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## AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE

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### **CHANGE OF DIRECTOR FOR 2018 PRODUCTION OF *OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD***

**Ameenah Kaplan to step in for Tyne Rafaeli**

Plus, APT to host American Theatre Critic's Convention in July, 2018

**SPRING GREEN, WIS:** American Players Theatre (APT) announced that, due to schedule conflicts, Director **Tyne Rafaeli** will step away from the 2018 production of Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*. **Ameenah Kaplan**, movement director and co-composer for APT's 2017 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, will helm the production. Kaplan had originally been slated as Associate Director and Fight Director.

Artistic Director **Brenda DeVita** said, "We are so sorry Tyne had to step away from this project. I'm confident that we will have a very long relationship with her, and hopeful that she'll work with us again at APT in the future. The amazing thing is that Ameenah Kaplan has agreed to step in. We're incredibly fortunate that she's been involved with this project with Tyne since the beginning. She is a dynamic and imaginative director who is passionate about this play – she is, quite simply, a force of nature. She'll bring to bear her formidable talent to the production. Sure, it's challenging to make a change at this point, but I'm confident in the pairing of Ameenah with *Our Country's Good*. The transition has been seamless."

Kaplan recently directed *The Wiz* at First Stage in Milwaukee. Other directing credits include *How to Break* at the Village Theatre in Seattle, *The Royale* at ACT Theatre, Seattle, *Molodi: Up Close and Personal* for Las Vegas' premiere body percussion ensemble and *Molodi* and *Bash'd* at Celebration Theatre in Los Angeles. She has also directed twice for Noah Wyle's Young Playwrights Festival. Her short film, *Man With a Movie Camera* premiered at Hollyshorts Film Festival in 2014 and her short film *The American Failure* has played at numerous film festivals.

She is also an award-winning choreographer and has choreographed more than two dozen shows for stage and television, including The Grammy Awards and Dancing with the Stars. She was a member of the original cast of *Stomp* and serves as a drum coach for *Blue Man Group*.

She is the recipient of the NAACP, LA Weekly, Gregory and Ovation awards.

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## American Theatre Critics Association (ATCA) at APT

This summer, APT will host the American Theatre Critics Association's annual conference, welcoming dozens of critics from around the country. The conference runs July 11-15. The group will attend workshops and panel discussions, many of which will feature APT staff and artists. Critics will also have the option to attend five APT productions during the conference. Additional activities include excursions to Taliesin, the Madison Farmer's Market, the Overture Center and White Oak Savanna.

Managing Director Carrie Van Hallgren said, "We are honored to be chosen to host this conference. It is an incredible opportunity to share APT's work and our story with so many respected critics. We are grateful to the group of Wisconsin and Chicago-based critics who recommended APT to host. It's a dream come true for us."

APT staff has been working with a planning committee of area critics, including Lindsay Christians, theater critic for *The Capital Times*, and freelance critics Gwendolyn Rice and Amanda Finn.

The American Theatre Critics Association is the only national association of professional theater critics. The members work for newspapers, magazines, radio, television and online services across the United States. Since its founding in 1974, ATCA has worked to foster greater communication among theater critics in the US and abroad, to improve training and development, to advocate absolute freedom of expression in theater and theater criticism and to increase public awareness of theater as an important national resource.

## Additional Casting Announced

The entire Core Acting Company will return for the 2018 season. In addition, several APT favorites are set to return this season in pivotal roles.

### ***As You Like It***

**By William Shakespeare. Directed by James Bohnen.**

**Opens June 16**

Core Company member **Melisa Pereyra** will play Rosalind, the largest female role in Shakespeare's canon. **Andrea San Miguel**, who starred with Ms. Pereyra last season in *The Maids* and also played Lucienne in *A Flea in Her Ear*, will return for her second season at APT and will play Celia. **Chris Klopatek** returns to APT after a two year hiatus to play Orlando. Several other Core Company members appear in pivotal roles, including **Marcus Truschinski** as Touchstone, **Tracy Michelle Arnold** as Jacques, **Brian Mani** as Duke Frederick, **David Daniel** as Duke Senior and Kelsey Brennan as Phoebe.

### ***Born Yesterday***

**By Garson Kanin. Directed by Brenda DeVita.**

**Opens June 23**

**Colleen Madden** and **David Daniel** lead the cast of this 1940s comedy as Billie Dawn and Harry Brock. **Reese Madigan**, who has appeared on Broadway in *Lincoln in Illinois* and *Holiday*, as well as extensive acting credits throughout the Midwest, makes his APT debut as Paul Verrall. **John Taylor Phillips**, who last year appeared in *A Flea in Her Ear* and *Three Sisters*, returns to play Ed Devery, Brock's right-hand man. Core Company members **James Ridge** and **Sarah Day** play Senator and Mrs. Hedges and APT favorite **Cristina Panfilio** rounds out the cast as Helen.

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### ***The Recruiting Officer***

**By George Farquhar. Directed by William Brown.**

**Opens June 30**

Core Company member **Nate Burger** plays the titular recruiting officer, Captain Plume in this 18<sup>th</sup> century English comedy. **Juan Rivera Lebron** returns to APT for a second season after appearing in *A Flea in Her Ear* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* last season. **Kelsey Brennan** plays Sylvia, **Andrea San Miguel** plays Melinda, **Marcus Truschinski** plays Brazen, **Brian Mani** will play Balance, **Cristina Panfilio** plays Rose and **John Taylor Phillips** plays Thomas.

**Jefferson A. Russell** will make his APT debut as Sergeant Kite in *The Recruiting Officer*. **LaShawn Banks**, who was originally slated to play the role, had to regrettably remove himself from the season due to non-emergency knee surgery.

### ***Heartbreak House***

**By George Bernard Shaw. Adapted & Directed by Aaron Posner.**

**Opens August 11**

**Jonathan Smoots** plays the patriarch of the Shotovers, the eccentric family at the center of this Shaw comedy. **Colleen Madden** and **Tracy Michelle Arnold** play Ariadne and Hesione, his daughters. **Jim DeVita** plays Hector, Ariadne's husband. **Phoebe González**, who makes her APT debut this season after acting in the Winter Words reading of *The River Bride*, plays Ellie Dunn and Core Company member **Tim Gittings** plays her father, Mazzini. Rounding out the cast is **Sarah Day** as Guinness and **John Taylor Phillips** as Mangan.

### ***Measure for Measure***

**By William Shakespeare. Directed by Risa Brainin.**

**Opens August 18**

**Melisa Pereyra** will play Isabella, **Marcus Truschinski** plays Angelo and **James Ridge** plays the Duke in *Measure for Measure*. **Robert Tolentino**, who will play Isabella's brother Claudio, joins the APT company for the first time this year. **Cher Desiree Alvarez**, who was an acting apprentice last year, will return for a second season to play Juliet. **David Daniel** will play Pompey.

### IN THE TOUCHSTONE

#### ***Blood Knot***

**By Athol Fugard. Directed by Ron OJ Parson.**

**Opens June 16**

Core Company member **Jim DeVita** will play Morris. **Gavin Lawrence**, returning for his third APT season, plays Zachariah. Mr. Lawrence's previous APT credits include *The African Company Presents Richard III*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*.

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## **Exit the King**

**By Eugene Ionesco. Translated by Neil Armfield & Geoffrey Rush.**

**Directed by Ken Albers.**

**Opens June 30**

Core Company members include **James Ridge** as King Berenger, **Tracy Michele Arnold** as Queen Marguerite, Berenger's first wife and **Sarah Day** as Juliette, the nurse. APT favorites **John Pribyl** (Bottom in last season's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and **Casey Hoekstra** (Happy in *Death of a Salesman*, Marco in *A View from the Bridge*) return to play the Doctor and the Guard. **Cassia Thompson** will make her APT debut this season as Queen Marie, Berenger's second wife.

## ***Our Country's Good***

**By Timberlake Wertenbaker, Adapted from Thomas Keneally's novel "The Playmaker"**

**Directed by Ameenah Kaplan**

Each actor in *Our Country's Good* will play multiple roles. The ensemble is: **Kelsey Brennan, Carl Bryant, Nate Burger, Josh Krause, Juan Rivera Lebron, Brian Mani, Cristina Panfilio, Andrea San Miguel** and **Cassia Thompson**.

## **About the Theater**

APT is a professional repertory theater devoted to the great and future classics. It was founded in 1979 and continues to be one of the most popular outdoor classical theaters in the nation. APT is located in Spring Green, Wis., on 110 acres of hilly woods and meadows above the Wisconsin River. Completely remodeled in 2017, the outdoor amphitheater is built within a natural hollow atop an oak-wooded hill. Under the dome of sky, 1,089 comfortably cushioned seats encircle three sides of the stage. In 2009, APT opened the 201-seat indoor Touchstone Theatre, offering a different type of play and experience.

For more information, visit [www.americanplayers.org](http://www.americanplayers.org). For photos or interviews, please contact: **Jess Amend, 608-588-9240, [jamend@americanplayers.org](mailto:jamend@americanplayers.org)**