

**PORTLAND
CENTER STAGE
AT THE ARMORY**

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MEDIA RELEASE

Portland Center Stage presents the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company production of *Where We Belong* in association with Folger Shakespeare Library



**"An important story — thought-provoking, respectful, and alive."
—MD Theatre Guide**

"Where We Belong illuminate[s] a culture, in the past and in the present, that we should know more about." —New York Theater

Previews Begin Feb. 25 | Opening Night is Mar. 3 | Closes Mar. 26
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January — PORTLAND, OR. Portland Center Stage is thrilled to bring Portland audiences the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company production of Madeline Sayet's profoundly affecting and

breathhtaking solo show *Where We Belong*, presented in association with Folger Shakespeare Library.

Directed by Mei Ann Teo, *Where We Belong* recounts an Indigenous theatermaker's journey across geographic borders, personal history, and cultural legacies in search of a place to belong. Indigenous actor Jessica Ranville will make her Portland Center Stage debut performing the role of Achokayis.

Where We Belong begins preview performances on February 25, opens on March 3, and runs through March 26 on the U.S. Bank Main Stage. Tickets are on sale now. As part of the partnership for this production, complimentary tickets are available to Native people.

Woolly Mammoth's Artistic Director Maria Manuela Goyanes said of the production, "I loved *Where We Belong* from the moment I encountered it. Madeline's personal history with our country's suppression of her Indigenous language and culture is heartbreaking, and her reflections in this play strike an exquisite balance of delightful humor and painful truth. The journey shared in the script speaks directly to our current moment and what it means to belong in our increasingly complicated world."

"*Where We Belong* is an invitation to all of us to begin our journey to understand the real impact of colonization and erasure of Indigenous peoples and cultures," said Karen Ann Daniels, Director of Programming and Artistic Director of Folger Theatre. "Madeline offers us her personal history in *Where We Belong* as an entry point to engage learning as individuals, communities, and cultural institutions — we are proud to support this vital conversation."

Where We Belong premiered at Shakespeare's Globe in London in 2019 as part of Border Crossings' ORIGINS Festival, the UK's only large-scale multidisciplinary festival of Indigenous arts and culture. Sayet then adapted the original piece for the digital realm at Woolly Mammoth with director Mei Ann Teo. That collaboration was followed by a national tour that launched in the spring of 2022.

Where We Belong comes to Portland direct from an acclaimed run at The Public Theater in New York. The tour is slated to continue through 2024, including an upcoming production at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in the fall, with a final stop in the winter of 2024 at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC.

Each theater's commitment to the tour has been led by a desire to engage in authentic, continuous, long-term relationships with both the Indigenous nations whose land each presenting theater occupies and the local Native community. These values are embodied in a community accountability rider developed by playwright Madeline Sayet with support from Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company.

"I didn't want my story to be able to be used as a tokenistic way for theaters to check boxes, without actually changing their behavior," explained Sayet. "So we created an accountability rider to go with the show in order to ensure all the presenting theaters would commit to what I feel is the bare minimum commitment toward engaging with the Native peoples whose lands they occupy, and the history of our erasure in the 'American' theater."

Sayet continued, "Each presenting theater has agreed to never present redface again, develop an ongoing relationship with the Native peoples whose lands they occupy, offer free tickets to the show to all Native audiences, present work by local Native artists, and organize events supporting local language revitalization initiatives. It is my hope that these initiatives will lead to more Native stories being told, and, when done in tandem with the show, create awareness of some of the actual issues the piece is trying to address."

Where We Belong features production design by Hao Bai, costume design by Asa Benally, original composition and sound design by Erik Schilke, dramaturgy by Vera Starbard, dialect coaching by Liz Hayes, and casting by Judy Bowman. The tour is stage managed by Alison McLeod and has technical direction by Megan J. Coffel and makeup consulting by Dawn Newsome. Broadway & Beyond Theatricals serves as Executive Producer and booking agent.

ABOUT THE PLAY

In 2015, Achokayis, a Mohegan theater-maker, moves to England to pursue a Ph.D. in Shakespeare, grappling with the question of what it means to remain or leave, as the Brexit vote threatens to further disengage the UK from the wider world. Moving between nations that have failed to reckon with their ongoing roles in colonialism, she finds comfort in the journeys of her Native ancestors who had to cross the ocean in the 1700s to help their people. In this intimate and exhilarating solo piece directed by Mei Ann Teo, playwright Madeline Sayet asks us what it means to belong in an increasingly globalized world.

SPECIAL EVENTS

[The People's Party: BIPOC Affinity Night for *Where We Belong*](#)

Sat., Mar. 25, 7:30 p.m. • Sliding scale tickets w/ FREE pre- & post-show offerings

The People's Party: BIPOC Affinity Nights are a mindful curation of an environment meant to center the experience of people who identify as part of the BIPOC community (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). These events are dedicated to generating a space for BIPOC individuals to engage with the performance in ways that are authentic to them — and they include exciting pre- and post-show offerings, along with complimentary beer from Deschutes Brewery.

MADELINE SAYET, PLAYWRIGHT

Madeline is a Mohegan theater maker who believes the stories we pass down inform our collective possible futures. She serves as an assistant professor at Arizona State University with the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS), and is the executive director of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program (YIPAP). She has been honored as a Forbes 30 Under 30 in Hollywood & Entertainment, TED Fellow, MIT Media Lab Director's Fellow, National Directing Fellow, Drama League Director-In-Residence, NCAIED Native American 40 Under 40, and a recipient of The White House Champion of Change Award from President Obama. As a writer, her plays include: *Where We Belong*, *Up and Down the River*, *Antigone Or And Still She Must Rise Up*, *Daughters of Leda*, *The Neverland*, and *The Fish* (In Development). Recent directing work includes: *Tlingit Christmas Carol* (Perseverance Theatre), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (South Dakota Shakespeare), *Henry IV* (Connecticut Repertory Theatre), *Whale Song*

(Perseverance Theatre), *As You Like It* (Delaware Shakespeare), *The Winter's Tale* (Amerinda/HERE Arts), *Poppea* (Krannert Center, Illinois), *The Magic Flute* (Glimmerglass), *Macbeth* (NYC Parks), *Miss Lead* (59e59). *Where We Belong* is published by Bloomsbury. It will be available in paperback in August 2022, but you can currently [pre-order the paperback or purchase the e-book. madelinesayet.com](#)

MEI ANN TEO, DIRECTOR

Mei Ann Teo is a queer immigrant from Singapore making theater and film at the intersection of artistic/civic/contemplative practice. As a director/devisor/dramaturg, they create across genres, including music theater, intermedial participatory work, reimagining classics, and documentary theater. Mei's work has been in international festivals including Belgium's Festival de Liege, Edinburgh International Fringe, Beijing International Festival, Singapore Theatre Festival. They helmed *Dim Sum Warriors the Musical* by Colin Goh and Yen Yen Woo, composed by Pulitzer Prize-winner Du Yun for a national China 25-city tour. They have directed and/or developed new work at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Theatreworks Hartford, Playwrights Realm, Goodman Theatre, Public Theater, Berkeley Rep (Ground Floor), Crowded Fire, History Theatre, Page 73, Musical Theatre Factory, and the National Black Theatre. Recent work includes Jillian Walker's world premiere *SKiNFoLK: An American Show* at the Bushwick Starr, Madeline Sayet's *Where We Belong* at Shakespeare's Globe, Woolly Mammoth, BCS, and PTC, the North American premiere of Amy Berryman's *Walden* at Theatreworks Hartford, and the English US premiere of Stefano Massini's *7 Minutes at Waterwell*. Teo received the League of Professional Theatre Women's Josephine Abady Award, is the inaugural recipient of the Lily Fan Director Lilly Award, and is the associate artistic director and director of New Work at Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

JESSICA RANVILLE, PERFORMER

Jessica Ranville (Red River Métis) is an actor and teaching artist from Winnipeg, Manitoba, and based in New York City. Her work in the theater spans devised, movement-based plays to folk musicals to Shakespeare, to new play development. Ranville is a citizen of the Manitoba Métis Federation and has performed in new and classic works within the Native theater community for nearly a decade, including multiple collaborations with Madeline Sayet and Ty Defoe. She is

currently in residency at IRT Theater in Manhattan and is an adjunct for Brooklyn College's B.F.A. Theater Program where she teaches movement. She has developed new works at The Playwrights Realm, The Drama League, The Lark, WP Theater, The New Ohio Theater, and La MaMa. Regional: *Men On Boats* (Baltimore Center Stage). M.F.A., The New School for Drama.

TICKET & PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

When: February 25 – March 26, 2023*

***Opening Night/Press Night:** Friday, March 3, at 7:30 p.m.

Preview Performances: February 25 & 26 and March 1 & 2 at 7:30 p.m.

Pay What You Will Performances: February 26 and March 16 at 7:30 p.m.

The People's Party: BIPOC Affinity Night: March 25 at 7:30 p.m.

Where: On the U.S. Bank Main Stage at The Armory, 128 NW Eleventh Ave, Portland, Oregon.

To Purchase Regular Tickets: Prices range from \$25 to \$93 and tickets may be purchased at pcs.org/where-we-belong, 503.445.3700, or in-person from the box office. *Prices vary by date and time and are subject to change.*

Ticket Specials: Visit pcs.org/deals to view ticket specials, including Rush Tickets, Pay What You Will, Arts for All, Active Duty, Military Veteran, Student, Under 30, The Armory Card, Groups of 10+, and more.

Please Note: This production is recommended for ages 13 and up. It contains flashing lights, depictions of racism, and discussions of borders, war, loss of language, residential schools, colonial theft of human remains, and repatriation. Learn more by calling 503-445-3700.

Accessibility: Learn about accessibility options at pcs.org/access.

WOOLLY MAMMOTH THEATRE COMPANY

The Tony Award®-winning Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company creates badass theater that highlights the stunning, challenging, and tremendous complexity of our world. For over 40 years, Woolly has maintained a high standard of artistic rigor while simultaneously daring to take risks, innovate, and push beyond perceived boundaries. One of the few remaining theaters in the country to maintain a company of artists, Woolly serves an essential research and development role within the American theater. Plays premiered here have gone on to productions at hundreds of theaters all over the world and have had lasting impacts on the

field. Currently coled by Artistic Director Maria Manuela Goyanes and Interim Managing Director Ted DeLong, Woolly is located in Washington, DC, equidistant from the Capitol and the White House. This unique location influences Woolly's investment in actively working towards an equitable, participatory, and creative democracy. Woolly Mammoth stands upon occupied, unceded territory: the ancestral homeland of the Nacotchtank whose descendants belong to the Piscataway peoples. Furthermore, the foundation of this city, and most of the original buildings in Washington, DC, were funded by the sale of enslaved people of African descent and built by their hands.

FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

Folger Shakespeare Library is the world's largest Shakespeare collection, the ultimate resource for exploring Shakespeare and his world. The Folger welcomes millions of visitors online and in person. It provides unparalleled access to a huge array of resources, from original sources to modern interpretations. With the Folger, you can experience the power of performance, the wonder of exhibitions, and the excitement of path-breaking research. The Folger offers the opportunity to see and even work with early modern sources, driving discovery and transforming education for students of all ages.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE

[Portland Center Stage's](#) mission is to create transcendent theatrical experiences and community programs that break down the barriers separating people. We support our community in celebrating the full scope of humanity, appreciating difference, and fostering belonging. PCS was established in 1988 as a branch of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and became independent in 1994. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Marissa Wolf and Interim Managing Director Liam Kaas-Lentz, the company produces a mix of classic, contemporary, and world-premiere productions, along with a variety of high-quality education and community programs. As part of its dedication to new play development, the company has produced 28 world premieres, many of which were developed at its JAW New Play Festival. PCS's home is The Armory, a historic building originally constructed in 1891. After a major renovation, The Armory opened in 2006 as the first building on the National Register of Historic

Places, the first performing arts venue in the country, and the first building in Portland to achieve a LEED Platinum rating.

Portland Center Stage is committed to identifying and interrupting instances of racism and all forms of oppression, through the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA). Learn more at pcs.org/idea.

[Portland Center Stage's 2022-2023 season](#) is funded in part by Season Superstars the Regional Arts and Culture Council and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation; Season Sponsors the Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency funded by the state of Oregon and the National Endowment for the Arts, and US Bank; and Producing Sponsors Ellyn Bye, Ray and Bobbi Davis, Ronni Lacroute, Mark Spencer, Argyle Winery, and Deschutes Brewery. Additional support for *Where We Belong* comes from Chrys Martin and Jack Pessia.

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