

MEDIA RELEASE

**The World Premiere of Celebrated Playwright
Lauren Yee’s PCS-Commissioned Play *Young Americans*
Takes Audiences on Two Road Trips — Headed To and From
Portland, 20 years apart — Through the Lens of the
Immigrant Experience**



Previews Begin Feb. 11 | Opening Night is Feb. 17 | Closes Mar. 26
[REQUEST PRESS TICKETS](#)

January 19, 2023 — PORTLAND, OR. Portland Center Stage presents the newest play from one of the most exciting playwrights in the country — the world premiere of Lauren Yee’s *Young Americans*, directed by Desdemona Chiang. Commissioned by PCS, *Young Americans* takes audiences on two road trips, traveling to and from Portland, 20 years apart. *Young Americans* begins preview performances on February 11, opens on February 17, and runs through March

26 in the Ellyn Bye Studio. *Young Americans* is a co-production with Pittsburgh Public Theater. Tickets are on sale now.

Yee is a powerhouse playwright who continues to rank among the top-produced playwrights in the country. Prior to the pandemic closures, Yee was slated to have 18 productions of her plays showing at regional theaters across the country. PCS's production of this play is especially meaningful, not only because the play was commissioned by PCS, but because it will finally be making its world premiere after initially being postponed due to the COVID shutdown.

Among the many accolades from the press, Yee's work has been hailed as "profoundly astonishing," "whip-smart and very funny," "thoroughly compelling," and "exceptionally entertaining." *The Chicago Tribune* called Yee "a talented, smart, and very funny writer." *DC Metro Theater Arts* has said that her work "will have you laughing and thinking. It will linger in my memory for weeks and months to come." *Performink* called her work "brilliant," saying that "the ebb and flow of her storytelling is a joy ride, packed with humor and a self-awareness that embraces the audience."

While Yee was working with PCS on the development of *Young Americans*, she spoke about the importance of supporting new work: "Every masterpiece out there, every piece of art that you love and that you accept as cannon was once a new piece. It was once a new play, it was a new musical, it was something that hadn't existed before, and was brought into the world by artists who hoped that it may become something new and add something to the conversation. We need to continue exploring who we are in this moment and think about what else we want to add to that cannon."

ABOUT THE PLAY

This hilarious, heartfelt new play veers back and forth in time as it takes audiences on two road trips, across two generations. In one, immigrants Jenny and Joe drive from the East Coast to Portland, OR, trying to connect as a newly engaged couple. 20 years later, Joe and their adopted daughter, Lucy, set out on a similar cross-country adventure. With some unexpected detours along the way, Jenny and Joe traverse the strange territory of their new country, while their

daughter, Lucy, pieces together their bittersweet family history. This beautiful comedy offers a fresh look at a U.S. road trip through the lens of the immigrant experience. Yee explores what home and belonging mean to those in transition — and the lengths we will go to for the people we love.

SPECIAL EVENTS

[The People's Party: BIPOC Affinity Night for Young Americans](#)

Fri., Mar. 17, 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.

PLAYWRIGHT LAUREN YEE

Lauren Yee's plays include *Cambodian Rock Band*, with music by Dengue Fever, which premiered at South Coast Rep, with subsequent productions at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, City Theatre, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Signature Theatre, and Jungle Theatre, with an upcoming national tour. Her play *The Great Leap* was produced at PCS in 2022, as well as DCPA, Steppenwolf, Seattle Repertory, Atlantic Theatre, the Guthrie Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Arts Club, and InterAct Theatre. Yee's honors include the Doris Duke Artists Award, Whiting Award, Steinberg/ATCA Award, American Academy of Arts and Letters literature award, Horton Foote Prize, Kesselring Prize, Primus Prize, a Hodder Fellowship at Princeton, and the #1 and #2 plays on the 2017 Kilroys List. She's a Residency 5 playwright at Signature Theatre, a New Dramatists member, Ma-Yi Writers' Lab member, and Playwrights Realm playwright. Her TV credits include *Pachinko* (Apple), *Soundtrack* (Netflix). Current commissions include Geffen Playhouse, La Jolla Playhouse, Second Stage, and South Coast Rep. B.A: Yale. M.F.A: UCSD. laurenyee.com

THE CAST

This dynamic cast of three are all making their PCS debuts! LA-based actor Danny Bernardo (*Mamma Mia!* at East West Players) plays Joe; New York City-based Marielle Young (*Edith Can Shoot Things* at Kitchen Theatre Company) plays Jenny, and Portland local Sammy Rat Rios (*A Christmas Carol* at Portland Playhouse) plays their daughter Lucy.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Director Desdemona Chiang (The 5th Avenue Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Alley Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival) makes her PCS main stage debut leading a team that includes Scenic Designer Junghyun Georgia Lee (*Kristina Wong, Sweatshop Overlord* at PCS); Costume Designer Susan Tsu (*Godspell* and *The Joy Luck Club*, a benchmark collaboration between Chinese and American companies,); Lighting Designer Solomon Weisbard (*9 Parts of Desire* and *The Breath of Life* at PCS); Sound Designer Andre Pluess (Broadway productions include *Goodnight Oscar, The Minutes*, and *33 Variations*); with Dramaturg Kamilah Bush, Stage Manager Janine Vanderhoff, and Assistant Stage Manager Dana Petersen.

TICKET AND PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

When: February 11 – March 26, 2023*

***Opening Night/Press Night:** Friday, March 17, at 7:30 p.m.

Preview Performances: March 11, 12, 15, and 16 at 7:30 p.m.

Pay What You Will Performances: February 12 and March 2 at 7:30 p.m.

The People's Party: BIPOC Affinity Night: March 17 at 7:30 p.m.

Where: In the Ellyn Bye Studio at The Armory, 128 NW Eleventh Ave, Portland, Oregon.

To Purchase Regular Tickets: Prices range from \$23 to \$67 and tickets may be purchased at pcs.org/young-americans, 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 adult situations and language, depictions of racism, and drug use. Learn more by calling 503-445-3700.

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

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. *Young Americans* was supported in part by the Wallace Foundation.

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