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M E D I A R E L E A S E

PERKINS COIE FUNDS NEW PLAY COMMISSION PROGRAM FOR PORTLAND CENTER STAGE THROUGH ITS UNIQUE INNOVATIVE MINDS PROGRAM

31 May 2012, Portland, Ore. – With generous funding from the Innovative Minds Program of the law firm Perkins Coie, Portland Center Stage announces the launch of a new playwright commissioning program. The first two commissions will go to performer and writer **Lauren Weedman** for the play *The People's Republic of Portland*, which will receive its world premiere in the PCS 2012-2013 season; and playwright **Adam Bock**, whose previous plays *The Thugs* and *The Receptionist* have received workshop and full productions at PCS.

“When asking a playwright to write a play, they become part of the company’s artistic mission during the commission. In part to get to know the theater in a deeper way, but to also have them as a resource for our education and community programs. The two-year commission will include residency for at least six weeks, readings with actors, and meetings with a dramaturg, director and whomever else the playwright feels would be helpful,” says PCS Associate Artistic Director Rose Riordan. “And probably most important someone consistently at the other end of the phone who wants to talk about their work. We chose Adam and Lauren because we are fans of their work and already have a working relationship with them. It’s important that a commission be more than a check. It should also create a true artistic home for the artist and a deeper collaboration with the theatre.”

This collaboration between artist and theater is also reflected in the relationship between Perkins Coie and PCS. “Perkins Coie is delighted to be a part of the team bringing *The People's Republic of Portland* to Portland Center Stage next season,” says Steve Hedberg, PCS Board Chair and Perkins Coie Partner. “The opportunity to demonstrate our continuing commitment to the arts in Oregon by commissioning playwrights as talented as Lauren Weedman and Adam Bock is unique. We're excited about it.” Perkins Coie’s Innovative Minds Program is a philanthropic endeavor designed to recognize and reward intellectual curiosity. The PCS commissions for new plays encompasses just one of four projects funded nationally. “We salute PCS for their continuing dedication to bringing world-class

theater to Portland. We are honored to support Lauren Weedman and Adam Bock, and look forward to *The People's Republic of Portland*," says Hedberg.

"When we first met with the team at Perkins Coie about their Innovative Minds program, it stuck a cord for us," said Artistic Director Chris Coleman. "PCS is always seeking to find unique ways to forge new ground as a company and for our field, and that is certainly mirrored in the way that Perkins Coie looks at philanthropy. They clearly seek a deeper connection and impact with their efforts, and we look forward to this partnership with them and the excitement these first commissions will generate."

The new commissions program marks an important advancement in new play development for Portland Center Stage. Having found exceptional success over the fourteen years of the JAW (Just Add Water) Festival, a two-week residency with playwrights, directors, dramaturges and company of actors that culminates in a weekend of public readings, PCS is ready to take the next step by commissioning new work from two rising stars in the American theater. "While we will not impose creatively on the playwright, it is our hope to be part of the conversation that helps the play along the way," continues Riordan. "We are committed to providing resources for the writer and the work."

Additionally, both writers will be in residence for the JAW festival this summer and be presenting new work. Adam Bock's brand-new play *San Diego* was chosen to be in the festival independent of the new commissioning program. Lauren will be workshopping *The People's Republic of Portland* as part of both the commission and the festival.

Lauren Weedman is an award winning comedic actress, playwright and author. She has written and performed eight solo plays. (*Homecoming, Amsterdam, If Ornaments Had Lips, Huu, Rash, Wreckage, BUST, No...You Shut Up*). Her first show, *Homecoming*, began as a 15-minute performance art piece at Seattle's On the Boards and went on to go off-Broadway in NYC. *BUST*, about her work in the LA county jail was awarded a Macdowell fellowship for playwriting by the Alpert Awards as well as several "best of the arts" honors across the nation. Her television credits include *The Daily Show, True Blood, United States of Tara, Reno 911, Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and playing Horny Patty on HBO's *HUNG*. Film credits include *Imagine That, Date Night* and Judd Apatow's *A Five Year Engagement* starring Jason Segel. Weedman's first book, *A Woman Trapped in a Woman's Body: (Tales from a Life of Cringe)*, is a collection of comedic essays and was named by Kirkus Reviews as a Top Ten Indie book for 2007. Weedman currently lives in Santa Monica by the Baja Fresh.

Adam Bock's plays include *Phaedra* (Shotgun Players), *A Small Fire* (Playwrights Horizons, Drama Desk nomination), the book for *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, with music by Todd Almond (Yale Rep), *The Flowers* (About Face Theatre), *The Receptionist* (MTC, 2008 Outer Critics nomination, *Best Plays of 2007-2008*, *The Evidence Room* with Megan Mullally), *The Drunken City* (Playwrights Horizons, 2008 Outer Critics nomination), *The Thugs* (Soho Rep, 2007 OBIE Award for Playwriting), *The Shaker Chair* (2005 Humana Festival), *Swimming In The Shallows* (Shotgun Players, Second Stage Uptown, 2000 BATCC Award, Clauder Prize), *Five Flights* (Encore Theatre and Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, 2002 Glickman Award, ACTA nomination, Osborn nomination), *Marcy Comes Home* and *The Typographer's Dream* (Encore Theatre/Shotgun Players). Adam is the resident playwright at Encore Theatre, and a Shotgun Players Artistic Associate. He is a NEA grantee, a three-time resident at Yaddo, a former member of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, a NYTW Usual Suspect, and a TDF Open Doors mentor. Adam's plays are published by Samuel French, Dramatists Play Service and Playscripts, Inc. He is a proud member of New Dramatists.

ABOUT PERKINS COIE

With more than 850 lawyers in 19 offices across the United States and Asia, Perkins Coie represents great companies across a wide range of industries and at varying stages of growth—from start-ups to FORTUNE 100 corporations.

- Perkins Coie is frequently recognized for its leadership in the legal profession:
- Ranked #59 on the American Lawyer 100 list (2011)
- Listed on FORTUNE magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" for 10 consecutive years (2003-2012)
- Honored as one of *Working Mother* magazine's and Flex Time Lawyers' "Best Law Firms for Women" (2008, 2009 & 2011)
- Received the Corporate Partnership Award for Supporting People with Disabilities
- Ranked #1 for diversity efforts by the Minority Bar Association of Washington
- Earned the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's top rating of 100 percent in the Corporate Equality Index (2009-2012)
- Ranked as a leading firm in Chambers USA with 100 attorneys listed in 10 key markets across the country; 18 of the firm's practices received Band 1 rankings (2011)
- 161 lawyers named to the "Best Lawyers in America" (2012)

ABOUT PORTLAND CENTER STAGE endeavors to "inspire our community by bringing stories to life in unexpected ways." Established in 1988 as a branch of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PCS became an independent theater in 1994 and has been under the leadership of Artistic Director Chris Coleman since May 2000. The company presents a blend of classic, contemporary and original productions in a conscious effort to appeal to the eclectic palate of theatergoers in Portland. PCS also offers a variety of education and outreach programs for curious minds from six to 106, including discussions, classes, workshops and partnerships with organizations throughout the Portland metro area.

THE GERDING THEATER AT THE ARMORY houses a 599-seat Main Stage and the 200-seat black box Ellyn Bye Studio. It was the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue, to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification. The Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public on Oct. 1, 2006. The capital campaign to fund the renovation of this hub for community artistic activity continues. Information about the campaign is available at http://www.pcs.org/armory_campaign/.

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