

# STEPPENWOLF THEATRE CO.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PRESS CONTACTS:**

**Madeline Long**, Senior Communications Director

mlong@steppenwolf.org | 312-654-5656

**Leean Torske**, PR Associate

ltorske@steppenwolf.org | 312-654-5631

## Steppenwolf Announces Casting for First Four Shows of 2019/20 Season

*The Great Leap* by Lauren Yee

*The Brothers Size* by ensemble member Tarell Alvin McCraney

*Lindiwe* by ensemble member Eric Simonson

*Dance Nation* by Clare Barron

Single Tickets on Sale Friday, July 26



CHICAGO (July 23, 2019) – Steppenwolf Theatre Company announces casting for the first four productions of the 2019/20 season featuring previously announced ensemble members **Audrey Francis**, **Tim Hopper**, **Caroline Neff**, **Yasen Peyankov** and **Karen Rodriguez**, and the return of Steppenwolf regulars including **Michael Patrick Thornton**, **Cedric Young** and **Keith Kupferer**, along with dozens of Chicago-based actors and an exciting debut by South African stage and screen star **Nondumiso Tembe**.

*Lindiwe* features the five-time GRAMMY-winning **Ladysmith Black Mambazo** and marks the third collaboration between Steppenwolf and Ladysmith. The legendary a cappella group and Steppenwolf first partnered in 1992 for *The Song of Jacob Zulu*, which was also directed by ensemble member Eric Simonson and transferred to Broadway receiving six Tony nominations. Actor Cedric Young who will be featured in *Lindiwe* was part of the original *Zulu* cast. Then in 1996, Simonson, Steppenwolf and Ladysmith teamed up again for the “beautiful and deeply moving” (*Chicago Tribune*) production of *Nomathemba*, which went on to The Kennedy Center. Simonson received an Oscar nomination for his 2000 documentary *On Tiptoe: The Music of Ladysmith Black Mambazo* about the group’s global impact and message of love and peace.

Productions include: ***The Great Leap*** by **Lauren Yee** (September 5 – October 20, 2019); Steppenwolf for Young Adults' production of ***The Brothers Size*** by ensemble member Tarell Alvin McCraney (October 2 – 19, 2019); ***Lindiwe*** by ensemble member **Eric Simonson** (November 7, 2019 – January 5, 2020); and ***Dance Nation*** by **Clare Barron** (December 12, 2019 – February 2, 2020).

**Single tickets to *The Great Leap* go on sale this Friday, July 26 at 11am. Classic and Flex Memberships are currently available for the 2019/20 Season.** To purchase a Membership and secure a seat now, contact Audience Services at 312-335-1650 or [steppenwolf.org/memberships](http://steppenwolf.org/memberships). Member pre-sale for additional single tickets to *The Great Leap* go on sale today, July 23 at 11am through Audience Services.

**Classic Memberships** start as low as \$100 and can save audiences up to 60% off single ticket purchases. The entire season can be experienced by securing your seats to all seven main series productions. Members enjoy perks of discounted tickets, easy and free exchanges, access to insider events, 10% discount at Front Bar & Steppenwolf Shop as well as pre-sale notices before public announcements. Five, six and seven play membership packages are also available. Discounted packages for students and teachers and accessible packages are offered, and current members who renew by May 15, 2019 can guarantee their seats in the Downstairs Theatre. Group sales are also now available.

Steppenwolf also offers year-round **flexible membership** options including the **Black Card** which starts as low as \$180. With a Black Card, you receive six ticket credits to use whenever and however you want for an entire year. Use all six tickets before that year is up? Reload your card to keep those unforgettable experiences coming. Under 30? Join Steppenwolf **RED** for just \$100 and enjoy the same six flexible ticket credits. That's less than \$17 a credit and almost 80% off single ticket prices. Black and RED cardholders receive exclusive discounts, special perks and insider access. **For more information and to purchase Memberships, visit Audience Services at 1650 N Halsted St, call 312-335-1650 or visit [steppenwolf.org/memberships](http://steppenwolf.org/memberships).**

### **Casting Listed Below:**

**Chicago Premiere**

***The Great Leap***

By **Lauren Yee**

Directed by **Jesca Prudencio**

**September 5 – October 20, 2019**

In the Upstairs Theatre



The cast features (Pictured L to R) **Glenn Obrero** (Manford), **Deanna Myers** (Connie), **Keith Kupferer** (Saul) and **James Seol** (Wen Chang).

When an American basketball team travels to Beijing amidst tensions in the late 80s, past relationships collide with present day revelations. Witty and weighty, this Chicago premiere explores cultural barriers, political risks and personal sacrifice. Lauren Yee's *The Great Leap* is sure to be compelling to basketball fans, history buffs and everyone who has ever had a dream.

**Lauren Yee's** *Cambodian Rock Band*, with music by Dengue Fever, premiered at South Coast Rep, subsequent productions at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, City Theatre, Merrimack Rep, Signature Theatre, Portland Center Stage, and Jungle Theatre. Her play *The Great Leap* has been produced at the Denver Center, Seattle Repertory, Atlantic Theatre, the Guthrie Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre, Arts Club, and InterAct Theatre, with future productions at Long Wharf, and Asolo Rep. 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, New Dramatists members, Ma-Yi Writers' Lab member, and Playwrights Realm alumni playwright. TV credits: *Pachinko* (Apple), *Soundtrack* (Netflix). Current commissions include Geffen Playhouse, La Jolla Playhouse, Portland Center Stage, Second Stage, South Coast Rep. BA: Yale. MFA: UCSD. [www.laurenyee.com](http://www.laurenyee.com)

### **Steppenwolf for Young Adults**

#### ***The Brothers Size***

By ensemble member **Tarell Alvin McCraney**

Directed by **Monty Cole**

**October 02 – October 19, 2019**

In the Downstairs Theatre



The cast features (Pictured L to R) **Patrick Agada** (Oshoosi Size), **Manny Buckley** (Ogun Size) and **Rashaad Hall** (Elegba)

Returning to our stage for the first time since its celebrated Chicago premiere, Steppenwolf for Young Adults presents Tarell Alvin McCraney's *The Brothers Size*. Ogun Size is hardworking and heartbroken. Oshoosi Size is recently returned home from prison and trying to be anywhere but. In this fierce and honest look at the complex bonds of brotherhood, McCraney weaves together poetry, music and Yoruba mythology to magnify the tug-of-war between freedom and the need to belong somewhere, to something, to someone.

**Tarell Alvin McCraney** is an acclaimed playwright and screenwriter and has been a Steppenwolf ensemble member since 2010. His script *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue* is the basis for the Oscar-winning film *Moonlight* directed by Barry Jenkins, for which McCraney and Jenkins won an Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay. He also wrote the film *High Flying Bird* which recently premiered on Netflix directed by Steven Soderbergh. McCraney's plays include *The Brother/Sister Plays* trilogy, *Choir Boy*, *Head of Passes*, *MS. BLAKK FOR PRESIDENT* and *WIG OUT!*. McCraney is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius" Grant, the Whiting Award, Steinberg Playwright Award, the Evening Standard Award, the New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award, the Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, the Windham Campbell Award, and a Doris Duke Artist Award. He is currently Chair of Playwriting at Yale School of Drama; an ensemble member at Steppenwolf Theatre Chicago; and a member of Teo Castellanos/D-Projects. McCraney is currently working on an original scripted TV series, *David Makes Man*, for Oprah Winfrey's OWN Network, produced by Michael B. Jordan and Page Fright Productions.

**World Premiere**  
***Lindiwe***

By ensemble member **Eric Simonson**

Music by **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**

Directed by ensemble member **Eric Simonson** and **Jonathan Berry**

Featuring ensemble member **Yasen Peyankov** and **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**

**November 7 – January 5, 2019**

In the Downstairs Theatre



The cast features (pictured top row L to R) **Nondumiso Tembe** (Lindiwe), ensemble member **Yasen Peyankov** (Keeper), **Cedric Young** (Mkhulu), **Buddy Fambro** (guitarist), **Frank Russell** (bassist), **Erik Hellman** (Adam) and (pictured bottom row) **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**.

The evocative live music of Ladysmith Black Mambazo forms the foundation of this Steppenwolf world premiere production written and co-directed by ensemble member Eric Simonson. As the story travels from Chicago's Kingston Mines to South Africa and beyond, *Lindiwe's* love story challenges us to define the boundaries between this world and the next, all the while exploring the sacrifices we make for love.

**Ladysmith Black Mambazo** is South Africa's five-time GRAMMY Award-winning singing group founded in the early 1960s. A radio broadcast, in 1970, opened the door to a recording career that includes over seventy albums, earning 19 GRAMMY Award nominations and five GRAMMY Award wins, including their most recent album, *Shaka Zulu Revisited* for Best World Music Album. In the mid-1980s, American singer/songwriter Paul Simon famously incorporated the group's rich harmonies into the *Graceland* album, a landmark recording considered seminal in introducing South African music to mainstream audiences. When Nelson Mandela

was released from prison he stated that Ladysmith Black Mambazo's music was a powerful message of peace that he listened to while in jail. It was Mandela who called Ladysmith Black Mambazo "South Africa's Cultural Ambassadors to the World." The group sings from a traditional music style called isicathamiya (is-cot-a-ME-Ya), which developed in the mines of South Africa. The group has also recorded with Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, Sarah McLachlan, Josh Groban, Emmylou Harris and many others. Ladysmith Black Mambazo carries a message of Peace, Love and Harmony to every theater they perform in. We hope you will join them as they spread their message.

**Eric Simonson's** plays and adaptations at Steppenwolf include *Nomathemba* (written with Ntozake Shange and Joseph Shabalala), *Carter's Way*, *Honest*, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Fake*. Other plays include *Louder Faster*, *Magic/Bird*, *Bronx Bombers*, *Bang the Drum Slowly* *The Last Hurrah*, *Work Song: Three Views of Frank Lloyd Wright* (with Jeffrey Hatcher), *Edge of the World* and *Speak American*. On Broadway, his credits include *Lombardi*, *Magic/Bird* and *Bronx Bombers*. His plays have been produced around the world and throughout the United States at theaters including The Huntington Theatre Company, L.A. Theatre Works, City Theatre of Pittsburgh, The Kennedy Center, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Arizona Theatre Company, Madison Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre and Crossroads Theatre Company. His production of Steppenwolf's *The Song of Jacob Zulu* received six Tony® Award nominations, including one for best direction. He's received an Academy Award for his documentary *A Note of Triumph*, an Oscar nomination for his documentary Ladysmith Black Mambazo and an Emmy nomination for his HBO documentary about Studs Terkel. Eric's television work includes writing for *The Man in the High Castle*, *Homecoming* (Amazon), *Killing Reagan* and *Swagger* (Apple TV). He is the recipient of the Princess Grace award and is the Artistic Director of the Door Kinetic Arts Festival in Door County, Wisconsin.

## **Chicago Premiere**

### ***Dance Nation***

By **Clare Barron**

Directed and choreographed by **Lee Sunday Evans**

Featuring ensemble members **Audrey Francis, Tim Hopper, Caroline Neff** and **Karen Rodriguez**

**December 12, 2019 – February 2, 2020**

In the Upstairs Theatre



The cast features (pictured top row, L to R) previously announced ensemble members **Audrey Francis** (The Moms/Vanessa), **Caroline Neff** (Zuzu), **Tim Hopper** (Dance Teacher Pat) and **Karen Rodriguez** (Amina) with (pictured bottom row, L to R) **Ariana Burks** (Sofia), **Ellen Maddow** (Maeve), **Michael Patrick Thornton** (Luke), **Shanésia Davis** (Ashlee) and **Adithi Chandrashekar** (Connie).

A pre-teen dance troupe navigates ambition, friendship and desire as they claw their way to Nationals in Tampa Bay. Featuring a multigenerational cast of women playing our pre-teen heroines, this Chicago premiere is fiercely funny, theatrically inventive and full of heart.

**Clare Barron** is a New York based playwright. Her play *Dance Nation* was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize, the recipient of the 2017 Susan Smith Blackburn award, and previously received the inaugural Relentless Award (2015); the play received its world premiere at Playwrights Horizons this past May and ran at the Almeida Theatre in London. Clare's play *You Got Older* (2015 Obie award for Playwriting; nominee for 2015 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding New Play; finalist for the 2015 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize) received its world premiere through P73 under the direction of Anne Kauffman and recently ran at Steppenwolf. Her play *Baby Screams Miracle* was recently produced at Woolly Mammoth, after having premiered as part of Clubbed Thumb's 2013 SummerWorks Festival. Her play *I'll Never Love Again* was produced at the Bushwick Starr in 2016 and was a New York Times Critics' Pick. Clare is the recipient of the 2014-2015 Paula Vogel Playwriting Award (Vineyard Theater), the 2014 P73 Playwriting Fellowship; she has received Sloan commissions from MTC and EST, and is also under commission to Lincoln Center Theater, and Playwrights Horizons. She was recently staffed on

Maria Semple's upcoming show on HBO, *Today Will Be Different*, starring Julia Roberts, and is currently developing a project with Gran Via Productions attached for AMC.

### **2019/20 Season**

Steppenwolf's 44<sup>th</sup> season features ***The Great Leap***, a Chicago premiere by Lauren Yee, directed by Jesca Prudencio (Sep 5 – Oct 20, 2019); ***Lindiwe***, a world premiere by ensemble member Eric Simonson, directed by Eric Simonson and Jonathan Berry, featuring Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Nov 7 – Dec 29, 2019); ***Dance Nation***, a Chicago premiere by Clare Barron (Dec 12, 2019 – February 2, 2020); ***Bug*** by ensemble member Tracy Letts, directed by David Cromer (Jan 23 – Mar 8, 2020); ***The Spectacularly Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington***, a Chicago premiere by James Ijames, directed by Whitney White (Apr 2 - May 17, 2020); ***King James***, a world premiere by ensemble member Rajiv Joseph, directed by ensemble member Anna D. Shapiro (May 7 – June 21, 2020); and ***Catch as Catch Can***, a Chicago premiere by Mia Chung, directed by Ken Rus Schmoll (June 4 – July 26, 2020).

### **Visitor Information**

Steppenwolf is located at 1650 N Halsted St near all forms of public transportation, bike racks and Divvy bike stands. The parking facility (\$13 or \$15, cash or card) is located just south of our theater at 1624 N Halsted. Valet parking service (\$15 cash) is available directly in front of the main entrance starting at 5pm on weeknights, 1pm on weekends and at 12noon before Wednesday matinees. Limited street and lot parking are also available. For last minute questions and concerns, patrons can call the Steppenwolf Parking Hotline at 312.335.1774.

### **Accessibility**

Committed to making the Steppenwolf experience accessible to everyone, performances featuring American Sign Language Interpretation, Open Captioning and Audio Description are offered during the run of each play. Assistive listening devices and large-print programs are available for every performance and the Downstairs and 1700 Theatres are each equipped with an induction hearing loop. All theaters feature wheelchair accessible seating and restrooms, and Front Bar features a push-button entrance, all-gender restrooms and accessible counter and table spaces.

### **Sponsor Information**

Lead support for *Lindiwe* is provided by the Zell Family Foundation. Other sponsors for *Lindiwe* include ComEd, Conagra Brands Foundation, Laurents/Hatcher Foundation and The Poetry Foundation. United Airlines is the Official and Exclusive Airline of Steppenwolf.

### **Front Bar: Coffee and Drinks**

Connected to the main lobby is Steppenwolf's own **Front Bar: Coffee and Drinks**, offering a warm, creative space to grab a drink, have a bite, or meet up with friends and collaborators, day or night. Open Tuesdays – Sundays, Front Bar serves locally roasted coffee and espresso by Passion House Coffee Roasters and features food by The Goddess and Grocer. The menu focuses on fresh, accessible fare, featuring grab-and-go salads and sandwiches for lunch and adding shareable small plates and desserts for evening and post show service. [www.front-bar.com](http://www.front-bar.com).



### **Year of Chicago Theatre**

Steppenwolf Theatre Company is proud to be part of the 2019 Year of Chicago Theatre, presented by the City of Chicago and the League of Chicago Theatres. To truly fall in love with Chicago, you must go to our theatres. This is where the city bares its fearless soul. Home to a community of creators, risk-takers, and big hearts, Chicago theatre is a hotbed for exciting new work and hundreds of world premieres every year. From Broadway musicals to storefront plays and improv, there's always a seat waiting for you at one of our 200+ theatres. Book your next show today at [ChicagoPlays.com](http://ChicagoPlays.com).

**Steppenwolf Theatre Company** is the nation's premier ensemble theater. Formed by a collective of actors in 1976, the ensemble members represent a remarkable cross-section of actors, directors and playwrights. Thrilling and powerful productions from *Balm in Gilead* and *August: Osage County* to *Pass Over* and *Downstate*—and accolades that include the National Medal of Arts and 12 Tony Awards—have made the theater legendary. Steppenwolf produces hundreds of performances and events annually in its three spaces: the 515-seat Downstairs Theatre, the 299-seat Upstairs Theatre and the 80-seat 1700 Theatre. Artistic programming includes a seven-play season; a two-play Steppenwolf for Young Adults season; Visiting Company engagements; and LookOut, a multi-genre performances series. Education initiatives include the nationally recognized work of Steppenwolf for Young Adults, which engages 15,000 participants annually from Chicago's diverse communities; the esteemed School at Steppenwolf; and Professional Leadership Programs for arts administration training. While firmly grounded in the Chicago community, nearly 40 original Steppenwolf productions have enjoyed success both nationally and internationally, including Broadway, Off-Broadway, London, Sydney, Galway and Dublin. Anna D. Shapiro is the Artistic Director and David Schmitz is the Executive Director. Eric Lefkofsky is Chair of Steppenwolf's Board of Trustees. For additional information, visit [steppenwolf.org](http://steppenwolf.org), [facebook.com/steppenwolftheatre](https://facebook.com/steppenwolftheatre), [twitter.com/steppenwolfthr](https://twitter.com/steppenwolfthr) and [instagram.com/steppenwolfthr](https://instagram.com/steppenwolfthr).

# # #