

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 Theatre Company Jumps Right Into the 44th Season with

The Great Leap

By Lauren Yee

Directed by Jesca Prudencio

September 5 – October 20, 2019

A Gripping Story Exploring Cultural Barriers and Political Risks



CHICAGO (July 30, 2019) – Steppenwolf Theatre Company’s 2019/20 season of complex, beautiful and maddening theater kicks off with a thrilling Chicago premiere by in-demand playwright, **Lauren Yee**, directed by **Jesca Prudencio**. Set in 1989, ***The Great Leap*** tells the story of Manford Lum, a local star of the sidewalk basketball courts of San Francisco’s Chinatown who talks his way onto an American college team travelling to Beijing for a “friendship” game. Set amidst the friction of the post-Cultural Revolution era, ***The Great Leap*** keeps tensions high right up to the final buzzer.

Previews begin September 5, 2019 (opening is Monday, September 16) and runs through October 20, 2019 in the Upstairs Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted St. Press performances are Sunday, September 15 at 3pm and Wednesday, September 18 at 7:30pm. **Single tickets (\$20 - \$89) are on sale now through Audience Services at 312-335-1650 or steppenwolf.org. Classic and Flex Memberships are currently available for the 2019/20 Season.** To purchase a Membership and secure the best seats at the lowest prices, contact Audience Services at 312-335-1650 or steppenwolf.org/memberships.

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.

“Growing up, my father dominated the basketball courts of San Francisco’s Chinatown, and in the 1980s, his legendary game won him a spot on a friendship team headed to a newly open China to play a series of exhibition games against the best teams in the People’s

Republic. That nugget of his history formed the inspiration for my play *The Great Leap* nearly 40 years later,” shared **Lauren Yee**.

“I’m thrilled to be back in Chicago, which has become the most warm and welcoming artistic home imaginable, and with director Jesca Prudencio, who is a bold, gutsy new visionary I think Chicago will fall in love with.”

Director **Jesca Prudencio** adds, “Lauren’s thrilling language in *The Great Leap* is fast-paced, high-stakes, and full of energy, just like a basketball game. **In our production, we will create an experience that is not only theatrical, but athletic in every aspect.**”

Meet the Cast



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

Glenn Obrero has played street basketball his whole life priming him for his Steppenwolf debut as Manford Lum in *The Great Leap*. Obrero’s recent theater credits include the national tour of *In To America* (Griffin Theatre); *Scientific Method* (Rivendell Theatre); and *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* (Lookingglass Theatre), as well as NBC’s *Chicago Fire*. *The Great Leap* marks **Keith Kupferer**’s fifth production with Steppenwolf (*The Qualms*, *Good People*, *Carter’s Way*, *Of Mice and Men*); in addition to his many Chicago credits including *Support Group for Men*, *God of Carnage* and *Passion Play* (Goodman Theatre) and dozens of plays with Rivendell, where he is an ensemble member. **Deanna Myers** is a company member with Barrel of Monkeys and her numerous Chicago credits include *White Snake* (u/s) and The New Stages Production of *King of the Yees* (Goodman Theatre); *You on the Moors Now* (The Hypocrites); *Two Mile Hollow* (First Floor Theatre); and *The Scene* and *Smart People* (Writers Theatre). **James Seol** makes his Steppenwolf debut with credits from across the US including Broadway’s *A Naked Girl on the Appian Way* (Roundabout Theatre Company); Off-Broadway: *[Veil Widow Conspiracy]*, *Henry VI* (NAATCO); *KPOP* (Lucille Lortel Nomination; Ars Nova/Ma-Yi/Woodshed Collective); Small Mouth Sounds (Ars Nova); Regional: *Vietgone*, *The Orphan of Zhao* (American Conservatory Theatre); *The Four Immigrants*, *Tokyo Fish Story* (TheatreWorks Silicon Valley); and *Zombie: the American* (Woolly Mammoth).

About the Playwright



Lauren Yee's *Cambodian Rock Band*, with music by Dengue Fever, recently played to critical acclaim at Victory Gardens Theatre following productions at South Coast Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, City Theatre, Merrimack Rep, Signature Theatre, Portland Center Stage, and Jungle Theatre. *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 upcoming 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) and *Soundtrack* (Netflix). Current commissions include Geffen Playhouse, La Jolla Playhouse, Portland Center Stage, Second Stage, South Coast Rep. BA: Yale. MFA: UCSD. laurenyee.com

About the Director



Jesca Prudencio is a theater director focused on creating highly physical work at theaters across the U.S. and internationally. Her critically acclaimed productions of Qui Nguyen's *Vietgone* and Anna Ziegler's *Actually* at San Diego Repertory Theatre received numerous Craig Noel nominations including Outstanding Director. Selected credits include Anna Moench's *Man of God* (East West Players), Will Snider's *How To Use a Knife* (Mixed Blood), Ben Fisher's *Mobile Happiness Bazaar* (La Jolla Playhouse's Wow Festival), *Calling* (Ping Chong + Company), and *FAN: stories from the brothels of Bangkok* (Thailand). She is a recipient of The Drama League Fellowship, and the inaugural Julie Taymor World Theater Fellowship. Jesca is Artistic Director/Founder of People Of Interest, which is dedicated to creating documentary dance theater works. She is currently Head of Directing at San Diego State University. BFA: NYU Tisch, MFA: UCSD. jescaprudencio.com

The Great Leap production team includes **Justin Humphres** (Scenic Design), **Jenny Mannis** (Costume Design), **Keith Parham** (Lighting Design), **Nok Kanchanabanca** (Sound Design and Original Music), **Rasean Davonte Johnson** (Projection Design) and **Gigi Buffington** (Company Voice and Text Coach). Additional credits include **Christine D. Freeburg** (Stage Manager), **Kat Barrett** (Assistant Stage Manager), **JC Clementz** (Casting Director and Artistic Producer).

Tickets and Memberships

Preview tickets for *The Great Leap* (September 5 – 15) range from \$20 – \$76. The show opens Monday, September 16 at 7pm and single tickets for the regular run (September 18 – October 20) range from \$20 - \$89.

Steppenwolf offers **20 for \$20** – twenty \$20 tickets available on the day of the performance beginning at 11am (Mon – Sat) and 1pm (Sun), by phone only at 312-335-1650. Limit 2 per person. **Half-price rush tickets** are available one hour before each show. There are a limited number of \$15 student tickets available online for each show, steppenwolf.org/students. All groups of 10 or more receive a discounted rate; steppenwolf.org/groups.

While single ticket prices are subject to change, audiences can secure set ticket prices and seats at lower rates with Classic and Flexible Memberships.

Classic Memberships start as low as \$100 and can save audiences up to 60% off single ticket purchases. 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 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.

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. Under 30? Join Steppenwolf **RED** for only \$100 and enjoy the same six flexible ticket credits (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, contact Audience Services at 312-335-1650 or visit \[steppenwolf.org/memberships\]\(http://steppenwolf.org/memberships\).](#)

Plan Your Visit

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.

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.

Accessible Performances:

American Sign Language Interpretation: Sunday, September 29 at 7:30pm

Open Captioning: Thursday, September 26 at 7:30pm and Saturday, October 19 at 3:00pm

Audio Description and Touch Tour: Sunday, October 13 at 3:00pm (1:30pm Touch Tour, 3:00pm Curtain)

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.frontbar.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.

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 *MS. BLAKK FOR PRESIDENT*—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 Lefkowsky is Chair of Steppenwolf's Board of Trustees.

Steppenwolf's Mission: Steppenwolf strives to create thrilling, courageous and provocative art in a thoughtful and inclusive environment. We succeed when we disrupt your routine with experiences that spark curiosity, empathy and joy. We invite you to join our ensemble as we navigate, together, our complex world.

For additional information, visit steppenwolf.org, facebook.com/steppenwolftheatre, twitter.com/steppenwolfthr and instagram.com/steppenwolfthr.

###