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TOWN HALL THEATRE ANNOUNCES

THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE

AUGUST 16, 2017 – Town Hall Theatre “Generations” Season 2017-2018 kicks off this fall with ***THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE - A Musical Fairy Tale***, with book, music and lyrics by award-winning Bay Area playwright Min Kahng. Based upon the Hans Christian Andersen fairy-tale, ***THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE*** is an enchanting, pop musical romp for the whole family that reminds us that true beauty and worth is always found within.

THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE will have 12 performances, including two previews, September 28 through October 21, 2017, at Town Hall Theatre Company, 3535 School Street, in Lafayette, CA. Tickets are \$18 - \$30, and are available through the Box Office at (925) 283-1557 or online at www.TownHallTheatre.com. THT will host two Special Events for ***THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE***: *Opening Night*, on Saturday, September 30, 2017; and LIT UP, a literary salon, on Wednesday, October 4, 2017.

THT’s production of ***THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE*** is directed and choreographed by Michael Mohammed, with music direction by Margaret Halbig, and features an impressive ensemble of local performers: Isabel To as Mei Lin, DC Scarpelli as the Emperor, Pauli Amornkul as the Nightingale, Lisa Woo as Madame Wu, Matt Ono as Xiao Hai, Ted V. Bigornia as Bing Wen, Christopher Juan as Fake Nightingale/Ensemble, Kenneth Greenwell as Tai Yun, Miyoko Sakatani as Head Fisherwoman/Ensemble, Chelsea Wellott as

Messenger/Ensemble, MinSeob Yeom as Death/Ensemble, Benjamin Nguyen as Head Chef/Ensemble, and Ji-Yun Kim as Peasant/Ensemble.

THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE is set in an ancient Chinese empire, where an ambitious kitchen maid hoping to better her station in life captures the beautifully singing Nightingale. She presents the bird to the Emperor who is enchanted by its magical song of hope, and is promoted to the court, leaving behind the man who loves her deeply. But the Emperor is soon dazzled and distracted by a new toy, a golden bejeweled Fake Nightingale, and the plain little brown bird is neglected and forgotten. It's always a mistake to judge by outer appearances alone, and the Emperor and others must learn to look within to find the truth, to grow and become better people.

“... an exquisite musical stage version of Hans Christian Andersen's story ... do go to see this enchanting “Song of the Nightingale.” - *Contra Costa Times*

When asked about the inspiration for the musical, playwright/composer Min Kahng responded, “The story of *The Nightingale* has a special place in my heart. When I was in the 3rd grade, I performed in a children's play adaptation of the fairy tale, and the story stuck with me ever since. I also long to expand the roles available to Asian American actors in musical theatre. Andersen's setting of a mythical China provides a choice opportunity to do just that.”

The music of ***THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE*** echoes such beloved “Disney Renaissance” films as *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Throughout the score, you may also hear references or homages to composers Rodgers & Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim, and Alan Menken, giants of American musical theatre who influenced the playwright/composer. Kahng dreamed initially of adapting Andersen's *The Nightingale* into an animated film and when

he decided to turn his piece into a musical, the Disney-esque storytelling quality stuck with him.

THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE had its world premiere at Alameda's Altarena Playhouse in 2013, and the musical is now newly reworked by the playwright especially for the Town Hall Theatre stage, making the story more succinct and focused. Kahng says, "This second production has provided me a rare opportunity to revise my work and see it on its feet in its new form. I'm so grateful to Town Hall Theatre for this chance to let *The Song of the Nightingale* take wing again!"

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT/COMPOSER

Min Kahng (Book, Music & Lyrics) is a Bay Area playwright and composer whose world premiere works include *The Four Immigrants: An American Musical Manga* (TheatreWorks); and *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, *Bad Kitty On Stage!*, and *Tales of Olympus* (Bay Area Children's Theatre). Kahng also wrote the NEA-funded project *Story Explorers*, an original musical for young audiences with autism. He received the 2014 Titan Award for Playwrights and was recognized in *American Theatre* magazine as one of "9 Musical Theatre Writers You Should Know." Kahng is a Resident Playwright at Playwrights Foundation and a proud member of the Dramatists Guild. www.minkahng.com

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR/CHOREOGRAPHER

Michael Mohammed's directing highlights include *Pippi Longstocking* (Bay Area Children's Theatre), *The Unsung Diva* (New York Fringe Festival), *Candide*, (Douglas Morrison Theatre), *The Full Monty* (MFA program, American Conservatory Theater), and *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (Oakland Opera Theater). He is currently the Director of the Musical Theatre Ensemble at the San

Francisco Conservatory of Music and on the opera faculty. SFCM productions include *Side by Side by Sondheim*, *A New Brain*, *As Thousands Cheer*, *Bernarda Alba*, *The World Goes 'Round*, and *La Bohème*. He is also an Artist-in-Residence with the Theatre Department at the Ruth Asawa School of the Arts. Michael's research is based on finding the intersections between opera and musical theatre and the role of inclusivity in performance practice.

www.michaelmohammed.net

ABOUT THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

Margaret Halbig is on the accompanying and vocal coaching staff at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and also coaches at the Chamber Music Silicon Valley Young Artists and the Bay Area Vocal Academy. She has served as pianist for the Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco since 2014. An advocate of new and contemporary music, Margaret has been the pianist for *Wild Rumpus New Music Collective* since its inception in 2011, and is also a member of the wind and piano chamber ensemble *Frequency 49*. For THT, Margaret was Music Director for Stephen Sondheim's *Company* (2014) and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (2015), and the Music Director for Town Hall Education's High School musicals for over six years (*Urinetown*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*, among others).

ABOUT TOWN HALL THEATRE COMPANY

Established in 1944 as the Dramateurs, Town Hall Theatre turned 73 this year, making it the oldest continuously active theatre in Contra Costa County. Town Hall Theatre was awarded Best Theatre Troupe 2016 in *Diablo Magazines*, *Best of The East Bay*, and is the past recipient of numerous Shellie Awards, and four regional 2016 Theatre Bay Area Awards. THT is also home to an extensive children's educational program, twice voted the "Best Children's Theatre

Company" by *Bay Area Parent Magazine*. THT's 102-year old historical building is managed by the Lafayette Association (LIA).

Town Hall Theatre Company, 3535 School Street, in Lafayette, CA 94549. The Box Office is open Tuesday through Friday, 4:00 to 6:00PM and Saturday 2:00-4:00 pm and can be reached at 925.283.1557. Information is also available at www.TownHallTheatre.com.

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CALENDAR Information on *THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE: A MUSICAL FAIRY TALE*:

WHO: TOWN HALL THEATRE COMPANY presents

WHAT: *THE SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE: A MUSICAL FAIRY TALE*, a new pop musical based on the Hans Christian Andersen fairy-tale, with book, music & lyrics by Min Kahng; directed and choreographed by Michael Mohammed with music direction by Margaret Halbig.

CAST: Pauli Amornkul, Ted V. Bigornia, Kenneth Greenwell, Christopher Juan, Ji-Yun Kim, Benjamin Nguyen, Matt Ono, Miyoko Sakatani, DC Scarpelli, Isabel To, Chelsea Wellott, Lisa Woo, and MinSeob Yeom.

DATES: September 28 & 29, 2017

Thursday, September 28, 2017, Preview @ 8:00 p.m.

Friday, September 29, 2017, Preview @ 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 30, 2017: OPENING RECEPTION

THROUGH October 21, 2017

SHOWTIMES: Sept 28 – Oct 21, 2017

Thursday Sept 28 (preview) and Friday Sept. 29 (preview) @ 8:00 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays @ 8:00 PM

Sunday, Oct 8 and Oct 15 @ 2:00 PM

CLOSES: October 21

WHERE: Town Hall Theatre Company, 3535 School Street, Lafayette, CA
94549

SPECIAL EVENTS:

September 30, 2017: *Opening Night*

October 4, 2017: LIT UP, a Literary Salon, 7:00-8:30pm

October 6, 2017: **Theatre Club** 8:00pm Post-Show Talk-Back

October 20, 2017: **Theatre Club** 8:00pm Post-Show Talk-Back

TICKETS: \$18 Previews

\$27-30 Thurs. eve., Fri. eve., Sat. eve

\$25-27 Sun. matinee

Discounts available for Seniors and youth

BOX OFFICE: (925) 283-1557; www.townhalltheatre.com

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