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TOWN HALL THEATRE ANNOUNCES FOURTH IN THEIR “NEW VOICES” SERIES- “THE BODY PLAY” BY MADISON WETZELL

SEPTEMBER 06, 2022 – Playwright Madison Wetzell’s piece, **“The Body Play”** will be brought to the stage by Director Lisa Anne Morrison. This lightly produced, two-weekend performance model will be the fourth in Town Hall’s **New Voices** series. New Voices will produce two brand new, never produced-on-stage plays by playwrights living in the nine Bay Area counties. New Voices will heavily feature plays written by traditionally under-represented and under-produced artists.

Something's very wrong with Amy's body. Her detached, neurotic mind, submits this chaotic, screaming body to scrutiny of experts—doctors, therapists, yoga teachers—and ultimately explores what it might mean to be a body, and not just a mind that, regrettably, also has a body. An exploration of a chronic illness and the absurdity of being embodied.

“A common theme in the works we've produced at Town Hall over the last year is psychology/ mental health intersecting with some other aspect of theatrical representation.” explains Curator of Artistic Programming, **Daniel J Eslick**. “What amazes me about the *The Body Play* is how Madison Wetzell has created an intersection between feminism, mental health, and physical health and how hilarious, and absurd it all can be. *The Body Play* centers specifically around the struggle women have to live with to get the healthcare they need, a topic that is all too relevant in this country. The constant struggle of women's bodies vs. a world that doesn't respect them. It is lovely that Madison's piece acts as a bridge between our last few shows and this new season.”

“Having a body is really fraught, even under ideal conditions. During the pandemic, as we were all forced to confront the reality of disease, I felt, bizarrely, that the whole world had been brought into a private reckoning I was having with the fragility of my own body.” shared playwright **Madison Wetzell**. “I wrote this play to explore my own maddening journey with what I've been calling the “vague women's diseases,” the cluster of invisible, under-researched, hard to diagnose, and therefore largely ignored illnesses that affect mostly people assigned female at birth.

In her essay "On Being Ill," Virginia Woolf writes, "Considering how common illness is, how tremendous the spiritual change that it brings, how astonishing, when the lights of health go down, the undiscovered countries that are then disclosed...it becomes strange indeed that illness has not taken its place with love, battle, and jealousy among the prime themes of literature." If there's something positive I can wrest from the experience of being chronically ill, it's that it brings you face-to-face with your embodied self—who it turns out is a stubborn, exasperating, funny, tender little creature at the heart of who you are."

"I think we all feel a separation between our minds and our bodies at certain times in our lives." shares director **Lisa Anne Morrison**. "Amy's journey to figure out what is wrong with her body is a story I related to as soon as I read Madison's funny, absurd and very touching play. Amy goes to doctor after doctor and on to a healer, acupuncturist, yoga teacher and so on searching for an answer to why she feels awful all the time. Along the way, with the support of her loving girlfriend, Gianna, she figures out what it is that is keeping her from feeling whole. "The Body Play" speaks to so much of what we go through as humans struggling with what it means to have a "healthy" mind and body that can co-exist as one."

The New Voices series is a first for Town Hall Theatre. The series was created to give a wider-array of playwrights a chance to expose new and in-process works to an audience that may not otherwise be exposed to their stories. Productions in the series will include a facilitated talkback at each performance allowing the playwrights the chance to receive feedback from audiences in a constructive manner, while also giving audiences an insight into the theatre maker's process.

The third season of the New Voices series is in the works, and we are accepting new submissions through Oct 15th 2022.

"The Body Play" will perform on October 7th, 8th, 14th & 15th. Tickets are \$25 and the October 15th performance will be Pay-What-You-Can. Tickets and information can be found at TownHallTheatre.com/single-tickets.

COVID PRECAUTIONS

Town Hall Theatre Staff and Board are currently updating our COVID 19 Policy, please check back on our website at a later date.

CONTENT ADVISORY FOR THIS PRODUCTION

"The Body Play" contains adult language and themes.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Madison Wetzell (She/They) is currently pursuing her playwriting MFA at Brooklyn College, having previously lived and worked in the Bay Area. Her full-length work includes *Mediocre Heterosexual Sex* (Z-Space's Problematic Play Festival; Finalist, Bay Area Playwrights Festival; Semi-Finalist, O'Neill Theatre Center National Playwrights Conference), *The Lost Ballad of Our Mechanical Ancestor* (Shotgun Players' Champagne Reading Series; Winner, Risk Theater Modern Tragedy Competition) and *The Body Play* (LezWritesBTQ, 3Girls Theatre). Her short play, *The Official Unicorn Hunters' Guide*, was the winner of ShortLived VIII at PianoFight. She has developed new work with 3Girls Theatre, Playground SF, Shotgun Players, FaultLine Theater, Soundwave, The Bechdel Group, and The Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Lisa Anne Morrison (she, her) is a CalArts graduate who made her way back home to the Bay Area after working professionally in Los Angeles for many years. She appeared in T.V., Commercials, Film, Theatre, and traveled internationally with her long form Improv group, "Those Meddling Kids". She was a long-time member (actor, director, producer) of Theatre of NOTE in Los Angeles which is known for producing only New Works. Lisa has performed at Cal Shakes, TheatreWorks, Magic Theatre, Z Space, A Noise Within, Odyssey Theatre, Laguna Playhouse and more. She was recently seen on television in Netflix' "13 Reasons Why." Lisa is a teaching artist and producer/director (New Voices) here at Town Hall. She is also a contributing member of CoachArt, a non-profit that pairs artists and athletes with chronically ill children and directed the Bay Area edition of the annual Coach Art Fundraising Gala.

ABOUT THE NEW VOICES SERIES

In an effort to use Town Hall's platform to raise up local artists, they have created the New Voices series starting in the 2021-2022 season. This is a series of small-scale productions that feature local playwrights whose unproduced work is still in the final steps of the workshopping phase. This offers playwrights the chance to get structured audience feedback and hear their work aloud. For Town Hall's audiences it's a chance to be exposed to new local artists. The primary focus of this program is to benefit local playwrights, especially those who belong to traditionally under-represented and under-produced groups.

ABOUT TOWN HALL THEATRE

Established in 1944 as the Dramateurs, Town Hall Theatre Company is the oldest continuously active theatre in Contra Costa County. Town Hall Theatre (THT) was awarded Best Theatre Troupe 2016 by Diablo Magazine, Best of The East Bay, and is the past recipient of numerous Shellie Awards, and 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 home is the historic Town Hall Theatre building located at 3535 School Street in Lafayette which is owned by the Lafayette Improvement Association (LIA).

CALENDAR Information for "The Body Play"

WHO: Town Hall Theatre Company

WHAT: "The Body Play"

Written by Madison Wetzell

Directed by Lisa Anne Morrison

CAST: Alyxaundrea Munson, Sierra Camille and Maeron Yeshiwas.

DATES: October 7th, 8th, 14th & 15th at 8PM

WHERE: Town Hall Theatre

TICKETS: \$25. October 15th is a Pay-What-You-Can performance

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