

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2021

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Kathryn Kersey, Board Chair

Kevin Nelson, Managing Director

MAGIC THEATRE ANNOUNCES SEAN SAN JOSÉ AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (April 22, 2021) - Magic Theatre (Kathryn Kersey, Board Chair and Kevin Nelson, Managing Director) is thrilled to announce that Sean San José will be the company's next Artistic Director, succeeding Loretta Greco in the post. San José will begin working with Magic Theatre in June 2021 on a part-time basis, transitioning to full-time in August 2021.

"Magic was the first theatre where I saw a play - changing my life, feeling the power of what theatre could possess," said Sean San José. "It was the theatre where I got my Actor's Equity card as a performer, cast by the late Barbie Stein, giving me a profession and union; it was where I studied, as part of an unofficial company, performing for 5 seasons; it was where I gained inspirations and ambitions to reach beyond expectations and the scope of productions, where I was affirmed of long term commitments, in the way I was able to witness and be part of watching Loretta Greco artistically produce. It will be a true honor to be able to extend this trajectory, and more so, to deepen the amazing impact and inspiration Magic Theatre has made."

"I don't believe there is anyone so naturally suited to lead Magic, a theatre so richly defined by the spirit of San Francisco, than the absolutely sublime Sean San José," said Loretta Greco, Magic Theatre's Artistic Director from 2008-2020. "I am thrilled for my dear friend (and for Magic!) and look forward to experiencing how Sean's incomparable vision, artistry and love of this community meets this particular moment in time—to manifest a brand new, impactful, and exhilarating chapter for Magic!"

On behalf of Magic's Board, Chair Kathryn Kersey writes, "We are delighted to welcome Sean San José as our new Artistic Director. We were impressed with his track record and commitment to directing and producing bold new plays consistently over a decades-long career. His work is diverse and inclusive and Sean represents a voice that is modern, relevant and refreshing. What we also value in Sean is his ability to build local community which is foundational for theater. We are confident that Sean will shepherd us into a new era of theater and continue the Magic Theatre mission locally, nationally and internationally."

"I can barely contain my excitement and how absolutely delighted I am to begin working with Sean," says Kevin Nelson, Managing Director. "His voracious support of and leadership among Bay Area artists, longstanding history with Magic and incomparable work make him a natural and wonderful fit to chart the next path in Magic's 54 year journey."

As the new Artistic Director of Magic Theatre, San José carries the legacy and lessons from his former mentors and previous Magic Artistic Directors in Mame Hunt and Loretta Greco. Sean San José will continue as Program Director for Campo Santo, the new performances group for People of Color he is an integral part of. Along with Campo Santo Producing Director Joan Osato, he will continue to help produce and develop new works for Campo Santo, including co-productions with and at Magic Theatre. Campo Santo will also begin a residency at Magic as part of a vision for opening up Magic to more people: artists, communities, companies, disciplines with massive diversity as the direction forward.

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While maintaining Magic's historic legacy with new plays and playwrights, Magic will look to expand in many ways, creating a more open and truly reflective home for folk in the Bay. Invoking Campo Santo's POC centered culture, creativity, and collaborations, this new chapter in Magic's bold and beautiful history will reach out to reclaim; and will lead into a new era of possibilities.

Magic already has a calendar full of exciting commitments and will reopen with the most exciting of projects, beginning this new era and season with Taylor Mac's new play, *Joy and Pandemic* directed by Loretta Greco.

The season will continue to evolve as the world settles into its new reality. Under Sean San José's artistic direction Magic, will sustain its national reputation working with and producing artists from recent Magic history such as Taylor Mac, Luis Alfaro, Jessica Hagedorn, Richard Montoya and Roger Guenveur Smith, as well as artists new to Magic including multi-visionary Colman Domingo; Campo Santo/Crowded Fire Theatre Mellon Playwright in Residence Star Finch; director Ellen Sebastian Chang; composer Marc Anthony Thompson; writer Britney Frazier; and writer A.M. Smiley. The future will also include inviting more music, dance, film and interdisciplinary works to share space at Magic, to create an evolving forum for our peoples.

San José has upcoming seasons already envisioned and soon to be shared. Magic Theatre will soon be open and filled with new works, new communities and new disciplines, reflecting the world we live in.

ABOUT SEAN SAN JOSÉ

Sean San José is a Bay Area theatre maker, performer, director, and producer, making change and amplifying theatrical innovation for the last 25 years. His long history with Magic is fundamentally tied to his history with theatre writ large. San José got his Actors Equity card after being cast by the late Barbie Stein in Erin Cressida Wilson's *Soiled Eyes of a Ghost* in 1990. Over the years, Sean has had the honor of working at Magic under Mame Hunt's leadership and more recently under Loretta Greco's direction in new works by Luis Alfaro, Jessica Hagedorn, Octavio Solis, and many more.

Along with Margo Hall, the late and even greater Luis Saguar, and Michael Torres, San José helped co-found Campo Santo in 1996. As Program Director of Campo Santo, San José has helped develop, produce, and premiere nearly 100 new works for and by People of Color since 1996. One of these works, *Nogales*, by Richard Montoya was a co-production and collaboration with Magic Theatre, launching Magic's 50th Anniversary Season in 2016.

Sean San José sat on the Theatre Communications Group board of directors, was a member of the Zellerbach Family Foundation review panel, and currently teaches as a guest lecturer and guest director at University of California Berkeley. He is a recipient of multiple MAP fund awards, and was commissioned in the inaugural round of writers for Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Play On! to create a translation of William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. This June, Sean is excited to begin his post as Magic Theatre's new Artistic Director.

INDUSTRY REACTIONS TO SEAN SAN JOSÉ'S APPOINTMENT

"I am overjoyed for Magic Theatre, and for all of San Francisco, that Sean San José has been chosen as the new Artistic Director. Sean is one of those magical artists that can do it all: writing, directing, acting, producing, and community building. Best of all, he approaches the work with joy, with humility, with humor and with endless curiosity. My collaborations with Sean have always been filled with laughter and learning, as he has helped to open my eyes to new worlds and new ways of seeing and

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thinking. His leadership will mark a major new chapter in the creative life of Magic, and I look forward to it with great anticipation.”

- Carey Perloff, former Artistic Director of American Conservatory Theater

“What a way to come back into the American Theater! I know Sean San José to be a true visionary and thoughtful, loving, and kind leader. He has blossomed into a true community builder whose heart pumps with the joy of creating vital art that reflects the times. His homegrown roots in the Bay mixed with his connectivity to the world at large thrills me about how he will champion the Magic Theater into this new auspicious future of the American Theater.”

- Colman Domingo, Tony Award-nominated actor, writer, director, producer.

“Sean San José's extraordinary artistic vision has shaped the Bay Area cultural scene for decades. He is a legend! I've been grateful to be in his cosmic sphere as Star Finch, Campo Santo, and Crowded Fire look to manifest new futures as part of the Mellon Foundation Playwright in Residence Program. His community legacy matched with the powerful new play development history, tremendous staff, and overall resources at Magic Theatre will impact what theater-making is in our region for years to come—and I am here for it all!”

- Mina Morita, Artistic Director of Crowded Fire Theatre Company

“Sean San José has been an agent of change in the Bay Area Theater community for his entire career, which makes him the absolute best choice to lead Magic Theatre at this critical time in history. From the time we put down roots together in the sacred ground of Campo Santo, Sean has always nurtured a passion for new work—work that has always uplifted the voices of those who have been historically silenced. I have had the pleasure of witnessing his tenacity and commitment to pushing the boundaries of what theater can be for over twenty years; I cannot wait to see him continue to redefine what we can expect out of theater in the Bay Area at the helm of Magic.”

- Margo Hall, Artistic Director of Lorraine Hansberry Theatre

“Sean San José. Actor. Writer. Producer. Generator and Cultivator of Stories. Sean has been preparing for this moment all his life. He is the historical lived roots of San Francisco. Sean is the magic of theater in this uncertain epoch. He moves with the velocity of imagination that is needed to direct, curate, produce, and lead Magic towards an integrated, intergenerational, collaborative space. He brings an integrity that is needed to sustain what was built materially and to change what is no longer culturally relevant or honest. It is with great excitement that I applaud the wisdom and hope this appointment of Sean San José as Magic's next Artistic Director brings.”

- Ellen Sebastian Chang (she/her), Director/Writer/Arts Educator

“Sean San José's roots run deep in San Francisco's theater scene and most importantly in the organic community he's built around it. What a joyous opportunity it will be to witness him plug that consciousness into Magic Theatre's nationally celebrated legacy. Sean San José's support of emerging talent and his impulse to give POC creatives their first official gigs as actors, playwrights, stage managers, or sound designers is unmatched. I'm on a long list of Bay Area artists who got their first (much needed) break with Campo Santo. What a gift it has been to expand our creative collaborations into a place of genuine friendship. The pairing of Sean San José and Magic Theatre is a lightning strike of San Francisco spirit! With the decades of theater experience held between them, the fruits of this union possess the potential to nourish new ways of engaging with creatives, audiences and the art form itself for generations to come.”

- Star Finch, Playwright

“This is a seismic shift in Bay Area Theater and indeed the country, our Teatro Ancestors rejoice in the House of Shepard no less!”

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- Richard Montoya, Playwright

“At a time when most regional theatres look outside their regions for new leadership, Magic Theatre, a Bay Area institution built on the hopes, dreams and efforts of its artists and audiences, looks to continue to build its legacy and vision, especially in these daunting times, with the hiring of its native son, Sean San José, an artist of great vision, resilience and commitment to the San Francisco experience. Sean San José is the region's treasure, and I am confident that he will look locally and nationally to move the legacy of this storied institution into its next expression.”

- Luis Alfaro, Playwright

“Working with Sean has been a source of delight and inspiration since we first collaborated in 1999. His groundbreaking work with Campo Santo, his deep commitment to building and serving a community of artists, and his vision for the role that theater can play in our lives at this particular moment make him a perfect match for Magic. I can't wait to hear more about his plans for the theater that has been central in the lives of so many extraordinary artists, and to be introduced to a new group of storytellers that will now find a home at Magic.”

- Johanna Pfaelzer, Artistic Director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre

“Sean is the fiercest truth-teller that I know. He will tell tough stories with compassion. We say we're ready to handle the truth now. Sean's Magic will show us how.”

- Lue Douthit, CEO / Creative Director at Play On Shakespeare; Producer, Dramaturg

“There are so many great and potent works that could only be executed due to the hard work and vision of Sean San José, and I and all the Campo Santo Familia are thrilled to see him take this next step in his journey. Sean is always so committed to any project from the start and we look forward to his impressive cultivation of playwrights, company, and community - and his provocative and spontaneous art.”

- Joan Osato, Producer, Producing Director at Campo Santo, Video / Film Designer

“Sean San José is a Bay Area treasure. He's a brilliant and beloved theatre artist who wears many hats—actor, producer, director, teacher, dramaturg, and playwright. Bold ideas, new artists, and new audiences are only some of the things Sean can bring to Magic Theatre, as we all move forward in 2021. Mabuhay, Sean! Mabuhay, Magic!”

- Jessica Hagedorn, Playwright

ABOUT MAGIC THEATRE

Magic Theatre's first in-person production following the COVID-19 shutdown will be Taylor Mac's *JOY AND PANDEMIC*, directed by Loretta Greco. *JOY AND PANDEMIC* will perform in the fall of 2021 at Magic Theatre's Fort Mason location. Due to the uncertainty of the pandemic, exact dates will be announced at a later time.

Magic Theatre's full 2021-2022 season will be announced in the coming months. Productions that were in development prior the 2020 shutdown are still expected to be produced. Tickets will become available at a later date. All 2020-2021 season subscriptions will be honored. Additional information is available at [MagicTheatre.org](https://www.magictheatre.org).

Magic Theatre is located in the Marina District of San Francisco, at the historic Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture (Fort Mason, 2 Marina Blvd., Building D, 3rd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94123). The entrance to Fort Mason is at the intersection of Marina Blvd and Buchanan Street.

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For any inquiries or additional information, please contact the Box Office at boxoffice@magictheatre.org or by calling (415) 441-8822; For more information, visit MagicTheatre.org.

Magic Theatre is dedicated to the cultivation of bold new plays, playwrights, and audiences—and to producing explosive, entertaining, and ideologically-robust plays that ask substantive questions about, and reflect the rich diversity of, the world in which we live. For 54 years, Magic's belief in supporting the writer's vision has manifested in a rigorous artistic home where a full body of work can be imagined, developed, and produced. By adding innovative, challenging new voices to the canon, Magic ensures the future vibrancy of the American theatre.

Since the company's founding in 1967 by visionary John Lion, Magic has identified and cultivated writers on the cutting edge of American theatre, serving as a vital center for the creation and performance of new American plays. The hiring of scholar Martin Esslin as the first resident dramaturg at an American theatre company had a resounding impact on the field. Beat poet-playwright Michael McClure created 22 works for Magic. Sam Shepard developed and premiered his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Buried Child*, *True West*, and *Fool for Love* during his decade-long Magic residency (1974-84), forever altering the shape of American drama. Paula Vogel, *Soon 3*, Athol Fugard, Mark O'Rowe, Nilo Cruz, Octavio Solis, Claire Chafee, Jon Robin Baitz, Anne Bogart, Stephen Belber, Basil Twist, Rebecca Gilman, and many others also called Magic home through the 1990s and 2000s.

Since 2008, 21 of Magic's 26 most recent world premieres have received between 2 and 72 subsequent productions throughout the United States and beyond—in Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Ashland, Seattle, Portland, Tucson, Minneapolis, Williamstown, Nashville, Boulder, and San Diego as well as Winnipeg, Vancouver, Edmonton, London, and Sydney, and in translation in Seoul and Manila. In New York City alone, Magic premieres from the past decade have gone to The New Group, The Vineyard, Ma-Yi, INTAR, The Play Company, Playwrights Horizons, and The Public Theater.

Magic remains a national leader in new play development through their commitment to a core group of writers as they build their groundbreaking bodies of work. These writers currently include Lloyd Suh, Taylor Mac, Linda McLean, Jessica Hagedorn, John Kolvenbach, Sharr White, Christina Anderson, Joshua Harmon, Mfoniso Udofia, Barbara Hammond, and Luis Alfaro.

Magic plays have received numerous honors, including the Pulitzer Prize, Obie Awards, Kennedy Center Awards, PEN-West Awards for Drama, Glickman Awards, Bay Area Critics Circle Awards, Los Angeles Drama-Logue Awards, and NAACP Image Awards. Magic playwrights have gone on to be recognized with MacArthur Genius Grants, Tony Awards, Outer Critics Circle Awards, the Herb Alpert Award, Drama Desk Awards, Harper Lee Awards, Academy Awards, New York Drama Critics Circle Awards, Drama League Awards, Guggenheim Fellowships, Rockefeller Grants, NEA Grants, and Alfred Jarry Awards.

Beyond the walls of our San Francisco performance space, Magic conducts a robust educational program, Making Magic: Arts and Community. A cornerstone of the program is Magic's more-than-decade-long partnership with Oakland's Laney College, which establishes a bridge between the college theater curriculum and professional theater practice: Laney students attend designer presentations, rehearsals, and performances at Magic, and Magic playwrights and directors visit Laney classrooms to discuss play content and production. Each Magic production is presented at a free matinee performance at Laney that is open to the community. Since 2018, Making Magic has also worked in partnership with Tenderloin Elementary School, Southeast Asian Development Center, Code Tenderloin, Antonia Manor, and Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation, extending the program's reach to engage community members of all ages with curriculum that centers around mindfulness, self-esteem, legacy, literacy, writing, and performance.

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