



For Immediate Release

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Inclusion Media Group and seven Southern California theatres announce the 2020 “Raise Your Voice” Playwright Competition

Inclusion Media Group, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to creating, supporting and amplifying works supporting diversity and inclusion across all media, will partner with seven Southern California theatre organizations for the 2020 “Raise Your Voice” Playwright Competition.

The participating theatres, which are **3-D Theatricals**, **5-Star Theatricals**, **High Street Arts Center**, **McCoy Rigby Entertainment**, **Musical Theatre West**, **San Diego Musical Theatre** and **Skylight Theatre Company**, will each choose a winning play or musical by diverse playwrights to receive a cash award and a reading that will utilize a diverse production team. The participating theatres will also consider the winning works for benefit performances or placement in a future season.

The works, which may tell a story that depicts an aspect of the range of experiences of and/or issues facing BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people and that feature characters of color, need to be submitted for consideration by August 7, 2020 at the following:

<https://filmfreeway.com/RaiseYourVoice-PlaywrightCompetition>.

Winners will be notified by September 25, 2020. Between September 25-October 2, each theatre will contact the winners regarding scheduling for the reading of their work.

Event organizers include **Nicole Pryor Dernersesian**, Executive Director of Inclusion Media Group; **Cindy Murray**, Executive Director, 5-Star Theatricals; **Jill Townsend**, Artistic Director, San Diego Musical Theatre; **Ken Rayzor**, Executive Director, High Street Arts Center; **Paul Garman**, Executive Director/Producer, Musical Theatre West; **T.J. Dawson**, Executive Producer/Artistic Director, 3-D Theatricals; **Tom McCoy**, Executive Producer, McCoy Rigby Entertainment; and **Gary Grossman**, Producing Artistic Director, Skylight Theatre Company.

About **Inclusion Media Group**:

We are a non-profit organization whose mission is to create, support and promote content across all media outlets that share diverse stories in order to raise awareness, promote and improve diversity and inclusion in our world. And with this increased awareness, our hope is that we can become a more inclusive society which will assist with the eradication of racism and prejudice. IMG is run by Nicole Pryor Dernersesian, known as the first African American singer to play the role she played in *The Phantom of The Opera*. www.nicolepryor.com

About **3-D Theatricals**:

3-D Theatricals has established itself with audiences and fans, far and wide, as one of Southern California's premier professional theater companies. The resident company of the state-of-the-art Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 3-D Theatricals has earned a reputation for fresh interpretations of Broadway shows featuring the highest caliber Broadway talent. The company seeks to provide Southern California with professional theater that includes Broadway Musicals, plays, readings, and new works. It is 3-D Theatricals' goal to increase arts awareness throughout the community and to nurture our youth with culture and education. The company is committed to excellence and bringing new life and demand to the arts. The company features T.J. Dawson (*Producer/Artistic Director*), Gretchen Dawson (*Co-Founder/Director of Marketing*), Daniel Dawson (*Co-Founder*), Jeanette Dawson (*Co-Founder*), Terry Hanrahan (*Production Manager*), David Jordan Nestor (*Company Manager*), Gigi Fusco Meese (*Director of Community Relations*), Amber Snead (*Casting Director*), Jim Mora (*Warehouse Manager*), Jennifer Nelson (*Patron Services/Booking and Rentals Manager*), and Grace Teddy (*Office Associate*).

About **5-Star Theatricals**:

5-Star Theatricals (formerly Cabrillo Music Theatre) is the Ovation Award-winning

resident musical theatre production company of the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza, and a non-profit theatre organization. For more than three decades, 5-Star Theatricals has been enriching the cultural life of Ventura and Los Angeles counties and the surrounding areas by providing an extraordinary performing arts experience through live, Broadway-quality productions of musical theatre. It is 5-Star Theatricals' mission to provide the highest-quality theatre experience, to foster educational opportunities, and to promote cultural and artistic enrichment to enhance the quality of life in Southern California. By creating opportunities for up-and-coming performers and artists, 5-Star Theatricals has launched hundreds to success in theatre, movies, television and music, including Adam Lambert, Katharine McPhee and Tony nominee Stephanie J. Block. In addition, 5-Star Theatricals goes "Beyond the Footlights" with outreach programs to give back to the community and to provide enhanced theatre experiences for all audiences. Since the inception of "Beyond the Footlights," more than 45,000 underserved children, in-need seniors and active military have enjoyed 5-Star Theatricals productions at no charge. In addition, 5-Star Theatricals provides ASL-signed performances of every production, talkbacks with the cast and staff, and beyond.

About **Musical Theatre West:**

The story of Musical Theatre West is the 67-year journey from a group of volunteers performing in a high school auditorium to one of the largest and most respected theatrical production companies in Southern California. Beginning as the Whittier Civic Light Opera in 1952, the company originally produced two shows a year for just two days each, back when shows like *Rio Rita* and *The Red Mill* were still in vogue. During most of the 1960s and 1970s, the group remained an all-volunteer effort, producing one show a year. Back then tickets were sold at Hinshaw's and Myers department stores and could be had for all of \$1.50 (75 cents for children)! In 1977 the group moved to the brand-new La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts and began to produce a full season of shows. During the 1980s and 1990s the company began to assert itself as one of the top companies in the area, utilizing professional talent and producing regional premieres and even a world premiere musical (1992's *Hurry! Hurry! Hollywood!*), while continuing to honor the tradition of classic musical theater. The company entered a new phase in 1997 when it began to produce shows at the Richard and Karen Carpenter Performing Arts Center in Long Beach and quickly became the largest arts producer in the Long Beach area. The company greets the 21st Century by continuing to produce newer fare (*In the Heights*, *Bright Star*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, *Something Rotten!*) alongside classics of the genre (*Mame*, *Oliver!*, *Carousel*, *Guys & Dolls*), and has recently produced two additional world premieres. The company continues to receive critical acclaim and national recognition – and many performers

who cut their teeth on the MTW stage have gone on to successful careers on Broadway and in television and film. Just as important, stage and screen veterans now come to Musical Theatre West to perform, finding it to be one of the friendliest and most fun venues to work. A key aspect of the company is its dedication to education, and the Education and Outreach Programs of Musical Theatre West brings the joy and magic of musical theater to over 17,000 children each year through special morning performances, school assemblies, and the Summer Youth Conservatory. We hope that you'll join the thousands of performers, technicians, audience members, donors and volunteers that make up the Musical Theatre West family as we look forward to another 67 years of bringing Broadway to Southern California.

About **San Diego Musical Theatre:**

San Diego Musical Theatre, is a local, non-profit, professional musical theatre organization, in its fourteenth year of presenting Broadway style musical theatre to San Diego audiences. SDMT is the only year-round musical theatre organization in San Diego and takes pride in being one of the only theatres in San Diego, to offer live orchestras during each production. SDMT provides a home for over 400 artists annually such as actors, directors, designers, musicians, and crew! The Horton Grand Theatre in San Diego's downtown, Gaslamp District is SDMT's home. Musical theatre is the only truly American art form, other than Jazz. SDMT is driven by a passion for musical theatre, a passion to celebrate this art form with others and a passion to pass the American tradition on to the next generation. We strive to do just that through our SDMT Academy where we offer classes, in a safe and supportive environment, for youth and adults. SDMT's You Give. We Give. campaign is our way to give back to our community. SDMT chooses another local nonprofit organization, for each of our productions, and donates to that organization to support the work they do in our community. We are proud that since this campaign started, we have donated over \$20,000 to other local non-profits to help with their missions. SDMT continues to expand their presence in the local theatre community and offer San Diego audiences live entertainment of the highest caliber. San Diego Musical Theatre is your local way to see Broadway.

About **High Street Arts Center:**

The High Street Arts Center has had a long and rich history as a source of culture and entertainment for the residents of Moorpark. In its early incarnation, the El Rancho, located at 45 East High Street in Moorpark, California, was built in 1927 to replace an old wooden structure that housed a silent movie theater. The El Rancho had the distinction of being the only "talking movie" theater in the east end of Ventura County. Sometimes referred to as the Moorpark Theatre, it closed as a movie house in the 1950s

and was used for school and community productions. It had many incarnations, even being used as a junk shop. In 1983 it re-opened as a “live” event theater known as the Magnificent Moorpark Melodrama & Vaudeville Co. Audiences came from all over Southern California to experience the unique melodramatic offerings. Ownership changed hands several times through the 1980s and 1990s with the doors finally closing on the Moorpark Playhouse in 1999. In 2001, Larry Janss, whose father and grandfather developed much of Westwood and the San Fernando Valley, bought the building with the intent of creating a new cultural center for Moorpark. After a light-hearted competition, the theater was renamed The Theater on High Street, and was transformed into a vibrant venue for classic films, live concerts and plays. In August of 2005, the City Council of Moorpark came to an agreement with Larry Janss and voted to purchase the theater. After several rentals to local theater production companies, the city, via the Redevelopment Agency, embarked on a new venture: creating a performing arts venue for the Moorpark Community, and renaming it the High Street Arts Center (HSAC). The city’s ambitious plans for the redevelopment of Historic High Street includes the HSAC and it has remained a key element of those plans for the past decade through a serious economic recession with the hope that other developments will follow. After operating the HSAC as a part of the City’s Community Services Department including a substantial financial subsidy, the City Council established the Non-Profit Moorpark Foundation for the Arts in 2009 that assumed daily operation of the HSAC. The City and the Foundation continued to manage the HSAC with the help of City funding and in July 2012, a three-year Operating Agreement was signed giving the growing Foundation full operating responsibility and reducing the City funding. A second three-year Operating Agreement was signed in July 2015 and all city funding was eliminated. From 2010, the success of the HSAC has grown by leaps and bounds, with attendance and revenues increasing by huge percentages. The independent Foundation’s management of the HSAC brought professional quality in aggressive show selection which attracts the best talents the region has to offer and the venue now enjoys the reputation as the finest of its kind in Ventura County.

About McCoy Rigby Entertainment:

Celebrating its 23rd season at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, McCoy Rigby Entertainment (MRE), is one of the world’s premier theatrical production companies. Headed by Executive Producers Tom McCoy and Cathy Rigby, MRE has produced over one hundred musicals, plays, and concerts featuring some of the biggest stars in the industry today. In addition, MRE has launched several Emmy Award-winning and Tony Award-nominated Broadway, National, and International touring productions including: *Peter Pan*, *Seussical the Musical*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Happy Days The Musical*, *Dreamgirls*, and *Disney’s Little*

Mermaid. Peter Pan starring Cathy Rigby has made four stops on Broadway and received four Tony Award nominations including Best Revival of a Musical and Best Actress in a Musical. The A&E TV network premiere of *Peter Pan*, starring Cathy Rigby, received one Emmy Award and four Emmy Award nominations. MRE is a proud member of The Broadway League, The National Alliance for Musical Theatre, and The LA Stage Alliance garnering many LA Ovation Awards and nominations including “Best Season of The Year.” McCoy Rigby Entertainment is proud to call La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts it’s home and the place where magic is made.

About **Skylight Theatre Company**:

Skylight Theatre Company expands the boundaries of mainstream theatre through the telling of relevant and more inclusive stories. A vibrant family of artists, Skylight discovers, develops and produces new works, introduces plays new to Los Angeles, and educates and nurtures the people that create them. With a commitment to local artists and telling stories that reflect Southern California’s rich diversity of culture, ethnicity and experiences, Skylight’s goal is to promote understanding through original works that resonate with audiences and help stimulate conversation. Dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion, we make stories come to life. Diversity, equity and inclusion are embedded in the fabric of Skylight. It’s more than multi-racial casting, it’s telling stories that would go unnoticed or could be controversial. It’s taking a chance on someone without regard for age, gender, ethnicity or their zip code. It’s actively seeking out artists that have never heard of Skylight and welcoming them into the family. Recognized as a “powerhouse of new play development” by Dramatist Magazine, works premiering at the Skylight have gone on to be performed Off-Broadway, in cities across the country and internationally. *Church & State* by Jason Odell Williams, had its world premiere at Skylight in 2016, opened a year later Off-Broadway and as of February 2020 has been performed in 52 states with more scheduled. *The Wrong Man* by Ross Golan began at Skylight in 2014 winning three local awards and played Off-Broadway Fall 2019 with two *Hamilton* Tony winners at the helm. Works by our resident playwrights have been produced in Chicago, New York and cities nationwide. Skylight has received 2020 Ovation Awards for Best Book/Original Musical and Best Lyrics and Musical/Original Musical for the 2019 world premiere of *Bronco Billy – The Musical*. In 2018, Skylight received three 2018 Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards for *Rotterdam* (Best Production - tying with *Hamilton*, Playwriting - Jon Brittain, and Lead Actress- Ashley Romans) as well as two 2018 Stage Raw Awards (Production of the Year and Lead Performance). The production was remounted by the Center Theatre Group in 2020 at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. Skylight has also received the prestigious Steinberg National Theatre Critics Citation for *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* by Nathan Alan Davis which was produced in association with Lower Depth Theatre Ensemble. We’ve presented over

100 World Premiere plays (and counting), and hosted more than 2,500 artists in over 750 productions, workshops, readings and classes. Our artistic development programs include: Skylab, the INKubator Play Reading Series, Lab Works, writing and performance programs for emerging professionals, young adults and teens. Hundreds of playwrights (notable and new) have worked here.

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