

— FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE —

ARTS CLUB CREATES JOBS FOR ARTISTS THROUGH NEW INITIATIVE

VANCOUVER, B.C. (June 18, 2020)—Western Canada’s largest not-for-profit theatre company, the Arts Club Theatre Company, has launched a new initiative that’s providing jobs for artists who are out of work due to COVID-19.

The Arts Club has created 20 new temporary full-time positions for Education and Community Outreach Specialists (ECOS). This team of artists and actors, many of whom were part of Arts Club shows cancelled as a result of the pandemic, includes **Paul Almeida, Abraham Asto, Duston Baranow-Watts, Alexandra Brynn, Mishelle Cutler, Andrew Creightney, Sia Foryoh, Paige Fraser, Jeff Gladstone, Cory Haas, Camille Legg, Makayla Moore, Omari Newton, Amir Ofek, Monice Peter, Jason Sakaki, Amanda Testini, Michelle Thorne, Kaitlin Williams, and Raugi Yu.** These roles are funded by the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), the Bill Millerd Artist Fund, and the generosity of donors.

“We’re excited to welcome these talented artists onto our team, and are immensely grateful for the CEWS as well as our donors and funders for making this possible,” said Artistic Director **Ashlie Corcoran.** “Though this a difficult time for theatre professionals everywhere, it’s also an opportunity to find new ways to create great art and connect with audiences.”

The ECOS team is charged with creating compelling digital content, hosting educational workshops online, and connecting with patrons and donors to foster a greater sense of togetherness while the company’s stages remain dark. The content created by ECOS focuses on engaging the extended Arts Club community in ways that fully reflect the rich cultural diversity of Vancouver’s Lower Mainland. This includes working from a mindset that is consciously inclusive and actively anti-racist, and making these practices core company values.

An integral part of the ECOS team’s work is using the Arts Club’s platform and position to amplify the voices of Black, Indigenous, and other artists of colour in the community.

“My intention is to listen to members of our community and amplify their causes, concerns, and suggestions so that I may represent a seat at the table for BIPOC theatre artists in Vancouver,” said Omari Newton, who is an actor, writer, and slam poet, as well as the co-playwright of Arts Club 2018 Silver Commission *Redbone Coonhound*. “The work of decolonization is vital, necessarily painful, and ultimately rewarding. I’m encouraged that the Arts Club is ready to begin the process of healing old wounds, opening new doors, and building new bridges.”

Another ECOS project currently underway is *Until Further Notice*: a digital exhibition spearheaded by Amir Ofek and Kaitlin Williams that features the work of Vancouver theatre artists lost as a result of COVID-19. The exhibition will include items from cancelled productions, such as unfinished or unused costumes and props, to tell a visual story about the impact of the pandemic on the theatre industry.

The breadth of the Arts Club’s digital workshops has also been expanded through this initiative. With more instructors on hand—especially ones with unique theatrical and artistic skills—the company is now able offer workshops on topics such as directing for the stage, dance basics, and poetry by African American, Afro-Canadian, and Caribbean writers.

Corcoran and Executive Director **Peter Cathie White** believe that the work done by the ECOS group will con-

tinue to have an impact on the company long after their contracts end, which is currently in four to eight weeks depending on the success of fundraising efforts.

“Though this is a time of financial hardship for the Arts Club, we must continue to support our artists in any way possible,” said Cathie White. “This includes not only creating work for artists, but also inviting them onto our staff to start important conversations about our actions and practices as a company, as well as the role we play in our community. We intend to make this vital work a permanent part of our organization going forward.”

For interviews, please contact Madison Taylor, Communications Associate, at publicity@artsclub.com

ABOUT THE ARTS CLUB

The Arts Club Theatre Company, founded in 1964, is Canada’s largest not-for-profit urban theatre company. Led by Artistic Director Ashlie Corcoran and Executive Director Peter Cathie White, it offers professional theatre at three venues—the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, Granville Island Stage, and the Goldcorp Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre—as well as on tour throughout the province.