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**TOWN HALL THEATRE ANNOUNCES FIRST IN THEIR “NEW VOICES” SERIES- “THE CHILDREN'S FARM” BY SEAN DUNNINGTON**

AUGUST 30, 2021 – Playwright Sean Dunnington’s piece, **“The Children’s Farm”** will be brought to the stage by Director Ciera Eis. This lightly produced, two-weekend performance model will be the first in Town Hall’s **New Voices** series. New Voices will produce two brand new, never produced-on-stage plays by playwrights living in the seven Bay Area counties. New Voices will heavily feature plays written by traditionally under-represented and under-produced artists.

In “The Children’s Farm” Sam runs away to California to live with her cousins Joey and Lauren (and their sock puppets) after being outed, tormented, and exiled. While there, Sam wraps herself in a fantastic world of wonder and love where she can truly be herself. She calls this place “The Funny Farm,” a riff off of Joey and Lauren’s nickname for therapy. Traversing a decade and a half of role-playing and therapy, this drama weighs forced family, roots, and finding freedom on the farm.

“In retrospect, a lot of my earlier plays were fueled by shame,” says “The Children’s Farm” playwright **Sean Dunnington**. “The queer character just wanted the homophobe to understand who they *really* were. They wanted acceptance, but even more so, they wanted to assimilate. I’m not interested in that kind of narrative anymore. ‘The Children’s Farm’is an ode to a queer childhood with my sisters. It’s an internal look at what it means to find belonging in myself, in my own queerness, rather than from a straight gaze.”

For their first outing in the New Voicesseries, Town Hall Theatre welcomes **Ciera Eis** and her tremendous knowledge and experience as she directs “The Children’s Farm.” Eis is passionate about directing and developing socio-political new work, emerging playwrights and artists, and experimenting with space and form in theatre. She is especially drawn to directing heightened comedy, queer-femme narratives and plays dealing with mental health and catharsis in trauma.

“As a queer woman who grew up in a rural and very religious town in California,” says Eis, “‘The Children’s Farm’ is an honest interpretation of a child’s journey of self-discovery and family belonging. Dunnington has done a great job of making this play an incredibly imaginative and deeply fun dive into the world of a child through the beauty of queerness, acceptance, therapy, and resilience.”

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 second entry in the first New Voices series will be “amémonos // let us love each other” by D. Linda Maria Girón which will be produced in Spring 2022.

**“**The Children’s Farm”will perform on October 8, 9 & 15, 16. Tickets are $25 and the October 16 performance will be Pay What You’d Like. Tickets and information can be found at TownHallTheatre.com

**COVID PRECAUTIONS**

Town Hall Theatre is prioritizing the health and safety of our artists, staff, and audiences above all else. We are keeping close watch on the number of COVID cases and hospitalizations and if we feel we cannot safely produce any of our works, we will move to a hybrid in-person and digital model or postpone to a later date.

Town Hall Theatre has joined Theatre Bay Area’s coalition on COVID protocols (https://www.theatrebayarea.org/page/bayareasafe). Town Hall’s full COVID policy (found at <https://www.townhalltheatre.com/covid19>) states:

*Town Hall Theatre reserves the right to refuse service to anyone, and anyone violating this policy will be asked to leave the premises immediately.*

***MASKS UP AT ALL TIMES***

* *Masks that cover the nose and mouth must be worn in Town Hall Theatre or during any in-door off-site Town Hall produced events or classes regardless of vaccination status. This includes but is not limited to rehearsals, performances, classes, or meetings. This policy applies to audiences, performers, staff, Teaching Artists, students, visitors, and volunteers.*
* *Masks may be temporarily lowered to consume food or drink, but then must be replaced while not actively consuming food and beverage.*
* *Town Hall will provide disposable masks to anyone who needs them.*

***PROOF OF VACCINATION OR RECENT NEGATIVE COVID TEST IS REQUIRED***

* *Anyone who has received a vaccination must present proof of vaccination in the form of a vaccine card or state-issued digital vaccine record (which may be obtained at* [*https://myvaccinerecord.cdph.ca.gov*](https://myvaccinerecord.cdph.ca.gov/)*/).*
* *Anyone who has not received a vaccination must present a negative COVID test from the past 72 hours.*
* *Appropriate photo ID is required to match both COVID test results and/or vaccination records.*
* *Students under the age of 12 registered in classes will not be required to provide vaccination status or COVID test. No-contact (laser, infrared) temperature checks may be administered prior to any onsite, indoor activities.*
* *NO VISITORS will be permitted within Town Hall during class times to minimize the possible exposure to students. Guardians should drop off and pick up their students at the door.*
* *Rapid tests will not fill the requirement for a recent negative COVID test. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test results will be the only results accepted.*

**CONTENT ADVISORY FOR THIS PRODUCTION**

*“*The Children’s Farm” contains adult language and viewer discretion is advised.

**ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

Sean Dunnington's (he/him) plays include” The Children's Farm,” ” Flat Fish,” ”Zap,” ”Hawaiian Shake,” and ”House Plays.” Sean's work has been produced and/or developed by Magic Theatre, Custom Made Theatre, Lounge Theatre, LabTheatre, and Manhattan Repertory Theatre. Residences and fellowships include: East-West Center, Ka Waiwai Collective, The Worms, and Creative Labs Hawai'i in partnership with the Dramatists Foundation and Dramatists Guild of America. Sean earned his experimental B.A. in Applied Playwriting from the University of Redlands' Johnston Center for Integrative Studies.

**ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

Ciera Eis (she/her) has directed plays at St. Mary’s College, UC Santa Cruz among many more and Asst. directed at A.C.T., Berkeley Rep and Magic Theatre. Recent directing credits include: “The Lost Ballad of our Mechanical Ancestor” (Shotgun Players), “Every Brilliant Thing” (Saint Mary’s), “In the Dark'' (Playground-LA), “You Had Me At Hello” (Faultline) and “The Official Unicorn Hunter’s Guide” (Winner of Shortlived VIII). Asst. directing credits: “Wakey Wakey,” “Both Your Houses,” “Spring Awakening '' (A.C.T.). She is currently in the SDCF Observer Class 2019-2021 and graduated from UCSC with a double in Directing and Psychology. Awards: Promising Young Woman in Theatre, Porter Arts Grant, DaVinci Scholar, Renaissance Artist Award and winner of Shortlived Play Festival 2019.

**ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER PRODUCER**

Lisa Anne Morrison (she, her) made her way back home to the Bay Area after working professionally as an actor in Los Angeles for many years. She is a CalArts graduate who found her love of new plays while producing and acting as a member of L.A.’s Theatre of NOTE. Some favorite Bay Area acting credits are “All’s Well that Ends Well,” “Othello” (Cal Shakes), “Intimate Apparel,” “Shakespeare in Hollywood” (TheatreWorks). She was last seen in Netflix’ “13 Reasons Why.” Lisa is a long-time teaching artist with CoachArt, a non-profit that pairs artists and athletes with chronically ill children and produced the Bay Area edition of the annual Coach Art Fundraising Gala where close to $1million was raised in a single evening. Lisa serves as the DEIB chair for Stanley Middle School and is on the district DEIB committee. The New Voices series is an exciting way to combine Lisa’s passion for theatre and promoting diversity in our community.

**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 Children’s Farm”**

**WHO:** Town Hall Theatre Company

**WHAT: “**The Children’s Farm”

Directed by Ciera Eis

Written by Sean Dunnington

**CAST:** TBA

**DATES:** October 8, 9 & 15, 16 at 8PM

**WHERE:** Town Hall Theatre

**TICKETS:** $25. October 19 is a Pay-What-You’d-Like performance

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