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Full Casting Announced for Washington Ensemble Theatre's Production of *Straight White Men*

January 12 - 29, 2018

By Young Jean Lee

Directed by Sara Porkalob

(December 19, 2017 — SEATTLE) **Washington Ensemble Theatre** has announced full casting for the Seattle premiere of ***Straight White Men***, the critically acclaimed family drama by **Young Jean Lee** that explores and critiques white privilege. *Straight White Men*, which is now in rehearsals, features a stellar cast including **Frank Boyd, Andy Buffelen, David S. Klein, Sam Turner, Nicolas Japaul Bernard** and **Nina Williams-Teramachi**, and is directed by **Sara Porkalob**, who recently served as the co-curator of Intiman Theatre's 2017 season. *Straight White Men*, which was called "a compassionate and stimulating exploration of one man's existential crisis" by the *New York Times*, is the second of three plays in WET's 2017/18 season that puts toxic masculinity under a microscope. Performances begin on **January 12** and run through **January 29** at **12th Avenue Arts** (1620 12th Avenue). Tickets range from \$15 - \$25 and are on sale now at www.washingtonensemble.org.

"*Straight White Men* is a hyper-realistic family drama which critiques, with unrelenting wit, what lies at the heart of American theatre 'classics': white, masculine crises," said **Porkalob**. "The play is an unexpected, hilarious, and subversive examination of whiteness at the intersection of gender, class, and literary device. It traps you with compassionate renderings of problematic white men—men we interact with everyday, men who are capable of doing great good in the world—and men who ultimately benefit from white supremacist systems. There's also dancing. Lots of dancing."

Straight White Men is a family drama about the demographic you love to hate. When three brothers gather at their father's home for Christmas, it becomes clear that they have more on their minds than the

holidays. With hypocrisy, humor, and enlightened progressivism, this story explores what to do with privilege, and who is to blame for it.

About the Cast

Frank Boyd (Matt) is a Seattle-based performer and writer. *The Holler Sessions*, Frank's first full-length original piece, premiered in Seattle at On the Boards in 2015 and has since toured to PS122's COIL Festival in New York City where it was a *New York Times* Critics' Pick, Guthrie Theater (Minneapolis), Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival (the Netherlands), Detroit Public Theatre, ACT Theatre (Seattle) and will be at Artists Rep (Portland) this March. Frank is a company member of the New York City-based ensembles Elevator Repair Service and the TEAM, with whom he has performed in *Gatz*, *The Select*, *Architecting*, and *Particularly in the Heartland*. Frank has also toured with Young Jean Lee's Theater Company in *Straight White Men*, playing the role of Drew. He is thrilled to have a chance to play Matt in WET's production. Frank's next original piece, a co-creation with Libby King called *Patti & The Kid*, is a post-apocalyptic western with Nerf guns that will premiere at On the Boards this April. Frank studied acting at NYU and is originally from Michigan.

Andy Buffelen (Jake) makes his debut with Washington Ensemble Theatre. He is a producer, performer, sk8r, director, and PWN native. He has proudly produced, directed, written, or performed with local companies Forward Flux Productions, Theatre22, Annex Theatre, Bainbridge Performing Arts, Pacific Play Company, Playing in Progress, AJnC Dance, New Animals, 14/48 Projects, Cabin Fever, Seattle's Solo Performance Festival, West of Lenin, Pocket Theater, On the Boards, ACT Lab, Live Girls, Freehold Theater, Boom! Theatre Company, and Cornish College of the Arts.

David S. Klein (Ed) has been a working theater artist for 48 years, performing in over 150 professional productions, as well as directing and teaching. Before moving here in 1985, he ran a touring children's theater in rural New England and performed at international avant-garde festivals in Baltimore and in Wroclaw, Poland. He has helped start five theaters, both here and in Boston, and is now a member of Theater 9/12, Tales of the Alchemysts Theater and Fern Shakespeare Company. He was seen last year at ACT in *The Crucible*, at GhostLight Theatricals in *Battle of the Bards*, in *Macbeth* with the Fern and in *Comedy of Errors* with Greenstage.

Sam Turner (Drew) is a Seattle-based actor and teacher who attended Western Washington University, earning degrees in Theatre and Elementary Education. You may have seen him working with HERON Ensemble (*The Earth Shakes*, *Nina Variations*), Centerstage (*Squatch! The Musical*, *For All That*, *Aladdin*), Annex (*Natural*), GreenStage (*Love's Labour's*), Idaho Rep (*Merry Wives*), Pacific Play Co. (*Crime & Rockets*), and the Seattle Fringe (*Self-Composed*). Sam is a core member of HERON ensemble, for which he performs and creates graphic design and marketing. Sam is in his second year of teaching second grade in West Seattle while getting his Masters in teaching, and has also taught theatre around Seattle. He is grateful to be making his WET debut in this arresting work.

Nina Williams-Teramachi (Person in Charge 1) is an actor and stage manager working in Seattle who has collaborated with Seattle Repertory Theatre, ACT Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre and more. Nina was recently stage manager for the world premiere of *Mario and the Comet* at Seattle Children's Theatre and on

the stage management team for *The Odyssey* at Seattle Repertory Theatre's Public Works. They were last seen onstage at Seattle Public Theatre's *The World of Extreme Happiness* and currently teaches theatre to elementary students in Kirkland. Nina is a graduate of the Intiman Emerging Artist Program and of the Seattle Children's Theatre internship. They are a BA candidate in Drama-Performance and Dance at the University of Washington.

Nicolas Japaul Bernard (Person in Charge 2) is a New York-based artist who recently moved to Seattle for the Intiman Emerging Artist Program. He is excited to make his Seattle debut with WET under the expert direction of Sara Porkalob. He would like to thank his family and friends for all their support.

About the Director

Sara Porkalob is an award winning solo performer, director, and arts activist recognized on City Art's 2017 Future List and has recently finished her term as Intiman Theatre's 2017 Co-Curator. This winter, in addition to *Straight White Men*, she is directing *Peerless* by Jiehae Park at Artswest. She is a co-founder of DeConstruct, an online journal of intersectional performance critique. An Asian-Pacific Islander and fervent intersectional feminist, she is committed to dynamic storytelling and the destruction of white supremacy in America. In the summer of 2018, you can catch her in new musical *String* at Village Theatre and directing new play *Persimmon Nights* by Seayoung Yim at Cafe Nordo. Her hit musical, *Dragon Lady*, will be touring to American Repertory Theatre March, 2018. www.saraporkalob.com

About the Creative Team

Straight White Men is choreographed by **Alyza DelPan-Monley** and stage managed by **Quy Ton**. It showcases scenic design by **Jennifer Zeyl**, lighting design by **Emily Leong**, costume design by **Natalie Shih**, and sound design by **Erin Bednarz**. Additional staff also includes **Sophie Franco*** (assistant director), **Maggie Rogers*** (dramaturg), **Kathleen Le Coz** (properties designer) and **Reiko Huffman*** (assistant scenic designer).

About the Playwright

Young Jean Lee is a writer, director, and filmmaker who has been called "the most adventurous downtown playwright of her generation" by the *New York Times* and "one of the best experimental playwrights in America" by *Time Out New York*. She has written and directed ten shows in New York with Young Jean Lee's Theater Company, and toured her work to over thirty cities around the world. Her plays have been published by Dramatists Play Service, Theatre Communications Group, and by Samuel French. She is currently under commission from Lincoln Center Theater and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and has written a screenplay commission for Plan B/Paramount Pictures. Her first short film, "Here Come the Girls," was presented at the Locarno International Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, and BAMcinemaFest. In 2013, she released her debut album, "We're Gonna Die," with her band, Future Wife. Lee is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, two OBIE Awards, a Prize in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a PEN Literary Award, a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a Doris Duke Artist Residency, a Foundation for Contemporary Arts grant, and the ZKB Patronage Prize of the Zürcher Theater Spektakel. She has also received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Rockefeller MAP Fund, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, Creative Capital, the Greenwall Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Arts Presenters/Ford

Foundation Creative Capacity Grant, the Barbara Bell Cumming Foundation, and the New England Foundation for the Arts National Theater Project Award.

2017/18 Season Sponsors

Washington Ensemble Theatre thanks production sponsor KUOW 94.9 FM. Additional thanks to 4Culture and Seattle Office of Arts & Culture for their continued support, media sponsor *The Stranger*, and restaurant sponsor Omega Ouzeri.

About Washington Ensemble Theatre

Through collaborative artistic leadership, Washington Ensemble Theatre fearlessly creates audacious stories for adventurous Seattle audiences. A resident company at 12th Avenue Arts in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, WET is committed to maintaining an environment wherein its members, as well as artists from the community, are challenged to grow through its work as an ensemble. For more information about Washington Ensemble Theatre, please visit washingtonensemble.org.

The 2017/2018 Ensemble is Samie Spring Detzer, Jeffrey Azevedo, Maria Manness, Rachel Liuzzi, Bobbin Ramsey, Tristan Roberson, Karla Davenport, Joceline Wynn, Jenn Oaster, Ryan Dunn, Erika Bailey, Maggie Rogers, Sophie Franco, Reiko Huffman, Rachel Guyer-Mafune, and Kevin Kelly.

*Member of Washington Ensemble Theatre

For Calendar Editors

- WHEN** Pay What You Can Preview: Thursday, January 11, 2018
Opening Night: Friday, January 12, 2018 (press opening)
Closing Day: Monday, January 29, 2018
- SHOW TIMES** Thursdays - Mondays at 7:30 PM
- WHERE** 12th Avenue Arts (1620 12th Avenue in Captiol Hill)
- TICKETS** Please visit www.washingtonensemble.org for tickets ranging \$15-\$25

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