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Cast Announced for *Dance Nation* at Washington Ensemble Theatre, the Seattle Premiere of Clare Barron's Pulitzer-Nominated Play

January 17 - February 3, 2020

By Clare Barron

Co-Directed by Bobbin Ramsey and Alyza Delpan-Monley

(Friday, November 15, 2019—SEATTLE) **Washington Ensemble Theatre** has announced the cast for the Seattle premiere of *Dance Nation*, the Pulitzer-nominated play by **Clare Barron** about a group of young people discovering the power inside of them and deciding what they're going to do with their potential. Will they squash it, embrace it, sexualize it, share it, or hoard it? WET is thrilled to welcome back to its stage **Hannah Victoria Franklin** (WET: *Tall Skinny Cruel Cruel Boys*, *The Seagull Project: The Three Sisters*) as The Moms and Vanessa, **Nik Doner** (WET: *Dirty*, ArtsWest: *Office Hour*) as Dance Teacher Pat, and **Marty Mukhalian** (WET: *Babs the Dodo*, *Intiman: Stu for Silverton*) as Sofia. WET members **Maggie L. Rogers** and **Erin Bednarz** make their WET stage debuts as Maeve and Ashlee, and making their WET debuts are **Sofia Raquel Sánchez** as Amina, **Rheanna Atendido** as Zuzu, **Varsha Raghavan** as Connie, and **Mikey Flores** as Luke. *Dance Nation* is co-directed by WET's Associate Artistic Director **Bobbin Ramssey** (*Feathers and Teeth*, *The Nether*, *Revolt. She said. Revolt again.*) and longtime WET collaborator **Alyza Delpan-Monley** (*Teh Internet Is Serious Business*, *Straight White Men*).

Dance Nation plays **January 17 - February 3, 2020** at **12th Avenue Arts** (1620 12th Avenue in Capitol Hill). Tickets are on sale now at www.washingtonensemble.org.

"Clare Barron has written a brilliant play that explores the power that exists inside young people, especially young women, through the vehicle of competitive preteen dance," said co-director **Bobbin Ramsey**. "It's a world that has extremely high stakes, infantilizes and sexualizes its participants, and speaks to deepest fantasies and highlights masked insecurities. With preteen angst, first crushes, and frenemies, this play simultaneously explores a time in our lives that we can all relate to and speaks to questions of ambition, intimacy, and dreams that remain relevant at any age. I'm so thrilled that WET gets to share this story with Seattle."

Dance Nation explores the cutthroat world of a preteen competitive dance team. Dance Teacher Pat will bring his army of ferocious youth performers all the way to nationals but only if they can harness their immense potential first. This razor-sharp story is a celebration of the unsettling, and at times terrifying, power of young women as they navigate their own monumental ambition. Sparkles, fangs, and intense feminine energy: what more could you want? *Dance Nation*, called “A blazingly original play” by *The New York Times*, had its world premiere at Playwrights Horizons in 2018.

About the Cast

Rheanna Atendido makes her WET debut as Zuzu. Atendido is a proud Filipino-American playwright, composer, and performer. Credits include The 5th Avenue Theatre (*Mamma Mia!*, Adventure Musical Theater), Seattle Repertory Theatre (*The Odyssey*), Village Theatre (*Spelling Bee*, *ZM*), and Taproot Theatre Company (*Bright Star*). Her musical *Breakup Bench* makes its debut in August at Annex Theatre.

Erin Bednarz makes her WET stage debut as Ashlee. Bednarz works nationally in sound, dramaturgy, production, performance, and music. She contributes to LiveGirls Theatre, and is co-founder of Umbrella Project and Cheat Day Collective (4 Culture Grant Recipient). As DJ play__pranks, she plays nostalgia pop + dance hall around the bar scene in Seattle. She teaches Advanced Sound Design at Cornish College of the Arts and holds a Gregory Award in Outstanding Sound Design. Her late band Hearts Are Thugs had its time 2013 - 2015 and earned a 2014 RAW Artist Award. Bednarz is a proud member of Washington Ensemble Theatre.

Nik Doner joins the cast as Dance Teacher Pat. Doner is a Seattle-native actor, producer, and voiceover artist with a B.A. from Loyola Marymount University. Recent theatrical appearances include *Office Hour* (Arts West), *My Antonia* (Book-It Repertory Theatre), *Hostages* (Radial Theatre), *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings* (Theater Schmeater), *Dirty* (Washington Ensemble Theatre), and *We Are Proud to Present...* (Pony World Theatre). His production house (White Rabbits Inc) premiered his solo show *Cuddling with Strippers* in 2017 and David Harrower's *Blackbird* in 2019. Currently, Doner is starring in, co-producing, and fundraising for the August 2020 performance of Yussef El Guindi's *Hostages* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Mikey Flores makes his WET debut as Luke. Flores is from Orange County California and is a graduate of Cornish College of the Arts, where he received a BFA in Original Works. Recent credits include *Romeo and Juliet* with ACT, *Pinocchio* with Theatre Schmeater (Red Fox), The Core Ensemble's *Coaster Show* (Writer/Actor), *Love and Information* (Ensemble), *The Clown Show* (Pogo Dikdanz), *O-Fest* (Actor/Writer/Director), *The Sins of Sor Juana* (Pedro), *Oh! Beautiful* (Jesus), and *The Myth Projects 2016*.

Hannah Victoria Franklin returns to the WET stage as The Moms and Vanessa. Franklin is a Seattle based actor and director and has an MFA from the University of Washington's PATP. She is the president of Red Eagle Soaring Native Youth Theater's board of directors, a core company member of The Seagull Project, a 2012 company member of Intiman Theatre and former company member of Washington Ensemble Theatre. In 2013 she was named Best Actress in Seattle Weekly's yearly "Best of Seattle" issue and has been nominated for Seattle Theater Writer awards twice; in 2013 for supporting actress and in 2015 for sound design. She played Natasha in *The Three Sisters* at ACT for the Seagull Project, which won production of the year at the 2015 Gregory Awards. Franklin starred and sound designed *Is She Dead Yet*, which won the

Gregory Award in 2016 for Best New Play and played Charlotta in *The Cherry Orchard*, which won People's Choice for Outstanding Production at the 2017 Gregory Awards. Most recently Franklin directed and has toured *Killer Whale and the Black Rush* for Red Eagle Soaring at the ACTone festival and One Heart Native Film and Arts Festival in Spokane. Outside of the Pacific Northwest she has performed at Labyrinth Theater Company in NYC, Ilkhom Theater in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Shizuoka and Tokyo, Japan, St.Petersburg, Russia and Carnegie Hall.

Marty Mukhalian returns to the WET stage as Sofia. Previous WET credits include the title role in Michael Mitnick's *Babs the Dodo*, directed by Elise Hunt. Mukhalian has performed over 20 years in and around the Seattle area including appearances with Book-It Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Strawberry Theatre Workshop, The 14/48 Projects, Seattle Public Theatre, ArtsWest, and Annex Theatre, among others. Most recently she performed in Mirror Stage's *Expand Upon: Homelessness* new play reading series.

Varsha Raghavan makes her WET debut as Connie. A Chicago native and greater Boston transplant, Raghavan is happy to have called Seattle home for the past four years. Local credits include: *I and You* (Pratidhwani/Theater Schmeater), *The Who's Tommy* (Seattle G&S), *Journey West!* (Copious Love Productions), *Squatch! the Musical* (Centerstage), *A Small History of Amal, Age 7* (Pratidhwani/Forward Flux), *Twister Beach* (Cafe Nordo), and *Weird Romance* (STAGEright). Along with performing, Raghavan serves on the Board of Showtunes Theatre Company.

Maggie L. Rogers makes her WET stage debut as Maeve. Rogers is a Seattle based director, Gregory-nominated sound designer, and fat activist who proudly hails from Louisville, Kentucky. She is WET's Literary Manager and Resident Dramaturg, Resident Director at The Horse in Motion, and the Company Dramaturg for Cherdonna Shinatra's, DONNA.

Sofía Raquel Sánchez (they/them) makes their WET debut as Amina. Sánchez is a graduate of Cornish College of the Arts' Original Works program and is a Seattle based actor, playwright, and activist. They believe in developing new work that gives multigenerational voices to marginalized and oppressed communities. Their theatrical motto is "it is our job as artists to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comforted." Their recent work includes: Copious Love's *Querida Familia: A Fundraiser for El Paso* (Producer,) The Scratch's New Work Series' *Rushing* (Alex), Seattle Shakespeare Company's *Romeo and Juliet* (Romeo), Seattle Children's Theater's Educational Tour *Ghosted* (Kayla & Teaching Artist), Seattle Public Theater's *Fire Season* (Jessamyn), Cornish College of the Arts' *The Sins of Sor Juana* (Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz,) and Strawberry Theater Workshop's *Lydia* (Ceci).

About the Co-Directors

Bobbin Ramsey is a freelance theatre and film director based in Seattle, Washington and is the Associate Artistic Director for Washington Ensemble Theatre. In addition, she is a co-founder and the Lead Producer of The Horse in Motion, a new theatre company dedicated to non-traditional performance, and has directed most of their major productions. In summer 2014, Ramsey directed her first feature, a horror film titled *Dead Body*, produced by Diving Bell Media and Angel Inc. Productions which is now available on multiple VOD platforms including Amazon, iTunes, and Vudu. Notable productions include *The Nether*, and

Revolt. She said. Revolt again. with Washington Ensemble Theatre, *Wellesley Girl* and *BrechtFest* with The Horse in Motion, *Peter and the Starcatcher* at Cornish College of the Arts, *Waiting for Godot* with Arts on the Waterfront, *American Archipelago* with Pony World Theatre, *The Great Noise*, a rock musical which premiered at On the Boards, and staged readings with ACT Theatre, Macha Productions, Book-It Repertory Theatre, and New Century Theatre Company.

Alyza Delpan-Monley believes in the expressive power that can be accessed in the body through movement. Their work has been presented at Cafe Nordo, ArtsWest, Book-It Repertory Theatre, and Strawberry Theatre Workshop. This is their fifth production with Washington Ensemble Theatre: *Revolt. She said. Revolt again.*, *Teh Internet Is Serious Business*, *Monstrosity*, and *Straight White Men*. They also perform with DONNA and Tim Smith- Stewart and Jeffrey Azevedo and MALACARNE.

About the Playwright

Clare Barron is a playwright and actor from Wenatchee, Washington. Her plays include *You Got Older*, which received its world premiere with Page 73 and appeared at Steppenwolf in 2018 (Obie Award for Playwriting, Drama Desk Nomination for Outstanding Play, Kilroys List, and Susan Smith Blackburn finalist); *I'll Never Love Again* (The Bushwick Starr, NYTimes & Time Out Critics' Picks); *Baby Screams Miracle* (Woolly Mammoth, Clubbed Thumb); and *Dance Nation*, which will appear at Playwrights Horizons in 2018 and won the Relentless Award established in honor of Philip Seymour Hoffman, and the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. She is also the recipient of a Whiting Award, the Page 73 Playwriting Fellowship and the Paula Vogel Award at the Vineyard.

About the Creative Team

Dance Nation features scenic and lighting design by **Tristan Roberson***, costume design by **Jennifer Oaster***, sound design by **D.R. Amromin**, properties design by **Parmida Ziaei**, with stage management by **Xandria Easterday Callahan**. Additional staff includes **Sienna Mendez*** (assistant director and dramaturg).

*Member of Washington Ensemble Theatre

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 www.washingtonensemble.org.

The 2019/20 Ensemble is Samie Spring Detzer, Jeffrey Azevedo, Maria Manness, Bobbin Ramsey, Tristan Roberson, Joceline Wynn, Jenn Oaster, Ryan Dunn, Maggie Rogers, Sophie Franco, Rachel Guyer-Mafune, Erin Bednarz, Kiki Abba, Sienna Mendez, Ben Swenson-Klatt, Brian Dang, and Minna Lee.

Thanks to 2019/20 season sponsors 4Culture and Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, Portage Bay Café, and media sponsor *The Stranger*.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHEN

Pay What You Can Preview: Thursday, January 16, 2020

Opening Night: Friday, January 17, 2020 (press opening)

Closing Day: Monday, February 3, 2020

SHOW TIMES

Thursdays - Mondays at 7:30 PM (no performance January 20)

There will be a matinee performance at 2:00 PM on Sunday, February 2, 2020

WHERE

12th Avenue Arts (1620 12th Avenue in Capitol Hill)

TICKETS

Please visit www.washingtonensemble.org to purchase tickets.

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