

After 57 Years Long Wharf Theatre Announces Groundbreaking New Direction

Founded in 1965, the storied company is ushering in something ambitious, radical and joyous

February 23, 2022—Today, the Board of Directors of Long Wharf Theatre announced plans to lead a growing movement to re-envision a *new* American theatre. The next chapter of the iconic organization will focus on a commitment to artists, collaborators, and the communities they serve. The cornerstone of this vision is a new, itinerant production model that will prioritize equity, accessibility and transparency, guided by three core pillars: revolutionary partnerships, artistic innovation, and radical inclusion.

Beginning in fall of 2023—following an in-depth, community-driven strategic planning phase—the new model will enable Long Wharf Theatre productions to be presented throughout Greater New Haven, embedding the company within the City, and no longer anchoring performances to the Theatre's current space.

Realized in phases over the next several years, the culmination of this process will be a reimagined Long Wharf Theatre campus that could include a theatre hub as well as a network of partner venues and organizations throughout the city filled with new productions, readings and community programs.

Long Wharf Theatre, like many regional theaters across the country, has had to balance artistic innovation and the desire for deeper community engagement with the ever-increasing costs of maintaining physical venues, a model that has failed to evolve alongside the shifting landscape. Long Wharf Theatre will break this cycle and marshal its resources to become a catalyst for community-wide connection, conversation and growth. Funding that will help support this new vision includes generous commitments from its Board, donors and cash reserves. In addition, Long Wharf Theatre's ongoing work and programming is supported with grants from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

*"I am honored to share this new vision that will meet the needs of a changing cultural landscape in pursuit of a more inclusive, emergent, and boundary-breaking new American theatre," said **Jacob G. Padrón, Artistic Director of Long Wharf Theatre**. "Theatre belongs to the community and should reflect the world we live in today—from the makeup of the Board to the artisans working onstage and off. This new model will allow us to build on the best parts of our celebrated past as the bridge to a visionary future, to truly be a place for everyone."*

*"At its core, Long Wharf Theatre is about the artists, audiences and collaborators who make us what we are, not a specific space or venue," said **Kit Ingui, Managing Director of Long Wharf Theatre**. "We are energized and excited by this change and look forward to spending the coming months meeting with those who have supported and encouraged us as a theatre company of the 21st century."*

*"Long Wharf Theatre has always been a place of creative innovation, and the past two years have provided a unique opportunity to reflect, regroup, and reimagine," said **Nancy Alexander, Board Chair**. "As the trailblazing*

poet and playwright Luis Alfaro said at our inaugural Artistic Congress, 'The great pause has become the great possibility,' and Jacob and Kit's leadership and vision—closely held by the entire Board—are critical to fully realizing the great potential of this moment and making theatre for everyone."

"In difficult times, art is what elevates and connects us. This moment invites performing arts organizations to move beyond business as usual and invest in new business models that are values driven and sustainable," **said Maurine Knighton, Program Director for the Arts, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.** "We applaud Long Wharf Theatre for accepting that invitation in a way that honors both its artistic integrity and its commitments to community. This evolution can serve as a model for others, and we support Long Wharf Theatre as it undertakes this historic endeavor."

"For almost six decades, Long Wharf Theatre's productions have helped us to know ourselves as individuals and to come together as a community," said **Will Ginsberg, President and CEO of The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.** "In these times of sweeping change, our community is changing dramatically too. I applaud Long Wharf Theatre for envisioning a new model for its work that will reflect and serve our community in new ways."

Embracing Long Wharf Theatre's roots as a revolutionary and trusted community partner

Long Wharf Theatre was founded with the mission of providing a world class theatre firmly rooted in New Haven. This new model allows the Theatre to be more intentional and strengthen its commitment to centering and enriching the city's—and surrounding region's—creative community.

By partnering with local organizations and institutions, making meaningful efforts to engage with every part of the community and incubating local talent into nationally-recognized productions and works, the Theatre has developed as a regional, and national, leader, and will continue initiatives such as:

- **One City Many Stages**, piloted for the 2020/2021 season, focuses on accessibility, responsiveness to current events, the amplification of lived experiences, and a renewed commitment to incubating new works
- **New Haven Play Project**, an initiative supported by Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art that builds community by spotlighting the life experiences of the Elm City's Muslim residents
- **Play on My Block**, a production created by, for, and with New Haven residents in public spaces throughout the Elm City
- **Artistic Congress for the People**, a convening of local and national artists, artistic decision-makers, and institutional leaders to build a more equitable and accessible American theatre

"I am proud that the humble theatre we opened nearly 60 years ago has grown to be a national force where hundreds of the country's top talents have appeared," **said Jon Jory, Co-Founder of Long Wharf Theatre.** "Innovation is always crucial to first-rate work and this new vision will maintain the Theatre's position as a powerful center for creativity and community."

*"Since its inception, Long Wharf Theatre has been an anchor of New Haven's cultural ecosystem," said **Adriane Jefferson, Director of Cultural Affairs for New Haven.** "This new vision is a continuation of the spirit in which the organization was founded, as a means to harness the artistry, vibrancy and talent of our city, for our city. With this new direction, the Theatre is not losing a home, but rather expanding their community and their reach."*

A deepened commitment to artistic innovation

Long Wharf Theatre's commitment to the creation of new work will continue to be a driving force, assessing the needs of each artistic project and working with partner organizations to find the best presenting venue. The Theatre will be an unparalleled hub for creative excellence and an artistic home for a new generation of great storytellers. Examples of programming Long Wharf Theatre will continue to invest in include:

- Dynamic and **fully staged productions** of new and classic plays and musicals
- **New play commissioning and development**, seeding a new canon of American plays and musicals for future production, including new work by Guadalís Del Carmen, Ricardo Pérez González, Raja Feather Kelly, Bryce Pinkham, Madeline Sayet and Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel, Ruth Tang, and the artistic collective UNIVERSES (Steven Sapp and Mildred Ruiz-Sapp), among others.
- **The LAB@LWT**, a collaboration between artists and Long Wharf Theatre, providing month-long residencies to local and national artists while giving audiences a glimpse into the new play development process and an opportunity to explore and interrogate the New Haven arts scene
- **Play Club**, a member-only event that fosters conversations about scripts with Long Wharf Theatre's artistic staff
- **Artistic Ensemble**, a collective of local and national theatre-makers who support Long Wharf Theatre with their guidance and good counsel while receiving resources to develop their newest ideas for the stage

*"Jacob Padrón is one of the most talented and inspired young leaders of the American Theatre. Long Wharf Theatre is one of the most storied theatres in America, and as it enters a new chapter it is in wonderful hands," said **Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director, The Public Theater.** "We are in a time of great change, and we must all work tirelessly to ensure that our theatres are embedded deeply in our communities. Only by spreading the power and joy of our art in a broad, inclusive way can we realize the promise of our theatre, the most democratic art form on earth. Long Wharf Theatre is putting that vision into action in a brave and thrilling way. We are lucky to have them among us; we will cheer for them, be challenged and inspired by them, and support them always."*

*"My work is a reflection of the largely untold stories that surround each of us, infused with nuance and contradictions," said **Dominique Morisseau, playwright.** "As a Detroit native, *Paradise Blue* was particularly personal and the process of collaborating with Long Wharf Theatre was one of the highlights of my career. Their consideration, sensitivity, and commitment to mastery made them the ideal partner for that production, and I am excited to see their impact amplified through this new model."*

Producing radically inclusive shows today and in the future

Long Wharf Theatre has staged world premieres by emerging and esteemed playwrights including Julia Cho, Athol Fugard, Ricardo Pérez González, A.R. Gurney, Samuel D. Hunter, Craig Lucas, Steve Martin, Dael Orlandersmith, Eliana Pipes, Heidi Schreck, Anna Deavere Smith, and Paula Vogel, and collaborated with some of the nation's leading actors such as Al Pacino, Billy Porter, Colleen Dewhurst, and Jane Alexander. It will continue to produce

theatre, including an offering by the artistic ensemble UNIVERSES (Steven Sapp and Mildred Ruiz-Sapp), Long Wharf Theatre's Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Playwrights-in-Residence.

Long Wharf Theatre is also in the midst of an exciting 2021/2022 season at its current location. *Fires in the Mirror* just completed an acclaimed run. [Dream Hou\\$e](#) and [Queen](#) will be produced at 222 Sargent Drive, New Haven, over the next four months. At the close of the current season, the company will focus on planning a dynamic slate of programming for spring 2023.

Moving forward, Long Wharf Theatre will continue to work with the most exciting and emerging voices, presenting important works that reflect our world today and spotlight our shared humanity. Over the coming weeks and months, the Theatre will host a series of Town Hall gatherings for members of the community to convene, question and help to shape the future. The schedule is below with more information to follow at longwharf.org:

- Thursday, March 9 at 7-8pm, Virtual
- Thursday, March 24 at 7-8pm, Virtual
- Saturday, April 2 at 2-3pm, New Haven Free Public Library, Mitchell Branch, 37 Harrison Street, New Haven
- Thursday, April 7 at 7-8pm, Long Wharf Theatre, 222 Sargent Drive, New Haven

"A great theatre is one that builds bridges between and within the communities it serves," said Bill Rauch, Artistic Director, Perelman Performing Arts Center, currently under construction at the World Trade Center. "Long Wharf Theatre's new community-centered vision is fearless in its embrace of the voices that have long been overshadowed. Nothing is off limits and everything is possible."

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About Long Wharf Theatre's Spring 2022 Season

[DREAM HOU\\$E](#)

March 15-April 3, 2022

Written by Eliana Pipes

Directed by Laurie Woolery

Produced in partnership with Alliance Theatre and Baltimore Center Stage

Dream Hou\$e follows two Latinx sisters on an HGTV-style show who are selling their family home, hoping to capitalize on the gentrification in their "changing neighborhood." As they perform for the camera the show starts to slip into the surreal: one sister grapples with turmoil in the family's ancestral past and the other learns how much she's willing to sacrifice for the family's future.

[QUEEN](#)

May 17-June 5, 2022

Written by Madhuri Shekar

Directed by Aneesha Kudtarkar

Produced in partnership with National Asian American Theatre Company (NAATCO)

PhD candidates Sanam and Ariel have spent the better part of the last decade exhaustively researching vanishing bee populations across the globe. Just as these close friends are about to publish a career-defining paper, Sanam stumbles upon an error in their calculations, which could cause catastrophic damage to their reputations, careers, and friendship.

About Long Wharf Theatre

Founded in 1965, Long Wharf Theatre (Jacob G. Padrón, Artistic Director; Kit Ingui, Managing Director) is a Tony Award-winning company of international renown. It was founded on the notion that New Haven deserves an active culture that is locally created, supported by community leaders and patrons of the arts. It is recognized for a historic commitment to commissioning, developing, and producing new plays and musicals that have become a part of the modern American canon. More than 30 of its productions have transferred to Broadway or Off-Broadway runs, three of which—*Wit*, *The Shadow Box*, and *The Gin Game*—won Pulitzer Prizes for Drama. It was among the earliest recipients of the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre (1978) and its productions have won numerous accolades, including Tony, New York Drama Critics' Circle, and Obie Awards; a Margo Jones Award; and nominations and Connecticut Critics Circle Awards in nearly every category. In 2015, the company received the 50 Years of Achievement in Theatre award from National Corporate Theatre Fund and the Major Award for Outstanding Contributions to New England Theatre, the highest honor from New England Theatre Conference.

Under current leadership, in partnership with a dedicated staff and Board, Long Wharf Theatre aspires to be a company with, by, and for the Greater New Haven community. It is engineering stories that represent an inclusive culture, in all of its complexities, and amplifying the voices of living playwrights and artists of color. Long Wharf Theatre is doubling down on its commitment to new work while broadening collaborations with synergistic partners, discovering new pathways to nurture the best new American voices for theatre. It is shifting from being a space with four cement walls to bringing live theatre into multiple venues, neighborhoods, and public spaces. Community is rigorously centered within the organization, building an inclusive treasury of its neighbors' resilient and interconnected life experiences through storytelling.

Land Acknowledgment

Long Wharf Theatre sits on the unceded territory of the Paugusset, Quinnipiac, and Wappinger peoples. We acknowledge that Indigenous peoples and nations have for generations stewarded the lands and waterways of what we now call the state of Connecticut. We honor and respect the enduring relationship that exists between these peoples and nations and this land. We remind ourselves that along with stolen land came stolen people. It is our responsibility to the future to know our past.