



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oakland Theater Project presents
the World Premiere of
A THOUSAND SHIPS
by Marcus Gardley
directed by Michael Socrates Moran
in association with Cal Shakes

Oakland, CA (Nov 19, 2024) - Oakland Theater Project is thrilled to announce the upcoming world premiere of *A Thousand Ships*, a new play from award-winning Oakland-born playwright **Marcus Gardley**, directed by OTP Co-Artistic Director **Michael Socrates Moran** (*Angels in America*) **December 13–January 5 at Oakland Theater Project.**

From the beloved playwright of *black odyssey* and screenwriter for *The Color Purple* comes an extraordinary tale of friendship between two Black women and their families, from their wartime work in the Oakland shipyards to the fulfillment of a dream: their own hair salon.

On the eve of the 2008 presidential election, Adeline and Laney's salon is a hub of activity. The rent is months overdue, Laney's son is wanted by the FBI, and the First Lady's hair (First Lady of a church in the Oakland Hills, that is) won't style itself.

Scenes move backward and forward through time with the fluidity of the sea, weaving an intricate tale of friendship, dreams, and legacy that spans generations.

Infused with glorious music and vocals from composer **Molly Holm** and Gardley's signature humor and pathos, this deeply moving, heartwarming tale is a love letter to Oakland and a meditation on loss, renewal, and the healing power of community.

Boasting an extraordinary cast that includes OTP Associate Artists **Halili Knox** (*The Crucible*, *Dance of the Holy Ghosts*) and **Dawn**



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Troupe (*Begin the Beguine*, *Pool of Unknown Wonders*); OTP Company Member **Rolanda Bell** (*Is God Is*, *The Crucible*); OTP Founding Member **William Hartfield** (*Gospel of Lovingkindness*, *Grapes of Wrath*); and celebrated Bay Area artists **Adrian Roberts** (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Tempest*), **Sam Jackson** (*Lear* at Cal Shakes, in association with OTP), and **Jasmine Williams** (*Josephine's Feast* at Magic Theatre), this world premiere is a must-see this holiday season.

"We are thrilled to present this story—told in a style full of rituals that bring meaning, alongside an uplifting dose of humor—during the holiday season, when many of us are looking for a way forward in the face of loss," said Director **Michael Socrates Moran**.

"*A Thousand Ships* is a holiday gift to Oakland," said OTP Dramaturg **Philippa Kelly**. "Without dreams, we exist without truly living. Dreams are the flesh and blood of our future."

A Thousand Ships is a **Hewlett 50 Arts Commission**. Originally conceived and awarded to **California Shakespeare Theater** to build off of the artistic collaboration and tremendous success of the 2017 production of *black odyssey*. After the initial plans for the production were upended due to the pandemic, in 2023 the commission and production transitioned to be helmed by Oakland Theater Project and in association with Cal Shakes.

"We honor and celebrate the contribution that Cal Shakes made to the development of this extraordinary play specifically, and to use this occasion as an opportunity to thank and celebrate the incredible contribution that Cal Shakes has made to the Bay Area theater community," said OTP Managing Director Colin Mandlin. "My first internship during college was at Cal Shakes and it proved to be a rigorous and formative experience in my personal and professional development. I learned a tremendous amount about producing theater and I know I won't be alone on opening night recounting and celebrating the impact Cal Shakes has had on our community. We are grateful for the chance to honor Cal Shakes."

Tickets are available at oaklandtheaterproject.com/ships



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A Thousand Ships is the final production in Oakland Theater Project's **2024 Season: *Ghosts of Past, Present and Future***, a collection of seven plays that echo from the past into the present—in hopes of illuminating the future.

“In our 12th year, we seek to interrogate the ghosts that haunt our collective past, present and future so that we might gain clarity about our global predicaments, and find inspiration to move forward,” said OTP Co-Artistic Director **Michael Socrates Moran**. “With seven shows from divergent lenses all focused on this central theme, we hope this season helps to illuminate the ways in which our experiences can inspire solidarity across difference.”

Tickets & Performance Information

World Premiere

A Thousand Ships

by **Marcus Gardley**

directed by **Michael Socrates Moran**

December 13—January 5, 2025

Previews: Fri, Dec 13 & Sat, Dec 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Opening Night: Sun Dec 15 at 7:30 p.m.

Performances: Thu / Fri / Sat / Sun through Jan 5 (Thu, Fri, Sat at 7:30 p.m., Sun at 2 p.m.)

Tickets: \$10–60 online; tickets at oaklandtheaterproject.org/ships, by calling (510) 646-1126, or by emailing boxoffice@oaklandtheaterproject.org.

Performance Location

FLAX art & design

1501 Martin Luther King Jr Way

Oakland, CA 94612



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Safety Protocols

Masks will be required at **Friday** performances throughout the season, and are optional for all other performances.

About Oakland Theater Project

Oakland Theater Project's mission is to create exquisite theatrical experiences to inspire compassion and forge bonds across socio-economic and racial barriers.

Oakland Theater Project was founded in 2012 by Michael Socrates Moran, William Hodgson, and Colin Mandlin in Oakland, CA and produces year-round professional theater for Oakland and the Bay Area.

Rooted in Oakland, OTP's work seeks to explore the ways in which theater can act as a vehicle to reveal and invigorate the latent interconnectedness in society.

To subscribe, donate, or learn more, the public can call **510.646.1126** or visit **oaklandtheaterproject.org**.