

**CUTTING BALL THEATER OPENS 16TH SEASON
WITH WORLD PREMIERE OF “SUPERHEROES”
November 21-December 21, 2014**

SAN FRANCISCO (November 6, 2014) – **Cutting Ball Theater** opens its 16th season with the **World Premiere** of **SUPERHEROES**, written and directed by **Sean San José**. Featuring **Myers Clark, Juan Amador, Donald E. Lacy, Jr., Britney Frazier, Ricky Saenz, and Delina Patrice Brooks**, **SUPERHEROES** plays **November 21 through December 21** (Press opening: December 2) at the Cutting Ball Theater in residence at EXIT on Taylor (277 Taylor Street) in San Francisco. For tickets (\$10-50) and more information, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **415-525-1205**.

Defiant, passionate, and bursting with poetic energy, **SUPERHEROES** tells the story of a journalist working to separate fact from fiction as she investigates the sordid history of the crack-cocaine epidemic. Partially inspired by Bay Area reporter Gary Webb’s groundbreaking investigative journalism into the relationship between the CIA and Nicaraguan émigré-drug traffickers, this incendiary new play traces a lyrical labyrinth through churches, courthouses, and street corners in pursuit of a shocking truth. **SUPERHEROES** was developed as part Cutting Ball’s 2013 edition of RISK IS THIS... The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival, one of the only play festivals in America solely dedicated to experimental works for the stage.

“My generation is marked by two epidemics: AIDS and crack. At the end of the day, my work must respond to that, personally and professionally,” said writer and director Sean San José. “*Superheroes* delves into the stories, lives, and communities forever affected by this war and epidemic. Recalling Catfish Row from the Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* and August Wilson’s Hill District in *King Hedley*, these stories and experiences live ghostly and gargantuan here today.”

Continued San José, “I am thrilled by the possibility of new collaborations and merging to more directly address and reflect the issues we are exploring with *Superheroes* and the lingering effects of the crack epidemic. I feel both inspired and challenged to meet Cutting Ball Theater’s commitment to broaden their output to more accurately and effectively reflect the community and neighborhood in which they reside.

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I feel the whole culture expands and benefits when we open ourselves up and broaden our horizons to collaborate on creating more storytelling opportunities. I am charged with the possibilities Cutting Ball and I have working with the communities of the Tenderloin and the Bayview, how we can learn from sharing these stories and bring new work to these non-theater spaces. I feel the partnership we are forging can be the mark of a new era in outreach and theater creation.”

“The theme for Cutting Ball’s 16th season is Injustice, in which we start by examining injustice here at home with the World Premiere of Sean San José’s *Superheroes*, a penetrating exploration of the crack cocaine epidemic in San Francisco,” said Cutting Ball Artistic Director Rob Melrose. “In the same way we asked our audiences to look at our neighborhood in a new way, to see the people and hear their stories, to see beyond the veneer of crime and decay with our 2012 production of *Tenderloin*, with *Superheroes* we ask audiences to consider the issues of social justice and drug use in San Francisco and how the veneer of crime and decay got here.”

Continued Melrose, “Partially inspired by former *San Jose Mercury News* reporter Gary Webb’s investigative journalism, *Superheroes* is a thread through the labyrinth of drugs, money, and addiction. What excites me about this play is that in addition to a documentary level of truth, Sean takes a brutal story and teases out the humanity in it, enabling the impact of the production to reach far beyond Cutting Ball’s theater walls. I have admired the work of Campo Santo and Sean San José since I moved to the Bay Area over 15 years ago and I am thrilled to be working with him at Cutting Ball on this stunning new work.”

Additionally, Cutting Ball received a \$40,000 Creative Work Fund grant and a \$10,000 Venturous Theater Fund grant to partially fund **SUPERHEROES**. The CWF grant is focused on the partnership that Cutting Ball has created with Glide Memorial Church; the company will present a small segment of the production at Glide during a Sunday Celebration, and writer/director Sean San José will work with Glide’s community on a series of writing workshops that encourage creative expression, particularly in relationship to experiences with the crack cocaine epidemic either as witnesses or survivors. Cutting Ball will also host a writing workshop for the Tenderloin community, which will include residents of the Cadillac Hotel and members of SF Recovery Theater. During the run of **SUPERHEROES**, San José will also hold workshops and work with the Bay View’s Bread of Life Church.

Sean San José is a writer, director, performer, and the former program director of the Performance Program for Intersection for the Arts and its resident company Campo Santo. He collaborated on works with more than 500 artists in his time at Intersection, overseeing, developing, and helping to create works for artists including Jimmy Baca, Junot Diaz, Dave Eggers, Chinaka Hodge, Denis Johnson, Dennis Kim,

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Luis Saguar, Greg Sarris, Vendela Vida, Philip Gotanda, Jessica Hagedorn, Naomi Iizuka, Octavio Solis, Daniel Alarcon, and Luis Alfaro. Additionally, San José was the creator and project director of Alma Delfina Group-Teatro Contra el SIDA and Pieces of the Quilt, a collection of more than 50 short plays confronting AIDS, which included original works by Rhodessa Jones, Danny Hoch, Edward Albee, Lanford Wilson, Irene Fornes, David Hwang, Craig Lucas, and Tony Kushner, among others. Recent awards include a Gerbode Foundation Playwright Collaboration Grant with Richard Montoya and one of the inaugural Irvine Foundation Artist Residencies for the de Young Museum.

Cutting Ball Theater has assembled a talented ensemble for **SUPERHEROES**. **Myers Clark**, who appeared in Cutting Ball’s productions of *The Death of the Last Blackman in the Whole Entire World* and *Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi*, returns to the company as Free in **SUPERHEROES**. Credits include productions at Campo Santo (*Angry Black Whiteboy*), American Conservatory Theater (*Holy Crime*), and the Douglass Morrison Theater (*An Ideal Husband*); he will appear in African-American Shakespeare Company’s upcoming production of *Xtigone* in 2015.

Juan Amador makes his Cutting Ball debut as Bayuncoso in **SUPERHEROES**. Credits include productions with Campo Santo (*Block by Block*, *Tree City Legends*, *Holy Crime*) and Shotgun Players (*Daylighting*). Also making his Cutting Ball debut is **Donald E. Lacy, Jr.** as Rev. Lacy is a writer, director, actor, comedian, and radio talk show host. Television and film credits include *Cherry* with James Franco, *Jack* directed by Francis Ford Coppola, *Blood In*, *Blood Out* directed by Taylor Hackford, the NBC drama *Trauma*, the ABC sitcom *Hangin’ With Mr. Cooper*. Stage credits include productions at Berkeley Repertory Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, and Odyssey Theater, among others. Since 1979, Lacy has been a weekly announcer on KPOO 89.5 FM.

Britney Frazier makes her Cutting Ball debut as Magnolia in **SUPERHEROES**. Credits include productions with Shotgun Players (*Daylighting*, *Bulrusher*, *The Voyage*), Intersection for the Arts (*Mirrors in Every Corner*), Lorraine Hansberry Theatre (*Fabulation*), Brava Theater (*Daughter’s Eyes*), and Marin Theater Company, among others. Also making his Cutting Ball debut is **Ricky Saenz** as Nicoya. He is a member of Campo Santo and was recently featured in *Placas* by Paul Flores at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre; small screen credits include roles on NBC’s *Southland* and *Trauma*, *The Mentalist* on CBS, and Hulu’s *East Los High*. **Delina Patrice Brooks** rounds out the cast of **SUPERHEROES** as Aparecita. A Bay Area native, Brooks has studied and performed across the U.S., Western Europe, the Philippines, and Guinea, West Africa. Credits include productions at African-American Shakespeare Company (*Cinderella*), Willows Theater (*Hair*), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts,

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Youth Speaks, Black Choreographers Festival, The Crucible, and Marc Bamuthi Joseph's Living Word. Additionally, she has performed with Zap Mama, Nas, and Damian Marley, among others.

Co-founded in 1999 by theater artists Rob Melrose and Paige Rogers, **Cutting Ball Theater** presents avant-garde works of the past, present, and future by re-envisioning classics, exploring seminal avant-garde texts, and developing new experimental plays. The company has commissioned, developed, and produced new experimental plays, and has partnered with Playwrights Foundation, and the Magic Theatre/Z Space New Plays Initiative to commission new experimental works. In addition to producing West Coast Premieres and re-imaging various classics, Cutting Ball Theater has produced nine World Premieres and seven World Premiere translations. Cutting Ball received the 2008 *San Francisco Bay Guardian* Goldie award for outstanding talent in the performing arts, and was voted “Best Theater Company” in the 2010 *San Francisco Bay Guardian* Best of the Bay issue. The company also earned the Best of SF award in 2006 and “Best Experimental Theater Company” in 2012 from *SF Weekly*, and was selected by *San Francisco* magazine as Best Classic Theater in 2007. Cutting Ball Theater was featured in the February 2010 and 2012 issues of *American Theatre Magazine*. In 2012, Cutting Ball was awarded a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to fund a three-year residency for resident playwright Andrew Saito. The American Theatre Wing, best known as the creator of the Antoinette Perry “Tony” Awards, awarded the company with a 2013 National Theatre Company grant.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT:

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SUPERHEROES Special Events – for more information visit cuttingball.com

Gala Opening Night – Friday, December 5, 8pm, \$50 tickets

November 23 – Pre-show Tea – 4pm

Happy Hour Fridays – meet and mingle 7-8pm

Preshow Talks (5 minutes) – before every show

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Friday talk back series with the artists – post-performance talks following every Sunday performance

Sunday talk back series – post-performance talks following every Sunday performance

- *November 23 – Creating Superheroes* – Cutting Ball Associate Producer/Literary Manager Rem Myers and Dramaturg/Resident Playwright Andrew Saito discuss how the play Superheroes grew from simple research to a fully staged production
- *December 7 – The (Legal) War on Drugs* – Hadar Aviram, Professor of Law at UC Hastings, discusses criminal justice, victims of the crack cocaine epidemic, and the war on drugs.
- *December 14 – Witnessing Superheroes* – Superheroes actor Donald Lacy shares stories from San Francisco in the 1980s and the destruction crack cocaine had on its communities
- *December 21 – Lingering Superheroes* – Playwright/Director Sean San José joins leads a discussion about the lingering effects of the crack cocaine epidemic that began in the 1980s and how it is still seen in our neighborhoods today

December 13 and 20 - Saturday matinee Tenderloin tours – 1pm - pre-show 30 minute tours of the Tenderloin with a focus on the history of immigrants in the neighborhood and those who currently live in and have helped to shape the community; led by Del Seymour of Tenderloin Walking Tours (\$15-\$19)

DATES: Previews: November 21-30, 2014

Opens: December 2, 2014

(Press opening: Tuesday, December 2; Gala Opening Friday, December 5)

Closes: December 21, 2014

All Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday performances at 7:30pm; Friday-Saturday at 8pm; Saturday at 2pm, and Sunday at 5pm

WHERE: The Cutting Ball Theater in residence at EXIT on Taylor, 277 Taylor St., San Francisco

TICKETS: For season membership, single tickets (\$10-50), and more information, the public may visit cuttingball.com or call **415-525-1205**; group discounts available. Pay What You Can tickets are available to neighborhood residents for all productions. Free student walk-up tickets are available to students with valid student ID.

PHOTOS: High-resolution digital color photos may be accessed at cuttingball.com/press or are available upon request by contacting [brightbutterfly\[at\]hotmail.com](mailto:brightbutterfly[at]hotmail.com)

The Cutting Ball Theater's 2014-15 season is made possible in part by The Compton Foundation, The Creative Work Fund, Grants for the Arts / San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Mental Insight Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, The Kenneth Rainin Foundation, The RHE Foundation, The San Francisco Arts Commission, The San Francisco Foundation, Venturous Theater Fund, The Zellerbach Family Foundation, and by individual donors. *Superheroes* is sponsored in part by Associate Producers Lisa Fischer, and Marty & Pamela Krasney.