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## **CUTTING BALL THEATER ANNOUNCES NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

*Paige Rogers to become Artistic Director  
Rob Melrose to be named Founding Artistic Director*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (April xx, 2016) – San Francisco’s cutting-edge **Cutting Ball Theater** today announced that after a productive year-long sabbatical, which included directing *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Old Globe Theater as well as *Ondine* and *A Dreamplay* at Cutting Ball, co-founder and Artistic Director, **Rob Melrose**, has decided to officially step down as Artistic Director to continue to focus on his creative work and freelance projects. Melrose will remain on the Cutting Ball Board and take on the title of Founding Artistic Director. He will continue to be creatively involved with Cutting Ball, including drafting a new translation of a French classic for the company’s upcoming season, however, he will no longer oversee the day to day operations of the theater. Co-founder **Paige Rogers** will step into the role of Artistic Director, a position that she has effectively been doing this past year as Acting Artistic Director while Melrose was on sabbatical; her tenure as Artistic Director officially begins with the end of the company’s 2015-16 season.

“I am so excited for this next phase in Cutting Ball’s history as well as the next phase of my own creative work,” said outgoing Artistic Director, Rob Melrose. “These past few years, I have had the opportunity to direct at The Public Theater, the Guthrie, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Old Globe, and PlayMakers Rep, among others. Working at some of the most respected theaters in the country has pushed my work forward and I am looking forward to pursuing more of these kinds of opportunities.”

Continued Melrose, “I couldn’t be happier about what we have accomplished at Cutting Ball so far. Paige and I dreamed about doing this kind of work when we were studying in Europe on a Fox Foundation Grant in 1997. Cutting Ball’s first show, Richard Foreman’s *My Head Was a Sledgehammer*, premiered in San Francisco in 1999 and was rehearsed in a kindergarten classroom with a production budget of \$450. Now Cutting Ball has a budget of over \$600,000, a three play season, and our own wonderful space at the EXIT on Taylor in the Tenderloin. More than the organizational accomplishments, I am proud of

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our productions and their legacy. We have produced an ambitious program of experimental new plays, seminal avant garde works, and re-envisioned classics that is quite unique in this country. I am proud of our new translations of plays by Ionesco, Jarry, Büchner, Maeterlinck, Sophocles, and Strindberg, especially our five play *Strindberg Cycle* marathon of August Strindberg's Chamber Plays as well as the many premieres of new plays we have done by playwrights pushing the boundaries of what theater can be, and the impressive number of playwrights that have come through our Risk is This Festival, including Katharine Sherman, Marcus Gardley, Annie Elias, Andrew Saito, Eugenie Chan, Sean San José, Basil Kreimendahl, Kevin Oakes, Liz Duffy Adams, Jen Silverman, Phillip Howze, Christopher Chen, Mark Jackson, Janet Allard, Anthony Clarvoe, Bennett Fisher, Trevor Allen, Christine Evans, Brad Chequer, Alex Johnson, and Caridad Svich.”

“What I am most proud of, however, are the productions from the two most-produced playwrights during my tenure as Artistic Director: William Shakespeare and Suzan-Lori Parks. Our innovative productions of Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Tempest*, helped distinguish Cutting Ball as a company and are what launched my national directing career. Our productions of Suzan-Lori Parks' *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, *Pickling*, *Betting on the Dust Commander*, and *365 Days / 365 Plays*, connected our theater to one of the greatest living playwrights and made us one of the hub theaters for the 365 Days / 365 Plays project.”

“I was a playwright before I was a director and it was such a pleasure to take time off from running a theater and directing plays to focus on writing again. I am looking forward to doing more writing and translating. I am doubly delighted that Paige Rogers will be taking over as Artistic Director. She did a phenomenal job as Acting Artistic Director during my sabbatical year and has a bold vision for Cutting Ball's future. In the eight months that I was gone, Paige secured \$150,000 in grant monies to install air conditioning in the theater and to remodel the lobby, redesigned the website, and rebranded the theater, Working closely with her mentors, Marc Vogl and Rob Orchard through the Rainin Foundation and the Bloomberg Foundation respectively, Paige has been hard at work planning an exciting and sustainable future for Cutting Ball. We are both excited about each other's artistic growth and how we have adjusted our lives to foster it.”

“Lastly,” said Melrose, “since I am not going anywhere I don't want to say goodbye, but I do want to take this moment of transition to thank all the individual donors, audiences, and deeply supportive foundations in the Bay Area, the city of San Francisco, the NEA, EXIT Theatre, Cutting Ball staff past and present,

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and most especially all the wonderful, talented, committed artists who have worked at Cutting Ball. It really took a host of people to get us where we are today and I am eternally grateful.”

“As co-founder of Cutting Ball Theater, I had a hand in building the organization from its inception in 1999, but the person driving the bus, so to speak, has always been Rob,” said incoming Artistic Director Paige Rogers. “Rob has directed over 25 plays for Cutting Ball and his artistic vision has helped the theater to become widely recognized and respected. It’s exciting to see him become more entrenched in the national theater scene and perhaps, in the near future, in the international scene as well; his departure from Cutting Ball just seems like a natural progression.”

Continued Rogers, “What also seems like a natural progression is my stepping into a larger role at Cutting Ball. As many of our patrons know, Rob and I have been married for nearly 25 years. I have always had one foot at the theater and another at home with our two children. This year has been an exciting one for me as I was called upon to lead the organization while Rob was on sabbatical; somewhat surprising to both of us, working 50 hours a week in the Tenderloin suited me quite well. As Rob will remain on Cutting Ball's Board and direct for us in the near future, this transition does not seem like a departure, rather a shifting of energies, and one that we are both thrilled about.”

Cutting Ball Theater closes its 17<sup>th</sup> season in May with August Strindberg’s **A DREAMPLAY**, directed by Rob Melrose, in a new translation by Paul Walsh. The company’s 2016-17 season will be announced on April 19<sup>th</sup>. For tickets or more information about Cutting Ball, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **415-525-1205**.

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

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the February 2010, 2012, and December 2014 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. Cutting Ball was also featured in the February 2015 issue of *American Theatre Magazine*.

The Cutting Ball Theater’s 2015-16 season is made possible in part by Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Fleishacker Foundation, 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, and The Zellerbach Family Foundation, and Season Producers Erik Blachford and Maryam Mohit, and Dave and Kate Yrueta.

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