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MARK VALDEZ NAMED MIXED BLOOD'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Valdez will succeed founder Jack Reuler after 46 years at helm

Mayor Frey Proclaims 2-22-22 "Mixed Blood Theatre Day" in the City of Minneapolis

(Minneapolis, MN) — After a 20-month national search, the Mixed Blood Theatre Board of Directors is thrilled to announce that director/playwright/organizer/activist **Mark Valdez will become the organization's second artistic director.**

Valdez has directed nine shows at Mixed Blood, served as a Resident Artist for two spans, and has participated in planning and producing for this progressive institution. His forte is partnering with communities, organizations, civic institutions, and others, using theatre and creative tools to address community needs and lift up community voices and stories.

"We are thrilled that Mark will become our next Artistic Director," said Tabitha Montgomery, former Board President, Interim Managing Director, and a member of the Succession Planning Committee. "Mixed Blood continues to benefit from the rich perspective and passion of the people who believe in its mission. This is evident from Jack's leadership in this moment of change, and in how board members along with staff are working enthusiastically to ensure Mark has a smooth transition to the creative helm."

Reuler, who founded Mixed Blood in 1976 at the age of 22, is equally enthusiastic about the choice of Valdez. "Mark has been a resident artist, guest director, playwright, organizer, advisor, confidant, and friend to Mixed Blood and me since 2006. Mark's belief in what theatre can be – as an art form, tool for social change, and instrument for justice – aligns with Mixed Blood's new strategic direction and our worldview. We are blessed that Mark has agreed to lead Mixed Blood and I can't wait to see how this progressive organization will evolve." Valdez is this year's recipient of SDC's Zelda Fichandler Award, Americans for the Arts' second Johnson Fellowship for Artists Transforming Communities, and the California Arts Council's 2021 Legacy Artist Fellow. He was director of Mixed Blood's production of *Vietgone*, which received an Ivey Award for its ensemble work in 2018. In partnership with Ashley Sparks, he created, wrote, and directed Mixed Blood's most recent work, *The Most Beautiful Home...Maybe*, about housing insecurity. That show is slated for runs in Los Angeles, CA; Syracuse, NY; and Mesa, AZ.

With Cornerstone Theater Company, an ensemble creating play in, with, and for communities across the nation, Valdez has served as Associate Director, head of Cornerstone's Institute, and now Board Chair. For seven years, he was the Executive Director of the Network of Ensemble Theatres (NET), a national alliance of artists and organizations committed to collaborative creation. He grew NET from 50 to 400 members and its budget from \$60,000 to \$900,000.

Valdez has authored and directed plays for Trinity Rep, The Alliance Theatre, Native Voices, Teatro Vision, East West Players, ChildsPlay, the Center Theatre Group, and more. He has served on the board of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and the Performing Arts Alliance as well as directed at numerous colleges and universities. He holds an MFA in directing from the University of California, Irvine.

As a consultant, Valdez has partnered with a variety of institutions interested in engagement and creative community development, including Americans for the Arts, Center for Performance and Civic Practice, Opera America, EMC Arts, LISC, the Irvine Foundation, Community Engagement and the Arts, and Arizona State University.

“Mixed Blood has been an artistic home for me, and I’ve had the privilege to see, first-hand, how the company lives its values of equity and inclusion,” said Valdez. “I am eager to build on this work. We can use the tools and skills of theatermaking—imagination, consensus building, meaning making—to support our communities and our peoples. Mixed Blood’s new strategic direction asks us do just that. This is the work I care most about and I’m lucky to have found a home in Mixed Blood that shares these priorities.”

Seven board members, led by Artistic Logistics of Georgia, comprised a Succession Planning Committee that created a plan, raised funds, and conducted an extensive nationwide search for the Artistic Director. In addition, Seema Sueko (then Deputy Artistic Director at Arena Stage), Michael Rohd (founder and former Artistic Director of Sojourn Theatre), Laura Zabel (Executive Director of Springboard for the Arts), and Michael John Garces (Artistic Director of Cornerstone) participated in the interview process.

Valdez will be in residence part-time March-May 2022 and begin full-time June 6, 2022. Reuler’s final day will be July 6, such that his tenure spans 2-2-76 to 7-6-22, a fact of deep importance to him! Valdez will curate programming and the budget for 2022-23s.

The City of Minneapolis has proclaimed February 22, 2022, as “Mixed Blood Theatre Day in the City of Minneapolis.” Mayor Frey’s proclamation reads

Whereas the US has been divided by the isms that plague America

Whereas the City of Minneapolis has a Strategic and Racial Equity Action Work Plan to activate and operationalize its aspiration to champion and model equity at all levels

Whereas the culturally-rich arts community of Minneapolis can be a platform to both reveal social justice changes that need to be made and drive those changes to occur

Whereas the Mixed Blood Theatre has used its art form to disrupt injustice, advance equity, and build community throughout the City of Minneapolis for 46 years

Whereas Mixed Blood has remained an anchor in the vibrant Cedar Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis since 1976

Whereas Artistic Director Jack Reuler has led Mixed Blood since its Bicentennial inception to 2022, and inspiring new leadership now takes it into its future

Now, therefore, I, Jacob Frey, Mayor of the City of Minneapolis, do hereby proclaim 2-22-22 as MIXED BLOOD THEATRE DAY in the City of Minneapolis.

