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Contact:

David Alex – Program Chair

mrdavidalex@yahoo.com

Jeffrey Marks – Media Chair

media@jeffawards.org

David Liesse – Jeff Awards Committee Chair

chair@jeffawards.org

JEFF AWARDS PRESENTS PUBLIC INTIMACY DESIGN PANEL WITH ACCLAIMED DESIGNERS AND DIRECTORS

CHICAGO – The Jeff Awards committee presents a panel conversation on the art and challenges of intimacy design on Tuesday, August 17 at 7:30 pm at the Greenhouse Theater. The discussion will be led by Intimacy Directors International co-founder Tonia Sina and Chicago actors and directors Sasha Smith and Gaby Labotka. Members of the public are welcome and encouraged to attend the program.

Panel Members Bios:

- **Tonia Sina** is the Executive Director and co-founder of Intimacy Directors International (IDI), based in Oklahoma City. Her numerous credits for Intimacy Choreographer include *The Bakkhai* at the Stratford Festival in Ontario, Canada. She is also an international sexual harassment prevention advisor for theatre and film.
- **Sasha Smith** is a Chicago-based actor, violence and intimacy choreographer and Steep Theatre ensemble member. Chicago intimacy choreography credits include *You Got Older* (Steppenwolf), *Smart People* (Writers Theatre), *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* (Haven Theatre), *The Toilet* (Haven Theatre), *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Gynecologic Oncology Unit At Sloan-Kettering Memorial Cancer Center Of New York City* (Route 66), *Ideation* (Jackalope), and *Octagon* (Jackalope).
- **Gaby Labotka** is an actor, director, and choreographer with training in intimacy design by IDI. Recent Intimacy Choreography work includes *Tilikum* (Sideshow); *Don't Smoke in Bed* (Chimera Ensemble); *Another*



Jungle (CloudGate Theatre); *Through the Elevated Line* (Silk Road Rising), *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* (First Floor Theater); *A Swell in the Ground* (The Gift); and *Survivor Story: A Workshop* (Transcendent Ensemble Theatre).

Intimacy Design

Intimacy design is choreographing intimate scenes for the stage that “creates safe places for dangerous work,” according to the Intimacy Directors International (IDI) website. IDI goes on to state that “The choreography of these scenes must accurately tell the characters' stories, as intended by the writer through the interpretation of the director and the actors involved, while respecting the physical and psychological safety of all involved.”

Sina’s intimacy design method, as recently featured in the NY Times, American Theatre Magazine, CBC Radio and several other publications and radio shows, borrows from the protocols of fight direction, with the same allegiance to keeping actors safe in potentially dangerous circumstances. “With stage combat, you can get stabbed in the eye or punched in the face,” she said. “This is emotional and mental health, which is just as important.”

Intimacy design is gaining significantly increased attention and utilization in the theatre, including Chicagoland theatre. Particularly in the last few years, controversy involving the portrayal and implementation of sexual behavior onstage in Chicago theatre companies has received local and national media attention.

For years now, the Jeff Awards Committee member meetings feature various program topics about theatre as continuing education for its members. In 2018 the committee began opening these programs to the public as part of an effort to expand its educational and community missions. If interested in attending the August 14 program, please email David Liesse, Jeff Awards Committee Chair at chair@jeffawards.org.

Joseph Jefferson Awards

The Jeff Awards has been honoring outstanding theatre artists annually since it was established in 1968. With up to 55 members representing a wide variety of backgrounds in theatre (including producers, directors, actors, playwrights, designers, professors of theatre, entertainment lawyers and agents, and theatre lovers), the Jeff Awards is committed to celebrating the vitality of Chicago area theatre by recognizing excellence



through its recommendations, awards, and honors. Opening night judges include not only the members but also Artistic & Technical theatre volunteers (the “A/T Team”), including Artistic Directors, producers, directors and artists from Chicago theatres. The Jeff Awards fosters the artistic growth of area theatres and theatre artists and promotes educational opportunities, audience appreciation, and civic pride in the achievements of the theatre community. Each year, the Jeff Awards judges over 300 theatrical productions and host two awards ceremonies. Originally chartered to recognize only Equity productions, the Jeff Awards established the Non–Equity Wing in 1973 to celebrate outstanding achievement in non–union theatre. The next Equity Awards will be held on Monday, October 22, 2018, at Drury Lane Oakbrook.

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