



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Contact: David Hyry (415) 864-3547
daldenh@aol.com

CROWDED FIRE THEATER ANNOUNCES ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

SAN FRANCISCO (February 18, 2015) – **Crowded Fire Theater (CFT), one of the Bay Area’s most innovative and critically acclaimed producers of new plays, today announced the hiring of Mina Morita as the new Artistic Director.** Morita replaces Marissa Wolf, who resigned from her post in December 2014 to become Director of New Works at Kansas City Rep. Morita’s hire is the result of a national search that saw applications from over 40 talented candidates. As Artistic Associate at Berkeley Rep, Morita helped establish and run The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work. Mina also served as Board President of Shotgun Players for the past five years, during which she oversaw immense growth for the company. She will be leaving both positions to lead Crowded Fire in collaboration with longtime Managing Director and current Executive Producing Director Tiffany Cothran.

“This is a hugely important moment for the organization,” states CFT Board President Peter Glazer, who also led the Search Committee constituted in October 2014 to find Wolf’s successor. “We couldn’t be happier. Mina is one of the most respected voices in new works development in the Bay Area, and a brilliant director. Now she will bring her formidable talents to CFT, to help shape our vision for the future. The board, the resident artists, and the staff welcome her with great excitement and enthusiasm.

Now embarking on its 18th season, Crowded Fire’s recent growth has been significant, with the company more than doubling its budget and deepening support for new play development through the formalization of *The Matchbox: Commissioning and Development Program*. CFT is known for taking bold artistic risks and supporting artists, including emerging playwrights, early in their careers.

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"I am deeply honored and thrilled to be joining the leadership team of this exceptional organization," said Morita. "Crowded Fire has long been a vital nexus for new play development and an essential home for talented artists. I look forward to being a curious, compassionate, and innovative champion of Crowded Fire's legacy."

In April, Morita will direct the second show in Crowded Fire's season, the West Coast premiere of *Blackademics* by Idris Goodwin. The company's season opens this month with A. Rey Pamatmat's *Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them* and will close in October with the American premiere of *Truck Stop* by Lachlan Philpott. Morita will officially assume the role of Artistic Director by May of 2015.

Mina Morita is the Artistic Associate at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and a member of the leadership team of The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work. During her time at Berkeley Rep, Mina has artistically coordinated the Fireworks Festival, directed *Crazy Wisdom Saves the World Again*, and directed a staged reading of *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later*. As assistant director there, she has worked with a number of directors including Tony Taccone for Tony Kushner's *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*, and with Les Waters for Sarah Ruhl's *In The Next Room, or the vibrator play* (which received a Tony nomination). In 2012, Mina worked with Anna Deavere Smith as the artistic coordinator for her play *On Grace* at Grace Cathedral.

As a freelance director, she has worked at Shotgun Players (*By and By*, *The Great Divide*, and *The Norman Conquest's Round and Round the Garden*), Just Theater (*Underneath the Lintel*), TheatreFIRST (*Fire Work*), Sleepwalkers Theatre (*The Nature Line*), Aurora Theatre Company's Global Age Project, Playwrights' Foundation, Impact Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, and Bay Area Children's Theatre, among others. She is the proud recipient of Theatre Bay Area's 2014 award for *Best Director of a Musical: Tier II* for her development of *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* a new musical produced by Bay Area Children's Theatre.

Currently, Mina is directing Crowded Fire alum Christopher Chen's *Aulis: An Act of Nihilism in One Long Act* at UC Berkeley's Zellerbach Playhouse. She is also thrilled to be directing J.C. Lee's *Crane* at Ferocious Lotus Theatre and Idris Goodwin's *Blackademics* at Crowded Fire Theater Company later this year.

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Mina recently served as Board President of Shotgun Players and is one of the original founders of Bay Area Children's Theatre where she served as interim Executive Director in 2011. She is currently enjoying a three-year tenure on the Zellerbach Family Foundation's Community Arts Panel. She holds a degree in directing from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, was awarded the Bret C. Harte Fellowship at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, received the National Arts Strategies Future Leadership Fellowship, and participated in the 2014 Lincoln Center Director's Lab. www.minamorita.com

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