

Crowded Fire Theater

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Press Page: www.crowdedfire.org/press/

**Crowded Fire Theater presents the World Premiere of
Christopher Chen's
A TALE OF AUTUMN**

A psychological rise-to-power fable.

September 14 - October 7, 2017
at the POTRERO STAGE (formerly known as the Thick House)
1695 18th St, San Francisco
(press opening Monday, September 18)

San Francisco - Crowded Fire Theater (CFT) In his inaugural commission as Crowded Fire's Playwright-in-Residence, Christopher Chen tackles the power structures inherent in large corporations. Set in a parallel world, *A TALE OF AUTUMN* is a psychological rise-to-power fable. Founded with the rebellious notion of 'Ambitious Citizenship,' Farm Company operates with an aggressive altruism in pursuit of the common good. When the popular founder of this benevolent but formidable company dies, the struggle to find a successor unfolds in an eerily familiar landscape. With each twist and turn, Christopher Chen creates a perilous 'House of Mirrors,' in which intentions are blurred and convictions are shattered.

Inspired by Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, along with popular "quest-for-power" TV shows *Game of Thrones* and *House of Cards*, this is Chen's third commission and world premiere with Crowded Fire. "Chris' distinct humor and experimentation with multi-theatrical and meta-theatrical form fits perfectly with Crowded Fire's uncompromising persistence in using art to disrupt what we accept as cultural norms" says Crowded Fire Artistic Director Mina Morita, who will direct the piece. Past Chen-Crowded Fire collaborations include the commissions and world premieres of *The Hundred Flowers Project* (a co-commission with Playwrights Foundation) and *The Late Wedding*.

"My work deals foremost with systems of power—how they are structured, perpetuated and how they wend their way into the most intimate psychological spaces," says Chen. Born from a concern over the ever increasing power of corporate personhood in present day capitalism, the play considers how the surrealism of our current national moment is a logical conclusion of this underlying dynamic. *A TALE OF AUTUMN* will look at how each individual's complicity and buy-in perpetuates systems of power even when they seek to interrupt them.

The cast includes Ed Berkeley, Maria Candelaria, Skyler Cooper, Nora el Samahy, Sarah Nina Hayon, Michele Apriña Leavy, Lawrence Radecker, and Christopher W. White. Designers include Adeline Smith (scenic), Ray Oppenheimer (lighting), Miriam R. Lewis (costume), Theodore J.H. Hulsker (sound/video), and Devon LaBelle (props). Development dramaturgy provided by Laura Brueckner. Production dramaturgy by Sarah Rose Leonard. Support for this project comes from The Kenneth Rainin Foundation (NEW Program), The National Endowment for the Arts (ArtsWorks), The San Francisco Arts Commission (OPG), The Tournesol Foundation, and The Venturous Theater Fund of the Tides Foundation.

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A TALE OF AUTUMN runs at the Potrero Stage (formerly known as the Thick House), 1695 18th Street in San Francisco September 14 through October 7 (press opening Monday, September 18). Cast photos available at <http://www.crowdedfire.org/a-tale-of-autumn/>.

BIOS:

Christopher Chen (Playwright) is the 2017 Obie winner for playwriting for his play *Caught* (*NY Times* Critics Pick, Barrymore Award, Drama League Nomination). Other works include *The Hundred Flowers Project* (the Glickman and Rella Lossy Awards, James Tait Black Award shortlist), *Into The Numbers* (Belarus Free Theater International Playwriting Competition- 2nd Place), *The Late Wedding*, *Mutt*, *Aulis: An Act of Nihilism in One Long Act*, *You Mean To Do Me Harm*, and *Home Invasion*. Honors include the 2017 Lanford Wilson Award; the 2015-2016 Sundance Institute/Time Warner Fellowship; the Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, through which he was playwright in residence at The Vineyard. Upcoming world premieres include *Passage* at The Wilma. He is currently under commission at American Conservatory Theatre, The Aurora, LCT3, Manhattan Theatre Club and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Chris is a founding member of 6NewPlays, and is the resident playwright at Crowded Fire. A San Francisco native, Chris is a graduate of U.C. Berkeley, and holds an M.F.A. in playwriting from S.F. State.

Mina Morita (Director/Artistic Director) previously served as the Artistic Associate at Berkeley Repertory Theatre—and a founding member of its Ground Floor program; as Board President of Shotgun Players; as a 2014 Lincoln Center Director's Lab participant; as one of the founding members of Bay Area Children's Theatre; and Community Arts Panelist with the Zellerbach Family Foundation. In 2015, Mina was honored to share her story on TEDx, and in 2016, she was chosen as one of the YBCA100, for "asking questions and making provocations that will shape the future of culture." She has had the privilege of directing the following plays, among many others: *Aulis: An Act of Nihilism in One Long Act* by Christopher Chen @ Zellerbach Playhouse, *Sisters Matsumoto* by Philip Kan Gotanda @ Center Rep, *By and By* by Lauren Gunderson & *The Great Divide* by Adam Chanzit @ Shotgun Players, and co-directed *The Shipment* by Young Jean Lee & *Blackademics* by Idris Goodwin @ Crowded Fire. Memorable assistant directing credits include Tony Kushner's *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide...* and Sarah Ruhl's Tony-nominated *In The Next Room...* @ Berkeley Rep. In 2012, she worked with Anna Deavere Smith as the artistic coordinator for *On Grace*. Mina was awarded Best Direction of a Musical for Min Kahng's *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* in 2014 by Theater Bay Area.

CAST:

Ed Berkeley (Gil) is a Bay Area based Actor who is originally from the East Coast. This is one of Ed's final projects in the Bay Area and also one of the dearest to him. This is his debut "Crowded Fire Theatre". Ed has been busy around the bay for the past two years working with companies such as: SF Playhouse in "Colossal", The Custom Made Theatre in "In Love and Warcraft", NCTC in "From White Plains", and TheatreFirst in "Bagyó", The Cutting Ball Theatre's "Phèdre" as "Hippolytus", and NCTC's world premiere of "Warplay" as "A".

Maria Candelaria (Rena) is a San Francisco-based actor. She has acted in world premieres for such playwrights as Luis Valdez and Octavio Solis and in theatrical adaptations of groundbreaking literary works like Junot Diaz's Pulitzer Prize novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. She has had the pleasure of working with California Shakespeare Festival, Campo Santo, Intersection for the Arts, Thick Description, Word for Word, Aurora Theatre, Shotgun Players, San Diego Repertory Theatre and El Teatro Campesino. She has a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California at Davis.

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Skyler Cooper (Yul) is thrilled to be back on the stage and with Crowded Fire once again. Skyler was wooed to the theater through Shakespeare. Skyler discovered he had an affinity toward gender bending. He went from playing Othello the moor (Director, Melissa Hillman) to Queen Margaret (Director, Jon Tracy). Skyler brought his talents to television and film. Then took some time off to write, produce and direct his award-winning short film *Hero Mars*, about limitations of gender-stereotypes inside the world of classical theater actor. Skyler trained in acting with Phil Bennett Lab, A.C.T., and a Summer internship with the California Shakespeare Company. Gratitude for this moment, you for being here with us, and for what art can do! Skylercooper.net

Nora el Samahy (San) is delighted to be working with Crowded Fire on a Christopher Chen piece. She is a proud company member of Campo Santo and Golden Thread Productions. She has worked with Aurora Theatre, Magic Theatre, foolsFURY, Traveling Jewish Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Exit Theater, Shotgun Players, The San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, African American Shakespeare Company, among others. In 2013 Nora founded a performance company called *Affinity Project* with Atosa Babaoff, Beatrice Basso and Emily Hoffman. Nora is a Pilates teacher and co-owner of *studio 74 pilates* with business partner Jennifer Moulton. Love and gratitude to Patrick and Ziyad.

Sarah Nina Hayon (Mariana) is a bi-coastal actress and three-time Drama Desk Nominee, most recently seen in Danny DeVito's *Curmudgeons* which premiered at Tribeca Film Festival and launched Vimeo's Staff Picks Premieres and Bekah Brunstetter-penned (*This Is Us*) webseries *Heirloom*. Last fall she received a TBA nomination for her role in Rachel Bond's World Premiere of *Swimmers* directed by Mike Donahue. She is proud member of LAByrinth Theater Company, Partial Comfort and Rising Phoenix Repertory. Passionate about new play development, she has workshopped new plays on Broadway and Off-Broadway including Yale, New York Stage and Film, Manhattan Theatre Club, The Roundabout, New Dramatists, INTAR, The Public Theatre, and NYTW. Recent Theater Includes: *Bright Half Life* (Magic Theatre, Jessica Holt) *Life Is A Dream* (Cal Shakes, Loretta Greco), *This Golden State* (Magic Theatre, Loretta Greco), *Water By The Spoonful* (The Old Globe, Eddie Torres). TV & FILM: *Curmudgeons*, *Heirloom*, *Unforgettable*, *Parker & Maggie*, *Are We There Yet*, *The Green*, *SATC*, *Law & Order*, *Avatar*. Upcoming Theater: Lucy Thurber project with RPR directed by Daniel Talbott.

Michele Apríña Leavy (Gesalm/Council Person) has been a Resident Artist with Crowded Fire Theater since 2004 and has developed and premiered many roles. She last appeared with the company in *Blackademics*. Most recently she was seen in Brava Theater Center's production of *Ghost Limb*. Bay Area theater credits include: American Conservatory Theater, Alameda Civic Ballet, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, BRAVA Theater Center, Bay Area Playwrights Festival 2014, Center Repertory Company, California Conservatory Theater, Livermore Shakespeare Festival, Marin Theatre Company, and TheatreWorks, among others. In farther locales, she has appeared with Theatre Key West (Florida), The Elephant Theatre Company (Los Angeles), and Theatre 167 (New York City). Michele serves on Crowded Fire Theater's Literary Committee and is also a core member of BALTAN – the Bay Area Latino Theater Artists Network.

Lawrence Radecker (Dave) is a resident artist and has developed and debuted roles in a number of Crowded Fire world premieres including *The Listener*, *Sticky Time*, *Invasion!*, *The Bereaved* and Chris Chen's *The Late Wedding*. Some of his credits outside of CFT include, *The Night Alive* at San Jose Stage, *The Heir Apparent* at Aurora Theatre, *Arctic Requiem* for Bootstrap Theatre, *Buried Child* and *Dogeaters* at Magic Theatre and Chris Chen's *Mutt* at Impact Theatre.

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Christopher W. White (Xavier) was Cofounding Artistic Director of Mugwumpin from 2004-2016. With Mugwumpin, he co-created and performed in *Blockbuster Season* and conceived and performed in the performance installation *Luster* at the Asian Art Museum. He directed Mugwumpin's *The Great Big Also* (2013) and co-created and performed in *Future Motive Power* (2012), *Super:Anti:Reluctant*(2006/2008 Cairo tour), and *This Is All I Need* (2010/2011 European tour), among others. Other credits include Lance in Richard Montoya's *The River* (Campo Santo), Christopher in Montoya's film *The Other Barrio*, Simon Stimson in *Our Town* (Shotgun Players), co-creator and performer in *A Hand in Desire* and *Monkey Gone to Heaven* (EmSpace Dance), puppet design/construction/direction for *Coraline* (SF Playhouse), plus shows with the Magic Theater, Banana Bag & Bodice, foolsFURY, Lunatique Fantastique, the SF Opera, and others. He's written for *American Theatre*, *TheatreForum*, *Theatre Bay Area*, and *Howlround*. MFA: Naropa University/London International School of the Performing Arts; BA: Yale University.

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For Calendar Editors:

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directed by Mina Morita

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PERFORMANCES:

Wed-Saturdays 8 PM with Special Opening Night Performance on Monday, September 18, 8PM

Tickets: Prices range from \$10-\$35 progressively during the course of the run.

We offer Pay-What-You-Can Preview performances and student/senior/group rates.

Tickets: Visit www.crowdedfire.org for more information and to purchase tickets.

Box Office by phone (415) 523-0034 ext 1

www.crowdedfire.org or (415) 523-0034 ext 0

Cast photos available at <http://www.crowdedfire.org/a-tale-of-autumn/>