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**STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY ANNOUNCES
2016 – 2017 TOP TEN “STANDOUT MOMENTS”**

(April 25, 2017—New York, NY) On Monday night, April 24th, at its semi-annual Membership meeting, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, the national theatrical union representing stage directors and choreographers across the United States, announced the 2016-2017 Top Ten “Standout Moments.”

The Top Ten “Standout Moments” were established by SDC’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee in 2016 to recognize the important contributions directors and choreographers make every day to create a more inclusive and diverse theatre.

“Standout Moments” subcommittee co-chair Karen Azenberg stated, “I am inspired by my colleagues who make choices each and every day around the country that contribute so clearly to increasing access and advancing diversity and inclusion in the American theatre. The Union is proud to recognize the work so many Members are doing, particularly in these hard times, to protect the vision and ambition of artists and communities.”

Committee co-chair Seret Scott presented this year’s awards, sharing key elements of SDC’s Statement of Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion, released in April of 2016. “SDC believes that the American Theatre must reflect the great diversity of our nation and affirms its commitment to equitable hiring practices in order to achieve that goal.” Seret went on to add that, “it is essential to our work as directors and choreographers that we acknowledge that in the creative enterprise of making theatre, we have a great deal of influence, responsibility, and decision making power in the industry.” <http://sdcweb.org/diversity-inclusion/>

The 2016-2017 Top Ten “Standout Moments” Honorees are, in alphabetical order:

Michael Baron for his inclusive production of *Fiddler on the Roof* at Lyric Theatre, which featured Deaf performers communicating using ASL in principal roles and onstage ASL interpreters. Baron is working to document and share this model so that it may be used by other organizations interested in replicating the process and increasing the access of Deaf performers and audience members to their productions.

Jo Bonney for her work on *Trans Scripts, Pt. 1: The Women* at American Repertory Theatre. Drawn from verbatim interviews from around the world the *Trans Scripts, Pt. 1: The Women* provided a portal into the rich and diverse experiences of the Trans community. This timely, moving, and effective production, featured an inclusive cast with six of seven actors identifying as transgender, many performing onstage for the first time.

Tisa Chang, Tim Dang, Leslie Ishii, Mia Katigbak, Meena Natajara, Bill Rauch, and Randy Reyes for their work on the 5th National Asian American Theater Conference and Festival (ConFest) hosted by Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) and produced by the Consortium of Asian American Theaters and Artists (CAATA). The ConFest shared the highest number of Pan Asian Pacific Islanders (API) theatrical works ever produced on a single non-API theatre campus within one festival and one season in the United States and strengthened the Asian American Theatre Movement. The ConFest also convened the first Central/West Asian and Arab/Middle Eastern Artist Pre-Conference, as well as hosted the Beyond Orientalism Pre-Conference and National Cultural Navigation Theatre Project.

Saheem Ali, Sammi Cannold, Rachel Chavkin, Lear deBessonet, Moisés Kaufman, Jenny Koons, Tina Landau, Lorin Latarro, Rebecca Martinez, Lisa Peterson, Sam Pinkleton, Leigh Silverman, Liesl Tommy for their work on the Ghostlight Project Steering Committee. On January 19, 2017 nearly 500 theatres across the country participated in an initiating action uniting the theatre community across the country to stand in support of the rights of all citizens and artists. The Ghostlight Project is a resource for theaters, arts communities, and individuals to identify and create meaningful action steps, or to continue in the social justice work already underway. The Ghostlight Project was initiated by designer David Zinn.

Wendy C. Goldberg for her work establishing and leading the National Directors Fellowship. In the first two years of this five-year joint initiative between the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, National New Play Network, Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and SDC Foundation, the first ten directors selected for the program represented a diverse group of artists working independently and within institutions both nationally and internationally.

Devanand Janki for the creation and ongoing leadership of the Bingham Camp Theatre Retreat, a new play center for stories written by and for actors of color. In 2016-2017, Janki and his team successfully produced a workshop of a new musical written and performed by actors of color which garnered artistic praise and tangible commercial interest for future projects. Bingham Camp Theatre Retreat grows larger and more effective each season, thanks to Janki's ongoing leadership and commitment.

Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj for directing and choreographing the world premiere of *The Ballad of Trayvon Martin* at New Freedom Theatre. Maharaj was appointed Artistic Director in 2016, and *The Ballad of Trayvon Martin* marked a thoughtful and relevant first production. He conducted extensive outreach and worked particularly with Mothers in Charge (mothers who have lost their children to gun violence), inviting them to stand, be seen, and speak the names of their slain children at each performance.

Shakina Nayfack, Founding Artistic Director of Musical Theatre Factory, for creating and leading the Representation Roundtables. Representation Roundtables are drop-in song clinics and safe

spaces for People of Color, Women, and Trans Identified artists. These Roundtables support underrepresented writers and provide an entry point to other MTF development programs for writers of color, women, and trans writers.

Bill Rauch for his ongoing commitment to diversity as seen in the programming of the 2017-2018 Season at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. For the second year in a row, OSF is producing four new plays by writers of color with an acting company that is majority of color, and has hired several women-identifying and/or directors of color to helm its productions.

Chay Yew for the 2017-2018 Season at Victory Gardens Theater. All of the plays selected for production are written by women and will be directed by five directors, two of whom are women and three of whom are of color. This season is groundbreaking on a national level and thrilling for Chicago theatre.

The 2016-2017 Top Ten “Standout Moments” were selected by SDC’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee, co-chaired by Michael John Garcés (Cornerstone Theatre) and Seret Scott (freelance director), with Christopher Ashley (La Jolla Playhouse), Karen Azenberg (Pioneer Theatre Company), Donald Byrd (Spectrum Dance Theater), Wendy Goldberg (Eugene O’Neill Theater Center), Joseph Haj (Guthrie Theatre), Mark Lamos (Westport Country Playhouse), Lisa Portes (DePaul University), Seema Sueko (Arena Stage), and Talvin Wilks (Ensemble Studio Theatre). The Standout Moments are recognized annually, with nominations solicited from the entire SDC Membership.

SDC is the theatrical union that represents 4,000 professional stage Directors and Choreographers throughout the United States. Its mission is to foster a national community of professional stage directors and choreographers by protecting the rights, health, and livelihoods of all its Members.

SDC has jurisdiction over the employment of directors and choreographers working in the following areas: Broadway and National tours, Off-Broadway, ANTC (Association of Non-Profit Theatre Companies, New York City), Resident Theatre (League of Resident Theatres–LORT), Resident summer stock companies (Council of Resident Stock Theatres –CORST/TSS), Dinner Theatre (Dinner Theatre Agreement–DTA), Regional Musical Theatre (RMT), and Outdoor musical stock (OMS).

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