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PRESS RELEASE

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MARVIN'S ROOM

January 21 – February 27, 2022

ACTORS CO-OP THEATRE COMPANY To Open *MARVIN'S ROOM* 1/21/2021

The Intermission is Over! The Award-winning Actors Co-op Theatre Company is proud to present ***Marvin's Room***, winner of the 1991-1992 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play, written by Scott McPherson, directed by Thomas James O'Leary, produced by Crystal Yvonne Jackson and Carly Lopez.

Marvin's Room tells the story of two sisters Lee and Bessie who could not be more different and, though sisters, have not seen each other for almost two decades. During that time Lee has been raising two challenging boys on her own. Bessie has been caring for their father, along with his soap opera-obsessed sister. Now the two are thrown together as Bessie has just been diagnosed with leukemia and needs a bone marrow transplant. ***Marvin's Room*** is real, hopeful, compassionate, and absurdly funny.

In addition to the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play, ***MARVIN'S ROOM*** also garnered the 1991–1992 Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off-Broadway Play, the John Gassner Award for Best New American Play, and the 1991 Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award.

What critics have said about the play

"...***Marvin's Room***...mordantly and ruefully truthful as ever...acute and piercingly funny. – Broadway News

"...McPherson's ***Marvin's Room***...pained yet comforting play cuts its sentiment with laughing-into-the-darkness comedy, just this side of absurdism, that reflects the influence John Guare and Christopher Durang...it also suggests a deep understanding of illness and sacrifice..." – TimeOut NY

"...written with a blazing, tender accuracy that grips you with the force of revelation..." - The Village Voice.

“...the themes of death, love, duty, care and service are frugally intertwined in a play of considerable emotional resonance. Laughing one minute, we are shuddering with a stealthy empathy the next. Death has rarely seemed more interesting or love so complex.” - NY Post.

“My first impulse after seeing Mr. McPherson’s play was to gather those I care about close to me and take them into MARVIN’S ROOM so that they, too, could bask in its bouncing, healing light.” - NY Times.

The original production of **MARVIN’S ROOM** premiered at the Goodman Theatre Studio in Chicago in 1990, directed by David Petrarca. The original cast featured Laura Esterman (Bessie Wakefield), Lee Guthrie (Lee Wakefield Lacker), Mark Rosenthal (Hank), and Jane MacIver (Aunt Ruth). It played at The Hartford Stage, opening November 1990, Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons November 15, 1991 through February 23, 1992. The play re-opened Off-Broadway at the Minetta Lane Theater in March 1992 and closed on September 6, 1992, directed by David Petraca.

The play was performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, from September 1992 to October 1992, directed by David Petrarca; at the Hampstead Theatre in London in 1993 and transferred to the West End at the Comedy Theatre for a short-run.

The Los Angeles production played at the Tiffany Theater in 1994, was produced by Paula Holt and Susan Alschuler in association with Patricia L. Glaser, and directed by Dennis Erdman. The cast featured Mary Steenburgen as Bessie, Jean Smart as Lee, Chad Cox as Hank, and Jane Cecil as Ruth.

A Broadway production of **MARVIN’S ROOM** ran at the Roundabout Theatre Company at the American Airlines Theatre June 8 to August 27, 2017, directed by Anne Kauffman. The cast included Janeane Garofalo, Lili Taylor, Jack DiFalco, and Celia Weston.

MARVIN’S ROOM has garnered numerous awards including the 1991 Dramatists Guild Hull-Warriner Award, 1991 John Gassner Award for Best New American Play, 1991-1992 Obie Award for Distinguished Performance by an Actress - Laura Esterman (winner), the 1992 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play, the 1992 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Actress in a Play - Laura Esterman, and was the Runner-up for the 1992 Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best American Play.

In addition, the play was adapted into a film also called **MARVIN’S ROOM** in 1996, directed by Jerry Zaks, with a script by John Guare, and starring Meryl Streep, Diane Keaton, Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, Hume Cronyn and Gwen Verdon. In 1997 the film was nominated for the following awards: 69th Academy Awards - Best Actress (Diane Keaton), 54th Golden Globe Awards -Best Actress, Drama (Meryl Streep), 3rd Screen Actors Guild Awards - Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture, 3rd Screen Actors Guild Awards -Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role (Diane Keaton), and 3rd Screen Actors Guild Awards - Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role (Gwen Verdon).

The Actors Co-op cast features the talents of Tara Battani, Justin Bowles, Francesca Casale*, Brian Habicht*, Dean Hermansen, Crystal Yvonne Jackson, Marek Meyers and Kimi Walker*

The production team includes Set Design by Nicholas Acciani, with David Atkinson and Jeff McGrail, Lighting Design by Avery Reagan and Martha G. Carter, Sound Design by David B. Marling, Costume Design by E.B. Brooks, Property Design by Lori Berg. Rounding out the Production Team are Stage Manager Kassy Menke, Assistant Costume Designer Annie Szeliski, and Assistant Stage Manager Ryver Townsend.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

SCOTT MCPHERSON (Playwright) was an actor and writer. His first full-length play, *'Til the Fat Lady Sings*, was directed by Eric Simonson at Chicago's Lifeline Theatre and was nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Citation for Best New Work. His one-act, *Scraped*, was produced by Chicago New Plays at the Organic Theatre. He has appeared in the Goodman Theatre's production of *Red River*, as well as productions at Victory Garden Theater, Next Theatre, and Steppenwolf Theatre. He has also written television shows for Fox, WGN-TV, and NBC. He wrote an original screenplay for Norman Lear's Act III Productions and worked on the screen version of *Marvin's Room* for Paramount Pictures, and wrote a play commissioned by the Goodman Theatre. *Marvin's Room* is his second full-length play. He is the recipient of a 1991 Whiting Writer's Award for *Marvin's Room* and an honorable mention in the 1991 National Arts Club Joseph Kesselring Prizes.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

THOMAS JAMES O'LEARY** (Director) is delighted to be back at Actors Co-op after directing *The Christians* and *33 Variations*, which received four 2018 Ovation Awards - for Directing, Scenic Design, Lighting Design and Best Production of a Play in an Intimate Theatre. Other recent directing credits include *Sunday in the Park with George* (Musical Theatre Guild), *Next to Normal* (Pico Playhouse), *Flim Flam: Houdini and the Hereafter* (Malibu Playhouse), *Dusty de los Santos* and *Bloodletting* (Skylight Theatre), *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Carrie*, *Aida*, *Sister Act*, *Nine*, *How to Succeed in Business...* and *Kiss Me, Kate* (AMDA), *Reserve Champion* and *A Horse with a View* (Hollywood Fringe Festival), and *The Escape Artist's Children* (Celebration Theatre). Thomas thanks the brilliant directors whom he studied while performing in their celebrated productions. Thomas was blessed to have worked with Hal Prince when he played the title role in *The Phantom of the Opera* on Broadway for more than 1,000 performances, and with Nicholas Hytner, when he originated the role of Captain Schultz in Broadway's first production of *Miss Saigon*. He was also in the first national companies *Les Misérables*, directed by John Caird and Trevor Nunn, and *Chess*, directed by Des McAnuff. Here in LA, Tom received the LA Weekly Award for his portrayal of Mason Marzac in Celebration Theatre's *Take Me Out*. Tom is a proud member of SDC, AEA and SAG-AFTRA.

ABOUT THE CAST

TARA BATTANI (Lee) was last seen as Alma in *Summer and Smoke*, for which she won a "Best Actress" Scenic and was nominated for a Stage Raw Award for "Best Female Lead Performance." Other LA credits: *The Spitfire Grill* (Narrator); *The Miracle Worker* (Annie Sullivan); *Days of Wine and Roses* (Kirsten Clay); *The Traveling Lady* (Georgette); *The Philadelphia Story* (Tracy Lord); *Chapter Two* (Jennie); *The House of Yes* (Jackie-O); and *Gypsy* (Gypsy.) Special thanks to her generous friends and family who did extra baby-sitting hours for Natalie so she and Justin could share the stage telling this lovely story. Grateful.
www.TaraBattani.net

JUSTIN BOWLES (Marvin/Bob) has worked on a number of contemporary characters and plays including Hal in *Proof*, Marty in *The House of Yes*, and Jake in *Jake's Women*; and has also played a number of original characters and portrayals, his favorites being both God and Jesus. Realizing how quick and unabating certain cancers and illnesses can take hold, Justin would like to commend all of the courageous people who were able - and are able to fight off illnesses and sicknesses, and would like to pray for and honor all of those who lost the arduous battle.

FRANCESCA CASALE* (Bessie) Stage Raw nomination lead actress *All My Sons* (Lounge Theatre); Ovation nomination supporting actress West Coast Premiere *The Fastest Clock...* (Celebration Theatre); (LADCC) nominee McCulloh Award *Orpheus Descending* (Theatre Theatre); West Coast Premiere *A Nervous Smile* (I.C.T.); *The House of Blue Leaves* (Matrix Theatre); *Beggars...House of Plenty* director Larry Moss (Theatre Theatre); *Light Up... Sky, Translations* (Actor's Co-op). At nationally recognized Colony Theatre, produced, acted in numerous productions...*Lost in Yonkers*; *Other People's Money*; *David's Mother*; *Morning Star*. Film/TV...*Sons of Anarchy*, *World Trade Center*, *Detective*, *One Wish*, *Law and Order*, *Life on Liberty Street*, *General Hospital*. For my Boyo's!! www.francescacasale.com

BRIAN HABICHT* (Dr. Wally) Brian is delighted to be a part of *Marvin's Room*, with this very talented Cast, Director, and Crew. Previous Co-op credits include: *Lucky Stiff*, *Summer and Smoke*, *The Matchmaker*, *1940's Radio Hour*, *Makin' Hay*, *Freddie Wyatt's Christmas*, *The Boy's Next Door*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Fantastiks*, *1776*, *She Loves Me*, *The Curious Savage*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Damn Yankees*. Brian can be seen in network television commercials, CONAN O'Brien as a recurring sketch performer, as well as independent films and voicing animation projects. Many thanks to Hollywood Presbyterian Church and Co-op subscribers. Enjoy the Show. Carpe Deo!

DEAN HERMANSEN (Hank) is excited to join the cast of *Marvin's Room*. Dean was scheduled to be seen as Shakespeare in a production of *Something Rotten* in 2019 but he found out, "It's hard to be the Bard" when the world shuts down. Dean's previous credits include *The Music Man* where he won a National Youth Arts Award for "Outstanding Lead Performance" playing Harold Hill, *Cinderella* (Jean Michelle), *The Human Comedy* (Toby), *Wait Until Dark* (Sammy Golden), *Prelude to a Kiss* (Taylor), and *Mary Poppins* (Robertson Ay). This is Dean's first time at Actors Co-op and he is profoundly grateful to director Tom O'Leary for his faith in him. Fun fact: Dean's first time on stage was playing Prince Charming in *Into the Woods*, directed by his teacher, Tara Battani, who is now playing his mom in *Marvin's Room*.

CRYSTAL YVONNE JACKSON (Ruth) studied drama at Howard University. Last seen on stage as the Stage Manager in *Our Town* at Actors Co-op. Her other theatre credits include Ma Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Calpurnia in *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Lead Chorus in *Electra* at WCE to name a few. Film credits include Momma in *Collusions*, Linda in *Green Plaid Shirt* and Crystal Miller in *Destiny's Child*. She also enjoys producing her credits include *She Loves Me*, *A Body of Water* and *The Water Tribe*. Crystal also serves as producer on *Marvin's Room*. Thank you God for always guiding me!

MAREK MEYERS (Charlie) is thrilled to be a part of this wonderful production with Actors Co-op Theatre Company for his stage debut. Moving to California from Connecticut in the summer of 2013 at age 3, Marek caught the acting bug while hanging around on set with his big brother, Will. His natural ability to learn lines and his animated personality made it easy for him to transition from the sidelines to the spotlight. He has enjoyed work in print jobs and on film, but has always dreamed of taking the stage. His training and preparation at Second City Hollywood has only strengthened that desire. Marek would like to express immense gratitude to the beautiful artists of Actors Co-op Theatre Company for taking him under their wings and giving him this incredible opportunity.

KIMI WALKER* (Doctor Charlotte/Retirement Home Director) is a long-time member of Actors Co-op and has produced several shows for this acting company including: *The Learned Ladies*, *And Then There Were None*, *Lend Me a Tenor*, and *The Baker's Wife*. Her productions of *A Perfect Likeness* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* were both nominated for Ovation awards. As an actor Kimi has worked extensively in regional theatre. In Los Angeles she has worked with Theatre of Note, Sacred Fools, The Blank Theatre, Acme Theatre, The L.A. Opera, Paul Morse Company, The Bilingual Foundation of the Arts, The Tamarind Theatre, The Ford, and Antaeus. Most recently, she produced and played the Ghost of Christmas Past in First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood's production of *A Christmas Carol*.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION TEAM

NICHOLAS ACCIANI (Set Design) is a Los Angeles-based scenic and projection designer. Scenic design highlights at the Actors Co-op include *33 Variations* (2017 Ovation Award: Scenic Design, 2017 LADCC Award Nominee), *Violet* (2018 Ovation Award Nominee: Best Production), *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *Hound of the Baskervilles*, and *The Last Five Years*. Other Scenic Design favorites include *Forbidden Tour* (Todrck Hall), *The 39 Steps* (Dean Productions), *Den of Thieves* (2Cents Theatre), *DNA* (Red Cup Theatre), *The Claw*, and *Boxes* (Theatre West). A writer, actor, and director as well, Nicholas teaches and designs at CSArts-SGV and hosts an informational Backstage Youtube series. www.nicholasaccianidesign.com.

LORI BERG (Property Design) directed *Collected Stories*, a Co-op Too! 2019 production. Prior to that, she portrayed Clairee in the Co-op production of *Steel Magnolias*. She has propped and staged scores of shows at Actors Co-op. She proudly serves as a Board member of Actors Co-op, her theatre home, and teaches performance all over greater L.A. She designs and produces art for several boutique venues.

E.B. BROOKS** (Costume Design) Actors Co-op: *The Christians*, *Cats Paw*. Regional: *Off the Rails*, *Manahatta* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (2018 Ovation Award, 2018 L.A. Drama Critics Circle Award), *Bad Jews*, *Wait Until Dark*, *Good People* (Geffen Playhouse), *Billy and Ray* (Laguna Playhouse), *Ten Chimneys* (Artists Repertory Theatre), *They Don't Talk Back* (La Jolla Playhouse). International: *Nightwalk in the Chinese Garden*, *Fantomas* (Center for New Performance/ Wu-Zhen Theater Festival, China). Los Angeles: *Hit the Wall* (2016 Stage Raw Nominee) at the L.A. LGBT Center, Celebration Theater, East West Players, Boston Court, Black Dahlia. Awards: 2010 L.A. Weekly Award for Best Production Design (*Brewsie and Willie*); 2010 Ticket Holder Award (*Blithe Spirit*). Film/ TV: Abominable Picture's *Improvised Shakespeare Project*, Defy Media's *Men at Arms* hosted by Danny Trejo, *Screen Junkies*, *Warp Zone*, *Smosh Games*, *Clevver TV*. Affiliations: Member of United Scenic Artists 829 and Costume Designers Guild 892. Education: BFA University of Maryland, MFA California Institute of the Arts.

MARTHA G. CARTER (Lighting Design) is based out of Los Angeles. She is Head of Design and an Assistant Professor at Cal State Long Beach and enjoys collaborating with ensemble companies to create new work that incites positive change within communities. Some of her recent credits include: *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (Actors Co-op), *Miss Lilly Gets Boned* (Rogue Machine), *Driving Miss Daisy* (The Laguna Playhouse), *A Little Night Music* (Madison Opera), *The Penal Colony* (Long Beach Opera), *Cinderella* (Long Beach Ballet), *Famous* (The 11:11), *Peter Pan* and *Evita* (Panama City Panama).

NORA FELDMAN (Publicist) is on staff at Actors Co-op Theatre Company, The Group Rep, and The Whitefire Theatre. She has publicized numerous theatre productions and events such as World Championships of the Performing Arts and Experience NoHo. Nora has also served as producer of the theatre component for the NoHo Theatre & Arts Festival, NoHo Scene, and Experience NoHo. Nora is married to actor Steve Peterson.

CARLY LOPEZ (2020 Producer) is a member at Actors Co-op and has previously produced *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Christians*, and *The Mystery of Irma Vep*. She currently works at the Pasadena Playhouse and when not working is in a Playback Theatre troupe that utilizes practical theatre for team building, spiritual formation, and storytelling. This is her second time working with Tom as her director and wishes to thank him for the passion, openness, and curiosity he brings to the rehearsal room. Just as Bessie is a transformative presence for her family, Tom, you are a transformative presence for me and all of Co-op. Break a leg to the cast and crew!

DAVID B. MARLING (Sound Design) has added his sound character in many live productions and independent films over the past 29 years. Dave is happy to be back at Actors Co-op working on *Marvin's Room*. He has received over 30 Ovation nominations with three wins: *Napoli Millionaria*, *The Woman in Black* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. Last season Actors Co-op received the Ovation's Best Production for *33 Variations*. The Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP has nominated him six times with three wins. *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Gem of the Ocean* and *Transition*. He is also a University Professor of Theater Sound. DavidBMarling@WavMagicAudio.com

KASSY MENKE (Stage Manager) is excited to be working back with Actors Co-op! She studied at SJDC before receiving her B.A. in Theater Arts from Cal State Northridge. She works in live theater and the entertainment field exploring different avenues such as photography (Kassandra Faith Photography), acting, and production work. Some of her favorite credits in stage management include: *Miracle on 34th Street A Live Radio Musical Play*, *The Forgotten Fort* taken to Desert Hearts Music Festival and LiB Festival, *A Lie of the Mind*, and *Boom!*. She is thankful for God, her family and friends for the constant support and love. #LiveLikeLance #SammysWarriors

DYLAN PRICE (Original Music) is a composer and pianist from Syracuse, NY. He is currently based out of Los Angeles where he works as a freelance composer for Hans Zimmer's Bleeding Fingers Music. His latest work with them has been writing for the shows *Master Chef*, *Master Chef Junior*, and the recently premiered *Lego Masters* series on Fox. In addition, he regularly contributes music to Sony/ATV's Extreme Music production music library from which his tracks have been licensed for over 100 television shows worldwide. Additionally, he serves as Piano Accompanist and instructor at the performing arts college AMDA (American Musical and Dramatic Academy) and as pianist/organist at the Community United Methodist Church of Pacific Palisades. This is his third collaboration with the Actor's Co-op after having previously music directed for their productions of *33 Variations* and *The Chrstians*.

AVERY REAGAN (Lighting Design) is a lighting designer based out of Los Angeles. Originally hailing from Atlanta, Georgia, Avery made her way out west to receive her Master of Fine Arts in Lighting Design with the University of California, Irvine. She enjoys collaborating with artists as a storyteller through light. Some of her recent credits include: *The Tale of Turandot* (Imagine Project), *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (The Los Angeles Shakespeare Center), *The Servant of Two Masters* (The Great River Shakespeare Festival), and *The Penelopiad* (Claire Trevor School of the Arts).
www.averyreagandesigns.com

ANNIE SZELISKI (Assistant Costume Designer) is excited to work on her first production with Actors Co-op Theater Company. She re-located from Seattle to Los Angeles in early 2019 to work in costumes. She has assisted E. B. Brooks on several other shows including *Mysterious Circumstances* at Geffen Playhouse and *Sweet Land* at The Industry.

RYVER TOWNSEND (Assistant Stage Manager) is a recent graduate from AMDA College and Conservatory (2020) and is so excited to be working with Actors Co-op Theatre Company for one of his first theatrical jobs post-graduation. While Ryver loves the technical side of theatre, he also acts in many projects. His most recent role was Christian Bechdel in *Fun Home!* He would like to thank his AMDA instructors, including Thomas James O'Leary, for all the knowledge and opportunities shared.

ABOUT ACTORS CO-OP

In its 28th Season of transforming theatre, Actors Co-op operates two 99-seat Equity-approved theatres on the campus of First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. Actors Co-op began in 1987 with a dozen actors. Currently, its membership exceeds 50 professionals. Called “a 99-seat miracle” by Daily Variety, Actors Co-op’s numerous awards for theatre excellence include the Los Angeles Drama Critics Polly Warfield Award for “Outstanding Season” (2013) in a small to mid-sized theatre, sixteen Ovation Award nominations including “Best Season” (2013-2014), the Margaret Harford Award for “Sustained Achievement” in smaller theatre from the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle as well as the Charlie Award for “Excellence in the Arts” by the Hollywood Arts Council.

RECENT AWARDS AND NOMINATIONS FOR ACTORS CO-OP THEATRE COMPANY
Actors Co-op won the 2018 Ovation Award for Direction of a Musical by Richard Israel for their critically acclaimed production of *Violet*. The company takes pride in Four 2017 Ovation Awards for their Critics Pick production *33 Variations*: Best Production of a Play, Intimate Theatre, Best Lighting, Intimate Theatre – Andrew Schmedake, Best Scenic Design, Intimate Theatre - Nicholas Acciani, and Best Direction of a Play – Thomas James O’Leary; Two Robby Awards *33 Variations*, Nan Martin Award Best Production and Sally Kemp Award Best Actress Drama - Nan McNamara. In addition, Actors Co-op Theatre Company garnered Five 2017 Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle nominations for *33 Variations*. In addition, *Steel Magnolia*’s director, Cameron Watson, became recipient of the 2018 Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Milton Katselas Award for Distinguished Achievement in Direction at the LADCC Awards Ceremony at the Pasadena Playhouse. For more than a quarter century, ACTORS CO-OP has been bringing audience members world-class theatre.

WHAT: MARVIN’S ROOM

WHEN: January 21 – February 27, 2022

Fridays at 8:00 pm; Saturday & Sunday Matinees at 2:30 pm

WHERE: The David Schall Theatre, 1760 N. Gower Street, Hollywood 90028, on the campus of First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood

TICKETS: Adults: \$35, Seniors (60+) \$30, Students w/School ID: \$25. Group Rates and Student Rush Fridays (excluding opening night) available.

RESERVATIONS/INFORMATION: (323) 462-8460 or visit www.actorsco-op.org

Current covid policy: Patrons must show proof of full vaccination and wear a mask while inside the theater complex.

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To interview talent, request complimentary tickets or for production photos please contact nora.feldman.pr@gmail.com