

La Jolla Playhouse Names Mike Lew and Rehana Lew Mirza 2018 Artists-in-Residence

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces that married playwrights Mike Lew and Rehana Lew Mirza have been named the Playhouse's newest **Artists-in-Residence** beginning in April, 2018. During their residency, they plan to continue work on their Playhouse-commissioned trilogy: ***The Colonialism Project***, as well as a new musical, ***Bhangin' It***.

"The Artist-in-Residence program reinforces the Playhouse's mission to serve as a supportive and profound home for artists," said **Playhouse Artistic Director Christopher Ashley**. "Mike and Rehana both possess riveting new voices in the theatre, and it is deeply gratifying to be able to offer them this joint residency to develop new projects together and immerse themselves in the day-to-day operations of the Playhouse."

A co-commission from La Jolla Playhouse, ***The Colonialism Project*** is an ambitious time-spanning trilogy about colonialism and its aftermath. Through three interconnected full-length plays that together comprise an epic evening of theater, this work seeks to trace the scars of colonialism across nations and centuries, from British Raj in India, to plantation labor in the Caribbean, to the ripple effects of colonialism in America today. One of the plays in the trilogy, *Child of Colonialism*, had its first reading as part of the Playhouse's DNA New Work Series in 2017.

Bhangin' It, featuring a book by Rehana Lew Mirza and Mike Lew with music and lyrics by Sam Willmott, draws inspiration from the high-stakes world of intercollegiate competitive bhangra – a traditional Indian folk dance morphed into a good ole American dance-off. The story follows a biracial student, Mary, who gets kicked off her bhangra team for not being "Indian enough." When she forms a team of her own, cultural authenticity and cultural pluralism are set on a collision course in this brash, intoxicating and gripping new musical.

This multi-month artist residency program is designed to give artists the freedom to focus on their ongoing body of work, while becoming fully immersed in all aspects of the institution, from the stage to the boardroom to the classroom. Previous appointees have included Tony Award-winning actor and writer **BD Wong** (Playhouse's *Herringbone*, *The Orphan of Zhao*, playwright/director for POP Tour production of *Alice Chan*), acclaimed scenic designer and UC San Diego graduate and current faculty member **Robert Brill** (Playhouse's *SUMMER: The Donna Summer Musical*, *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*, *The Wiz*, among many others) and MacArthur "genius" Grant recipient **Basil Twist** (Playhouse's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dogugaeshi*, WOW Festival productions of *Seafoam Sleepwalk* and *Faetopia*).

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Mike Lew's acclaimed play *Tiger Style!* was part of the Playhouse's 2016/2017 season. The work enjoyed additional productions at Alliance and Huntington Theatres, as well as workshops at O'Neill, CTG, and Juilliard. His plays include *Teenage Dick* (upcoming productions at Ma-Yi Theater at the Public, Artists Rep and Perseverance Theatre), *microcrisis* (Ma-Yi, InterAct, and Next Act productions), *Stockton* (AracaWorks and EST workshops), *People's Park* (Victory Gardens workshop), *In Paris You Will Find Many Baguettes...* and *Roanoke* (Humana Festival/Actors Theatre of Louisville) and *Moustache Guys*. Lew is a Tony voter, Dramatists Guild Council member, and co-recipient (with Mirza) of a Mellon Foundation residency at Ma-Yi Theater. Honors include Lark Venturous and NYFA fellowships as well as the PEN, Lanford Wilson, Helen Merrill, Heideman and Kendeda Awards.



Rehana Lew Mirza's *Child of Colonialism* was commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse and was part of the Playhouse's 2017 DNA New Work Series. She is an HBO Access Fellow and Colt Coeur artist, and together with Mike she holds a Mellon National Playwright residency at Ma-Yi Theater. Her other plays include: *Soldier X* (Ma-Yi and Brooklyn College; Kilroys selection; NYSCA commission); *Lonely Leela* (LPAC); and *Barriers* (Desipina; AATC). Honors include a 2016 Lilly Award (Stacey Mindich commission), NNPN commission via InterAct, Rita Goldberg Playwrights' Workshop and IAAC residencies at the Lark, Primary Stages' Dorothy Strelsin Writers Group, TCG/New Georges fellowship, Tofte Lake residency, and E.S.T./Sloan commission. M.F.A.: Columbia University. B.F.A.: NYU's Tisch. rehanamirza.com.

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Currently led by 2017 Tony Award-winning Artistic Director Christopher Ashley and Managing Director Debby Buchholz, the Playhouse was founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer. Playhouse artists and audiences have taken part in the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 95 world premieres, commissioning 50 new works, and sending 32 productions to Broadway, among them the currently-running hit musicals *Come From Away*, *Escape to Margaritaville* and *SUMMER: The Donna Summer Musical*, garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, including the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. For more information, visit LaJollaPlayhouse.org

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