



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HISTORIC GARDEN THEATRE NAMES THREE NEW EXECUTIVES
TO LEADERSHIP TEAM**

***Non-profit arts organization fills roles of Artistic Director, Marketing Director
and Development Director to maximize efforts during its
monumental 10th anniversary season.***

WINTER GARDEN, FL (October 9, 2017) - The Garden Theatre today welcomes three new staff members to its core leadership team: Rob Winn Anderson as Artistic Director, Melissa Braillard as Marketing Director, and Linn LeBlanc as Development Director. All three professionals bring a combined 55 years of experience in non-profit arts, marketing and development. Their wide breadth of passions and skills position Winter Garden's historic theatre for continued success during its 10th anniversary season and beyond.

A noted playwright, director and choreographer, Rob Winn Anderson first joined the Garden Theatre staff as Consulting Artistic Director during the 2015-2016 Season, after working with the organization on many projects over the years. As a playwright, Anderson has been a winner and finalist for some of the theater industry's most prestigious awards and development programs. Several of his works have been produced around the country, including his stage show for Viking Cruises, *La Peregrina*, which was ranked as one of the five best new stage shows on cruise ships in 2015 by the Cruisers' Choice Awards.

Anderson's directorial works at the Garden include *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Bonnie & Clyde*, *The Whale* and *Alice Lost in Wonderland* (Beth Marshall Presents), and *Christmas by Committee*. Elsewhere, his

credits include: *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Southeastern U.S. premiere), *The Rainmaker*, *Shipwrecked*, and *She Loves Me* to name a few.

“Directing for the Garden Theatre has been incredibly fulfilling, both creatively and professionally. So much so, that I was drawn to becoming a permanent part of this one-of-a kind organization,” said Rob Winn Anderson, Artistic Director. “I look forward to forging new creative alliances within the Central Florida community and helping to propel the Garden into its next decade.”

Getting her start in arts marketing and nonprofit administration at the Village Theater in Issaquah, WA, Melissa Braillard most recently served as the Director of Marketing at Orlando Shakespeare Theater in Partnership with UCF for more than six seasons. During her tenure, Braillard helped lead Orlando Shakes toward its goal of becoming a nationally recognized center for Shakespeare and new plays. She also contributed to the creative team that developed and executed the *Les Miserables* Flash Mob at the Mall at Millenia, which has now been viewed by more than 3 million people on YouTube. An accomplished public speaker and advocate for the arts, Melissa regularly leads workshops at regional and national arts marketing events, including the Edyth Bush Institute for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership and the Brevard Cultural Summit.

Melissa holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Theatre from Washington State University, a Masters of Fine Arts in Theatre from the University of Central Florida, and Leadership Practice Certificate from Rollins College Edyth Bush Institute for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership.

With a strong love for the theater and a solid background in securing major gifts, Linn LeBlanc comes to the Garden Theatre following her service at several high-profile nonprofit organizations over the last twenty years, including the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation (ASF) and Buzz Aldrin’s ShareSpace Foundation. She has executed more than 300 events worldwide with American heroes and celebrities such as John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, Tom Hanks and John Travolta.

Skilled in institute advancement, she grew ASF’s endowment from \$1.9 million to \$9 million through the acquisition of grants, major gifts, individual giving, sponsorships and partnerships. Linn holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Communications and Public Relations from the University of Central Florida, and a Nonprofit Fundraising, Development, Management and Leadership Practice Certificate from the Rollins College Edyth Bush Institute for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership.

Under direction of Garden Theatre Board President Paul Oppedisano and a board search committee, Executive Director Nao Tsurumaki led the thorough effort to find the three talented and passionate individuals who would reinforce the Garden's mission to "enrich, engage, and entertain through creative experiences."

The installation of three new directors to the Garden Theatre staff concludes the transition of leadership. Current Executive Director Nao Tsurumaki began his role on July 10 after former Executive Director Alauna Friskics transitioned to the Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival. Tsurumaki heads the effort to further grow the Garden Theatre and has been charged with maintaining artistic integrity, developing additional educational endeavors, and amassing confidence surrounding the organization.

"This is great news for the Garden and for the local arts community," said Tsurumaki. "They each bring a wealth of experience, a broad perspective of our diverse community, and an unwavering belief for the future of the Garden Theatre. The installation of three new leaders will add to the positive momentum the Garden has enjoyed as we celebrate our 10th anniversary."

"We can't wait to see the remarkable things this new leadership team will accomplish together," said Paul Oppedisano, president of the Garden Theatre Board. "We all look forward to this dynamic team's leadership as we enter the next phase of organizational and artistic excellence."

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ABOUT THE GARDEN THEATRE

Garden Theatre of Winter Garden celebrates its 10th anniversary during the 2017-18 performance season. Originally built in 1935 as a single-screen cinema, the theatre was the first in Central Florida built for "talkies" and was a gathering place for locals to watch the latest newsreels and films of the day. The building was restored to its former glory in 2008, and the 299-seat Garden Theatre, with a current annual budget of nearly \$1.5 million, has grown to a performing arts center with extensive programming that includes professional live theatre, concerts, dance, special events, movies and a thriving summer camp and arts education program. Visit www.gardentheatre.org or contact 407-877-4736 for details about the 2017-2018 season.