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**Berkshire Leadership Summit Announces Keynote Speaker and Presenters**

LEE, MA - WAM Theatre is excited to release the program schedule of the upcoming **Berkshire Leadership Summit**, taking place on Saturday, October 28 and Sunday, October 29, 2017 in the Elayne P. Bernstein Center for the Performing Arts at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Mass. Over 20 nonprofit theatre leaders, professional experts, and resource providers will be leading a cohort of 80 attendees from across the United States and Canada through a series of programs that will develop their vocabulary, skills, and strategies for successful leadership.

**Michelle Hensley**, Founder and Artistic Director of Ten Thousand Things Theater in Minnesota, will be providing the keynote address. Ms. Hensley will discuss her efforts, as an artistic director finding herself in a very male world, to create a place where she could work and live with her values intact - a central theme of this pilot event.

Michelle Hensley has directed and produced over 25 years of award-winning drama brought directly to nontraditional audiences in prisons, shelters and housing projects, as well as the general public in and around Minneapolis through Ten Thousand Things Theater. A McKnight Theater Fellow, Ms. Hensley was named the Star Tribune's Best Artistic Director in 2012, received the Francesca Primus Prize for outstanding contribution to the American theater by a female artist, published her book *All The Lights On* in 2015, and just last month received the Ivey Award for Lifetime Achievement.

The keynote speech will kick off the weekend summit which is filled with panels, plenaries, and conversations. 16 skill building sessions will be offered on topics ranging from fundraising to board development, and will be led by over a dozen experts in the field including **Patricia Bonner-DuVal**, President of Bonner Enterprises; **Debbie Chinn**, Executive Director of Opera Parallèle; **Jenna Deja**, Vice President at Arts Consulting Group; **David J. Diamond**, Theatre Consultant, Producer, and Founder of Career Coaching for Artists; **Mandy Greenfield,** Artistic Director of Williamstown Theater Festival; **Julie Hennrikus**, Executive Director of StageSource; **Joan Lancourt**, Founder of Greater Boston Theater Board Leaders Group; **David Mallette**, Partner at Management Consultants for the Arts; **Dr. S. Atyia Martin**, Chief Resilience Officer at City of Boston; **Laura Penn**, Executive Director of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society; **Ellen Richard**, Executive Director of Laguna Playhouse; **Sarah Shampnois**, Managing Director of Company One; and **Erin Washington**, Founder of Soul Center.

"By directly addressing the common barriers outlined in the A.C.T./Wellesley Centers for Women research, our goal is to provide such intentional training resources and direct action that there is no question that these candidates are positioned and prepared to lead with success." said Rachel Fink, member of the Berkshire Leadership Summit Steering Committee. "We have gathered a remarkable group of current and future leaders and I am so excited to witness their collective power as they mobilize to impact our field for the better."

Other program highlights include:

* Saturday plenary session: **Leadership Shifts: From the Wellesley Report to Executive Search**

This group discussion, moderated by **Rachel Fink**, Managing Director of Theatre Bay Area in San Francisco and Berkshire Leadership Summit Steering Committee member, will use the findings from the Wellesley Centers for Women/A.C.T. research as a springboard for a conversation about current hiring practices in the nonprofit theatre, industry efforts towards gender parity, and tactics to address the barriers to advancement detailed in the study. Panelists include **Emika Abe**, Assistant Managing Director of Alliance Theatre; **Michelle Bonoan**, Managing Director at Koya Leadership Partners; and **Ineke Ceder**, Research Associate at Wellesley Centers for Women as well as **Jenna Deja**, **Joan Lancourt**, **David Mallette**, and **Laura Penn**.

* Sunday plenary session: **Successive Leadership: Leading on While Passing the Baton**

This plenary, moderated by **Liz Diamond**, Chair of the Directing Department at Yale School of Drama and Resident Director at Yale Repertory Theatre, will tackle what leadership development looks like over the lifespan of a career, as well as transitioning leadership skills and positions to a new generation of women. Panelists include **Martha Richards**, Executive Director of WomenArts, and **Hana Sharif**, Associate Artistic Director of Baltimore Center Stage.

* Sunday pinnacle conversation: **A Clarion Call for Advancement**In this final conversation, moderated by **Erin Washington**, attendees will hear from leaders in the field who have taken action on women's leadership and discuss what’s next. Panelists include **Carol Dunne**, Producing Artistic Director at Northern Stage; **Joy Meads**, Co-Founder of The Kilroys and Literary Manager/Artistic Engagement Strategist at Center Theatre Group; and **Kristen van Ginhoven**, Artistic Director of WAM Theatre and Berkshire Leadership Summit Steering Committee chair.

Summit organizers are also thrilled to announce that the keynote address, plenaries, and pinnacle conversation will be livestreamed on the global, commons-based peer produced **HowlRound TV** network at [howlround.tv](http://howlround.com/tv). The **keynote presentation** will be livestreamed on Saturday, Oct 28 at 9:30 a.m. EDT (New York) / 8:30 a.m. CDT (Chicago) / 6:30 a.m. PDT (Los Angeles). **Saturday’s plenary session** will be livestreamed on Saturday, Oct 28 at 4:00 p.m. EDT (New York) / 3:00 p.m. CDT (Chicago) / 1:00 p.m. PDT (Los Angeles). **Sunday’s plenary session** will be livestreamed on Sunday, Oct 29 at 11:15 a.m. EDT (New York) / 10:15 a.m. CDT (Chicago) / 8:15 a.m. PDT (Los Angeles). The **pinnacle conversation** will be livestreamed on Sunday, Oct 29 at 1:30 p.m. EDT (New York) / 12:30 p.m. CDT (Chicago) / 10:30 a.m. PDT (Los Angeles).

More information about the Berkshire Leadership Summit schedule can be found at <http://www.wamtheatre.com/berkshire-leadership-summit-2017/>.

**ABOUT THE BERKSHIRE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT**

The pilot Berkshire Leadership Summit will be hosted by WAM Theatre on October 28 and 29, 2017, in the Elayne Bernstein Performing Arts Center at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Mass.

The summit is informed and supported by the research that American Conservatory Theater commissioned from the Wellesley Centers for Women. The HowlRound blogpost about the study can be found at<http://howlround.com/women-s-leadership-research-results-and-recommendations>

Sponsors and supporters for the summit include Lynn and Richard Atkinson, Hannelore Voness, Joan and James Hunter, Jack and Suzy Wadsworth, Arwen Lowbridge of Baystate Financial, Classical Tents, Blue Q, ZONTA Club of Berkshire County, and the donors of the GoFundMe campaign.

The Berkshire Leadership Summit Steering Committee: Kristen van Ginhoven, Artistic Director of WAM Theatre; Akiba Abaka, Audience Development Manager at ArtsEmerson; Rachel Fink, Managing Director of Theatre Bay Area; and Shafer Mazow, who currently works at the Exploratorium in San Francisco and was a lead developer and organizer of the Women’s Leadership Project and convening.

The BLS Advisory Committee includes Ineke Ceder and Sumru Erkut, authors of the Wellesley Study; Elena Chang, Associate Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at TCG; Mandy Greenfield, Artistic Director at Williamstown Theatre Festival; Carey Perloff, Artistic Director at American Conservatory Theatre who commissioned the Wellesley study; Laura Penn, Executive Director of the Society of Stage Director and Choreographers; and Martha Richards, Executive Director of WomenArts.

**ABOUT WAM THEATRE**

Based in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, WAM Theatre is Where Arts and Activism Meet. The company was co-founded in 2010 by Canadian director, actor, educator, and producer Kristen van Ginhoven. WAM’s vision is to create opportunity for women and girls through the mission of theatre as philanthropy. Inspired by the book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, WAM donates a portion of the proceeds from its theatrical events to organizations that benefit women and girls. Since 2010, WAM Theatre has donated more than $32,500 to twelve nonprofit organizations and provided paid work to more than 200 theatre artists. In addition to the main stage productions and special events, WAM Theatre’s activities include a comprehensive educational outreach program and the Fresh Takes Play Reading Series. For more information, visit [www.WAMTheatre.com](http://www.wamtheatre.com/)

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