



**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY
OPENS 25TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON WITH
“DEAR MASTER”
September 2 - October 2, 2016**

BERKELEY, Calif. (August 11, 2016) – **Aurora Theatre Company** proudly opens its 25th anniversary season with a revival of the play that started it all, **DEAR MASTER**. **Joy Carlin** (*The How and The Why, Talley’s Folly, Jack Goes Boating*) helms this elegant portrait featuring Bay Area favorite **Michael Ray Wisely** (*The Letters, The Arsonists*) and Aurora’s first leading lady **Kimberly King** (Edward Albee’s *A Delicate Balance*), wife of Aurora co-founder **Ken Grantham**, who played Flaubert in the original production. **DEAR MASTER** plays **September 2 through October 2** at the Aurora Theatre in Berkeley. For tickets (\$32-56) and information the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**.

Originally produced at the Berkeley City Club in 1991, starring Aurora founding Artistic Director **Barbara Oliver** and penned by Berkeley writer **Dorothy Bryant**, **DEAR MASTER** is the flagship play upon which Aurora Theatre Company was built. An intimate dialogue in letters between powerhouse 19th century French novelists George Sand and Gustave Flaubert, **DEAR MASTER** provides flesh and blood portraits of these two famed intellectuals, revealing their fears, desires, abundant wit, and friendship. During a time as violent and politically polarized as our own, Sand and Flaubert, who agreed on virtually nothing and shared an age difference of 20 years, argued vehemently over matters artistic, political, religious, and personal, yet were able to sustain a deep, affectionate, supportive, and respectful relationship, brought to an end only by the death of Sand. Declared “a jewel from beginning to end” by the *Oakland Tribune*, hailed as “a splendid achievement” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and about which the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* declared, “What might have been merely a bookish exercise shimmers with relevant and touching insights into politics, art and life,” **DEAR MASTER**’s deep sharing of the heart and mind makes even the most fiery love affair seem tame.

“With the 25th season, Aurora Theatre Company is telling the story of Barbara Oliver’s little theater at the Berkeley City Club and how it has grown and evolved into the mature institution it is today,” said Aurora Theatre Company Artistic Director Tom Ross. “Way back then, we all thought our humble beginnings at the Berkeley City Club were a risky experiment. Starting a professional Actors’ Equity company in a

AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS “DEAR MASTER”

2-2-2-2-2-2

room that sat only 67 seemed like a financial disaster waiting to happen, but here we are today, spotlighting the talents of local artists and celebrating 25 years of intimate, quality theater.”

Continued Ross, “*Dear Master* was technically not Aurora’s first show because Aurora as we know it did not exist then, but the success of that production gave Barbara the encouragement to start her own professional company. Aurora’s first leading lady Kimberly King, who starred in Shaw’s *Candida*, plays the role Barbara originated as George Sand. If there is any actor Barbara would relish taking on that role, it would be Kimberly.”

Born in San Francisco in 1930, novelist, playwright, essayist **Dorothy Bryant** is known for her mystical, feminist, and fantastic novels and plays that traverse the space between the real world and her character’s inner psyches. Bryant was the first person in her family to graduate from college, and she earned her living teaching high school and college until 1976. Her works of fiction include, *Ella Price’s Journal* (1972), *The Kin of Ata are Waiting for You* (1976), *Miss Giardino* (1976), *The Garden of Eros* (1979), *Prisoners* (1980), *Killing Wonder* (1981), *A Day in San Francisco* (1983), *Confessions of Madame Psyche* (1986; American Book Award winner 1987), *The Test* (1991), *Anita, Anita* (1994), and *The Berkeley Pit* (2007). In addition to **DEAR MASTER** (1991), Bryant’s works for the stage include *Tea with Mister Hardy* (1992), *The Panel* (1994), *Posting for Gaugain* (1997), *The Trial of Cornelia Connelly* (2003), *Sad but Glorious Days* (2003), and *Eros in Love* (2006).

“My first image of George Sand was the cross-dressing, cigar-smoking, sexually ruthless, domineering Merle Oberon devouring the delicate Chopin – Cornell Wilde coughing drops of blood over the piano keys in the movie *A Song to Remember*,” said playwright Dorothy Bryant. “Twenty years later I glimpsed the real George Sand in an old translation of the letters between her and Gustave Flaubert. In her letters I discovered a mature, world famous novelist beloved for her liberating influence on literature and politics, her devotion and generosity to family, friends, and lovers. In his letters to her I discovered – in the pessimistic, cynical and misogynist Flaubert – a warmth and sensitivity, even tenderness, a yearning for goodness and decency as strong as his devotion to beauty in art.”

Continued Bryant, “Yet another twenty years passed before (in 1986) I began the research into biographies, histories, other letters, and works of Sand and Flaubert that resulted in the play *Dear Master*. In writing what they said, as well as what they could have, would have, might have said, I found myself pulled back and forth between these two great souls, opposites in every way but in their devotion to art

AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS "DEAR MASTER"

3-3-3-3-3-3

and their giant capacity for friendship. Perhaps I was motivated, not only by my deep admiration for both these artists, but by my own yearning to achieve an inner balance of the extremes they embodied.”

Veteran Bay Area actress and director **Joy Carlin** helms **DEAR MASTER**. Carlin attended the Yale School of Drama and is an original member of Chicago’s Playwrights’ Theatre; she has been a leading actress, director, and teacher in the Bay Area since 1969. Carlin served as the Associate Artistic Director of the American Conservatory Theater from 1987-1992, was an actor and resident director at Berkeley Repertory Theatre from 1981-1984, and served as its Interim Artistic Director from 1983-1984. For Aurora Theatre Company, Carlin most recently directed *The How and the Why*, *Talley’s Folly*, *After the Revolution* and Annie Baker’s *Body Awareness*, as well as productions of Clifford Odet’s *Awake and Sing!*, Bob Glaudini’s Off Broadway hit *Jack Goes Boating*, Terry Johnson’s *Hysteria*, John Guare’s *Bosoms and Neglect*, Arthur Miller’s *The Price*, Conor McPherson’s *Dublin Carol*, David Mamet’s *The Old Neighborhood*, and Michael Frayn’s *Benefactors*. In addition to starring in Aurora Theatre Company’s productions of *Our Practical Heaven*, *Thérèse Raquin*, and *The Belle of Amherst*, she has appeared in multiple stage roles at American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre Company, and San Jose Repertory Theatre, among others. Carlin is the recipient of numerous Bay Area Critics Circle Awards and *Dramalogue* Awards for both acting and directing.

Aurora Theatre Company has brought together a gifted duo for **DEAR MASTER**. **Kimberly King**, Aurora Theatre Company’s first leading lady (*Candida*, *Intimate Exchanges*), returns as George Sand. King’s credits include productions at American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks, South Coast Repertory, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage, Intiman Theatre, and McCarter Theatre, among others.

Also returning to the Aurora stage is **Michael Ray Wisely** as Gustave Flaubert in **DEAR MASTER**. Wisely previously appeared in Aurora’s productions of *The Letters*, *The Arsonists*, *Trouble in Mind*, *The Devils Disciple*, and *The Birthday Party*. Additional credits include productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks, Magic Theatre, Shotgun Players, Marin Theatre Company, San Jose Stage Company, Center REpertory Company, Marin Shakespeare Company, and American Musical Theatre of San Jose, among others. Recent credits include *Ideation* off Broadway and at San Francisco Playhouse, and *Macbeth* at the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival.

AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS "DEAR MASTER"

4-4-4-4-4-4

Following **DEAR MASTER**, the season continues in November with the West Coast Premiere of Keith Josef Adkins' **SAFE HOUSE**, helmed by **L. Peter Callender**, followed by Tom Stoppard's **THE REAL THING** in January, directed by Timothy Near. Jon Tracy helms the Bay Area Premiere of Sarah Greenman's **LENI** in March. Steve Waters' **TEMPLE** makes its' U.S. Premiere at Aurora in April, directed by Artistic Director Tom Ross. Abi Morgan's **SPLENDOR**, directed by Barbara Damashek, closes the season in June.

Voted Best Theater Company in 2012 by *SF Weekly*, Aurora Theatre Company continues to offer challenging, literate, intelligent stage works to the Bay Area, each year increasing its reputation for top-notch theater. Located in the heart of the Downtown Berkeley Arts District, Aurora Theatre Company, declared "one of the best regional theaters around" by *7x7* magazine, has been called "one of the most important regional theaters in the area" and "a must-see midsize company" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while *The Wall Street Journal* has "nothing but praise for the Aurora." The *Contra Costa Times* stated "perfection is probably an unattainable ideal in a medium as fluid as live performance, but the Aurora Theatre comes luminously close," while the *San Jose Mercury News* affirmed Aurora Theatre Company is "arguably the finest small theater in the Bay Area," and the *Oakland Tribune* stated "it's all about choices, and if you value good theater, choose the Aurora."

AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS “DEAR MASTER”

5-5-5-5-5-5

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

Aurora Theatre Company opens its 25th season with a revival of the play that started it all, **DEAR MASTER**. Originally produced at the Berkeley City Club in 1991, starring Aurora founding Artistic Director **Barbara Oliver** and penned by Berkeley writer **Dorothy Bryant**, **DEAR MASTER** is the flagship play upon which Aurora Theatre Company was built. An intimate dialogue in letters between powerhouse 19th century French novelists George Sand and Gustave Flaubert, **DEAR MASTER** provides flesh and blood portraits of these two famed intellectuals, revealing their fears, desires, abundant wit, and friendship. During a time as violent and politically polarized as our own, Sand and Flaubert, who agreed on virtually nothing and shared an age difference of 20 years, argued vehemently over matters artistic, political, religious, and personal, yet were able to sustain a deep, affectionate, supportive, and respectful relationship, brought to an end only by the death of Sand. **DEAR MASTER**'s deep sharing of the heart and mind makes even the fieriest love affair seem tame.

Joy Carlin (*The How and The Why*, *Talley's Folly*, *Jack Goes Boating*) helms this elegant portrait, hailed as “a splendid achievement” by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and about which the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* declared, “What might have been merely a bookish exercise shimmers with relevant and touching insights into politics, art and life,” featuring Bay Area favorite **Michael Ray Wisely** (*The Letters*, *The Arsonists*), and **Kimberly King** (Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance*), Aurora's first leading lady in Shaw's *Candida*, and wife of Aurora co-founder Ken Grantham, who played Flaubert in the original production.

DATES: Previews: September 2, 3, 7 at 8pm; September 4 at 2pm; September 6 at 7pm
 Opens: September 8, 2016
 Talkbacks: September 9, 13, 21, 29
 Closes: October 2

SHOWS: Tuesday at 7pm; Wednesday through Saturday at 8pm; Sunday at 2pm and 7pm

WHERE: Aurora Theatre, 2081 Addison Street, Berkeley, CA

TICKETS: For subscriptions and single tickets, the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**. Half-off tickets for Under 35, student, and group discounts available.

PHOTOS: High resolution pre-production art for **DEAR MASTER** can be found at **auroratheatre.org/index.php?option=com_theatre&view=press_show&id=129**

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges Season Restaurant Sponsor Gecko Gecko and Season Floral Sponsor Darling Flowers for their support.

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully Associate Sponsors Merrill Meltz and Gerry DeVito, and Sponsors Trudy and Gary H. Moore, and Carol Emory and The Wingate Foundation for their support.

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges the following foundations and government agencies for their support: Actors' Equity Foundation, Alameda County Arts Commission, Berkeley Civic Arts Program & Civic Arts Commission, The Fleishhacker Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Sam Mazza Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, Kenneth Rainin Foundation, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, The Shubert Foundation, The Tournesol Project, and The Zellerbach Family Foundation.