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***The Highest Tide* is a lyrical love poem to Olympia**

Olympia, WA – January 29, 2020 – Harlequin Productions presents Jane Jones’ adaptation of Jim Lynch’s bestselling novel, *The Highest Tide*, February 28th through March 21st at the State Theater in downtown Olympia. Artistic Director Aaron Lamb will direct.

The beach talks to Miles O'Malley. Obsessed with all things aquatic, 13-year-old, stature-challenged Miles loves combing the tidal beaches near his Puget Sound home in the middle of the night. When one of his discoveries lands him unexpectedly in the news, he is launched into involuntary celebrity, shaking his world in a way that is only topped by the Nisqually earthquake.

The Highest Tide is a story about Olympia. As Jim Lynch puts it, Harlequin’s production will be mounted “within a stroll from the tidal flats that inspired the book in the first place.” Having recently become a full-time Olympia resident himself, Lamb chose the adaptation for the 2020 Season “to celebrate the community I’ve chosen to be a part of.”

Outside of the locale, Lamb was drawn to the lyrical simplicity of Lynch’s writing, which distills nuanced, complex subjects and ideas into language that is at once poetic and disarmingly direct. As adapter Jane Jones puts it, “The magic of life, the unsettling awakenings of sexual desire, the loss of innocence, the guilt of deception and the confrontation of death all find their way, miraculously, into this story.” Lamb makes clear that Lynch’s writing will be front-and-center in the adaptation: “We are presenting Jim’s story. We will portray the South Sound the way he does.”

The challenge of bringing a sweeping narrative to the stage is one of scope. Says Lamb, “There are so many places we go, people we meet, and so many scenes, that the test is to make that possible in a fixed location while making it flow effortlessly.” To do this, set designer Jeannie Beirne will reimagine the State Theater stage, and videographer John Serembe will incorporate film from local areas. The result will be suggestions of locations and narrative elements, rather than a straightforward set. Says Lamb, “If we let the audience imagine something, they will invest in it more and believe it more than if we show them something and ask them to believe it.”

When it comes to the central character, Harlequin’s production holds one last unexpected twist. Lamb determined that the sheer size of the role and the number of performances for a school-age child would be best served if shared between two actors. Thus, Miles O’Malley will be played by two local boys, Leo Conklin and Jack Brotherton, who also just happen to be cousins. Brotherton and Conklin will alternate performances, each bringing their unique stamp to the production. Audiences are encouraged to see both interpretations!

Jim Lynch is the author of four novels. Lynch's first novel, *The Highest Tide*, became a bestseller in the United Kingdom after the coming-of-age story was featured on the Richard & Judy book club television show in England. It went on to receive the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award in 2006. His second novel, *Border Songs*, set along the rural western end of the Canada–United States border, won the Washington State Book Award for Fiction and was a finalist for the American Booksellers Association award for best fiction in 2009. His most recent novel, *Before the Wind*, was picked as one of the best novels of the year by The Wall Street Journal and the American Library Association and became a bestseller in 2018 in France, where it was a finalist for France's Voyagers Award for literature about the sea. Lynch grew up in the Seattle area and graduated from the University of Washington before traveling the country as a reporter for newspapers in Alaska, Virginia and for columnist Jack Anderson in Washington, D.C. Returning to the Northwest, he wrote for the Spokane Spokesman-Review, the Portland Oregonian and the Seattle Times before turning to fiction full-time.

Jane Jones is the founder and founding co-artistic director of Book-It Repertory Theatre, with Myra Platt. In her 30 years of staging literature, she has performed, adapted, and directed works by such literary giants as Charles Dickens, Eudora Welty, Edith Wharton, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Pam Houston, Raymond Carver, Frank O'Connor, Jim Lynch, Ernest Hemingway, Colette, Amy Bloom, John Irving, John Steinbeck, Daphne du Maurier, and Jane Austen. A veteran actress of 35 years, she has played leading roles in many of America's most prominent regional theatres. In 2008 she, Myra Platt, and Book-It were honored to be named by *The Seattle Times* among seven Unsung Heroes and Uncommon Genius for their 20-year contribution to life in the Puget Sound region. She is a recipient of the 2009 Women's University Club of Seattle Brava Award, a 2010 Women of Influence award from *Puget Sound Business Journal*, and the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation's 20th Anniversary Founders Grant and was a finalist for the American Union for Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation's 2012 Zelda Fichandler Award.

Aaron Lamb is the Artistic Director of Harlequin Productions. This past season, Lamb directed *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Carol*, *Love and Information*, *A Doll's House* and *Man of La Mancha*. In eleven seasons as an actor and director with Harlequin he has also directed *The 1940s Radio Hour*, *I Am My Own Wife*, *Three Days of Rain*, *Ruthless!*, *August: Osage County*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Time Stands Still*, *Middletown*, and *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress*. As an actor, he most recently appeared in the January 2020 production of *Noises Off*, as Frederick Fellowes. Lamb has worked in Seattle for Village Theatre, Taproot Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, and Seattle Shakespeare Company, and has worked regionally throughout the country. He holds an MFA in Acting from California State University, Fullerton, and a BA from Washington State University.

Returning to Harlequin in the cast of eleven are **Ann Flannigan** (*I Ought To Be In Pictures*), **Gerald B. Browning** (*Love and Information*), **Christian Doyle** (*Cymbeline*), **John Serembe*** (*The Art of Racing in the Rain*) and **Laura Hanson** (*Present Laughter*). Making their Harlequin debuts are **Jack Brotherton** and **Leo Conklin**, both in the role of Miles, **Karlee Brannam**, **Kameron Peapealalo**, **Mary Lou Mills** and **Julian Owen**.

WHAT: Harlequin Productions presents *The Highest Tide*, Jane Jones' adaptation of the best-selling novel by Jim Lynch, directed by Aaron Lamb.

WHEN: February 28 – March 21, 2020

WHERE: State Theater, 202 4th Ave East, Olympia, WA 98501

TICKETS: Tickets are available online at harlequinproductions.org, by phone at **360-786-0151**, or in person 12-6 pm, Tuesday-Saturday and 2 hours before performances at the Harlequin Box Office in the State Theater.

General admission tickets are \$36

Senior 60+/Military \$34

Student/Youths Under 25 \$20

Rush Tickets (half-hour to showtime) General \$18; Senior/Military \$17; Student/Youth 25-20 \$10; Teens (19 and under) \$5

SPECIAL DATES FOR THE AUDIENCE:

Previews: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 and Thursday, February 27, 2020 at 7:30 pm
Tickets to the Previews are \$20 General Admission

Opening Night: Friday, February 28, 2020 at 7:30 pm

Pay-What-You-Choose: Three PWYC performances to be announced on Wednesday, February 26

Ladies' Night Out: Friday, March 6, 2020 at 7:30 pm

Post-show Talkback: Sunday, March 8, 2020 at 2:00 pm

Pride Night: Friday, March 13, 2020 at 7:30 pm

CATEGORY: Drama

AGE RECOMMENDATION: Ages 11 and up with guidance (language and frank sexual content)

CAST:

Jack Brotherton	<i>Miles O'Malley</i>
Leo Conklin	
Ann Flannigan	<i>Mother/Ensemble</i>
Gerald B. Browning	<i>Father/Ensemble</i>
Christian Doyle	<i>Professor/Ensemble</i>
John Serembe*	<i>Judge/Ensemble</i>
Karlee Brannam	<i>Angie/Ensemble</i>
Kameron Peapealalo	<i>Phelps/Ensemble</i>
Mary Lou Mills	<i>Florence/Ensemble</i>
Julian Owen	<i>Frankie/Ensemble</i>
Laura Hanson	<i>Mrs Powers/Ensemble</i>

* Indicates membership in the Actor's Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Harlequin Productions is a professional not-for-profit theater company in Olympia, WA. We seek to invigorate, educate, and empower our community and all people to feel more, think more, play more, and judge less through the mirror of real live theatre.

PR: Helen Harvester, Marketing and Communications Director
helen@harlequinproductions.org
