

FOOLSFURY ANNOUNCES CLOSURE AFTER 23 YEARS

Honorary “wake” to take place at Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts
on November 20 at 3 p.m.



Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts
2868 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, November 5, 2021 – FoolsFURY Theater Company, once “one of the brightest stars of the San Francisco experimental theater scene,” has announced its impending closure over the next several months. On November 20 at 3 p.m., foolsFURY will hold a public “wake” at Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts where an altar, created by members of the company as a “ritual of dismantling,” is already on view. To RSVP for the wake, please email johnhillpr@gmail.com.

Over a span of 23 years, the company earned national recognition for its adventurous, physically oriented productions of new plays, its introduction of works by European playwrights to English speaking audiences, and its tireless evangelism for the practices of ensemble theater-making. The company cites multiple events for its decision to close shop: the departure in 2020 of Founding Artistic Director **Ben Yalom**, the 2020 wildfires which destroyed the Sonoma County home and artist retreat center of current Artistic Director **Debórah Eliezer**, and the global pandemic which destabilized

the company's already precarious infrastructure typical of small nomadic companies.

Founded in 1998 by Yalom, foolsFURY first garnered wide attention with the world premiere of *Monster in the Dark* by **Doug Dorst**, a co-production with Berkeley-based Shotgun Players, followed the next year with the U.S. premiere of **Fabrice Melquiot's** *The Devil on All Sides*, which toured from San Francisco to Performance Space New York (formerly PS122). Among the playwrights foolsFURY has supported through new commissions are **Sheila Callaghan**, **Katie Pearl**, **Angela Santillo** and **Kate Tarker**.

Every two or so years, the company presented a festival, called FURY Factory, convening practitioners of devised theater from across the U.S. and Canada, the United Kingdom, India and beyond. With each festival, foolsFURY reinforced the Bay Area's clout as a national hub for ensemble theater, presenting a cross-section of the field with works by more than a hundred companies over its lifetime.

FoolsFURY's world-class workshops offered a reliable foothold on the West Coast for a wide range of ensemble theater practices. Most notably, the company will be remembered for its association with the SITI Company (Saratoga International Theater Institute) and with dancer and philosopher **Mary Overlie**, originator of the Six Viewpoints technique.

Over the last several years, with key leadership by Eliezer, foolsFURY made overt strides to address longstanding inequities within the company and the theater field more broadly. The company hired new staff with an eye toward diversity and inclusion, increased wages and produced two digital conferences by and for ensemble theater makers, with panel discussions and workshops around "Economic Equity and the Nonprofit Industrial Complex" and "Indigenous Digital: Contemporary Native Storytelling," to give two examples.

After this month's closing rituals, Eliezer's plans include archiving foolsFURY's legacy with oral histories of the company's 23 years of activity. She hopes for the archive to eventually be housed in a public library. As part of its legacy, two affiliated groups will be honored with monetary awards in support of their continued work: **Kanyon Consulting** under the direction of **Kanyon Sayers-Roods**, and the **Trans Advocacy Collective** under the direction of **Nicky Martinez**, which was formed in foolsFURY's Ensemble Liberation Lab program.

Finally, foolsFURY's legacy will live on through two touring projects. *Burning Wild*, currently in development by Eliezer in collaboration with **Noor Adabachi**, **Cynthia Ling Lee** and **Vidhu Singh** began as a response to the California wildfires of 2020. Drawing on the artists' lived experience of displacement, *Burning Wild* is a "collaged docu-myth" about the land, eco-trauma and renewal. The other play, *(dis)Place[d]*, premiered in 2017 before touring to London. In *(dis)Place[d]*, Eliezer unravels her identity as the daughter of an Iraqi Jew, refugee and spy.

"As artists we know change keeps us on the live edge of growth," said Eliezer. "FoolsURY is an important reason why the model of ensemble is alive and well – and growing – in the Bay Area and nationally. As artists, we are departing with the least amount of harm and the maximum joy, practicing being in relationship with discomfort – and dismantling with grace as a part of our civic contract."

For more information, visit foolsfury.org.