

2018-19 DOUBLE SEASON: Lisa Kron / Anna Deavere Smith

**FOR IMMEDIATE MEDIA RELEASE:**

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**Profile commissions *(Un)Conditional*: [a new work](#) for the 2018-19 season**

Inspired by local stories and created in collaboration with the internationally acclaimed [Ping Chong + Company](#) and Community Profile

*"The cumulative power of these shared stories is nothing short of astonishing...  
Ping Chong creates a tremendous tapestry of lives."* - Twin Cities Reader



photo from Inside/Out by Ping Chong + Company

PORTLAND, OREGON, USA. September 4, 2018 - In February 2019 [PROFILE THEATRE](#) will present their first-ever world premiere commission: an ambitious project exploring healthcare and chronic illness created with world-renowned theatre artist and National Medal of Arts awardee Ping Chong and his company. Lead by Ping Chong + Company Associate Director Sara Zatz, *(Un)Conditional* will be an interview-based work of theater featuring local community members whose lives have been impacted by chronic

2018-19 DOUBLE SEASON: Lisa Kron / Anna Deavere Smith

illness and will be a part of *Undesirable Elements*, the company's ongoing series of community-specific oral history theater works examining marginalized cultures.

This project is an exciting deepening of Profile's mission to engage local communities in conversation about the issues highlighted in their season. Inspired by questions about navigating health and illness in the changing field of American healthcare that figure in the plays of both Lisa Kron and Anna Deavere Smith, *(Un)Conditional* also aligns with Kron and Smith's shared interest in real stories as a starting point for the creation of new theatre. The commission will feature members of Profile's Community Profile project, a group of 40 community members living with or caring for those who live with chronic illness who meet monthly to write, reflect and share their experiences of chronic illness.

This project is made possible with generous support from the Oregon Community Foundation's Creative Heights Initiative and the National Endowment for the Arts.

**WHERE:** Artist Repertory Theatre's Morrison Stage, 1515 SW Morrison Street, Portland OR 97205

**WHEN:** February 8-10, and 15-17, 2019. Thursday-Saturday at 7:30pm, Sunday at 2pm.

**TICKETS:** Available online October 1 at [www.profiletheatre.org](http://www.profiletheatre.org)

Or contact the box office at (503)-242-0080 or [boxoffice@profiletheatre.org](mailto:boxoffice@profiletheatre.org)

Season subscriptions on sale now with flex packages to see 4 or 5 plays for \$80-\$170

Single tickets\* on sale for \$15-\$25

\*Discounts available to groups, students, teachers, ASL, 30-and-under, Arts for All, and previews

#### **ABOUT PING CHONG + COMPANY COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

*"Generating empathy, defying small-mindedness, this is an inherently political show that arrives at a time of fervently uncivil discourse [and] believes in the power of storytelling to create a stronger, kinder culture."* [The New York Times](#)

*"...consistently powerful and eye-opening."* [The Washington Post](#)

**Ping Chong** is an interdisciplinary artist and theatrical innovator based in New York City. Ping was honored with the National Medal of Arts, the highest award given to artists by the United States government, in 2014 by President Obama. [Ping Chong + Company](#) produces works addressing the important cultural and civic issues of our times, creating theater that crosses boundaries of identity, community, and form. Productions range from intimate oral history projects to grand scale cinematic multidisciplinary productions. The art reveals beauty, precision, and a commitment to social justice.

Ping Chong + Company's projects initiate dialogue about identity and the power of sharing individuals' stories. This production is part of an ongoing series of community-specific oral history theater works known as [the Undesirable Elements](#) series. Created in 1992 by Ping Chong, each production is made in

a specific community, with local participants testifying to their real lives and experiences. The script is based on interviews with the participants who then share their own true stories in the final production. Since 1992, over 50 productions have been made across the United States and abroad. Recent productions have explored themes as far ranging as the disability experience, Native American identity, the experiences of refugees in the U.S., and the experiences of survivors sexual abuse. Ping Chong + Company has created documentaries, toolkits, and training workshops and arts education programs for communities who wish to use the arts to address social justice issues in their own work.

“I’ve been a fan of Ping Chong + Company for over a decade since we first collaborated together at The Kennedy Center in 2008,” says Profile Artistic Director Josh Hecht. “Like Lisa Kron and Anna Deavere Smith, Ping’s work and the work of his associate Sara Zatz, blends incredible craft, documentary-style story-telling and a passion for social justice. His work gives voice to those whose stories might not otherwise get told but are a necessary part of our national tapestry. I’m honored to bring Ping and Sara to Portland for the first time and to commission new work from them to sit in dialogue with Lisa Kron and Anna Deavere Smith”.

#### **ABOUT COMMUNITY PROFILE**

Community Profile is a year-long writing workshop and community-building space influenced by the work of our main stage writers. This year’s program follows the themes in the work of Lisa Kron and Anna Deavere Smith and is for those living with chronic illness, their family and caregivers. Participants attend monthly writing workshops with award-winning writers, cultivating their own creative voices and using writing as a springboard for conversation and community-building. A cohort of 40 participants have been gathering monthly since January 2018 and will continue until the season’s end in June 2019.

One participant who has been recently diagnosed with Parkinson’s describes the group as a “wonderful world of creative people who happened to be ill,” while another who has been a caretaker for both of her parents notes: “We never knew how much we needed it [i.e. Community Profile].”

Artistic Director Josh Hecht elaborates: “There is not one of us who has not known intimately someone living with a chronic condition, or who will not ourselves one day have mixed abilities. Our ability as a community to hold space for people living with or caring for someone living with chronic illness, is a mark of our ability to face the fact of our mortality and to love, value and celebrate each other in all of our vulnerability. I am humbled by the community members who have made Profile Theatre their home this year, and honored to make space for them to tell their stories here. Our work together is at the core of what I believe theatre can do: help us know ourselves and each other more deeply”.

This year’s Community Profile cohort is supported in part with funding from Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon.

## ABOUT THE LEAD ARTISTS

### Sara Zatz, Director



Sara Zatz is the Associate Director of Ping Chong + Company and project manager of the *Undesirable Elements* performance series, an interview-based theater project exploring issues of culture and identity in the lives of individuals in specific communities. Since she joined the company in 2002, she has managed the production of dozens of original works in the series, working in collaboration with partner organizations ranging from regional theaters to community-based arts organizations, exploring themes such as the experiences of people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and disenfranchised youth. She has had the privilege of interviewing hundreds of individuals from all over the world and has served as lead artistic collaborator with Ping Chong on numerous productions. Additionally, she oversees Ping Chong + Company's in-school arts education program and training institutes to share the methodology of *Undesirable Elements* with other artists and community members. She is the writer and director of *Secret Survivors*, a work in a series which explores the experiences of survivors of

child sexual abuse, and oversees Ping Chong + Company's Secret Survivors National Initiative, which partners with nonarts-organizations to use theater to end child sexual abuse. Other recent projects include *Say My Name, Say My Name: Stories of LGBTQ Youth of New Orleans* and *Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity*. She has spoken and presented workshops on community-engaged theater at many conferences and universities.

### Josh Hecht, Profile Theatre Artistic Director



Josh is the Artistic Director of Profile Theatre where he recently directed the Concert Staging of Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* as well as the rotating repertory productions of Quiara Alegria Hudes' *Water by the Spoonful* and *The Happiest Song Plays Last*. He is a Drama Desk Award-winning director whose productions have been seen in New York at MCC Theater, The Cherry Lane, The Duke on 42nd Street, New World Stages, Culture Project, regionally at The Guthrie Theater, the Berkshire Theatre Group, the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Signature Theatre (DC) and internationally at the Dublin Arts Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and elsewhere. His collaboration with Ping Chong + Company was commissioned by and premiered at The Kennedy Center before touring the Northeast. His writing has received the support of the Jerome Foundation. He is formerly the Director of Playwright Development at MCC Theater and the Director of New Play Development at WET.

He's served on the faculty of the New School for Drama MFA Directing program, the Fordham University MFA Playwriting program, Purchase College SUNY's BFA Dramatic Writing pro-



2018-19 DOUBLE SEASON: Lisa Kron / Anna Deavere Smith

gram and has been a guest artist at The Juilliard School, NYU's Dramatic Writing MFA, Carnegie Mellon's MFA Playwriting, University of Minnesota's BFA Acting program and others.

\*For additional bios or to arrange interviews with Ping Chong + Co in their visit to Portland in August, please contact Marketing Consultant Jen Mitas

### **ABOUT PROFILE THEATRE**

**Now in its 21st season**, Profile Theatre's mission is to produce a season of first class productions and community engagement activities focused on a single playwright whose vision broadens our perspective on the world and deepens our collective compassion. With the 2018-2019 season, Profile begins the third year of an Initiative for Diversity and Inclusion, a three-year commitment to producing only the works of women and people of color and to examining how the core values of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion can be woven into their practices. There is energized and passionate conversation happening in theaters throughout the country around the ideas of diversity and inclusion. With this initiative, Profile places itself not only at the center of that conversation, but also on the leading edge of change.

### **Season Sponsors**

Profile Theatre's 2018 Season Sponsor is Ronni LaCroute. This Commission is made possible with support from the Oregon Community Foundation's Creative Heights Initiative and National Endowment of the Arts. Additional support is provided by The Regional Arts and Culture Council and Work for Art, The Oregon Arts Commission, The Meyer Memorial Trust, The James F. & Marion L. Miller Foundation, The Oregon Community Foundation, The Collins Foundation, The Kinsman Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Autzen Foundation, The Rose E. Tucker Charitable and the PGE Foundation.

For more information, visit [Profiletheatre.org](http://Profiletheatre.org) or call 503.242.0080

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