

World Premiere musical based on Jane Austen's *Persuasion* at Taproot Theatre

SEATTLE, WA – March 24, 2017 – **Taproot Theatre Company** is proud to produce the World Premiere production of **Harold Taw** and **Chris Jeffries'** musical based on Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. The beloved novel has been transformed into a breathtaking new musical filled with love, laughter and second chances. The production will play on Taproot's Jewell Mainstage this July 12 through August 19. Taproot's Associate Artistic Director, Karen Lund, will helm this new work and direct an all-star cast of Seattle's musical theatre giants.

Persuasion is a 2015 product of The 5th Avenue Theatre's inaugural *NextFest: A Festival of New Musicals*. It has since been workshopped at the Texas Musical Theatre Workshop in 2016.

"Hope is the most tenacious thing." Jane Austen's final novel soars to life in this ravishing new musical about love, longing and second chances. Years ago, Anne Elliot was persuaded to abandon true love but now her past mistakes and long-lost hopes have returned. Can she summon the courage to follow her heart?

Harold Taw is a novelist, playwright, screenwriter and layabout multi-form writer. His debut novel was *Adventures of the Karaoke King* (Lake Union Publishing 2011). His writing has been featured on NPR, in a *New York Times* bestselling anthology and in *The Seattle Times*; his screenplay *Dog Park* has garnered recognition in domestic and international film festivals and competitions. Harold wrote the book for two musicals presented as staged readings by The 5th Avenue Theatre: the full-length *Persuasion: A New Musical* (2015), based on Jane Austen's final novel, which also had a workshop reading at Texas Musical Theatre Workshop; and the original one-act *The Missed Connections Club* (2014), which won Third Place in the 2015 Frostburg State University One-Act Competition, was a finalist in the Arts Club of Washington's 2014 One-Act Play Competition, and was longlisted for the 2015 British Theatre Challenge. A Yale Law School graduate and a Fulbright Scholar, Harold's research and writing have been supported by, among others, 826 Seattle, Artist Trust, Centrum, the Helen Riaboff Whiteley Center, Humanities Washington, Jack Straw Productions and Wing Luke Museum.

Chris Jeffries has written book, music and lyrics for *Vera Wilde* and *Moon of My Delight* (Empty Space Theatre); *Kaleidoscope Eyes* (Northwest Film Forum); and *The Glory Booty Club* (Garland Award); *I See London, I See France*; *Radio Pirates*; and *The Fatty Arbuckle Spook House Revue* (Annex Theatre, Footlight Award). *Fatty* was later produced at Yale School of Drama. *Vera Wilde* has been produced throughout the U.S. and abroad, most recently in Berkeley (four SFBATCC awards). Music/lyrics credits include *Laura Comstock's Bag-Punching Dog* (Los Angeles, Ovation and LA Weekly Awards, Best Musical) and *Horse Opera* (Seattle, Minneapolis, Washington; NEA Consortium Grant). His music for *Bunnacula* (Kennedy Center/Seattle Children's Theatre) has been heard in dozens of productions in the U.S. and Canada. He is under commission by A Contemporary Theatre (ACT) for a musical based on Jack Kerouac's *Maggie Cassidy*. Chris received *The Stranger's* first Genius Award in Theatre

and was twice a finalist for CalArts' Alpert Award in the Arts. A graduate of Yale University, he lives in Seattle, Washington.

Karen Lund's other directing credits at Taproot include *Godspell*, *Jane Eyre*, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and *Illyria*. She is currently serving as the President of the Board of Directors for Theatre Puget Sound.

Michael Nutting returns to music direct at Taproot, after serving in the same position for *Joyful Noise*. He served as the Associate Music Director on 2014 ACT/5th Avenue Theatre collaboration, *Little Shop of Horrors*. Other credits include *Sweet Charity* and *A Christmas Carol* (Seattle Musical Theatre) and *Messiah* (The Inverse Opera).

Cayman Ilika (ACT/5th Avenue's *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well...*) leads the cast as Anne Elliot; accompanying her on her journey to find true love are **Matthew Posner** (5th Avenue Theatre's *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*) as Captain Wentworth, **Chelsea LeValley** (Village Theatre's *A Proper Place*) as Henrietta Musgrove/Elizabeth Elliot, **Ryan Childers** (Village Theatre's *My Fair Lady*) as Charles Musgrove/Mr. Shepherd, **Caitlin Frances** (Balagan Theatre's *Jerry Springer the Opera*) as Lady Russell/Mrs. Musgrove/Mrs. Harville, **Sophia Franzella** (Village Theatre's *A Proper Place*) as Louisa Musgrove/Ms. Carteret, **Randy Scholz** (Village Theatre's *A Proper Place*) as Captain Benwick/Mr. William Walter Elliot, **Kate Jaeger** (Village Theatre's *Les Misérables*) as Mary Musgrove and **Nick DeSantis** (5th Avenue Theatre's *Man of La Mancha*) as Sir Walter Elliot/Captain Harville.

The production team includes **Jessica Spencer**, Assistant Director; **Michael Matlock**, Assistant Music Director; **Katy Tabb**, Choreographer; **Sarah Burch Gordon**, Costume Design; **Andrew Duff**, Lighting Design; **Mark Lund**, Scenic & Sound Design; **Abigail Pishaw**, Stage Manager; **Matt Orme**, Fight Choreographer; **RJ Tancioco**, Music Consultant; **Andrea Spraycar**, Props Master; **Sonja Lowe**, Dramaturg; and **Ben Wippel**, Dialect Coach.

SPECIAL DATES FOR THE AUDIENCE

Discounted Previews: See the show before it officially opens at our discounted previews. These performances are very popular with subscribers, so buy your tickets in advance to guarantee seats.

Post-Play Discussions: TTC staff and cast members will join the audience to discuss the play and its production process. Post-play discussions are held after every Wednesday performance (excluding Preview) and after the Midweek Matinee performance on July 18 (*limited availability*) at 2:00pm.

Senior Matinee: July 18 (with post-play discussion, *limited availability*); Our Senior Matinee program provides anyone aged 62 and older with an affordable way to participate in live theatre in convenient daytime performance.

Pay What You Can (PWYC): July 19 at 7:30pm; a limited number of \$10 tickets are available at noon, tickets may be purchased in person or by phone. Beginning at 5:00pm, tickets are name-your-own-price; these tickets may be purchased in person only. Limit 4 tickets per person. Seating for PWYC performances is General Admission, there is no reserved seating. If you have accessible seating needs please call the Box Office directly.

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WHAT: Taproot Theatre Company is proud to produce the World Premiere production of Harold Taw and Chris Jeffries' musical based on Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. Jane Austen's final novel soars to life in this ravishing new musical about love, longing and second chances. Years ago, Anne Elliot was persuaded to abandon true love but now her past mistakes and long-lost hopes have returned. Can she summon the courage to follow her heart?

WHEN: July 12 – August 19, 2017 • Wed/Thur, 7:30 pm; Fri/Sat, 8:00 pm; Sat matinee, 2:00 pm

Dates to note:

Previews: July 12 & 13, 7:30 pm

Opening night: July 14, 8:00 pm

Midweek Matinee: July 18 (with post-play discussion) at 2:00pm

Pay What You Can: July 19, 7:30 pm

Post-play Discussions: Wednesday nights following performances (excluding Preview)

There is no performance scheduled on Wednesday, July 26 due to the Greenwood SeaFair Parade.

WHERE: Taproot Theatre Company's Jewell Mainstage Theatre, 204 N 85th St, Seattle, WA 98103

TICKETS: Single tickets are available online at www.taproottheatre.org, by phone at 206.781.9707 or in person at 204 N 85th St. Tickets range from \$27-47, depending on the performance. Taproot offers a \$5 senior/student discount off regularly priced tickets (excludes previews or specially priced performances). Tickets for the Midweek Matinee are \$20 and cannot be purchased online. Discounts are available for groups of 8 or more by visiting www.taproottheatre.org/group-sales/ or by calling 206.781.9708. Tickets for the PWYC performance are available day of show at the Box Office window; contact the box office for details.

AGE RECOMMENDATION: 12 & up

PHOTOS: Press photos for *Persuasion* are available at <http://taproottheatre.org/for-the-press/>. *This link should not be published.*

CAST (in alphabetical order)

Ryan Childers	<i>Charles Musgrove/Mr. Shepherd</i>
Nick DeSantis	<i>Sir Walter Elliot/Captain Harville</i>
Caitlin Frances	<i>Lady Russell/Mrs. Musgrove/Mrs. Harville</i>
Sophia Franzella	<i>Louisa Musgrove/Ms. Carteret</i>
Cayman Ilika	<i>Anne Elliot</i>
Kate Jaeger	<i>Mary Musgrove</i>
Chelsea LeValley	<i>Henrietta Musgrove/Elizabeth Elliot</i>
Matthew Posner	<i>Captain Wentworth</i>
Randy Scholz	<i>Captain Benwick/Mr. William Walter Elliot</i>

PRODUCTION TEAM

Karen Lund	<i>Director</i>
Michael Nutting	<i>Music Director / Copyist / Orchestrator</i>
Jessica Spencer	<i>Assistant Director</i>
Michael Matlock	<i>Assistant Music Director</i>
Katy Tabb	<i>Choreographer</i>
Andrew Duff	<i>Lighting Design</i>
Sarah Burch Gordon	<i>Costume Design</i>
Mark Lund	<i>Scenic & Sound Design</i>
Abigail Pishaw	<i>Stage Manager</i>
Matt Orme	<i>Fight Choreographer</i>
RJ Tancioco	<i>Music Consultant</i>
Andrea Spraycar	<i>Props Master</i>
Sonja Lowe	<i>Dramaturg</i>
Ben Wippel	<i>Dialect Coach</i>

PR: Isaiah Custer, Communications Manager, 206.529.3666, isaiahc@taproottheatre.org

Persuasion is supported in part by Verity Credit Union.

Support for Taproot Theatre Company's 2017 Jewell Mainstage Season is generously provided by 4Culture, ArtsFund, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture and the Nesholm Family Foundation.

Taproot Theatre Company is a professional, non-profit theatre company with a multi-faceted production program. Founded in 1976, Taproot Theatre serves the Pacific Northwest with Jewell Mainstage Productions, Isaac Studio Theatre Productions, Touring Productions and the Acting Studio. Taproot Theatre Company creates theatre experiences to brighten the spirit, engage the mind and deepen the understanding of the world around us while inspiring imagination, conversation and hope. Taproot Theatre Company is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), Theatre Puget Sound (TPS) and Phinney Ridge Neighborhood Association (PNA).

Scott Nolte, Producing Artistic Director | Karen Lund, Associate Artistic Director
204 N 85th St | Seattle, WA 98103
206.781.9705 | taproottheatre.org

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