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**TWO ORIGINAL MUSICALS *LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE*
AND *LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE*, SELECTED FOR ANNUAL
SUNDANCE INSTITUTE THEATRE LAB AT WHITE OAK
OCTOBER 25 - NOVEMBER 8, 2009**

Los Angeles, CA – Sundance Institute announced today the projects chosen to participate in its annual Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at White Oak. The two projects selected for this season's Lab are *Like Water for Chocolate*, a musical adaptation of the best-selling 1989 novel by Mexican author Laura Esquivel composed by Lila Downs and Paul R. Cohen with book by Quiara Alegria Hudes; and *Little Miss Sunshine*, a musical adaptation of the popular 2006 film by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris with music and lyrics by William Finn, and book and direction by James Lapine. Under the artistic direction of Philip Humberg, Producing Artistic Director of the Sundance Institute Theatre Program, the Lab runs October 25 through November 7, 2009 at White Oak in Yulee, Florida.

The Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at White Oak focuses on support for innovative musical theatre as well as on ensemble-generated work. Janice Paran, an Associate Artist of the Sundance Institute Theatre Program, who has served as a dramaturg for the Program's Labs in Utah and White Oak as well as its New York Lab at the Public Theater, returns as Lab dramaturg. Dramaturgical support will also be provided by Chris Burney, associate artistic director of Second Stage in New York. Alan Filderman serves as casting director.

"This is a critical time for the arts, and we're honored to provide creative resources and energy to these gifted artists," said Humberg. "This year's projects hold special meaning for Sundance Institute since the film versions both found audiences at the Sundance Film Festival, and we're thrilled that these well-loved stories will be finding new life on the stage. Although we have always supported both emerging and established artists, the Sundance Theatre Program has yet to have the opportunity to support either Mr. Lapine or Mr Finn in the development of new work. It is also meaningful to be extending our lab to two international artists – Lila Downs and Paul Cohen of Mexico City - who are crossing over to collaborate with American musical theater artists. In our eighth iteration of Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at White Oak, it is a great pleasure to support these two musical theatre projects."

LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE

Lila Downs, composer & lyricist
Paul R. Cohen, co-composer
Quiara Alegria Hudes, bookwriter
Ted Sperling, co-director
Jonathan Butterell, co-director
Michael, Levine, designer

Like Water for Chocolate is a musical adaptation of the best-selling 1989 novel by Mexican author Laura Esquivel. The film version of the book premiered at the 1993 Sundance Film Festival. It is a romantic tale of food, magic and passion. Making her musical theater debut, Mexican singer-songwriter Lila Downs wrote the songs with her long-time collaborator Paul Cohen, and the script is by Tony Award- and Pulitzer Prize-nominee Quiara Alegria Hudes. *Like Water for Chocolate* will be a feast for all the senses, incorporating Mexican cooking and the power of food, the magical realism of Mexican folk tales, and both contemporary and ancient theater techniques. The show is being conceived collaboratively with co-directors Ted Sperling and Jonathan Butterell and designer Michael Levine, who bring their extensive backgrounds in innovative theater works (*The Light in the Piazza*, *See What I Wanna See*, *Mnemonic*) to this exciting new project. Bursting with beautiful and powerful music, choreography and stage craft, the musical *Like Water for Chocolate* will bring this beloved book to life in three dimensions for a whole new audience.

Quiara Alegria Hudes (book) was nominated for a 2008 Tony Award for her book of the Broadway musical *In the Heights* (Tony Award for Best Musical). In 2007 she was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for her

play *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue* (Page 73 premiere). Other works include the musical *Barrio Grrr!* (Kennedy Center premiere) and the plays *26 Miles* (Alliance Theatre premiere) and *Yemaya's Belly* (Portland Stage Company premiere, Clauder Prize). Her honors include a Joyce Foundation Award, the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Musical, the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Musical, and the Paula Vogel Award in Playwriting. Hudes has degrees from Yale (BA) and Brown (MFA) Universities.

Lila Downs (music and lyrics), born in Oaxaca, Mexico, is the daughter of Mixtec cabaret singer Anita Sánchez and Allen Downs, a Scottish/English-American art professor. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in voice and anthropology. Downs is accompanied on her musical journey by her longtime band, La Misteriosa, multicultural multi-instrumentalists who include Paul Cohen, her collaborator, producer, and husband. She played a role in the Salma Hayek film about Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, sang the Oscar-nominated song "Burn It Blue," and became the first Mexican to perform on the Academy Awards telecast. She also captured a Latin Grammy for 2004's *Una Sangre*. Downs taps into the native Mesoamerican music of the Mixtec, Zapotec, Maya, and Nahuatl cultures with her Grammy-nominated release, "Shake Away." www.liladowns.com

Multi-instrumentalist/Composer/Arranger Paul R. Cohen (co-composer) was born in New York City, and spent his childhood in New Jersey. He attended Haverford College and majored in psychology and fine arts, and later studied drawing and sculpture at the New York Studio School. In the late 1970s he began a career as a clown and juggler, went to the Ringling Bros. Clown College and toured with the Clyde Beatty Cole Bros. Circus (U.S.A.), Le Cirque Baroque (Paris) and Los Hermanos Mendoza (Guatemala). During the early 1980s he began studying music, playing saxophone in the band of the Cirque Baroque in France and then in dance bands and jazz ensembles in the city of Oaxaca, Mexico. He began his longtime collaboration with singer/songwriter Lila Downs in Southern Mexico in the late 1990s. Paul has been the musical director of the Lila Downs touring ensemble since 1999.

Ted Sperling (co-director) is a director, music director, arranger, orchestrator, conductor, singer, pianist and violinist. He is the music director and conductor for the Tony Award-winning revival of *South Pacific* and recent revival of *Guys and Dolls*. Sperling won the 2005 Tony and Drama Desk Awards for his orchestrations of *The Light in the Piazza*, for which he was also music director. Other Broadway and off-Broadway credits as music director include *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *The Fully Monty*, *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *My Favorite Year*, *A Man of No Importance*, *Wise Guys*, *A New Brain*, *Saturn Returns*, and *Floyd Collins*. Sperling's work as a stage director includes the off-Broadway productions of *Striking 12* and *See What I Wanna See*. He has conducted the scores for the films *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Everything Is Illuminated*, and directed the short musical film, *Love Mom*. As soprano Audra McDonald's music director since 1999, Sperling has conducted the New York Philharmonic in a live TV broadcast for New Year's Eve, as well as performances of "La Voix Humaine" at the Houston Grand Opera. He has conducted for Deborah Voigt, Patti LuPone and Victoria Clark. Sperling made his professional acting debut as an original cast member of the Broadway musical *Titanic*. He currently holds the post of Director of the Music Theater Initiative at the Public Theater.

Jonathan Butterell (co-director) recently directed *Giant*, by Michael John LaChiusa and Sybille Pearson, at the Signature Theater. He is also developing a stage version of *A Star is Born* for Warner Brothers. Broadway credits include *The Light in the Piazza*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Assassins* and *Nine*, previously seen at Donmar Warehouse (London). Additional Donmar credits: *Company* (West End), *Habeus Corpus*, *Into the Woods* (co-directed), *How I Learned to Drive*, *The Maids*, *Electra* (Broadway transfer). He directed Michael Ball in *Alone Together: Divas at the Donmar*, served as associate director on *Othello* (RNT), and *Hamlet* (RSC) and co-directed *Peter Pan* (Royal Festival Hall) and *Sweeney Todd* (Opera North). West End credits include Sondheim's *Passion*. He directed *Orpheus Descending* and *Strindberg's Creditors* (Theatre Project Tokyo). New York credits include *Wise Guys* (workshop), *A Man of No Importance* (Lincoln Center) and *See What I Wanna See* (Public Theater).

Michael Levine (designer) has designed sets and costumes for major opera companies in North America and Europe including Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Vienna State Opera, Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, and Paris Opera. His designs have also been seen at Royal Shakespeare Company, in the West End, and on Broadway. Recent productions include direction and design for Wagner's *Rheingold* at Canadian Opera Company, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at the Met, and Bernstein's *Candide* for Théâtre du Châtelet and La Scala. Levine received his early training at the Ontario College of Art in his native Toronto and London's Central School of Art and Design. His many awards include a Gemini Award for Best Production Design for the movie *September Songs*, Paris Critics' Prize for Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream* at Aix en Provence, and Edinburgh Festival Music and Arts award for the Canadian Opera Company's production of *Bluebeard's Castle* with *Erwartung*.

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

James Lapine, book & direction

William Finn, music & lyrics

A musical version of the quirky and popular film *Little Miss Sunshine*, which premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, created by frequent collaborators and Tony award winners William Finn (music and lyrics) and James Lapine (book and direction). The story follows the travails of the dysfunctional Hoover family as they make their way in a vintage yellow VW bus from Albuquerque to Southern California for a kid's beauty pageant.

James Lapine (book & direction) has collaborated with William Finn on *Falsettos*, *A New Brain* and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. With Stephen Sondheim he has done *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Into the Woods*, and *Passion*. He has written the plays *Table Settings*, *Twelve Dreams*, *Luck, Pluck & Virtue*, *The Moment When*, *Fran's Bed* and *Mrs. Miller Does Her Thing*. On Broadway he also directed Michel LeFranc's *Amour*; the revival of *The Diary of Anne Frank*; and David Henry Hwang's *Golden Child*. He has also directed the films *Impromptu*, *Life with Mikey* and *Earthly Possessions*.

William Finn (music & lyrics) is the writer and composer of *Falsettos*, for which he received two Tony Awards: Best Book of a Musical (with James Lapine) and Best Original Score. He has also written and composed *In Trousers*, *March of the Falsettos* and *Falsettoland* (Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Musical, two Los Angeles Drama Critics Awards, two Drama Desk Awards, the Lucille Lortel Award and Guggenheim Fellowship in Playwriting). Mr. Finn wrote the lyrics to Graciela Daniele's *Tango Apasionado* (music by the great Astor Piazzolla) and, with Michael Starobin, the music to Lapine's version of *The Winter's Tale*. His musical *Romance in Hard Times* was presented at The Public Theater. Recently, he wrote *Painting You for Love's Fire*, a piece commissioned and performed by the Acting Company, based on Shakespeare's sonnets. A graduate of Williams College, where he was awarded the Hutchinson Fellowship for Musical Composition, Finn now teaches a weekly master class at the NYU Tisch Graduate Program in Musical Theatre Writing. His most recent projects include *Elegies*, *A Song Cycle* (Lincoln Center) and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* which had a three-year run on Broadway and has been produced nationally and all over the world. For the past four years he has been the Artistic Head of the Musical Theatre Lab at the Barrington Stage Company in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

White Oak is located on a 7,500 acre property in Yulee, Florida, conceived by Howard Gilman as a sanctuary for animals and a place of peaceful yet productive retreat for the people and activities he cared about. In 1982, Gilman established the White Oak Conservation Center on the property for the conservation and propagation of threatened and endangered species. White Oak, which houses the Baryshnikov Dance Studio, has also hosted residencies by performing artists and dance companies; national and international conferences; and seminars and workshops directly related to the Foundation's primary fields of interest: performing arts, wildlife conservation and cardiovascular research.

Sundance Institute Theatre Program

The Sundance Institute Theatre Program is a program of the Sundance Institute. Through its developmental activities at the Sundance Institute Playwright's Retreat at Ucross, the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at White Oak, Sundance Institute East Africa, and two new pilot theatre programs at Mass MoCA and Governors Island, the Program identifies and assists emerging theatre artists, contributes to the creative growth of established artists, and encourages and supports the development of new work for the stage. Under the guidance of Producing Artistic Director Philip Humberg, more than 85% of the work coming out of the Program's labs has found professional production at theatres across the United States, Mexico and Europe. Recent productions of Sundance-developed work include: *Passing Strange* by Stew and Heidi Rodewald, which won the 2008 Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical and *Grey Gardens* by Doug Wright, Scott Frankel and Michael Korie.

Sundance Institute

Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a not-for-profit organization that fosters the development of original storytelling in film and theatre, and presents the annual Sundance Film Festival. Internationally recognized for its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as *Angels in America*, *Spring Awakening*, *Boys Don't Cry*, *Sin Number*, *Born into Brothels* and *Trouble the Water*. www.sundance.org.