

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Kisha Jarrett

[kjarrett@artistsrep.org](mailto:kjarrett@artistsrep.org) | 404.272.3037

# ARTISTS REP ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DÁMASO RODRÍGUEZ WILL STEP DOWN AT THE END OF 2021, CONCLUDING A NINE-YEAR TENURE LEADING PORTLAND'S LONGEST-RUNNING PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

ARTISTS REP'S BOARD TO SOON ANNOUNCE SUCCESSION PLANS

**PORTLAND, OREGON – September 9, 2021** Dámaso Rodríguez steps down as Executive Artistic Director at the end of the calendar year to make way for new artistic leadership at Artists Rep. Rodríguez will remain in Portland, where he will join Arts Consulting Group (ACG) as Vice President. Artists Rep's Board of Directors, along with Executive Director J.S. May and Managing Director Kisha Jarrett, have begun succession planning and are collaborating to ensure a smooth artistic leadership transition. In the midst of the transition, the non-profit organization launches its return to in-person production with its 39th season of intimate, provocative theatre. The Board will announce succession plans in October. It is anticipated that Rodríguez will continue collaborating with Artists Rep as a guest artist beyond his tenure as artistic director.

*“By stepping down, I believe Artists Rep will have valuable flexibility as it charts the course for the future. I am not leaving Portland, nor do I wish to leave the Artists Rep community of artists. I hope I can continue to maintain a relationship with the theatre as an independent artist and champion for the organization,”* **said Artistic Director, Dámaso Rodríguez.**

*“Periodic, intentional leadership change is best for a regional theatre—and at this point in life change is good for me and my family.”* **said Rodríguez.** *“I am inspired to use this moment of field-wide transition to make room for other artist-administrator(s) to guide Artists Rep into its next decade. New leadership is granted a mandate and space to try new things, or to radically*

*change course. My departure will empower them to move forward boldly in the crucial, upcoming years. I'm excited for the next team to lead this vital theatre. Let them build the new, post-pandemic ART (physically and programmatically) in collaboration with the impassioned new generation of staff and artists who are joining the organization."*

Rodríguez has spent nine seasons as Artistic Director of Artists Rep and guided the theatre through many periods of transition. During his tenure, Artists Rep joined the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and produced more than 60 productions, including eight world premieres. Artistic programming highlights include: the establishment of the new works development program, Table/Room/Stage; the organizational residency program, ArtsHub; the expansion of the Resident Artists program to include nearly 40 artists across theatrical disciplines; the pandemic pivot to digital mediums and investment in new creative development processes known as the Mercury Company; and the establishment of the DNA: Oxygen program, which works to transform the company into a theatre rooted in anti-racist, anti-bias practices. Plays developed during his tenure as Artistic Director have been produced in New York, Chicago, London, and throughout the U.S. Directing credits for Artists Rep include the world premiere of the five-hour epic *Magellanica* (audio drama and stage play) by E.M. Lewis, *The Berlin Diaries* (Audio Drama) by Andrea Stolowitz, *The Vertical City* (Audio Drama) by Diana Burbano, *Today is My Birthday* (Audio Drama) by Susan Soon He Stanton; local premieres of *An Octoroon* and *Everybody* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, *The Humans* by Stephen Karam, *1984* by George Orwell adapted by Duncan Macmillan & Robert Icke, *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* by David Greig, *Feathers and Teeth* by Charise Castro Smith, *La Ruta* by Isaac Gómez, *The Skin of Our Teeth* by Thornton Wilder (featuring over 150 community guest stars), the U.S. premiere of Dawn King's *Foxfinder*, the National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere of *Wolf Play* by Hansol Jung, and the box office record-breaking world premiere musical *Cuba Libre* by Carlos Lacámara and featuring music by three-time Grammy-nominated Cuban timba band Tiempo Libre.

In addition to helming over 20 Artists Rep productions, Rodríguez's credits include work at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Pasadena Playhouse, Intiman Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Rep, A Noise Within, The Playwrights' Center, the Theatre@Boston Court, and Furious Theatre, among others. Prior to joining Artists Rep, he served as Associate Artistic Director of the Pasadena Playhouse and Co-Artistic Director of L.A.'s Furious Theatre Company. Rodríguez is a recipient of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award, the BackStage Garland Award, the NAACP Theatre Award, and the Pasadena Arts Council's Gold Crown Award. His productions have been nominated for and won dozens of awards, including the LA Stage Alliance Ovation Award, LA Stage Scene

Award, and the LA Weekly Theatre Award. He was honored as a Finalist for the Zelda Fichandler Award by the Stage Directors & Choreographers Foundation and was named a Knowledge Universe Rising Star by Portland Monthly. He is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and has been honored to serve as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts, as a Theatre Communications Group Delegate to the Havana International Theatre Festival, and as a guest of Spain's Ministry of Culture for the Ibero-American Theatre Forum.

*"We will miss him and his artistic vision," said Board Chair Pancho Savery, "but we can be nothing but thankful for the years he artistically drove this organization. Because of his leadership, Artists Rep was able to create and commission more new work, hire a slew of new artists, and envisioned new ways of creating during the pandemic. We look forward to the challenge of finding the next leader to continue that pathway into the future."*

Regarding RISE - the Campaign for Artists Repertory Theatre to revitalize its facilities at 1515 Morrison, J.S. May will continue to steer the fundraising campaign and ongoing construction project, *"I always envisioned my time at ART as a four-five year project to help fund and build a new home for ART and the ArtsHub," said Executive Director, J.S. May. "My time working with and alongside Dámaso has been extraordinary and I look forward to collaborating with new artistic leadership."*

\*\*\*

#### ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

[ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE'S \(Artists Rep or ART\)](#) mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for a diverse community of artists and audiences to take creative risks.

ART recognizes that we are a predominately white organization and operate within systemic racism and oppression, and that silence and neutrality are actions of complicity. We recognize the critical role the arts play in our culture and national conversation, and accept our responsibility to make positive change through our work, our practices, and our policies. We commit ourselves to the work of becoming an anti-racism and anti-oppression organization, and will [work with urgency](#) to end racial inequities in our industry and our culture.

We invite artists, audiences, and colleagues to hold us accountable.

ART gratefully acknowledges our theatre rests on the traditional lands of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

Artists Rep (est. 1982) is Portland's oldest professional theatre company and has become a significant presence in the U.S. regional theatre with a legacy of world, national, and regional premieres of provocative new work with the

highest standards of stagecraft. In 2016, ART became the 72<sup>nd</sup> member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN). Plays developed by ART have subsequently been produced in New York, Chicago, London, and throughout the country. Recognition for ART developed plays includes the Dramatists Guild Foundation Award, the Edgerton New Play Award, NEA Funding, the Mellon Foundation National Playwright Residency Program, American Theatre Magazine's Most-Produced Plays, and coverage in the New Yorker and the New York Times. In 2021, the Oregon Media Production Association (OMPA) honored Artists Rep with the Creative Innovation Award for the company's pivot to digital mediums in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

[TABLE|ROOM|STAGE \(T|R|S\)](#), established in 2015, is Artists Rep's new works program. The T|R|S mission is to develop and produce new work that vividly expresses Artists Rep's [aesthetic values](#). Focused on work by BIPOC writers, women, LGBTQIA+ and gender nonconforming writers, and offer an environment where these playwrights can create provocative, intimate new theatre pieces that challenge, illuminate, and inspire.

T|R|S has produced the following commissions: *The Talented Ones* by Yussef El Guindi (April 2017), *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse (Sicangu Lakota) (April 2018), and the NNPN Rolling World Premiere *Wolf Play* by Hansol Jung (March 2019).

T|R|S is home to Mellon Playwright-In-Residence and Steinberg Award Winner, E.M. Lewis, and Lacroute Playwright-In-Residence, Andrea Stolowitz. Playwrights under commission presently include Linda Alper, Kareem Fahmy, Andrea Stolowitz, and E.M. Lewis, whose play *The Great Divide* is co-commissioned with ART and Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

T|R|S has a hand in shaping World Premieres and vital second productions by some of the nation's most exciting playwrights. Productions are: *La Ruta* by Isaac Gómez (November 2019), *Teenage Dick* by Mike Lew (January 2019), *Magellanica* by E.M. Lewis (January 2018), and *Cuba Libre* by Carlos Lacámara (Book) and Jorge Gómez (Music & Lyrics).

Through T|R|S, Artists Rep is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN).

[RESIDENT ARTISTS](#) have an ongoing history of working on stage and behind-the-scenes of Artists Rep's mainstage productions. They collaborate with administrative staff on education, community engagement, new play development, and fundraising efforts. The Resident Artist title is offered by the Artistic Director in appreciation of each artist's achievements with ART and in the spirit of continued collaboration. These multidisciplinary theatre makers are deeply committed to ART's success, share organizational values, and participate in decision-making processes that impact the theatre's mission and its future. Through the Resident Artists program, a diverse community of Portland-based artists are at the center of the day-to-day life of the theatre and play a vital part in creating the culture at ART.

[EDUCATION](#) is dedicated to developing life-long learners at every ability, interest, and level of expertise. Opportunities focus on engaging with our community by offering professional-level classes, coaching, and workshops with our teaching artists. Programs like these serve artists and others seeking professional development, students seeking to engage in the transformative power of the arts, and life-long learners who can take classes in subjects such as dramaturgy, script-writing, and communication for non-actors. With the Student Ambassador Program, students learn about the inner-workings of a major nonprofit professional theatre, meet once per month, see shows for free, and participate in discussions with leading theatre artists and professionals.

Access and enrichment are available for educators who enjoy ticket discounts, school programming, and workshops. Enhanced viewing experiences include post-show discussions with the cast, panel discussions with experts, and a dedicated conversation with production designers. Artists Rep and The Actors Conservatory are working in collaboration for both studio classes and a two-year intensive acting conservatory certificate program.

**ARTSHUB** is Artists Rep's resource sharing and community-building initiative supporting Portland theatre makers, arts and education nonprofits, and community groups. The mission of the ArtsHub is to create a cultural center by supporting Portland's rich artistic ecosystem. Programs and services include below market rates for rehearsal, performance, and meeting space; shared administrative work space for individuals and organizations; and production services such as set construction, scenic painting, and professional technical support from design through performance. We prioritize artists and organizations that support ART's values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, and seek to provide a home for artists and audiences to take creative risks.

While the program's origin seven years ago was in response to an opportunity to share underutilized performance space, we have found that the most vital and lasting impact of the ArtsHub is the bustling community that has been formed, and the myriad ways it has led to the empowerment of local artists and the accelerated growth of participating organizations. Our new facility is being designed so that the ARTSHUB can include even more organizations than it currently serves.

**DNA: OXYGEN** generates belonging.

DNA: Oxygen is an experiment in the radical transformation of a regional theatre into an institution rooted in anti-racist and anti-bias practices, allowing artists of color to find safety and community and flourish within our work.

Through a mentorship model designed to break down kept gates, the curation and prioritization of affinity space in a theatrical process, an ethos that begins with the safety of our brains, bodies, and stories, and an investigation into and the implementation of pathways to success for and defined by artists of color, DNA: Oxygen is an initiative to reinvest Artists Repertory Theatre with the spirit of a community center for all, regardless of access point or experience.

Each season, DNA: Oxygen leads with a question that guides programming choices, meetings, collaborators, and more.

**RISE: The Campaign for Artists Repertory Theatre** is the capital funding drive that will make possible the reinvention of ART's building at 1515 SW Morrison. Originally an Elks Lodge health club, the Artists Rep building has reached the end of its useful life. A major gift in 2018 paid off the outstanding mortgage on the entire downtown block catalyzing the 2019 sale of the north half of the building. ART received \$9 million in the sale, which is now the lead investment for the reimagining of the remaining building. The roof and two massive wood beams will rise to create a modern multiuse performing arts center with two theatres, four rehearsal halls, and collaborative spaces that will give space to the many new stories waiting to be shared. In June of 2021, the State of Oregon made a \$2 million grant to RISE - The Campaign for Artists Repertory Theatre. This brings the total raised for the project to \$22.9 million and potentially provides the funding to begin Phase 2 of construction, completion of the core, shell, seismic upgrades and investments in mechanical systems. Given long lead times for steel, construction is planned to begin in February/March of 2022. With additional fundraising success, Phase 3 (interiors) will be completed and ART will move into the new building in the winter of 2023.