



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Bess Wohl Returns to Artists Rep with Critically Acclaimed Dramey**

## **SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS**

**Requires Full-Body Listening**

**WHO:** Artists Repertory Theatre

**WHAT:** [SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS](#)  
By Bess Wohl  
Directed by Shawn Lee

**WHEN:** October 7 – November 4, 2018  
Preview Performances: Oct. 7, 9, 10, 11, 12  
**Opening Night/Press Night: Saturday, Oct. 13 @ 7:30pm**  
Regular run Oct. 14 through Nov. 4  
Wednesdays-Sundays @ 7:30pm, Sundays @ 2pm  
Additional Performances:  
    Tuesdays: Oct. 23 & 30 @ 7:30pm  
    Saturday Matinees: Oct. 20 & Nov. 3 @ 2pm  
    Wednesday: Oct. 24 @ noon  
Sunday Post-Matinee Talkbacks:  
    Oct. 14, 21, 24, 28, Nov. 4\*  
    Oct. 24 – post noon performance  
    \*Oregon Psychoanalytic Center  
Post-Show Discussion “Tech Talk” with show designers: Wednesday, Oct. 10  
Open Captioned Performance: Nov. 3 @ 2pm  
Closing Performance: Nov. 4 @ 7:30pm

**WHERE:** Artists Repertory Theatre, Alder Stage, 1516 SW Alder St., Portland

**TICKETS:** \$60 regular price; \$30 preview/student/under 35  
Artists Rep participates in [Arts for All](#) and the [Multnomah County Library’s Discovery Pass Program](#).  
Buy Tickets: 503.241.1278 or [www.artistsrep.org](http://www.artistsrep.org)

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#### PREVIEW PERFORMANCE SPECIALS:

- Oct. 7: Sunday Sounday – Pay-What-You-Will + crystal bowl sound healer  
[Shalom Mayberg](#) @ 6:30pm
- Oct. 9: Ten Buck Tuesday – \$10 ticket
- Oct. 10: Wine Down Wednesday – \$30 ticket + a glass of Dark Horse wine
- Oct. 11: Thirsty Thursday – \$30 ticket + Lagunitas beer
- Oct. 12: Foodie Friday – \$30 ticket + discounted bar food

**NOTE:** This show contains nudity.

**BOOK & FILM LIST:** [Play-inspired recommendations](#) by Multnomah County Library staff

**SHOW IMAGE ATTACHED:** Design credit – Jeff Hayes, Kisha Jarrett, Mary Beth Leavens

**PRODUCTION PHOTOS AVAILABLE:** Oct. 10, 2018

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. Portland, Oregon | September 20, 2018.** Starting October 7, Artists Repertory Theatre presents Bess Wohl's *Small Mouth Sounds*, directed by Shawn Lee. Artists Rep's 2016/17 season featured Wohl's *American Hero*, which was also directed by Lee. *Small Mouth Sounds* runs from October 7 through November 4 on the Alder Stage.

In 2015, Wohl received the Sam Norkin special Drama Desk Award for “establishing herself as an important voice in New York theatre, and having a breakthrough year.” *Small Mouth Sounds* was a 2016 Critics' Pick in *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, and *Time Out New York*, and was selected for the [2015 Kilroy List](#).

#### ABOUT THE PLAY

Tired of not living their ‘best life,’ six broken individuals gather at a wellness center in the middle of the woods for a weeklong silent retreat to breathe and reset. As the voice from an omniscient guru drones on in broken self-help speech, the attendees struggle to find their inner calm while awkwardly combating their mental and physical desires. Over the course of five days, the group inexpertly attempts to navigate through hurt feelings, crippling faux pas, and exposed vulnerabilities to reach enlightenment. Absurdly funny and profoundly poignant, *Small Mouth Sounds* encourages us all to put down the phone and just be in the moment.

“...exploits the subversive power of stillness in our age of manic multitasking.”

– Karen D’Souza, *Mercury News* | [review](#)

“...joyful and hilarious about the absolutely worst things we all face.”

– Jesse Green, *Vulture* | [review](#)

“The cast may be virtually silent, but the audience is roaring in laughter.”

– Jason Fraley, *Washington’s Top News* | [review](#)

“Unplug and make a connection—that’s at the root of this play,” said **director Shawn Lee**. “Each character attending the silent retreat in *Small Mouth Sounds* has very little dialogue to express a whole lot of angst, desire, and heart. Our talented and brave actors have to reach deep within their physicality to portray a range of emotion with just an eye roll or a smile or a sly glance. It’s exciting to see what gets uncovered when you take away speech.”

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“I’m thrilled to bring Bess Wohl’s work back to Portland with this bold, funny, and quietly moving play,” said **Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez**. “Wohl audaciously places her characters in a silent retreat and unlike most plays which communicate character and back story with language, *Small Mouth Sounds* mirrors real-life encounters where we are left to infer intention and often never learn the sources of joy or pain that friends, co-workers, and strangers carry with them.”

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

**Bess Wohl** began her career as an actress, earning an MFA from Yale, and has since become a writer for the stage, motion pictures, and television. She is currently at work on a family drama about the meat business for HBO. She is also working on an original musical about the adult entertainment business which is a recent commission from the Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles. Her first play, *Cats Talk Back*, had its world premiere at the Yale Cabaret while she was a student at Yale. It was subsequently performed at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, and finally at the NYC International Fringe Festival where it won the award for Best Overall Production. Her play, *Touch(ed)*, had its world premiere at the Pioneer Theatre Company earlier this year. *Barcelona* was recently workshopped at Ojai Playwrights Conference. Her plays have been produced or developed at The Vineyard Theatre, The Pittsburgh Public Theater, The Northlight Theatre, TheatreWorks New Works Festival, and The Geffen Playhouse. Her work has also been supported by the MacDowell Colony, where she was recently a fellow. In 2011, her play *In*, premiered at the Pioneer Theatre Company. The screenplay adaptation of her play *In* was included on Hollywood’s Black List of best feature scripts. She has also developed for network television, and recently wrote an original pilot for Twentieth Century Fox Television/FBC. As an actress, Bess has appeared onstage in New York, regionally and at Williamstown Theater Festival (five summers) and in numerous films and TV shows, where she has given birth, solved crimes, committed crimes, been wrongly accused, and come back from the dead. She is a graduate of Harvard, magna cum laude, where she was awarded the Rona Jaffe Writing Prize, and the Tennessee Williams Scholarship. At the Yale School of Drama, she was a recipient of the Rebecca West Scholarship. Wohl won the 2015 Drama Desk Sam Norkin Off-Broadway Award that recognizes excellence and significant contributions to the theater for establishing herself as an important voice in New York theatre, and having a breakthrough year with the eclectic *American Hero*, *Pretty Filthy*, and *Small Mouth Sounds*. She is originally from Brooklyn, New York, and divides her time between New York and Los Angeles.

[www.besswohl.com](http://www.besswohl.com) | [www.smallmouthsounds.com](http://www.smallmouthsounds.com)

- 2018 [BroadwayWorld interview](#) with Bess Wohl about *Small Mouth Sounds*
- 2017 [American Conservatory Theatre \(A.C.T.\) interview](#) with Bess Wohl about *Small Mouth Sounds*

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

This is **Shawn Lee**’s second time directing a play by Bess Wohl for Artists Rep; with the first being 2016’s *American Hero*. In 2017, he directed Christopher Chen’s *Caught*, a multi-media theatre/art installation and collaboration with Portland visual artist Horatio Law. He directed and co-produced the international tour of E.M. Lewis’ *The Gun Show* starring Artists Rep Resident Artist Vin Shambry which premiered in CoHo Productions’ 21<sup>st</sup> season. After a sold-out run, *The Gun Show* was remounted at Artists Rep before touring to the Logan Festival of Solo Performance at 1<sup>st</sup> Stage in Virginia, the 2017 Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland, Portland Public Schools, and Willamette University. Shawn is the Producing Director at Artists Rep, and is now in his fifth season.

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In 2001, he co-founded the Furious Theatre Company in Los Angeles where he served as co-Artistic Director before moving to Portland in 2014. With Furious Theatre Company, he has produced over 25 productions including the award-winning rolling U.S. Premiere of *Foxfinder* with Artists Rep and *The Pain and the Itch* with The Theatre@Boston Court. In 2010, Furious Theatre Company was named to LA Weekly's list of "Best Theatres of the Decade." He is a co-creator of the YouTube video series *Real Found Footage* with Matt Pelfrey (*Skins* on MTV, Facebook Series *Turnt*) and directed the short film *The Foodie* by Kirk Pynchon, *She* and several episodes of the web series *A.G.A.N.G.* As an actor, he is a recipient of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award, the Back Stage Garland Award, LA Weekly Theatre Award, LA Stage Alliance Ovation Award, and the Pasadena Arts Council's Gold Crown Award.

## SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS

By [Bess Wohl](#)

Directed by [Shawn Lee](#)<sup>+</sup>

### CAST

[Mary McDonald-Lewis](#)<sup>^</sup> as Teacher | *Superfriends* (ABC), *GI Joe* (Marvel Productions), *OnStar* (General Motors)

[Susannah Mars](#)<sup>+^</sup> as Joan | *A Civil War Christmas*, *Mars On Life*, *The Quality of Life* (Artists Rep); *Sweeney Todd* (Portland Opera); *The Light In The Piazza* (Portland Playhouse); *Fiddler on the Roof* (Portland Center Stage)

[Ayanna Berkshire](#)<sup>+^</sup> as Judy | *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *An Octoroon*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *A Civil War Christmas*, *Grand Concourse*, *The Understudy*, *Intimate Apparel*, *Race* (Artists Rep)

[Kelly Godell](#)<sup>+</sup> as Alicia | *Radiant Vermin* (CoHo Productions); *The Secretaries* (Profile Theatre); *Noises Off* (Third Rail Repertory Theatre); *Miss Julie* (Shaking the Tree Theatre)

[Darius Pierce](#)<sup>+</sup> as Ned | *Feathers and Teeth* (Artists Rep); *Stupid Fucking Bird* (Woolly Mammoth); *Cyrano*, *The Santaland Diaries* (Portland Center Stage); *Peter and the Starcatcher* (Portland Playhouse)

[John San Nicolas](#)<sup>+^</sup> as Rodney | *Magellanica*, *An Octoroon*, *The Talented Ones*, *A Civil War Christmas*, *Grand Concourse*, *Trevor*, *The Liar*, *The Invisible Hand*, *Exiles*, *The Motherfucker with the Hat* (Artists Rep)

[Michael Mendelson](#)<sup>+^</sup> as Jan | *Magellanica*, *An Octoroon*, *Marjorie Prime*, *Trevor*, *Mothers and Sons*, *The Price*, *Tribes*, *The Quality of Life*, *Mistakes Were Made*, *Ten Chimneys*, *Red Herring*, *Sherlock Holmes and The Case of The Christmas Carol*, *God Of Carnage*, *Superior Donuts* (Artists Rep)

### CREATIVE TEAM

Director | [Shawn Lee](#)<sup>+</sup>

Scenic Designer | [Megan Wilkerson](#) #^

Costume Designer | [Gregory Pulver](#) ^

Lighting Designer | [Jennifer Lin](#)

Composer & Sound Designer | [Rodolfo Ortega](#) ^

Dramaturg | [Luan Schooler](#)

Intimacy Consultant | [Amanda K Cole](#)

Stage Manager | Miranda Russ<sup>+</sup>

Props Master | [Robert Amico](#)

Production Assistant | [Megan Moll](#)

Board Op | Alan Cline

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## PRODUCTION TEAM

Producing Director | Shawn Lee  
Associate Producer & Production Manager | Kristeen Willis Crosser  
Casting Director | Vonessa Martin  
Costume Shop Manager/Wardrobe | Clare Hungate-Hawk  
Technical Director | Nathan Crone  
Scene Shop Foreman | Eddie Rivera  
Master Carpenter | Charlie Capps  
Scenic Charge | Sarah Kindler  
Master Electrician | Ronan Kilkelly  
Sound Technician | David Petersen

+ Member of Actors Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the U.S.

\* Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

# The scenic, costume, lighting, projection & sound designers are represented by United Scenic Artists

^ Artists Rep Resident Artist

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## ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

[Artists Repertory Theatre's](#) mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for artists and audiences to take creative risks. Artists Rep is Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company, and is led by Artistic Director/Interim Managing Director Dámaso Rodríguez. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. Artists Rep became the 72<sup>nd</sup> member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) in 2016 and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN).

Artists Rep's 2018/19 season can be found [here](#).

Artists Rep has become a significant presence in American regional theatre with a legacy of world, national, and regional premieres of provocative new work with the highest standards of stagecraft. The organization is committed to local artists and features a company of Resident Artists, professionals of varied theatre disciplines, who are a driving force behind Artists Rep's creative output and identity.

**RESIDENT ARTISTS**—Artists Rep productions feature the work of a core group of over two dozen multidisciplinary theatre professionals. Hailing from around the country, the Resident Artists are nationally renowned and award-winning actors, directors, writers, designers, and educators who have chosen to make Portland and Artists Rep their artistic home. Working together and independently, they create inventive and theatrically rich experiences for audiences while playing a major role in defining Portland's cultural landscape.

**TABLE | ROOM | STAGE**—Established in 2015, Table | Room | Stage (T|R|S) is Artists Rep's new play program that offers development opportunities for local and national playwrights, and ensures that underrepresented voices are heard on stage. This program strives to make a meaningful impact on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the theatre field by mandating opportunities for women writers and writers of color, and cultivating the next generation of theatre-goers. Artists Rep is committed to bringing the exciting work of women, transgender, and non-binary writers and writers of color to its

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stages with this program. Artists Rep's first completed T|R|S commission was *The Talented Ones*, by Yusef El Guindi (premiered April, 2017). The second T|R|S commission was *The Thanksgiving Play*, by Larissa FastHorse (Sicangu Lakota) (premiered April, 2018). The third T|R|S commission will be *Wolf Play* by Hansol Jung (to premiere March, 2019). Current playwright commissions include: Linda Alper, Dael Orlandersmith, Steve Rathje, and Andrea Stolowitz. T|R|S is also developing work with playwrights Anthony Hudson and Susannah Mars. To learn more about all the projects, playwrights, and programs of T|R|S [visit here](#).

**EDUCATION**—The 2018/19 Artists Rep season launched a robust education program with a dedication to programs that help develop theatre artists and arts professionals. These education opportunities focus on engaging and elevating our community by offering professional-level [classes, coaching and workshops](#) with our Resident Artists and guest artists. These classes serve artists seeking professional development, as well as curious community members who can take classes on subjects such as dramaturgy, script-writing, acting for communication, and more. With the innovative [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. The purpose of the program is to introduce students to the full range of skills and ideas that are essential to running a professional theatre and to foster the next generation of arts leaders and professionals. Access and enrichment continues for [schools and educators](#) who enjoy ticket discounts, school programming, and workshops. Artists Rep's [pre- and post-show discussions](#) have been enhanced to include post-show mingling with the cast, director and staff, and a dedicated conversation with production designers.

**ARTSHUB**—Artists Rep is also home to the ArtsHub, where a diverse range of artists and arts organizations find a home and thrive with access to affordable administrative, performance, and rehearsal space, as well as myriad support services. The ArtsHub serves as a community arts center, where performance venues and lobbies buzz with creative energy and Portland's arts-loving audiences gather. Over the past year, Artists Rep hosted 324 rehearsals and more than 600 performances, events, and other happenings by 51 groups. To learn about the arts organizations of Artists Rep's ArtsHub [visit here](#).

Artists Repertory Theatre receives generous support from our community of patrons, including significant leadership gifts from: Anonymous, The Collins Foundation, The Robert & Mercedes Eichholz Foundation, Ronni Lacroute, The James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation, Regional Arts & Culture Council, The Shubert Foundation, and David & Christine Vernier. Additional Corporate and Foundation support comes from: Advance Gender Equity in the Arts (AGE); Hotel deLuxe; Jackson Foundation; Kinsman Foundation; Oregon Arts Commission, a State Agency; Oregon Cultural Trust; The Oregonian/OregonLive (media sponsor); Rafati's Catering; and US Bank.

[artistsrep.org](http://artistsrep.org)

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