

**For immediate release**

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**Can the virtual world be policed? Should it be?**

**SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE**

Kicks off 2016 with controversial questions in

*The Bay Area Premiere of*

**THE NETHER**

Written by Jennifer Haley

Directed by Bill English

January 19th to March 5<sup>th</sup>

Preview Performances January 19, 20, 21, 22 at 8pm

Tues, Wed, Thurs 7pm, Fri & Sat 8pm, Sat 3pm, Sun 2pm

Press Opening: Saturday, January 23, 2016, 8pm

November 2015 — San Francisco Playhouse will kick off 2016 with Jennifer Haley's mind-blowing play *The Nether*, which challenges audience to confront an explosive and controversial conversation that resonates with disturbing current events of the day. *The Nether* asks the question "How can the virtual world be policed—and should it be?"

The San Francisco Playhouse cast for this Bay Area premiere will include **Matilda Holtz, Warren David Keith\*, Louis Parnell\*, Ruibo Qian\*, Carmen Steele,** and **Josh Schell. Bill English** will direct.

THE FUTURE: The Internet has evolved into a virtual reality world where you can live out your every fantasy in complete anonymity. Identities are blurred, dreams real, and culpability seemingly nonexistent. This is the world of Jennifer Haley's play *The Nether*, a crime drama and sci-fi thriller that explores the moral and psychological implications of human relationships in an increasingly technological age.

A new virtual wonderland provides total sensory immersion. Just log in, choose an identity and indulge your every whim, no matter how dark or sinister—it's not "real," right? But when a young detective uncovers an ominous brand of entertainment, she triggers a dark battle over technology and human desire. Winner of the 2012 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, *The Nether* is both serpentine crime drama and haunting sci-fi thriller that explores the consequences of living out our private dreams.

The World Premiere of *The Nether* was produced by Center Theatre Group/Kirk Douglas Theatre, Michael Ritchie, Artistic Director, in Los Angeles, CA in 2013. It opened at the Royal Court in July 2014 and immediately transferred to the West End. Its New York engagement at MCC, which premiered in February 2015, was extended three times.

**Jennifer Haley** is a playwright whose work delves into ethics in virtual reality and the impact of technology on our human relationships, identity, and desire. She won the 2012 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for her play, *The Nether*, produced in Los Angeles, off-Broadway, and on London's West End. Other plays include *Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom*, a horror story about suburban video game addiction, and *Froggy*, a noir thriller with interactive media design and a live soundtrack. Jennifer has worked with Center Theatre Group, Royal Court Theatre, Headlong, Sonia Friedman Productions, the Humana

## **SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE**

### **The Nether Casting Announcement**

Festival of New Plays, American Conservatory Theater, The Banff Centre, Sundance Theatre Lab, O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, Lark Play Development Center, PlayPenn, and Page 73. She is a member of New Dramatists in New York City and lives in Los Angeles, where she founded the Playwrights Union.

**Bill English** (Director/Artistic Director), an accomplished singer, pianist and composer, has spent his life producing works of art. He co-founded San Francisco Playhouse, and in 13 years, has overseen its growth from a storefront to a major regional theater company, with a 6-play main stage series, a 2-play World Premiere series, an education program and a New Works program that has commissioned 10 playwrights. Bill's vision propels San Francisco Playhouse to stand out among its peers for making bold choices and taking artistic risks. Bill's work in the theater has been recognized with numerous awards for acting, directing, sound and set design. Under Bill's leadership The San Francisco Playhouse, has earned multiple nominations and awards.

Founded by Bill English and Susi Damilano in 2003, **San Francisco Playhouse** has been described in the New York Times as "a company that stages some of the most consistently high-quality work around." Located right in the heart of the Union Square Theater District, San Francisco Playhouse is the city's Off-Broadway style company, an intimate alternative to the larger more traditional Union Square theater fare. The San Francisco Playhouse provides audiences the opportunity to experience professional theater with top-notch actors and world-class design in a setting where they are close to the action. The company has received multiple awards for overall productions, acting, and design including the SF Weekly Best Theatre Award and the Bay Guardian's Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award. Presenting a diverse range of plays and musicals, San Francisco Playhouse produces new works as well as re-imagining classics, "making the edgy accessible and the traditional edgy." The San Francisco Chronicle raved: "On the verge of opening its 10th season, the company that lived a hand-to-mouth existence for its first few years has become 'the little playhouse that could.' It quickly established a reputation for attracting some of the Bay Area's best acting and directing talent, as well as for its exciting play choices. And with its bold Sandbox Series, it's become a player in developing new works as well." San Francisco Playhouse is committed to providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theater lovers converge to create works that celebrate the human spirit.

*\*Actors appear courtesy of Actors' Equity Association.*

#### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** A new virtual wonderland provides total sensory immersion. Just log in, choose an identity and indulge your every whim. But when a young detective uncovers a disturbing brand of entertainment, she triggers a dark battle over technology and human desire.

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**SHOWS:** January 19th to March 5th Tues, Wed, Thurs 7pm / Fri, Sat 8pm / Sat 3pm, Sun 2pm, Preview Performances: January 19, 20, 21, 22 at 8pm, no matinee January 23 or 24.

**WHERE:** 450 Post Street, San Francisco, 2nd Floor of the Kensington Park Hotel.

**TICKETS:** For tickets (\$20-\$120) or more information, the public may contact The San Francisco Playhouse box office at 415-677-9596, or [www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/2015-2016-season/the-nether](http://www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/2015-2016-season/the-nether)

