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Carl Lumbly to play Ira Aldridge in the biographical  
West Coast Premiere of  
**RED VELVET**  
Written by Lolita Chakrabarti  
Directed by Margo Hall

**Press Opening: Saturday, May 14, 8pm**

May 10 through June 25, 2016  
Tues, Wed, Thurs 7pm / Fri, Sat 8pm / Sat 3pm, Sun 2pm  
Preview Performances: May 10, 11, 12, 13 at 8pm

*No matinees May 14 & 15*

**San Francisco, CA** (April 2016) – **San Francisco Playhouse** (Bill English, Artistic Director; Susi Damilano, Producing Director) continues its thirteenth Mainstage season with the West Coast premiere of Lolita Chakrabarti's biographical play *Red Velvet*, directed by **Margo Hall**.

**Carl Lumbly\*** will star as **Ira Aldridge**, the African-American actor who, in the nineteenth century and against social mores of the day, built an incredible reputation on the stages of London and Europe. The cast of *Red Velvet* at San Francisco Playhouse also features **Susi Damilano\***, **Britney Frazier\***, **Richard Louis James**, **Tim Kniffin\***, and **Elena Wright\***

It is 1833 in London. No black man has ever starred on a British stage—not even as Othello—until tonight. Edmund Kean, the greatest actor of his generation, has collapsed on stage while playing Othello. Ira Aldridge, a young black American, breaks more than the color barrier as he battles the entrenched social and theatrical norms of his day. But as the public riot in the streets over the abolition of slavery, how will the cast, critics and audience react to the revolution taking place in the theatre?

## THE SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

### ***Red Velvet***

*Continued:*

Lolita Chakrabarti's play creates imagined experiences based on this little-known true story of Ira Aldridge, proposing experiences to illustrate the deep emotion and controversy he likely endured.

*Red Velvet* received its world premiere at the Tricycle Theatre, London, on 11 October 2012, starring Adrian Lester as Ira Aldridge. It was revived at the Tricycle Theatre on 23 January 2014, before transferring to St Ann's Warehouse, New York, on 25 March 2014.

**San Francisco Playhouse's** production of *Red Velvet* is made possible by Producers Betty Hoener; Buffy & George Miller and Brittny Bottorf & Asim Bhansali. Associate Producers are Ellen Hall and Steven & Karin Chase.

**Lolita Chakrabarti** (Playwright) is an award winning actress and writer. She has worked extensively as an actress on stage and screen. As a writer *Red Velvet* is her debut play. (Evening Standard Charles Wintour Award for Most Promising Playwright 2012; Critics Circle Award for Most Promising Playwright 2012; AWA Award for Arts and Culture 2013; WhatsonStage nominations for London Newcomer of the Year and Best New Play 2012; Olivier Award nomination for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre 2012). *Red Velvet* premiered at the Tricycle Theatre, London in 2012 where it returned in 2014 before transferring to St Anne's Warehouse, New York. Lolita also wrote *Last Seen – Joy* for The Almeida Theatre and a five-part adaptation of *The Goddess* for BBC Radio 4. Lolita runs Lesata Productions with Rosa Maggiora and Adrian Lester.

**Margo Hall** (Director) has had the pleasure of directing and performing for San Francisco Playhouse. She directed *The Story* by Tracey Scott Wilson and performed in *MF with the Hat* as Victoria. She debuted as a director with the World Premiere of *Joyride*, from the novel Grand Avenue by Greg Sarris, for Campo Santo. The production won the Critics Circle Award and SF Weekly Black Box Award for Best Director. She also co-directed *Mission Indians* with Nancy Benjamin, *The Trail of Her Inner Thigh* with Rhodessa Jones, *Hotel Angulo*, and *Simpatico* for Campo Santo. She most recently directed *Hamlet, Blood in the Brain* for Chabot College. Other credits include *Thurgood* for Lorraine Hansberry Theater, *Sonny's Blues*, for the Word for Word Theater Company-which toured France, and co-directed *Bulrusher* with Ellen Sebastian Chang for Shotgun Players. She is also a professor at Chabot College where she directed *The Trojan Women, It Falls, SPUNK, Ragtime, and A Streetcar Named Desire*.

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: London, 1833. No black man has ever starred on a British stage—not even as Othello—until tonight. Based on a true story of Ira Aldridge, a young black American, breaks more than the color barrier as he battles the entrenched social and theatrical norms of his day, going on to become a living legend, lauded from the footlights of Stratford to the halls of Saint Petersburg.

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WHERE: 450 Post Street, San Francisco, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](http://www.sfplayhouse.org).