

— FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE —

ARTS CLUB ANNOUNCES 2019–2020 SEASON CANCELLATION DUE TO COVID-19

VANCOUVER, B.C. (May 6, 2020)—Today, Arts Club Artistic Director **Ashlie Corcoran** and Executive Director **Peter Cathie White** announced that the remainder of Western Canada’s largest not-for-profit theatre company’s 2019–2020 season, which would have run through to the end of August, is cancelled.

“We’re heartsick over cancelling the remaining productions in our 56th season,” said Corcoran. “This choice impacts not only our artists and staff, but also our patrons who were looking forward to seeing these incredible shows brought to life on our stages.”

This decision was made in light of both the B.C. government’s announcement on May 6, which stated that gatherings of over 50 people are not possible for the foreseeable future, and the continued risks and unpredictability surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. The shows impacted by this cancellation include *carried away on the crest of a wave*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *‘da Kink in my Hair*, *Kinky Boots*, and *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*. Productions of *The Wedding Party* and *Kim’s Convenience* were cut short in mid-March as well.

“Our casts and artists have already put so much talent and hard work into each production, and we remain committed to staging them with the same teams in the future,” Corcoran stressed. “We’re striving to make choices that ensure the safety of our patrons, artists, and theatre community, which involves having many discussions with our staff, collaborators, and co-producers to reimagine how we can continue to engage with our audiences in a meaningful way.”

Corcoran also acknowledged that this decision raises questions about the 2020–2021 season. With the existing social distancing restrictions in place, the likelihood of presenting the full and robust season announced in February is slim. The Arts Club—which normally produces 16–18 shows per season—is now modelling a reduced 2020–2021 season that could be staged in accordance with B.C. Ministry of Health guidelines, and exploring additional options that may be implemented as these restrictions ease.

Over its nearly six decades of operation, the Arts Club has grown to be the premiere gathering place for the performing arts in B.C. Each year, the not-for-profit company draws over a quarter of a million people to its venues to experience the best in professional theatre. Roughly 80% of the company’s annual operating budget comes from ticket sales and related revenue, and the organization employs over 500 people in an average year—including more artists than any other B.C. arts organization. Therefore, the impact of these cancelled performances is drastic.

The Arts Club has launched the **Chrysalis Campaign** in support of its re-emergence. Tax-deductible gifts up to a total of \$100,000 will be matched dollar for dollar by this campaign, which was spearheaded by board members and donors to help the Arts Club recover from financial losses due to COVID-19.

“This situation has put B.C.’s arts sector in crisis,” said Cathie White. “The support of our patrons and donors is

vital to our survival, as it ensures that we can continue to not only bring unique and moving productions to our stages, but also offer enriching education programs for youth and creative events in the community. We'd really like to thank the lead donors who generously gave to create this matching gift, and we are humbled by the community response to this donation call so far."

Additional support has come from the Community Response Fund, which awarded the Arts Club an operating grant of \$50,000. This initiative was launched by the Vancouver Foundation, the Vancity Credit Union, the United Way Lower Mainland, and the City of Vancouver to support arts, culture, and community organizations through the COVID-19 pandemic. This grant will be used to help mitigate the economic impact of lost work on the Arts Club, its employees, and its artists.

"We know that cancelling our remaining productions has a significant financial impact on our artists, our staff, and our organization," added Cathie White. "This is an incredibly difficult decision, but it's one we believe we must make to best support the safety of our theatre community. We look forward to bringing laughter and light back to our stages as soon as it's safe to do so."

For interviews, please contact Madison Taylor, Communications Associate, at publicity@artsclub.com

ABOUT THE ARTS CLUB

The Arts Club, one of the largest not-for-profit theatre companies in the country, is the principal gathering place for the theatrical arts in British Columbia. Comprising three unique venues across Vancouver, the Arts Club welcomes more than a quarter million guests annually, tours provincially and nationally, and engages students and artists alike through educational and professional programs.

Above all, the Arts Club is dedicated to the advancement of local artists telling stories from around the globe and, in particular, those of our region. From this, we believe that culture expands, an understanding of differences is nurtured, and art bursts forth. The Arts Club was founded in 1964 and is currently led by Artistic Director Ashlie Corcoran and Executive Director Peter Cathie White.