



Contact:

Joe Guttridge, Director, Communications

jguttridge@nycitycenter.org

212.763.1279

Obie Award-winning composer Michael Friedman will be the next Artistic Director of *Encores! Off-Center*

April 19, 2016/New York, NY—New York City Center President & CEO **Arlene Shuler** today announced that Obie Award-winning composer **Michael Friedman** (*Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, *Pretty Filthy*) will be the next Artistic Director of *Encores! Off-Center*, City Center's popular summer musical theater series. Beginning with the 2017 season, Friedman will succeed founding *Encores! Off-Center* Artistic Director **Jeanine Tesori**, who will maintain her relationship with City Center as an artistic advisor.

"We are delighted to welcome Michael to the City Center family," said Arlene Shuler. "As an institution, it is important that City Center not only bring artists to our stage but to provide a platform for their vision as leaders in the artistic community. With the success of *Encores! Off-Center*, Jeanine has expanded the range of musicals we're able to present at City Center, and I'm excited to see how Michael will bring his unique sensibility to the program."

"As a musical theater writer, Michael represents the theater of today and tomorrow at its absolute best," added *Encores!* Artistic Director Jack Viertel. "He possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of the past, which makes him an ideal fit for the series. He's smart, he's funny, he has a prodigious imagination, and he knows his stuff, which means he'll be a great person to work with and a suitable successor to Jeanine Tesori. While she can never be replaced, she's paved the way for what will follow."

"Being the artistic director for *Encores! Off-Center* has taught me the importance of advocating for other artists, taking a stand for their work as I do for my own," said Jeanine Tesori. "I can't wait to see where the bold and innovative Michael Friedman will take us next, and I'm thrilled to see another composer take the lead."

"What I love about City Center," said Friedman, "is that it has always had a populist vision of the performing arts as something that is available to everyone. *Encores! Off-Center* has quickly become one of the irreplaceable institutions in New York—which is daunting—but I'm eager to build on the work that Jeanine and Jack have done to broaden our understanding of what musical theater is in America. I'm looking forward to reimagining these risky, unexpected, and sometimes forgotten works which the audience may think they know, but will now see in perhaps a different light."

Michael Friedman's recent credits include the musicals *Unknown Soldier*, *Pretty Filthy*, *The Fortress of Solitude*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, the last of which premiered at the Public

Theater before transferring to Broadway. With the acclaimed company The Civilians, he has also written music and lyrics for *Canard Canard Goose*, *Gone Missing*, *Nobody's Lunch*, *This Beautiful City*, *In the Footprint*, and *The Great Immensity*, and music for Anne Washburn's *Mr. Burns*. With Steve Cosson, he is the co-author of *Paris Commune* (BAM Next Wave Festival). Friedman has been a MacDowell Fellow, a Princeton Hodder Fellow, a Meet The Composer Fellow and a Barron Visiting Professor at The Princeton Environmental Institute. His Tedx talk, "The Song Makes a Space," can be seen on YouTube. An evening of his songs was featured at Lincoln Center's American Songbook, and "The New Yorker Radio Hour" on WNYC features his songs about the 2016 election. He is artist in residence and director of the Public Forum at the Public Theater, and received an Obie Award for sustained achievement.

Encores! Off-Center was founded in 2013 with the mission of presenting Off-Broadway musicals that pushed creative boundaries when they were first produced. Filtered through the lens of today's artists, these shows are presented not as historical documents but as living, vital works that continue to resonate with audiences. *The New York Times* has called *Encores! Off-Center* "a summer theater highlight," with past productions including *Violet* with Sutton Foster (which transferred to Broadway the following year); *tick, tick...BOOM!* with Lin-Manuel Miranda; *A New Brain* with Jonathan Groff; and *Little Shop of Horrors* with Ellen Greene and Jake Gyllenhaal. This summer's *Encores! Off-Center* season will feature *Runaways* (Jul 6-9), *Off-Center Jamboree!* (Jul 16), and *Kurt Vonnegut's God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (Jul 27-30). In keeping with City Center's founding mission to make the arts accessible to all, many *Off-Center* tickets are \$25.

New York City Center gratefully acknowledges the *Encores! Off-Center* Founding Sponsors, Stacey and Eric Mindich and Stacy Bash-Polley; Leadership Sponsor, Nathalie and Pablo Salame; Series Sponsors, American Express, Luigi Caiola and Sean McGill, Andrew Martin-Weber, and the Stephanie and Fred Shuman Fund for *Encores!*; with additional support provided by The Frederick Loewe Foundation, Paula and Ira Resnick and Alec Stais and Elissa Burke. In addition, City Center thanks The Howard Gilman Foundation and Lisa and Richard Witten for their generous support in establishing the Artistic Innovation Fund.

New York City Center (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. It was Manhattan's first performing arts center, dedicated by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with a mission to make the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. Today, City Center is home to many distinguished companies, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, City Center's Principal Dance Company, as well as Manhattan Theatre Club; a roster of renowned national and international visiting artists; and its own critically acclaimed and popular programs. The Tony-honored *Encores!* musical theater series has been hailed as "one of the very best reasons to be alive in New York." In summer 2013, City Center launched *Encores! Off-Center*, a series that features landmark Off-Broadway musicals filtered through the lens of today's most innovative artists. Dance has been integral to the theater's mission from the start — and dance programs, including the annual *Fall for Dance* Festival, remain central to City Center's identity. Vital partnerships with arts organizations including Jazz at Lincoln Center and London's Sadler's Wells Theatre enhance City Center's programmatic offerings. City Center brings dance and musical theater to over 9,000 New York City students each year through its robust education program, and other learning opportunities are offered to seniors, families, and the general public. City Center is expanding its programming beyond the proscenium and activating its alternative spaces with pre-show talks, master classes, exhibitions of visual art, and intimate performances that give an up-close look at the work of the great theater and dance artists of our time. In October 2011, City Center completed an extensive renovation project to revitalize and modernize its historic theater.

###