

For Immediate Release:

September 10, 2019

**Imagine Project, L.A.'s Only Equity Theatre Company  
Dedicated Exclusively to Young Audiences,  
Presents Its Inaugural Production,  
The World Premiere Of  
*The Tale of Turandot*  
At The Colony Theatre in Burbank, CA  
November 7 through 17, 2019  
Opening Night: Friday, November 8**

LOS ANGELES, CA – **Imagine Project** is proud to announce its inaugural production, *The Tale of Turandot*, a World Premiere running for two weekends at The Colony Theatre in Burbank, California, from Thursday, November 7, through Sunday, November 17, 2019, with Opening Night taking place on Friday, November 8. Inspired by the centuries-old story, **Armina LaManna** wrote and will direct this family friendly production, which is geared toward children between the ages of four and twelve years old. It incorporates puppetry and video projections, with many other creative elements. Imagine Project is Los Angeles's new Equity theatre for young audiences. The company is dedicated to telling stories that spotlight a diverse array of female heroes. For more information on *The Tale of Turandot*, please visit <http://imagineprojectca.com>.

Imagine Project will present nine performances of *The Tale of Turandot* from November 7<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> for the public, plus five school matinee performances. Showtimes for the first weekend include 7:00 pm for one Preview Night on Thursday, November 7<sup>th</sup>; Opening Night on Friday the 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm; two shows on Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm, and a 4:00 pm performance on Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup>. There will be four public shows on the second weekend, beginning on Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm; two shows on Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm, with the final performance on Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm. Tickets are priced at \$17 for patrons 12 years old or under, and \$25 for the general public. The Colony Theatre is located at 555 N. Third St., Burbank, CA 91582. Join the cast and crew for a reception at the theatre following the Opening Night performance.

Imagine Project's inaugural production, *The Tale of Turandot*, is a modern theatrical puppetry experience for elementary school-aged children. The fable, perhaps best known as Giacomo Puccini's final opera, is set in China and involves Prince Calaf, who falls in love with the "cold" Princess Turandot. LaManna wanted to give Turandot her own voice after reading Carlo Gozzi's 1762 play and later seeing Puccini's opera, challenging the idea that female characters who are smart are somehow less feminine, less desirable and less human. In the original tale, to obtain permission to marry Princess Turandot, a suitor has to solve three riddles; any wrong answer results in death. LaManna's retelling, however, reinterprets events specifically from the perspective of Turandot, a young woman forced to get married at a very

young age before she has had the chance to explore the world and learn about herself. This World Premiere play is a multimedia commedia dell'arte experience that includes original music, puppetry, circus and multimedia elements.

“We are very excited to bring professional and relevant storytelling to kids in Los Angeles, and hope to create an experience that our young viewers will carry with them for a long time,” said LaManna. “Study after study strongly demonstrates the impact high-quality plays have on children’s empathy and education. We believe our work to be a vital part of raising compassionate, courageous and erudite children in today’s world.”

To expand an awareness of the company and its mission, this past spring Imagine Project introduced its official Ambassador, **Penny Johnson Jerald** of Fox’s *The Orville* fame, among others.

#### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

- Written and Directed by Armina LaManna
- Set Design by **Thomas Buderwitz**
- Lighting Design by **Avery Reagan**
- Costume Design by **Dianne Graebner**
- Video Projection Design by **Lily Bartenstein**
- Puppet Design by **Alexander “Jürgen” Ferguson**
- Music by **Shahen Hagobian**
- Sound Design by **Jon Steinmeier**
- Stage Managed by **Elna Kordijan**
- Produced by Armina LaManna & **Laura Hill**

#### **ABOUT IMAGINE PROJECT:**

Founded in 2016, Imagine Project is committed to producing diverse and memorable theatrical experiences for kids. Armed with its mission statement, “Imagine Project strives to build an empathetic and inclusive society, across cultures, by immersing young people in theatre that celebrates gender equity, diversity and civic engagement,” its founders Armina LaManna (Artistic Director) and **Alex Zonin** (Board Chairman) joined forces in 2016 to research and create a flagship professional theatre for young audiences in Los Angeles. Unlike most major cities in the United States, until the founding of Imagine Project, the entertainment capital of the world did not have an Equity theatre dedicated entirely to programming for young audiences.

Co-founder Alex Zonin related, “Children around the world, and in other metropolitan cities in the United States, grow up with access to professional children’s theatre. There are 2.3 million kids under the age of eighteen in L.A. County, and, for most, a trip to an Imagine Project production would be their first visit to the theatre. One of IP’s objectives is to create a new rite of passage for kids in our city—going to the theatre—building not only tomorrow’s patrons, but also tomorrow’s generation of leaders and innovators.”

#### **VISION:**

The role of live theatre is indispensable to shaping the way our children connect to each other and the rest of society. Through the stories we tell and the communal experience of theatre, we imagine a future guided by kind and courageous people who have the motivation and inner resources to make the world a better place.

#### **COMMITMENT:**

We promise to tell relevant stories that spotlight female heroes.

We promise to champion kids, especially girls, and instill in them the courage to find their own voices.

We promise to create experiences accessible to kids from all economic backgrounds.

We promise to hire local artists and pay them real wages.

We promise to produce plays that are inclusive of stories from L.A.'s diverse cultural fabric.

We promise to be the vehicle for social change in a way that only professional theatre can be.

#### **UPCOMING NEWS:**

Imagine Project's second production is an original play, *Anahit the Brave*. The play is based on a fairy tale written by Ghazaros Aghayan. Anahit is a young peasant and master carpet weaver. When King Vachagan meets her, he falls in love with her wit and beauty and asks her to marry him. She refuses his proposal, because he doesn't have any skills, nor does he know any trade. She notes that he is a king today, but may not be tomorrow. Vachagan agrees with her, returns to his home, learns to weave carpets and finally wins her hand. But shortly after, he is kidnapped by dark forces. After learning of his captivity, Queen Anahit becomes a warrior and leads a battle, liberating the King and saving the entire kingdom.

#### **ABOUT:**

##### **Armina LaManna** (Writer/Director) –

Armina LaManna is a director, playwright and the Founding Artistic Director of Imagine Project – L.A.'s Professional Children's Theatre. Her stage career began at the age of six in the former USSR. Her U.S. theatre credits include work at The Fountain Theatre, Sacred Fools Theatre Company, ETC, OC-Centric New Play Festival, The Chance Theatre, Moving Arts Car Plays, Temple Theatres, Philly Fringe, The Colony Theatre, Interact Theatre (in Philadelphia & Los Angeles), The Groundlings, Grove Theatre Center and Pasadena Shakespeare Company. LaManna's playwriting credits include *Pushkin* at Boldino, *Lost in LaPorte*; translation and/or adaptation credits: Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (commissioned by The Lantern Theatre), Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. LaManna is a recipient of a Dramaturgy Grant from the Samuel S. Felt Fund; she is a member of SDC, AEA and DG and is a member of the Adjunct Faculty at the GCC Theatre Department. LaManna holds a B.A. in Directing from CSU Fullerton and an MFA in Directing from Temple University.

[www.arminalamanna.com](http://www.arminalamanna.com)

##### **Alex "Jürgen" Ferguson** (Puppet Designer) –

A graduate of Savannah College of Art and Design, Alex "Jürgen" Ferguson is a freelance fabricator/designer of puppets and props. Ferguson began his career at *Sesame Street*, for which he won an Emmy. Since then he has worked with the Jim Henson Company and Disney's Muppets. He has

collaborated on multiple TV shows, films, theatre and commercial projects. For the last two years, he has been working on Netflix's *The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance* series. Ferguson currently lives in Los Angeles and looks forward to his next project.

**Dianne K. Graebner** (Costume Designer) –

Dianne Graebner has designed more than 100 productions nationwide and internationally and has originated the costumes for many new works and world premieres. Including: *Church & State* - Off-Broadway 2017, *Fallen Angels* (Indy award; Santa Barbara), *Breath and Imagination* at The Colony Theatre (NAACP nomination), *The Brothers Karamazov* (Ovation nomination) and *Battle Hymn* (*LA Weekly* nomination) for Circle X Theatre Co., among others. Member of United Scenic Artists Local-829. [www.diannegraebner.com](http://www.diannegraebner.com)

**Thomas Buderwitz** (Set Designer) –

Thomas Buderwitz has designed productions for South Coast Repertory, Center Theatre Group, Goodman Theater, The Shakespeare Theater, Berkeley Repertory, Geffen Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse, Intiman Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Denver Center Theatre Company, Laguna Playhouse, Chautauqua Theater Company, Indiana Repertory Theater, Arizona Theatre Company, San Diego Repertory, Artist Repertory, Antaeus Company, Reprise Theatre Company, The Theatre @ Boston Court, PCPA Theaterfest, Riverside Theater, Florida Studio Theatre, Rogue Machine Theatre, Deaf West Theatre, The Fountain Theatre, Coeourage Theatre Company and A Noise Within, among many others. He has been honored with six L.A. Stage Alliance Ovation Awards (27 nominations) and four L.A. Drama Critics Circle Awards. Buderwitz has designed television specials and series for every major broadcast and cable network and received three Emmy Award nominations and an Art Director's Guild Award nomination. [www.TomBuderwitz.com](http://www.TomBuderwitz.com)

**Laura Hill** (Producer) –

Laura Hill is a seasoned theatre arts professional with more than twenty years of broad-range arts management and producing experience. She first worked with the award-winning Deaf West Theatre across many capacities, including Managing Director. There, she also produced many of the company's critically acclaimed mainstage and TYA productions. Hill also served as Managing Director at other top L.A. intimate theatres—Antaeus and Rogue Machine—as well as working at Center Theatre Group and the Pasadena Playhouse. In addition, she has produced more than twenty-five theatrical shows (most as a single producer), including several LADCC, *LA Weekly* and Ovation award-winners. She is currently on staff at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts as its Production Administrator.

**LINKS**

- Imagine Project - <http://imagineprojectca.com>
- *The Tale of Turandot* tickets - <https://ci.ovationtix.com/35252/production/1017344>
- *The Tale of Turandot* FB event page - <https://www.facebook.com/events/425281288334523>
- IP Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/imagineprojectca>
- IP Twitter - [https://twitter.com/\\_ImagineProject](https://twitter.com/_ImagineProject)
- IP Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/imagineprojectca>

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For more information, photos, to schedule an interview or request press passes, please contact Green Galactic's Lynn Tejada at 213-840-1201 or [lynn@greengalactic.com](mailto:lynn@greengalactic.com).