

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Single Tickets: General: \$30 Senior (65+): \$25 Youth (18-): \$25

Subscriptions: General: \$75 Senior (65+): \$60 Youth (18-): \$60

Additional discounts available to Village Originals Members.

Box Office: ISS (425) 392-2202 | Tues. – Sat. 11:00AM – 7:00PM

How to Break, A Musical Fusion of Hip-Hop and Social Justice, Begins Beta Series Workshop

*Both Season Tickets and Single Tickets for Beta Series Shows are
Available Now.*

ISSAQUAH, WASH. – Village Theatre kicks off the second Season of the **Beta Series** with ***How to Break***, a new musical with book & lyrics by **Aaron Jafferis**, song & lyrics by **Rebecca Hart**, and a beatbox score by **Yako 440**. *How to Break* will run at Village Theatre's **First Stage Theatre** in Issaquah from **January 5-14, 2018**.

Ignited by an electric collision of theatre, breakdancing, and lyrical flow, this ground-breaking new musical follows two teenage hip hop dancers as they battle not only their disease, but also the hospital caregivers, for control over their own bodies. With a score backed by a beatboxed soundscape of the patients' breaths and IV beeps, tensions rise as race, class, and language create life-threatening rifts between the patients and their treatment team. As the doctor and therapist wrestle over the health benefits of art versus painkillers, the teens attempt to break through their diagnoses in search of a gut understanding of what it means to be ill – both metaphorically and literally.

How to Break examines racial and economic bias in the medical field through rap and breakdancing, connecting the innate social consciousness of hip-hop with the musical theatre world. After a reading in the Village Originals' **Festival of New Musicals** in 2016, this Beta Series

production allows the authors to test the show in front of savvy theatergoers using simple sets and costumes. After each performance, audiences are invited to ask questions and share their feedback with the writers. No two performances will be exactly the same; the writers rewrite and make changes between shows, and audiences are encouraged to witness the evolution by seeing the performance multiple times.

Author Aaron Jafferis, a former Open Rap Slam Champion at the National Poetry Slam Championships, was inspired to write the show while working in a children's hospital. "I witnessed some teenagers turning their illness and vulnerability into a strength," Jafferis says. "I thought it would be fascinating to bring stories from that 'ill' environment to another world I'm a part of, in which being 'ill' is a sign of strength." After thinking further about this idea, he was surrounded by various questions. "When two young people whose strength as hip-hop dancers is suddenly undermined by illness, who do they become? When my sense of self as a caregiver is undermined by my own miscommunications and assumptions, who do I become?" With the further development of this show, Jafferis hopes to break through to a deeper conversation. "My hope is that *How to Break* can help drive a wedge into hip-hop culture, and American culture, to open a slightly larger space for real illness to be talked about," Jafferis says. "People can be fully who they are, and not a pigeonholed version of what it means to be 'ill' or 'well'."

Jafferis' hip-hop musicals have been produced, presented, or developed by The Old Globe, Public Theater, Sundance Theatre Lab, Atlantic Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, HERE, TheatreWorks/Silicon Valley, On the Boards, and many more. His honors include a Creative Capital Award, Richard Rodgers Award, Sundance Institute/Time Warner Fellowship, NEFA National Theatre Pilot Grant, MacDowell Fellowship, Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award, Barbour Playwright's Award, NYMF Most Promising New Musical Award, and The Dramatist's "50 To Watch."

The show features a cast and production team of some of the most talented and sought-after artists in the country. As the teens who use their art to deal with their sickness, **Jason Facey** (a dancer for Gwen Stefani, Alicia Keys, Pharrell, and Major Lazer) will play Joel, and making her Village Theatre debut, local Seattle University student, **Veronica Garcia**, will portray Ana. Joining them are Seattle actors, **Andrew Lee Creech** (*Mr. Burns* at ACT Theatre), **Sylvie Davidson** (*The Crucible* at ACT Theatre), as well as Broadway's **Chesney Snow** (*The Unwritten Law* and *In Transit*) as a beatboxing nurse.

The creative team includes eclectic artists from across genres to tackle this challenging and provoking work. Director **Ameenah Kaplan** is a multidisciplinary director, choreographer, musician, and actor with such diverse credits as an original company member of *STOMP*, a recurring role on NBC's *The Office*, as well as her recent Gregory Award-winning work as director of *The Royale* at ACT Theatre and the Mark Taper Forum. Choreographing and associate directing will be hip-hop theatre-maker **Gabriel "KWIKSTEP" Dionisio**, an international icon in breakdancing best known for his smooth style, versatility, and signature head spins, who just choreographed the off-Broadway hit *Syncing Ink* at The Flea. The music team includes Seattle-based composer and musician **Orlando Morales** as music director, and

Lizard Boy creator **Justin Huertas** as associate music director. The team is rounded out by scenic designer **Christopher Mumaw** (*Newsies* at Village Theatre), costume designer **Brynne McKeen** (*Green Day's American Idiot* at ArtsWest), lighting designer **Robert J. Aguilar** (Seattle Repertory Theatre's *Dry Powder*), projections designer **Gregory W. Towle** (*Into the Woods* at Village Theatre), and sound designer **Natalie Kinsaul**.

How to Break is on stage at Village Theatre's First Stage Theatre in Issaquah January 5 – 14, 2018. For tickets, please visit www.VillageTheatre.org or call the Box Office at (425) 392-2202.

About Village Theatre

Based in Issaquah, WA, with operations in Everett, WA, Village Theatre is a leading producer of musical theatre in the Pacific Northwest. Producing entertaining, quality productions since 1979, Village Theatre has grown into one of the region's best-attended theatres, with more than 20,000 Subscribers and 220,000 projected total attendance each season. Through its Village Originals program, Village Theatre is nationally recognized for its contribution to the development of new musicals, having supported the development of over 160 new works to date. Village Theatre also takes pride in nurturing tomorrow's audiences through its Youth Education and Outreach programs, KIDSTAGE and Pied Piper, serving over 58,000 young people and their families annually.

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