

## Michael Arden Concludes Week of Research and Development for New Production of Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along* at The Wallis

R&D Cast featured Tituss Burgess, Steve Kazee, Valarie Pettiford and Marissa Jaret Winokur

(Beverly Hills, CA May 25) Tony Award-nominee **Michael Arden** (*Spring Awakening*) has just concluded a weeklong research and development session led by Broadway and television star **Tituss Burgess** ("Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt," *The Little Mermaid*, *Jersey Boys*), Tony Award-winners **Steve Kazee** (*Once*) and **Marissa Jaret Winokur** (*Hairspray*), and Tony Award-nominee **Valarie Pettiford** (*Fosse*), in advance of a new production of the Stephen Sondheim masterwork *Merrily We Roll Along*, set to hit the stage of the Bram Goldsmith Theater at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts November 22, 2016 through December 18, 2016. Casting for the fall production will be announced at a later date.

"I'm so excited to be partnering with The Wallis and Cody Lassen again to bring one of my favorite musicals to life," remarked Arden. "Just about a year ago, we were in the same rehearsal hall working on *Spring Awakening*, and to be back in that same room with these incredible actors and creatives felt like a homecoming."

"The Wallis is both a performing arts center, with stages to share performances with audiences, and a collaborative resource for artists to nurture and develop new ideas, projects and possible productions," said Paul Crewes, The Wallis' new Artistic Director. "We were thrilled to support Michael's development of our co-production of *Merrily We Roll Along*, which will be our second theater production of the new season."

The research and development cast also included: Adam Von Almen, Bryan Dobson, Max Ehrich, Annie Funke, LaRece Hawkins, Ginifer King, Jeffrey Landman, Charlotte Maltby, Peter Porte, Scarlett Strallen and Luke Youngblood. The creative team included Eamon Foley (Choreographer), Adam Wachter (Music Director), Blake Silver (Associate Director), Jacob Yates (Accompanist), Beth Lipari (Casting Director) and Lora K. Powell (Production Stage Manager).

Michael Arden, who brilliantly reimagined The Wallis' production of *Spring Awakening* with Deaf West Theatre that received rave reviews on Broadway and earned him Tony, Drama Desk and New York Outer Critics Circle Award nominations, directs *Merrily We Roll Along*, the rarely staged Stephen Sondheim (*Into the Wood*, *Sweeney Todd*, *West Side Story*) musical that travels backwards in time to navigate the bumpy history between three friends—Franklin, Charlie and Mary—who begin their careers in show business together. The powerful and moving story, based on the Kaufman and Hart play, features some of Sondheim's most beautiful songs including "Good Thing Going," "Old Friends,"

“Our Time” and “Not a Day Goes By.” The musical will be produced by The Wallis and Cody Lassen with co-producer Aaron Sanko.

Arden was recently named the institution’s first ever Artist-in-Residence for the 2016/17 season. He will direct two new productions: Sondheim’s *Merrily We Roll Along* and Alexi Kaye Campbell’s *The Pride*, continue to develop new work and conduct a Master Class. *The Pride*, a gorgeously-drawn drama alternating between two very distinct time periods and sets of characters whose fate is written by their eras, is set to hit the stage of the Lovelace Studio Theater at The Wallis June 6 through 30, 2017.

### **About the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts**

Since opening its doors in October 2013, The Wallis has produced or presented over 100 dance, theatre, opera, classical music and children's programs to an ever expanding audience. Located in the heart of Beverly Hills, California, The Wallis brings audiences world-class theater, dance and music, performed by many of the world's most talented and sought-after artists. Featuring eclectic programming that mirrors the diverse landscape of Los Angeles and its notability as the entertainment capital of the world, The Wallis offers original and revered works from across the U.S. and around the globe. The mission of The Wallis is to be a vital cultural hub that uses unique arts events and education programming to entertain, enlighten and inspire children and adults in our community and across the nation.

Nominated for 26 Ovation Awards, four L.A. Drama Critic's Circle Awards and the recipient of five architectural awards since opening in 2013, The Wallis is a breathtaking 70,000-square-foot venue that celebrates the classic and the modern, and was designed by Zoltan E. Pali, FAIA of Studio Pali Fekete architects. The building features the restored, original 1933 Beverly Hills Post Office (on the National Register of Historic Places) that serves as the theater's dramatic yet welcoming lobby, and houses the 150-seat Lovelace Studio Theater, GRoW at The Wallis: A Space for Arts Education (a gift of Gregory Annenberg Weingarten and Family and the Annenberg Foundation) and the contemporary 500-seat, state-of-the-art Bram Goldsmith Theater. Together, these structures embrace the city's history and its future, creating a performing arts destination for L.A.-area visitors and residents alike.

For more information about The Wallis, please visit: [TheWallis.org](http://TheWallis.org).

For downloadable photos of the Merrily R&D week, please click [here](#).

Like The Wallis on [Facebook](#), and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

### **Press Contacts:**

Sarah Jarvis, The Wallis Communications Manager  
310-246-3800 | [sjarvis@thewallis.org](mailto:sjarvis@thewallis.org)

Gary W. Murphy, The Wallis Public Relations Consultant  
310-914-0178 | [gmurphypr@gmail.com](mailto:gmurphypr@gmail.com)