



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, PLEASE:

Press Contact: Daniel Demello 917.981.0344 or danielwdemello@gmail.com

“An exciting and ambitious project, driven by Teng’s eclectic score, Shaffer’s inspired rewrites of the Buddha story, and their punchy, provocative lyrics...Hilarious and moving production numbers... imaginatively staged by Broadway’s Matt August...An absolute delight.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

NANCY ANDERSON TO STAR IN
NEW YORK MUSICAL FESTIVAL AND 4M PRODUCTIONS'

THE FOURTH MESSENGER

An Official Selection of the 2017
New York Musical Festival's Next Link Project
THE PRODUCTION WILL RUN JULY 18 – JULY 23
AT THE ACORN THEATRE AT THEATRE ROW

**AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT TANYA SHAFFER'S
ENLIGHTENING NEW MUSICAL FEATURES MUSIC BY
INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED RECORDING ARTIST VIENNA TENG
AND DIRECTION BY BROADWAY'S MATT AUGUST**

Epic and intimate, comic and profound, this story of a modern female Buddha investigates what it means to be both enlightened and human.

(New York, NY) – Fresh off the triumphant run of *Sunset Boulevard*, **NANCY ANDERSON** will play the role of world-famous spiritual teacher Mama Sid in New York Musical Festival and 4M Productions' East Coast premiere of **THE FOURTH MESSENGER**, a contemporary Western re-imagining of the Buddha legend featuring a flawed, female Buddha figure, as part of the New York Musical Festival. The cast also features **SAMIA MOUNTS, ALAN GILLESPIE, JACOB HOFFMAN, CALI MOORE, JOSH POWELL, TERRY PALASZ, FAITH SANDBERG AND MAURICIO VILLALOBOS**. The production, which begins performances on Tuesday, July 18th at The Acorn Theatre at Theatre Row (410 West 42nd Street) includes book and lyrics by **TANYA SHAFFER** and music and additional lyrics by **VIENNA TENG**, and is directed by Broadway director **MATT AUGUST** (*Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas: the Musical*). Performances will continue through July 23rd. nymf.org/fourthmessenger

NANCY ANDERSON (Sid) was last seen on Broadway in *Sunset Boulevard* (Ensemble, u/s Norma). Other Broadway credits include the revival of *Wonderful Town* (Helen and Eileen) and *A Class Act* (Mona). PBS Great Performances audiences know her for her Olivier- and Helen Hayes-Nominated performance as Lois/Bianca in the West End premiere of *Kiss Me Kate* and the Great Performances broadcast of *South Pacific in Concert at Carnegie Hall*. Off-Broadway, Nancy played Kelli O'Hara's best friend in Frankel and Korie's *Far From Heaven* at Playwrights Horizons. She received a 2000 Drama Desk Nomination for her portrayal of all the Women in *Jolson & Co* at the York Theater and a 2005 Drama Desk Nomination for the title role in *Fanny Hill*. Other off-Broadway credits include all the female roles in *Yank!* and the New York revival of *Ionescopade*. Regionally, she has played leading roles at such theaters as the Kennedy Center, Geffen Playhouse, Goodspeed Opera House, Papermill Playhouse, and the Shakespeare Theater in Washington, D.C. She has appeared twice with Michael Feinstein at Carnegie Hall and sings regularly at Town Hall in Scott Siegel's Broadway by the Year series. She has also appeared on the CBS series *Madam Secretary*. Nancy is frequently seen at the legendary jazz club Birdland with Ross Patterson and His Little Big Band featuring songs from her debut album, *Ten Cents a Dance*.

SAMIA MOUNTS (Raina) has appeared in past NYMF productions as Fresca in *Lisa & Leonardo* and Loretta in *Once Upon A Time In New Jersey*. Other theatre: Layla in *We Live In Cairo* (New York Theatre Workshop), Vocalist in *The Source* (BAM, LA Opera, SF Opera), *Les Miserables* (St Louis MUNY, Atlanta TOTS). Samia releases her original music under the name Samia XI, and she's the creator and host of the podcast *Make America Relate Again*, in which she has compassionate, respectful political conversations with women who voted for Donald Trump.

In the tradition of the classic rock music *Jesus Christ Superstar*, **THE FOURTH MESSENGER** is a captivating, visionary fusion of spirituality and theatricality which asks the provocative question: What if the Buddha were a woman, living in our times? Loosely inspired by the life of the historical Buddha, **THE FOURTH MESSENGER** imagines a modern-day "awakened one," a world-famous spiritual teacher named Mama Sid. When Raina, a young woman on a mission to reveal Mama Sid's hidden past, arrives at her meditation center, Sid's carefully constructed world starts to fall apart. At once epic and intimate, comic and profound, the musical explores what it means to be both enlightened and human.

Vienna Teng's layered harmonies and intricate, haunting melodies bring the piece vividly to life, adding depth and resonance that linger long after the lights come up.

Hailed as "an absolute delight" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, **THE FOURTH MESSENGER** premiered at the Ashby Stage in Berkeley, California in 2013, where it enjoyed a completely sold-out run and across-the-board critical acclaim. *KQED-FM*, the nation's largest NPR affiliate, placed it on its year-end Top Ten list, dubbing it "a satisfying and remarkably entertaining new musical that takes on spiritual life with wit and emotional resonance...like Sid's teachings, it seems sure to catch fire if the rest of the world gets a chance to hear it." *The Huffington Post* proclaimed it "hugely ambitious and refreshingly original," *Stage and Cinema* called it "masterful and compelling," and *Theater Dogs*, which also named it a year-end Top Tenner, called it "a triumph...Shaffer's book brims with intelligence and wit, and Teng's music feels rich in original ways, full of melody and intricacy." It has since had a second production in Yunlin County, Taiwan.

In addition to Ms. Anderson and Ms. Mounts, the cast includes Alan Gillespie, Jacob Hoffman, Cali Moore, Terry Palasz, Josh Powell, Faith Sandberg, and Mauricio Villalobos.

Tanya Shaffer (book and lyrics) is a San Francisco based writer whose plays have been produced by Berkeley Repertory Theatre, San Diego Repertory Theatre, A Contemporary Theatre, TheatreWorks, and the Eureka Theatre, and have toured more than 40 cities in the U.S. and Canada. She has also co-written two shows for the Tony-Award-winning San Francisco Mime Troupe. Her solo show *Let My Enemy Live Long!* ran for six sold-out months in the Bay Area and was awarded a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for solo performance. Her play *Baby Taj*, which premiered at TheatreWorks in 2005, was selected by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, and the *Oakland Tribune* as one of the Top Ten Shows of the Year and nominated for a National Theatre Critics Association Steinberg Award for the best play to premiere that year outside of New York City. It has since been published by Samuel French, Inc. She's also the author of the critically acclaimed travel memoir, *Somebody's Heart is Burning: A Woman Wanderer in Africa*. Her stories and essays have appeared on Salon.com and in numerous anthologies. She recently completed a four-year residency at the San Francisco Playwrights' Foundation.

Vienna Teng (music and additional lyrics) is a singer, songwriter and pianist who has released four studio albums and one live album on the Virt and Rounder labels, as well as singing the role of Mama Sid on *The Fourth Messenger* studio album, released in 2015. Her 2013 album AIMS received four Independent Music Awards – for Adult Contemporary Album, Pop Song, A Capella Song, and Social Action Song – the most awards any artist has received in a given year. AIMS debuted at #4 on Billboard's Heartseekers Albums Chart and was included in the Best of 2013 lists of the Huffington Post, NJ Star-Ledger, and Glide Magazine. Her albums *Waking Hour* and *Warm Strangers* both reached the top five of Amazon.com's bestseller list, and she won the 2010 Independent Music Awards' Vox Pop vote for her album *Inland Territory*. She has appeared on The Late Show with David Letterman, NPR's Weekend Edition, CBS's Early Show, and CNN's News Night with Aaron Brown, and has toured with Joan Baez, Brandi Carlile, Duncan Sheik, Madeleine Peyroux, Joan Osborne, Sarah Harmer, Marc Cohn and the Indigo Girls, among others. In addition to her performing and composing career, Vienna recently received an MB/MS from the Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise at the University of Michigan. She is a native of Saratoga, California, and holds a Computer Science degree from Stanford University.

MATT AUGUST (Director) Directed both Broadway productions of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (and 12 Nat'l Tours, Madison Square Garden, Grand Ole Opry, Pantages productions). A finalist for the 2016 TCG Alan Schneider Directing Award, he recently directed the first American production of *King Charles III* at Arizona Theatre Company and the critically acclaimed Geffen Playhouse, ATC and NoHo Arts Center productions of *Gospel According to Jefferson*, *Dickens and Tolstoy: Discord*. Other credits: *Two Dollar Bill*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *In the Heights* (Pioneer Theatre); *The Trouble We Come From* by Scott Caan, produced by Garry Marshall (Falcon Theatre); *Fourth Messenger* (Ashby Stage); *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Pig Farm*, *Time Flies*, *Food Chain* (Old Globe Theatre); *Dracula*, *Intelligence Slave*, *The Real Dr. Strangelove*, *Speech and Debate*, *40th Anniversary Gala* (LA Theatre Works); *Liberty Smith*, *Christmas Carol* (5 seasons) *Meet John Doe* as Co-Author (NYMF & Ford's Theatre); *Baby Taj* (TheatreWorks); *Complete History of America Abridged*, *All in the Timing*, *Tempest* (Hanger Theatre); *Sixteen Wounded* (with Martin Landau, Long Wharf Theatre); *Full Monty* (Australian Tour). He was Associate Director for the Broadway productions of *Henry IV*, *Imaginary Friends*, *Invention of Love*, *Full Monty* (Nat'l Tours). Off Broadway: *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (The Acting Company and Nat'l Tour); *Sixteen Wounded* (Cherry Lane Theatre). He directed the multi award-winning short film [How to Get to Candybar](#). Matt's productions have been recognized by Ovation, Helen Hayes, Bay Area Critics, Broadway World, Utah Theatre, and Australia's Helpmann awards and nominations, and appeared on Year End Top Ten lists in the L.A. Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Huffington Post, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury News and NPR/KQED. He has

mentored upcoming directors through the SDC Observership Program, Drama League Director Fellowship and at NYU, and has guest taught and lectured at many universities across the country. He is a member of the SDC Los Angeles Advisory Committee and is a Drama League Fellow, Oregon Shakespeare Killian Fellow, Robert Wilson Watermill Fellow and Panavision New Filmmaker Grant recipient. He splits his time between LA and NYC.

THE FOURTH MESSENGER features orchestrations by Ryan O'Connell, choreography by Natalie Malotke, set and costume design by Elizabeth Caitlin Ward, lighting design by Nick Solyom, sound design by Shannon Slater, and music direction by Jesse Lozano.

Performances of **THE FOURTH MESSENGER** are **7/18 at 8PM, 7/20 at 9PM, 7/21 at 5PM, 7/22 at 1PM, and 7/23 at 9PM at the Acorn Theatre at Theatre Row, 410 W. 22nd Street.**

Tickets for **THE FOURTH MESSENGER** are available at <http://www.nymf.org/festival/2017-events/fourth-messenger/>. The NYMF PASS is another way to experience the New York Musical Festival. To purchase a pass, please visit: <http://www.nymf.org/festival/tickets/#NYMFPASS>.

The running time is approximately 2 hours, including intermission.

ABOUT NYMF:

The New York Musical Festival nurtures the creation, production, and public presentation of stylistically, thematically, and culturally diverse new musicals to ensure the future vitality of musical theater.

Now in its fourteenth year, the Festival is the premier musical theater event in the world. The preeminent site for launching new musicals and discovering new talent, the Festival provides an affordable platform for artists to mount professional productions that reach their peers, industry leaders, and musical theater fans. More than 90 Festival shows have gone on to productions on and Off-Broadway, in regional theaters in all 50 states, and in more than 24 countries worldwide. Festival alumni have received a wide array of awards including the Tony Award® and the Pulitzer Prize. In 2013, NYMF received a special Drama Desk Award in recognition of its work "creating and nurturing new musical theater, ensuring the future of this essential art form."

NYMF is the flagship program of National Music Theater Network, Inc., a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization. 2017 NYMF is sponsored by The City of New York Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, PRG, TheaterMania, Clear Channel Outdoor and the Village Voice, and is supported, in part, in part, by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

The NYMF PASS is a great way to experience The New York Musical Festival. With a NYMF PASS, you can get into the theater before individual ticket holders. Passes also offer the exclusive ability to book tickets before they go on sale to the public. Individual tickets on sale now.

The 2017 New York Musical Festival will take place July 10 - August 6. For more information, please visit: www.nymf.org

###