February 18, 2019

**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Tara Wibrew, Associate Producer

Telephone: 541-684-6988 x204

Email: tara@octheatre.org

**Oregon Contemporary Theatre Presents the West Coast Premiere of**

 **Bennett Fisher’s Thriller *DAMASCUS***

**March 29 – April 14, 2019**

**EUGENE, OREGON –**Oregon Contemporary Theatre is proud to present the West Coast premiere of ***Damascus*** by Bennett Fisher, directed by OCT Associate Producer Tara Wibrew. ***Damascus*** runs March 29 through April 14 at Oregon Contemporary Theatre, 194 West Broadway in downtown Eugene. Tickets are available online at [www.octheatre.org](http://www.octheatre.org) or by calling 541-465-1506.

***Damascus*** follows the journey of Hassan, a financially struggling Somali-American taxi driver, and Lloyd, a teenager stranded at the Minneapolis airport. Lloyd is desperate to catch a flight out of Chicago's O'Hare and begs Hassan to take him across state lines. Breaking rules to accept this unusual fare seems like it's worth the risk. Until it isn't. An intense thriller about privilege, paranoia, and the assumptions we make about one another, ***Damascus*** is a breakthrough play from a writer whose star is rising.

“Bennett Fisher’s writing is engaging and surprising. Lloyd and Hassan’s journey challenges viewers to let go of ingrained cultural assumptions,” said OCT Producing Artistic Director Craig Willis. “Audiences will be on the edge of their seats as Fisher takes us through unexpected twists and turns. It’s a finely tuned thriller.”

***Damascus*** stars Portland-based actor Jasper L. Howard as Hassan alongside OCT veteran Connor French (*Hand to God*) as Lloyd. The ensemble also includes Donella-Elizabeth Alston (*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*) and Lisa Roth in her OCT debut.

The production team for ***Damascus*** includes director Tara Wibrew, assistant director Chelsey Megli, sound designer Taylor Freeman, lighting designer Michael A. Peterson, scenic designer Michael Teague, costume designer Kat Matthews, props designer Rebecca Blanchard, and movement director William Hulings. Christle O’Neill is the production stage manager.

Bennett Fisher (*Playwright*) is an Artistic Associate and former Shank Fellowship Playwright in Residence at Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago, and a company member of Campo Santo, People of Interest and the Cutting Ball Theater. His plays include *Damascus* (Samuel Goldwyn Award, O'Neill Conference finalist), *Borealis* (Alliance/Kendeda Prize finalist),*Don't Be Evil*, *Candlestick*, *Campo Maldito* and the dialogue for the immersive theater experience *The Speakeasy*. His work has been presented and produced by the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Strawdog Theater Company, La Jolla Playhouse's WOW Festival, the Alliance Theater, the Kennedy Center MFA Playwrights Workshop, Florida Repertory Theater, the Martin E. Segel Center, Burbage Theater Company, People of Interest, Ubuntu Theater Project, Theater Emory, the Unicorn Theater, Sleepwalkers Theater, New Conservatory, the Cutting Ball Theater, Custom Made Theatre Company, and others. Bennett has been commissioned by the House Theater, Theater Emory, Campo Santo, and others. His screenplay version of ***Damascus***has been optioned by Bill Mechanic and Pandemonium, and he is currently developing work with e1 based on the experience of the former CIA officer-turned-whistleblower John Kiriakou. Bennett received his MFA in playwrighting from UC San Diego in 2016.

Pay-What-You-Can preview performances of ***Damascus*** are on March 27 and March 28 at 7:30pm. For more information or to order tickets, visit [www.octheatre.org](http://www.octheatre.org) or call the OCT Box Office: (541)465-1506. All performances are at Oregon Contemporary Theatre, 194 West Broadway in downtown Eugene.

Critical praise for ***Damascus***:

"Buckle up for ***Damascus***... Bennett Fisher's excellent script has been optioned for a film. It's the kind of work you will want to see first on stage." –*Buzz Center Stage - Chicago*

 “In your face is probably not the right way to describe the close-up experience of watching Bennett Fisher’s harrowing play ***Damascus***… Eye to unblinking eye would be more accurate.”
–*Chicago on the Aisle*

“***Damascus*** is an exciting, thrilling journey that taps neatly into our current climate of prejudice, hatred and assumptions about race and ethnicity… a must-see.” –*News-Press.com*

# # #

***Damascus*** Performance Calendar

Wednesday, March 27 7:30pm Preview ($15 suggested or Pay-What-You-Can)

Thursday, March 28 7:30pm Preview ($15 tickets or Pay-What-You-Can)

Friday, March 29 7:30pm Opening Night ($40 includes wine, beer, and dessert

reception with the cast after the performance)

Saturday, March 30 7:30pm Performance, Tickets start at $20

Thursday, April 4 7:30pm Performance, Tickets start at $20

Friday, April 5 7:30pm Performance, Tickets start at $20

Saturday, April 6 7:30pm Performance, Tickets start at $20

Sunday, April 7 2:00pm Matinee, Tickets start at $20

Thursday, April 11 7:30pm Performance, Tickets start at $20

Friday, April 12 7:30pm Performance, Tickets start at $20

Saturday, April 13 7:30pm Performance, Tickets start at $20

Sunday, April 14 2:00pm Matinee, Tickets start at $20

Discounts are available for current students with student ID. For more information, visit [www.octheatre.org](http://www.octheatre.org) or call the OCT Box Office: (541)465-1506.