

## **Native Voices' Randy Reinholz Becomes the First Native American to Receive the Ellen Stewart Career Achievement in Professional Theater Award**

Los Angeles, CA (August 12, 2019)— [The Association for Theatre in Higher Education](#) named Randy Reinholz (Choctaw), the recipient of their most prestigious honor, named for Ellen Stewart, well-known Artistic Director of the acclaimed La MaMa Theater in New York. Reinholz, a celebrated leader in the field of theater and higher education, has been at the forefront of equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice for 25 years as the Founder and Producing Artistic Director of [Native Voices at the Autry](#), the only Equity theater company wholly dedicated to developing and producing Native American plays.

"I am so honored to receive the Ellen Stewart Career Achievement in Professional Theatre Award from ATHE," said Reinholz. "I had the great pleasure of speaking on a panel with Ellen Stewart in 1998 at New World Theatre at U Mass Amherst. When our panel concluded, she turned to me and said, '...now it is your turn. It is your turn to be like those great artists that worked with me before, like Spiderwoman and Hanay Geiogamah.' In awe, I thanked her and we parted ways. I have tried to live up to her expectations. And so, I think of her and thank her again today. She was such an inspiration to so many."

Reinholz was nominated by **Dr. Courtney Elkin Mohler** (Santa Barbara Chumash), Assistant Professor of Theatre at Butler University. Mohler praised Reinholz's career and the path he has led for Native playwrights, actors, directors, and theatre-makers. Before assembling the nomination, Mohler compiled a "who's who" collection of letters of support from industry professionals depicting Reinholz's career as a producer, director, and playwright as stellar. "It was an honor to be able to nominate my elder, whose love for theatre and Native cultural endurance has been nothing short of transformational. Randy has nurtured hundreds of new works and provided continued support for Native artists at all points of their careers over the past twenty-five years. Choosing only ten letters of support for his nomination from the dozens I received was a tremendous challenge," said Mohler.



Image: Randy Reinholz receives the ATHE award.

As one member of the ATHE awards committee wrote about Reinholz, “his lifetime of achievement and sustained contribution to honoring, research about, and moreover cultivation of Native theater is impossible to overstate...the artists whose work he has helped to mentor, produce, and curate, the prolific theater practice and running of Native theater, as well as his own playwriting and direction, has shaped a movement in the field, and an awakening, not only filling gaps but transforming practices at an array of sites (universities, professional theaters, local communities, scholarly gatherings, and more).”

During Reinholz's introduction, he was surprised by a letter from **Gary Batton**, Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, organized by Dr. Bethany Hughes (Choctaw), Assistant Professor at University of Michigan. "Thank you, Randy, for carrying the Choctaw success story into your fields," said Batton's letter. "As an educator, director, producer, and playwright whose roots reach back to Boswell, Oklahoma, you are bringing a Native voice to the American stage. Your vision, hard work and talent are paving the way for future generations of young Native theater artists. For this, your tribe, the Choctaw Nation, is proud of you. May the spotlight continue to shine brightly upon your education and theater endeavors."

Reinholz and Jean Bruce Scott, Native Voices Co-Founder and Producing Executive Director Emeritus, traveled to Orlando for the ATHE National Conference, where he received the award in-person and was interviewed for the ATHE website and archives by **Ann White**, Vice President of the Awards Committee. At the awards ceremony, Reinholz gave an acceptance speech before the conference's keynote speech given by **Bill Rauch**, Artistic Director of Oregon Shakespeare Festival and one of Reinholz's nominators. Long-time friends, they worked together to bring Reinholz's play *Off The Rails* to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for a sold-out run in 2017. It was the first Native play the theater produced in its 82-year history.

“The impact of Randy’s collaboration with OSF cannot be overstated; it completely transformed our organization,” said Rauch. “He introduced me and our company to Native dramaturgs, designers, and performers, most of whom are still a vibrant part of our company over two years later. For example, last

season, the year after *Off the Rails*, there were ten Native actors spread across the repertory in classic as well as contemporary work—that is over 10% of the largest acting company in the country. Randy has made a difference nationally with Native work for decades, but the visibility of *Off the Rails* and Randy's role with us has jump-started a marked increase of interest in Native voices across our field."

### **About Randy Reinholz**

Reinholz, an enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, is Co-Founder and Producing Artistic Director of Native Voices at the Autry, the nation's premier Equity theater company dedicated exclusively to the development and production of new plays by Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and First Nations playwrights. In 2019-20 NVA celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary of developing, producing, and touring critically acclaimed theater to advance the Native narrative for social change. Reinholz has worked diligently to put the Native voice at the center of telling the stories of Native people on the American stage. He is an accomplished producer, director, actor, playwright and activist. *Off The Rails*, his bawdy and irreverent adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* had its world premiere and a sold out run at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival with Bill Rauch directing in 2017. His current play, *Under A Big Sky* was developed in 2019 at Seven Devils Playwrights Conference. Reinholz has produced more than 30 scripts and directed over 60 plays in the United States, Australia, Mexico, England, and Canada. He has received the Playwrights' Arena's Lee Melville Award, a MAP Grant, a McKnight Fellowship, the LA Drama Critics Circle Gordon Davidson Award and numerous grants from the NEA, Ford Foundation, Shubert Foundation, City of LA Cultural Affairs, Disney, Sony, and LA County Arts Commission. Reinholz is Vice President of the National Theater Conference, a member of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre, on the National Advisory Board for the Valdez Last Frontier Theatre Conference, and the La Jolla Playhouse Leadership Council. He served on the Los Angeles County, Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative Advisory Committee, and ATHE's Leadership Institute, Leadership Transition Team where he continues to serve as a faculty mentor. He is a founding member of the Fund for an Equitable Theatre Ecology (FETE) a Think Tank facilitated by the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Institute (a partnership of TCG and artEquity), the National Cultural Navigation Theater Project, and is a Core Partner of ArtChangeUS: Arts in a Changing America a five-year initiative based out of the California Institute of the Arts. Reinholz is a tenured Professor at San Diego State University, where he served as Head of Acting from 1997-2007, Director of the School of Theatre, Television, and Film from 2007-2012, and Director of Community Engagement and Innovation for the College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts from 2012-2015. He holds an MFA, Cornell University; BA, William Jewell College.

Beyond SDSU, he has held academic positions with Illinois State University, Duke University, and Santa Monica College. During that time he also lectured at University of Massachusetts, Amherst; University of Miami, Ohio; Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia; University of La Verne; University of Oregon; Northwestern University; Brown University; UC Riverside; UC San Diego; UC Irvine; Harlaxton College, Gramthan, UK; University of Lincoln, Lincolnshire, UK; City University of New York; The Smithsonian; Cornell University; Smith College; United States Institute of Theater Technology (USITT); and The Mark Taper Forum. His work has been seen at La Jolla Playhouse, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Perseverance Theatre, Vision Maker Media, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, Montana

Rep, The Alaska Native Heritage Center, Riverside Theatres, London, The Gilcrease Museum, Queensland State Library, Brisbane, The Glenbow Museum, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Old Globe Theatre and New York's Public Theater. He has also appeared as an actor on many stages across the country as well as NBC, ABC, and CBS Television.

### **About the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE)**

ATHE is a comprehensive non-profit professional membership organization. Founded in 1986, ATHE serves the interests of its diverse individual and organizational members, including college and university theatre departments and administrators, educators, graduate students, and theatre practitioners. The Association's website is [www.athe.org](http://www.athe.org).

### **About Native Voices at the Autry**

Native Voices at the Autry is the only Equity theatre company devoted exclusively to developing and producing new works for the stage by Native American, Alaska Native, and First Nations playwrights. The theatre company is committed to putting Native narratives at the center of the American story in order to facilitate a more inclusive dialog on what it means to be American. Founded in 1994 by Producing Artistic Director Randy Reinholz (Choctaw) and Producing Executive Director Jean Bruce Scott, Native Voices became the resident theatre company at the Autry Museum of the American West in 1999. The company provides a supportive, collaborative setting for Native theatre artists from across North America. In 2014 the company established the Native Voices Artists Ensemble to more fully support the extraordinary talents of its Native actors, writers, musicians, and directors. The Ensemble is devoted to developing new work in a collaborative process as well as supporting Native Voices' ongoing focus on the work of individual playwrights. Native Voices at the Autry is a member of Actors' Equity Association, LA Stage Alliance, and the Dramatists Guild, an associate member of the National New Play Network and is a Constituent Theatre of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre. Visit [TheAutry.org/NativeVoices](http://TheAutry.org/NativeVoices) for more information.