

DEBORAH ELIEZER TO SUCCEED BEN YALOM AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AT FOOLSFURY



Debórah Eliezer photographed by Lorenz Angelo Gonzales.

foolsFURY.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, June 25, 2020 – FoolsFURY and its Board of Trustees today announced that **Ben Yalom** will step down as the company’s founding artistic director of 22 years. Effective September 1, 2020, he will be succeeded by **Debórah Eliezer**, foolsFURY’s current co-artistic director. Marking the occasion of her appointment, foolsFURY will host a national convening of ensemble theater makers this fall, September 12 - 13, in collaboration with **Claudia Alick**, executive producer of *Calling Up Justice*.

After moving away from the Bay Area in 2011, Yalom continued to lead the adventurous, physically oriented theater ensemble he founded in 1998. In 2015, he tapped longtime company member Eliezer, then serving as associate artistic director, to join him as co-artistic director in charge of producing new works, internship opportunities and public education programs.

Eliezer joined foolsFURY in 2005 after departing as founding co-artistic director of Eclipse Dance Theater in San Francisco. Her first performing role with the company was in *The Strange Case of the Jenson Files*, written and directed by Yalom. In a short time she became a core member of the company co-creating, choreographing and performing memorable roles in premieres directed by Yalom. Highlights include *Monster in the Dark* by Doug Dorst, *The Devil on All Sides* by Fabrice Melquiot, *Port Out Starboard Home* by Sheila Callaghan and last year’s *Dionysus Was Such a Nice Man* by Kate Tarker. In 2016, she began development on her first solo show, drawing on her own story as the child of a first-generation

immigrant to America caught between cultures – Arab, Iraqi, Israeli, Jewish, American. Titled *(dis)Place[d]*, the show has toured from San Francisco to London.

Among her other credits, Eliezer is an associate artist with Golden Thread Productions. She's worked with Woman's Will, The Puppet Players, Marin Shakespeare Company, Antenna Theater, Boxcar Theatre and Traveling Jewish Theatre. She holds a B.A. *cum laude* from San Francisco State University, and a certificate in Sound, Voice and Music Healing from the California Institute of Integral Studies. She is an alumna of artEquity's national facilitator training, a participant in Theatres Advancing Social Change, and she serves on the national steering committee of the Middle East North African Theater Makers Alliance and the Alliance of Jewish Theatres antiracist committee.

"FoolsFURY has been my creative home and laboratory for over two decades," said Yalom. "While the decision to move on has been difficult, the company could not be in better hands. Debórah has been a brilliant partner in artistic exploration, and in broadening our audiences' understanding of what theater can be. She brings three decades of experience as an acclaimed physical performer and voiceover artist, a teacher and a coach, and an enthusiastic champion of the values of collaboratively made theater that we hold dear. Under her leadership, foolsFURY will continue to deepen its relationships with ensemble theater makers around the country and abroad, with an eye to ever greater inclusion of artists of color, women, immigrants and exiles, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

"Debórah epitomizes the spirit in our company's name: she is a force of nature who understands theater's 'furious' capacity for social critique and social change, and she embodies the warmth, wit and wisdom of the 'fool'. She has been a joy to work with both on and off the stage for 16 years."

In addition to winding down his tenure with foolsFURY, Yalom is currently involved in completing several writing projects including an essay about foolsFURY's innovations with the Viewpoints technique and its originator Mary Overlie, who passed away in May, as well as a book-length manuscript, *Innocent Witnesses: Children's Memories of World War II*, the last major work by his feminist historian mother, Marilyn Yalom, who passed away last fall. He is also involved with several theaters in San Diego, where he now lives with his wife, Anisa, and three children.

In lieu of the FURY Factory Festival of Ensemble and Devised Theater, a biennial event postponed to July 2021, foolsFURY will instead convene a series of online dialogues with ensemble theater makers near and far. The program, titled *BUILD from Here*, will include participation from Theatre Bay Area, the Network of Ensemble Theaters, Howlround and Calling Up Justice, among many more organizations and independent artists. Additional details will be announced next month.

"I am grateful for Ben's visionary leadership, friendship and long-term commitment to collaboration," said Eliezer. "Ben's directorial judgment, literary acuity and overall pursuit of artistic excellence have fundamentally contributed to uplifting the model of ensemble theater in the U.S. I'm excited to continue challenging the assumptions of what theater can be."

ABOUT FOOLSFURY THEATER COMPANY

FoolsFURY, founded in 1998 by Ben Yalom, is a physically oriented theater ensemble based in San Francisco. FoolsFURY has been hailed as San Francisco's "Best Theater Company" (*SF Weekly*), "One of the brightest stars of the San Francisco experimental theater scene" (*SF/Arts*), and it was awarded the GOLDIE award for theater by the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*. FoolsFURY strives to innovate constantly,

focusing on inspired uses of the body in creating narrative, and offering visceral experiences for audiences that cannot be replicated in film or television. Recent and upcoming productions include the West Coast premiere of Kate Tarker's *Dionysus Was Such a Nice Man*, Debórah Eliezer's *(dis)Place[d]* and *The Library Project*, a collaboration with Katie Pearl. In addition to creating and touring new works, foolsFURY serves as the West Coast hub of the national ensemble theater movement, producing FURY Factory, a festival of ensemble and devised theater presenting works from companies across the U.S. and beyond.