

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**New York City Center names Lear deBessonnet
next Artistic Director of Encores!**

October 29, 2019—New York City Center President & CEO **Arlene Shuler** today announced **Lear deBessonnet** as the next Artistic Director of Encores!, City Center’s beloved musical theater program. Currently Resident Director of the Tony-honored series, deBessonnet will continue working alongside Artistic Director Jack Viertel throughout the 2020 season and assume her new role beginning with the 2021 Encores! season. DeBessonnet will be the first new artistic director to lead the series since Viertel was appointed in 2000.

Arlene Shuler said, “When we began looking for candidates who not only appreciate the Encores! mission but share a passion for the art form, it became clear that we did not need to look far. Lear is a visionary leader with a track record of delivering artistic excellence and shares in City Center’s goal to provide access to the best in the arts to the widest possible audience. We’re delighted to have her lead Encores! in its next chapter.”

Jack Viertel said, “The moment I saw Lear’s work as a director I knew I wanted to collaborate with her. Her expression of wit, joy, brains, taste, warmth, and inclusiveness was captivating. Her relationship with City Center began in 2014 and set in motion a series of wonderful, like-minded conversations, and eagerly hatched plans. When I decided it was time for me to hand the baton to the next generation of artists, Lear’s ability to inspire and excite artists and audiences made her the ideal candidate.”

Lear deBessonnet said, “I have a deep respect for the mission of Encores! and am personally passionate about making work that is vibrant and accessible to a new generation of audience members. There’s an enormously rich history here, and I’m particularly excited by the promise and meaning of City Center as a center—a place for all New Yorkers to come together around the arts. I look forward to advancing the tradition of American musical theater at this historic theater.”



In addition to being Resident Director of Encores!, deBessonnet is the Founder of Public Works and Resident Director at The Public Theater. Her directing credits include the Public Works musical productions of *Hercules*, *The Odyssey*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*; The Public Theater productions of *Miss You Like Hell*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet*; and the Foundry Theater's *Good Person of Szechwan*. Her directing credits for City Center include *Thoroughly Modern Millie* for this season's Encores!, *Big River* (Encores!), and *Pump Boys and Dinettes* (Encores! Off-Center). Her work has received multiple Drama Desk and Lortel nominations, the Doris Duke Impact Award, TCG's Peter Zeisler Award, a Lilly Award, and an Obie Award for Direction.

NEW YORK CITY CENTER (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. The distinctive neo-Moorish theater welcomes over 300,000 annual visitors to experience internationally acclaimed artists on the same stage where legends like George Balanchine, Leonard Bernstein, and Barbara Cook made their mark. Its landmark 75th Anniversary Season (2018 – 2019) paid tribute to this rich history and celebrated the institution's singular role in the arts today. City Center's Tony-honored Encores! series has celebrated the tradition of American musical theater for over 25 years. In 2013, City Center launched the Encores! Off-Center series, which brings today's innovative artists into contact with groundbreaking musicals from the more recent past. Dance has also been integral to the theater's mission from the start and programs like the annual Fall for Dance Festival remain central to City Center's identity. Home to a roster of renowned national and international companies including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (City Center's Principal Dance Company) and Manhattan Theatre Club, New York City Center is Manhattan's first performing arts center, founded by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with the mission of making the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. That mission continues today through its dynamic programming, art exhibitions, studio events, and master classes, which are complemented by education and community engagement programs that bring the performing arts to over 11,000 New York City students, teachers, and families each year. NYCityCenter.org

PRESS CONTACT:

Joe Guttridge, Director of Communications

JGuttridge@NYCityCenter.org

212.763.1279

Sara Garcia, Publicity Assistant

SGarcia@NYCityCenter.org

212.763.1288

###

