

# Theatre Arts Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## THROUGH THE LENS OF A WOMAN *MACHINAL* CHALLENGES AMERICA'S SOCIAL IMPRISONMENT

*A REINVENTION OF THE 1928 CLASSIC EXPOSES THE COGS OF OPPRESSION*

**LONG BEACH, CA, October 2017** –Sophie Treadwell's groundbreaking classic *Machinal* rips the façade of social customs away by forcing the audience to see life through the eyes of a young woman in the 1920s. Inspired by the real-life story of Ruth Snyder, Helen is the lens through which the mechanics of America are seen. Directed by The Speakeasy Society's co-artistic director **Julianne Just**, *Machinal* "is what happens when we push against the prescribed roles of society and how much we force ourselves into those roles, and how we feel trapped by them", said Just.

Helen is a working stenographer in an office filled with mechanized workers and her boss Mr. Jones, who repeatedly calls her into his office for "special tasks". Mr. Jones proposes and Helen is disgusted by the idea yet torn between her freedom and the necessity of financial security for her and her mother. In a flash, Helen is coerced into marriage and a honeymoon in which she discovers the full commitment that is expected from her new husband. Straining in her prescribed role Helen finds liberation and motive in a fleeting love, who gives her a glimpse of happiness. She murders her husband to escape the life, the child and the home forced upon her; it is up to a jury to decide her fate.

Director Julianne Just's company, The Speakeasy Society, was named Best Emerging Immersive Theater Company of 2015 by the LA Weekly. Just takes that experience and expertise into *Machinal*, "I want the audience to feel one with her. We are not on the outside judging her actions, but that we are with her as she is deciding what to do." In keeping with the impact of Treadwell's work, which is often dismissed as purely feminist, Just said, "It is not a woman's play. You can see how much a man can be a cog in a machine just like a woman can." Written during the gilded age, with growing monopolies and an economy that promised every American success, *Machinal* asks "How do you break the machine? And how do you push back against corruption when you barely have the energy to keep you and your family afloat?" said Just.

Julianne Just received a MFA in directing from the California Institute of the Arts and has done concept development with Walt Disney Imagineering Creative Entertainment. Her company, The Speakeasy Society is aiming to "change what it means to go to the theater in Los Angeles."

The success of *Machinal*, "a triumph of individual distinction gleaming with intangible beauty" was praised by the *New York Times* in 1928 as a play "that in a hundred years...should still be vital and vivid". Using expressionist caricatures *Machinal* represents the inner confusion of a young woman who asks "Is nothing mine?" during a time of increasing liberation and the oppressive response of American conservatism. For its Broadway premiere Perriton Maxel of *Theatre Magazine* wrote, *Machinal* has "a beauty that cannot be conveyed in words... the most enthralling play of the year". The play has been revived several times from America to London and was adapted for TV in 1954.

Playwright Sophie Treadwell, a native of California, attended the University of California at Berkeley in 1906 where she began to write plays. Treadwell wrote *Machinal* six years after campaigning for and helping win women's suffrage. She has often been lauded as representing the blooming idea of feminism in America, even keeping a separate residence from her husband. Treadwell produced and directed several productions of her own work, a monumental triumph in the male dominated society of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before her death in 1970 Treadwell had written hundreds of newspaper stories, four novels and over thirty plays covering economics, technology, medicine, law, motherhood, the press, romance and religion.

1250 Bellflower Blvd. Long Beach, CA 90840  
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## Calendar Listing for *Machinal*

### ***Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell**

Directed by Julianne Just

CSULB Theatre Arts, 1250 Bellflower Blvd, Long Beach, CA, 90840

### **Performances:**

Thursday, October 12 at 8:00 pm

Friday, October 13 at 8:00 pm (Opening Night)

Saturday, October 14 at 8:00 pm

Sunday, October 15 at 2:00pm

Wednesday, October 18 at 8:00 pm

Thursday, October 19 at 7:00 pm (Inside Look at 6pm with Director Julianne Just and Assistant Professor of Sociology Nancy Martin)

Friday, October 20 at 8:00 pm

Saturday, April 21 at 8:00 pm

### **Tickets and Information:**

Tickets: <http://web.csulb.edu/colleges/cota/theatre/on-stage-now/index.html>

Prices: General Admission \$20

Students (w/ID)/ CSULB Faculty & Staff/\$15

Seniors (55+)/ Military: \$17

Groups: Groups of 10 or more start at \$13.5/ticket

Location: University Theatre at CSULB, 7<sup>th</sup> Street and East Campus Drive

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