

For Immediate Release  
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**3Girls Theatre Company Presents...**  
**The San Francisco Premiere of "Low Hanging Fruit"**  
The story of four homeless women struggling to survive on LA's Skid Row

**July 6 - July 30, 2016**

Z Below, 470 Florida Street, San Francisco

Info/Tix: [www.3girlstheatre.org/about-us/low-hanging-fruit-by-robin-bradford](http://www.3girlstheatre.org/about-us/low-hanging-fruit-by-robin-bradford)

Facebook event page: [www.facebook.com/events/1784678185088894](https://www.facebook.com/events/1784678185088894)

Press page: [www.3girlstheatre.org/press-lhf](http://www.3girlstheatre.org/press-lhf)

San Francisco, CA... 3Girls Theatre Company (3GT) presents the San Francisco premiere of Bay Area-based playwright, Robin Bradford's *Low Hanging Fruit*, which tells the compelling story of four homeless women struggling to survive on Los Angeles' Skid Row. All military veterans, the women face nightmares brought on by their combat experiences and cluster together for quasi-safety in a small tent encampment they've nicknamed "The Taj Mahal."

*Low Hanging Fruit* is a response to the dramatic rise in homelessness among women who have served in the military in Iraq and Afghanistan. The play focuses on the aftermath of war as seen through the lives of four homeless women veterans struggling to survive on the streets of LA. The term "Low Hanging Fruit" refers to a person that can be persuaded or manipulated with little effort, suggesting that the individual is on the bottom, the easiest to reach.

Interspersing traditional dialogue with slam poetry and music, Bradford's play catapults the audience from the present lives of the homeless characters into the devastating memories of their lives as soldiers. The play draws our attention to the shameful treatment of our returning vets and more specifically to the returning women, who are not often the subject of post war dramas. Living in a tent encampment under a freeway in LA are: Cory (Heather Gordon), a lesbian with physical as well as emotional battle scars; Maya (Livia DiMarchi), a Latina poet who dreams of a better life; Yolanda (Cat Brooks), an African American prostitute, drug addict, always looking for her next "hit;" and Alice (Cheri Lynne VandenHeuvel, reprising her role from the LA production), an African American mother hen who watches carefully over her brood.

These women have created their own encampment under the freeway with a handmade cardboard sign that reads "Taj Mahal." Shared military experiences equals trust in their world, and they respect one another enough to exist semi-peacefully. That is, until Cory befriends a 14 year old runaway named Canyon

(Jessica Waldman) and invites the girl to stay with them at the Taj Mahal. This immediately tests relationships, pushes boundaries, and raises painful memories. Cory, in particular, who is desperate to make a lasting connection with Canyon, relates a story of war that is truly horrifying, involving not only foreign enemies, but also a commanding officer, thus shedding a light on the vile treatment that some women have faced in the military.

The play doesn't try to explain why these veterans are homeless: it's simply a fact given our society's acceptance of homelessness in America. There isn't outrage, no character rallies against the poor treatment of the returning women soldiers, but rather they accept it. It is this acceptance that makes the biggest statement. Watching these women struggle, fight, and cling to some kind of hope for themselves, we are watching the reality that perhaps no one cares, or cares enough. In the absence of societal action, these women draw strength, love, and empathy from each other.

As the play moves forward, and each character is faced with possible life changes, whether it's Cory's budding relationship with Canyon or Maya's hope for getting off the streets and taking her friends with her, "Low Hanging Fruit" never relents from its central message: there is always hope, even when it seems the world doesn't care. After serving in combat, too many of our veterans return home with varying degrees of trauma and literally fall through society's cracks. This play seeks to open up conversations about what happens after we say "thank you for your service."

The play premiered in LA in 2014 and went on to present month-long runs in North Carolina in 2015 and Michigan in 2016.

A note from the Playwright, Robin Bradford:

A couple of years ago, I read a short newspaper article about the dramatic rise in homelessness amongst military women who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. I could not understand how it could be. How was it that women who served our country so profoundly could be allowed to drift away or slip through the cracks once they left service? What would cause these women to separate from friends, family, and the very society they elected to serve? I set out with a simple goal to understand. The Veteran's Administration (VA) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) do not collect data on the risk factors that contribute to female veteran homelessness. We do know that the number of homeless women veterans doubled from 2006 to 2010 and is expected to continue to rise as increasing numbers of military women integrate into their communities following service. These women face unique challenges that greatly increase their susceptibility to homelessness. Nearly 80% of homeless veterans suffer from mental health disorders, drug and/or alcohol abuse and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Women who experience Military Sexual Trauma (MST) are nine times more at risk for PTSD, which often leads to difficulties maintaining productive employment and family relationships, greatly increasing the odds for becoming homeless. While constituting only 14.6% of the military,

women service members account for over 95% of reported sex crimes. According to Pentagon reports, violent sex crimes in the military have increased by 64% since 2006. Fear of being ostracized or punished prevents many women from reporting abuse. The Defense Department acknowledges that sex crimes are "very under-reported," with actual incidents of military sexual assault being six times higher than reported. Those who suffer personal violence, including rape, are 6.5 times more likely to experience homelessness, especially when compounded by PTSD. It was my hope in writing "Low Hanging Fruit" to step away from the statistics and tell the stories of a small group of competent women soldiers who served and then found themselves unable to handle the challenges of everyday life. In researching this work, I spoke to many people: active and retired military personnel, government employees, volunteers in the private sector, and homeless people living on the street. The characters are fictional.

### **PRESS QUOTES AND PREVIOUS PRESS:**

"More visceral and raw than RENT. Tender and heartfelt. . ." – LA Examiner  
[www.examiner.com/review/a-soulful-fruit-of-labor-low-hanging-fruit](http://www.examiner.com/review/a-soulful-fruit-of-labor-low-hanging-fruit)

"the writing is powerful and poetic, with a strong message" – LA Post  
[www.thelosangelespost.org/low-hanging-fruit-reviewed-rose-desena](http://www.thelosangelespost.org/low-hanging-fruit-reviewed-rose-desena)

". . . a structure reminiscent of the tragedies of Tennessee Williams and Clifford Odets"  
– StarNews, Wilmington NC  
[www.starnewsline.com/article/20150930/ENT/150929694?p=2&tc=pg](http://www.starnewsline.com/article/20150930/ENT/150929694?p=2&tc=pg)

### **COMMUNITY NIGHTS:**

3GT is partnering, during the month-long run of *Low Hanging Fruit*, with 4 non profit organizations that offer support to San Francisco veterans and homeless citizens. Each Thursday night at 6:45pm, 3GT will sponsor a community night at the theater before the show to raise awareness of these local heroes and their work. Join us and meet representatives of each organization and hear what they are doing to make a difference and how you can help. We'll also be collecting in-kind donations (clothing, hygiene packets and other items requested by our featured nonprofits) on behalf of these organizations. All month, there will be collection bins in the Z Below lobby.

Thursday, July 7	North Beach Citizens
Thursday, July 14	Compass Family Services
Thursday, July 21	San Francisco Suicide Prevention
Thursday, July 28	Coalition on Homelessness

\*Bring a donation with you to the theater and get \$1 off your drink or snack.

### **NORTH BEACH CITIZENS (NBC):**

NBC is a community based non profit that utilizes the strength of the neighborhood to effectively address the needs of homeless and low-income citizens through an innovative collaboration of residents, merchants, police, and service providers. [www.northbeachcitizens.org](http://www.northbeachcitizens.org)

**DONATIONS REQUESTED:** New socks and underwear for men and women, new and gently used clothing.

**COMPASS FAMILY SERVICES (CFS):**

CFS helps homeless families and families at imminent risk for homelessness to achieve housing stability, family well-being, and self-sufficiency. Our six programs provide services to more than 5,000 parents and children each year, 50% of whom are under age 18. Of our 80+ staff members, 57% are people of color, 73% are women, and more than 20% have been homeless and bring firsthand knowledge to their work with clients. [www.compass-sf.org](http://www.compass-sf.org)

**DONATIONS REQUESTED:** Hygiene packets for homeless families: gallon plastic baggies that include a toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, hand sanitizer, hand cream, razor, Kleenex packet. These can be full-size or travel and packets for children are also appreciated. All items should be new. We would also appreciate donations of feminine hygiene products.

**SAN FRANCISCO SUICIDE PREVENTION (SFSP)**

The mission of SFSP is to provide emotional support, education, assistance, and intervention as necessary to all persons in crisis and those impacted by them, with the goal of reducing suicides and self-destructive behaviors. San Francisco Suicide Prevention has developed specialized programs in response to differing community needs. This has enabled us to help people who are in pain before they feel suicidal. We feel that making help available early is an important approach to preventing suicide because it reduces the number of people who feel that their pain is intolerable and their future is hopeless. [www.sfsuicide.org](http://www.sfsuicide.org)

**DONATIONS REQUESTED:** Tea! Our volunteers drink so much tea; it really helps them calm down between calls.

**COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS**

The Coalition on Homelessness brings together homeless folks, front-line service providers, and their allies to build a San Francisco that everyone can call home. We are working every day to expand access to housing in one of the richest cities in the country, protect the rights of the poorest people on our streets, and to address the root causes of homelessness and poverty. [www.cohsf.org](http://www.cohsf.org)

**DONATIONS REQUESTED:** Blankets, socks, and diapers.

**PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTOR, AND ACTORS' BIOS:**

**3GT Resident Playwright, Robin Bradford**, is an award-winning writer, director and producer who transitioned from 25 years as CEO of a highly successful Bay Area staffing company to independent film production and playwriting. Her most recent play, *LOW HANGING FRUIT*, had a critically-acclaimed world premiere run at the Zephyr Theatre in LA in 2014, went on to receive

productions in Michigan and South Carolina, and will debut in San Francisco in a new 3GT production in July 2016. Among the many films produced and developed by her company, Bright Line Films, are: THE GOOD DAUGHTER, GRADUATION (sold to Magnolia Pictures), FRANK (sold to First Look Studios), LAKOTA HOPE, and DREAM WEAVERS. THE GOOD DAUGHTER also appeared as a stage play at the San Francisco Fringe Festival, where it received a Best of Fringe Award. CHANT, an original contemporary Opera, premiered in Venice in 2008. Robin's screenplays have been celebrated at festivals and competitions nationwide and have won top screenwriting honors at (among others) the Telluride Independent Film Festival, the Key West Independent Film Festival, the Houston Worldfest Film Festival, the Moondance Film Festival, the Heart of Austin Film Festival and the Cinequest Film Festival. Her screenplay LA BELLA DIVA was a finalist for the Sundance Screenwriters Lab.

**DIRECTOR LOUIS PARNELL** has worked extensively as an actor and director with numerous companies in the Bay Area including American Conservatory Theatre, Campo Santo, CCT, Center Repertory, CentralWorks, The Magic, Marin Theatre Company, SF Playhouse, TheatreWorks, Thick Description and Traveling Jewish Theatre, as well as with many smaller nomadic companies. He most recently appeared as Doyle in the SF Playhouse production of THE NETHER. He is on the Board of Directors of the SF Playhouse, was a founding member of Genesius Theatre Company and the Actors Theatre of SF, and is a member of Playground at Berkeley Rep, SAG, AFTRA, and AEA.

### CAST

**CAT BROOKS (YOLANDA)** began her theater career at the age of 8 and later obtained her B.A. in Theater with an emphasis on classical works. Upon graduation, she studied at the Royal National Theater Studio in London. She has performed across the world including playing Lady Macbeth at the Edinburgh Theater Festival in Scotland. Cat is also a poet and writer and is currently penning a one-woman show about the in-custody death of Natasha McKenna in Fairfax County, VA. She lives in West Oakland with her daughter.

**LIVIA DEMARCHI (MAYA)** is making her 3Girls Theater debut in Low Hanging Fruit. She is originally from Brazil, where she studied at the renowned Macunaima School of Theater in Sao Paulo. Locally she has trained at A.C.T., Seydways Studios, and with private coaches. She has performed at SF Playhouse, the Marin and San Francisco Shakespeare Festivals, Crowded Fire Theater, Theater Rhinoceros, Ross Valley Players, among others.

**HEATHER GORDON (CORY)** started performing in theater at the age of 10 and was the recipient of the Robin Williams Acting Scholarship as well as "Best Actor" Awards 2002-2006 for her performances in various roles. Heather trained at the prestigious American Repertory Theater/Moscow Art Theatre School and received her MFA in Acting from Harvard.

**JULIAN GREEN (TITO)** is proficient in more than one art form, from improv to Shakespeare. He trained at A.C.T. in San Francisco and has studied under Patrick Russell, Dan Flapper, and Nick Gabriel. His recent appearances include improv at Pan Theater Company, Keem in the film THUG, and various commercials.

**GEREG JONES MULLER (COP)** is a multi-instrumental musician and songwriter, a teacher of World Armed Combat Arts, a leatherworker, an improv actor who once took on the role of William Shakespeare on three days' notice, and a writer of sonnets. This is his first scripted acting role since high school.

**CHERI LYNNE VANDENHEUVEL (ALICE)** hails from Detroit and calls L.A. home. Cheri is an alumna of the The Second City-Detroit Mainstage where she taught, wrote and performed sketch comedy. Currently, she is an improv instructor at The Second City Hollywood. LA stage credits include originating the role of Alice in the premiere of Low Hanging Fruit at the Zephyr Theater in Hollywood and Sophie in Flyin' West at ICT Long Beach, CA. Cheri's classical credits include the Alabama Shakespeare Festival; Regan in King Lear, Aouda in Around The World in 80 Days, Calphurnia in To Kill A Mockingbird, Lady MacDuff and Witch #2 in Macbeth. Cheri has her B.F.A. from The University of Detroit and M.F.A. from The University of Missouri-Kansas City.

**JESSICA WALDMAN (CANYON)** is a recent graduate of Stanford University, where she received her B.A. in both Theater and French. Recent roles include the title role in Ondine with The Cutting Ball Theatre, Ophelia in Hamlet with the Stanford Theatre Department, and Cecily Cardew in The Importance of Being Earnest with Stanford Repertory Theatre. She has trained at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center (NTI) and at the British American Drama Academy.

#### **ABOUT 3GIRLS THEATRE COMPANY:**

3GT's mission is to develop, produce and promote new plays written by San Francisco Bay Area women playwrights. In 2011, San Francisco playwrights Suze Allen, AJ Baker, and Lee Brady decided it was time to stop complaining about the lack of opportunities for women playwrights in American theater and take action. They set about recruiting a company of amazing women who shared their vision to "put women's work on stage where it belongs." Today, 3GT's resident playwrights collaborate with one another and the larger community to create and support extraordinary new work by women playwrights through three core programs: the annual New Works Festival, the intimate Salon Reading Series, and full productions of new plays. 3GT also sponsors outreach programs that develop new playwrights, empower girls, and nurture LBT playwrights and performers.

For Calendar Editors

WHAT: 3Girls Theatre Company Presents...  
Low Hanging Fruit  
by playwright, Robin Bradford

WHEN: July 6 - July 30, 2016

Previews: Wednesday, July 6 and Thursday, July 7 @ 8pm  
Opening Night: Friday, July 8 @ 8pm

Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays @ 8pm  
Saturday July 30 ONLY @ 2pm  
Sundays @ 2pm

Pre-performance Community Nights: Thursday at @ 6:45pm

Thursday, July 7	North Beach Citizens
Thursday, July 14	Compass Family Services
Thursday, July 21	SF Suicide Prevention
Thursday, July 28	Coalition on Homelessness

\*Bring an in-kind donation and get \$1 off your drink or snack.

WHERE: Z Below  
470 Florida Street  
San Francisco

TIX/INFO: Previews: \$20  
Opening Night: \$50  
All other performances: \$35

[www.3girlstheatre.org/about-us/low-hanging-fruit-by-robin-bradford](http://www.3girlstheatre.org/about-us/low-hanging-fruit-by-robin-bradford)

PRESS: For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Lisa Geduldig at (415) 431-7363 or cell: (415) 205-6515 or [lisag@igc.org](mailto:lisag@igc.org)