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San Francisco, CA - **Youth Speaks**, one of the country's leading spoken word and literary arts organizations, has appointed **Sean San José** as **Artistic Director** of its exciting new **Emerging Artists Program**. The accomplished Bay Area-born actor, director, and writer joined Youth Speaks last fall following an extensive two-year search by the organization after founding Artistic Director Marc Bamuthi Joseph joined the staff at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. In his new position, San José will lead a new and dynamic initiative to reignite the organization's performance program. Through the formation of a new performance company, establishment of a fellowship program, and a wide array of workshops in theatre, playwriting, dance, production, and arts management and leadership, the Emerging Artists Program will provide the opportunity for a coalition of young artists, ages 18-27, to learn all aspects of performance and arts leadership.

This initiative for me is about expanding on the massive Youth Speaks' trajectory: creating for the first time a formal new performance company at Youth Speaks. We want to take the creativity, camaraderie, energy and enthusiasm of these younger writers and artists of color and feed them into a group setting where they can help shape the next definition of what live performance can be. ~San San José, Youth Speaks Artistic Director, Emerging Artists Program

For 15 years Sean San José was the Program Director of the Performance Program at **Intersection for the Arts**, where he produced and oversaw more than 100 premiere productions of theatre, dance and interdisciplinary performances. San José worked under Deborah Cullinan and alongside Kevin B. Chen and Rebeka Rodriguez as part of a team that developed new works that crossed boundaries, disciplines and communities. In 1996 San José cofounded **Campo Santo**, the award-winning new performances company and former longtime resident company of Intersection for the Arts. Campo Santo is a multicultural performances group that gives voice to untold stories through socially relevant world premieres of plays created in long-term processes. He remains the program director for Campo Santo and is still developing new works for the stage. As Youth Speaks continues to evolve, San José is mindful of their synergistic relationships. "I feel this is part of a great new chapter. For me our small group Campo Santo started the same year as Youth Speaks, so joining Youth Speaks is a kind of rebirth," says San José. "While working in different forms and formats over the years, there has always been a shared desire to make a future aesthetic possible with our works, and now we have a chance to do it together."

In his appointment as artistic director of Youth Speaks' **Emerging Artists Program**, San José will work alongside Joan Osato, Youth Speaks' Producing Director, to advance the organization's body of theatre and performance work. The next few years will include training emerging artists from the inside on production, development and creation of new performance works and giving them the opportunity to learn and work with theatre companies, dance groups, musicians, filmmakers and more. At the same time these artists will be on the ground seeking out and connecting with like-minded creators and thinkers to form the beginnings of this new performance company. By year three the plan is to not only have a fully-formed company armed with new works, but also an equipped and experienced group of younger artists who will be carving out the next wave of performance aesthetics. "Through this initiative we will see new styles, new works, multi-lingual, multi-generational, younger people of color leading this as yet defined type of performance that will be rooted in theatre as we know it now, but will be next level," says San José. "As the works come to premiere, we will then witness a new cadre of arts leaders emerge, seeded from work right here in the neighborhoods and communities of our San Francisco Bay Area."

This new opportunity will build on several fertile creative mines. The new work will continue the spirit of Marc Bamuthi Joseph's groundbreaking aesthetics with the Living Word Project and Youth Speaks, highlighted by Bamuthi's seminal works (most recently "red, black and green: a blues"). The initiative will also follow the years of collaborative performance work creations from Campo Santo and the Living Word Project for Intersection for the Arts and Youth Speaks, including the first plays by Youth Speaks stars Chinaka Hodge and Dennis Kim. James Kass, Founder and Executive Director of Youth Speaks is a visionary whose legacy will continue with San José's appointment and this new program. "I've known and admired Sean for years. I'm honored that he has joined the team here at Youth Speaks, and am excited to work with him in this capacity, says Kass. "What he's got planned for what theater and performance can look like within our organization and within the field is powerful. It will be great to see how it plays out."

The **Emerging Artists Program** will include a newly inaugurated three-year fellowship program comprised of alumni of Youth Speaks and Brave New Voices Network partners. The fellowship will provide its participants with training and mentorship on presenting, producing, managing and marketing new works and performance pieces. Program participants will be able to learn all aspects of performance, participate in workshops led by diverse Bay Area companies, and develop their own work. The goal of the Emerging Artists Program is to launch a new theater company running, devising, producing, presenting and creating new works within three years.

About Youth Speaks

Founded in 1996, Youth Speaks is a multi-faceted organization that understands and believes that the power, insight, creativity, and passion of young artists can change the world. Through the intersection of arts education and youth development practices, civic engagement strategies and high quality artistic presentation, Youth Speaks creates safe spaces that challenge young people to find, develop, publicly present, and apply their voices as creators of societal change. Youth Speaks exists to shift the perception of youth by combating illiteracy, alienation, and silence, creating a global movement of brave new voices bringing the noise from the margins to the core.

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For more information, high-resolution pictures and interview opportunities:
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