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GUTHRIE THEATER ANNOUNCES 2017-2018 SEASON

Season opens with three revered masterpieces: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Lillian Hellman's political thriller *Watch on the Rhine* and Noël Coward's comedy *Blithe Spirit*

Adored classics are complemented by bold new work from four powerhouses: Kia Corthron, Danai Gurira, Todd Kreidler and Matthew Lopez

Two remaining productions – a new play by a celebrated contemporary female playwright and one of the most ambitious musicals in Guthrie history – to be revealed on April 17

(Minneapolis/St. Paul)—The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, Artistic Director) today announced seven of the nine productions to be offered as part of the theater's 2017-2018 subscription season, including Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Todd Kreidler's *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* on the Wurtele Thrust Stage, and Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*, Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit*, Danai Gurira's *Familiar*, Kia Corthron's world premiere adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and Matthew Lopez's *The Legend of Georgia McBride* on the McGuire Proscenium Stage. Due to licensing terms, the final two plays will be announced on April 17. New season subscriptions start at \$90 and go on sale May 19, 2017 through the Season Ticket Office at 612.225.6238 or 1.877.997.3276 (toll-free) and at guthrietheater.org.

"It thrills me immensely to announce these seven productions today. With this season we've curated an extraordinary combination of dynamic classics alongside vigorous new plays from a diverse range of voices. This mix of plays has such relevance today, and allows us to hold a mirror up to society and address timely questions about ourselves and our world," said Artistic Director Joseph Haj. He added, "We feel we have a season that can powerfully engage our current patrons while also opening doors to new audiences."

The 2017-2018 Guthrie subscription season begins on the Wurtele Thrust Stage with Shakespeare's ***Romeo and Juliet*** (September 9 – October 28, 2017), directed by Joseph Haj. It's a story so well-known it scarcely needs introduction, yet surprisingly the Guthrie has produced it just twice before, in 1979 and in 2004.

Set in Verona, where the rival houses of Capulet and Montague are embroiled in a long-standing feud, *Romeo and Juliet* is Shakespeare's famous tale of star-crossed lovers, filled with all the passion and violence of young love. Having inherited the deep-seated resentments of their parents, we see young people find love across a great divide. Underscored by ingenious wit and astonishing beauty, the play pits the bitterness of resentment against the intensity of romance.

The season continues on the McGuire Proscenium Stage with ***Watch on the Rhine*** (September 30 – November 5, 2017), the 1941 play by activist Lillian Hellman (*The Little Foxes*). A comedy of manners

that quickly evolves into a suspenseful thriller, the play is set in 1940 in the Washington D.C. home of wealthy widow Fanny Farrelly. Fanny is expecting the arrival of her daughter Sara, Sara's German husband Kurt, and their children who have fled Europe due to Kurt's role in the anti-Nazi resistance movement. When a Romanian houseguest, who is a Nazi supporter, discovers Kurt's identity, he threatens to expose him.

Hellman began *Watch on the Rhine* in August 1939, during the weeks prior to the official onset of World War II. The play debuted in 1941, eight months before the United States entered the war. In its depiction of a family that struggles to combat the rise of fascism, *Watch on the Rhine* emerges as a timely examination of moral obligation, sacrifice and what it means to be American. This marks the first production of a work by Hellman at the Guthrie.

Next on the McGuire Proscenium, playing opposite *A Christmas Carol*, will be the 1941 comedy ***Blithe Spirit*** (November 25, 2017 – January 14, 2018) by Noël Coward. Like Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*, Coward penned *Blithe Spirit* during World War II. After his apartment was damaged by German bombers, Coward determined to write a play that would serve as a comic diversion for the bleak times in London, and his endearing play was a record-breaking success, running for over 2,000 performances.

It's summertime in Kent, and Charles Condomine is working on his latest novel, *The Unseen*. As part of his research, he and his wife Ruth host a séance with an eccentric medium known as Madame Arcati and invite their friends to play along. But the evening takes a supernatural turn when Arcati conjures Charles' first wife, Elvira, who has been dead for five years and doesn't have plans to leave.

Blithe Spirit was produced on the Guthrie stage previously in 1997. The Guthrie has produced three other Coward plays: *Private Lives* (1975, 1992 and 2007), *Design for Living* (1977) and *Hay Fever* (2012).

Next on the McGuire Proscenium Stage, the Guthrie will present ***Familial*** (March 10 – April 14, 2018) by Tony Award-nominated playwright Danai Gurira. There's something old, something new and something borrowed in this feisty, heart-warming play about a Zimbabwean-American family preparing for a wedding. Marvelous and Donald have built their American dream in Minnesota, so when their daughter requests a traditional African blessing before marrying her white fiancé from Minnetonka and a surprise guest drops a bombshell, all hell breaks loose and the rehearsal dinner can't come soon enough.

Familial opened off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons in the spring of 2016 and followed the success of Gurira's earlier work *Eclipsed*, which debuted at The Public in 2015 and starred Lupita Nyong'o in its Broadway run. *The New York Times* called *Familial* "a fiercely funny new play," adding "Ms. Gurira weaves issues of cultural identity and displacement, generational frictions and other meaty matters into dialogue that flows utterly naturally. Her engaging characters are drawn with sympathy." *Time Out New York* raved "*Familial* is a vigorous, fresh comedy-drama that ricochets from raw pathos to bawdy laughs, excavating deep cultural anxieties along the way."

While this will be the first production of Gurira's work at the Guthrie, she may be known to audiences for her recurring role on AMC's "The Walking Dead." She is also a graduate of Macalester College.

Next, the Guthrie will present ***Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*** (April 7 – May 27, 2018) by Todd Kreidler, adapted from the screenplay by William Rose, on the Wurtele Thrust Stage. Matt and Christina Drayton are a progressive couple living in San Francisco. It is 1967 when their daughter Joanna arrives home unexpectedly with Dr. John Prentice, an African American doctor 14 years her senior. They're in love and they want the Draytons' blessing for their marriage – today. The Draytons have prided themselves on their liberal-mindedness and having raised Joey to be open-minded, but now they are forced to put their values to the test against the mores of the 1960s. Kreidler's classic is a witty, tender and insightful reflection on two families confronted by their prejudices.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner is adapted from the Academy Award nominated film -- celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year -- which starred Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn and Sidney Poitier. Set in the same year that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Loving v. Virginia* that stated bans of interracial marriage

were unconstitutional (a case referred to in the script), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* insightfully explores the nature of race relations in our country.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner will be the first production of a play by Todd Kreidler at the Guthrie. A playwright, director and dramaturg, Kreidler is best known for writing the jukebox musical *Holler If Ya Hear Me*, featuring the music of Tupac Shakur, which played on Broadway in 2014. Kreidler also collaborated frequently with August Wilson, directing and co-conceiving with Wilson the one-man show *How I Learned What I Learned*, among other projects.

Continuing on the McGuire Proscenium Stage will be the world premiere of ***An Enemy of the People*** (April 28 - June 3, 2018) by Kia Corthron, based on the 1882 play by Henrik Ibsen. The story follows Dr. Stockmann who aims to expose dangerous water pollution in a Norwegian spa town's public baths. At first he's seen as a hero, but gradually the whistleblower comes under fire for publicizing a problem that could destroy the town's economy and reputation. With ripped-from-the-headlines relevance, this high-intensity drama reveals the dangers a single person may face in a quest for truth.

Corthron is a prolific playwright whose works have premiered in New York, across the U.S. and in London. In addition to teaching playwriting in prisons for youth and adults, and at universities and conservatories, Corthron is known for writing short plays which address current issues. She was one of nine American playwrights selected by the Guthrie for a special world travel/play commission under the auspices of the Bush Foundation. This world premiere adaptation was commissioned by the Guthrie and will be the first of Corthron's works at the theater. Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, translated by John Patrick Vincent, was previously staged at the Guthrie in 1976.

The theater rounds out its season on the McGuire Proscenium Stage with ***The Legend of Georgia McBride*** (July 14 - August 26, 2018) by Matthew Lopez. As an Elvis impersonator at Cleo's bar in the Florida Panhandle, 20-something Casey has everything going for him, including a new sequin jumpsuit. But just like that he's lost his gig, rent is overdue, and his wife announces there's a baby on the way. So when Elvis leaves the building and a drag show moves in, all hands are on deck for Casey's transformation. He always knew he'd be a star—but not quite like this. With snappy zingers and show-stopping musical numbers, *The Legend of Georgia McBride* is a wildly entertaining story of transformation that blurs the lines between past and future, masculine and feminine and love and passion.

The Legend of Georgia McBride premiered at the Denver Theatre Center for the Performing Arts in 2014. The show then had a well-received run off-Broadway with MCC Theater in 2015. Critics have called it "stitch-in-your-side funny" (*The New York Times*), "a highly-entertaining, genuine crowd-pleaser," (*The Hollywood Reporter*), "irresistible and deceptively deep" (NY1), and "a funny and often glorious tribute to the art of drag" (*Variety*).

Matthew Lopez is the author of *The Whipping Man*, one of the most widely produced plays in the last decade. *The Whipping Man* premiered at Luna Stage in New Jersey and played at Manhattan Theatre Club in 2010. It was also produced at Penumbra Theatre in 2009 and by the Minnesota Jewish Theatre in 2017. *The Legend of Georgia McBride* is the first production of Lopez's work at the Guthrie.

Due to the terms of the theater's licensing agreements, two final productions on the Wurtele Thrust Stage will be announced on April 17. From February 17 to March 24, 2018 the Guthrie will present a new play by a celebrated contemporary female playwright/director duo, and from June 16 to August 26, 2018 the theater will present a widely acclaimed American musical. Joseph Haj, whose production of *South Pacific* was the highest grossing in Guthrie history, is slated to direct the musical.

In addition to the mainstage subscription season, the Guthrie will present the 43rd annual production of Charles Dickens' ***A Christmas Carol*** (November 14 – December 30, 2017), returning to the adaptation by Crispin Whittell.

The Guthrie's Level Nine Series, which has gained popularity in its first year, will be announced this spring. As part of the series, all tickets are priced at just \$9, and every performance includes an audience engagement component.

TICKET INFORMATION

Nine plays will be available as part of the 2017-2018 subscription series, seven of which were announced today: *Romeo and Juliet* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* on the Wurtele Thrust Stage and *Watch on the Rhine*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Familiar*, *An Enemy of the People* and *The Legend of Georgia McBride* on the McGuire Proscenium Stage.

New season subscriptions start at \$90 and go on sale May 19, 2017. Single tickets for *Romeo and Juliet*, *Watch on the Rhine*, and *Blithe Spirit* go on sale July 17, 2017. Single tickets for *A Christmas Carol* go on sale September 5, 2017. Single tickets for *TBA – play*, *Familiar*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, and *An Enemy of the People* go on sale November 1, 2017. Single tickets for *TBA – musical* and *The Legend of Georgia McBride* go on sale February 15, 2018. Single ticket prices for all mainstage shows, excluding *A Christmas Carol*, range from \$15 to \$92; *A Christmas Carol* ranges from \$15 - \$137. Discounts are available for students, seniors and children.

For more information or to purchase tickets or season subscriptions, call the Season Ticket Office at 612.225.6238 or 1.877.997.3276 or visit guthrietheater.org.

GUTHRIE THEATER 2017-2018 MAINSTAGE SEASON

On the Wurtele Thrust Stage

Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare

directed by Joseph Haj

September 9 – October 28, 2017

A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens

adapted by Crispin Whittell

directed by TBA

November 14 – December 30, 2017

TBA (play)

February 17 – March 24, 2018

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

by Todd Kreidler

based on the screenplay *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* by William Rose

directed by TBA

April 7 – May 27, 2018

TBA (musical)

directed by Joseph Haj

June 16 – August 26, 2018

On the McGuire Proscenium Stage

Watch on the Rhine

by Lillian Hellman

directed by TBA

September 30 – November 5, 2017

Blithe Spirit

by Noël Coward

directed by TBA

November 25, 2017 – January 14, 2018

Familiar

by Danai Gurira

directed by TBA

March 10 – April 14, 2018

An Enemy of the People

based on the play by Henrik Ibsen

by Kia Corthron

directed by Lyndsey Turner

April 28 – June 3, 2018

The Legend of Georgia McBride

by Matthew Lopez

directed by TBA

July 14 – August 26, 2018

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