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**THE GUTHRIE THEATER AND WALKER ART CENTER PARTNER IN
2017-2018 SEASON TO CO-PRESENT TWO GLOBALLY ACCLAIMED PROJECTS**

***LEILA'S DEATH* BY LEBANESE ARTIST ALI CHAHROUR
AND
THE MIDWEST PREMIERE OF *887*, A SOLO TOUR-DE-FORCE BY ROBERT LEPAGE**

Minneapolis, July 6, 2017 — The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, Artistic Director) and Walker Art Center (Olga Viso, Executive Director) today announced that they will co-present two international theatrical projects, both Midwest premieres, in the 2017-2018 performing arts season: *Leila's Death* choreographed and directed by Lebanese theater artist Ali Chahrour, and *887*, a solo tour-de-force by Canadian director/creator Robert Lepage. *Leila's Death* will be performed one night only, November 11, 2017, on the Guthrie's McGuire Proscenium Stage, while *887* will play five performances April 4-7, 2018, on the Walker's William and Nadine McGuire Theater. Tickets will go on sale July 11 when the Walker's full 2017-2018 Performing Arts season is announced. *Leila's Death* tickets will be available through the Guthrie at 612.377.2224 or guthrietheater.org; *887* will be available through the Walker at 612.375.7600 or walker.org/tickets.

"The Guthrie and the Walker Art Center have a rich history of collaboration, and we've been committed to finding new and meaningful ways to partner," said Guthrie Artistic Director Joseph Haj. "I'm eager to share the work of these important artists with our audiences and to fulfill our promise of creating space in our community for an exchange of ideas."

Philip Bither, McGuire Director and Senior Curator, Performing Arts, commented, "Collaboration has long been part of the ethos of Twin Cities arts communities and has certainly helped to define the Walker's Performing Arts program over six decades. I am thrilled to work with Joe Haj and the Guthrie to bring these two highly acclaimed global theatrical projects to the Midwest, both of which I am convinced will enrich our cultural landscape in powerful, unexpected ways."

The first co-presentation of the season will be *Leila's Death*, a theatrical movement work by Lebanese theater artist Ali Chahrour. The piece features a contemporary music trio from Beirut, incorporating vocal work by Leila, a professional mourner who is paid to sing at funerals and burials in Southern Lebanon. Part of a fading tradition, these singers have long played a key role in rituals of condolence. Chahrour taps this tradition and combines it with

storytelling, contemporary global dance, and performance aesthetics to make something universal and artistically fresh. The hour-long piece is performed in Arabic with English subtitles. It received wide acclaim by critics and public alike at its European debut at Festival d'Avignon in July 2016, where Haj first saw it, and in its U.S. premiere at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA) in September 2016, where Bither saw the work and got to know the artists involved.

The second co-presentation is *887*, an autobiographical solo theater work by Canadian writer/director/performer Robert Lepage – one of the world's greatest theater visionaries – that provides an alternately comic and poignant remembrance of the artist's boyhood home in Quebec City, Canada. Replete with expanded dollhouse-scale buildings and painstaking miniatures, *887* combines ingenious storytelling with awe-inspiring illusions through high-tech scenic transformations. Lepage's piece investigates universal questions of identity and self through bewitching tales of the things we can't quite remember and those we can't forget. *887* made its U.S. premiere at BAM in March 2017, and was named a *New York Times* Critics' Pick.

The Sydney Morning Herald wrote, "*887* is an elaborately constructed memory palace – moving, disarmingly funny and, yes, unforgettable – from a theatrical master at the top of his game." *Variety* said, "Fans of Robert Lepage have come to expect certain things from the French-Canadian theater maker: seductive storytelling, wry character observation and a stagecraft that lies somewhere between technical innovation and magic. All such expectations are happily fulfilled in *887*...a work that delights, mesmerizes and provokes." *The New York Times* wrote, "There are many technological marvels – a signature of Mr. Lepage's work – but they're humanely scaled and rarely deployed for their own sake. Raw emotional force builds from the accretion of slight moments of remembrance and discovery."

ABOUT ALI CHAHROUR

At the National Institut of Fine Arts in Beirut, in which Chahrour enrolled in 2008, "dramatic dance," the only choreographic training available at the university level in Lebanon, is taught as a second-year class as part of the dramatic arts curriculum. In that class, he caught the eye of his professor, Omar Rajeh, who hired him in his company. As a student, Ali Chahrour participated in numerous internships and workshops in order to diversify his approach to movement. During that time, the dancer sketched his first show, *On the Lips Snow*, a duo about the end of love, which he presented in Beirut and in the Netherlands in 2011, shortly after graduating. The following year he created *Danas*, which "studies the everyday violence to which the body is subjected," the beginning of an aesthetics he built on, "without compromising," in the social, political, and religious context that is his: a rejection of the formatted bodies of western contemporary dance in order to showcase a corpus "that has forgotten the great stories of the Arab world." His latest creations, *Fatmeh* and *Leila's Death*, explore Shiite rituals and their contemporary transformations.

ABOUT ROBERT LEPAGE

Lepage is equally talented as a director, playwright, actor and film director. His creative and original approach to theater has won him international acclaim and shaken the dogma of classical stage direction to its foundations, especially through his use of new technologies. He graduated from the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec and studied in Paris in 1978. In 1984, his play *Circulations* toured Canada, followed by *The Dragons' Trilogy* (1985), *Vinci* (1986), *Polygraph* (1987) and *Tectonic Plates* (1988). From 1989 to 1993 he was artistic director of the Théâtre Français at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Meanwhile pursuing his own creative projects, he directed *Needles and Opium* (1991), *Coriolanus*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest* (1992). With *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1992 he became the first North American to direct a Shakespeare play at the Royal National Theatre in London. In 1994, he founded Ex Machina, then wrote and directed his first feature film, *Le Confessionnal*. It was followed by *Polygraph* (1996), *Nô* (1997), *Possible Worlds* (2000) and *The Far Side of the Moon* (2003). In 2013, he co-directed *Triptych* with Pedro Pires, an adaptation of the play *Lipsynch*. With Ex Machina, he created for the stage *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* (1994), *Geometry of Miracles* (1998, co-commissioned and co-presented by the Walker, the Guthrie and Northrop in 2000, the only other Lepage work to come to Minnesota, but Lepage himself did not come at that time), *The Far Side of The Moon* (2000), a new version of *The Dragons' Trilogy* (2003), *The Andersen Project* (2005), *Lipsynch* (2007), *The Blue Dragon* (2008), *Eonnagata* (2009), *Playing Cards: SPADES and HEARTS* (2012) and a new staging of *Needles and Opium* (2013). Recent productions include *Quills*, Doug Wright's controversial work on censorship, with Lepage as the Marquis de Sade, co-directed with Jean-Pierre Cloutier. Lepage directed Peter Gabriel's *Secret World Tour* (1993) and *Growing Up Tour* (2002), designed and directed Cirque du Soleil

shows *KÀ* (2005) and *TOTEM* (2010). For Quebec City's 400th anniversary in 2008, Robert Lepage and Ex Machina created the largest architectural projection ever achieved: *The Image Mill*. As part of the festivities surrounding the Grand Bibliothèque's 10th anniversary, Ex Machina has created, based on an original idea by Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, an exhibition inspired by Alberto Manguel's *The Library at Night*. Multifaceted, *The Library at Night* (2015) leads visitors on a journey through 10 libraries across the world, real or imagined, by means of virtual reality. Lepage made a grand entrance into the opera world with *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Erwartung* (1993). He continued with *La Damnation de Faust* (1999), followed by *1984* (2005) based on the novel by George Orwell with Lorin Maazel providing the musical direction, *The Rake's Progress* (2007), and *The Nightingale and Other Short Fables* (2009). *Das Rheingold*, Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* prelude, premiered September 2010 at the Metropolitan Opera with the cycle being presented during the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons. His latest stagings include *The Tempest* (2012), by Thomas Adès, libretto by Meredith Oakes, based on William Shakespeare's eponymous play, and *L'Amour de loin* (2015), with music by Kaija Saariaho and a libretto by Amin Maalouf.

Lepage's work has been recognized by many awards. Among the most important, the Légion d'honneur (2002); the Denise Pelletier Prize (2003); the Hans Christian Andersen Prize (2004) for his outstanding artistic contribution honoring Hans Christian Andersen worldwide; the Stanislavski Award (2005) for his contribution to international theater; the Festival de l'Union des Théâtres de l'Europe honored him with the distinguished Prix Europe (2007), previously awarded to Ariane Mnouchkine and Robert Wilson among others; the Médaille de la ville de Québec (2011); and the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts at MIT (2012). In 2013, he became the recipient of the 10th Glenn Gould Prize awarded by the Glenn Gould Foundation. In 2015, he was made Compagnon des Arts et des lettres du Québec for his contribution, commitment, and dedication in developing and extending the influence of the Québec culture.

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THE GUTHRIE THEATER (Joseph Haj, Artistic Director) was founded by Sir Tyrone Guthrie in 1963 and is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training, dedicated to producing the great works of dramatic literature and to cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Under Haj's leadership, the Guthrie produces a mix of classic and contemporary plays on three stages, and continues to set a national standard for excellence in theatrical production and performance. In 2006, the Guthrie opened its new home on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, the Guthrie Theater houses three state-of-the-art stages, production facilities, classrooms, full-service restaurants and dramatic public lobbies. guthrietheater.org

WALKER ART CENTER (Olga Viso, Executive Director) One of the most internationally celebrated art museums and multidisciplinary art centers, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis is known for presenting today's most compelling artists from around the world as well as modern masters. Led by Senior Curator Philip Bither since 1997, the Walker's Performing Arts program under his tenure has been defined by its commitment to the increasingly blurred lines between artistic disciplines, including contemporary dance, new music-theatre, performance art, experimental theatre, avant-jazz, contemporary classical music, new global sounds and alternative rock and pop. In addition to animating its outstanding McGuire Theater, the Walker has also greatly expanded its placement of dance into gallery settings, in its sculpture garden, and beyond, to further encourage a conversation between forms. It has also continued its long-standing tradition of mounting work together with presenters, venues, community-based collaborators, and unique sites across the Twin Cities. Through its endeavors, the Walker has earned an international reputation as "one of America's foremost experimental art spaces" (*The Guardian*).

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