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**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR JOSEPH HAJ ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL SEASON**

**Haj's first fully curated mainstage season is defined by two literary adaptations, a monumental Shakespeare tragedy, the Guthrie's first Sondheim musical on a mainstage, two theatrical classics, a dynamic play with music, a world premiere and a fresh comedy by a significant new voice in the theater.**

**Lileana Blain-Cruz, Patricia McGregor and Sarah Rasmussen slated to make their Guthrie directorial debuts, joining the return of Joe Chvala, Joseph Haj and Dominique Serrand at the helm of Guthrie productions**

(*Minneapolis/St. Paul*)—The Guthrie Theater today announced Artistic Director Joseph Haj's inaugural mainstage season. The nine productions in the theater's 2016-2017 subscription lineup include ***Sense and Sensibility***, ***King Lear***, Toni Morrison's ***The Bluest Eye*** and ***Sunday in the Park with George*** on the Wurtele Thrust Stage and ***The Parchman Hour: Songs and Stories of the '61 Freedom Riders***, ***The Lion in Winter***, ***The Royal Family***, ***Refugia*** and ***Native Gardens*** on the McGuire Proscenium Stage. New season subscriptions start at \$90 and go on sale May 19, 2016 through the Guthrie Season Ticket Office at 612.225.6238 or 1.877.997.3276 (toll-free) and at [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org). A complete band of artistic programming curated by Haj for the Guthrie's Dowling Studio will be announced later this month.

"Over the last number of months, I've had the incredible opportunity to really get to know our patrons in the Twin Cities and the region and discover what inspires theatergoers here," said Artistic Director **Joseph Haj**. "Today, I am proud to announce a subscription season featuring nine plays that, at their core, tell dynamic, captivating and engaging stories worthy of our audience and the greater community. These were my imperatives in assembling my first season as the Guthrie's artistic director, and I am excited to share it with our audience."

Haj added, "Our mainstage season delivers breadth, depth and a plurality of voices that really excites me, and I look forward to complementing this mix of plays with a full slate of programming in the Dowling Studio. To me, the studio is perhaps the most dynamic, thrilling space under our roof. I see enormous potential for the intersection of great art and conversation there, and in the coming weeks I cannot wait to reveal what we have planned."

The 2016-2017 Guthrie subscription season begins on the Wurtele Thrust Stage with ***Sense and Sensibility*** (September 10 – October 29, 2016), **Kate Hamill's** adaptation of **Jane Austen's** treasured novel, to be directed by the Jungle Theater's new leader, **Sarah Rasmussen**. Set in late 18th-century

England, *Sense and Sensibility* centers on sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, whose lives are turned upside down when their father passes away suddenly, leaving them penniless and with reputations at stake. Together the women must learn to mix sense with sensibility to find happiness in a society where love is ruled by money. The Huffington Post called Hamill's script perhaps "the greatest stage adaptation of this novel in history." Rasmussen will revisit the play after directing it for Dallas Theater Center last season, and this production marks her Guthrie directorial debut. The Guthrie has twice staged adaptations of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, both under Joe Dowling's direction.

The season continues on the McGuire Proscenium Stage with ***The Parchman Hour: Songs and Stories of the '61 Freedom Riders*** by **Mike Wiley**, directed by **Patricia McGregor** (October 1 – November 6, 2016). At the dawn of the Civil Rights movement, brave women and men of all backgrounds said goodbye to their families, boarded buses and headed into the Deep South to battle discrimination. Arrested and imprisoned in Mississippi's notorious Parchman Farm Penitentiary, these Freedom Riders endured by creating a nightly variety show called "The Parchman Hour," singing songs and sharing poems, jokes and stories from their cells. With characters such as political activist Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, *The Parchman Hour* is a captivating play with music that reveals a defining chapter in American history while celebrating the hope and resilience of a community that joined together to stand against segregation.

Wiley is well known for writing plays about key events and figures in African-American history, spanning the stories of fugitive slaves, sports figures and freedom fighters. McGregor recently directed the world premiere of *Hurt Village* at Signature Theatre in New York City. Both artists make their Guthrie debut with *The Parchman Hour*.

Next on the McGuire Proscenium, playing opposite *A Christmas Carol*, will be ***The Lion in Winter*** by **James Goldman** (November 19 – December 31, 2016). Set during Christmas 1183, *The Lion in Winter* tells the wickedly amusing tale of King Henry II, his imprisoned Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine (whom he releases only for the holiday), and their three entitled sons who vie for the throne in a double-dealing division of the kingdom. With elegance and barbarism, devotion and disloyalty, this brutally funny comedy is a high-stakes chess game where the pieces constantly change sides and no one is spared the sword. Immortalized on screen in 1968 by Peter O'Toole and Katharine Hepburn, *The Lion in Winter* has been called "a work of intelligence, astringent wit, and much theatrical skill" (*The New York Times*).

Following the holiday season, the Guthrie will present George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber's theatrical triumph, ***The Royal Family***, on the McGuire Proscenium Stage (January 28 – March 19, 2017). For the Cavendish clan, the "Royal Family" of Broadway, the show must go on. Set in 1920s Manhattan, this American classic (loosely based on the Barrymore family) centers on three generations of actors, each at different stages in their careers. From an aging grande dame to a promising ingénue, together they confront a choice between secure, yet dull domesticity and an erratic, egocentric yet potentially fulfilling life on the stage. A brilliant fast-paced comedy, *The Royal Family* is a masterfully written love letter to the Great White Way.

Next, the Guthrie will stage **William Shakespeare's** monumental tragedy, ***King Lear***, under the direction of **Joseph Haj** on the Wurtele Thrust Stage (February 11 – April 2, 2017). After years of ruling Britain in peace, King Lear decides to relinquish his crown and divide his kingdom among his three daughters. But when their love and loyalty falter, so does Lear's sanity. *King Lear* is a gripping portrait of fathers, daughters and a once mighty ruler thwarted by his own hubris and betrayed by a vanishing mind. The play has been produced twice by the Guthrie, first in the 1974-75 season directed by Michael Langham and again in the 1995-96 season directed by Garland Wright.

Next on the Wurtele Thrust Stage is **Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye***, adapted by **Lydia R. Diamond** and directed by **Lileana Blain-Cruz** (April 15 – May 21, 2017). *The Bluest Eye* is a heartrending coming of age story about a young black girl in 1940s Ohio. Pecola Breedlove wants nothing more than to be loved, but she's only met with ridicule and abuse. Confronting turmoil at home, she prays for Shirley Temple's blue eyes, believing their beauty is the only thing standing between her and the happiness of the white girls at school. By turns beautiful and harrowing, this powerful adaptation explores the destructive power of a racist society and the strength of a community attempting to embrace an era of change. *The New York Sun* called *The Bluest Eye* a "bittersweet, moving drama that preserves the vigor and the disquiet of Ms. Morrison's novel," noting "it is not to be missed."

Diamond, best known for her Broadway play *Stick Fly*, and Blain-Cruz both make their Guthrie debuts with this production. Blain-Cruz's recent work includes *Red Speedo* at New York Theatre Workshop, *Much Ado About Nothing* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and *War* at Yale Repertory Theatre.

Continuing on the McGuire Proscenium Stage will be the world premiere of ***Refugia*** (May 13 – June 11, 2017), an original work by The Moving Company, core members of the legendary Theatre de la Jeune Lune, and directed by Dominique Serrand. At once funny and poetic, cinematic and theatrical, *Refugia* is a riveting investigation of those who find themselves navigating life's margins at the crossroads of transition. Composed of interconnected chapters and conveyed through music, movement, language and video, this new production explores exile, borders and the displacement of peoples now and throughout time. *Refugia* will be developed during a multi-week workshop at the Guthrie in the fall of 2016 in preparation for its run in spring of 2017. It signifies a first-time collaboration between the Guthrie and The Moving Company.

Haj will round out his first mainstage season on the Wurtele Thrust with ***Sunday in the Park with George***, the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical with music and lyrics by **Stephen Sondheim** and book by **James Lapine** (June 17 – August 20, 2017). Inspired by George Seurat's famous painting, this dazzling musical by two of the greatest musical theater artists of our time merges past and present into a poignant and sophisticated exploration of what it takes, and what it costs, to be an artist. George is an obsessive painter who risks it all, including his relationship with his lover Dot, to complete his latest masterpiece. A century later, George's great-grandson is working as an artist in New York City. In search of inspiration, he soon discovers that the answer to his future is painted clearly in his past. *Sunday in the Park with George* is the first Sondheim musical to be produced on the Guthrie's mainstage. Haj is slated to direct the musical, his second at the Guthrie, following Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific* this summer.

Opposite *Sunday in the Park with George*, the Guthrie will present ***Native Gardens*** by **Karen Zacarias** – a Guthrie debut for the playwright – on the McGuire Proscenium Stage (July 15 – August 20, 2017). In this brilliant new comedy, cultures and convictions clash, turning well-intentioned neighbors into feuding enemies. Pablo, a rising attorney, and doctoral candidate Tania, his very pregnant wife, have just purchased a home next to Frank and Virginia, a well-established D.C. couple with a prize-worthy English garden. But an impending barbecue for Pablo's colleagues and a delicate disagreement over a longstanding fence line soon spirals into an all-out border dispute, exposing both couples' notions of race, taste, class and privilege. Zacarias' award-winning plays include *The Book Club Play*, *Just Like Us* (adapted from the book by Helen Thorpe), *Legacy of Light* and *Mariela in the Desert*.

In addition to the mainstage subscription season, the Guthrie will present the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual production of Charles Dickens' ***A Christmas Carol***, adapted by Crispin Whittell (November 15 – December 30, 2016). Director and choreographer **Joe Chvala** will direct the show for a fifth consecutive year.

## **TICKET INFORMATION**

Nine plays of the 2016-2017 season are available as part of the subscription series at the Guthrie – *Sense and Sensibility*, *King Lear*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Sunday in the Park with George* on the Wurtele Thrust Stage and *The Parchman Hour: Songs and Stories of the '61 Freedom Riders*, *The Lion in Winter*, *The Royal Family*, *Refugia* and *Native Gardens* on the McGuire Proscenium Stage. New season subscriptions start at \$90 and go on sale May 19, 2016. Single tickets for *Sense and Sensibility*, *The Parchman Hour* and *The Lion in Winter* go on sale July 20, 2016. Single tickets for *A Christmas Carol* go on sale September 6, 2016. Single tickets for *The Royal Family*, *King Lear*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Refugia* go on sale November 1, 2016. Single tickets for *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Native Gardens* go on sale February 1, 2017. Single ticket prices for all mainstage shows, excluding *A Christmas Carol*, range from \$15 to \$87; *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 Guthrie Theater Box Office at 612.377.2224 or toll-free 877.44.STAGE, 612.225.6244 (Group Sales) and online at [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org).

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