



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR *WATCH ON THE RHINE*

**LILLIAN HELLMAN'S COMEDY OF MANNERS TURNED POLITICAL THRILLER
TO BE DIRECTED BY LISA PETERSON**

(*Minneapolis/St. Paul*)—The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, Artistic Director) today announced casting for Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*, a co-production with Berkeley Repertory Theatre (Berkeley Rep) directed by Lisa Peterson. *Watch on the Rhine* will play September 30 – November 5, 2017 on the McGuire Proscenium Stage. Single tickets start at \$15 for preview performances and are on sale now through the Guthrie Box Office at 612.377.2224, toll-free 877.44.STAGE, 612.225.6244 (Group Sales) and online at guthrietheater.org.

A comedy of manners that quickly evolves into a suspenseful thriller, *Watch on the Rhine* by Lillian Hellman (*The Little Foxes*) 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 three 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.

Watch on the Rhine, titled from a German patriotic song, "Die Wacht am Rhein," was published in 1941 by Lillian Hellman, a brilliant activist and playwright who was ahead of her time. Hellman began writing the play 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.

At the company's first rehearsal Haj noted, "It is well past time to shine a light on this important writer [Hellman] as her work has such resonance and relevance in our current moment." He added, "This is why we produce classics—to hold them up to the light of our contemporary world and to find what reverberates for a modern audience."

Lisa Peterson, Associate Director at Berkeley Rep and the director for this production, shared, "In reading this play, I found that I was in a constant state of suspense, and I want our audiences to be on the edge of their seats. It's a political thriller that involves truly witty, smart characters."

The cast features **Sarah Agnew** (*Crimes of the Heart*, *The Servant of Two Masters*) as Sara Muller, **Elijah Alexander** (Guthrie: debut) as Kurt Muller, **Carley Clover** as Babette Muller for select

performances (*A Christmas Carol*, *The Music Man*), **Kate Guentzel** (*The Master Butchers Singing Club*, *M. Butterfly*) as Marthe, **James Detmar** (Guthrie: debut) as Joseph, **Hugh Kennedy** (*A Christmas Carol*, *Othello*, *the Moor of Venice*) as David Farrelly, **Leontyne Mbele-Mbong** (Guthrie: debut) as Anise, **Caitlin O'Connell** (*Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *The Playboy of the Western World*) as Fanny Farrelly, **Kate Regan** as Babette Muller for select performances (Guthrie: debut), **Silas Sellnow** (Guthrie: debut, University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater B.F.A. Actor Training Program graduate '16) as Joshua, **Jonathan Walker** (Guthrie: debut) as Teck de Brancovis, **Hal Weilandgruber** as Bodo Muller for select performances (*A Christmas Carol*) and **Huxley Westemeier** as Bodo Muller for select performances (Guthrie: debut).

The creative team for *Watch on the Rhine* includes **Neil Patel** (Scenic Designer), **Raquel Barreto** (Costume Designer), **Alexander V. Nichols** (Lighting Designer), **Paul J. Prendergast** (Sound Designer/Composer), **Lucinda Holshue** (Vocal Coach), **Aaron Preusse** (Fight Director), **Jo Holcomb** (Dramaturg), **Samuel-Moses Jones** (Stage Manager), **Jane Heer** (Assistant Stage Manager) and **Bonnie Gabel** (Assistant Director).

ABOUT LISA PETERSON

Lisa Peterson is a two-time Obie Award-winning writer and director with additional nominations for Lortel, Drama Desk, and Calloway awards. Her previous mainstage directing credits at the Guthrie Theater include *Clybourne Park*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Major Barbara*, *Oedipus* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Her play, *An ILIAD*, written with Denis O'Hare, played at the Guthrie twice in the last few years. In September 2016, Peterson became Associate Director for Berkeley Repertory Theatre where her duties include directing for Berkeley Rep's main stage, developing new work through The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work and supporting ongoing artistic endeavors. Peterson has directed regionally at the Mark Taper Forum (where she was Resident Director for 10 years), La Jolla Playhouse (Associate Director for three years), Seattle Rep, Arena Stage, McCarter, Actors' Theater of Louisville, Hartford Stage, Long Wharf, Yale Rep, Baltimore Center Stage, Huntington, Dallas Theater Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and California Shakespeare Theater. She is a usual suspect at New York Theatre Workshop (NYTW), and a proud member of The Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC).

ABOUT LILLIAN HELLMAN

Lillian Hellman (1906-1984) remains one of the most notable writers of the twentieth century, and her work is finding new revival in the twenty-first. Hellman was a playwright, screen writer, essayist, novelist and memoirist, winning the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best American Play (for *Watch on the Rhine* and *Toys in the Attic*); a Tony Award (for *Toys in the Attic*); the National Book Award (for her memoir *An Unfinished Woman*), among countless award nominations and honors. Hellman was also a lifelong anti-Fascist and activist, championing causes such as the Republican faction of the Spanish Civil War and the Hollywood anti-Fascist movement. When called before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952 and asked to name those who may have ties to the Communist Party, she famously stated, "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions ..." Hellman's theatrical works include *The Children's Hour* (1934), *The Little Foxes* (1939), *Watch on the Rhine* (1941), *Another Part of the Forest* (1946) and *Toys in the Attic* (1960). Her three memoirs are *An Unfinished Woman* (1969), *Pentimento* (1973) and *Scoundrel Time* (1976).

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 is guided by four core values: Artistic Excellence; Community; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and Fiscal Responsibility. 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, serving nearly 400,000 patrons annually. In 2006, the Guthrie opened a new home, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Open to the public year-round, it houses three state-of-the-art stages, production facilities, classrooms, full-service restaurants and dramatic public lobbies. guthrietheater.org

FACT SHEET

Watch on the Rhine

by Lillian Hellman

directed by Lisa Peterson

A co-production with Berkeley Repertory Theatre

About the show: In *Watch on the Rhine*, set in 1940 in Washington D.C., Fanny Farrelly 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. Published in 1941 by Lillian Hellman, a brilliant activist who was ahead of her time, *Watch on the Rhine* is a timely examination of moral obligation and sacrifice.

Cast: **Sarah Agnew** (*Crimes of the Heart, The Servant of Two Masters*) as Sara Muller, **Elijah Alexander** (Guthrie: debut) as Kurt Muller, **Carley Clover** as Babette Muller for select performances (*A Christmas Carol, The Music Man*), **Kate Guentzel** (*The Master Butchers Singing Club, M. Butterfly*) as Marthe, **James Detmar** (Guthrie: debut) as Joseph, **Hugh Kennedy** (*A Christmas Carol, Othello, the Moor of Venice*) as David Farrelly, **Leontyne Mbele-Mbong** (Guthrie: debut) as Anise, **Caitlin O'Connell** (*Mrs. Warren's Profession, The Playboy of the Western World*) as Fanny Farrelly, **Kate Regan** as Babette Muller for select performances (Guthrie: debut), **Silas Sellnow** (Guthrie: debut, University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater B.F.A. Actor Training Program graduate '16) as Joshua, **Jonathan Walker** (Guthrie: debut) as Teck de Brancovis, **Hal Weilandgruber** as Bodo Muller for select performances (*A Christmas Carol*) and **Huxley Westemeier** as Bodo Muller for select performances (Guthrie: debut).

Creative team: **Neil Patel** (Scenic Designer), **Raquel Barreto** (Costume Designer), **Alexander V. Nichols** (Lighting Designer), **Paul J. Prendergast** (Sound Designer/Composer), **Lucinda Holshue** (Vocal Coach), **Aaron Preusse** (Fight Director), **Jo Holcomb** (Dramaturg), **Samuel-Moses Jones** (Stage Manager), **Jane Heer** (Assistant Stage Manager) and **Bonnie Gabel** (Assistant Director).

Performance Dates: September 30 – November 5, 2017 on the McGuire Proscenium Stage

Opening Night: Friday, October 6 at 7:30 p.m.

Performance Times: Tuesdays – Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.; select Sundays at 7 p.m.; matinees on select Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 1 p.m. Visit guthrietheater.org for the complete performance schedule.

Location: Guthrie Theater – McGuire Proscenium Stage
818 South 2nd Street, Minneapolis, MN 55415

Pricing: Single tickets start at \$29 (\$15 for previews, September 30 – October 5)
(Discounts for students and seniors available.)

Tickets: Tickets may be purchased online at guthrietheater.org
Guthrie Box Office: 612.377.2224 or 877.44.STAGE
Box Office hours: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. (11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on non-performance days)
Group Sales: 612.225.6244 or 877.225.6211

RELATED EVENTS

Post-Play Discussions

Audiences are invited to stay after the performance on these dates for a discussion with the artists who bring the show to life.

Sunday, October 8 at 1 p.m.
Tuesday, October 10 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, October 21 at 1 p.m.
Saturday, October 28 at 1 p.m.
Sunday, November 5 at 1 p.m.

ACCESS DATES

ASL Performances

Friday, October 27 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, October 28 at 1 p.m.

Audio Described Performances

Friday, October 27 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, October 28 at 1 p.m.

Open Captioned Performances

Friday, October 27 at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, November 1 at 1 p.m.
Saturday, November 4 at 1 p.m.

If you have specific program questions or need an accommodation, please contact the Accessibility Office by phone at 612.225.6390 (voice) or 612.225.6391 (TTY) or email at accessibility@guthrietheater.org.

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