



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 23, 2018

Press release #1741

For more information contact:

Marita Meinerts Albinson, 612.225.6142

[maritaa@guthrietheater.org](mailto:maritaa@guthrietheater.org)

**GUTHRIE THEATER ANNOUNCES THE RETURN OF DIRECTOR JOANNE AKALAITIS  
TO PRESENT THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *BAD NEWS! i was there...***

**A promenade-style production featuring dialogue, music, sounds and movement performed  
in the Guthrie Theater lobbies**

**Four performances only: June 2–3, 2018**

(*Minneapolis/St. Paul*) – The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, artistic director) announced it will present ***BAD NEWS! i was there...*** created and directed by JoAnne Akalaitis with Kate Atwell, Greg Taubman and Ashley Tata with original music and sound by Bruce Odland. Playing June 2–3, 2018, for four performances only, this unique theater experience will take place in the Guthrie lobbies in promenade style, which requires patrons to stand and walk during the performance. A limited number of chairs will be available for accessible seating.

All general admission tickets are \$9 and on sale now through the Box Office at 612.377.2224, 877.44.STAGE (toll-free), 612.225.6244 (group sales) and online at [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org).

Performances include:

Saturday, June 2 at 5:35 a.m. – Sunrise performance with a post-show discussion in the Dowling Studio featuring complimentary coffee, tea and muffins

Saturday, June 2 at 9:30 p.m. – Sunset performance with a post-show discussion in the Dowling Studio

Sunday, June 3 at 1:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. – Afternoon and evening performances with post-show discussions in the Dowling Studio

***BAD NEWS! i was there...*** explores the monumental impact of the Messenger character from classic drama – a theatrical device originated by the Greeks, who unapologetically used theater to ask questions of its citizens. Today, the Messenger is eerily reflected in the media reportage of terrifying events as heard in the common, heartbreaking refrain from eyewitnesses: “I was there.”

The Greeks were unapologetically demanding of their audiences, using theater as the only means to ask certain questions. No one is spared any of the details of horrific events that the Messenger describes: Thyestes feasting on his own sons, Agave’s delusional dismemberment of her son Pentheus, Medea’s

murderous gifts to Jason's new wife, virgin sacrifice, brothers battling to death, matricide, infanticide, incest, suicide and the revenge of the gods.

Taken from the works of Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Racine, Brecht and more – as seen through the creative lens of translators and poets – this composition/collage *oratorio* is both spoken and sung, interweaving English with Greek, Latin, French and German and featuring movement influenced by the Indian Kathakali tradition.

The acoustical score is composed of call-and-answer vocalisms and back-and-forth simple hoquet rhythms and choral clusters. Close harmonies and held tones lead to underscoring melodies and singing, growing at times to shouts.

Created in the spirit of the Greek *polis*, where the audience came together as resident spectators to witness tragedies that called into question the basic rationality of mortals and the justice of the gods, an ensemble of eight actors, 10 audience guides (extras) and four children trades the stage for public lobbies in an electrifying performance.

"I am thrilled to be working with my old buddy Joe [Guthrie Artistic Director Joseph Haj] at the 'new' Guthrie," shared Akalaitis, referring to her experiences of directing and collaborating with Haj as a young actor. "I believe Joe's support of this project, filling the public spaces of the building with electric stories, is a natural extension of our shared belief in the power of theater to both disturb and heal, and in the meantime have fun. As the poet Audre Lorde said, 'So it is better to speak.' Plus, I love the actors, the staff, production support, audiences and the town itself."

**JoANNE AKALAITIS** is a five-time Obie Award-winning theater director and writer, co-founder of the critically acclaimed avant-garde theater company Mabou Mines, former artistic director of the New York Shakespeare Festival and a Drama Desk Award recipient. In addition to creating many works at The Public Theater such as *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2* and *Cymbeline*, she has staged her own work and works by Euripides, Shakespeare, Strindberg, Janáček, Beckett, Jean Genet, Tennessee Williams and Harold Pinter at Lincoln Center, New York City Opera, Goodman Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Court Theatre, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Hartford Stage, New York Theatre Workshop and Guthrie Theater (*The Rover*, 1994–1995 Season; *The Screens*, 1989–1990 Season; and *Leon & Lena (and Ienz): A Celebration with a Dark Side*, 1987–1988 Season).

As artist-in-residence at Chicago's Court Theatre, Akalaitis staged many works, including *The Iphigenia Project* and *Mary Stuart*. She was the Andrew Mellon Co-Chair of the first directing program at Juilliard, Chair of the theater program at Bard College until 2012 and the Denzel Washington Endowed Chair in Theatre at Fordham University in 2015. She has received grants from the Guggenheim Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation and Pew Charitable Trust National Theatre Artist Residency Program, and she is a recipient of the Edwin Booth Award and Rosamond Gilder Award for Outstanding Achievement in Theatre.

The ensemble cast for ***BAD NEWS! i was there...*** features **Megan Burns** (Guthrie: debut, graduate of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater B.F.A. Actor Training Program) as Orestes, **Nathaniel Fuller** (Guthrie: *King Lear*, *Trouble in Mind*, *The Crucible*) as Oedipus, **Emily Gunyou Halaas** (Guthrie: *A Christmas Carol*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Sense and Sensibility*) as Thyestes, **JuCoby Johnson** (Guthrie: debut, graduate of the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater B.F.A. Actor Training Program) as Hecuba, **Cynthia Jones-Taylor** (Guthrie: debut) as Medea, **Ann Michels** (Guthrie: *Sunday in the Park*

with *George*, *The Cocoanuts*, *My Fair Lady*) as Phedre, **Eric Sharp** (Guthrie: *A Christmas Carol*, *M. Butterfly*) as Antigone and **Stephen Yoakam** (Guthrie: *King Lear*, *The Crucible*, *Othello*, *the Moor of Venice*) as The Bacchae.

The creative team for ***BAD NEWS! i was there...*** includes **JoAnne Akalaitis** (Creator/Director), **Bruce Odland** (Composer/Sound Designer), **Alice Fredrickson** (Costume Designer), **Jennifer Tipton** (Lighting Designer), **Foster Johns** (Vocal Coach), **Katie Hawkinson** (Stage Manager), and **Audrey Rice** (Production Assistant), **Jessica Rose McVay** (Assistant Director) and **Raymond Berg** (Assistant Sound Designer).

Access services (ASL, Audio Description and Open Captioning) are available by request. Visit [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org) or call the Box Office at 612.377.2224 for more information.

**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 cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Under Haj's leadership, the Guthrie is guided by four core values: Artistic Excellence; Community; Equity, Diversity 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](http://guthrietheater.org)

###