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**GUTHRIE THEATER PRESENTS MATTHEW LOPEZ'S BIG-HEARTED, MUSIC-FILLED COMEDY,
*THE LEGEND OF GEORGIA McBRIDE***

Associate Artistic Director Jeffrey Meanza makes his Guthrie directorial debut

**Previews begin Saturday, July 14; Opening on Friday, July 20;
Playing through Sunday, August 26
on the McGuire Proscenium Stage at the Guthrie Theater**

(*Minneapolis/St. Paul*) – The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, artistic director) announced casting for Matthew Lopez's heartfelt and humorous play, *The Legend of Georgia McBride*. Heralded as "full of sass and good spirits – along with a spritz or two of sentimentality" by *The New York Times*, *The Legend of Georgia McBride* premiered at Denver Center for the Performing Arts in 2014, followed by MCC Theater in New York City and a run at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles. The Guthrie Theater's production marks the directorial debut of Associate Artistic Director Jeffrey Meanza.

The Legend of Georgia McBride plays July 14 – August 26, 2018 on the McGuire Proscenium Stage. Single tickets start at \$15 for preview performances (July 14–19) and are on sale now through the Box Office at 612.377.2224, 1.877.44.STAGE (toll-free), 612.225.6244 (group sales) and online at guthrietheater.org.

"I am so taken with this play's joyous spirit, keen wit and big heart," shared director Jeffrey Meanza. "I am surprised and inspired by how the play never apologizes for what it sets out to accomplish – to imagine a world where the most unlikely cast of characters finds a way to build something together in the most unexpected of places."

Set in Panama City Beach in Florida's panhandle, *The Legend of Georgia McBride's* Casey is an Elvis impersonator with everything going for him, including a flashy sequin jumpsuit. But just like that he loses his gig, rent is overdue and his wife announces a baby on the way. So when Elvis leaves the building and a drag show moves in, "The King" transforms into an all-out queen with the help of some new friends who become the second family Casey never saw coming. With snappy zingers and dance-worthy numbers, this wildly entertaining story will challenge your assumptions with extraordinary humor and depth.

Playwright Matthew Lopez wrote *The Legend of Georgia McBride* as a love letter to drag, but it's also an affectionate homage to Panama City Beach where he and his Puerto Rican family lived when Lopez was a boy. As he was in the process of coming out, Lopez found refuge at a local gay bar where his "tutelage as a young gay man was at the hands of drag queens," he recalls.

For Lopez, drag is the ultimate populist art form; it's accessible to anyone who wants to put on a pair of heels and take the stage. But *The Legend of Georgia McBride* also clearly shows the skill, talent, hard work and tenacity that it takes to be a drag queen while sharing the legacy of drag and the story of the gay rights movement.

The cast of *The Legend of Georgia McBride* features **Cameron Folmar** (Guthrie: debut) as Tracy, **Chaz Hodges** (Guthrie: debut) as Jo, **Jim Lichtscheidl** (Guthrie: *Uncle Vanya*, *Clybourne Park*, *Nice Fish*) as Eddie, **Arturo Soria** (Guthrie: debut) as Rexy/Jason and **Jayson Speters** (Guthrie: debut) as Casey.

The creative team includes **Jeffrey Meanza** (director), **Matthew Steffens** (choreographer), **Mikiko Suzuki MacAdams** (scenic designer), **Patrick Holt** (costume designer), **Ryan Connealy** (lighting designer), **Scott W. Edwards** (sound designer), **Jo Holcomb** (dramaturg), **John Patrick** (vocal coach), **Jason Clusman** (stage manager), **Justin Hossle** (assistant stage manager) and **Laura Leffler** (assistant director).

Matthew Lopez (playwright) is the author of *The Whipping Man*, one of the most widely produced new American plays of the last several years. The play premiered at Luna Stage in Montclair, N.J. and debuted in New York City at Manhattan Theatre Club. *The Legend of Georgia McBride* premiered at Denver Center for the Performing Arts and ran off-Broadway at MCC Theater in a production that received multiple Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle nominations. Other plays include *Somewhere* (The Old Globe, world premiere), *Reverberation* (Hartford Stage, world premiere), *The Inheritance* (London's Young Vic and Noël Coward Theatre) and *The Sentinels* (London's Headlong Theatre). Lopez holds commissions from Roundabout Theatre Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, South Coast Repertory, Williamstown Theatre Festival and Hartford Stage. He was a writer for the HBO series "The Newsroom" and is currently developing *Some Like It Hot* (Broadway) as well as a film version of *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (New Regency/Fox 2000/That's Wonderful Productions).

Jeffrey Meanza (director) has served as the Guthrie Theater's associate artistic director since August 2015. In his role at the Guthrie, Meanza oversees the artistic department, including casting, producing, education, community engagement, literary and the Guthrie's esteemed training programs. An actor, director and educator, Meanza began his collaboration with Joseph Haj at PlayMakers Repertory Company in 2007 as director of education and outreach. In 2010, he was named the theater's first associate artistic director, working closely with Haj to develop the vision and mission of the organization. During his tenure at PlayMakers, Meanza launched the theater's Artist Residency program, which sent teaching artists into underserved schools to prepare them to attend PlayMakers productions, and he led the Summer Youth Conservatory, providing area middle and high school students the opportunity to receive professional-level training and performance experience. Additionally, Meanza developed numerous community partnerships and managed the theater's engagement programs. Most recently, Meanza directed the regional premiere of Bekah Brunstetter's *The Cake* for PlayMakers. He holds an M.F.A. in Acting from the Professional Actor Training Program at UNC-Chapel Hill and a B.A. in Theater and Performance Studies from the University of California, Berkeley.

Post-play discussions and access services (ASL, Audio Described and Open Captioned performances) are available on select dates. Visit 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

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