Welcome from Artistic Director Joseph Haj

Dear Friends,

When Theatre de la Jeune Lune closed its doors in 2008, it wasn’t just Minnesota that lost an artistic treasure. Jeune Lune’s dissolution was felt and mourned throughout the entire theater industry. It was a reaction that testified to the groundbreaking, breathtaking work that Dominique Serrand and his collaborators had been producing right here in our community for 30 years. Fortunately for all of us, Serrand – along with Steven Epp, Nathan Keepers and Christina Baldwin – swiftly regrouped as The Moving Company, and we’re honored to have developed Refugia with them.

Refugia comes to the Guthrie stage at a time when the global community is wrestling with its obligation and relationship to refugees. Not only nations, but cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul included, are deciding how to respond and what they can offer. The theater community is as well.

The Moving Company’s response is a deeply felt one that explores the notion of borders and what it means and looks like to cross them. These lines too often serve to separate us, to impede movement toward one another, and Refugia serves as a powerful reminder of what connects us.

After the show, we invite you to experience another Minnesotan’s artistic response to the concepts of asylum, home and borders. Photographer Peter Beck’s striking portraits of local immigrants and fellow Minnesotans will be displayed in the Level One lobby throughout the entire run of Refugia. The series of photos, entitled “Promise,” and accompanying biographies put the faces of our neighbors to stories we might otherwise unconsciously gloss over in the flood of daily news.

Thank you for coming together with us for Refugia.

Yours,

Sense and Sensibility
September 10 – October 29, 2016
Wurtele Thrust Stage

The Parchman Hour
October 1 – November 6, 2016
McGuire Proscenium Stage

A Christmas Carol
November 16 – December 30, 2016
Wurtele Thrust Stage

The Lion in Winter
November 19 – December 31, 2016
McGuire Proscenium Stage

The Royal Family
January 28 – March 19, 2017
McGuire Proscenium Stage

King Lear
February 11 – April 2, 2017
Wurtele Thrust Stage

The Bluest Eye
April 15 – May 21, 2017
Wurtele Thrust Stage

Refugia
May 13 – June 11, 2017
McGuire Proscenium Stage

Sunday in the Park with George
June 17 – August 20, 2017
Wurtele Thrust Stage

Native Gardens
July 15 – August 20, 2017
McGuire Proscenium Stage

Visit guthrietheater.org for additional productions and play descriptions.
Refugia
an original idea developed by
The Moving Company
written by Steven Epp, Dominique Serrand and Nathan Keepers

Acting Ensemble
in order of appearance

Steven Epp*
Jamal Abdunnasir*
Kendra ‘Vie Boheme’ Dennard
Christina Baldwin*
Maia Hernandez+/Carolina Sierra+
Orlando Pabotoy*
Nathan Keepers*
Rendah Heywood*

Creative Team

DIRECTOR Dominique Serrand
SCENIC DESIGNER Riccardo Hernández
COSTUME DESIGNER Sonya M. Berlovitz
LIGHTING DESIGNER Marcus Dilliard
PROJECTION DESIGNER Shawn Duan
SOUND DESIGNER Scott W. Edwards
DRAMATURG Jo Holcomb
VOCAL COACH Mira K. Kehoe
FIGHT DIRECTOR Aaron Preusse
STAGE MANAGER Jason Clusman*
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER Michele Hossle*
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Laura Leffler
DESIGN ASSISTANTS Alice Fredrickson (costumes)
Ryan Connealy (lighting)
Reid Rejsa (sound associate)

INTERNS
Amy Slothower (literary)
Laura Sperling (stage management)

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association
+Alternate performances

The Guthrie gratefully recognizes
Allen & Kathy Lenzmeier and Ron Frey & Steve Thompson as Executive Producers, Robert Rosenbaum & Maggie Gilbert as Producers, and Frances & Frank Wilkinson as Associate Producers of Refugia.

Run Time
Approximately 2 hours, 40 minutes with one intermission

Orderlies, Functionaries, Kurdish Women, Rescue Workers
Jason Paul Andrews, Ayana Ito, Kelsey Maverick, Joann Oudekerk, Sequoia Rhian, Bethel Safawo, Ben Swenson-Klatt, Guillermo Zerreno

Acknowledgments
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The Moving Company would also like to thank: Sarah Rasmussen and the University of Texas Theater Department, David Stewart, Billy Henry, Osh Ghanimah, Nandita Chandra, Ryan Colbert, Meghan Kreidler, Marlene Dietrich and their loyal supporters.

The Guthrie’s rush line is made possible with support from Target.

Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline of the Guthrie Theater.
Devising *Refugia*

An important part of the Guthrie’s three-year grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation goes to our support of, and collaboration with, theater companies like The Moving Company that devise their stage work. Devised theater differs from traditional notions of our art form in several key ways. First and foremost, the ensemble doesn’t start the rehearsal process with a script. And there is no one writer. Actors and designers are given great responsibility as co-creators, and the script is born from improvisation, interviews, discussions, inspirational source material and, vitally, trial and error. Moreover, rehearsals are nonhierarchical, and a director often serves as the facilitator of total collaboration rather than an arbiter of every creative decision.

In the case of *Refugia*, members of The Moving Company were struck by a news story concerning Syrian refugees and immediately began to develop the project with students from the University of Texas at Austin. The team talked through five chapters, or stories, concerning refugees, and the creative process blossomed from there, culminating in a small-scale presentation at the school.

In order to further develop *Refugia* and ready it for a world premiere, The Moving Company partnered with the Guthrie. Devised theater ensembles are among the most innovative artists working in the performing arts today, yet they operate with less financial support for the creation of their work than other types of companies. Devising artists are, in general, not compensated for the time they spend creating a piece, unlike actors and directors in the traditional theater model. The Guthrie’s Mellon Grant allowed us to break that mold, and in September 2016, we hosted The Moving Company for a three-week residency and workshop where they sought to flesh out and add chapters to *Refugia*. The ensemble rehearsed here for an additional four weeks this April and May with the full support of the Guthrie’s administrative, artistic and production teams.
Four original members of The Moving Company – Dominique Serrand, Steven Epp, Nathan Keepers and Christina Baldwin – sat down with Guthrie Senior Dramaturg Jo Holcomb to talk about the source and traditions of their company and how their transformative play *Refugia* was born.

**JO HOLCOMB:** You have all shared a long work history, first at Theatre de la Jeune Lune and now with The Moving Company. Can you talk a bit about your work together?

**STEVEN EPP:** The Moving Company is the next incarnation of Theatre de la Jeune Lune. It’s a platform for continuing to create new work for the theater. We do research and develop our pieces by partnering with university and college theater departments to take the creative spark we find and develop it on a small scale with members of our acting company and the students. The initial aim is to mount smaller productions locally and then to see that work fully produced by partnering with larger companies like the Guthrie. The ultimate hope is that once a work is produced on that larger scale, it will have a long life traveling to other venues.

**JH:** Is there a specific philosophy behind how you begin a theater piece?

**DOMINIQUE SERRAND:** There is an organic way in which every work we do somehow plants seeds for another show at some point in the future. In the case of *Refugia*, it was a play that came to us out of an immediate world experience.

**NATHAN KEEPPERS:** Each piece we do is a response to what’s happening in the world. It can take many forms. *Liberty Falls 54321* (2015) was a response to the Republican primaries and the chaos we were seeing in the political system.
CHRISTINA BALDWIN: It’s the same with the source materials for a piece like *Come Hell and High Water* (2011) which was based on a novel. Even if it’s older, existing material, it’s responsive.

NK: I also think there has been a general theme that found its genesis with Jeune Lune and is now emerging strongly with The Moving Company: the shows are not necessarily about conflicts among the characters, but rather an overall theme of conflict with the world. That opens up the work.

JH: How do you collaborate in the rehearsal room?

SE: Part of what we do is based on shared history. In order to get to the point of being able to create successfully and productively, we had to develop shared knowledge, experience and vernacular. There are reference points now that create a shorthand in the room. But there are still failures along the way and sometimes great success, and we learn equally from both.

CB: There is a trust that has developed. That’s why we have the freedom to do the wrong thing in order to get the right result.

SE: We know that the answer usually will reveal itself. I think when you’re a younger artist you can panic a bit more and think, “How are we going to fix this problem?” Like anything, the longer you do it, it’s easier to say, “It will work out fine, we’ll find it.”

NK: We’re also able to trust that it’s not on any one of us to find the answer in one of our pieces. We do it collectively.

CB: One challenge when we’re working with actors who aren’t used to this method is making sure they feel welcome to fail. Most theater training these days does not prepare you for that. You’re taught to come in ready to go with something solid. But we need malleability. We’re looking for clay, not a bronze sculpture.

DS: One of the key elements to The Moving Company is our structure. It’s a structure of respect and companionship. And we know who amongst us is better at some things. Everyone becomes a specialist in his own voice. You’re not looking at a director for answers. You’re looking at talents in the room who are developing a piece. Everyone participates in the creation of the work.

NK: There’s a respect for letting the work unfold. We’re not forcing something to happen. It becomes what it is as we work towards the finished product, and we’re very respectful of that.

SE: It’s what theater director Peter Brook calls a “formless hunch” – that sense that there’s something worth exploring, and you trust and go at it.

JH: How did you decide which refugee stories to include? *Refugia* encompasses every border and passage —

DS: You don’t really decide. You go up on your feet and talk through the stories. We have to remember that we’re doing a theater piece. It has to find a theatrical translation on the stage, and if it doesn’t work, you don’t force it.

NK: We are always looking for something that is theatrical but also has poetry. There’s something about a true story when the themes and essence have a certain poetry that allows us to make it theatrical.

DS: As you do your work, you try to refine it. You don’t refine it through the mechanics of writing. You refine it through the actors. It’s the actor who opens up the moments that we create. The more we rehearse, the more we develop that quality that we touch or approach. The whole point of The Moving Company is to move people. From the moment they enter the room to the moment they leave, something happens that moves them. The more we can contribute to making people think – that’s what we are working toward.
An Eye Toward America

Photographer Peter Beck’s documentary portrait series “Promise,” which is currently on exhibit in the Guthrie’s Level One lobby, honors the optimism and strength of 11 immigrants who call Minnesota home. Beck recently spoke with Guthrie Publications Manager Justin Quinn Pelegano about the inspiration behind his images.

JUSTIN QUINN PELEGANO: “Promise” strikes me as a global project on one hand, and yet also a uniquely intimate and local project. What sparked you to examine a vast topic through a Minnesota lens?

PETER BECK: My interest in immigrant stories is connected to my late maternal grandparents, who helped raise me. They were Italian immigrants who passed through Ellis Island on their way to Minnesota in the early 1900s. “Promise” began as a response to the wave of anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. that took shape following the 9/11 attacks. By way of individual stories and portraits, my intent has been to offer evidence from the vast mainstream of immigrants who have helped to form and enrich America. I discovered quickly that...
Minnesota’s immigrant community was diverse and easily accessible to me. In essence, “Promise” is about a common humanity, the fragile or sinewy “ties that bind.”

JQP: I understand you attended journalism school. How did that course of study inform your work here?

PB: I graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1970 with a B.A. in anthropology and photojournalism. In 2011, I returned and earned an M.A. from the university’s School of Journalism and Mass Communication with a special interest in immigrant identity. My graduate work illuminated patterns of global migration fueled often by political oppression, economic displacement and suppression of human rights. In my interviews, immigrants repeatedly identify democratic governance, economic opportunity and assurances of human rights as key factors motivating their migration to the U.S. However, it’s important to emphasize that in my experience most immigrants retain an abiding connection to their birth nation.

JQP: Something that stood out to me in your portraits is the background image layering or, in some cases, the subjects themselves are holding small photos in the foreground.

PB: My immigrant portraits are hybrid and collaborative. I’ve asked each person to give me something tangible that connects them to their birth nation or to America. Immigrants have provided photographs, letters, memorabilia, documents and so on. Those items are in a sense artifacts from their lives and connected to their stories. I’ve then photographed one or more of these artifacts, which I’ve then composited or layered into the final portrait. I very much have worked to subordinate clothing to simple black or white garments. I want each immigrant to be encountered as an individual. I believe it’s on that sort of level playing field where viewers might be reminded of their own extended family histories.

JQP: How did you – or did you at all – direct your subjects as you were photographing them in order to achieve a specific look?

PB: When I shoot portraits, I always talk to people about what I’m doing. The portraits I shot of each immigrant took place after interviews lasting up to two hours. Those conversations were wide-ranging, unscripted and often began with: “What brought you to America?” Many immigrants asked me why I was interested in them and their stories. I tried to be open and frank, putting my cards on the table. I told them about my Italian immigrant grandparents’ roles in helping to raise me when my parents divorced. As for “a look,” I’m not sure exactly how to characterize it. I suppose I’ve tried to show real people, equipped with a measure of courage, confidence and perseverance.

JQP: What did you learn from “Promise” and the immigrants you collaborated with?

PB: “Promise” has been a labor of love for me. Listening to many immigrants describe how and why they came to America has been rewarding and reassuring for me. Each has reminded me that a diverse group of individuals, Americans all, continue to expand and rejuvenate our shared homeland. What have I learned from this project? Two takeaways: My immigrant grandparents made the right decision in sailing for America. And our country’s greatest asset is a richly diverse citizenry.