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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
TAKES A BOW ON GEVA'S WILSON STAGE IN
"THE STAGE DOOR PROJECT: *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*"

Rochester, N.Y., February 10, 2016 – One of the highlights of the Rochester theatre season will be Geva's production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. To accompany this production, Geva, Rochester's leading professional theatre has invited School of the Arts (SOTA) to participate in **"The Stage Door Project: *To Kill a Mockingbird*."**

Geva's mission has always placed its work at the crossroads of artistic excellence and community engagement. One of the most unique education programs we offer for emerging young artists in the Rochester area is the Stage Door Project. This program gives area high schools students the rare opportunity to explore the entire process of theatrical production with a nationally recognized, regional theatre. It offers an unparalleled professional experience fostering a deeper understanding of dramatic literature, the theatre industry and the process of bringing literature to life on the stage.

Geva has a long-standing relationship with School of the Arts. They have been involved in the theatre's educational programming for nearly two decades and were the 2013 recipient of Geva's Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award. For the Stage Door project, SOTA cast 20 young actors and recruited an equal number of students interested in design, technical theatre and marketing to join a creative team that mirrors Geva's. The director of the SOTA production, Lorie Dengler Dewey, is acting as the Assistant Director for Geva's production. The designers from SOTA have had the opportunity to shadow Geva's professional designers and a student marketing team has worked with Geva's in-house graphic designer, Director of Marketing and Communications Manager. The cast and creative team from SOTA have had the unique opportunity to attend Geva's rehearsals and to work with Geva's acting company of professional actors. In a nutshell, students are following the entire process of putting on a show at Geva Theatre Center.

The Stage Door Project culminates in a unique and rare opportunity. After rehearsing the show independently at their school, the students from SOTA will come together to perform their own version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the Wilson Stage on the set of Geva's production of *Mockingbird* for a special one-night performance on **Tuesday, March 15 at 7:30pm.**

In 2007, Geva collaborated with Brighton High School for a shadowing project of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. The Brighton High School cast of the show and their director met with their professional counterparts in the Geva cast of *Our Town* to share their thoughts and examine the creative process while both productions rehearsed. At the conclusion of the project, the high school cast performed their production on the Geva Mainstage set. This joint venture paved the way for the first Stage Door Project, *Almost, Maine* in 2010 which welcomed nine area high schools into every step of our production process resulting in a public performance of *Almost, Maine* on the Geva Mainstage. In 2011, the Stage Door Design Project centered on the Geva production of *Over the Tavern*. Fourteen area high school students were selected as scenic, lighting, sound and costume designers, each responsible for the exploration and creation of some design element of the *Over the Tavern* script. In 2012, Geva offered a similar experience with *A Raisin in the Sun*. In 2013, Geva selected 16 area high school students to meet as a collective to discuss storytelling through design, observation, interpretation, choice and the function of design with our professional designers. They discussed concept and text with directors and examined how research affects design with our dramaturgs. They sat in on technical rehearsals and visited Geva's shops to explore the build process. In 2015, Geva partnered with Rush-Henrietta High School for The Stage Door Project: *Little Shop of Horrors* which culminated with Rush-Henrietta's performance of *Little Shop* on the Wilson Stage.

For Geva Theatre Center and its professionals, it is an opportunity to share the wonder and creativity of students. The theatre acknowledges their roles as theatre stewards by interacting with this younger company and thanks them for the privilege of learning with them and from them.

Tickets for the March 15th performance of *To Kill a Mockingbird* are \$16 and can be purchased online at gevatheatre.org or through the Geva Box Office.

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