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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GEVA UNVEILS ITS REIMAGINED 2020-2021 SEASON

***ESL Federal Credit Union Presents Geva's 48th Season with
Honorary Season Producer Dr. Dawn Lipson***

Tuesday, August 24, 2020. Rochester, N.Y. – Geva Theatre Center is excited to announce its reimagined 2020-2021 season, restructured to provide audiences with the most fulfilling experience possible, while ensuring the health and safety of guests, performers, and staff members.

From October through December, Geva will present *Recognition Radio: An Audio Play Festival Celebrating Black Voices* featuring four plays written and directed by Black theatre artists. Local theatre artists Esther Winter will serve as Creative Producer. The four-plays of *Recognition Radio* equal the first two productions of Geva's Wilson Stage subscription season. These plays have been selected, and will be specially adapted, for an intimate and immersive listening experience. Play titles will be announced in September. Once on sale, tickets for non-subscribers will be available per-show or as a package.

From January through July of 2021, Geva plans to offer five live productions on the Wilson Stage – four of these included in the 20-21 subscription package, and a fifth “bonus” play. This rarely seen Alice Childress masterwork, planned for April, will serve as a replacement for last season's cancelled production of *Looks Like Pretty*. Because of the pandemic, there will be no production of the annual holiday classic, *A Christmas Carol*, this year.

All live performances beginning in January will be conducted in accordance with public health guidelines, including distanced seating, masking, modified entry procedures, and enhanced cleaning protocols,

as may be required. Geva also plans to offer ticket holders on-demand video as an alternative to in-person attendance. The 2020-21 Fielding Stage season has been cancelled due to the smaller size of the Fielding auditorium where appropriate physical distancing would be especially challenging. Those who have already subscribed for the 2020-2021 Fielding Stage series will have the option to transfer their subscriptions in full to the 2021-2022 season.

Since Geva's 2014-2015 Season, **ESL Federal Credit Union** has sponsored the Wilson Stage Series, along with the Fielding Stage Series in recent years. In its 100th year, the financial institution continues its commitment as the Presenting Sponsor for the Geva Theatre Center 2020-2021 Season. **Dr. Dawn Lipson** will serve as Honorary Season Producer.

"The pandemic forced us to close our doors in mid-March, of course, and we thank our audiences for their understanding and flexibility in waiting for us to announce how we can continue to produce professional theatre" stated **Artistic Director Mark Cuddy**. "These past months have not only shut down our industry because of COVID-19, but have brought about a national uprising calling on us all to finally and fully address the human rights and social justice issues of our country. Shutting our doors has granted us a rare gift of extra time to reimagine our role as a theatre and a non-profit, public-service organization, and to re-envision our 2020-2021 season in a way that accounts for the evolving circumstances of the pandemic and centers anti-racism in our plays and programming. I call it the 'Nothing is Normal, Anything is Possible' season – a season of innovation and inclusion, packed with fresh experiences and the talented theatre artists that Geva is known for."

"At the core of what we do is the celebration of the human experience," commented **Executive Director Christopher Mannelli**. "In next year's season we are proud to bring stories on our stage that will inspire and entertain all of the Rochester community."

"As always, ESL is proud to be the presenting sponsor for Geva's upcoming season, especially during the current pandemic and the challenges it has created for so many in our community," said **Faheem Masood, President and CEO, ESL Federal Credit Union**. "The Geva team has done a phenomenal job coming up with the difficult task of reimagining their season. Their ingenuity has produced an inventive and inspiring lineup that exemplifies Greater Rochester's reputation as a community dedicated to arts and culture."

Since 1973, the not-for-profit Geva Theatre Center has been Rochester's professional theatre home, offering

patrons the opportunity to enjoy the work of the country's top artists in an intimate setting right in their own community.

Because professional regional theatre cannot be sustained on ticket-sales alone, Geva Theatre Center thanks those generous individuals and businesses that have already committed to making the 2020-2021 Season a memorable one: ESL Federal Credit Union and Dr. Dawn Lipson.

Subscriptions for the full 2020-2021 Wilson Stage Season are on sale now. Complete information about dates and single-ticket sales will be released on an ongoing basis as the theatre continues to monitor guidelines set by local, state and federal authorities. To receive timely news and information, patrons and supporters are encouraged to visit GevaTheatre.org and register for email updates. Announcements will also be shared regularly on Geva's social media channels.

All plays, artists, schedules and prices are subject to change.

2020-2021 Reimagined Season

Recognition Radio

An Audio Play Festival Celebrating Black Voices
Produced by Esther Winter

Four plays by Black writers that amplify Black American stories. Specially crafted for an immersive listening experience. Complete details coming soon.

Where Did We Sit On the Bus?

By Brian Quijada
Directed by Chay Yew

*"A bus solidly black and white. No Blend.
A clear separation. No Gray. But specifically no Brown.
I can't keep my hand down.
'Yes, Brian'*

Well where were we?

'Excuse me?'

Like Latinos? Where did we sit on the bus?

The room goes quiet."

With pulsing rhythms and original rhymes set to a live, looped soundtrack, Brian Quijada's electric one man show is a hip-hop autobiography about falling in love with performance, the power of family, and growing up Latinx in a world that categorizes everyone in black and white. "An explosion of energy, raw emotion, and irresistible storytelling." –*The Chicago Sun Times*

Tagline: A hip-hop autobiography about love, performance, family, and being Latinx

The Real James Bond ... Was Dominican

A story about the Real James Bond – Porfirio Rubirosa

Created by Christopher Rivas

Directed by Daniel Banks

"A medium dry Vodka Martini, with a slice of lemon peel ... Shake it, do not stir it."

A charming true story – but not one you've seen – about Porfirio Rubirosa, international playboy, man of mystery, and the inspiration behind Ian Fleming's iconic James Bond character.

Eight-year-old Christopher Rivas, a Dominican boy from Queens, is obsessed with James Bond. When he finds out the inspiration behind his hero was also Dominican, his world is rocked to the core.

Written and performed by Christopher Rivas, *The Real James Bond ...* is an enthralling and highly personal story of one young man's guide to love, success, and re-claiming your identity.

Tagline: One boy's inspired journey to claim his identity, told through music & multimedia

Wine In the Wilderness

By Alice Childress

"For a time I thought I was about to move into another world, the so-called 'integrated' world ... but that's a lie."

Rarely staged since its debut in 1969, this Alice Childress masterwork peers into class dynamics in civil-rights-era Black America through an illuminating and engrossing lens. Set in an artist's apartment in 1964 Harlem, audiences are invited to peer into the lives of five passionate characters as they contend with misconceptions, artistic ambition and cultural interdependence while an uprising rages outside.

Tagline: A rare masterwork exploring class dynamics in 1960's Black America

Yoga Play

By Dipika Guha

Directed by Pirronne Yousefzadeh

"Here at Jojomon, when we share our goals we improve ourselves."

Corporate yoga giant Jojomon is at the pinnacle of its game when a scandal sends the company into freefall. Joan, the newly hired CEO, risks everything on a wild plan to recover the company's earnings and reputation. *Yoga Play* is a provocative new comedy about confronting cultural appropriation and searching for authenticity in a world determined to sell enlightenment.

Tagline: A comedy about scandal, selling enlightenment, and seeking realness

Ring of Fire

The Music of Johnny Cash

Created by Richard Maltby, Jr.

Conceived by William Meade

Directed by Mark Cuddy

Take a crowd-pleasing ride through Johnny Cash's gritty life story with this rowdy jukebox musical. A multi-talented cast pays homage to the legendary Man in Black with more than two-dozen Cash classics, including "I Walk the Line," "Folsom Prison Blues," "I've Been Everywhere," and, of course, "Ring of Fire."

Tagline: Celebrating the legend of Johnny Cash with over two-dozen iconic songs

FAST FACTS ON



Artists:

- Nearly 6,200 actors, directors, choreographers, designers, musical directors, musicians, stage managers, and writers have worked at Geva since it was founded in 1972.
- Among Geva's notable alumni are:
 - 1 Pulitzer Prize nominee
 - 4 Academy Award Nominees: Josh Brolin, Robert Downey, Jr., Samuel L. Jackson & Robert Vaughn
 - 23 Tony Award winners and 77 Tony nominees
 - 34 Drama Desk Award Winners and 94 Drama Desk nominees
 - 11 Emmy Award Winners and 47 Emmy nominees.
- Geva casts the country's top artists from auditions held in New York City and Rochester.
- Geva houses out-of-town actors, directors and artists in apartments just 150 steps away from the theatre, which the theatre now owns.
- Geva provides every out-of-town actor, director and artist with a familiarization packet containing information on all there is to see and do in Rochester and the surrounding area.
- Actors who perform at Geva are Rochester residents for an average of eight weeks and become part of the fabric of the community, dining in area restaurants, shopping in area stores and visiting area attractions.

Writers and New Plays

- Geva has presented approximately 360 play readings and workshops since its inception. More than 70 Geva-developed plays have had subsequent productions around the country and the globe.
- In subsequent productions, plays that premiere at Geva are recognized on the title page of programs, saying "Originally produced at Geva Theatre Center, Rochester, NY."
- Play readings are free and open to the public, and most are followed by a discussion between the audience and the playwright.
- Geva's nationally recognized and innovative "Hornets' Nest" series of play readings uses theatre to facilitate community discussions on contemporary topics.

Productions:

- Geva has made over 540 fully-produced productions of plays and musicals since 1972.
- What audiences see onstage is the culmination of months of work. The artistic team for each show begins collaborating up to 12 months in advance of the first performance on every aspect and detail of the production.
- It takes over 11,000 direct labor hours to produce each show at Geva.

Geva and Geva's Staff:

- As a member of the national League of Resident Theatres (LORT), Geva operates under agreements between Actors Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the US; the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, an independent national labor union; and United Scenic Artists (Local USA-829), a union of scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers.
- Geva is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), Visit Rochester, the Rochester Business Alliance (RBA), Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC), Arts & Cultural Council for Greater Rochester, TheatreROCS and the Washington Square Neighborhood Association.

Economic Impact:

- In a normal season, Geva operates on a budget of approximately \$8 million, 87% of which is directed toward artistic, production, education, literary and community program expenses.
- Geva's annual economic impact exceeds \$11 million. Since 1972, Geva has contributed over \$260 million in economic activity to the community.
- 86% of Geva's direct expenses are made in New York State, with 71% in the Rochester area.
- Geva's education and work-force training programs serve over 40,000 youth and adults each year.
- Geva welcomes 160,000 people through its doors each season and over its 48-year history has served over 5 million theatergoers.