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GEVA THEATRE ANNOUNCES THE LINE-UP FOR THE 23/24 SEASON

Sponsored by ESL Federal Credit Union
Honorary Season Producer Dr. Dawn Lipson

Rochester, N.Y. — Following on Geva's 50th Anniversary Season, which brought two *New York Times* Critic's Pick productions and an Obie Award winning new play to Rochester, along with exciting new productions of family favorites, Geva Theatre's Artistic Director Elizabeth Williamson and Executive Director Christopher Mannelli are delighted to announce the 2023/2024 Season.

"I've been loving my first year at Geva Theatre, and getting to know folks here in Rochester and the surrounding area, so much!" said Artistic Director Elizabeth Williamson. "The season planning committee and I have put together a lineup of shows for next year that I can't wait to share with you all. We've got some of the most exciting directors and writers in the field joining us to bring an amazing array of stories – from world premieres to reimagined classics and family favorites – to life for our audiences."

The season begins with *The Wizard Of Oz*, opening the Wilson Stage in September. **Zi Alikhan**, who directed Geva's production of *Somewhere* last season, will put a new spin on the classic musical based on the movie. Second up on the Wilson Stage will be **Vanessa Severo's** one woman Frida Kahlo show, *Frida... A Self Portrait*, directed by **Joanie Schultz**. Following the production of *Frida... A Self Portrait*, we open up the

doors of the Fielding Stage with Boston Playwrights' Theatre's production of ***Mr. Parent***, written by **Melinda Lopez** with **Maurice Emmanuel Parent** about his experience as a teacher in the Boston schools, and conceived with and directed by **Megan Sandberg-Zakian**.

Diving head-first into the new year, we begin with an exciting new version of Frederick Knott's thrilling murder mystery, ***Dial M For Murder***, adapted by **Jeffrey Hatcher** and directed by **Rachel Alderman**. Next up is a world premiere musical, ***I Put A Spell On You***. Written by Geva's Playwright in Residence, **Harrison David Rivers**, with music arranged by **Nubya Garcia**, and produced in partnership with Barney Wragg, the musical tells the story of the life and music of the legendary **Nina Simone**. The fifth slot on the Wilson Stage goes to ***Newtown***, a world premiere play written by **Dan O'Brien** and directed by Artistic Director **Elizabeth Williamson**.

Rounding out the Fielding Stage is the Kitchen Theatre's production of ***Sanctuary City***, written by **Martyna Majok**, sharing the story of two Dreamers and best friends fighting to stay in the United States. Closing the 23/24 season is a co-production with Theater Latté Da of the musical ***The Color Purple***, based on the novel by **Alice Walker**, with book by Marsha Norman, and music and lyrics by Brenda Russell, Allee Willis, and Stephen Bray, and directed by **Kelli Foster Warder**.

For our 23/24 season we are happy to announce that actor, writer, and comedian **Baron Vaughn** will be joining Geva as our next Artist in Residence. Baron begins a two year residency and will overlap with our current Playwright in Residence, Harrison David Rivers. Vaughn will curate a comedy series in the Fielding (dates and comedians TBA), as well as working on a newly commissioned piece, and will join Geva's season planning committee for the following season.

"We are thrilled to be sharing this remarkable season of productions with the community," said Geva Executive Director Christopher Mannelli. "We are so thankful to all who have supported Geva and continue to make our theatre a vibrant hub for the arts in downtown Rochester!"

Geva's 23/24 season was curated by Geva's season planning committee which includes Rachel DeGuzman, Patrick Heydenburg, Fiona Kyle, Christopher Mannelli, Harrison David Rivers, Jenni Werner, and Elizabeth Williamson.

ESL Federal Credit Union continues its support to Geva as the sponsor of the 23/24 Season. ESL Federal Credit Union has served as Season Sponsor since 2014. "The Geva Theater Center is a cultural gem in the Greater Rochester region and ESL is

honored to be the presenting sponsor for its 51st Season,” says **ESL Federal Credit Union President and CEO Faheem Masood**. “In our community, people of all ages and backgrounds benefit from Geva’s productions and programs, reinforcing the importance of theater and the arts, and the influence they have in our lives.”

Dr. Dawn Lipson will once again serve as Honorary Season Producer.

The Fielding Stage is Sponsored by The Gouvernet Arts Fund at The Community Foundation.

Subscriptions for Geva’s 23/24 Season are on sale now and may be purchased online at gevatheatre.org or by calling the Geva Theatre Box office at 585-232-4382. Tickets to all individual productions will go on sale to the general public in July.

2023/2024 Season

The Wizard Of Oz

By L. Frank Baum

With Music and Lyrics by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg

Background Music by Herbert Stothart

Dance and Vocal Arrangements by Peter Howard

Orchestration by Larry Wilcox

Adapted by John Kane for the Royal Shakespeare Company

Based upon the Classic Motion Picture owned by

Turner Entertainment Co. and distributed in all media by Warner Bros.

Directed by Zi Alikhan

Wilson Stage

August 30 – October 1, 2023

Follow the yellow brick road in this delightful stage adaptation of L. Frank Baum’s timeless classic, featuring the iconic musical score from the MGM film. With the help of Dorothy Gale and her friends, director Zi Alikhan explores what it means to go “over the rainbow” to find your chosen family, and discover your true self in the Land of Oz. A visual spectacle for adults and children alike.

Frida... A Self Portrait
By Vanessa Severo • Directed by Joanie Schultz
Wilson Stage
October 17 – November 12, 2023

Frida Kahlo was her own mysterious and brilliant muse. The iconic Mexican painter captured the difficulties and wonders of her life with incredible vibrancy. Now, she comes to life onstage through playwright and performer Vanessa Severo. *Frida... A Self Portrait* transports you to La Casa Azul, Frida's home, where Vanessa recounts the artist's bold life. With music and movement, she shares insights about Frida's physical limitations, complex love life, addictions and, of course, the beauty in her art. This searing new play cracks open a powerful portal between Vanessa and Frida bringing breathtaking physicality and raw honesty to this stunningly creative production. With music and movement, she shares insights about Frida's physical limitations, complex love life, addictions and, of course, the beauty in her art. This searing new play cracks open a powerful portal between Vanessa and Frida bringing breathtaking physicality and raw honesty to this stunningly creative production.

Mr. Parent
By Melinda Lopez with Maurice Emmanuel Parent
Conceived with and directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian
A Production from Boston Playwrights' Theatre
Fielding Stage
November 1 – November 19, 2023

A struggling actor turns to teaching for a steady paycheck, thinking "how hard could it be?" It doesn't take long to realize that the answer is somewhere between "very" and "impossible." But then – as he careens from the Boston Public Schools by day to serious thespian at night – Mr. Parent starts to wonder where he really belongs. *Mr. Parent* is a deeply felt and hilarious solo performance about crushingly inequitable systems, the brilliance of every kid, and how we might all find the space to be ourselves.

Dial M For Murder
By Frederick Knott • Adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher
Directed by Rachel Alderman
Wilson Stage
January 16 – February 11, 2024

A new adaptation of the celebrated murder mystery that inspired Hitchcock's masterpiece! Tony is convinced that his wife Margot has been cheating on him. Now it seems that the affair is over,

but in his jealousy Tony spins a web of suspicion and deception that will tighten around them and ensnare them both in danger, recrimination and murder.

I Put A Spell On You
By Harrison David Rivers
Music Arranged by Nubya Garcia
Wilson Stage
March 5 – March 31, 2024

From the sticky-keyed upright at Luke C.M.E Church in Fort Tryon, North Carolina, to the sleek concert grand at Carnegie Hall, Nina Simone never met a piano she couldn't make sing; or a song she couldn't transform with her signature artistry and unique sound. *I Put a Spell on You*, a brand-new musical, tells the story of one of the 20th century's most influential recording artists – her loves, losses, triumphs, defeats – and celebrates her extraordinary gifts and indomitable spirit. Written by GLAAD and Relentless Award winner Harrison David Rivers, with musical arrangements by Jazz FM UK Jazz Act of the Year Award winner Nubya Garcia, *I Put a Spell on You* features some of Simone's greatest hits, including "Little Girl Blue", "Feeling Good", "To Be Young, Gifted and Black", "Sinnerman", and so many more.

Sanctuary City
By Martyna Majok
A Kitchen Theatre Production
Fielding Stage
March 20 – April 7, 2024

From Pulitzer Prize-winner Martyna Majok comes this poignant and invigorating drama. Teenagers B and G are best friends and Dreamers, fighting to stay in America – the only home they've ever known. When she is naturalized, they hatch a plan to keep him here, but as time hurdles on, the challenges mount and threaten their friendship. Can they save each other – and their friendship – or will the risks be too great?

Newtown
By Dan O'Brien
Directed by Elizabeth Williamson
Wilson Stage
April 16 – May 12, 2024

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Public Theater co-commissioned Dan O'Brien to write a play about the place of guns in our country's story, as part of American Revolutions: The United States History Cycle. The resulting play engages with recent history: the prologue and aftermath of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012.

Derived closely from documentary source material, the play is at once lyrical and unflinchingly realistic. A heartbreaking and powerful interrogation of the complex causes of gun violence in our culture, *Newtown* offers in the end the possibility of healing and hope.

The Color Purple
By Alice Walker
Book by Marsha Norman
Directed by Kelli Foster Warder
Music & Lyrics by Brenda Russell, Allee Willis, and Stephen Bray
Co-production with Theater Latté Da
Wilson Stage
May 28 – June 23, 2024

Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Alice Walker and adapted for the stage by Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winner Marsha Norman, *The Color Purple* tells the story of courageous heroine Celie, as she journeys through joy, despair, anguish and hope in her own personal awakening to discover her unique voice in the world. This intimate version of this landmark musical celebrates life, love, and finding the strength to stand up for who you are and what you believe in.

Additional Programming

Rochester Fringe Festival
Fielding Stage
September 12 – September 23

Geva Theatre's Fielding Stage will once again be a venue for the Rochester Fringe Festival, hosting a wide variety of performances.

A Christmas Carol
Wilson Stage
November 29 – December 30, 2023

On Christmas Eve, Scrooge is visited by a series of ghosts who remind him who he was and what he might yet become. He learns the true meaning of the season and that it's never too late to make a new start. Charles Dickens' famous tale of redemption for the most despised man in London will awaken your heart and rekindle your spirit.

Baron Vaughn's Comedy Series Fielding Stage

Join us on the Fielding stage throughout the season on dates to be announced as Geva's incoming Artist in Residence, Baron Vaughn, curates a new long-form comedy series where the audience gets to watch some of the country's most exciting comedians develop new long-form comedy material live with the Rochester community.

Baron Vaughn is a force to be reckoned with in the world of entertainment. With a career that spans live comedy, acting, and directing, Baron's talent knows no bounds. As an actor, he's best known as "Bud", sharing the screen with Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin on the longest-running hit Netflix series, *Grace & Frankie*. Baron lends his voice as "Tom Servo" in the recent seasons of cult-hit, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

He's also a creative force behind the scenes, co-creating and co-hosting the groundbreaking Comedy Central showcase variety series *The New Negroes with Open Mike Eagle*. The show shined a light on both established and rising Black artists in comedy and music. In 2020, Baron continued to push boundaries with *Call & Response*, a limited series produced by Blavity and Funny or Die. Baron's deeply personal project *Fatherless*, directed by the award-winning Dawn Porter, explores the impact of absent fathers on families and communities while he also endeavored to finally connect with his own absent father.

As a stand-up comedian, Baron has been entertaining audiences for more than 20 years. He has two influential comedy recordings, *Raised by Cable* and *Blaxistential Crisis*, both available for streaming on all platforms. Baron's headlining performances at major clubs and colleges throughout the US have led him to perform at renowned festivals including *Just for Laughs* (Montreal & Vancouver), *Life Is Beautiful* (Las Vegas), and the *New York Comedy Festival*.

Baron's directorial debut, the short film "So Much To Do" featuring Toni Trucks, can be seen in the horror anthology, *Scare Package*, on Shudder. Baron holds a BFA in Acting from Boston University.

About Geva Theatre Center

Founded in 1972, Geva Theatre Center is a not-for-profit, professional theatre company dedicated to creating and producing singular theatre productions and programs that serve the Rochester region and beyond, by illuminating the fullness of our many human experiences.

The 516-seat Elaine P. Wilson Stage is home to a wide variety of performances, from musicals to American and world classics. The 180-seat Ron & Donna Fielding Stage is home to Geva's series of contemporary drama, comedy, musical theatre, and new play

development programs. In addition, the Fielding Stage hosts visiting companies of both local and international renown.

Geva offers a wide variety of educational, engagement, and literary programs, nurturing audiences and artists alike. Geva Theatre Center sits on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Onödowá'ga, or "the people of the Great Hill." In English, they are known as the Seneca people, "the keeper of the western door." They have stewarded this land through generations, and Geva pays respect and gives thanks to their elders, past and present.

Geva is under the leadership of Artistic Director Elizabeth Williamson and Executive Director Christopher Mannelli.

Find out more about Geva Theatre Center at GevaTheatre.org or by connecting with us on social media. Facebook: facebook.com/gevatheatrecenter, Twitter: [@gevatheatre](https://twitter.com/gevatheatre), Instagram: [@gevatheatre](https://instagram.com/gevatheatre), LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/geva-theatre-center.

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