

the HYPOCRITES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Hypocrites Announces 20th Anniversary Season:

The Chicago Premiere of
YOU ON THE MOORS NOW

By Jaclyn Backhaus
Directed by Devon de Mayo

The World Premiere Adaptation of
CINDERELLA AT THE THEATER OF POTATOES

By Andra Velis Simon
Based on *Cendrillon* and other compositions by Pauline Viardot-García
Directed by Artistic Director Sean Graney

The Pulitzer Prize-Winning Drama
WIT

By Margaret Edson
Directed by Marti Lyons

THE HOUSE OF MARTIN GUERRE
Book by Leslie Arden and Anna Theresa Cascio
Music and Lyrics by Leslie Arden
Directed by Geoff Button

The Chicago Premiere of
LAS MENINAS
By Lynn Nottage
Directed by Jess McLeod

Plus: New Play Commissions Initiative

20th Anniversary Season Subscriptions Now On-Sale!

CHICAGO (March 29, 2015) – **The Hypocrites** is pleased to announce its **20th Anniversary Season**, featuring five dynamic productions, including a world premiere musical adaptation and two Chicago premieres. The company is also thrilled to launch a new play development initiative, with its first-ever new play commissions.

The 2016-17 season kicks off this fall with the Chicago premiere of **YOU ON THE MOORS NOW**, **Jaclyn Backhaus'** comical mash-up of mythology and 19th century literary heroines, directed by **Devon de Mayo**.

Just in time for the holidays, a fresh new spin on a fairy tale classic! Experience our heroine as you've never seen her before in **Andra Velis Simon's** musical adaptation **CINDERELLA AT THE THEATER OF POTATOES**, based on the opera *Cendrillon* and other compositions by **Pauline Viardot-García** and directed by Artistic Director **Sean Graney**. In signature Hypocrites' style, the performers act as their own orchestra in this musical-play perfect for the entire family!

Next winter, director **Marti Lyons** helms a stirring new production of **Margaret Edson's** Pulitzer Prize-winning drama **WIT**, one woman's unique and transformative battle with terminal cancer. This Hypocrites' production pays homage to the many recent losses in the Chicago theater community.

In the spring, **Geoff Button** directs the sweeping musical epic **THE HOUSE OF MARTIN GUERRE** by **Leslie Arden** and **Anna Theresa Cascio**. Inspired by the famous 16th century French court case about Martin Guerre and his wife Betrande, the musical drama returns home two decades after its triumphant world premiere at Chicago's Goodman Theatre.

The Hypocrites' **20th Anniversary Season** concludes with the Chicago premiere of **LAS MENINAS**, the beautiful, rarely performed memory play by Pulitzer Prize-winner **Lynn Nottage**. **Jess McCleod** directs this true story of an illicit affair between Queen Marie-Theres, wife of King Louis XIV, and an unlikely love interest that scandalized the French court.

The Hypocrites' 20th Anniversary Season will be presented at **The Den Theatre's Heath Main Stage**, 1329 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, with the exception of **THE HOUSE OF MARTIN GUERRE**, which will be staged at **Stage 773**, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

Season subscription packages for all five 20th Anniversary productions are currently on sale at www.the-hypocrites.com. Single tickets are also available for all productions, with the exception of **THE HOUSE OF MARTIN GUERRE**, which will go on sale Sunday, May 1, 2016.

New Play Commissions

The Hypocrites also enters new territory this season, with the commissioning of writers **Lavina Jadhvani** and **Rohina Malik** to create three new plays that reflect the company's mission. **Jadhvani** will adapt the classic Sanskrit drama, *Shakuntalā* by *Kālidāsa* and **Malik's** new work is inspired by Syrian musicians facing the current international refugee crisis, an exciting follow up to her highly successful *Jasmina's Necklace* and *Mecca Tales*.

"Our 20th anniversary season is about looking to the future, not the past," comments The Hypocrites Artistic Director **Sean Graney**. "In deciding what to program, I asked myself, 'What will the next 20 years look like?' This season is the next step on a pathway of permanent and exciting change for the company. We will be producing and commissioning more new work in order to focus on contemporary voices, and the theater-makers of the future. We want to encourage new artists to work in dialogue with historical theater, questioning its relevance for us living today. I hope you share my love for our programming, I find it funny, smart, entertaining and moving. A mix of old stories told in a fresh immediate way and intensely moving contemporary theater."

The Hypocrites 20th Anniversary Season:

September 9 – October 30, 2016

YOU ON THE MOORS NOW – *Chicago Premiere!*

By **Jaclyn Backhaus**, Directed by **Devon de Mayo**

The Den Theatre's Heath Main Stage, 1329 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago

This crazy, funny show sets heroines from the 19th century novels of Louis May Alcott, Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters in a mythical place of Moors. When our heroines receive proposals of marriage, they decide to escape. The men wage war on the women starting the Moors Wars. **Jaclyn Backhaus'** ultimately moving and inventive play ends in beautiful prose like a chapter from the books these women originated.

"*You On the Moors Now* excites me because it is a feminist re-imagining of the lives of the heroines of four of the greatest literary novels by women," comments director Devon de Mayo. "It reminds us of the specific importance of the strong, female protagonist, and asks 'What if she didn't need the dude? Like, at all?' And 'What if a woman's friendship with other women is what drives her? Not her relationship with men.' It's so

exciting to see these classics ripped apart and exploded into new, imagined circumstances. It's witty, unpredictable and empowering. I think of it as Masterpiece Theatre meets Charles Mee meets *Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play*. Every time I read the play it makes me laugh, it surprises me and I find it touching."

November 12, 2016 – January 8, 2017

CINDERELLA AT THE THEATER OF POTATOES – *World Premiere Adaptation!*

Adapted by **Andra Velis Simon**

Based on the opera *Cendrillon* and other compositions by **Pauline Viardot-García**

Directed by Artistic Director by **Sean Graney**

The Den Theatre's Heath Main Stage, 1329 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago

Adapted from **Pauline Viardot-García's** 1904 opera *Cendrillon* and many of her other compositions, **Andra Velis Simon's** musical-play is an elegantly irreverent exploration of the classic fairy tale. Here, Cinderella's version of happily-ever-after does not include acceptance by the Prince. In the actor-as-orchestra style of The Hypocrites' Gilbert & Sullivan opera work, Artistic Director **Sean Graney** directs this fun holiday-time show, perfect for the whole family.

"I wanted to take the next step in exploring opera with my long-time collaborator Andra Velis Simon," comment director Sean Graney. "When we came across Viardot-García's *Cendrillon*, we knew we found the right project. *Cinderella at the Theater of Potatoes* is elegant in its exploration of the classic fairy tale; also it manages to present the main character as an independent person rather than one completely tied to acceptance by the Prince. When we explored more of Viardot-García's life and compositions, we discovered a deep love for the composer and her interesting life."

January 20 – March 12, 2017

WIT

By **Margaret Edson**, Directed by **Marti Lyons**

The Den Theatre's Heath Main Stage, 1329 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago

During her final hours, Dr. Vivian Bearing, recounts her battle with cancer and struggles to accept her approaching end. Winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, **Margaret Edson's** play is a haunting tale of loss and meditation on life. In 2015, The Hypocrites were not alone in losing many beloved collaborators and friends, most of whom were taken by illness. This production of *Wit* will be our exploration of the complicated feelings that seized us all and an homage to those we lost.

"*Wit* is one of the bravest plays I have ever read," comment director Marti Lyons. "In it, Margaret Edson, the playwright faces illness, mortality and death head on through her lead character, Dr. Vivian Bearing. Through Vivian's bout with ovarian cancer and her life-long exploration of John Donne's Holy Sonnets, the play is an investigation of what it means to live, a meditation on what it means to die, and a mourning for the deep loss inherent in the brevity of our time on this earth."

February 18 – April 2, 2017

THE HOUSE OF MARTIN GUERRE

Book by **Leslie Arden and Anna Theresa Cascio**, Music and Lyrics by **Leslie Arden**

Directed by **Geoff Button**

Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago

In the remote village of Artigat, an arranged marriage is taking place between underage Bertrande and Martin Guerre. Unhappy with his quiet life and fertile wife, Martin leaves to explore new worlds across the ocean. When he returns years later, a changed man, he is accepted by some but accused and taken to trial for being an imposter by others. Will the real Martin Guerre please stand up?

"*The House of Martin Guerre* is an epic in the same style as the mega-musicals I grew up with, but it's an epic with an intimate, smart and heart-breaking core," comments director **Geoff Button**. "On a purely artistic level, I'm excited at the opportunity to take such a sprawling story and focus in on the relationships and ideas, and let the scale be guided by the necessities of the narrative. This show uses its story of an

impostor to dissect the way that any couple must create and decide on the shared story of their relationship. Every romance has three stories, the subjective 'truth' for each individual, and the agreed-upon truth of their love. I think every couple in the audience will feel a sigh of recognition at the realization that even if the stories we tell ourselves are merely stories, that doesn't make them any less true."

March 24 – May 21, 2017

LAS MENINAS

By **Lynn Nottage**, Directed by **Jess McLeod**

The Den Theatre's Heath Main Stage, 1329 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Lynn Nottage's** beautiful, rarely-performed memory play recounts a taboo romance in the court of the Sun King Louis XIV. Nabo, an African dwarf, is delivered as a gift to the Queen Marie-Therese, and the two find a deep and unlikely connection mostly erased from history books. On the eve of her wedding, a novice nun, Louise Marie-Therese, narrates this story shadowed in gossip, intrigue, and faith.

"*Las Meninas* possesses Lynn Nottage's trademark personal/political depth, linguistic elegance and unforgettable imagery with surprising doses of frank humor and provocative whimsy," comment's director **Jess McLeod**. "The play explores the impact of an affair between the lonely Spanish Queen of France and the African little person captured and shipped to her in an ornate gift box. The narrator, a fragile, joyful young nun who simultaneously spins a great yarn, shakes our thirst for scandal, exposes the privileges and perils of monarchic rule, and asks if those born at the bottom of the sociopolitical ditch can ever actually climb out."

2016-17 Season Directors

Geoff Button is a member of The Hypocrites' Artistic Council, and directed their productions of *Adding Machine: A Musical*, *Into the Woods*, *Coriolanus*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *True West* (Non-Equity Jeff Nominations – Best Play, Best Director), as well as his own adaptation of *Three Sisters*. He received his MFA in Theater Directing from Northwestern University, where he directed *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, *The Who's Tommy* and *Spring Awakening*. Also an actor, he has performed in several Hypocrites' productions, including *All Our Tragic* (Equity Jeff Awards – Best Midsize Play, Best Ensemble), *Sophocles: Seven Sicknesses*, *Woyzeck*, *Mud*, *Balm in Gilead* and *Equus* (Non-Equity Jeff – Best Actor). He is currently teaching at the Chicago Academy for the Arts, and assistant directing Barbara Gaines' upcoming history cycle, *Tug of War*, for Chicago Shakespeare Theater.

Devon de Mayo most recently directed *Animals Out of Paper* for Shattered Globe Theatre and *You Can't Take it With You* for Northlight Theatre. Last year, Devon worked as the Resident Director under Stephen Daldry on the Broadway production of *The Audience*. Other directing credits: *Jet Black Chevrolet* (side project), *Compulsion* and *Everything is Illuminated* (Next Theatre), *An Actor Prepares* (Logan Center), *Roadkill Confidential*, *The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler*, *Clouds* (Dog & Pony), *Infiltrating Bounce* (Luminaria, San Antonio), and *52* (Canal Café, London). Directing and devising credits: *Guerra: A Clown Play* (performances in Chicago, New York, Albuquerque, Madrid, Bogota, and Mexico City), *The Whole World is Watching*, *As Told by the Vivian Girls* (Dog & Pony) and *The Twins Would Like to Say* (Dog & Pony, Steppenwolf Garage Rep). She received her MFA from Middlesex University in London.

Sean Graney has directed over 30 productions for The Hypocrites since 1997, including the critically acclaimed *All Our Tragic*. He recently returned from a Fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. In 2004, Graney was a participant in the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors. He has won four Joseph Jefferson Citation awards for the Direction and Adaptation for *Sophocles: Seven Sicknesses*, and Directing of *Equus* and *Machinal*. He has directed *Edward II* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *The Hairy Ape* (Eugene O'Neill Festival at Goodman Theatre), *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep* and *What the Butler Saw* (Court Theatre), *Yankee Tavern* (Milwaukee Rep) and *The Elephant Man* (Steppenwolf for Young Audiences). Graney currently serves as the Hypocrites' Artistic Director.

Marti Lyons is a freelance director based in Chicago. She is currently directing *Wondrous Strange* by Meg Miroshnik, Martyna Majok, Jen Silverman and Jiehae Park for the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville, starring the theater's Apprentice Company. Most recently she directed Will Eno's *Title and Deed* for Lookingglass Theatre Company and a reading of Martin Zimmerman's *On The Exhale* for the Goodman Theatre, where she received the 2015 Maggio directing fellowship. She has directed Laura Marks' *Bethany and Mine* and Will Nedved's *Body and Blood* for The Gift Theatre, where she is an ensemble member. Other credits: Catherine Trieschmann's *Hot Georgia Sunday* for Haven Theatre; *9 Circles* by Bill Cain, *Maria/Stuart* by Jason Grote, and co-directed *The Golden Dragon* for Sideshow Theatre, as well as *The Peacock* by Calamity West for Jackalope Theatre. Marti just opened *Mai Dang Lao* by David Jacobi for Sideshow Theatre, and next up will direct *Prowess* by Ike Holter for Jackalope, and *City of Conversation* by Anthony Giardina for Northlight Theatre Company.

Jess McLeod specializes in new plays and musicals about underrepresented Americans. Chicago credits include Lauren Yee's *in a word* (Strawdog), *For Your Art: portrait of a young blu artist* (Lyric Unlimited), Shawn Pfautsch's *Season on the Line* (The House Theatre), Kevin Coval's *L-vis Live!* (Victory Gardens Theater); Emily Schwartz's *Funeral Wedding: The Alvin Play* (Strange Tree Group); Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus* (Steppenwolf Next Up!); *Kin* (Griffin Theatre); *Babes In Arms* (Porchlight Revisits); *The Wedding Singer* (Haven Theatre) and *The 48-Hour Musicals: Encore!, The Pajama Game, and Fugitive Songs* (The Music Theatre Company). New York credits include Joyce Carol Oates' *The Corn Maiden*, Harrison David Rivers's *Fell*, Rachel Axler's *Kitchen Sink*, Jason Robert Brown's *The Last Five Years*, Brad Ross & Joe Keenan's *The Times* and *The Unauthorized Musicology of Ben Folds* (NYMF). McLeod served as Co-Artistic Director of The Music Theatre Company from 2014-15 and Director of Programming of The New York Musical Theatre Festival from 2005-08, and has led workshops at the Goodman Theatre, ATC, The House, Steep Theatre and the American Music Theater Project. She is currently developing the new musical *Mill Girls* with playwright Samantha Beach and composer/lyricist Diana Lawrence. M.F.A., Northwestern University.

About The Hypocrites

Artistic Director **Sean Graney** created The Hypocrites in 1997. The company is currently run by Graney and Executive Director **Kelli Strickland**. One of Chicago's premier off-Loop theater companies, The Hypocrites specializes in mounting bold productions that challenge preconceptions and redefining the role of the audience. The company has a reputation in Chicago for creating exciting, surprising and deeply engaging theater as it re-interprets classics and tackles ambitious new works.

Their recent production of Graney's *All Our Tragic*, a twelve-hour adaptation combining all 32 surviving Greek Tragedies, garnered the company six 2015 Equity Jeff Awards in its first year of eligibility. Graney's musical adaptations of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, *The Mikado* and *H.M.S. Pinafore* have become audience and critic favorites, being remounted numerous times in Chicago as well as going on tour to American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.), Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville and Olney Theater Center. The company has grown significantly in the past few years, receiving acclaim for productions at the Steppenwolf Garage, Goodman Theatre, Museum of Contemporary Art, DCASE Storefront, Chopin Theater and nationally at American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.), Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Actors Theatre of Louisville.

The American Theatre Wing, best known as the creator of the Tony Awards, presented The Hypocrites with one of the 2013 National Theatre Company awards. The company's smash-hit production of *Our Town*, directed by David Cromer, transferred in 2009 to Off-Broadway, Los Angeles and Boston. Since the company's founding, The Hypocrites have produced over sixty mainstage productions and a dozen festival pieces, securing thirty-one Non-Equity Joseph Jefferson awards, six Equity Joseph Jefferson awards and two After Dark Awards.

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For more information, please visit www.the-hypocrites.com.

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