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A Noise Within Announces its 2017-2018 season

Entertaining Courage

***A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, adaptation by Mike Poulton**
***The Madwoman of Chaillot* by Jean Giraudoux, translated by Maurice Valency**
***Mrs. Warren's Profession* by George Bernard Shaw**
***Henry V* by William Shakespeare**
***A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry**
***Noises Off* by Michael Frayn**

***A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, adapted by Geoff Elliott, returns for its sixth season**

(Pasadena, CA –Tuesday, April 18) Led by co-producing artistic directors Julia Rodriguez-Elliott and Geoff Elliott, **A Noise Within (ANW)** is excited to announce its 2017-2018 season, themed “Entertaining Courage.”

The season opens with a U.S. premiere: Tony-nominated Mike Poulton’s (*Wolf Hall*) thrilling adaptation of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens and is followed in the fall by *The Madwoman of Chaillot* by Jean Giraudoux translated by Maurice Valency and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* by George Bernard Shaw. ANW’s holiday tradition continues for the sixth year with *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, adapted for the stage by Geoff Elliott. Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, and *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry play in rotating repertory in early spring 2018, and the season closes with a revival of one of ANW’s most popular productions, *Noises Off* by Michael Frayn. With the exception of *Noises Off* and *A Christmas Carol*, all of the season’s plays make their debut on the A Noise Within stage.

“Regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum, we’re certainly living in challenging, unprecedented times,” says Geoff Elliott, “It seems like many people are trying to figure out what the path forward looks like. While we certainly don’t have answers, we thought we’d face that national angst and fear head on by embracing courage and hope.”

Elliott continues: “These plays all feature characters who make bold choices to do something—anything—in the face of disaster.”

Julia Rodriguez-Elliott continues, “In addition to being very entertaining theatrical works, our plays examine courage from a variety of points of view, intimate and global, low-stakes and high-stakes: whether it’s just about carrying on and going onstage while the set falls apart around them (*Noises Off*) or if it’s for the ecological future of a Parisian neighborhood (*The Madwoman of Chaillot*).”

“We also look at courage in terms of two different families who are trying to figure out how to be their best selves—one against a background of racial prejudice in *A Raisin in the Sun*, and the other against societal hypocrisy in *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*. Finally, we take a look at courage on the largest historical scale set at pivotal moments in England and France. We see the personal courage of Sydney Carton, who gives his life for another during the French Revolution in a recent stage adaptation of *A Tale of Two Cities*. In Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, we see the courage of a prince who becomes a true king, unifying warring kingdoms through hard won reconciliation.”

“Even Scrooge, after a night of experiences, wakes up and finds the courage to change—one of the theatre’s favorite stories.”

Geoff Elliott says, “This is a season that asks tough, if fascinating, questions about the nature of courage, and there are no easy answers. Spending time with these fascinating characters allows us to think about our lives, reflect and even be inspired by them.”

For subscription tickets, please call 626-356-3100, or visit online at www.ANoiseWithin.org. A Noise Within is located on the corner of Foothill Boulevard and Sierra Madre Villa Avenue at 3352 East Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107, just north of the Madre Street exit off the 210.

The Plays – 2017-2018

CHARLES DICKENS’ *A Tale of Two Cities*

Adapted by Mike Poulton (United States Premiere)

Directed by Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

September 3–November 19, 2017

Mike Poulton has given the theatre a bold, fast-paced adaptation, which deftly transforms Dickens’ epic story into a taut political thriller, giving a new sense of urgency to the intertwined fates of two men during the bloody, turbulent time of the French Revolution.

Julia Rodriguez-Elliott said, “Poulton also breathes new life into the classic novel, and makes it so immediate, so exciting, so theatrical, and so wonderfully alive for audiences. It’s a roller coaster of romance and adventure, without losing the rich characterizations and Dickens’ eloquent language.” *The Guardian*, in its review of the original production, called it “fresh! A smash-and-grab raid of an adaptation ... with a relentless pace building up to the terminal velocity of a political thriller ... it’s like speed reading Dickens by flickering candlelight.”

A Tale of Two Cities (1859) is a novel by Charles Dickens, set in London and Paris before and during the French Revolution. The novel depicts the plight of the French peasantry demoralized by the aristocracy in the years leading up to the revolution, the corresponding brutality demonstrated by the revolutionaries toward the former aristocrats in the early years of the revolution, and many unflattering social parallels with life in London during the same period.

JEAN GIRAUDOUX’S *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, translation by Maurice Valency

Directed by Stephanie Shroyer

September 17–November 11, 2017

Variety said that *The Madwoman of Chaillot* is “a healing fairy tale about the triumph of human kindness over the corruptive forces of evil” when a supply of oil is discovered under Paris itself.

The Madwoman of Chaillot (French: *La Folle de Chaillot*) is a two-act play, a poetic satire by French dramatist Jean Giraudoux, written in 1943 and first performed in 1945, after his death. The story concerns an eccentric woman—Countess Aurelia and her coterie of eccentric friends who live in Paris—and her struggles against the straitlaced authority figures who want to drill oil wells and destroy the City of Light, the center of culture. Stephanie Shroyer who recently gave ANW audiences a comic *You Never Can Tell* (spring 2016), and a dark *The Maids* (fall 2016) over the last two seasons, directs the production.

Geoff Elliott said the play is “A can’t miss, rallying-cry for those who crave a satisfying David vs. Goliath fable in the form of incisive, wildly comic theatre. Think Molière, Feydeau, Beaumarchais, Wilde, and now Giraudoux.”

The original production of *The Madwoman of Chaillot* was created with Giraudoux's frequent collaborator, actor, and theater director Louis Jouvet, who played the Ragpicker. The celebrated French actress Marguerite Moreno was the inspiration for the piece; the play has frequently been revived in France. The star of the original Broadway production Martita Hunt won the 1949 Tony Award, and the cast featured John Carradine as The Ragpicker. In 1969, *Madwoman* became both an American musical entitled *Dear World*, with music and lyrics by Jerry Herman, and a film version, directed by and with a screenplay by Bryan Forbes, with translator Maurice Valency, starring Katherine Hepburn, Paul Henreid, Oskar Homolka, Yul Brynner, Richard Chamberlain, Edith Evans, and Donald Pleasence.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S *Mrs. Warren's Profession*

Directed by Michael Michetti

October 8–November 18, 2017

Mrs. Warren's Profession, written by George Bernard Shaw in 1893, and first performed in London in 1902, is about a former prostitute, now a madam who attempts to come to terms with her disapproving daughter.

The daughter, Cambridge-educated Vivie lives a comfortable middle class life shielded from her mother's source of income. Vivie envisions herself a pragmatic and open-minded twentieth-century woman until she discovers that her entrepreneurial mother, Kitty, is an unapologetically successful madam. Sensibilities clash in this character-driven dramedy about the business of pleasure, the economics of necessity, and the ties that bind ... or don't.

The *New York Times* said *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is, “packed with shiny Shavian dialogue and robustly drawn social archetypes.” “Though the play is very much of its time – especially in its incisive social commentary about the amorality and economic necessity of prostitution – many themes and ideas are still resonant,” says Julia Rodriguez-Elliott said, “Not only does the play contain a modern feminist perspective, it is an honest exploration of the complicated nature of Mother and Daughter relationships. The courage expressed here comes in being honest about who you are, what you want for yourself, and how you see your future.”

The Holiday Tradition Continues!

CHARLES DICKENS' *A Christmas Carol* Adapted for the stage by Geoff Elliott

Directed by Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

December 1–23, 2017

ANW's delightfully festive, musically merry, holiday tradition returns. Families love the inspirational story of Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, and Scrooge—the perfect burst of boundless good cheer for the season.

Producing Artistic Directors Geoff Elliott (who adapted the play directly from the novella) and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott co-direct Dickens' masterpiece about the redemptive and transformative power of love. In this production, hailed for its “enchantment” by *LA Weekly*, with “fantastical stagecraft.”

Dickens' poignant tale is matched by evocative original music by composer Ego Plum.

"Remounting our acclaimed presentation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* allows families to once again take a supremely theatrical journey, and celebrate the power of forgiveness during the holidays," says Geoff Elliott. "Ebenezer Scrooge's rebirth from miserly curmudgeon to the epitome of love and generosity affirms our faith in the potent goodness of human kind during this beloved time of year. He is emboldened with the courage to change and to admit that he was wrong."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *Henry V*

Directed by Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

February 4–April 6, 2018

The dogs of war are unleashed and a charismatic Warrior King emerges in Shakespeare's breathtaking depiction of the Battle of Agincourt. But the events before and after the decisive victory temper the fervor of nationalism—and paint a nuanced portrait of the introspective Henry, who learns that the attributes that make an inspirational leader often come in conflict with those that make a good man.

The Guardian recently remarked on "the play's extraordinary, shape-shifting ability to mirror the national mood and to reflect our current feelings about the war."

Henry V, the history play by William Shakespeare, written around 1599, tells the story of King Henry V of England, focusing on events immediately before and after the Battle of Agincourt (1415) during the Hundred Years' War. The play is the final part of a tetralogy, preceded by *Richard II*, *Henry IV, Part 1*, and *Henry IV, Part 2*. Original audiences would know the title character, from Shakespeare's earlier *Henry IV* plays as a wild, undisciplined lad known as "Prince Harry" and by Falstaff as "Hal."

LORRAINE HANSBERRY'S *A Raisin in the Sun*

Directed by Gregg Daniel

February 25–April 8, 2018

In *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, which debuted on Broadway in 1959, the prospect of life insurance money from their late father offers life-changing options for the Youngers, an African-American family living in a cramped South Side Chicago apartment. However, competing visions of how to use the money for the grandmother Lena, Walter her son (with wife Ruth and son Travis), and her daughter Beneatha, threaten to tear apart a family already facing pre-civil rights America.

The title comes from the poem "Harlem" by Langston Hughes (What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? ... Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?). The New York Drama Critics' Circle named it the best play of 1959.

Spike Lee has said, "*A Raisin in the Sun* was a revelation to me. It's still fresh. It is still relevant. Lorraine Hansberry was a visionary." Hilton Als, in *The New Yorker* said, "Lorraine Hansberry was an integrationist – she knew the toll the struggle could take. Walter is a deeply political, lonely figure. Hansberry's radicalism lay in giving a man like him language and making him go the course."

Ben Brantley wrote in *The New York Times* of the 2004 Broadway revival, "'*Raisin*' was remarkably prescient in identifying issues that would continue to shape African-American life: black men's struggles for self-assertion in households dominated by strong women; the movement to separate African from American identities; Christianity as both an oppressive and redemptive power; the restlessness of women imprisoned by domesticity -- all these elements come into play in Hansberry's drama. And that's before you get to the plot pivot in which the Younger family plans to move into a white neighborhood."

Geoff Elliott said, "Now, six decades later, we are still talking about her achievement of bringing this particular American family to the stage. The proof of the power of theatre is that this play illustrated what was thought to be a topical issue, and has turned out to be an important part of the national discussion of race since its premiere six decades ago. For all audiences, the play so carefully examines what is courage when it comes to the size of your dreams? And what dreams can money buy? Lorraine Hansberry's seminal work is about a lot of things – but it remains one that speaks of hope, and the retention of dignity in challenging times."

MICHAEL FRAYN'S *Noises Off*, revival of an audience favorite

Directed by Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

April 21–May 20, 2018

ANW's most requested production returns! ANW favorites are ready to rein in the chaos of this joyfully out-of-control British farce about the auspiciously titled play-within-a-play *Nothing On*. *Noises Off* invites the audience to step backstage and meet the under-rehearsed, over-worked cast and crew with a penchant for drama, more personal than professional. As the production progresses, the bumbling cast brings down the house—literally!

This encore presentation reunites many members of the original cast and brings in some fresh new faces. Last performed in 2011, ANW's production was beloved by audiences and critics alike: KPCC called it a "Brilliantly performed farce" and it was an *L.A. Times* Critic's Choice: "[the] superb cast hit the banana peel running and never let up."

The idea for 1982's *Noises Off* by English playwright Michael Frayn came in 1970, when Frayn was watching a performance of *The Two of Us*, a farce that he had written for Lynn Redgrave, from the wings. He said, "It was funnier from behind than in front, and I thought that one day I must write a farce from behind." *The New York Times* described it as, "the heady, headlong and (sorry, alliteration haters) altogether hilarious farce ... by now established as both a classic farce and a fiendishly ingenious homage to the form."

Frayn, the author of more than thirty plays including *Copenhagen* and *Democracy* then wrote *Exits*, a short-lived one-act play in 1977. At the request of his associate, Michael Codron, Frayn expanded this into what would become *Noises Off*. It takes its title from the theatrical stage direction indicating sounds coming from offstage. Rodriguez-Elliott said, "Audiences and actors alike can't get enough of this show. Endlessly entertaining for all, there is some kind of courage demonstrated to simply *go on with the show*. And we, all of us in show business, always *go on with the show*."

This is the fourth time ANW has presented this crowd pleaser, and it is strongly associated with the company. The others were in our 2009-2010 season, 2010-2011 season, and in our first Pasadena season 2011-2012.

About A Noise Within

A Noise Within, which celebrated its 25th Anniversary during the 2016-2017 season, was recently named "one of the nation's premier classical repertory companies" by The Huffington Post, and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, CA. ANW's award-winning resident company practices a rotating repertory model at their state-of-the-art, 283-seat performing space. This venue, established in 2011, has allowed ANW to expand its audience, surpassing its previous box office, subscription, and attendance records each year. In addition to producing world-class performances of classical theatre, the organization runs robust education programs committed to inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. Helmed by Producing Artistic Directors Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, who hold MFAs from San Francisco's American Conservatory Theatre, A Noise Within truly delivers CLASSIC THEATRE, MODERN MAGIC. www.anoisewithin.org ###