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January 16, 2019

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**Chester Theatre Company Announces its 30th Season
Four New England Premieres to fill the Town Hall Theatre Stage**

Chester, MA - Co-founded by Vincent Dowling and H. Newman Marsh in 1990 with the belief that every town should have a professional theatre, Chester Theatre Company (formerly The Miniature Theatre of Chester) prepares to celebrate its landmark **30th Season with four works, each a New England Premiere.**

Producing Artistic Director **Daniel Elihu Kramer** has chosen to open the season and to direct the New York Drama Critics' Circle Best Play Winner *The Night Alive*, written by Irish playwright Conor McPherson, as a tribute to Dowling, who served as Artistic Director of Dublin's Abbey Theatre in the late 80s, and who helmed the theatre in Chester from its founding until 1995.

"Vincent had a vision for how this theatre and this town could grow together," **Kramer** says. "His roots in the Irish theatre were a key part of the founding of Chester Theatre Company. We celebrate Vincent and those roots by opening our season with Conor McPherson's remarkable play."

The Season:

The Night Alive

Written by Conor McPherson

Directed by Daniel Elihu Kramer

June 20 – 30

Tommy rents a single room in his Uncle Maurice's Dublin house. Doc, a friend with whom Tommy does odd jobs, bunks in, and the two scrape by in the disheveled, messy bedsit, untethered and without direction. The "routine" is disrupted when Tommy saves a young prostitute named Aimee from an assault and brings her back to the house to get herself together. She stays, shaking up the group dynamics, especially when her boyfriend shows up.

Marielle Young, who appeared in the title role in 2018's *Mary's Wedding*, has been cast as Aimee. **James Barry** and **Joel Ripka**, who both starred in last season's Berkshire Theatre Critics' Award

winner for Best Ensemble, *The Aliens*, have been cast as Doc and Kenneth (Aimee's boyfriend), respectively.

"Conor McPherson, the Irish dramatist who gave us *The Weir* and *Shining City*, has a singular gift for making the ordinary glow with an extra dimension, like a gentle phosphorescence waiting to be coaxed into radiance." (Ben Brantley, *The New York Times*)

Now Circa Then

Written by Carly Mensch

Directed by Sean Christopher Lewis

July 4 – 14

Set in New York's Tenement Museum, *Now Circa Then* dances between the tale of two young immigrants, Josephine and Julian, making their way in their new country in the 1890s, and the developing relationship of Margie and Gideon, a mismatched pair of re-enactors hired to portray them. Things take a turn when the young museum employees' relationship spills into the story they are charged with acting out.

Sean Christopher Lewis makes his CTC directing debut with *Now Circa Then*. He is a playwright, actor, and director who has won the Smith Prize, a Barrymore Award, and the NEA Voices in Community Award. **Lilli Hokama**, who starred in 2017's *I and You*, is set to appear as Margie/Josephine.

"A twisty, humorous tale of significance." (Iris Wiener, *TheatreMania*)

On the Exhale

Written by Martin Zimmerman

Directed by Tara Franklin

July 25 – August 4

When a college professor suffers the unthinkable loss of her son in a school shooting, she fixates not on the shooter, but on the weapon itself. Her attempts to understand what happened unleash unexpected feelings about power, violence, and the role we all play in this American epidemic.

Therese Plaehn (*Sister Play*, *Blink*) returns to the Town Hall stage having recently completed a national tour of *The Humans* with Richard Thomas. **Tara Franklin**, who appeared in last season's *Bar Mitzvah Boy*, and as Plaehn's co-star in *Sister Play*, makes her CTC directorial debut.

"*On The Exhale* approaches the subject of American gun violence from a startlingly original perspective." (*The New York Times*)

Curve of Departure

Written by Rachel Bonds

August 8 – 18

A father, an ex-wife, a son, and the son's partner gather in a New Mexico motel the night before the burial of the man to whom they are all connected, but to whom they feel little connection.

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As they prepare themselves for the funeral in the confines of the crowded room, they grapple with the family dynamics of the past, present and the future, all of which outsize the space they find themselves in. *Curve of Departure* is a tender drama told with humor and grace.

Film and TV veteran **Raye Birk**, who recently appeared with Mark Rylance in *Nice Fish* in London's West End, has been cast as Rudy, and **Paul Pontrelli** (*I and You, The Aliens*) will be returning to Chester for his third consecutive season to play Rudy's grandson, Felix.

"*Curve of Departure* is a play that sneaks up on you instead of bashing you on the head, and I'm still thinking about it." (Margaret Gray, *Los Angeles Times*)

The company is also planning a **special event** that will take place July 18-20. This immersive theatre piece, created by **John Bechtold**, will celebrate the history of the company in the town of Chester. Bechtold has created several works of this nature, including pieces for The Emily Dickinson Museum, Double Edge Theater, and others. More details to come.

All performances of the four main productions will take place in the intimate setting of Chester's Historic Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA. Show times are 8:00 pm Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and 2:00 pm Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Talkbacks follow Thursday and Saturday matinees. Cast Conversations follow Friday evening performances. Panel Discussions featuring outside experts take place after the first Sunday matinee of each play.

Complete casting and additional production information will be announced at a later date.

Individual ticket prices are \$42.50. Chester residents, members of the military and their families, and those holding EBT/SNAP cards may purchase \$10 tickets at the door or by calling the box office. Student Rush \$10 tickets are available day of show. Single tickets, season subscriptions, and flex passes may be purchased online at chestertheatre.org, or by phone at 413.354.7771. Special rates for groups of 10 or more are available.

Tickets go on sale to the general public at noon on Monday, March 18, 2019.

About Chester Theatre Company

Chester Theatre Company, a professional theatre company located between the Berkshires and the Pioneer Valley, and convenient to both, is known for presenting high-quality productions with top-notch actors, directors, and designers from across the country since 1990. Co-founded by former Artistic Director of Dublin's Abbey Theatre, Vincent Dowling, CTC is now in its 30th season, and produces four thought-provoking plays each summer in the intimate setting of the Town Hall Theatre at 15 Middlefield Road in Chester, MA.

For further information, please call CTC at 413.354.7770, or visit www.chestertheatre.org.

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