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**For immediate release**

**IN CELEBRATION OF 50TH ANNIVERSARY  
CENTER THEATRE GROUP ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIPS  
WITH FOUR INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED THEATRES  
AND EXTENDED RELATIONSHIPS WITH THREE TOP THEATRE ARTISTS**

**\$1 Million Edgerton Foundation Playwrights Initiative will Support  
Center Theatre Group's Involvement in Individual Commissioning Arrangements with  
Goodman Theatre, the National Theatre, Royal Court Theatre and Second Stage Theater**

**In Addition Celebrated Artists Matthew Bourne, Danai Gurira and Anna D. Shapiro  
Have Expanded Their Relationship with Center Theatre Group as Associate Artists**

Center Theatre Group Artistic Director Michael Ritchie announced separate co-commissioning partnerships with four internationally renowned theatres. Chicago's Goodman Theatre, London's Royal Court Theatre and National Theatre, and New York's Second Stage Theater have each individually joined with Center Theatre Group to commission multiple works over the next decade. In addition, choreographer/director Matthew Bourne, playwright Danai Gurira and director Anna D. Shapiro have expanded their relationships with Center Theatre Group as Associate Artists.

A \$1 million grant from the Edgerton Foundation will support Center Theatre Group's portion of co-commissions from playwrights such as Jon Robin Baitz (Pulitzer finalist and Tony nominee), Will Eno (Pulitzer finalist), Danai Gurira (Tony nominee), Lisa Kron (Tony winner), Young Jean Lee (Obie winner), Lynn Nottage (two-time Pulitzer winner), Qui Nguyen (Steinberg Award winner), Al Smith (Sunday Times Playwriting Award winner) and Paula Vogel (Pulitzer winner). Titled the Edgerton Foundation Playwrights Initiative, the grant is intended to allow Center Theatre Group to commission at least two shows annually with each of the four theatres.

"In recognition of Center Theatre Group's long-standing mission to develop new art for the American stage, we are excited to offer commissioning funds for more than 50 new plays in the Edgerton Foundation Playwrights Initiative in partnership with four other theatres in Chicago, New York and London. By jointly developing each of these new plays with two talented theatre staffs, we hope to increase the number of productions that will journey to many regional theatres, Broadway and the West End," said Brad Edgerton, MD, President, Edgerton Foundation.

“The Edgerton Foundation Playwrights Initiative is allowing us to make bigger, bolder investments in some of the world’s best playwrights,” said Michael Ritchie. “Co-commissioning with some of the top theatres in the U.S. and London allows us to put our resources together in support of the creation and production of new work around the world—with a clear path to Broadway thanks to our new connection to Second Stage and their Helen Hayes Theater.”

Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre Vicky Featherstone said, “The Royal Court is constantly looking for partnership and co-operation with like-minded theatre companies around the world. With Center Theatre Group, we feel as though we’ve hit on a real affinity. Our shared enthusiasm and support for playwrights and our commitment to new writing that illuminates the times we live in make us feel certain that this alliance will bring great work into the world that might otherwise not have existed.”

Director of the National Theatre Rufus Norris said, “The National is delighted to be partnering with Center Theatre Group on a series of new US/UK co-commissions. There has never been a more important time for organizations from around the world to work together and I hope that this relationship will lead to some fantastic new plays from the best of British and American theatre-makers.”

“This program is a natural outgrowth of our already strong relationship with Center Theatre Group and our mutual commitment to the development and production of new American plays,” said Goodman Theatre Artistic Director Robert Falls. “Center Theatre Group is our producing partner on our current production of Lauren Yee’s delightful Goodman commission ‘King of the Yees,’ and recently hosted a very successful remount of my production of Rebecca Gilman’s newest play ‘Luna Gale.’ I am thrilled that this joint program will provide greater resources for playwrights, the results of which will then be enjoyed by audiences in both Chicago and Los Angeles.”

“Michael Ritchie and I have a long professional history and there is no one I’d rather launch our co-commissioning program with than Michael and Center Theatre Group,” said Second Stage Artistic Director Carole Rothman. “This unique partnership will allow American playwrights to reap the benefits of two institutions giving the writers two productions in two vitally different cities. Most crucially, the pathway between our theatre companies is charted to ensure a larger audience for new American plays.”

Michael Ritchie added, “At the same time we are beginning this collaboration with four world-class theatres, we are expanding and formalizing our existing relationships with Matthew, Danai and Anna — all artists working at the top of their game. They will be bringing new work to our stages and collaborating with our artistic team to help set the foundation for Center Theatre Group’s next 50 years.”

Sir Matthew Bourne OBE said “I’m honored and thrilled to have been asked by Michael, and the team at Center Theatre Group to be an Associate Artist for the next five years. The Center Theatre Group has felt very much like my company, New Adventures, home-away-from-home in North America since our first visit with ‘Swan Lake’ almost exactly 20 years ago. I look forward to building on our special relationship, developing ideas and further contributing to the extraordinary work Center Theatre Group delivers for artists, audiences and communities.”

Anna D. Shapiro, Artistic Director of Steppenwolf Theatre Company shares, “My relationship with Mike and Center Theatre Group began when I directed Steppenwolf’s

national touring production of 'August: Osage County' by ensemble member Tracy Letts in 2009, followed by Steppenwolf's 'A Parallelogram' by ensemble member Bruce Norris in 2013, and I'm excited to build on that. This expanded relationship creates a great opportunity to build a bridge between Chicago and Los Angeles, where many of our ensemble members live and work, allowing for more cross-collaboration between two like-minded theatres and exciting opportunities for Steppenwolf to make connections with new artists, which can only enhance the important work we're doing at home."

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation's preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles' leading nonprofit theatre company, programming seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2000-seat Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the 317-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. In addition to presenting and producing the broadest range of theatrical entertainment in the country, Center Theatre Group is one of the nation's leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics and circumstance to serve Los Angeles.

## Biographies

### **Goodman Theatre**

America's "Best Regional Theater" (Time) and Chicago's premiere not-for-profit theatre, Goodman Theatre is distinguished by the quality and scope of its artistic programming and civic engagement. The Goodman is led by Artistic Director Robert Falls and Executive Director Roche Schulfer. Productions have earned two Pulitzer Prizes, 22 Tony Awards and nearly 160 Jeff Awards. Over the past three decades, audiences have experienced over 150 world or American premieres, 30 major musicals and internationally celebrated productions of classics. The Goodman was the first in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson's "American Century Cycle." For four decades, the annual tradition of A Christmas Carol has created a new generation of theatergoers. The 2016 opening of the Alice Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement launched the next phase in the Goodman's commitment as an arts and community organization dedicated to educating Chicago youth and promoting lifelong learning.

### **National Theatre**

The National Theatre is dedicated to making the very best theatre and sharing it with as many people as possible. We produce productions on the South Bank in London each year, ranging from reimagined classics to modern masterpieces and new work by contemporary writers and theatre-makers. The National's work is seen on tour throughout the UK, in London's West End, internationally (including on Broadway) and in collaborations and co-productions with theatres across the country.

Across 2015-2016, the NT staged 34 productions and gave 3,134 performances in the UK and internationally. The NT's award-winning program had a UK audience of 2.5 million, 700,000 of which were NT Live audiences.

The NT is committed to providing programs for schools, young people, families, community groups and adult learners, including the nationwide youth theatre festival Connections and playwriting competition New Views. In 2015-2016, we engaged with over 181,000 participants through the NT Learning events program. Further, over 2,600 secondary schools have signed up to the free streaming service, On Demand. In Schools since its launch in September 2015.

### **Royal Court Theatre**

The Royal Court Theatre is the writers' theatre. It is the leading force in world theatre for energetically cultivating writers – undiscovered, emerging and established.

Through the writers, the Royal Court is at the forefront of creating restless, alert, provocative theatre about now. We open our doors to the unheard voices and free thinkers that, through their writing, change our way of seeing.

Over 120,000 people visit the Royal Court in Sloane Square, London, each year and many thousands more see our work elsewhere through transfers to the West End and New York, UK and international tours, digital platforms, our residencies across London, and our site-specific work. Through all our work we strive to inspire audiences and influence future writers with radical thinking and provocative discussion.

The Royal Court's extensive development activity encompasses a diverse range of writers and artists and includes an ongoing programme of writers' attachments, readings, workshops and playwriting groups. Twenty years of the International Department's pioneering work around the world means the Royal Court has relationships with writers on every continent.

Within the past 60 years, John Osborne, Beckett, Arnold Wesker, Ann Jellicoe, Howard Brenton, David Hare and many more started their careers at the Court. Many others, including Caryl Churchill, Athol Fugard, Mark Ravenhill, Simon Stephens, Debbie Tucker Green and Sarah Kane have followed.

More recently, the theatre has fostered new writers such as Lucy Kirkwood, Nick Payne, Penelope Skinner and Alistair McDowall and produced many iconic plays from Laura Wade's "Posh" to Jez Butterworth's "Jerusalem" and Martin McDonagh's "Hangmen."

Royal Court plays from every decade are now performed on stage and taught in classrooms and universities across the globe. It is because of this commitment to the writer that we believe there is no more important theatre in the world than the Royal Court.

### **Second Stage Theater**

Under the artistic direction of co-founder Carole Rothman, Second Stage Theater produces a diverse range of America's best contemporary theatre, including the 2015 Pulitzer Prize winner "Between Riverside and Crazy"; 2012 Pulitzer Prize winner "Water by the Spoonful" by Quiara Alegria Hudes; and 2010 Pulitzer Prize winner "Next to Normal" by Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey. Next spring, Second Stage will begin producing at The Hayes Theater on Broadway, where it will become the only company on Broadway dedicated exclusively to producing the work of living American playwrights.

[www.2ST.com](http://www.2ST.com)

### **Sir Matthew Bourne OBE**

Artistic Director of New Adventures and Re:Bourne, Matthew Bourne is widely hailed as the UK's most popular and successful choreographer and director. He was knighted in the Queen's New Year Honours 2016 for services to dance.

Matthew is the creator of the world's longest running ballet production, a five-time Olivier Award winner, and the only British director to have won the Tony Award for both Best Choreographer and Best Director of a Musical.

Matthew started his dance training at the comparatively late age of 22. He danced professionally for 14 years creating many roles in his own work. As Artistic Director of his first company, Adventures in Motion Pictures (1987-2002), Matthew created many award-winning works. Further hit productions were created when New Adventures was launched in 2002, becoming the UK's busiest and most successful dance company.

In 2008 he established his charity Re:Bourne to increase opportunities that inspire young people with a passion for dance.

### **Anna D. Shapiro**

Anna D. Shapiro joined the Steppenwolf Theatre Company ensemble in 2005 and became Artistic Director in 2015. She was awarded the 2008 Tony Award for Best Direction of a Play for "August: Osage County" (Steppenwolf, Broadway, London), and was nominated in 2011 in the same category for "The Motherf\*\*ker with the Hat" (Public Theater, Labyrinth Theater). Other Broadway credits include "Of Mice and Men" (with James Franco) and "Fish in the Dark" (with Larry David). Off-Broadway credits include "Domesticated" (Lincoln Center). Other directing credits at Steppenwolf include "Visiting Edna," "Mary Page Marlowe," "Three Sisters," "A Parallelogram" (also at the Mark Taper Forum), "Up," "The Crucible," "The Unmentionables" (also at Yale Repertory Theatre), "The Pain and the Itch" (also in New York), "I Never Sang for My Father," "Man from Nebraska," "Purple Heart" (also in Galway, Ireland), "The Drawer Boy," "Side Man" (also in Ireland, Australia and Vail, Colorado), "Three Days of Rain," "The Infidel" and "This is Our Youth" (which transferred to Broadway). Shapiro is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and Columbia. She is a full professor in Northwestern University's Department of Theatre.

### **Danai Gurira**

Danai Gurira's writing credits include "Eclipsed" (six Tony Award nominations; NAACP Award; Helen Hayes Award: Best New Play; Connecticut Critics Circle Award: Outstanding Production of a Play), "In the Continuum" (OBIE Award, Outer Critics Award, Helen Hayes Award) and "The Convert" (six Ovation Awards, Los Angeles Drama Critics Award). Danai's newest play, "Familiar," received its world premiere at Yale Rep in 2015. She is a recipient of the Whiting Award, a Hodder Fellow, and has been commissioned by Yale Rep, Center Theatre Group, Playwrights Horizons and the Royal Court. She recently completed production on the Tupac Shakur biopic "All Eyez on Me," appears in Marvel's upcoming film "Black Panther" and is currently developing a pilot for HBO. Select acting credits include "The Walking," "The Visitor," "Mother of George"

and Isabella in NYSF's "Measure for Measure" (Equity Callaway Award). Gurira is an Ambassador for the ONE Campaign and founder of LOGpledge.org, an awareness building campaign focused on the plights of women and girls around the globe. She is the co-founder of Almasi Arts, which works to give access and opportunity to the African Dramatic Artist ([almasiartsalliance.org](http://almasiartsalliance.org)). Born in the US to Zimbabwean parents, Gurira was raised in Zimbabwe and holds an MFA from Tisch, NYU.

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