44-MEMBER COMPANY OF ACTORS AND MUSICIANS ANNOUNCED FOR WONDERFUL TOWN, MARY ZIMMERMAN’S MAJOR REVIVAL OF LEONARD BERNSTEIN’S CLASSIC WORK, TO OPEN GOODMAN THEATRE’S 2016/2017 SEASON

**LAUREN MOLINA AND BRI SUDIA LEAD THE CAST AS TWO SMALL TOWN SISTERS WITH BIG CITY DREAMS**

***CREATIVE TEAM INCLUDES MUSIC DIRECTOR DOUG PECK AND CHOREOGRAPHER ALEX SANCHEZ***

(Chicago, IL) The cast and creative team is set for Tony Award winner Mary Zimmerman’s revival of Wonderful Town—Leonard Bernstein’s classic musical that "fizzes and pops and rhumbas with timeless energy" (Variety), with lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green and book by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov. A whimsical love letter to Manhattan, Wonderful Town follows the adventure of sisters Eileen and Ruth, who leave Columbus, Ohio in search of success in the Big Apple. Lauren Molina, who appeared as Cunegonde in Zimmerman’s acclaimed production of Candide (2010), portrays the beautiful actress and hopeful romantic, Eileen; and breakout Chicago star Bri Sudia (Far From Heaven, Porchlight Music Theater) makes her Goodman debut as Ruth, an aspiring, romantically challenged journalist. Joining Molina and Sudia in the 26-member cast are Karl Hamilton as Robert Baker, the isolated editor of the Manhattener newspaper; Wade Elkins as Frank Lippencott and Steven Strafford as Chick Clark—two of Eileen’s love prospects and residents of the bohemian 1950s town; and Jordan Brown (Wreck), Amy J. Carle (Mrs. Wade), Matt DeCaro (Appololous), Christina Hall (Violet), James Earl Jones II (Speedy Valenti), Kristin Villanueva (Helen) and George Andrew Wolff (Lonigan). Ensemble members include Nathaniel Braga, Ariana Cappuccitti, Sherriese Hamilton, Aaron Holland, Mark David Kaplan, Tiffany Krause, Kent M. Lewis, Russell Mernagh, Jeff Parker, Jody Reynard, Todd Rhoades, Lainie Sakakura, Ian Saunders and Erica Stephan. Artist headshots and bio information can be found on the Artist Page. Wonderful Town appears September 10 – October 16 in the Albert Theatre (Opening Night is September 20). Tickets ($25 - $93; subject to change) go on sale to the general public Friday, August 5 and are available at GoodmanTheatre.org, by phone at 312.443.3800 or at the box office (170 North Dearborn). Abbott Fund is the Major Production Sponsor and JP Morgan Chase is the Major Corporate Sponsor for Wonderful Town.

Under music director Doug Peck and associate music director/conductor Ben Johnson, the 18-member orchestra brings to life 20 of Bernstein’s songs—including “Ohio” and “One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man.” Chicago native and choreographer Alex Sanchez, whose work has been described as “spectacular-wildly ingenious and playful from start to finish” (Chicago Sun-Times), makes his Goodman debut. The creative team also includes Todd Rosenthal (sets), Ana Kuzmanic (costumes), T.J. Gerckens (lights) and Ray Nardelli (sound).

The Goodman production marks the first major revival of Wonderful Town in more than 10 years, the musical is based on the book My Sister Eileen by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov and the autobiographical short stories by Ruth McKenney. Fields and Chodorov wrote the hit Broadway play My Sister Eileen, which ran for three years (1940 to 1943) and later collaborated on the play’s musical adaptation Wonderful Town—earning them the 1953 Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical.

About the Artists

Mary Zimmerman is the recipient of a 1998 MacArthur Fellowship, the 2002 Tony Award for Best Director of a Play and numerous Jeff Awards (including Best Production and Best Direction). She is an Artistic Associate of Goodman Theatre, a member of Lookingglass Theatre Company and a professor of performance studies at Northwestern University. Zimmerman most recently adapted and directed Treasure Island, which appeared at Lookingglass Theatre Company this fall and at Berkeley Repertory Theatre this spring. She has also adapted and directed Metamorphoses, which appeared on Broadway and at Lookingglass Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum and Second Stage Theatre; The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci at the Goodman, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Seattle Repertory Theatre and Second Stage Theatre; Journey to the West at the Goodman, the Huntington Theatre Company and Berkeley Repertory Theatre; The Odyssey at Lookingglass Theatre Company, the Goodman, McCarter Theatre and Seattle Repertory Theatre.
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Theatre; *Mirror of the Invisible World* and *Silk*, both at the Goodman; *Arabian Nights* at Lookingglass Theatre Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Kansas City Repertory Theatre; *Argonautika* at Lookingglass Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Shakespeare Theatre Company and McCarter Theatre; *The Secret in the Wings* at Lookingglass Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, McCarter Theatre and Seattle Repertory Theatre; *Eleven Rooms of Proust* at Lookingglass Theatre Company and About Face Theatre (co-produced by the Goodman); a new opera with Philip Glass, *Galileo Galilei* at the Goodman, The Barbican in London and Brooklyn Academy of Music; *Candide* at the Goodman, the Shakespeare Theatre Company and the Huntington Theatre Company; *The Jungle Book* at the Goodman and Huntington Theatre Company and *The White Snake* at the Goodman, McCarter Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in China. In addition, Zimmerman has directed Shakespeare’s *Pericles* and *All’s Well That Ends Well* at the Goodman and *Henry VIII* and *Measure for Measure* at New York Theatre Festival’s Shakespeare in the Park. She made her Metropolitan Opera directorial debut in 2007 with *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which she also directed at La Scala in Milan in 2014. Subsequent Met productions include *Armida* and *La Sonnambula*; she will be directing the new production, *Rusalka*, in February 2017.

Leonard Bernstein (August 25, 1918 – October 14, 1990) was a world-renowned musician, conductor and composer throughout his entire adult life. He was Music Director of the New York Philharmonic and conducted the world’s major orchestras, recording hundreds of these performances. His books and the televised *Young People’s Concerts* with the New York Philharmonic established him as a leading educator. His compositions include *Jeremiah*, *The Age of Anxiety*, *Kaddish*, *Serenade*, *Five Anniversaries*, *Mass*, *Chichester Psalms*, *Slava*, *Songfest*, *Divertimento for Orchestra*, *Missa Brevis*, *Arias and Barcarolles*, *Concerto for Orchestra* and *A Quiet Place*. Bernstein composed for the Broadway musical stage, including *On the Town*, *Wonderful Town*, *Candide* and the immensely popular *West Side Story*. In addition to the *West Side Story* collaboration, He worked with choreographer Jerome Robbins on three major ballets: *Fancy Free*, *Facsimile* and *Dybbuk*. Bernstein was the recipient of many honors, including the Tony Award for Distinguished Achievement in the Theater, 11 Emmy Awards, the Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award and the Kennedy Center Honors.

In a partnership spanning nearly 60 years, Betty Comden & Adolph Green received Tony Awards for their lyrics and/or librettos for *Applause*, *Wonderful Town*, *Hallelujah Baby*, *On the Twentieth Century* and *The Will Rogers Follies*. Other Broadway credits include *On the Town*, *Peter Pan*, *Bells Are Ringing*, *Do Re Mi*, *Subways Are For Sleeping* and *A Doll’s Life*. They wrote the screenplays and/or lyrics for the motion pictures *Good News*, *On the Town*, *Singin’ in the Rain*, *The Band Wagon*, *It’s Always Fair Weather* (Academy Award nomination) and *Auntie Mame*, among others. They were inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, and received the Kennedy Center Honors Award in 1991. Comden appeared in the films *Garbo Talks* and *Slaves of New York*, and authored a collection of essays published under the title “Off Stage.” Green appeared in the films *Simon*, *My Favorite Year*, *Lily In Love*, *I Want To Go Home* and *The Substance of Fire*, and as Dr. Pangloss in the television broadcast of *Candide*, conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

About Goodman Theatre

Called America’s “Best Regional Theatre” by *Time* magazine, Goodman Theatre has won international recognition for its artists, productions and programs, and is a major cultural, educational and economic pillar in Chicago. Founded in 1925 by William O. Goodman and his family in honor of their son Kenneth (an important figure in Chicago’s cultural renaissance in the early 1900s), the Goodman family’s legacy lives on through the continued work and dedication of Kenneth’s family, including Albert Ivar Goodman, who with late his mother, Edith-Marie Appleton, contributed the necessary funds for the creation of the new Goodman Center in 2000. The Goodman has garnered hundreds of awards for artistic achievement and community engagement, including: two Pulitzer Prizes, 22 Tony Awards (including “Outstanding Regional Theatre” in 1992), nearly 160 Joseph Jefferson Awards and more. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Robert Falls and Executive Director Roche Schuller, the Goodman’s artistic priorities include new plays (more than 150 world or American premieres in the past 30 years), reimagined classics (including Falls’ nationally and internationally celebrated productions of *Death of a Salesman*, *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, *King Lear* and *The Iceman Cometh*, many in collaboration with actor Brian Dennehy), culturally specific work, musical theater (28 major productions in 20 years, including 10 world premieres) and international collaborations. Diversity and inclusion have been primary cornerstones of the Goodman’s mission for 30 years; over the past decade, 68% of the Goodman’s 35 world premieres were authored by women and/or playwrights of color, and the Goodman was the first theater in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson’s “American Century Cycle.” Each year, the Goodman’s numerous education and community engagement programs—including the innovative Student Subscription Series, now in its 30th year—serve thousands of students, teachers, life-long learners and special constituencies. In addition, for nearly four decades the annual holiday tradition of *A Christmas Carol* has led to the creation of a new generation of theatergoers in Chicago.
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Goodman Theatre’s leadership includes the distinguished members of the Artistic Collective: Brian Dennehy, Rebecca Gilman, Henry Godinez, Dael Orlandersmith, Steve Scott, Chuck Smith, Regina Taylor, Henry Wishcamper and Mary Zimmerman. Joan Clifford is Chair of Goodman Theatre’s Board of Trustees, Swati Mehta is Women’s Board President and Gordon C.C. Liao is President of the Scenemakers Board for young professionals.