GOODMAN THEATRE ANNOUNCES A WEEK-LONG “LEONARD BERNSTEIN CELEBRATION” FEATURING CONCERTS, FILM SCREENINGS AND MORE, IN CONJUNCTION WITH MARY ZIMMERMAN’S MAJOR REVIVAL OF WONDERFUL TOWN

***THE CENTERPIECE PRODUCTION APPEARS SEPTEMBER 10 – OCTOBER 16; REHEARSAL PHOTOS NOW AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD HERE IN THE PRESS ROOM***

(Chicago, IL) Goodman Theatre kicks off its 2016/2017 Season with a major revival of Wonderful Town, Leonard Bernstein’s timeless musical composition of hope and adventure, lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green and book by Joseph A. Fields and Jerome Chodorov. Directed by Tony Award winner and Manilow Resident Director Mary Zimmerman, Wonderful Town is a whimsical love letter to Manhattan that follows sisters Eileen and Ruth, who leave behind their mundane Ohio home in pursuit of career and romantic success in the Big Apple. Zimmerman’s revival will be the focal point of a week-long festive exploration of Leonard Bernstein’s (1918-1990) multifaceted career as a musical theater and film composer, classical composer, conductor, musician and educator. Free celebration events begin September 27 with an Artist Encounter—a conversation with a Bernstein specialist and Director Mary Zimmerman and special performances by Wonderful Town artists. Additional highlights include film screenings (On the Town, On the Waterfront and West Side Story), a “Conga! Swing!” instructional dance class highlighting choreography from Wonderful Town, and a series of concerts performed by noted Chicagoland performers and youth including participants from the Goodman’s summer Musical Theater Intensive workshop. The festivities continue through October 1 and are free to the public (reservations required). Most events take place at Goodman Theatre (170 North Dearborn). For ticket reservations and a full schedule, visit GoodmanTheatre.org/Bernstein.

“Leonard Bernstein was the most celebrated music maker of his time, and one of the most influential cultural figures of the 20th century; it is only fitting that this fall, on the eve of his 100th birthday, we pay homage with a week-long celebration of his life and legacy centered on a joyous revival of Wonderful Town, directed by Manilow Resident Director Mary Zimmerman,” said Artistic Director Robert Falls. “Together with a team of Chicago’s finest design and musical collaborators, and armed with a formidable cast and a 17-piece orchestra, Mary has created an infectious, hilarious and exhilarating revival that celebrates the journeys we’ve all taken as we move from the dreams of our youth into the exciting possibilities of our adulthood.”

As previously announced, Lauren Molina (Eileen) and Bri Sudia (Ruth) lead the 26-member cast, and acclaimed Chicago music director Doug Peck leads the 17-member orchestra featuring violins, violas, drums, percussion and more. Chicago native Alex Sanchez choreographs. Joining Molina and Sudia are Karl Hamilton (Robert Baker), Wade Elkins (Frank Lippencott), Steven Strafford (Chick Clark), Jordan Brown (Wreck), Amy J. Carle (Mrs. Wade), Matt DeCaro (Appopolous), Christina Hall (Violet), James Earl Jones II (Speedy Valenti), Kristin Villanueva (Helen) and George Andrew Wolff (Lonigan)—all of whom portray a group of unconventional neighbors and love prospects bringing life (and musical numbers) to 1950s bohemian Greenwich Village. Ensemble members include Nathaniel Braga, Ariana Capuccitti, 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. The design team includes Todd Rosenthal (sets), Ana Kuzmanic (costumes), Charles G. LaPointe (hair and wig design), T.J. Gerckens (lights) and Ray Nardelli (sound). Artist headshots and bio information can be found on the Artist Page. *Kristin Villanueva is now playing the role of Helen.*

Wonderful Town appears September 10 – October 16 in the Albert Theatre (Press Night is September 18). Tickets ($25 - $93; price subject to change) are now on-sale and available at GoodmanTheatre.org/WonderfulTown, 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.

“Wonderful Town recalls that exhilarating, scary, youthful moment when we are first let loose upon the world, wondering if life will become the thing we hope it will be. It’s witty, buoyant and hopeful, with a beautiful, swinging score by
Bernstein,” said Director Mary Zimmerman. “I hope that audiences will recall that moment in their own lives, and that those still in that moment take heart from it.”

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

Although McKenney’s stories were originally set in the 1930s, Zimmerman’s revival takes place in the early 1950s in Greenwich Village. Zimmerman felt as if “the music belongs to the 1950s, and the exhilaration of Greenwich Village as an enclave of artists, poets and composers and writers is equally as true in the early 1950s as it was in the 1930s.”

ABOUT THE MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

Under the direction of Doug Peck and associate music director/conductor Ben Johnson, the orchestra brings to life 20 of Bernstein’s songs—including “Ohio” and “A Little Bit in Love.” A standard woodwind orchestra, the 17-member orchestra (including Johnson) features three trumpeters, trombonists and reed players, two violinists, one violist, a cellist, a pianist, a drummer and a keyboardist.

“As the musical director, I like to think of myself as Bernstein’s voice in the room now that he is no longer with us. It’s my job to take the score as he composed it and fit it to this production and space. My hope is that audiences will experience the music in the way Bernstein originally envisioned it in the 1950s, which is very thrilling,” said Peck.

Almost every other scene will feature choreography by Chicago native Alex Sanchez, whose work has been described as “spectacular, wildly ingenious and playful from start to finish” (Chicago Sun-Times). Drawing inspiration from the book and the Bernstein composition, the dance numbers will be flavored with a variety of styles ranging from swing to Charleston to sports calisthenics, as well as heightened physical characterization.

“Wonderful Town is a witty, wise-cracking, highly comical book partnered with a versatile, complex, musically catchy score. It offers a lot of laughter, great songs and lots of dancing. It’s a musical that gives you everything and the kitchen sink with a lot of heart and sophistication,” said Sanchez.

TICKETS AND DISCOUNTS

Tickets ($25-93) – GoodmanTheatre.org/WonderfulTown; 312.443.3800; Fax: 312.443.3825; TTY/TDD: 312.443.3829
MezzTix – Half-price day-of-performance mezzanine tickets available at 10am online (promo code MEZTZIX)
$10Tix – Student $10 day-of-performance tickets; limit four, with valid student ID (promo code 10TIX)
Group Sales – Discounted tickets for parties of 10+ – 312.443.3820
Gift Certificates – Available in any amount (GoodmanTheatre.org/GiftCertificates)
Box Office Hours – 12noon - 5pm; on performance days, the office remains open until 30 minutes past curtain

EVENTS AND ACCESSIBILITY AT GOODMAN THEATRE

September 14, College Night – 6pm; $10 Pre-show reception and artistic presentation using promo code COLLEGE. Student ID required.
October 8, Touch-Tour Presentation – 12:30pm; a presentation detailing the set, costume and character elements; Audio-Described Performance – 2pm; the action/text is audibly enhanced for patrons via headset.
October 12, Sign-Interpreted Performance – 7:30pm; professional ASL interpreter signs the action/text as played.
October 15, Open-Captioned Performance – 2pm; an LED sign presents dialogue in sync with the performance.
Visit GoodmanTheatre.org/Access for more information about Goodman Theatre’s accessibility efforts.
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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 last 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; 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 Theater 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 a opera, Rusalka, in February 2017.

Leonard Bernstein (August 25, 1918 – October 14, 1990) was a world-renowned musician, conductor and composer throughout his adult life. He was simultaneously the New York Philharmonic and 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’s compositions for the Broadway musical stage, include 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.

Doug Peck returns to the Goodman, where he previously music directed, conducted and provided additional orchestrations for The Jungle Book, Candide and Animal Crackers. He is also a co-creator of the Goodman’s new musical theater high school intensive. Peck is the winner of six Jeff Awards (The Jungle Book; Porgy and Bess; Caroline, or Change; Carousel; Fiorello! and Man of La Mancha), two After Dark Awards (Guys and Dolls and Hello Again), the Sarah Siddons Award, and the Guy Adkins Award for his musical direction. His work has also been heard in Chicago at Court Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Writers Theatre, TimeLine Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre, the Paramount Theatre, Drury Lane Theatre, Porchlight Music Theatre (where he is an artistic associate), Ravinia Festival and the Chicago Humanities Festival. Regional credits include work at the Glimmerglass Festival, Huntington Theatre Company, the Shakespeare Theatre Company, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Wallis Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Asolo Repertory...
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Theatre, A Contemporary Theatre and Peninsula Players Theatre. For the Chicago Humanities Festival, he has presented Assassins and Follies in concert, as well as A Night at the Oscars (a chronological survey of every song that won the Best Original Song Academy Award), A Night at the Tonys (featuring one song from each Tony Award winner for Best Musical) and Four Women, which celebrates the musical and political legacies of Josephine Baker, Eartha Kitt, Nina Simone and Tina Turner. Peck is a graduate of Northwestern University and also trained at the Interlochen Center for the Arts.

Alex Sanchez makes his Goodman Theater debut. Chicago credits include Follies (Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Jeff Award nomination and BroadwayWorld Award) and on the Town (Marriott Theatre, Jeff Award nomination). New York credits include Red Eye of Love (SDC Calloway Award with Lainie Sakakura), Far From Heaven (Playwrights Horizons), Fiorello and Where’s Charley? (City Center Encores!) and Giant (The Public Theater, Lucille Lortel Award nomination). He has also performed in over 10 Broadway shows. Regional credits include West Side Story (Paper Mill Playhouse); Guys And Dolls (Goodspeed Opera House, Connecticut Critics Circle Award nomination); A Little Night Music (Berkshire Theater Group); Far From Heaven (Williamstown Theatre Festival); Roman Holiday (Guthrie Theater); 42nd Street (Stratford Shakespeare Festival, BroadwayWorld Award); Giant (Dallas Theater Center); West Side Story (Riverside Theater); Mary Poppins, Aladdin and The Little Mermaid (The MUNY and Starlight Theatre) and Beauty And The Beast (Alabama Shakespeare Festival). Sanchez recently directed and choreographed Evita (Marriott Theatre) and the national tour of In the Mood. He is a Stage Directors and Choreographers Dancebreak 2010 alumnus and was voted among the “25 To Watch in 2016” by Dance Magazine. Sanchez was also a soloist with Ballet Chicago and Ruth Page Ballet. Alexsanc.com.

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) and represented today by descendant Albert Ivar Goodman. Goodman Theatre 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 Schulfer, 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 (26 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 education and engagement programs serve thousands of students, teachers and life-long learners. In addition, for nearly four decades A Christmas Carol has led to the creation of a new generation of theatergoers in Chicago.

Goodman Theatre’s leadership includes 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.

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