**THE WORLD OF EXTREME HAPPINESS, FRANCES YA-CHU COWHIG’S DARKLY COMIC EXPLORATION OF MODERN CHINA’S URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE, LAUNCHES GOODMAN THEATRE’S 2014/2015 SEASON**

***THE WORLD PREMIERE CO-PRODUCTION WITH MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB OPENS IN CHICAGO SEPTEMBER 13 – OCTOBER 12***

(Chicago, IL) Is it possible to change one’s destiny? Goodman Theatre's milestone 90th Anniversary Season begins with an "All-New Fall" of new works, starting with Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig’s *The World of Extreme Happiness*—a provocative exploration of a factory girl struggling to gain control over her life amid China’s modern economic transformation. Directed by Eric Ting in a world-premiere co-production with Manhattan Theatre Club, the play was commissioned by South Coast Repertory and developed in workshop productions—first at the Goodman (2012 New Stages), then at London’s National Theatre (2013), where it was hailed as a “hard-hitting and bruisingly funny” (*Time Out London*) "snappy theatrical insight into contemporary China" (*London Evening Standard*). The cast, full creative team, a calendar of performances and information about special events appears below; artist bios and images can be found in the Press Room. *The World of Extreme Happiness* runs September 13 – October 12, 2014 in the Owen Theatre (opening night is Friday, September 26). Tickets ($10 - $40; subject to change) are on sale now at GoodmanTheatre.org/Happiness, by phone at 312.443.3800 or at the box office (170 North Dearborn). Following the Goodman run, *The World of Extreme Happiness* begins previews at Manhattan Theatre Club on February 3, 2015 for a February 24 opening night at New York City Center – Stage I. The Goodman is grateful for the generosity of its New Work Sponsors; a list of supporters appears below.

“Frances is among the most extraordinary writers of her generation—fearless, funny, scathing and provocative—and we are proud to introduce her to Chicago audiences” said Artistic Director Robert Falls. “It’s been wildly exciting to propel *The World of Extreme Happiness* from its development in New Stages to a full production as a centerpiece of our epic fall of new works.”

Cowhig, who was born in Philadelphia and raised in Northern Virginia, Okinawa, Taipei and Beijing, drew her inspiration for *The World of Extreme Happiness* from Arthur Miller’s essay *Tragedy and the Common Man*, as well as several books about China, including Xue Xinran’s *Message From an Unknown Chinese Mother: Stories of Loss and Love*; Leslie T. Chang's *Factory Girls*; and Liao Yiwu's *The Corpse Walker*.

"There aren't many plays written for Asian/Asian-American actors, and few feature complex female characters. I was interested in writing about the world's largest internal migration—rural Chinese peasants flooding the cities in search of better opportunities—through the lens of a young, ambitious Chinese woman," said Cowhig. "Self-help books are the most popular genre among migrant workers in China, yet most of the ideas contained within them are taken from Western pop-psychology. The lives of Chinese factory girls feel so far away, yet our fingers touch the products of their labor every day."

*The World of Extreme Happiness* centers on Sunny, who was unwanted from the moment she was born in rural China because she’s not a boy, and who migrate to the city in pursuit of urban success. As naive as she is ambitious, Sunny views her new job in a grueling factory as a stepping stone to untold opportunities. When fate casts her as a company spokeswoman at a sham PR event, Sunny's bright outlook starts to unravel in a series of harrowing and darkly comic events, as she begins to question a system enriching itself because she's not a boy.

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*Note: Donald Li replaces Andrew Pang, who was previously announced as James Lin/Li Han.*
Since the implementation of economic reforms in the late 1970s following the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward, China has undergone a massive urbanization that transformed the country from a primarily rural, agrarian society into a country of rapidly expanding cities. With the influx of foreign capital into the country came a demand for labor – resulting in millions of migrant workers embarking on long treks from the rural west to the cities of China’s southern coast. In spite of demanding hours and low wages at their city jobs (young Chinese migrant workers earn an average of 1,747.87 Chinese Yuan per month, equivalent to $277), workers can make up to three times more than their average income back home. Consequently, some cities like Shenzhen, where more than 85% of the city’s 10 million citizens are immigrants, have grown from small towns to bustling metropolises in less than three decades.

The World of Extreme Happiness kicks off the Goodman’s “All-New Fall,” celebrating nine decades with new inspiration: three months of new American plays, each developed in the Goodman’s new play programs. In the Albert is Noah Haidle’s Smokefall directed by Anne Kauffman, which premiered to significant critical and popular acclaim last season, September 20 – October 26 (opening night is September 29). In addition, three FREE workshop productions and three staged readings appear as part of the annual New Stages Festival in the Owen, October 29 – November 16, with a weekend for industry professionals taking place November 14-16 (titles and artists TBA).

The Goodman is grateful for the generosity of its New Work Sponsors, including The Davee Foundation, Major Supporter of the Expansion of New Stages; Time Warner Foundation, Lead Supporter of New Play Development; The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation and the Pritzker-Pucker Foundation, Major Supporters of New Play Development; The Glasser and Rosenthal Family, the Scenemakers Board and the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, Supporters of New Work Development; The Joyce Foundation, Principal Support of Artistic Development and Diversity Initiatives; Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Festival Sponsor. Edelman is the Major Corporate Sponsor for the Owen Theatre Season.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Artist Encounter at Goodman Theatre: Examining Contemporary China on stage
Sunday, September 21 at 5pm | $5 general public, FREE Subscribers, Donors, students
Artist Encounters bring together audiences and Goodman artists in an intimate environment for a behind-the-scenes look at the plays and the playmaking process. Join playwright Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig and director Eric Ting as they discuss the process of bringing The World of Extreme Happiness to life.

Post-Show Discussions at Goodman Theatre
Goodman Theatre | FREE
Stay late for discussions about the play with members of the artistic team every Wednesday evening throughout the run of the show.

Discount Ticket Opportunities

Mezztix are half-price mezzanine tickets available at 12 noon at the box office, and at 10am online (promo code MEZZTIX) day of performance; Mezztix are not available by telephone. 10TIX are $10 balcony tickets for students available any time for the Owen Theatre (promo code 10TIX); 10TIX are not available by telephone; a valid student ID must be presented when picking up the tickets; limit four per student with ID. All tickets are subject to availability and handling fees apply. Discounted Group Tickets for 10 persons or more are available at 312.443.3820. Purchase Goodman Gift Certificates in any amount at GoodmanTheatre.org/GiftCertificates. The flexibility of Goodman Gift Certificates allows recipients to choose the production, date and time of their performance. Artists, dates and ticket prices are subject to change.
**The World of Extreme Happiness**

**by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig**

**Directed by Eric Ting**

**In the Owen**

**September/October 2014**

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Prices subject to change.

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**About Goodman Theatre and Manhattan Theatre Club**

The Goodman’s milestone 90th Anniversary 2014/2015 Season features nine productions on its two stages—six in the 856-seat Albert Theatre and three in the 400-seat flexible Owen Theatre, plus the annual New Stages Festival that includes additional workshop productions, and partner productions with The Second City and Albany Park Theater Project. Still to come in the 2014/2015 Season is The World of Extreme Happiness by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig, directed by Eric Ting, a world premiere co-production with Manhattan Theatre Club (September 13 – October 12, 2014 in the Owen); Smokefall by Noah Haidle, directed by Anne Kauffman, an encore of the world-premiere Goodman commission (September 20 – October 26, 2014 in the Albert); the annual New Stages festival, including an “Industry Weekend” (October 29 – November 16, 2014 in the Owen); the 37th annual production of Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol, directed by Henry Wishcamper (November 15 – December 28, 2014 in the Albert); The Second City’s Twist Your Dickens by Peter Gwinn and Bobby Mort (December 5 – 28, 2014 in the Owen); Rapture, Blister, Burn by Gina Gionfriddo, directed by Kimberly Senior, a Chicago premiere (January 17 – February 22, 2015 in the Albert); Two Trains Running by August Wilson, directed by Chuck Smith, in conjunction with a citywide celebration of August Wilson (March 7 – April 12, 2015 in the Albert); The Upstairs Conclave by Kristoffer Diaz, a world premiere co-commission with Teatro Vista (March 28 – April 26, 2015 in the Owen); The Little Foxes by Lillian Hellman, directed by Henry Wishcamper (May 2 – June 7, 2015 in the Albert); stop. reset. written and directed by Regina Taylor, a Chicago premiere (May 23 – June 21, 2015 in the Owen); Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike by Christopher Durang, directed by Steve Scott, a Chicago premiere (June 20 – July 26, 2015 in the Albert), and a production still to be announced with the Albany Park Theater Project.

**Goodman Theatre** is world renowned for the quality and scope of its artistic programming and its commitment to improving life in the community. Artistic Director Robert Falls’ and Executive Director Roche Schulfer’s leadership has earned unparalleled artistic distinction and experienced unprecedented success, staging more than 80 world premieres, earning numerous awards for its productions—including the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre (1992) and the Pulitzer Prize for Ruined (2009)—and producing more than 25 new-work commissions. Founded in 1925 and housed in a state-of-the-art two-theater complex in the downtown Chicago Theatre District, the Goodman is Chicago’s oldest and largest not-for-profit producing theater, named “Best Regional Theatre” by Time magazine and “top dog of the Chicago theater scene” by Frommer’s. American Airlines is the Exclusive Airline of Goodman Theatre. Joan Clifford is Chairman of the Board of
Trustees, Swati Mehta is President of the Women’s Board and Gordon C.C. Liao is President of the Scenemakers Board, the Goodman’s young professionals auxiliary group.

Visit the Goodman virtually: watch artist interviews, view production photos, catch the latest news and more at GoodmanTheatre.org and our blog. Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, peek behind the scenes on YouTube.

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Lynne Meadow and Executive Producer Barry Grove, Manhattan Theatre Club has become one of the country’s most prominent and prestigious theater companies. Over the past four and a half decades, MTC productions have earned numerous awards including six Pulitzer Prizes and 19 Tony Awards. MTC has a Broadway home at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre and two Off-Broadway theatres at New York City Center. Renowned MTC productions include 2014 Best Play Tony nominees Casa Valentina and Outside Mullingar; The Assembled Parties; Venus in Fur; Master Class; Good People; The Whipping Man; Time Stands Still; The Royal Family; Ruined; Come Back, Little Sheba; Blackbird; Shining City; Rabbit Hole; Doubt; Proof; The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife; Love! Valour! Compassion!; A Small Family Business; Sylvia; Putting It Together; Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune; Crimes of the Heart; and Ain’t Misbehavin’.

For more information on MTC, please visit www.ManhattanTheatreClub.com

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