THE PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING DISGRACED, AYAD AKHTAR’S EXPLOSIVE LOOK AT XENOPHOBIA, RELIGION AND IDENTITY IN AMERICA, LAUNCHES THE GOODMAN’S 2015/2016 SEASON IN SEPTEMBER

**DIRECTOR KIMBERLY SENIOR’S CAST INCLUDES BERNARD WHITE, NISI STURGIS, ZAKIYA YOUNG, J. ANTHONY CRANE AND BEHZAD DABU IN THE ROLE HE ORIGINATED**

***SEASON OPENING BENEFIT SET FOR SEPTEMBER 21 AT THE STANDARD CLUB***

(Chicago, IL) On the heels of its Broadway smash success, Disgraced by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, novelist, screenwriter and actor Ayad Akhtar returns to the city of its birth in a new production at Goodman Theatre this fall. Directed by Kimberly Senior and critically lauded as “breathtaking, raw and blistering” (Associated Press), “ingenious and shockingly believable” (New York Magazine) and “terrific, turbulent, with fresh currents of dramatic electricity” (New York Times), Disgraced received impassioned audience response for its bold exploration of identity, religion, politics and class in the complex “politically correct” landscape of 21st century urban America. The Goodman’s production, co-produced with Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Seattle Repertory Theatre, stars Bernard White as Amir Kapoor, a successful Muslim-American lawyer; Nisi Sturzis as Emily, Amir’s wife and a visual artist; Zakiya Young as Jory, Amir’s co-worker; J. Anthony Crane as Isaac, Jory’s husband; and Behzad Dabu as Amir’s nephew Abe—a role he originated in Disgraced’s 2012 world premiere in Chicago. The design team includes John Lee Beatty (Set); Christine A. Binder (Lighting); Jennifer von Mayrhauser (Costume); and Jill DuBoff (Sound). Joe Drummond is the Production Stage Manager. Headshots and bio information can be found in the Goodman Theatre Press Room.

Disgraced appears September 12 – October 18 (Press Night is September 20) in the Albert Theatre. Running time is 82 minutes, no intermission. Tickets ($25-$82; subject to change) are on sale now by phone at 312.443.3000, at GoodmanTheatre.org/Disgraced or at the box office (170 North Dearborn). The Goodman’s Season Opening Celebration honoring the Artistic Collective and featuring the Opening Night Performance of Disgraced takes place on September 21. Tickets start at $500 and include pre-show cocktails and dinner at The Standard Club, followed by the 8pm performance. Season Opening Celebration Co-Chairs are Julie and Roger Baskes and Marcy and Harry Harczak. Proceeds from the event support the Goodman’s productions and education and engagement programs. Abbott Fund is the Sponsor Partner for Disgraced.

“Disgraced is neither a solemn political polemic nor an impassioned plea for a particular point of view. Wittily engaging and smart, Ayad’s brilliant play shows us successful, intelligent characters grappling with questions that cannot be readily answered or easily solved—in a society whose quest for correctness and justice may have resulted in neither,” said Artistic Director Robert Falls. “I am very pleased to open our new season with this astonishing new work—and welcome Kimberly Senior, whose production of Rapture, Blister, Burn was a highlight of our 2014/2015 season, back to the Goodman.”

Disgraced will be produced at 10 major American regional theaters this season and have 32 productions in the next 24 months, as well as numerous productions overseas; in addition, a film version with HBO is in the works.

“I’m thrilled that Disgraced returns to Chicago, and honored to be at the Goodman,” said Ayad Akhtar. “The play seems to function as a kind of litmus test; it tells you where you are in society, and has the capacity to connect people to themselves and others in a heartfelt way. I’ve gotten an equal amount of feedback from both sides of the Muslim community; some ask, ‘Why are you doing this?’ and others say, ‘Thank God you are doing this!’ Much work was done at every stage of development of Disgraced, but it finally feels like it has found its most mature form.”

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“When audiences interact with *Disgraced*, they think they'll align with the person who looks like them or who has the same background as they do—and they find very quickly that's not the case,” said Kimberly Senior. “As an Arab-Jewish woman, I never feel more Jewish than when I’m the only Jew in the room; and the least Jewish I felt was when I was in Israel. I think the play makes the characters stand by their identities and defend their point of view in a way they might not otherwise because each of them is a minority.”

*Disgraced* begins innocuously enough. Young, upwardly mobile Wall Street attorney (and lapsed Muslim) Amir Kapoor (Bernard White) and his beautiful, idealistic (and Caucasian) artist wife Emily (Nisi Sturgis) are throwing a small dinner party for a similarly successful couple, Isaac (J. Anthony Crane), a Jewish art curator who’s about to feature his hostess’s paintings in a new show, and his African American wife, Jory (Zakiya Young), also a rising young lawyer, who works in the same office as her host. At first, the talk is mundane but cordial: the latest loss by the Knicks, a fancy dessert picked up at Magnolia Bakery, gossip about the law firm’s senior partners and the latest trends in downtown art. But slowly, the Scotch-fueled discussion ventures into more complicated territory: musings about race and culture, power and privilege and the seething tensions triggered by religious tenets and practices from antiquity to today. As theoretical discussion morphs into personal revelation and private concerns become public, a celebratory dinner among four smart, engaging and personable friends becomes, perhaps inevitably, something dramatically different. The cast also includes Behzad Dabu as Amir’s nephew, Abe.

Following its 2012 world premiere production at Chicago’s American Theater Company, *Disgraced* went to New York’s Lincoln Center Theater, subsequently winning the 2013 Pulitzer Prize and Obie Award for Extraordinary Achievement, and later transferred to Broadway, where it earned a Tony Award nomination for Best Play. Akhtar’s other plays include *The Who and the What* (LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater and La Jolla Playhouse) and *The Invisible Hand* (New York Theatre Workshop/The Repertory Theater of St. Louis). Also a novelist, Akhtar is the author of *American Dervish*, published in 2012 by Little, Brown and Company, also in 20 languages worldwide. He co-wrote and starred in *The War Within* (Magnolia Pictures), which was released internationally and nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Screenplay. As an actor, Akhtar also starred as Neel Kashkari in HBO’s adaptation of Andrew Ross Sorkin’s book *Too Big to Fail*. 
Disgraced by Ayad Akhtar Opens Goodman Theatre’s 2015/2016 Season
Kimberly Senior Directs the Pulitzer Prize Winning Play, September 12 – October 18, 2015

SPECIAL EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

September 20, Artist Encounter with Ayad Akhtar & Kimberly Senior, moderated by Chicago Tribune’s Chris Jones – 5-6pm ($15 for General public, $10 for Subscribers/Donors/Students)
September 29, College Night – 6pm pizza party with artists, 7:30pm show ($10 promo COLLEGE w/valid student ID)
Every Wednesday & Thursday eve, PlayBacks – Discussions with actors, artistic staff & special guests after the show

ACCESSIBILITY AT GOODMAN THEATRE

September 30, Sign Interpreted Performance – 7:30pm; professional ASL interpreter signs the action/text as played. All tickets to the Disgraced signed performance include a pre-show reception in the Goodman’s Lounge.
October 10, Touch Tour – 12:30 -1pm; a presentation detailing the set, costume and character elements
October 10, Audio Described Performance – 2pm; the action/text is audibly enhanced for patrons via headset
October 17, 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.

TICKETS AND DISCOUNTS

Tickets ($25-82) – GoodmanTheatre.org/Disgraced; 312.443.3800; Fax: 312.443.3825; TTY/TDD: 312.443.3829
Subscriptions – Five-play Albert Theatre subscriptions start at $120 (GoodmanTheatre.org/Brilliant)
MezzTix – Half-price day-of-performance mezzanine tickets available at 10am online (promo code MEZZTIX)
$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.

About Goodman Theatre

The Goodman’s 2015/2016 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, including three development productions; a world premiere special event production of 2666; and partner productions with The Second City and Albany Park Theater Project. The 2015/2016 Season starts with Disgraced by Ayad Akhtar, directed by Kimberly Senior (September 12 – October 18 in the Albert), and continues with Feathers and Teeth by Charise Castro Smith, directed by Henry Godinez, a world premiere (September 19 – October 18 in the Owen); the annual New Stages festival (October 28 - November 15 in the Owen); 38th annual production of A Christmas Carol adapted by Tom Cremer, directed by Henry Wishcamper (November 14 – December 27 in the Albert); The Second City’s Twist Your Dickens by Peter Gwinn and Bobby Mort (December 4 – 27 in the Owen); Another Word for Beauty by José Rivera, directed by Steve Cosson, a world premiere Goodman commission (January 16 – February 21, 2016 in the Albert); 2666 adapted and directed by Robert Falls and Seth Bockley, a world premiere special event (February 6 – March 13, 2016 in the Owen); The Matchmaker by Thornton Wilder, directed by Henry Wishcamper (March 5 – April 10, 2016 in the Albert); Carlyle by Thomas Bradshaw, directed by Benjamin Kamine, a world premiere Goodman commission (April 2 – May 1, 2016 in the Owen); The Sign In Sidney Brustein’s Window by Lorraine Hansberry, directed by Anne Kauffman (April 30 – June 5, 2016 in the Albert); Soups, Stews, and Casseroles: 1976 by Rebecca Gilman, directed by Robert Falls, a Chicago premiere (May 21 – June 19, 2016 in the Owen); Wonderful Town music by Leonard Bernstein, lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, book by Joseph A. Fields and Jerome Chodorov, directed by Mary Zimmerman (June 28 – August 21, 2016 in the Albert); and a production still to be announced with the Albany Park Theater Project.

Chicago’s flagship theater since 1925, Goodman Theatre is an artistic and community institution dedicated to the art of theater and to civic engagement in the issues of the contemporary world. The Goodman has transformed over the past 35 years into a world class theater and premier Chicago cultural institution distinguished by the quality and

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scope of its programming and its culturally and aesthetically diverse creative leadership; artistic priorities includenew plays, reimagined classics, culturally specific works, musical theater and international collaborations. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Robert Falls and Executive Director Roche Schulfer, achievements include the Goodman’s state-of-the-art two-theater complex in the heart of the downtown Theatre District. Over the past three decades, the Goodman has generated more than 150 world or American premieres and more than 30 new-work commissions. “A mainstay of Chicago and beyond” (Chicago Sun-Times), the Goodman is internationally acclaimed for its “fresh work of magnitude and ambition (and) bold, risky theatrical choices” (Chicago Tribune). From new plays to “first-class revivals” (The New York Times), the Goodman has earned numerous awards for its productions: two Pulitzer Prizes; 22 Tony Awards, including Outstanding Regional Theatre (1992); and nearly 160 Joseph Jefferson Awards. 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.

Visit the Goodman virtually at GoodmanTheatre.org, and on Twitter (@GoodmanTheatre), Facebook and Instagram.

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