

Dana H.

By **Lucas Hnath**

Adapted from Interviews with **Dana Higginbotham**

Conducted by **Steve Cosson**

Directed by **Les Waters**

A Co-Production with **Center Theatre Group**



Table of Contents

Page 1 – A Note from Artistic Director Robert Falls

Page 3 – A Conversation with Lucas Hnath and Les Waters

Page 9 – In Sync

Page 13 – Lucas Hnath’s Spirit of Reinvention

Page 18 – Cast and Artists

Page 20 – Artist Profiles

Page 34 – About Us

welcome

For several years I have followed the meteoric rise of playwright Lucas Hnath, whose incisive voice and astute observations about society, politics and psychology have propelled his notable success. His breakout play *The Christians*, which premiered at Actors Theatre of Louisville in 2014, explores the function of faith in a megachurch and harnesses the inherent theatricality of the church's choir and charismatic pastor. *A Doll's House, Part 2*, in which Henrik Ibsen's controversial heroine Nora Helmer returns to her family 15 years after her famous departure, ran on Broadway for six months in 2017. His play *Hillary and Clinton*, which examines the power couple's relationship during Hillary's 2008 presidential campaign, premiered at Victory Gardens Theater in 2016 before enjoying a Broadway run in early 2019. A defining feature of Lucas' work is that no two plays closely resemble each other—his skill is apparent whether he is reimagining Ibsen's fictional characters, or fictionalizing the Clintons—so it is no surprise that his scintillating drama *Dana H.* follows no existing formula.

The titular character in *Dana H.*—who is Lucas' real-life mother, Dana Higginbotham—tells us a harrowing, personal story. The play consists entirely of Dana's account, arranged and edited by Lucas. An actress performs the role of Dana, but with a captivating twist: she

lip syncs the narrative while we listen to a recording of the real Dana speaking. In more than five decades of theater-going, I have never seen another piece that uses this mesmerizing theatrical device, which distances the actor from the story while simultaneously urging the audience to pay close attention. I am thrilled to present—and to witness—this accomplished playwright’s latest innovation, which I find both urgent and vexing.

I am also thrilled to welcome director Les Waters back to the Goodman, where he previously directed *Big Love* in our 2001/2002 Season. Les was one of the first directors I invited to work at the Goodman when I became artistic director in 1986; he not only has worked, to much acclaim, in many of the nation’s regional theaters as well as on Broadway, he also served as artistic director of Actors Theatre of Louisville from 2012 to 2018. There, he established a relationship with Lucas when he directed the world premiere of *The Christians*, and I am pleased to facilitate the continuation of their fruitful partnership.

I hope you are as captivated by the intricate world of *Dana H.* as I am.

Robert Falls

Artistic Director of Goodman Theatre

A Conversation with Lucas Hnath and Les Waters

By James Sims

The following conversation with playwright Lucas Hnath and director Les Waters was originally recorded in Los Angeles during preview performances for Dana H., a Goodman Theatre co-production with Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles and the Vineyard Theatre in New York. The two artists spoke about their creative process and the unique demands of creating a play like Dana H.

JAMES SIMS: Can you talk about how your collaborative relationship started? What was that first project?

LES WATERS: We met in 2012 at the Humana Festival of New American Plays when Lucas's play, *Death Tax*, was part of that festival. Our first collaboration was on *The Christians* at Actors Theatre, then it was produced in New York at Playwrights Horizons. We recently did *The Thin Place* at Actors Theatre, an Actors Theatre commission that will be in New York later this year.

JAMES : How would you describe the relationship between playwright and director for you? Is it different on each project you approach? Have you built up a rapport together having worked closely on a few key projects?

LES: Well, I think we have a rapport. I mean we have a similar taste in theatricality, maybe? I think our rhythms of work may be in sync.

JAMES: Lucas, what do you remember about that first time working with Les on a project? I'm sure there's a level of intimacy involved in giving your play over to a director and having that vision added on to what you have written, perhaps.

LUCAS HNATH: It's very much a brain meld, isn't it? There's no need to talk that much, we just look at each other and know what the other is thinking. I think the really reductive way to talk about it is [that] I have a tendency towards wanting everything to be extremely logical and Les has a comfort with mystery that pulls me back. Any spots where I have let the thing get a little looser, a little more mysterious, Les is tuned into knowing where to preserve that. And he's more comfortable with emotion than I am. So—

(They both laugh)

LES: (jokingly) Yeah, I'm a mess.

JAMES: With *Dana H.*, specifically, there's a lot of this play that we don't want to talk about in advance. Lucas, can you talk a little bit about why that's important to you: that we let the play speak for itself and not really get into a lot of the details of what is happening and why it's happening the way it does in the show?

LUCAS: With any play, you want it to remain a surprise for the audience, so there's that reason for it. But with this particular play I'm generally not comfortable saying anything about what happens, in part because it is about

my mother, and I was present for some of the events of the play, so there is a semi-autobiographical aspect to it. To talk about it in interviews means that people will ask me further questions about the events and I feel as though the play is kind of this black box recording; you watch it and there will not be any additional information about it. You don't go see *Hamlet* and ask further questions about what he was like as a child but you do tend to do that when you know that you have access to people who lived the events of the story. But I am asking that people receive it as a story on its own terms and not seek out supplementary information.

JAMES: I'd love to talk about the form of this play, *Dana H.*, in that there is a pre-recorded audio component to the show, and Deirdre O'Connell (Didi), the actress playing Dana, is not using her own voice. Lucas, could you talk about what it is like as someone who is generally writing the words from your own imagination to, with this project, work off of pre-recorded audio? And Les, I'm interested to hear what that means for you as a director; how that changes the game, if at all?

LUCAS: It is, of course, undeniably different from how I write most of my plays. And yet, at the same time, the way that I usually write is I will spend a period of time essentially just vomiting up text until I get somewhere between 200 and 400 pages of material. Then I organize that material and arrange it. I've always found it useful to think about that part of the process as going into the

editing room with footage that was collected. So when I knew that I wanted this play to be composed from transcripts of interviews, I took the transcripts and organized them like I would any of my other plays at that point in the process. I stop and I figure out what are the compelling moments, then I title them and start arranging them. The thing that this process opened up is not only was I composing with words and sentences but also with utterances: sighs, laughs. Those all became tools for the story-telling. But when I assembled the first draft of it I had no idea. I didn't listen to the recordings—I only worked off of the transcripts. That was intentional, but I had no idea if the cadences were going to line up, since I was using material from all over the place—interviews from different days and over many hours. Composing the story out of [my mother's] tone of voice and the speed with which she's speaking, that was another tool.

LES: For me, the process should have been head-bangingly difficult, or a huge challenge, because I have no experience with lip syncing. But it's not been because of three people: Mikhail Fiksel the sound designer; Steve Cuiffo who worked with Didi on lip syncing; and Didi, who is immensely kind, very funny, very generous, and sort of genius at it. And the tone of Dana's voice or the rhythm of how she's speaking on the tapes dictates a lot of what Didi does.

JAMES: Steve Cuiffo, who worked with Deirdre on the lip syncing, worked with you on another project that involved lip syncing as well. What was that?

LUCAS: I wrote a play that was written to be lip synced many years ago, probably in 2004 or 2005. It was my first experiment with that and I knew that Steve had experience with lip syncing, working with [drag artist and performer] Lipsynka, so I brought him in to advise us on how to make that play work.

JAMES: What led you to even experiment with that form?

LUCAS: It goes back to when I was in grad school; I got really interested in the work of the late director Reza Abdoh. A number of his plays were written to be lip synced and they allowed him a certain kind of narrative freedom because there's this implicit understanding that the thing that you're watching is on a track. As far back as grad school, even before that play I wrote in 2005, I was doing experiments in one of (NYU Professor) Richard Schechner's classes with lip syncing. I was interested in exploring theatrical conventions that can share some of the burden that certain narrative structures typically take responsibility for.

JAMES: *Dana H.* is a co-production involving three not-for-profit theaters. Could you talk about the role not-for-profit theater has played in your careers? What do you think its role is in the American theater landscape—and in particular, in introducing new forms to audiences?

LES: My American career has mainly been in not-for-profit regional theater. My New York work tends to be work that was commissioned by a regional theatre and has moved to New York. So these places that can commission writers and artists— and in particular younger, emerging artists— to make work and give them the time and facilities to do it are remarkable.

JAMES: Les talks about young writers getting a break that might come only by way of not-for-profit theaters being in place. Can you talk about your first break—or what you remember of having an opportunity to see your words brought to the stage?

LUCAS: The first full length play of mine that was professionally produced was *Death Tax* at Actors Theatre of Louisville. Before that, it was ten years of putting up anything I could in whatever free space I could get with dollar store props. The fact is, most theater is not-for-profit theater—the commercial theater represents an incredible, small percentage of theater that gets done in this country; it may be more amplified but most theater is in the not-for-profit sector. In the case of Actors Theatre of Louisville, it was a place where I was given remarkable freedom to fail with as little interference as possible. They came to me and asked me what I needed to do the play and that's, ideally, how it works.

James Sims is the Director of Communications at Center Theatre Group.

In Sync

Dana H. star *Deirdre O'Connell* masters the art of lip sync with consultant *Steve Cuiffo*

By Thomas Connors

Drama students may have a class in movement or improvisation as they train for a career on the stage. But lip syncing? Not likely. After all, an actor's voice is their instrument, and roles that require an actor to pretend to speak don't come along too often. But for veteran performer Deirdre O'Connell, that role did arrive.

Playing a survivor of abduction and abuse in Lucas Hnath's *Dana H.* (based on the experiences of the playwright's mother), would be challenging enough if this were a conventional play. But this solo piece is built on an unusual strategy, with O'Connell lip syncing to an interview between Dana and Steve Cosson, founding Artistic Director of New York-based company The Civilians, which creates investigative, documentary-style work.

O'Connell, whose work on the New York stage includes appearances in such much-admired shows as Abe Kogler's *Fulfillment Center* and Annie Baker's *Circle Mirror Transformation*, got an assist from Steve Cuiffo, a lip sync and illusion consultant who has worked with various theater companies, as well as with magician and endurance artist David Blaine. Cuiffo cut his teeth working

with leading drag artist John Epperson (a.k.a. Lypsinka) in *The Passion of the Crawford*, in which Epperson performed to a recording of an interview the movie star Joan Crawford gave in 1973. “The unique thing about that experience is that it wasn't a song, which you traditionally think of when you think of lip syncing, it was a conversation,” notes Cuiffo. “When you approach a text this way, working from a recording, it's antithetical to acting, where you want to create from the inside. But working with a recording, you find the breath of the speaker, and when you sync up with the breath, in a physical way, you embody the character.”

O'Connell describes Cuiffo as “a very good watcher” who helped her manage the effort she put into creating the impression that Dana's voice is her voice. “For the illusion to work—and I do think about it as an illusion, like magic—you don't have to use the same kind of musculature to simulate a sound,” explains Cuiffo. “There's a tendency, when you're starting, to over articulate your lips.

Sometimes, it's easier in certain passages to put in a little voice—not so much that the audience can hear—to help you get through the patterns and rhythms in the text. But what you want to do is become super relaxed and trust that less movement of the mouth is actually more convincing than pushing.”

O'Connell's voice may be on mute throughout *Dana H.*, but her body isn't invisible. Giving shape to the character—an actual person—presented its own

challenges. She had never met Dana Higginbotham, the playwright's mother, until opening night at the Center Theatre Group's Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City, California, in June. "It's interesting how much information you get from listening to somebody's voice for a long time," suggests O'Connell. "Somehow, if you listen to somebody's voice every day for six months, you kind of know how they appear."

To take the lead from a recording rather than the text is certainly restrictive. But even within the confines of this concept, O'Connell has found performing *Dana H.* to be more than a one-note experience. "Some nights I feel very vulnerable, some nights very angry, some nights it is a pleasure telling the story, some nights I feel more defensive. It's almost as if her voice sounds different in my head. It's strange how much it changes. Steve warned me about that. The thing about lip syncing is you cannot believe how different it feels every time."

As for understanding the woman whose experience she helps share, O'Connell admits, this too was a process. "I had a good deal of distance from Dana's story when I started," she relates. "I wasn't particularly clear about how I felt about everything that happened to her. And how I would feel if I knew her. How we were the same and how we were different. But just through the technical work I've learned to do for an hour and 14 minutes of each performance, I grew to have absolute empathy for her."

Thomas Connors is a Chicago-based freelance writer and the Chicago Editor of Playbill.

Lucas Hnath's Spirit of Reinvention.

By Tanya Palmer

In his 2016 review of Lucas Hnath's *Red Speedo*, a tightly constructed exploration of a swimmer with Olympic hopes and a shaky moral compass, *New York Times* critic Charles Isherwood writes that Hnath "has a wonderfully inventive theatrical mind. He rewrites the rules of dramaturgy with each play, usually tossing out the naturalistic playbook—and for that matter the playbook he created the last time around." Beginning with *Death Tax*, a bracing meditation on death and money which premiered at Actors Theatre's Humana Festival in 2012 and following what Hnath himself described as a decade of putting up his own plays in "whatever free space I could get with dollar store props," he has carved a distinctive space for himself as a leading voice in American drama—including two recent Broadway hits: *A Doll's House, Part Two* and *Hillary and Clinton*. With each new play, he is reinventing the form of the theatrical event that contains his story.

One simple but provocative example of Hnath's inventiveness is the use of microphones in his 2014 breakout play, *The Christians*. Set in an evangelical church not unlike the ones he and his mother, an ordained minister, attended when Hnath was a child growing up in Florida, the story centers around Paul, a pastor who is questioning the existence of hell. When he shares his

doubts with his congregation, he upends his life and tears his church apart. The play moves between public sermons and private, intimate scenes, such as those between the pastor and his wife. In both the public and private spaces, the dialogue is always spoken into a microphone. In an interview in *American Theatre* magazine with Hnath and director Les Waters, who collaborated with Hnath for the first time on the world premiere of *The Christians* at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Hnath describes how he came to the idea:

“One of the images I have lodged in my head from the churches I grew up in is the image of the pastor holding the mic. I thought, ‘I have to use that element.’ What I found is that dialogue is far more interesting spoken into a mic than not... There’s something about the sound of a mic that makes it sound like you’re inside someone’s head. I also had this impulse that once I start in the form of a church service, it doesn’t matter where the play moves in space and time, but it probably still wants to be using the form of a church service, which of course meant keeping the mics.”

With *Dana H.*, Hnath’s third collaboration with Les Waters following *The Thin Place*, which premiered at the Humana Festival earlier this year and will move to Playwrights Horizons in New York this fall, Hnath once again employs a simple but radical conceit—one which, like the microphones in *The Christians*, transforms the way we hear and understand the language being spoken on stage.

Built entirely from interviews with his mother, Dana Higginbotham, Hnath eschews his own language to center his mother's voice—literally. Deirdre O'Connell, the actor portraying Dana, lip syncs to a recording of Dana's voice. The story she tells us is true, and horrifying: she revisits the five months she was held captive, trapped in a series of Florida motel rooms by a former patient and ex-convict named Jim, whom she met while working as a chaplain at a psychiatric hospital.

In a recent *New Yorker* profile by writer D.T. Max, Hnath describes what led him to employ this unusual theatrical approach: "I realized there's no way an actor can do this. The story is so unbelievable, and even as my mother's telling the story she's questioning it, because, you know, that's not uncommon for victims of trauma." By delivering the story not only in Dana's own words—but also in her own cadences, rhythms, intonations, breaths, sighs and laughs—Hnath ensures that his mother's lived experience is undeniable, no matter how inconceivable the harrowing events may seem at times, even to the teller herself.

Tanya Palmer is the Director of New Play Development at Goodman Theatre.

Goodman Theatre

Robert Falls, **Artistic Director**

Roche Schulfer, **Executive Director**

In association with Center Theatre Group

Presents

Dana H.

by

Lucas Hnath

Adapted from Interviews with Dana Higginbotham

Conducted by Steve Cosson

Directed by

Les Waters

Set Design by

Andrew Boyce

Costume Design by

Janice Pytel

Lighting and Supertitle Design by

Paul Toben

Sound Design by

Mikhail Fiksel

Illusion and Lip Sync Consultant

Steve Cuiffo

Casting by

Adam Belcuore, CSA

Dramaturgy by

Tanya Palmer

Production Stage Manager

Maggie Swing*

Dana H. was originally commissioned and developed by
The Civilians, New York, NY, and Goodman Theatre.

cast

Dana H. **Deirdre**
O'Connell*

Assistant Director: **Hutch Pimentel**

Dana H. will be performed without an intermission.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited.

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Goodman Theatre is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group, Inc., the national service organization of nonprofit theaters; the League of Resident Theatres; the Illinois Arts Alliance and the American Arts

Alliance; the League of Chicago Theatres; and the Illinois Theatre Association.

Goodman Theatre operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States; the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union; the United Scenic Artists of America, Local 829,

AFL-CIO and the Chicago Federation of Musicians, Local No. 10-208, American Federation of Musicians. House crew and scene shop employees are represented by the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local No. 2.

*Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

profiles

DEIRDRE O'CONNELL* (*Dana H.*) makes her Goodman Theatre debut. At Center Theatre Group (Kirk Douglas Theatre), she appeared in *In the Wake* by Lisa Kron (Los Angeles Ovation Award, Richard Seff Actors' Equity Award, Lortel nomination). Recent favorite New York theater includes *Thunderbodies* by Kate Tarker (Soho Rep); *Fulfillment Center* by Abe Koogler (Drama Desk and Drama League Award nominations) and *By the Water* by Sharyn Rothstein (Lortel nomination, Manhattan Theatre Club); *Terminus* by Gabriel Jason Dean (NYTW); *The Way West* by Mona Mansour and *Thinner Than Water* by Melissa Ross (Labyrinth); *Judy* by Max Posner (Page 73); *Little Children Dream of God* by Jeff Augustin (Manhattan Theatre Club); *Scarcity* by Lucy Thurber (Rattlestick); *The Vandal* by Hamish Linklater (Flea); *Circle Mirror Transformation* by Annie Baker (Obie and Drama Desk Awards; Playwrights Horizons). In Los Angeles she spent several seasons at Los Angeles Theatre Center. Other favorite writers she has performed include Jenkins, Wellman, Schulman, Nelson, Meyer, Fornes, Shepard, Smith, Parks and Chekhov. Recent films include *Diane*, *Lez Bomb*, *I Am a Seagull*, *The Boy Downstairs*, *Gabriel*, *Synecdoche, NY*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. TV includes recurring roles on *One Dollar*, *The Path*, *The Affair* and *Nurse Jackie*. She earned an Obie for Sustained Excellence in Performance and a Lilly Award.

LUCAS HNATH (*Playwright*) received a 2017 Tony Award® nomination for Best Play with *A Doll's House, Part 2*. Hnath's other plays include *The Thin Place*, *Hillary and Clinton*, *Red Speedo*, *The Christians*, *A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney*, *Isaac's Eye* and *Death Tax*. He has been produced on Broadway at the John Golden Theatre, Off-Broadway at New York Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Horizons, Soho Rep, and Ensemble Studio Theatre. His plays have also premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays, Victory Gardens and South Coast Repertory. He is a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect, a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre and an alumnus of New Dramatists. Awards: Whiting Award, Guggenheim Fellowship, Kesselring Prize, Outer Critics Circle Award for Best New Play, Obie Award for Playwriting, Steinberg Playwright Award and the Windham-Campbell Literary Prize.

LES WATERS (*Director*), an Obie Award winner, was Artistic Director of Actors Theatre of Louisville from 2012–2018, where he directed *The Thin Place*, *Evocation to Visible Appearance*, *Little Bunny Foo Foo*, *Recent Alien Abductions*, *Macbeth*, *For Peter Pan on her 70TH Birthday*, *The Glory of the World*, *Luna Gale*, *At the Vanishing Point*, *The Christians*, *OurTown*, *Gnit*, *Girlfriends*, *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *Big Love*. From 2003–2011, he served as Associate Artistic Director at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. His productions have been seen in New York at Playwrights Horizons, Signature Theatre Company, The

Public Theater, Second Stage Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, Connelly Theater, Clubbed Thumb, Soho Rep and Brooklyn Academy of Music, and regionally at theaters such as Arena Stage, Huntington Theatre Company, Mark Taper Forum, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theater, La Jolla Playhouse and American Repertory Theater. In 2009, he made his Broadway debut with *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*. He led the MFA directing program at University of California, San Diego from 1995–2003.

ANDREW BOYCE (*Set Design*) returns to the Goodman, where he previously designed sets for *Lady in Denmark* and *Another Word for Beauty*. He is a multidisciplinary designer working on a variety of projects ranging from theater, opera and live events to film and commercial spaces. Past credits with Center Theatre Group include *The Royale* (Los Angeles Ovation nom) and *Buyer & Cellar*. NYC credits with Lincoln Center Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, Atlantic Theater Company, Rattlestick Theater, Play Company, Playwrights Realm, etc. Regional credits include Actors Theatre of Louisville, A.C.T., Alliance, Baltimore Center Stage, Berkeley Rep, Curtis Opera Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, Geffen, George Street Playhouse, Huntington, Longwharf, Milwaukee Rep, Old Globe, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Yale Rep, among many others. Andrew is a graduate of Yale School of Drama, and is currently on the faculty in the

Northwestern University theater department.
andrewboycedesign.com

JANICE PYTEL (*Costume Design*) returns to the Goodman, where she previously designed for *The Long Red Road* and *I Am My Own Wife*. L.A. credits include *Slowgirl* and *The Seafarer* (Geffen Playhouse) and *33 Variations* (Ahmanson Theatre). Previous collaborations with Les Waters include *Our Town* (Actors Theatre of Louisville) and *Middletown* (Steppenwolf). She designed costumes for the world premiere of Lucas Hnath's *Hillary and Clinton* (Victory Gardens Theater). In Chicago, Janice has worked with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Victory Gardens Theater, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Chicago Opera Theater, Writers Theatre, About Face Theatre, Lookingglass, Chicago Shakespeare, and others. Regional credits include work with Alley Theatre, Kansas City Rep, Milwaukee Rep, Madison Rep, Alliance Theatre, and others. She is a proud member of Rivendell Theatre Ensemble in Chicago. She chairs the Chicago Costume Design committee for her union, United Scenic Artists, Local 829.

PAUL TOBEN (*Lighting and Supertitle Design*) makes his Goodman Theatre debut. Credits include *Angels in America* (Parts 1 and 2), *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *4000 Miles*, and many others at Actors Theatre of Louisville, and designs for five seasons of the Humana Festival including *Evocation to Visible Appearance*, *Airness*, *The Grown-Up*, and *The Roommate*. Additional credits include

August Rush (Paramount Aurora), *Mystery of Love & Sex, Witch* (Writers Theatre), *Electra* (Court Theatre), *Cry It Out* (Northlight Theatre), *The Wolves* (Studio Theatre), *NSFW* (Roundhouse), *Silent Sky, Triangle, Upright Grand* (TheatreWorks), *The Book of Will* (Denver Center Theatre), *Fly by Night, Medea* (Dallas Theater Center), *The Who and the What* (Kansas City Rep), *Futurity* (The Walker Arts Center), *Daddy Long Legs* (New York, regional and international premieres), *The Story of My Life* (Broadway). paultoben.com

MIKHAIL FIKSEL (*Sound Design*) returns to the Goodman, where he recently designed for *Lady in Denmark, We're Only Alive for A Short Amount of Time* and *The Wolves*, among many other productions. Other recent projects include Playwrights Horizons, The Public Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Chicago Shakespeare, Victory Gardens, South Coast Rep, Studio Theatre, A.C.T., Writers Theatre, The Civilians, PlayCo, Manhattan Theatre Club, Steppenwolf Theatre, Albany Park Theater Project, and original audio plays with Make Believe Association. Film work includes original scores for *Glitch, The Wise Kids, and In Memoriam*. He is a recipient of two Lucille Lortel Awards, multiple Joseph Jefferson Awards, two Drama Desk nominations, and the Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award, and is a proud member of TSDCA and USA. mikhailfiksel.com

STEVE CUIFFO (*Illusion and Lip Sync Consultant*) is the co-founder of Secret Arts, a creative company that develops visual effects and illusions for theater, film and special events. Cuiffo has worked as a consultant on several of David Blaine's ABC television specials and most recently completed a 40-city US tour as magic director on *David Blaine Live*. He has created illusions and magic sequences for theatre on and Off-Broadway, including *The Thin Place* (Actors Theatre of Louisville), *Old Hats* (Signature Theatre), *Antipodes* (Signature Theatre), *A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney* (Soho Rep), *Home* (BAM), *The Object Lesson* (BAM) and *The Passion of the Crawford* (with Lypsinka). Cuiffo also co-created *Elephant Room*, an absurdist magic extravaganza with Geoff Sobelle and Trey Lyford.

STEVE COSSON returns to the Goodman, where he previously directed *Another Word for Beauty*. He is a writer, director and Artistic Director of The Civilians. Recently, Claire Kiechel's *Paul Swan is Dead and Gone*, Jill Sobule's musical *Times Square*, book/director *The Abominables* (Children's Theatre Company), writer/director *The Undertaking* (BAM Next Wave, US tour, Theatre de la Ville, Paris, and 59E59); writer/director, *Rimbaud in New York* (BAM); Michael Friedman and Bess Wohl's *Pretty Filthy*; *The Belle of Amherst* starring Joely Richardson; writer/director *The Great Immensity* (The Public Theater); Anne Washburn's *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* (Playwrights Horizons). Also, *In the Footprint*;

writer/director *This Beautiful City* (Center Theatre Group, Vineyard Theatre and several other regionals); *(I Am) Nobody's Lunch*; and *Gone Missing*. In 2014-15, he was artist-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
stevecosson.com

TANYA PALMER (*Dramaturg*) is the Goodman's Producer and Director of New Play Development, where she coordinates the annual *New Stages Festival*. Palmer has also served as the dramaturg on a number of Goodman productions, including *Vigils*, *Magnolia*, *The Long Red Road* and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Ruined*. Prior to her arrival in Chicago, Palmer served as the Director of New Play Development at Actors Theatre of Louisville, where she led the reading and select process for the Humana Festival of New American Plays. The co-editor of four collections of Humana Festival plays, as well as two collections of 10-minute plays, Palmer is originally from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and holds an MFA in playwriting from Toronto's York University.

MAGGIE SWING* (*Production Stage Manager*) makes her Goodman Theatre debut. Center Theatre Group: *For The Love Of*, *Native Son*, *Linda Vista*, *Quack*, *Bloodletting*, *Ameryka*, *Die, Mommie, Die!*, *Elliot*, *A Soldier's Fugue*, *Spamilton*, *Big Night*, *King of the Yees*, *Failure: A Love Story*, *Dry Land*, *Vicuña*, *Throw Me on the Burnpile* and *Light Me Up*. Geffen Playhouse: *Big Sky*, *Barcelona*, *Guards at the Taj*, *Discord*, *The Country House*, *American Buffalo*. Boston Court: *Collective Rage*. European tour:

The Apple Family Plays. Off- Broadway: *Regular Singing*, *Sorry*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Sweet and Sad*, *Knickerbocker*, *Compulsion*, *That Hopey Changey Thing* (The Public Theater), *Slowgirl* (Lincoln Center), *Blood Knot*, *The Orphans' Home Cycle* (Signature Theatre Company).

Robert Falls (*Goodman Theatre Artistic Director*) Falls will revive his 2014 production of *Don Giovanni* for the Lyric Opera this fall, and will direct Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney* at the Goodman next spring. Most recently, Falls directed Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and David Cale's *We're Only Alive for A Short Amount of Time* (Goodman Theatre, Public Theater). Other recent productions include *Pamplona*, starring Stacy Keach; Rogelio Martinez's *Blind Date*; and his own original adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. Recent credits also include *2666*, adapted from Roberto Bolaño's epic novel and co-directed with Seth Bockley; *The Iceman Cometh*, starring Nathan Lane and longtime collaborator Brian Dennehy (Brooklyn Academy of Music); and Beth Henley's *The Jacksonian*. Falls' Broadway productions include *Death of a Salesman*, starring Dennehy; *Long Day's Journey into Night*, starring Dennehy, Vanessa Redgrave, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Robert Sean Leonard; Eric Bogosian's *Talk Radio*; the American premiere of Conor McPherson's *Shining City*; and Horton Foote's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Young Man from Atlanta*. His Broadway production of Elton John and Tim Rice's *Aida*, for which he also co-wrote the book, continues to be produced around the world. Previous

Goodman productions include, most notably, Arthur Miller's *Finishing the Picture*; *The Seagull*; *Uncle Vanya*; *Measure for Measure*; *King Lear*; *Desire Under the Elms*; *The Misanthrope*; *Pal Joey*; *Galileo*; the American premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's *House and Garden*; the world premieres of Rebecca Gilman's *A True History of the Johnstown Flood*, *Blue Surge*, *Dollhouse* and *Luna Gale*; and Gilman's *Soups, Stews, and Casseroles: 1976*. Falls' honors for directing include a Tony Award (*Death of a Salesman*), a Drama Desk Award (*Long Day's Journey into Night*), an Obie Award (*subUrbia*), a Helen Hayes Award (*King Lear*) and multiple Jeff Awards. For "outstanding contributions to theater," he has also been recognized with such prestigious honors as the Savva Morozov Diamond Award (Moscow Art Theatre), the O'Neill Medallion (Eugene O'Neill Society), the Distinguished Service to the Arts Award (Lawyers for the Creative Arts) and the Illinois Arts Council Governor's Award. Falls was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 2015.

ROCHE EDWARD SCHULFER (*Goodman Theatre Executive Director*) started working in the Goodman Theatre box office and ultimately became executive director in 1980. Since that time he has overseen more than 350 productions including close to 150 premieres. He initiated the Goodman's annual production of *A Christmas Carol*, which celebrated 40 years as Chicago's leading

holiday arts tradition in 2017. In partnership with Artistic Director Robert Falls, Mr. Schulfer led the establishment of quality, diversity and community engagement as the core values of Goodman Theatre. During their tenure, the Goodman has received numerous awards for excellence, including the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater, recognition by *Time* magazine as the “Best Regional Theatre” in the U.S., the Pulitzer Prize for Lynn Nottage’s *Ruined* and many Jeff Awards for outstanding achievement in Chicago area theater. Schulfer has negotiated the presentation of numerous Goodman Theatre productions to many national and international venues. He coordinated the 12-year process to relocate the Goodman to the Theatre District in 2000. To mark his 40th anniversary with the Goodman, his name was added to the theater’s “Walk of Stars.” Schulfer was a founder and twice chair of the League of Chicago Theatres, the trade association of more than 200 Chicago area theaters and producers. He has been privileged to serve in leadership roles with Arts Alliance Illinois (the statewide advocacy coalition); Theatre Communications Group (the national service organization for more than 450 not-for-profit theaters); the Performing Arts Alliance (the national advocacy consortium of more than 18,000 organizations and individuals); the League of Resident Theatres (the management association of 65 leading U.S. theater companies); Lifeline Theatre in Rogers Park and the Arts & Business Council. Mr. Schulfer is honored to have been recognized with the League of Chicago Theater’s Lifetime

Achievement Award; Theatre Communication Group's Visionary Leadership Award; Actors' Equity Association for promoting diversity and equal opportunity in Chicago theater; the American Arts Alliance and Arts Alliance Illinois for arts advocacy; the Arts & Business Council for distinguished contributions to Chicago's artistic vitality; *Chicago* magazine and the *Chicago Tribune* as a "Chicagoan of the Year"; the City of Chicago; the Chicago Loop Alliance's "Illumination Award," honoring his commitment to Chicago's theater district; Columbia College Chicago for entrepreneurial leadership; the Joseph Jefferson Awards Committee for his partnership with Robert Falls; Lawyers for the Creative Arts; Lifeline Theatre's Raymond R. Snyder Award for Commitment to the Arts; Season of Concern for support of direct care for those living with HIV/AIDS; and Vision 2020 for promoting gender equality and diversity in the workplace. Schulfer received an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from North Central College. He taught at the theater school at DePaul University for 15 years and has lectured regularly on arts management at Southern Methodist University and other academic institutions. Schulfer is a lifelong Chicago area resident and received a degree in economics from the University of Notre Dame, where he managed the cultural arts commission. **CENTER THEATRE GROUP**, one of the nation's preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles' leading nonprofit theatre company, which, under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Ritchie, Managing Director Meghan Pressman

and Producing Director Douglas C. Baker, programs seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2100-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.

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AMERICA'S "BEST REGIONAL THEATRE" (*Time* magazine), Goodman Theatre is a premier not-for-profit organization distinguished by the excellence and scope of its artistic programming and civic engagement. Led by Artistic Director Robert Falls and Executive Director Roche Schulfer, the theater's artistic priorities include new play development (more than 150 world or American premieres in the past three decades), large scale musical theater works and reimagined classics (celebrated revivals include Falls' productions of *Death of a Salesman* and *The Iceman Cometh*). Goodman Theatre artists and productions have earned two Pulitzer Prizes, 22 Tony Awards, over 160 Jeff Awards and many more accolades. In addition, the Goodman is the first theater in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson's "American Century Cycle;" and its annual holiday tradition *A Christmas Carol*, now in its fifth decade, has created a new generation of theatergoers. The Goodman also frequently serves as a production partner with local off-Loop theaters and national and international companies by providing financial support or physical space for a variety of artistic endeavors.

Committed to three core values of Quality, Diversity and Community, the Goodman proactively makes inclusion the fabric of the institution and develops education and

community engagement programs that support arts as education. This practice uses the process of artistic creation to inspire youth, lifelong learners and audiences to find and/or enhance their voices, stories and abilities. The Goodman's Alice Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement is the home of such programming, most offered free of charge, and has vastly expanded the theater's ability to touch the lives of Chicagoland citizens (with 85% of youth participants coming from underserved communities) since its 2016 opening.

Goodman Theatre was founded 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 his late mother, Edith-Marie Appleton, contributed the necessary funds for the creation of the new Goodman center in 2000.

Today, Goodman Theatre leadership also 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. David W. Fox, Jr. is Chair of Goodman Theatre's Board of Trustees, Denise Stefan Ginascol is Women's Board President and Megan McCarthy Hayes is President of the Scenemakers Board for young professionals.