CONTACT: Denise Schneider and Ata Younan **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

312.443.5151 or Press@GoodmanTheatre.org **December 21, 2022**

**PLAY BALL! TRACEY N. BONNER LEADS THE NINE-MEMBER CAST OF LYDIA R. DIAMOND’S *TONI STONE*,**

**APPEARING JANUARY 28 – FEBRUARY 26, 2023IN THE ALBERT THEATRE**

***\*\*\**RON OJ PARSON DIRECTS THE CHICAGO PREMIERE PRODUCTION, TICKETS ON SALE NOW\*\*\***

(Chicago, IL) A homerun hit ushers in the new year at Goodman Theatre! *Toni Stone*, **Lydia R. Diamond**’s original play about the first woman to play professional baseball and overcome the racist and sexist barriers to play the sport she loves, takes the stage in the Albert Theatre. The Chicago premiere, directed by **Ron OJ Parson**—the [*Chicago Tribune*'s 2022 “Chicagoan of the Year for Theater](https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/theater/ct-ent-theater-chicagoan-of-the-year-2022-20221221-uxlt44mfirbtbnxlr43243ey3i-story.html)”—follows a grand slam Off-Broadway run. **Tracey N. Bonner** leads the cast in the title role—joined by **Kai Ealy** (King Tut), **Joseph Aaron Johnson** (Elzie), **Chiké Johnson** (Alberga), **Travis Knight** (Stretch), **Victor Musoni** (Jimmy), **Jon Hudson Odom** (Millie), **Edgar Miguel Sanchez** (Spec) and **Terence Sims** (Woody). *Toni Stone* appears January 28 – February 26, 2023 in the 856-seat Albert Theatre; opening night is Monday, February 6. Tickets ($25 –$80, subject to change) are available at GoodmanTheatre.org/Toni or by phone at 312-443-3800. The Goodman is grateful for the support of Bank of America (Corporate Sponsor Partner), Snap-on (Technical Sponsor) and The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust (Lead Funder of IDEAA Programming).

In *Toni Stone,* it’s the mid-twentieth century and while Toni has a great arm, she still can't play with the boys. Rejected by the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League because of her race, Toni sets out to become the first woman to play in baseball’s Negro Leagues. Challenges on and off the field—from hostile crowds to players who slide spikes-first—only steel her resolve to shatter racist and sexist barriers in the sport she’s loved since childhood. An original play inspired by the book *Curveball, The Remarkable Story of Toni Stone* by Martha Ackmann, this New York Times Critic’s Pick will have you cheering along.

Understudies for this production include **Jabari Khaliq** (Jimmy/Stretch), **Krystel McNeil** (Toni Stone), **Matty Robinson** (Spec/Elzie), **Reginald Robinson** (Woody/King Tut/Millie) and **A.C. Smith** (Alberga). The creative team includes **Henri Watkins** (Associate Director); **Todd Rosenthal** (Set Design); **Sotirios Livaditis** (Associate Set Design); **Mara Blumenfeld** (Costume Design); **Keith Parham** (Lighting Design); **Andre Pluess** (Original Music and Sound Design); **Cristin Carole** (Movement Consultant); **Mike Tutaj** (Projection Design). Casting is by **Lauren Port**, CSA and **Rachael Jimenez**, CSA. **Nikki Blue** is the Production Stage Manager and **Veronica Buztoz** is the Stage Manager.

**Lydia R. Diamond** is an award-winning playwright whose works include *The Gift Horse* (2002 premier at Goodman Theatre);*Toni Stone*; *Smart People;* *Stick Fly* (Broadway run at Cort Theatre); *Voyeurs de Venus;* *Harriet Jacobs;* *The Bluest Eye; The Inside*and *Stage Black*.  Her work has been performed at companies including American Conservatory Theatre Company, The Huntington Theatre, Congo Square, Steppenwolf Theatre Co., The Alliance Theatre, Arena Stage, Company One, Writers Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, New Victory at the Duke (off-Broadway), The Guthrie Theater, Roundabout Theatre Co. (off-Broadway), Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Second Stage Theater (off-Broadway), Hartford Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, True Colors, MPAACT, Arden Theatre Co., Encores at City Center (New York), Intiman Theatre and PlayMakers Repertory Company. Diamond has been a W. E. B. DuBois Institute Non-Resident Fellow at Harvard, a Sundance Playwright Lab Creative Advisor, a Radcliffe Institute Fellow, a Sally B. Goodman Fellow and a National Endowment for the Arts/TCG playwright in residence. Awards include Horton Foote Playwriting Award, Joseph Jefferson Award, IRNE Award Nomination, Elliot Norton Award Nomination, Audelco Nomination, Kilroy’s List, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Finalist, LA Critics Circle Award and National Art’s Club Kesselring Prize for Playwriting.  She was a consulting producer and writer for Showtime’s fourth season of *The Affair*and nominated for a Writer's Guild Award for Best Drama Episode.  She has also written for NBC, HBO, HBOMAX and Hulu. Diamond has an Honorary MFA from A.C.T., and an Honorary Doctorate from Pine Manor College.  She sits on the Dramatists Guild Legal Defense Fund Board and The Dramatist Guild Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access Committee. Diamond is an associate professor of Playwriting at University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Ron OJ Parson** (*Director*) returns to the Goodman, where he directed *Relentless* and *Sweat,* and acted in *Romance*. He is a native of Buffalo, New York and a graduate of the University of Michigan’s professional theater program. He is the co-founder and former Artistic Director of Onyx Theatre Ensemble of Chicago and a co-founder and co-director of Ripe ManGo Productions. Parson is a Resident Artist at Court Theatre and an Associate Artist with Teatro Vista, and an Associate Artist at Writers Theatre. Since moving to Chicago from New York in 1994, he has worked as both an actor and director. His Chicago credits include work with The Chicago Theatre Company, Victory Gardens, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Chicago Dramatists, Northlight, Court, Black Ensemble Theatre, Congo Square, Northlight Theatre, Urban Theatre Company, City Lit Theater, ETA Creative Arts, and Writers. Regionally, Parson has directed shows at Studio Arena Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Milwaukee Repertory, South Coast Repertory, Pasadena Playhouse, Geva Theatre, Virginia Stage, Wilshire Theatre, The Mechanic Theatre, CenterStage, St. Louis Black Repertory, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre, Signature Theatre (New York), Kansas City Rep, Portland Stage, Indiana Repertory Theatre, American Players Theatre, and Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, among others. In Canada, he directed the world premiere of Palmer Park by Joanna McClelland Glass at the Stratford Festival. He is a member of AEA, SAG-AFTRA, and SDC. For further information, visit [ronojparson.com](http://www.ronojparson.com/)

**THE COMPANY OF *Toni Stone* (in alphabetical order)**

***For images, bios and additional information about the artists, visit the*** [***Play Detail Page***](https://www.goodmantheatre.org/toni)***.***

Toni Stone…………….Tracey N. Bonner
King Tut………………..Kai Ealy
Elzie…………………Joseph Aaron Johnson

Alberga…………………Chiké Johnson

Stretch………………..Travis Knight

Jimmy…………………Victor Musoni

Millie…………………Jon Hudson Odom

Spec…………………..Edgar Miguel Sanchez

Woody………………Terence Sims

Understudies for this production include Jabari Khaliq (Jimmy/Stretch), Krystel McNeil (Toni Stone), Matty Robinson (Spec/Elzie), Reginald Robinson (Woody/King Tut/Millie) and A.C. Smith (Alberga).

Associate Direction by Henri Watkins

Set Design by Todd Rosenthal

Associate Set Design by Sotirios Livaditis

Costume Design by Mara Blumenfeld

Lighting Design by Keith Parham

Original Music and Sound Design by Andre Pluess

Movement by Cristin Carole

Projection Design by Mike Tutaj

Casting is by Lauren Port, CSA and Rachael Jimenez, CSA. Nikki Blue is the Production Stage Manager and Veronica Buztoz is the Stage Manager. Devin Christor is the the Assistant to the Director and Playwright.

**ENHANCED AND ACCESSIBLE PERFORMANCES**

*Visit Goodman theatre.org/Access for more information about Goodman Theatre’s accessibility efforts.*

ASL-Interpreted: Friday, February 24 at 8pm – An American Sign Language interpreter signs the action/text as played.

Touch Tour and Audio-Described Performance: Saturday, February 25, 12:30pm Touch Tour; 2pm performance – The action/text is audibly enhanced for patrons via headset. *NOTE: Touch Tours for the 2022/2023 Season will not have access to the stage due to current health and safety protocols, but will feature alternate pre-show sensory introductions.*

Spanish Subtitles: Saturday February 25 at 8pm.

Open-Captioned: Sunday, February 26 at 2pm – An LED sign presents dialogue in sync with the performance.

**ABOUT GOODMAN THEATRE**

Chicago’s theater since 1925, **Goodman Theatre** is a not-for-profit arts and community organization in the heart of the Loop, distinguished by the excellence and scope of its artistic programming and community engagement. The theater’s artistic priorities include new play development (more than 150 world or American premieres), large scale musical theater works and reimagined classics. Artists and productions have earner two Pulitzer Prizes, 22 Tony Awards and more than 160 Jeff Awards, among other accolades. The Goodman is the first theater in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson’s “American Century Cycle.” Its longtime annual holiday tradition *A Christmas Carol*, now in its fifth decade, has created a new generation of theatergoers in Chicago. The Goodman also frequently serves as a production and program partner with national and international companies and Chicago’s Off-Loop theaters.

Using the tools of the theatrical profession, the Goodman’s Education and Engagement programs aim to develop generations of citizens who understand the cultures and stories of diverse voices. The Goodman’s Alice Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement is the home of these programs, which are offered free of charge for Chicago youth—85% of whom come from underserved communities—schools and life-long learners.

As a cultural and community organization invested in quality, diversity and community, Goodman Theatre is committed to using the art of theater for a better Chicago. Goodman Theatre’s [Action Plan for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism and Access (IDEAA)](https://www.goodmantheatre.org/Accountability) was born out of the belief that progress means action, which includes building on the decades-long commitment to using art, assets and resources to contribute to a more just, equitable and anti-racist society.

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 on the new Goodman center in 2000.

Today, Goodman Theatre is led by Artistic Director **Robert Falls** (**Susan V. Booth** will assume that role this fall) and Executive Director **Roche Schulfer**. Theater leadership also includes the distinguished members of the Artistic Collective: **Rebecca Gilman**, **Dael Orlandersmith**, **Henry Godinez**, **Steve Scott**, **Kimberly Senior**, **Chuck Smith**, **Regina Taylor** and **Mary Zimmerman**. **Jeff Hesse** is Chairman of Goodman Theatre’s Board of Trustees, **Fran Del Boca** is Women’s Board President and **Craig McCaw** is President of the Scenemakers Board for young professionals.

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