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

312.443.5151 or [Press@GoodmanTheatre.org](mailto:Press@GoodmanTheatre.org) **March 25, 2024**

IMAGES: [Goodman Theatre Press Room](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/zicw72hk97apuuh/AABSxLQVydh3myWBep7gPnlca?dl=0)

**J. HARRISON GHEE, TOM HEWITT AND SIERRA BOGGESS TO STAR IN THE GROUND-BREAKING NEW MUSICAL**

***MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL***

**BOOK BY TAYLOR MAC, MUSIC AND LYRICS BY JASON ROBERT BROWN, CHOREOGRAPHY BY TANYA BIRL,**

**DIRECTED BY ROB ASHFORD,**

**BASED ON THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BEST-SELLING BOOK**

**BY JOHN BERENDT**

**\*\***[**EXCLUSIVE VIDEO**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeyL6JisDQo)**: HEAR FROM THE CREATORS OF *MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL*\*\***

**\*\*\*TICKETS ARE ON SALE MARCH 29 FOR THE WORLD-PREMIERE PRODUCTION, ON STAGE JUNE 25 – AUGUST 4\*\*\***

A statue of a person holding a bowl

Description automatically generated

(CHICAGO, IL) Goodman Theatre announces initial casting for *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*—a new musical based on **John Berendt**’s iconic non-fiction book that makes its world premiere in the 856-seat Albert Theatre this summer. The Goodman proudly welcomes Tony- and Grammy-Award winning actor **J. Harrison Ghee** in the role of The Lady Chablis; Tony Award nominee **Tom Hewitt** as Jim Williams; and Olivier Award nominee **Sierra Boggess** as Emma Dawes. The complete cast will be announced soon. With a book by MacArthur “Genius” Grantee **Taylor Mac** and music and lyrics by Tony Award winner **Jason Robert Brown**, the world-premiere production will be directed by Tony Award winner **Rob Ashford**, with choreography by **Tanya Birl**, sets by Tony and Olivier Award winner **Christopher Oram** and costumes by Tony Award nominee **Toni-Leslie James**. Casting is by **Lauren Port**, CSA and The Telsey Office/**Patrick Goodwin**, CSA. The world-premiere production of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* appears June 25 - August 4, 2024 in the 856-seat Albert Theatre). Tickets ($25 – 140) are on sale this Friday, March 29; call 312.443.3800 or visit GoodmanTheatre.org/Midnight.Goodman Theatre is grateful for the support of Northern Trust (Lead Corporate Sponsor).

**John Berendt**’s 1994 blockbuster book, a Pulitzer-Prize finalist that was on the *New York Times* Best-Seller list for 216 weeks and was adapted for Clint Eastwood's 1997 film of the same name, becomes a seductive new musical. Southern charm is bountiful in Savannah, Georgia. But behind polite smiles, the eccentric residents are filled with secrets and motives. When wealthy antiques dealer Jim Williams is accused of murder, the sensational trial uncovers hidden truths and exposes the fine line between good and evil — which sparks Lady Chablis and other Savannahians to change the  
city forever.

“I’m very excited about the cast we’ve assembled led by Broadway stars J. Harrison Ghee, Tom Hewitt and Sierra Boggess,” said **Director Rob Ashford**. “It’s an honor to welcome three such talented artists to the company as we set out to create a very special production for Chicago audiences.”

**ABOUT THE CAST**

**A person in a red shirt

Description automatically generated**

**J. Harrison Ghee** (*The Lady Chablis*), Tony and Grammy Award winner, made history as the first non-binary actor to win in a leading individual performance category for creating the role as “Daphne/Jerry” in *Some Like it Hot,* which also garnered them Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards. Also on Broadway, Ghee starred as “Lola” *Kinky Boots*, created the role of “Andre Mayhem” in *Mrs. Doubtfire*, and co-starred opposite Harry Connick, Jr. as “Johnny Hooker” in *The Sting*. On television, Ghee was selected to play the title role in “Robyn’s Story” on the hit FOX anthology series *Accused* (dir. Billy Porter), starred as “Kwame” in Netflix’s *Raising Dion*, and guest starred on HBO’s *High Maintenance*. A Fayetteville, North Carolina native, Ghee moved to New York City to study at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy, and began their professional career working at Tokyo Disney, on cruise ships and national tours. They live by the mantra, “You have to free yourself to see yourself,” with the hope of inspiring people to dream big and to chase those dreams. An outspoken advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community, Ghee has been involved with many organizations, including Broadway Cares, GLAAD, and God’s Love We Deliver, among others. They hope to create roles and conversations that reach beyond what was and into a realm of infinite possibilities.

**A person with grey hair and a black shirt

Description automatically generated**

**Tom Hewitt** (*Jim Williams*)’s Broadway bad guys include Hades, Billy Flynn, Scar, Dracula, Pontius Pilate, Captain Hook and Frank N Furter (Tony and Drama Desk nominations). His Off Broadway credits include Aaron Marks’ *Another Medea, Treasure Island, Jeffery, Beau Jest* (Outer Critics nomination), *Richard III* and *Othello.* National tours: *Finding Neverland, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Urinetown, Chicago* and *Peter Pan* with Cathy Rigby. His recent regional credits include *Sweeney Todd* and *Another Medea* (Provincetown Theatre), *I Hate Hamlet* (Bucks County), *My Paris* (Long Wharf), *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* (La Jolla Playhouse). Film and TV includes *Law and Order, Elementary, Frasier* and Julie Taymor’s *Fools’ Fire.*

**A person with red hair and yellow shirt

Description automatically generatedSierra Boggess** (*Emma Dawes*)has been seen on Broadway in *Harmony, School Of Rock*, *It Shoulda Been You,*two separate engagements of *The Phantom of the Opera* (the first for the show’s 25th Anniversary and the second opposite Norm Lewis), the revival of *Master Class* (opposite Tyne Daly) and *The Little Mermaid* (Drama Desk and Drama League nominations, [Broadway.com](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fbroadway.com%2F&data=05%7C02%7CDeniseSchneider%40goodmantheatre.org%7Caa273561c6a54207b33a08dc48fe4728%7C8305ef74c2704cdb9f2107217cc0965a%7C0%7C0%7C638465504348551055%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=gpeVJrezNnHrt%2FFX%2F3JXiBN2j%2BGw0tPRi7SaC06Q6A4%3D&reserved=0) Audience Choice Award). London credits include*Les Misérables*, the 25th-anniversary concerts of *The Phantom of the Opera* at Royal Albert Hall and *Love Never Dies* (Olivier Award nomination). Other New York credits include *The Good-bye Girl,*the off-Broadway premiere of *Harmony,*Manhattan Concert Productions’ *The Secret Garden*at Lincoln Center; the one-night-only concert of *Guys & Dolls* at Carnegie Hall opposite Nathan Lane, Patrick Wilson and Megan Mullally; the final Off-Broadway cast of *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*; and *Music in the Air* at Encores! Film/TV includes *Vulture Club*with Susan Sarandon and the web series *What’s Your Emergency*, directed by Michael Urie. Recordings include the complete studio recording of  *Oklahoma*, *School Of Rock*, *It Shoulda Been You,* the 25th anniversary concert of *The Phantom of the Opera* (also on DVD), the symphonic recording of *Love Never Dies*, *The Little Mermaid*, and Andrew Lippa’s *A Little Princess*. She has toured all over the world across Australia, Japan, Paris and London with her concert show, which has been preserved live and released on CD, *Awakening: Live at 54 Below*. She recently released an album of duets with Julian Ovenden made during the pandemic entitled *Together At A Distance.*

**ABOUT THE CREATORS**

**Rob Ashford** (Director): “I am a huge fan of John Berendt’s terrific book—and of its star, the beautiful city of Savannah! When asked if I’d be interested in helping tell that story on stage, I pinched myself and then said ‘absolutely!’ I can’t imagine anyone bringing these unique and wonderful characters to life in words and music better than Taylor Mac and Jason Robert Brown.” **Ashford** is a Tony Award, Olivier Award, Emmy Award, Drama Desk Award and Outer Critics Circle Award-winning director and choreographer. Broadway credits include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Frozen*, *How To Succeed In Business*, *Promises, Promises*, *Evita*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Shrek*, *John Water’s Cry Baby*, *Curtains* and *The Wedding Singer*. London credits include *The Winter’s Tale*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Entertainer*, *Harlequinade*, *Macbeth*, *Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* and the Olivier Award-winning productions of *Anna Christie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Parade*. He directed and choreographed NBC’s “Sound of Music Live!” and “Peter Pan Live!”. He directed and choreographed *Carouse*l, *Carmen*, & *The Barber of Seville* for Chicago Lyric Opera and Houston Grand Opera and choreographed Candide at La Scala, ENO, and Chatelet in Paris. He choreographed and staged the 2009, 2013, 2014, & 2015 Academy Awards winning an Emmy for his work on Baz Luhrmann’s 2009 production number featuring Hugh Jackman and Beyonce. He has staged The Tony Awards for eight years and has also staged tributes at The Kennedy Center Honors for Barbra Streisand, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Jerry Herman, Barbara Cook, Tom Hanks, Shirley MacLaine and Meryl Streep. Films include choreography for Disney’s *Cinderella*, *Beyond the Sea*, *A Million Ways to Die in the West*, *Ted 2*, *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Death on the Nile*.

**Taylor Mac** (*Book*): “*Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* was a seminal book for me as a young queer person, coming out in the late 1980s and early 90s. The eccentricities of Savannah, and how they were celebrated by such a large readership, seemed to say, the things that made me odd and an outcast in the world were actually things I should cherish. Likewise, musical theater has always had a similar effect on me. Singing our thoughts is such an eccentric way of expressing ourselves—yet so perfectly aligned with my personal liberation and joy. So turning *Midnight* into a musical, and with such master craftspeople as Jason, Rob and Tanya is essentially an extension of celebrating the joy and liberation from exposing what’s hidden.” **Mac** is a MacArthur Fellow, a Pulitzer Prize Finalist, a Tony Award Nominee (for Best Play), and the recipient of the Kennedy Prize (with Matt Ray), the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a Guggenheim, a Drama League Award, a NY Drama Critics Circle Award, two Obie’s, two Bessies, and the first American to receive the International Ibsen Award. Mac is the author of *Joy and Pandemic* (Huntington Theater)*; The Hang* (with Matt Ray); *Gary, A Sequel to Titus Andronicus; A 24-Decade History of Popular Music; Hir; The Fre, The Walk Across America For Mother Earth, The Lily’s Revenge*; *The Young Ladies Of*; and *The Be(A)st of Taylor Mac.* The documentary Taylor Mac’s *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* recently premiered on HBO to critical acclaim.

**Jason Robert Brown** (*Music and Lyrics*): “When I am deciding to start a new show, the two most important questions I ask myself are: 1) Does it sing? and 2) Do I get to work with fun people? With *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, I knew the answers to both questions immediately. The book’s milieu, so rich with mystery and romance and history, sings with every sentence, deeply passionate, slyly comic, emotions threatening to boil over on every page. And to work with Rob Ashford, whose transformative production of *Parade* at the Donmar Warehouse in 2007 reinvigorated not only the show’s reputation but my creative process, was a no-brainer. But then add to that the brilliant, joyful, radically inclusive mind of Taylor Mac, and there was no way I could resist. Creating this world with these mad geniuses is, in true Savannah tradition, a grand and great party. I can’t wait for the world to join in.” **Brown** has written the music and lyrics to several of the most renowned and influential musicals of our time, including the generation-defining *The Last Five Years*, his debut song cycle *Songs for a New World*, and the seminal *Parade*, which just won a 2023 Tony Award for Best Musical Revival, starring Ben Platt and directed by Michael Arden. His other musicals include *13*, which was made into a feature film on Netflix last year; *The Bridges of Madison County*, winner of Tony Awards for score and orchestrations; *Mr. Saturday Night* with Billy Crystal; and *Honeymoon In Vegas*. As a pianist, singer and bandleader, Jason has performed concerts around the world. His latest album, “Coming From Inside The House,” features Ariana Grande and Shoshana Bean and is available from Craft Recordings.

**Tanya Birl** (*Choreographer*): “I’m honored to make my Chicago debut with this incredible production, and thrilled to collaborate with such an amazingly talented creative team—including my longtime mentor and friend Rob Ashford. There is so much beauty and mystery in the written and spoken words of this story. I think the role of movement and dance in this piece is to tap into the essence of Savannah—to speak what is unspoken. I can’t wait to get to work!”

**Brill** is a New York City-based Movement Director and Choreographer. Choreography: *How I Learned What I Learned* (OSF), *Twelfth Night* (The Public Theater), *The Red Letter Plays* (The Signature Theater), *Comedy of Errors* (Classic Stage company), *As You Like It* (The Guthrie Theater) and *Peter and the Star Catcher* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). Select performance credits, Broadway: *Memphis the Musical,* *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *How to Succeed*, *On The Town*. Others: *The Lion King*, *The Bubbly Black Girl…,* *The Wiz,* *West Side Story*. Birl is currently in the process of writing an original choreo-play titled *‘A Play in 3 Movements’* about intergenerational trauma/healing and its links to auto-immunity in women. She is a 2023/2024 MAP Fund Grantee, 2022 NoMAA artist in residence and a High-Arts/Critical Breaks Fellow in collaboration with OSF New Works.

**Christoher Oram** (*Set Design*) is a recipient of the Tony, Drama Desk, Olivier, Evening Standard, Critic’s Circle, Garland, Falstaff and Ovation Awards for his work in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Shows with Rob Ashford: *Parade* (Donmar) *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Donmar), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (NYC), *Damsels in Distress* (Chichester) as well as G&D, *EVITA*, and *Frozen* and the Branagh collaborations. Opera credits include *The Marriage of Figaro* (Glyndebourne, Houston) ,*The Wreckers* (Houston), *Billy Budd* (Glyndebourne, Brooklyn Academy of Music) and *Don* Giovanni(Metropolitan Opera). Theater credits include *Red* (Donmar Warehouse and NYC); *Henry V*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (NYC); *Peter and Alice* and *Privates on Parade* (Michael Grandage Company at the Noel Coward); *Macbeth*(Manchester International Festival and Park Avenue Armory, NYC); *Frozen* (St. James Theatre, Theatre Royal Drury Lane, NYC, Japan); *Company* (Sheffield Crucible); *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Passion*, *Parade*, and *Frost/Nixon* (Donmar); *Hamlet*, *Madame de Sade*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Ivanov* (Donmar and Wyndham’s); *Summerfolk*, *Danton’s Death*, *Stuff Happens*, and *Power* (National Theatre); *Backbeat* (Glasgow Citizen’s); *Evita* (Adelphi and NYC); *Guys and Dolls*(Piccadilly); *King Lear* and *The Seagull* (Royal Shakespeare Company and world tour); *Wolf Hall*, *Bring up the*Bodies, and *The Mirror & The Light*(RSC, London and NYC); *A Winter’s Tale*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Entertainer* (Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company at the Garrick).

**Toni-Leslie James** (*Costume Design*)’s Broadway credits include *Birthday Candles, Flying Over Sunset*, *Bernhardt/Hamlet*(Drama Desk Award, TONY nomination)*Come From Away*(Hewes Design Award, Drama Desk nomination), *August Wilson’s Jitney*(TONY and Drama Desk nominations),*Lucky Guy*, *The Scottsboro Boys, Finian's Rainbow, Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, King Hedley II, One Mo’ Time, The Wild Party, Marie Christine, Footloose, The Tempest, Twilight Los Angeles 1992, Angels in America: Millennium Approaches & Perestroika, Chronicle of a Death Foretold,*and*Jelly’s Last Jam*(Hewes Design Award, TONY and Drama Desk nominations)*.* Off Broadway, she has designed multiple productions for The Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Second Stage, Soho Rep, Lincoln Center Theatre, The New York Theatre Workshop, and more than 15 productions for the NY City Center Encores series. She was the Head Costume Designer for *Whoopi* on NBC, and the CBS soap opera, *As the Word Turns,* as well as having designed four specials for WNET/13’s Great Performances series.

**John Berendt** (*Award-Winning* *Author*) was born and raised in Syracuse, New York. He attended Harvard, where he majored in English and wrote for the *Harvard Lampoon*. Upon graduation he was hired by *Esquire* magazine--first as an editor, then as a monthly columnist.  Later, he became the editor of *New York Magazine*. It was during a trip to the South in the mid-1980s that he discovered Savannah--a cloistered, inward-looking garden city that basked on the Georgia coast, reveling in its own peculiarities and giving not a thought to the outside world. He was enchanted and began writing about the city and its people in what would eventually become *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil.*

**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. Led by Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth** and Executive Director/CEO **Roche Schulfer**, 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 nearly 200 Joseph Jefferson 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 theatrical practice, the Goodman’s Education and Engagement programs aim to develop generations of citizens who understand and empathize with 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 for Chicago youth—85% of whom come from underserved communities—schools and life-long learners.

Goodman Theatre was built on the traditional homelands of the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nations. We recognize that many other Nations consider the area we now call Chicago as their traditional homeland—including the Myaamia, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sac and Fox, Peoria, Kaskaskia, Wea, Kickapoo and Mascouten—and remains home to many Native peoples today. While we believe that our city’s vast diversity should be reflected on the stages of its largest theater, we acknowledge that our efforts have largely overlooked the voices of our Native peoples. This omission has added to the isolation, erasure and harm that Indigenous communities have faced for hundreds of years. We have begun a more deliberate journey towards celebrating Native American stories and welcoming Indigenous communities.

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.

**Julie Danis** is Chair of Goodman Theatre’s Board of Trustees, **Lorrayne Weiss** is Women’s Board President and **Kelli Garcia** is President of the Scenemakers Board for young professionals.

—30—