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**ANNOUNCING THE COMPLETE COMPANY FOR THE GROUNDBREAKING 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 NON-FICTION BOOK**

**BY JOHN BERENDT**

**\*\*\*PERFORMANCES BEGIN JUNE 25 WITH OPENING NIGHT ON JULY 8; TICKETS NOW ON SALE\*\*\***



(CHICAGO, IL) Casting is complete 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. 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**. Joining the previously announced 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 cast features stage and screen notables **Lance Roberts** (*The Best Man*) as Bobby Lewis; **Austin Colby** (*The Great Gatsby*) as Danny Hansford; **Bailee Endebrock** (*Parade*) as Corrine Strong; **Shanel Bailey** (*The Book of Mormon*) as Lavella Cole; **Jessica Molaskey** (*Sunday in the Park with George*) as Alma Knox Carter; **Brianna Buckley** (*the ripple, the wave that carried me home*) as Minerva; **Mary Ernster** (*War Paint*) as Serena Barnes/Dawn Avery; **McKinley Carter** (*Turn of the Century*) as Vera Strong; and more. 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); opening night is July 8. For tickets ($25 – 165, *subject to change*), call 312.443.3800 or visit GoodmanTheatre.org/Midnight. Goodman Theatre is grateful for the support of Northern Trust (Lead Corporate Sponsor) and Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP (Corporate Sponsor Partner).

“We’re kind of giddy to welcome this absolutely sensational cast and top-flight creative team for the world premiere of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*,” said Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth**. “This collection of humans is like the dream dinner party, and we can’t wait to invite you to the table they’re setting. Some will be new to you, some are old friends, and all of them make this singular creation Chicago’s must-see musical event of summer 2024.”

**John Berendt**’s 1994 blockbuster non-fiction 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.

The award-winning creative team includes sets by Tony and Olivier Award winner **Christopher Oram**, costumes by Tony Award nominee **Toni-Leslie James**, lighting by Olivier- and Tony Award-winning designer **Neil Austin** and sound design by AUDELCO Award-winner **Jon Weston**. Casting is by **Lauren Port**, CSA and The Telsey Office/**Patrick Goodwin**, CSA.

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

J. Harrison Ghee…..The Lady Chablis

Tom Hewitt…..Jim Williams

Sierra Boggess…..Emma Dawes

Lance Roberts…..Bobby Lewis

Austin Colby…..Danny Hansford

Bailee Endebrock…..Corrine Strong

Shanel Bailey…..Lavella Cole

Jessica Molaskey…..Alma Knox Carter

Mary Ernster…..Serena Barnes/Dawn Avery

McKinley Carter…..Vera Strong

Brianna Buckley…..Minerva

Maya Bowles…..Stacey Brown

DeMarius Copes…..Jeremiah Jones

Sean Donovan…..Luther Driggers

Jason Michael Evans…..Colonel Atwood/Burt

Christopher Kelley…..Bubbles/Gregory

Andre Terrell Malcolm…..Josiah Domingo

Aaron James McKenzie…..Jethro Myles

Wes Olivier…..Jack the One-Eyed Jill

Kayla Marie Shipman…..Millicent/Mary

Rory Shirley…..Stefanie Davis

Calvin L. Cooper, Daryn Whitney Harrell, Kayla Kennedy, Jake DiMaggio Lopez, Justin Thomas Rivers…..Swing

**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!”

**Birl** 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.

**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 the non-fiction book *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.

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