



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Natalie Olson, Sheldon Theatre @ 651-388-8714, nolson@sheldontheatre.org
Bonnie Schock, *Appropriate* Director, bschock@sheldontheatre.org or
Kathy Fuchs, Producer, mrsfuchsie@gmail.com
Tickets: 651-388-8700 or www.sheldontheatre.org

Red Wing's veteran community theatre company, Phoenix Theatre, gets bold with *Appropriate* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins.

Red Wing MN – Phoenix Theatre and the Sheldon Theatre of Performing Arts proudly announce their next production. It is a bold choice with the Obie award winning drama for "Best New American Play," *Appropriate* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins. Don't miss this stunning story about family, culture, identity, and the histories that we carry forward, as one white family grapples with the connections between past and present. Performances take place **March 22, 23, 24 and 25, 2018; times vary.**

The Play. *Appropriate*

Every estranged member of the Lafayette clan has descended upon a crumbling Arkansas homestead to settle the accounts of their recently-deceased father. As his three adult children sort through a lifetime of hoarded mementos and junk, they collide over clutter, debt, and a contentious family history. But, after a disturbing discovery surfaces among their father's possessions, the reunion takes a turn for the explosive, unleashing a series of crackling surprises and confrontations.

The play was written in 2014 by award-winning African-American playwright, Jacobs-Jenkins, for a cast of all white characters, who are faced with the possibility that their recently deceased father might have been involved in racially-motivated crimes and Ku Klux Klan activity. It's been called "an exceptionally brilliant piece of writing" by *Time Out Chicago*, and described by *The Washington Post* as "What distinguishes *Appropriate* is the playwright's gift for drawing characters into an escalating conflict and sustaining, with

humor and craft, our curiosity about how they digest the terrible information thrown at them.”

Phoenix Theatre President, Helene Olson-Reed, says “this play is edgy and takes on tough topics. The characters argue, and they swear, and they get into things that are hard to talk about. Don’t worry, though. It’s also funny and tender, too. We wanted to go there, even though it may be a little scary for some of us Minnesotans, because it’s so very important now for our community to find ways to talk about these things together with compassion.”

Phoenix Theatre has taken on relevant issue-based plays in the past, including some productions that engendered local buzz and even some local controversy, such as *The Laramie Project* in 2004, *Laramie Epilogue* in 2009, and *The Vagina Monologues* in 2006 and 2009.

“The play follows one family’s struggle to shed the layers of history. It asks questions about who we are, what we think we know about our parents and our families and ourselves, and what we pass on to the next generation,” says the show’s director and Sheldon Executive Director, Bonnie Schock. “I’ve been working professionally in the theatre for 30 years, and this play is among the most powerful pieces of dramatic writing I’ve encountered. It is poetic and funny and true. And, I am very proud of Red Wing’s community theatre, Phoenix, for their guts and their passion and their talent to dig in to something like this.”

Due to the powerful questions raised by the play, **post-show discussions**, co-hosted by Phoenix and the **Human Rights Commission**, will be held immediately following the Saturday and Sunday performances. The director, members of the cast, and representatives of Red Wing’s Human Rights Commission will lead the discussions.

The Production Team

The Sheldon Theatre’s Executive Director, **Bonnie Schock**, is directing the production. Schock, who is making her Red Wing area directing debut with the Phoenix production, has a Master of Fine Arts in Stage Directing and a thirty year background as a stage director, in professional, semi-professional, collegiate, and amateur theatre settings. She was the first (and only) woman to direct on the Minnesota Centennial Showboat, toured a new work to critical acclaim at the Prague International Fringe Festival, and has staged dozens of productions for the Washington Shakespeare Festival, Theatre in the Round, 3 Legged Race New Theatre and Performance, University Theatre at UMN, among many others; and assistant directed at The Guthrie Theatre and Children’s Theatre Company.

The production features an all-star regional design team. The scenic environment is created by **Cate Whittemore**, an artist, teacher, and theatrical painter who has collaboratively created scenery for movies, television, and Broadway hits, including "The Book of Mormon". Veteran lighting designer, **Jeffrey Bartlett**, currently the Production Manager at Carleton College's Weitz Center, is well-known for his decades long, award-winning career as a dance lighting designer. Costume maven, **Susan Fick**'s work has been seen all over North America; she is on staff at Chanhassen Dinner Theatres, and works extensively as a freelancer at theatres and schools in the Twin Cities designing and coordinating costumes. With 40 years of experience as a musician, audio engineer, and Music Production Instructor, **Thomas Day** takes on his first theatrical sound design on this show.

And, this show needs a fight choreographer, to keep the actors safe during a 6 person, hand-to-hand combat family brawl! **Mike Speck** is a member of the Society of American Fight Directors and a certified fight teacher, who has choreographed many productions throughout the Midwest. The whole team is held together by Sheldon Theatre Director of Production, **Russell Johnson**, whose background includes international touring and 28 years as Production Stage Manager at the Guthrie Theatre. **Carrie Engberg**, who has a B.A. in Theatre from St. Mary's University, joins the team as a first time Stage Manager.

"It's an incredible team," says Schock. "There is so much experience and pure creativity here. Each member of the production team took on the creative challenge to design on a shoestring community theatre budget because of the power of this script, and the relevance of its message. What they've come up with is elegant and smart, and honors the play just beautifully."

The Cast

As with any great community theatre production, the *Appropriate* cast features veteran and first-time performers with diverse personal and professional backgrounds, including a local pastor at First Presbyterian Church (**Greg Bolt**), a Twin Bluff Elementary language arts teacher (**Julie Martin**), the next generation leadership of a 70 year old Red Wing family business (**Cory Koplin**), an Assistant County Attorney for Kanabec County (**Mary Russell**), an HR and online learning specialist with Red Wing Shoe Company (**Marcy Watzl**), as well as two teen cast members, each with extensive acting and community leadership credits to their name (**Cayanne Korder** and **Graham Wheeler-Nelson**). Six year old **Linus Cuchetti**, a student at Red Cottage Montessori with a love for being on stage, rounds out the cast. Each brings their life experience and passion for the arts as a vehicle for self- and community-empowerment to this production.

Mature content advisory: this play contains strong language, dramatized family conflict including a physical fight, and subject matter related to sexual crimes and racially motivated hate crimes. Content may be offensive to some, and discretion is advised. Not recommended for those under age 15.

Calendar Information

Phoenix Theatre in ***Appropriate***

Thursday, March 22, 2018, 7:30 P.M.

Friday, March 23, 2018, 7:30 P.M.

Saturday, March 24, 2018, 7:30 P.M.*

Sunday, March 25, 2018, 3:00 P.M.*

@ The Sheldon Theatre of Performing Arts
443 West Third Street, Red Wing, MN 55066
651-388-8700

*Post Show Discussions follow the Saturday and Sunday Performances.

www.sheldontheatre.org

This event is part of the Sheldon's **Homegrown Series**, which enriches our local community, shaping lifelong memories through participation and the pride of watching friends, family and neighbors find and share their talents and passions. The Homegrown Series is sponsored by Nesbitt's Nursery, Oasis Eatery, and Red Wing Confectionary.

ABOUT PHOENIX THEATRE

Phoenix Theatre is the resident community theatre at Red Wing's historic Sheldon Theatre. Since 1993, Phoenix has staged 70 productions, involving over 1,000 performers, directors, designers, and musicians in the great American tradition of community theatre. Phoenix Theatre offers a supportive home for learning and growth in and through participation in performing arts for people of all ages and skill levels. Membership in Phoenix Theatre is open to anyone who is interested in being part of a community theatre organization.

Appropriate is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York

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