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The Nora Theatre Company produces Lauren Gunderson's
Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight
Lee Mikeska Gardner's Boston Acting Debut
September 4 – October 5, 2014
Physicist. Card shark. Bad ass.

CAMBRIDGE, MA – The Nora Theatre Company is proud to present **Lauren Gunderson's *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight***. The piece will be the Boston acting debut for **Lee Mikeska Gardner** in the title role. Ms. Gardner was appointed Artistic Director of **The Nora Theatre Company** in November 2013 following a national search. The press performance is Monday, September 8 at 7:30PM.

Tonight, Emilie du Châtelet, leading physicist (before there was such a word), card shark, and all-around bad ass during the Age of Enlightenment returns searching for answers: Love or Philosophy? Head or Heart? Join the outspoken, revolutionary, and brilliantly sexy Marquise who introduced Newtonian physics to France and took Voltaire as her lover (correcting errors in his work) for a “fiercely inquisitive and joyfully sexy” (San Francisco Chronicle) theatrical exploration. Traverse time and space with a woman living ahead of her time, ignoring the rules of polite society, with her only limitation being that of her dexterous mind.

Tickets for ***Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight*** start at \$15 and are currently on sale at CentralSquareTheater.org or by calling 866.811.4111.

Under Ms. Gardner's leadership, The Nora is sharpening its focus on the feminine perspective with the underlying belief that it is also an inclusive human perspective. Ms. Gardner says: “Like The Nora's 2012 production of *Photograph 51*, **Lauren Gunderson's *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight*** illuminates a little known historical figure who was profoundly influential in the advancement of science and, in Emilie's case, mathematics. We are introduced to a legendary mind, who was a bridge between Newton and Einstein, and, because she was female, has been lost to the history books. Beyond that, Ms. Gunderson examines the life choices and sacrifices of the Marquise that are resonant today, experienced by both women and men, as we all wrestle with creating a life and a legacy that will mean something. We all want to die knowing we counted.”

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About Lauren Gunderson

Lauren Gunderson is a playwright, screenwriter and short story author from Atlanta, GA. She has spoken nationally and internationally on the intersection of science and theatre and Arts Activism, and teaches

playwriting in San Francisco. Her plays include *I and You* (Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award), *Bauer*, *Silent Sky* (Jane Chambers Award finalist). Her 2011 three-city rolling world premiere of *Exit, Pursued By A Bear*, was featured in *American Theatre Magazine* and *The Week*. The production reached 20 communities across the US often winning “Best Comedy” accolades. *Leap* was published with Theatre Emory’s Playwriting Center (2004), and her first collection of plays, *Deepen The Mystery: Science and the South Onstage*, is published with iUniverse (2006). Her first musical, *The Amazing Adventures of Dr. Wonderful and Her Dog!* is becoming a series of children’s books published by Amazon. *Emilie: La Marquise Du Chatelet Defends Her Tonight* (published by Samuel French) was commissioned and premiered at South Coast Rep in 2009, and has run across the country and in England. Other plays include *By And By* and *Fire Work* (2011 winner for Aurora Theatre’s Global Age Project). She has developed plays with Second Stage, Red Bull, Primary Stages, New Repertory Theatre, Playwrights Foundation, TheatreWorks, The Magic Theatre, among others.

Ms. Gunderson is the recipient of the Berrilla Kerr Award for American Theatre, Young Playwright’s Award, Eric Bentley New Play Award and Essential Theatre Prize. She received a Sloan Science Script Award (2008) for her screenplay *Grand Unification*. Her short story “The Ascending Life”, won the Norembega Short Fiction Award and was published in the anthology, *The Shape of Content*; her science play *Background* was published in *ISOTOPE: A Journal of Nature and Science Writing*. Her string theory poem “Hook of a Number” was published in the anthology *Riffing On Strings*. She is a Playwright in Residence at The Playwrights Foundation, a Dramatists Guild member, and was a member of Just Theatre’s New Play Lab. She writes for The Huffington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and tweets at @LalaTellsAStory, and curates HowToPlaywright.com. She received her BA in English/Creative Writing at Emory University, and her MFA in Dramatic Writing at NYU Tisch, where she was also a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship.

About Lee Mikeska Gardner

Lee Mikeska Gardner (*Emilie*; Artistic Director, *The Nora Theatre Company*) has an extensive background in the theatre arts, education and administration, primarily in the Washington, D.C. region. Her work ranges from plays in development to the classics. She has helmed over twenty world premieres, three of which earned nominations for the Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play. Overall, her productions have received twenty-five Helen Hayes nominations. An Artistic Associate for ten years at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Lee directed *After Ashley* (Helen Hayes nomination for Outstanding Direction); *Fat Men In Skirts*; *Life During Wartime* (Helen Hayes nomination for Outstanding Direction); *Goodnight, Desdemona*, *Good Morning Juliet* (Helen Hayes nomination for Outstanding Direction); Doug Wright’s *Watbanaland*; *The Chinese Art of Placement*; *The Gene Pool* (world premiere); *Stop Kiss* and *Fuddy Meers*. As an Associate Artist with 1st Stage Lee directed *Blithe Spirit*; *The How and The Why*; *Humble Boy* and *Fuddy Meers*. Lee served as the Managing Director for Washington Shakespeare Company for five years and for them directed the world premieres of *Caesar and Dada* and *Learning Curves* (both by long-time collaborator Allyson Currin); *Equus*; *A Midsummer’s Nights Dream* (with 7 actors,) and *Deathwatch*, a co-production with Actors’ Theatre of Washington, with whom she directed the all-male *Dangerous Liaisons*. Other favorite directing projects include *Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie* at The Kennedy Center, *Angels in America, Parts 1 and 2* at Washington, D.C.’s Signature Theatre, T.S. Eliot’s *The Cocktail Party* for the Washington Stage Guild (Theatre

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Lobby Award,) *Bad Dates* at the Olney Theatre Center, *Golden Boy* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* with the Keegan Theatre (Artistic Associate), *The Butterfingers Angel...*, *Thom Pain (Based on Nothing)*, *Stones In His Pockets* and *Three Tall Women* at Rep Stage, where Lee also served as Managing Director for two years. As a performer Lee has earned a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Lead Actress for the role of Mary in *A House in the Country* with Charter Theatre, and 4 additional nominations: Carla in *A Taste of Fire* (Charter Theatre); Terry in *Sideman* (1st Stage); Patricia Preece in *Stanley* (Potomac Theatre Project); and Kimberly Bergalis in *Patient A* (Freedom Stage.) Other favorite roles include Clare in Tennessee Williams's *The Two-Character Play* at Spooky Action Theatre, Gertrude in *Hamlet*, Luisa in *A Shayna Maidel* (Best Actress, Baltimore City Paper) at Rep Stage and Hettie in Julie Jensen's *Two Headed*, (Washington Shakespeare Company and Mill Mountain Theatre.) Lee spent seven years as Associate Artistic Director with the Shenandoah Playwrights' Retreat working on plays in development with such varied playwrights as Julie Jensen, Sean Clark, Peter Coy, Kia Corthron, Karim Alrawi, Hoang To Mai, Dana Yeaton, Tat Ming Cheung, Motti Lerner, Heather McDonald, John Walch, Christopher Stezin and Jerome Hairston. She also works closely with emerging playwrights at The Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival as an actor, director and mentor. Lee has taught or served as a Guest Artist at institutes of higher learning around the country and founded the Acting Classes at Woolly Mammoth and Washington Shakespeare Company. Lee has a BFA in the Performing Arts from George Mason University and an MFA in Acting from The Catholic University of America.

About Director Judy Braha

Judy Braha has been a director, teacher, actor and arts advocate in New England for over three decades. She has directed regionally at many theaters, including Actors Shakespeare Project, Boston Center for American Performance, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, New Repertory Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theater, Huntington Theatre Company, Boston Playwrights Theatre, and Nora Theatre Company. As a founding member of The New Ehrlich Theater, Judy directed many award winning productions including *Bent*, *The Fifth of July* and *House of Blue Leaves*, paving the way for the theater renaissance in Boston's South End. Currently head of the MFA Directing Program at Boston University's School of Theater, her teaching and guest artist credits also include Brandeis University, Emerson College, Mount Holyoke College, MIT, Northeastern, Wheaton College, Trinity Repertory Company, Conservatory, Suffolk University, and the Boston University Summer Theater Institute. Most recently, Ms. Braha directed *Our Class* and *The Road to Mecca* (BCAP); *Othello* (Actor's Shakespeare Project); and Joyce Van Dyke's new plays *Deported/ a dream play* and *The Oil Thief* (Boston Playwright's Theatre). *The Oil Thief* won an Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding New Play in 2009. Ms. Braha has an MFA from Boston University, a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University and continues to be a proud member of Stage Source where she sat on its Board of Directors for the first six years.

About the Cast of *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight*

Steven Barkhimer (*Voltaire*) most recently performed at Central Square Theater in The Nora Theatre Company's production of *Absurd Person Singular*. Prior to that he appeared in Underground Railway Theater's productions of *Distracted* and *Yesterday Happened: Remembering H.M.*; *Galileo*, directed by the late, great David Wheeler; *Alice's Adventures Underground* and *Einstein's Dreams*. Recent credits include *Middletown* with Actors' Shakespeare Project, of which he is a Resident Acting Company member; *The Sussman Variations* at Boston Playwrights' Theatre; *Lumberjacks In Love* at Stoneham Theatre, a show for which he also supplied musical direction; and *Witness for the Prosecution* and *The Foreigner* at The

Barnstormers Theatre in New Hampshire. His play *Windowmen*, produced at Boston Playwrights' Theatre last fall, was the recipient of the Elliot Norton Award for Outstanding New Script and the IRNE Award for Best New Play (2014).

Michelle Dowd (*The Madame*) is thrilled to be working with Ms. Gardner, Ms. Braha, cast, and crew at The Nora Theatre Company. Ms. Dowd has performed with many Boston Theater companies over the years. For regional mainstage experience, she has worked on productions of *The Amen Corner*, *Nomanthemba*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (The Huntington Theatre Company); she has also understudied for *Seven Guitars*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *From the Mississippi Delta*. She has performed in *Crowns* (Lyric Stage); the *Brother Sister Plays* (Company One); and *Violet* (SpeakEasy Stage Company). In addition, she has worked with the Zeitgeist Theater Company, winning an IRNE Award for Best Actress in Edward Albee's New England premiere of the three-act version of *Seascape*, and Best Supporting Actress for *The Story*. She was also part of the cast for IRNE award winning productions of *Brother Sister Plays* and *Spring Awakening*. She was last seen in *Distracted* (Underground Railway Theater), and in a stage reading of Danny Bryck's new play *The River and The Sea* (New Rep). Ms. Dowd also provides voice-over talent in the Boston area.

Sophorl Ngin (*Soubrette*) was last seen at Central Square Theater in Underground Railway Theater's *Sila*. Prior to that she appeared in the staged reading of Dan Hunter's play *Black Cat* and URT/The Nora's holiday production of *Arabian Nights*. Recently she appeared as Izzy in *Seminar* (Stoneham Theatre). Other acting credits include Phebe in *As You Like It*, Chorus Leader in *The Bacchae*, and Madame Davina in the film *Dark City*. Ms. Ngin is a principal dancer with the Angkor Dance Troupe, a professional Cambodian classical ballet and folk dance ensemble in the Boston area. When not performing onstage, Ms. Ngin is a co-director/writer/actor with Flying Orb Productions, an out-of-the-dark experimental film, dance, and performance art company. Directing credits include *The Nectar of Immortality* and *Apsara Dancing Stones*.

Lewis D. Wheeler (*The Gentleman*) last performed at CST in Brecht's *The Life of Galileo* (Underground Railway Theater). Regional credits include *No Man's Land*, for which he earned an IRNE nomination for Best Supporting Actor (American Repertory Theatre); *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *Pattern of Life* (New Rep); *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *A Number*, *Glass Menagerie* (Lyric Stage Company of Boston); *Doubt*, *An Ideal Husband* (Gloucester Stage Company); *Arcadia*, for which he earned an IRNE Nomination for Best Actor, and *Troilus and Cressida* (Publick Theatre Boston); *No Exit* (Payomet); *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* (Shakespeare Now!); *Bald Soprano*, *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, *What the Butler Saw*, and five seasons with Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theatre; and work at American Stage (Florida), Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Huntington Theatre Company, Wellesley Summer Theatre, Stoneham Theatre, Vineyard Playhouse, and Center for Arts in Natick. He is a former founding member of the Harbor Stage in Wellfleet, where he performed in *The Seagull* and *Hedda Gabler* and directed David Rabe's *Sticks and Bones*. Film and television credits include *The Company Men*, *Pink Panther 2*, *Gone Baby Gone*, *Louisa May Alcott* (PBS), *Brotherhood*, pilots *Hatfields & McCoys* and *Gilded Lilys*, and the upcoming film *Black Mass* about the Whitey Bulger saga. Mr. Wheeler earned his BA in theatre and film studies at Cornell University and his MFA from the American Film Institute.

The creative team for ***Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight*** includes Resident Scenic Designer for The Nora Theatre Company, **Steven Royal**, Costume Designer **Chelsea Kerl**, Lighting Designer **John R. Malinowski**, Sound Designer **David Wilson**, and Properties Artisan **Megan F. Kinneen**. **Dominique D. Burford** is the production Stage Manager. **Sophie Gibson-Rush** is the assistant director.

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Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight plays at Central Square Theater, 450 Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge, Thursday, September 4 through Sunday, October 5, 2014. Performances are Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30PM, Fridays at 8PM, Saturdays at 3PM and 8PM, and Sundays at 2PM. Tickets may be purchased by calling (866) 811-4111, at the Central Square Theater box office, or online at CentralSquareTheater.org. For box office hours, group discounts, and more information call (617) 576-9278 x210.

Central Square Theater (CST) opened in 2008 through a groundbreaking partnership between **The Nora Theatre Company** (The Nora) and **Underground Railway Theater** (URT). This collaboration has been called a model for the arts community (The Boston Foundation, Culture is our Commonwealth, and The National Collaboration Prize), as it has paired two like-minded performing arts organizations in a strategic alliance with the City of Cambridge and MIT, resulting in the development of a state-of-the-art performing arts center in the heart of Central Square. CST has a mission to support its two theaters-in-residence while maintaining a shared vision of artists and audiences creating theater vital to their communities. The Nora and URT have a combined track record of over 50 years producing award-winning theater. Located in Central Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and steeped in its multiracial, intergenerational, ethnically and economically diverse neighborhoods, the CST theater experience exudes a democratic energy where classes, races and age groups come together to be inspired, entertained and energized.

Press inquiries should be directed to Central Square Theater Marketing Director Nicholas Peterson, phone: 617.576.9278 x205 or via email ndp@centralsquaretheater.org

Central Square Theater is accessible to persons with special needs and to those requiring wheelchair seating.

For further information please call 617.576.9278 or visit CentralSquareTheater.org.

CALENDAR AND RELATED FACTS AT A GLANCE

Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight

by Lauren Gunderson

directed by Judy Braha

September 4 – October 5, 2014

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Tonight, Emilie du Châtelet, leading physicist (before there was such a word), card shark, and all-around bad ass during the Age of Enlightenment returns searching for answers: Love or Philosophy? Head or Heart? Join the outspoken, revolutionary, and brilliantly sexy Marquise who introduced Newtonian physics to France and took Voltaire as her lover (correcting errors in his work) for a “fiercely inquisitive and joyfully sexy” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) theatrical exploration. Traverse time and space with a woman living ahead of her time, ignoring the rules of polite society, with her only limitation being that of her dexterous mind.

Produced by: The Nora Theatre Company

Director: Judy Braha

Production Stage Manager: Dominique D. Burford

Design Team: Steven Royal (Scenic), Chelsea Kerl (Costumes),
John R. Malinowski (Lighting), David Wilson (Sound),
Megan F. Kinneen (Properties)

Performing at: Central Square Theater, 450 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139

Press Performance: Monday, September 8, 2013 at 7:30PM

Performance Schedule: Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30PM, Fridays at 8PM,
Saturdays at 3PM & 8PM, Sundays at 2PM

Run Time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

Ticket Prices: Tickets for all performances start at \$15

Student Rush: \$15 with valid college ID, day-of-show. Subject to availability.

Box Office: (866) 811-4111, CentralSquareTheater.org

Media Information: Nicholas Peterson, (617) 576-9278 x205

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