

VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, December 28, 2019

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Press Performance: Monday, January 27 at 7:30pm or by request.

(CAMBRIDGE) – From January 23 to February 23, 2020, Underground Railway Theater is proud to present **VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY**.

Two women – one privileged and the other from the streets – strive to navigate an unfair society that punishes them for every mistake. (Bad) Becky isn't afraid to break the rules while (Good) Amelia fears even to bend them. Kate Hamill's (*Sense & Sensibility*) adaptation of Thackeray's **VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY** explores how flexible our morals become when our luck turns against us. "A gift to actors and a goody bag for its audience." —*The New York Times*.

David R. Gammons returns to Central Square Theater to direct **VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY**. He previously directed *Frankenstein* last season.

The cast of **VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY** includes Josphine Moshiri Elwood, David Keohane, Paul Melendy, Malukah McHerrin-Cobb, Stewart Evan Smith, Evan Turissini, and Debra Wise.

The design team is David R. Gammons (*Scenic Designer*), Leslie Held (*Costume Designer*), Jeff Adelberg (*Lighting Designer*), David Wilson (*Sound Designer*) Ciara McAloon (*Properties Designer*), Victor Ventrucelli (*Fight Director*). Elizabeth Yvette Ramirez is the Stage Manager and SAmy Lehmitt is the Assistant Stage Manager.

VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY will run January 23 to February 23, 2020 at Central Square Theater, 450 Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge. For tickets and other information the public is invited to call Central Square Theater's Box Office at 617.576.9278 x1 or visit CentralSquareTheater.org

Playwright Information

KATE HAMILL (*Playwright*) was named 2017's Playwright of the Year by the *Wall Street Journal*. She has been one of the 10 most-produced playwrights in the country, 3 seasons running (2017-2020); in both 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, she wrote two of the top 10 most produced plays. Future productions include four world premieres in 2019/2020: *Dracula* at Classic Stage Company, *Emma* at the Guthrie, *Prostitute Play* at Cygnet Theater, and *Scarlet Letter* at South Coast Rep. Her previously-produced plays include *Sense and Sensibility* (Bedlam; in which she originated the role of Marianne) - Winner, Off-Broadway Alliance Award; Nominee, Drama League Award; 265+ performances off-Broadway; "Top Ten Theater of 2014" - Ben Brantley; "the greatest stage adaptation of this novel in history" - *Huffington Post*. Other plays include *Vanity Fair* (in which she originated the role of Becky Sharp; Nominee, Off Broadway Alliance Award; WSJ Critic's Pick), *Pride and Prejudice* (in which she originated the role of Lizzy Bennet; Nominee, Off Broadway Alliance Award; "Best Theater of 2017", *Huffington Post*; WSJ Critic's Pick), *Little Women*, and *Mansfield Park* (originated role of Mary Crawford). Her plays have been produced off-Broadway, at A.R.T., Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theatre, Seattle Rep, PlayMaker's Rep, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Dallas Theater Center, Folger Theatre (8 Helen Hayes Award nominations; Winner, best production - S&S) & more. Kate's *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Little Women* are published by DPS. She is currently working on an adaptation of *The Odyssey* (commissioned by A.R.T.) as well as several new original plays - including *Love Poem*, *In The Mines* (Sundance Semi-Finalist; now collaborating with The Bengsons on this piece), *Em* (Red Bull New Play finalist), the *Prostitute Play* (O'Neill Semi-Finalist), and *The Piper* (O'Neill Finalist, PlayPenn Haas Fellow play). Additional acting credits include: *The Seagull* (Bedlam; "best classical productions of 2014" - WSJ) *Noises Off* (Syracuse Stage), *The General from America* (HVSE), *Cyrano* ("Outstanding Performance by an Actress" - DFW Critics Awards, Amphibian Stage), *Internet Famous* (Youngblood), *Dreams of A West Texas Marsupial Girl* (PearlDamour), *All That Fall* (Cherry Lane), *When the Levee Broke* (Workshop Theater), *Playboy of Paris* (Phoenix Theatre Ensemble), *Separation Rapid* (Chenango River Theatre), *Walk Two Moons* (Theatreworks), *Good Person of Szechwan* (Columbia Stages), *The Nameday Party* (Schapiro Theatre). Numerous independent films that she has performed in have gone on to festival success, including: Clermont Ferrand Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Festival del Film Locarno, Brooklyn Film Festival, Boston Int'l Film Festival, New Orleans Film Festival (Jury Award Finalist), Honolulu Film Festival, Black Maria Film Festival (Stellar Award), etc. Kate has a BFA in Acting, Ithaca College. She currently studies with Jane Guyer Fujita.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY (*Novelist*) was born on July 18, 1811, in Calcutta, India. He was the only child of Richmond and Anne Thackeray. In 1817, after the death of his father, five-year old Thackeray was sent to England to live with his aunt while he received his education. In 1829 Thackeray entered Trinity College at Cambridge University, where he was only an average student. He left the university the next year, convinced that it was not worth his while to spend more time in pursuit of a second-rate degree under an unsuitable educational institution. A six-month stay in Weimar, Germany, gave Thackeray a more sophisticated polish, as well as a more objective view of English manners. After Thackeray returned to London, he began studying law at the Middle Temple. At the age of twenty-one Thackeray rejected law and went to Paris, France, to study French, to draw, and to attend plays. Between 1837 and 1844 Thackeray wrote critical articles on art and literature for numerous papers and journals, but he contributed most of his fiction of this period to *Fraser's Magazine*. In *The Memoirs of C. J. Yellowplush*, which appeared in a series from 1837 to 1838, he parodied (humorously wrote in the style of) the high-flown language of "fashnable" novels. *Vanity Fair* (1847–1848) established Thackeray's fame permanently. Set in the time just before and after the Battle of Waterloo (1815; a battle that ended French domination of Europe), this novel is a portrait of society and centers on three families interrelated by acquaintance and marriage. In the unrestrained and resourceful Becky Sharp, Thackeray created one of fiction's most engaging characters. In *Pendennis* (1849–1850) Thackeray concentrated on one character. The story of the development of a young writer, the first part draws on Thackeray's own life at school, at college, and as a journalist. The second half, which he wrote after a severe illness, lost the novel's focus. It presents only a superficial (having insincere and shallow qualities) analysis of character in Pen's struggle to choose between a practical, worldly life and one of domestic virtue. *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852), Thackeray's most carefully planned and executed work, is a historical novel set in the eighteenth century. He felt a temperamental sympathy with this age of satire and urbane wit. *Esmond* presents a vivid and convincing realization of the manners and historical background of the period. It contains some of Thackeray's most complex and firmly controlled characters.

Director Information

DAVID R. GAMMONS (*Director and Scenic Designer*) Central Square Theater: *Frankenstein*; is a director, designer, visual artist, and theatre educator. David is an Associate Professor at The Boston Conservatory at Berklee and is on the Theatre Arts faculty of MIT. Recent directing projects include *The Bald Soprano* at the Boston Conservatory and *Macbeth* for Commonwealth Shakespeare. He has also directed *Edward II*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Medea*,

The Hotel Nepenthe, *The Duchess of Malfi*, and *Titus Andronicus* for Actors' Shakespeare Project; and the New England premieres of *Hand to God*, *Necessary Monsters*, *The Whale*, *The Motherfucker with the Hat*, *Red*, and *Blackbird* at SpeakEasy Stage Company. He helmed the world premieres of *The Farm* by Walt McGough and *The Salt Girl* by John Kuntz at Boston Playwrights' Theatre, and the New England premieres of *Cherry Docs*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* and *My Name is Rachel Corrie* at New Rep. His work has garnered numerous awards, including the 2007 and 2017 Elliot Norton Awards for Outstanding Director and the 2012 and 2013 Elliot Norton Awards for Outstanding Production. David is a graduate of the Directing Program of the ART Institute at Harvard and of the Visual and Environmental Studies Department of Harvard University. For more information, please visit DavidRGammons.com.

Actor Information

JOSEPHINE MOSHIRI ELWOOD (*Becky Sharp*) Central Square Theater: debut; Previous theatre credits include *Onegin*, *Gabriel* (Greater Boston Stage Company), *Old Money* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company), *Hand to God*, *The Whale* (SpeakEasy Stage Company), *Othello*, *God's Ear* (Actors' Shakespeare Project), *Macbeth*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shit-Faced Shakespeare). Film credits include *Nos4a2* and *The Immigrant*. Josephine is a graduate of Emerson College where she received her BFA in acting.

DAVID KEOHANE (*Rawdon Crawley*, *Mr. Sedley*, *General Tufto*) Central Square Theater: *The Crucible*, *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol* (2017), *Matchless & The Happy Prince* (2015); Chicago area credits include productions with Goodman Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Jackalope Theatre, Commission Theatre, and Oak Park Festival Theatre. David received his BFA from Boston University with an acting certificate from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. DavidMKeohane.com.

PAUL MELENDY (*William Dobbin*, *Miss Pinkerton*, *Rose Crawley*) Central Square Theater: *A Disappearing Number*; Paul is elated to be reunited with not only Underground Railway Theater, but with director David R. Gammons as well – seen last with the former in 2014, and the latter in 2007's *Titus Andronicus*. Recent New England stage performances include *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre), the title role in *Noir Hamlet* (Centastage), of which he enjoyed a successful Scottish run of at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival this past August, tackling a Clown in Gloucester Stage Company's *The 39 Steps*, playing as Narrator for *Peter and the Wolf* with the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra (Symphony Hall), and taking on Patrolman Mancuso in *A Confederacy of Dunces* starring Nick Offerman (Huntington Theatre Company). Paul is a regular onstage in Boston's ongoing *Shear Madness* as Tony at the Charles Playhouse and is remembered on local television screens in a popular Bernie and Phyl's ad as The Naked Guy. In addition to *Vanity Fair* this

season, he can also be seen in 2020 in Merrimack's upcoming *The Lowell Offering*, in Greater Boston Stage Company's *Miss Holmes Returns*, and on the silver screen with *Love, Weddings & Other Disasters*, starring Jeremy Irons and Diane Keaton. Other film credits include *Father of the Year*, *Unfinished Business*, *The Pink Panther Deux*, and *The Makeover*. For even MORE info on Paul, here's his website: PaulMelendy.com. Thank you for your gracious attendance!

MALIKAH MCHERRIN-COBB (*Amelia Sedley*) Central Square Theater: debut; Malika has appeared in a number of roles in Regional Theatre including Zoe, from *The Niceties* at The New Hampshire Theatre Project, and The Prince/Balthazar, in *Romeo & Juliet* at Commonwealth Shakespeare Company. She wants to thank God, family, and friends for always being so supportive of the journey and process! Follow @TheSouthernBoheme.

STEWART EVAN SMITH (*George Osborne, Lesser Pitt, Lady Bareacres*) Central Square Theater: *The Crucible, Les Liaisons Dangerous, The Edge of Peace*; Stewart is a Boston based actor. His most recent credits include *The Three Musketeers, It's A Wonderful Life* (Greater Boston Stage Company). *Between Riverside and Crazy* (Speakeasy Stage), *To Kill A Mockingbird* (Gloucester Stage), *Edward II* (Actors' Shakespeare Project), *Murph* (Open Theatre Project), *Lucky Stiff* (Greater Boston Stage Company), *Noises Off* (Priscilla Beach Theatre), and *Dog Act* (Theatre on Fire). For three years, he was a regular performer with Shit-Faced Shakespeare, and is a regular ensemble performer with Mystery Cafe Dinner Theatre.

EVAN TURISSINI (*Joss Sedley, Sir Pitt, Mr. Osborne, Miss Jemima*) Central Square Theater: debut. Acting credits include: *The View UpStairs* (u/s, performed), *Every Brilliant Thing* (u/s, performed) (SpeakEasy Stage Company); *Twelfth Night, Shipwrecked! An Entertainment* (Moonbox Productions); *Three Sisters* (Apollinaire Theatre Company); *Julius Caesar, Incident at Vichy* (Praxis Stage Company); *Trapped* (Strange News Theatre); and more. Evan is the Artistic Director of Acropolis Stage Company, where he recently directed their inaugural production of *Cherry Docs*. By day, he serves as the Creative Services Associate for SpeakEasy Stage. Evan is a proud ensemble member of the international mega-hit Shit-Faced Shakespeare, in which he has played Claudio, Friar Laurence, Mercutio, and will be appearing as Bassanio in their upcoming rendition of *The Merchant of Venice*, coming to Davis Square in May 2020.

DEBRA WISE (*Manager, Matilda Crawley, Lord Steyne; Artistic Director, URT*) Central Square Theater: *Ada and the Engine, A Christmas Carol, The Happy Prince & Matchless* (director), *Homebody, Copenhagen, Brundibar & But the Giraffe!, The Other Place, Distracted, The How and the Why, Einstein's Dreams, From Orchids to Octopi: An Evolutionary Love Story, Yesterday Happened: Remembering H.M., Breaking the Code, Arabian Nights and A Christmas Memory*; Debra launched Underground Railway Theater in Oberlin, Ohio with founding Artistic Director Wes Sanders, who recently completed an e-book documenting URT's decades as a touring company (1978-2008). With Sanders, Wise helped create over 30 new works which

toured nationally and internationally. Wise led URT collaborations with Boston Symphony Orchestra, created and staged plays for Boston's Museum of Science, New Center for Arts and Culture, the Mary Baker Eddy Library, the MFA and the ICA, and the Cambridge Arts Council. With playwrights Alan Brody and the late Jon Lipsky, and Alan Lightman, she co-founded Catalyst Collaborative@MIT. She has led projects with Mount Auburn Cemetery and the National Park Service: *Roots of Liberty – The Haitian Revolution and the American Civil War*, featuring over 50 actors, dancers, musicians, and guest artists Danny Glover and Edwidge Danticat. URT has won five Elliot Norton awards under Wise's leadership. Appearances on other Boston stages include Poets' Theatre, New Repertory Theatre, SpeakEasy Stage Company, and Boston Playwrights' Theater. New York credits include *The Haggadah* at The Public with Julie Taymor. Wise has received several Elliot Norton and IRNE award nominations for her performances. Her work as a playwright includes *States of Grace* (adapted from Grace Paley's work) and *Alice's Adventures Underground* (from Lewis Carroll). She collaborates with Harvard's Project Zero, training teachers on using theater to help students think deeply across the curriculum.

NATHAN MALIN (*Understudy*) Central Square Theater: *The Crucible* (u/s), *Matchless & The Happy Prince* (u/s); Previous acting credits include *Admissions* (SpeakEasy Stage Company) 1984 and *The Lathe of Heaven* (Boston University), *Maura Dunne* (The Poets' Theatre), *Titus Andronicus* (Actors' Shakespeare Project), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Boston Theatre Company), and was a production intern on *Uncle Romeo Vanya Juliet* (Bedlam). He is currently pursuing a BFA in Theatre Arts from Boston University, and trained at Shakespeare & Company.

Central Square Theater is accessible to persons with special needs and to those requiring wheelchair seating. For tickets and other information about **VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY** the public is invited to call Central Square Theater's Box Office at 617.576.9278 x1 or visit CentralSquareTheater.org.

About Central Square Theater

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 Director of Marketing Nicholas Peterson, 617.576.9278 x205 (Office), 617.512.1688 (Cell - This cell number not for publication)
Email: NDP@CentralSquareTheater.org

VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY

by Kate Hamill, from the novel by William Makepeace Thackeray

directed by David R. Gammons

Produced by Underground Railway Theater

Two women – one privileged and the other from the streets – strive to navigate an unfair society that punishes them for every mistake. (Bad) Becky isn't afraid to break the rules while (Good) Amelia fears even to bend them. Kate Hamill's (*Sense & Sensibility*) adaptation of Thackeray's **VANITY FAIR, AN (IM-)MORALITY PLAY** explores how flexible our morals become when our luck turns against us. "A gift to actors and a goody bag for its audience." —*The New York Times*.

Cast: Josephine Moshiri Elwood, David Keohane, Paul Melendy, Malikah McHerrin-Cobb, Stewart Evan Smith, Evan Turissini, and Debra Wise

Director: David R. Gammons

Design Team: David R. Gammons (*Scenic Designer*), Leslie Held (*Costume Designer*), Jeff Adelberg (*Lighting Designer*), David Wilson (*Sound Designer*) Ciara McAloon (*Properties Designer*), Victor Ventricelli (*Fight Director*) and Erika Bailey (*Dialect Consultant*)

Stage Manager: Elizabeth Yvette Ramirez, Amy Lehrmitt (Assistant Stage Manager)

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

Performance Schedule: January 23 - February 23, 2020
Weeknights: 7:30pm. Friday: 8PM, Saturday: 3PM & 8PM,
Sunday: 2PM

Estimated Run Time: 2 hours, 30 minutes - including an intermission (estimated)

Press Performance: Monday, January 27 at 7PM

Ticket Prices: Tickets begin at \$25. Discounts for students, seniors, and groups.

Student Rush: \$15 with valid college ID, in person at the box-office only, one hour before curtain, subject to availability.

Box Office: 617.576.9278 x1, CentralSquareTheater.org

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