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For Immediate Release

Main Street Theater Announces Cast for The Book of Will Plus Final Title for the New Season

Main Street Theater (MST) will open its 43rd Season with the Regional Premiere of Lauren Gunderson's *The Book of Will*. This beautiful play tells the tale of how Shakespeare's First Folio came into existence thanks to the loyalty and love of his dear friends. Gunderson "has peopled the stage with lively, historically based characters... She paints a vivid portrait of the times in language sometimes formal, sometimes poetic and often...contemporary... [THE BOOK OF WILL] serves as homage to those who sacrificed to make the first folio happen and to Shakespeare's magnificent words." — Westword (Denver, CO).

After Shakespeare's death, his plays were pirated, performed and published in inaccurate and clumsy versions. Loyal friends and actors in Shakespeare's company embark on a labor of love to compile the First Folio and preserve the words that shaped their lives. Main Street's talented cast for *The Book of Will* includes John Felтч as Ben Jonson; Rutherford Cravens as Richard Burbage; Joel Sandel and Dwight Clark as John Heminges and Henry Condell, the members of Shakespeare's company responsible for ensuring the creation of the First Folio; Ivy Castle Simpson and Brittny Bush as Rebecca and Alice Heminges, John's wife and daughter; Elizabeth Marshall Black as Elizabeth Condell, Henry's wife; and rounding out the cast are Brandon Balque, Shane Manning, Blake Weir, and Zack Varela.

The theater has also announced the final show of its 2018 – 2019 Season, Alan Ayckbourn's brilliantly-constructed farce *Relatively Speaking*. This was Ayckbourn's first hit, even earning him a congratulatory telegram from Noël Coward. This smart, perfectly-crafted comedy of mistaken identities and motives will have audiences roaring with laughter while reflecting ever so slightly on the ups and downs of married life, the "fascinating intimations of the middle-class marital angst that was to become his speciality." (The Guardian)

Ginny and Greg are in love, and despite the awkward amount of flowers and chocolates oddly filling her flat, Greg proposes as Ginny is heading off for the day to see her parents – or so she says. Greg has found the address and manages to arrive first (to surprise her and ask her father for her hand), not realizing that these are not, in fact, Ginny's parents. The "parents," Sheila and Philip, welcome Greg into their house, each thinking he is someone else. The unraveling of this hilarious mess is so well-constructed, it's no wonder Sir Noël wrote to Ayckbourn!

The Book of Will by Lauren Gunderson
Sept. 22 – Oct. 21, 2018

Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley By Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon
Nov. 23 – Dec. 23, 2018

The Secretary by Kyle John Schmidt
Jan. 19 – Feb. 10, 2019

The Weir by Conor McPherson
Mar. 16 – Apr. 7, 2019

Relatively Speaking

May 4 – May 26, 2019

About Main Street Theater

Main Street Theater provides theater experiences for all ages. Founded in 1975, our MainStage produces professional, intimate, literary plays for adults and operates under an Actors' Equity Association union contract; our Theater for Youth produces professional, engaging productions based on children's literature for families and school groups, both in-house and on tour around Texas; and we offer Education and Outreach programs on-site and at satellite locations around the Greater Houston area for youth aged 4 – high school. We work out of 2 facilities: our Rice Village home on Times Blvd., and as part of the MATCH (Midtown Arts & Theater Center Houston) on Main Street.

Main Street Theater is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national service organization for not-for-profit theaters, of Theatre for Young Audiences/USA (formerly ASSITEJ), the world theatre network of theatre for children and young people, and a founding member of Houston Arts Partners. Main Street Theater is funded in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance, and the Texas Commission on the Arts. United Airlines is the official airline of Main Street Theater.

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