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INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE

Media contact:

Samantha Gordon
Marketing Associate
973-845-6740
SGordon@ShakespeareNJ.org

The Shakespeare Theatre Concludes Its Acclaimed 2017 Season with an American Holiday Classic, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*

MADISON, NJ — **The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey** wraps its 2017 season with a delightful adaptation of a treasured holiday film, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*. After a successful staged reading of the play in 2016, **director Doug West** returns to direct this new take on a beloved tale. **Adapter Joe Landry** has brought the 1946 film to the stage where he has gathered a troupe of radio actors and live Foley sound artists to perform *It's a Wonderful Life* in a 1940s radio station. Performances begin on November 30. Patrons can **purchase tickets at The F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre** located at 36 Madison Avenue, Madison, **by calling the Box Office at 973-408-5600 or by going online at www.ShakespeareNJ.org.**

A group of actors and technicians gather in a 1940s radio station at holiday time to perform a live broadcast of *It's a Wonderful Life*. Replete with Foley sound effects, commercials from the era, and sprinkled throughout with a generous dose of humor and music, this charming piece brings the famous story to life in a new way and fills the theatre with the inspiring spirit of the holidays.

Director Doug West said, "*It's a Wonderful Life* has been a part of my holiday tradition for years. We've assembled a fantastic cast and creative team for this production, and I'm very excited at the idea of sharing this iconic holiday tale with our audience."

Turpin Realtors and Wegmans are presenting sponsors of *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*. Todd Rosen, The Shakespeare Theatre's Managing Director said, "We are thankful for the support from our Presenting Sponsors Turpin Realtors and Wegmans. Community partners are vital to the Shakespeare Theatre's ability to create ambitious productions and innovative education programs. We applaud their commitment to our Theatre and leadership within our community."

The Cast:

John Keabler returns for his second season, most recently appearing in this year's opening production of *The Merchant of Venice*. He reprises the leading role of George Bailey after

playing it in last year's holiday reading of *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*. Mr. Keabler's film and television credits include *Madam Secretary*, *30 Rock*, *Faith, Love and Whiskey*, and *Sugar*.

Susan Maris will play Mary Hatch and is in her seventh season with The Shakespeare Theatre. Her company credits include *Much Ado About Nothing*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Othello*, *The Grapes of Wrath* on the Main Stage; and *The Learned Ladies* and *The Servant of Two Masters* on the Outdoor Stage. Her film and television credits include *Limitless*, *The Blood Painting*, and *College Humor*.

Andy Paterson will play the role of Clarence Oddbody as he returns for his 13th season. His company credits include *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (2016 and 2003), *A Most Dangerous Woman*, *Oliver Twist*, and *The Tempest*, among many others. He has performed regionally with Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Paper Mill Playhouse, and Yale Repertory Theatre.

For his eighth season with The Shakespeare Theatre, **John Ahlin** will play Mr. Potter. His company credits include *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, *Coriolanus*, *The Alchemist*, *Henry IV, Part One*, and *A Christmas Carol*, among many others. He has appeared on Broadway in *Waiting for Godot* and *Journey's End*.

Tina Stafford returns for her seventh season as Ma Bailey. Her company credits include last season's *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, *A Christmas Carol* (2011 and 2007), and *Carnival!*. Ms. Stafford has performed with the first national tour of *Once*, and her regional credits include Paper Mill Playhouse, La Jolla Playhouse, and Goodspeed Musicals.

After appearing in this summer's *The Bungler*, **James Michael Reilly** returns in his 24th season as Billy Bailey. His other company credits include *The Alchemist*, *Our Town*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Taming of the Shrew* (2010 and 1993), and *The Grapes of Wrath*, among many others. He has appeared in the European tour of *West Side Story* and Off-Broadway in *The Comedy of Errors*.

Javon Johnson, last seen in the Theatre's *Shakespeare in Love*, will play Joseph for his third season. His company credits include *Coriolanus* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* on the Main Stage, as well as the 2016 and 2017 Shakespeare LIVE! tours. Mr. Johnson was also assistant to the director for the 2015 Shakespeare LIVE! productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth*.

As Violet Bick, **Elizabeth Colwell** returns for her third season with The Shakespeare Theatre. Her company credits include *Coriolanus* on the Main Stage, as well as the 2016 and 2017 Shakespeare LIVE! tours. Her New York credits include The Hearth, Arts on Site, and Dixon Place.

Russell Sperberg makes his STNJ Main Stage debut as Harry Bailey. He previously appeared in the 2017 Shakespeare LIVE! tour of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Julius Caesar*. His New York credits include En Garde Arts, Everyday Inferno Theatre Company, and New York Theatre Workshop.

Company member **Warren Pace** will provide the live Foley sound effects throughout the performance. Mr. Pace is currently the Theatre's sound technician.

The Director:

Doug West makes his Main Stage directing debut after 16 seasons with The Shakespeare Theatre, where is currently the Associate Director of Education. Mr. West directed last year's staged reading of *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* as well as this year's Shakespeare LIVE! touring production of *Julius Caesar*. He is also the resident Stage Combat Instructor for the Shakespeare Theatre's Summer Professional Training Program, and his fight choreographer credits include *Coriolanus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Henry VI: Blood and Roses* on the Main Stage.

The Creative Team:

The F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre will be transformed into a 1940s radio station by the creative talents of **Scenic Designer Charlie Calvert**, **Lighting Designer Matthew Adelson**, **Costume Designer Natalie Loveland**, and **Sound Designer Steven Beckel**. The **Production Stage Manager** is **Kathy Snyder**.

Tickets:

Single tickets for *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* begin at \$29 for preview performances and \$69 for regular performances. The Theatre is proud to bring back its successful **30 UNDER 30** program for the 2017 season. Patrons aged 30 and under can purchase tickets for only \$30 with valid ID, subject to availability. For tickets, patrons can **call the Box Office at 973-408-5600 or visit www.ShakespeareNJ.org**.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey offers various cost-saving opportunities, including \$15 **student rush tickets**, which are available 30 minutes prior to each performance, with a valid student ID, and a limited number of **Pay What You Can** tickets for every performance on a first come, first serve basis. Season Memberships are also available and provide significant cost savings.

Special Performances:

For the same price as a regular ticket, the **Symposium Series performances** offer a post-show discussion with the cast and artistic staff. For *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, the symposia will be held following the Tuesday, December 12 at 7:30 p.m., Saturday, December 16 at 2:00 p.m., and Saturday, December 23 at 2:00 p.m. performances.

The **Know the Show** pre-show talks are offered free-of-cost. Prior to the show, an artist from The Shakespeare Theatre presents a pre-performance talk providing background information and an inside perspective on the production. This program is free with the purchase of a performance ticket, and for *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* will be held on Thursday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m., with the show beginning at 8:00 p.m. The Know the Show talk will be **broadcast live on the Theatre's Facebook** page so patrons can watch and interact live from home on their electronic device.

There will be special **family matinees** in the final week of performances for *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* on the following dates: Wednesday, December 27 at 2:00 p.m.; Friday, December 29 at 2:00 p.m.; and Sunday, December 31 at 4:30 p.m.

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The acclaimed Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is an independent, professional theatre company located on the Drew University campus. One of the leading Shakespeare theatres in the nation, serving approximately 100,000 children and adults annually, it is New Jersey's largest professional theatre company dedicated solely to Shakespeare's canon and other world classics. Through its distinguished productions and education programs, the company strives to illuminate the universal and lasting relevance of the classics for contemporary audiences.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's programs are made possible, in part, by funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional major support is received from Bank of America, The Merrill G. and Erita E. Hastings Foundation, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The F.M. Kirby Foundation, The Edward T. Cone Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, CTW Foundation, The Samuel H. Scripps Foundation, and The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, as well as contributions from numerous corporations, foundations, government agencies and individuals.

***It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* Snapshot:**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: Bonnie J. Monte

MANAGING DIRECTOR: Todd Rosen

MAIN STAGE:

36 Madison Avenue (at Lancaster Road)

Madison, NJ

(located on Drew University's campus)

It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play

Adapted by Joe Landry

Directed by Doug West

Performances begin November 30

Previews: Thursday, November 30 at 8:00 p.m.; Friday, December 1 at 8:00 p.m.; Saturday, December 2 at 2:00 p.m.; Saturday, December 2 at 8:00 p.m.; Sunday, December 3 at 2:00 p.m.; Sunday, December 3 at 7:30 p.m.; Wednesday, December 6 at 7:30 p.m.; Thursday, December 7 at 8:00 p.m.; Friday, December 8 at 8:00 p.m.; Saturday, December 9 at 2:00 p.m.

Opening Night: Saturday, December 9 at 7:30 p.m.

Post-Show Symposium Performances: Tuesday, December 12 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, December 16 at 2:00 p.m.; Saturday, December 23 at 2:00 p.m.

Know the Show: Thursday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m.; curtain at 8:00 p.m.

Performances:

Tuesdays (7:30 p.m.): December 12, 19, and 26

Wednesday (2:00 p.m.): December 27

Wednesdays (7:30 p.m.): December 6, 13, 20, and 27

Thursdays (8:00 p.m.): November 30, December 7, 14, 21, and 28

Friday (2:00 p.m.): December 29

Fridays (8:00 p.m.): December 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29

Saturdays (2:00 p.m.): December 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30

Saturday (7:30 p.m.): December 9

Saturdays (8:00 p.m.): December 2, 16, 23, and 30

Sundays (2:00 p.m.): December 3, 10, and 17

Sunday (4:30 p.m.): December 31
Sundays (7:30 p.m.); December 3, 10, and 17

For tickets and information: Call 973-408-5600 or visit www.ShakespeareNJ.org.

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