

Media Contacts:

Anne Shuff, Finance & Communications Consultant
ashuff@lanterntheater.org or (215) 888-6220

Stacy Maria Dutton, Executive Director
sdutton@lanterntheater.org or (610) 420-1121

Online Press Room & Downloads:

www.lanterntheater.org/press

Lantern Theater Company Announces One-Week Extension of the Philadelphia Premiere of *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord* by Scott Carter

Critically Acclaimed Smash Hit Production Will Close Sunday, July 9, 2017

PHILADELPHIA (June 19, 2017) – **Lantern Theater Company** announced today that its record-breaking 2016/17 season closing production of *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord* will extend its run to meet audience demand and will now close on **Sunday, July 9, 2017**. The following performances have been added:

Wednesday, July 5 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Thursday, July 6 at 7 p.m.

Friday, July 7 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, July 8 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Sunday, July 9 at 2 p.m.

Scott Carter's uproarious, razor-sharp exploration of legacy and faith has played to sold out houses since its first performance at the Lantern on June 1, and is on track to become one of the best-selling productions in the company's 23-year history. "When outstanding theater artists work with rich and well-constructed material, it is no surprise that the production is well received," said Lantern Theater Company Artistic Director **Charles McMahon**. "Still, we have been truly overwhelmed by the response to this play. Not since our production of David Ives' *New Jerusalem, The Interrogation of Baruch de Spinoza at Talmud Torah Congregation: Amsterdam, July 27, 1656* five years ago have we seen a piece of theater that has resonated so profoundly with our audience while drawing so many first-timers into the theater. It may seem counterintuitive in an age where

the human attention span is purportedly getting shorter, but we observe that the appetite for idea-driven theater and serious debate is alive and well in Philadelphia.”

Directed by actor, director, and playwright **James Ijames**, and starring **Andrew Criss** as Count Leo Tolstoy, **Gregory Isaac** as Thomas Jefferson, and **Brian McCann** as Charles Dickens, the production has resonated with Philadelphia’s theater critics as well. The Philadelphia Inquirer’s **Toby Zinman** said the “Lantern’s production, directed with plenty of style by James Ijames, makes a theology debate – not the usual topic for a comedy – both entertaining and intriguing. You’ll laugh and you’ll ponder.” Writing for Broad Street Review, **Mark Cofta** agreed: “Scott Carter makes religious debate exciting... The often heady debate favorably compares to George Bernard Shaw, who likewise made intellectual discourse sincere and passionate. *Gospel*’s fine cast bring these initially stiff figures to life and make them face themselves.” And in DC Metro Theater Arts, **Tim Dunleavy** wrote “the Lantern is an old hand at presenting plays full of heady ideas... Carter’s play will give you a lot to think about – and, in its best moments, a lot to laugh about.”

The cast has also been applauded for its ensemble of strong performances, including by **Kathryn Osenlund** in Phindie: “It would be hard to come up with better casting. They ride with the give and take, each with a distinct and unmistakable voice. Gregory Isaac...is vital and compelling as a rational, cynical Jefferson – who could have been quite tedious. Brian McCann doesn’t shy away from becoming shameless showman Dickens. Flamboyant and ridiculous, he’s a traditionalist with religious certitude. And Andrew Criss as Tolstoy is steady and grounded. Tolstoy keeps his own counsel much of the time until he emerges humble, but willing to brag. Ultimately he’s the one to espouse a useful and true philosophy. The Lantern team digs deep, and with skill and imagination transforms an essentially all-talk playscript into an engaging, living piece of theater.”

Tickets for all added performances of *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord* go on sale today and are available online at www.lanterntheater.org or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Tickets are \$33 – \$39 for all performances now through Sunday, June 25; prices increase to \$37 – \$42 for performances beginning Tuesday, June 27. Student tickets are always \$15 in advance; \$10 student rush tickets are available 10 minutes before curtain with valid ID. Discounts are also available for theater industry professionals (\$10 in advance or at the door), seniors 65 and up, groups of 10 or more, and U.S. military personnel. Lantern Theater Company is located at St. Stephen's Theater, 10th & Ludlow Sts. in Center City Philadelphia.

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994, Lantern Theater Company is closing its twenty-third season with a record number of subscribers, its largest-ever operating budget at \$1.3 million, and a growing community of theater artists engaged in its productions and audience enrichment events. Last season, the Lantern launched its **Theater**

Artist Fair Pay Initiative, which was recently featured in *American Theatre* magazine as a leading national success story for increasing artist compensation through a combination of fundraising and higher ticket sales. The Lantern seeks to be a vibrant, contributing member of its community, exposing audiences to great theater, inviting participation in dialogue and discussion, engaging audience members on artistic and social issues, and employing theatrical language and techniques to enrich learning in the classroom. Since the inception of the Barrymore Awards for Excellence in Theatre in 1995, the Lantern has received 94 nominations and 19 awards, including the 2009 Excellence in Theatre Education and Community Service Award for its innovative education program, *Illumination*. The Lantern's upcoming 2017/18 season includes the Philadelphia premiere of *Red Velvet* by Lolita Chakrabarti, the world premiere of *The Craftsman* by Philadelphia playwright Bruce Graham, *Copenhagen* by Michael Frayn, *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, and the Philadelphia premiere of *Don't Dress for Dinner* by Marc Camoletti and adapted by Robin Hawdon. More information is online at www.lanterntheater.org.

FACT SHEET
The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens
and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord

WRITTEN BY:
Scott Carter

DIRECTED BY:
James Ijames

CAST:
Andrew Criss as Count Leo Tolstoy
Gregory Isaac as Thomas Jefferson
Brian McCann as Charles Dickens

PRODUCTION TEAM:
Scenic Designer – Lance Kniskern
Costume Designer – Millie Hiibel
Lighting Designer – Shon Causer
Sound Designer – Christopher Colucci
AEA Stage Manager – Rebecca Smith
Production Manager – Meghan Jones

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TICKET INFORMATION:
Online: www.lanterntheater.org
By Phone: (215) 829-0395
In Person: Lantern Box Office, 10th & Ludlow Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19107

TICKET PRICING:
Tickets are \$33 – \$42
Students: \$15 in advance
Student Rush: available 10 minutes before curtain for \$10 with current student ID
Industry: \$10 in advance or at the door
Discounts also available for seniors, military, and groups of 10 or more

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:
Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. on June 20 and June 27
Wednesday at 2 p.m. on June 21 [AIC], June 28, and July 5
Wednesday at 7 p.m. on June 21, June 28, and July 5
Thursday at 7 p.m. on June 22, June 29, and July 6
Friday at 8 p.m. on June 23, June 30, and July 7
Saturday at 2 p.m. on July 1 and July 8
Saturday at 8 p.m. on June 24, July 1, and July 8
Sunday at 2 p.m. on June 25, July 2, and July 9

CLOSING:

Sunday, July 9 at 2 p.m.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

▪ **[AIC] Artists in Conversation**

The final post-show discussion with the cast immediately follows the 2 p.m. performance on Wednesday, June 21.

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

A Founding Father, a Victorian literary celebrity, and a Russian aristocrat/anarchist clash in a provocative new comedy that sets three of the world's greatest thinkers against each other in a battle of wits and wills. Jefferson, Dickens, and Tolstoy find themselves locked in a room with no exit. Attempting an escape, they ransack the philosophies of their lives and work, searching for a truth that will set them free. From playwright and former stand-up comedian Scott Carter (writer of HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*), this whip-smart comedy examines just what happens when great men of history are forced to repeat it.

PERFORMANCE VENUE:

St. Stephen's Theater, 10th & Ludlow Sts., Philadelphia, PA 19107

PARKING/TRANSPORTATION:

Ample parking is available at nearby lots and garages, including The Autopark at Jefferson (10th & Ludlow Sts.) and LAZ Parking (10th & Chestnut Sts.). Metered street parking is available during posted hours. Venue is also accessible by taxi, SEPTA buses and trains, and the PATCO Speedline.