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#TheCraftsmanLTC

Lantern Theater Company Presents the World Premiere of *The Craftsman* by Bruce Graham, Nov. 9 – Dec. 10, 2017

Lantern-Commissioned New Play Weaves Tale of Art, Resistance, and Redemption

PHILADELPHIA (October 18, 2017) – **Lantern Theater Company** continues its 24th season with a world premiere production of *The Craftsman* by celebrated Philadelphia playwright **Bruce Graham**. Commissioned and developed through the Lantern's **New Works Initiative**, Graham's new play spins a darkly ironic tale of ambition, genius, and deception. **M. Craig Getting** will direct a cast that includes **Mary Lee Bednarek, Dan Hodge, Anthony Lawton, Brian McCann, Paul L. Nolan, and Ian Merrill Peakes**. Theater critics and members of the press are invited to attend **opening night on Wednesday, November 15 at 7 p.m.** *A full schedule is included in the fact sheet below.*

From the ashes of World War II, Dutch patriots discover that one of their own – a rich and reputable art dealer – has sold rare Vermeer paintings to the Nazis. Accused of treason and on trial for his life, he must decide whether to destroy his own reputation or to reveal bigger secrets behind these works that the Dutch consider national treasures. *The Craftsman* uses the strange case of historical figure **Han van Meegeren**, a 20th century Dutch artist and art dealer, to explore how we define and value art, the reverberations of war into peacetime, and how ethical actions in one world can fail in the next.

Johannes Vermeer was born, lived, and died in Delft during the mid-17th century, and his paintings are considered among the finest of the Dutch Baroque era. His works are beloved for their sublime depiction of light, the richness of his pigmentation, and their focus on the daily lives of the rising merchant class and their domestic servants in Vermeer's contemporary society. Just 34 of his paintings are known to have survived, and

they are concentrated in a few museum collections around the world: the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (5), the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (4), the Mauritshuis in The Hague (3), the Frick Collection in New York (3), and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (3 confirmed, a fourth disputed). Vermeer has been the subject of countless biographies and novels, including Tracy Chevalier's 1999 novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, later made into the 2003 film of the same name directed by Peter Webber and starring Colin Firth as Vermeer and Scarlett Johansson as his servant who became immortalized in his art. Teller directed the 2013 documentary *Tim's Vermeer*, produced by Penn Jillette and Farley Ziegler, which focused on inventor Tim Jenison's quest to reproduce Vermeer's *The Music Lesson* to test his theory that Vermeer painted with the help of optical devices.

Three weeks after V-E Day when World War II victory was declared in Europe on May 8, 1945, **Han van Meegeren** was arrested in Amsterdam and charged with treason for having sold a Vermeer painting, considered a Dutch national treasure, to Nazi banker and art dealer Alois Miedl in 1942 – the punishment for which was death. Miedl sold the painting, *Christ with the Adulteress*, directly to German Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring. Before the war, Van Meegeren had been an intermittently successful society portrait painter and art dealer; his fortunes soared as the Nazis came to power and occupied the Netherlands. When the war ended and with his life at stake, Van Meegeren turned his trial into a very different self-indictment. He died in Amsterdam in 1947.

Inspired by Van Meegeren – and by all who view art obsessively and value it astronomically – Philadelphia playwright Bruce Graham has created a fictional Van Meegeren who mesmerizes even while fully displaying his flaws and prejudices. After building a career based on craft and deception, his efforts to reveal the truth fall on deaf ears. At the same time, his jailors and prosecutor – men who fought in the Dutch Resistance during the war – are trying to find their own ways back to rebuilding their lives, their careers, and civil society in the Netherlands during a period of scarce resources and moral uncertainty. Each character in *The Craftsman* must come to terms with his or her actions before, during, and after a war that witnessed the atrocities of the Holocaust, the destruction of the continent's economies, and the pillage of European culture.

The Craftsman director **M. Craig Getting** was honored to participate in the development of this commissioned work and is approaching the play as a jumping off point to explore the allure of revenge, the problem with cultural gatekeepers, and the lies we accept in search of the truth. In preparation for directing this play, Getting visited the Netherlands in 2016 and understands how the Amsterdam of *The Craftsman* is a city deeply scarred but on the mend; its citizens have resisted the Nazi occupation, and they are now on the hunt for collaborators and enablers. "I am intrigued by the moral ambiguities embedded in the play – the hate felt by the victors toward the vanquished is quickly calcifying and putting good people at risk of acting unethically now that they have power," said Getting. "Given that the play hinges on the authenticity of a few Vermeers, the play also asks

us to consider how authentic we need something to be, particularly an artwork, for it to be meaningful and valuable.”

Two years ago, Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon** commissioned **Bruce Graham** to write a new play for the Lantern under the auspices of the company’s **New Works Initiative**. The two theater artists quickly agreed that the story of Han van Meegeren was worthy of dramatic treatment; the con man of one generation journeyed easily into our own. Of the finished work, McMahon states, “If art holds the mirror up to nature, then *The Craftsman* holds a funhouse mirror up to art. Bruce Graham creates a fascinating world where the assumptions we make about the world around us keep shifting until the very notion of authenticity itself may seem like a shallow fiction.” Knowing that this new play will speak eloquently for itself, Graham challenges audiences to examine their own experiences in light of the characters’ actions in the play. “To me the play is about overcoming hate. As I get older I realize that hate can be more corrosive than battery acid.”

Tickets for *The Craftsman* are \$26 – \$43 and are available online at www.lanterntheater.org or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Student tickets are \$15 in advance; \$10 student rush tickets are available ten 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 the Playwright

Bruce Graham is the author of fourteen published plays: thirteen with Dramatists Play Service and one with Samuel French. His plays include *Burkie*, *Early One Evening at the Rainbow Bar & Grille*, *Moon Over the Brewery*, *Minor Demons*, *Belmont Avenue Social Club*, *The Champagne Charlie Stakes*, *Desperate Affection*, *Coyote on a Fence* (winner of The Rosenthal Prize), *According to Goldman*, *Something Intangible* (winner of seven Barrymore Awards, including Outstanding New Play), *Any Given Monday* (Barrymore winner for Outstanding New Play), *The Outgoing Tide* (Joseph Jefferson Award, Best New Play), *Stella and Lou*, *North of the Boulevard*, *White Guy on the Bus*, *Rizzo*, and *Funnyman*. *Fully Accessible* and *The Happy F!@#%\$G Blind Guy* have been published in Best Ten-Minute Plays of 2013 and 2014. His one-man show *The Philly Fan* plays semi-continuously throughout the Philadelphia area. Graham recently returned to acting, appearing as Ernie in *Rumors*, Eddie in *Lost in Yonkers*, Richard in *Time Stands Still*, Milt in *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, Artie in *Hurlyburly*, and Arthur in *Pterodactyls*. He has received grants from the Pew Foundation, the Princess Grace Foundation (Statuette Award Winner), the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Philadelphia Theatre Initiative. With Michele Volansky, he is the author of the book *The Collaborative Playwright*. A graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Graham teaches film and theater courses at Drexel University and divides his time between South Philadelphia and Elkton, Maryland with his wife Stephanie.

About the Director

M. Craig Getting's directing credits include Lantern productions of *An Iliad*, *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths*, *QED*, *Heroes*, and *A Skull in Connemara*. Getting also serves as the Lantern's education director, overseeing the award-winning Illumination education program and The Empathy Project, the Lantern's pioneering partnership with the Sidney Kimmel Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University. Getting holds a BA in drama from Kenyon College.

About the Cast and Production Team

Anthony Lawton returns to the Lantern stage as artist, art dealer, and accused traitor Han van Meegeren. Lawton's long-term artistic partnership with the Lantern has included productions of his C.S. Lewis adaptations of *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*, his adaption of Shel Silverstein's *The Devil and Billy Markham*, his autobiographical play *Heresy*, and the world premiere of his original play *The Foocy*, which was honored with five 2006 Barrymore Award nominations, including Outstanding New Play. His recent play *The Light Princess* is nominated for five 2017 Barrymore Awards, including Outstanding New Play.

Ian Merrill Peakes will make his Lantern debut as Dutch military captain Joseph Pillel, a man hardened by war and trying to rebuild his country. A Barrymore and Helen Hayes award-winning actor, Peakes' stage credits include productions with Walnut Street Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, Theatre Exile, Philadelphia Theatre Company, The Wilma Theater, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and many others. Film and television credits include *Still Standing*, *Hack*, *Homicide*, *Buried Girl*, and *Lebanon, PA*.

The Craftsman cast members returning to the Lantern stage include **Mary Lee Bednarek** (*Coriolanus*) as Van Meegeren's wife Johanna; **Dan Hodge** (*Hamlet*) as legal prosecutor Boll; **Brian McCann** (*The Gospel According To...* and *Coriolanus*) as prison guard Augustun, art restorer Rotke, and the Judge; and **Paul L. Nolan** (*Copenhagen*) as distinguished art critic Abraham Bredius.

The design team for *The Craftsman* includes scenic designer **Meghan Jones** (*Red Velvet*, *Coriolanus*, and *An Iliad*), costume designer **Kayla Speedy** (Lantern debut), lighting designer **Shannon Zura** (*An Iliad*), projection designer **Janelle Kauffman** (Lantern debut), props master **Dale Roth Nadel** (*Underneath the Lintel* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*), and sound designer **Christopher Colucci**, a seven-time Barrymore Award-winner whose many Lantern credits include *Red Velvet*, *The Gospel According To...*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths*, and *Arcadia*.

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994, Lantern Theater Company launched its twenty-fourth season with a record number of subscribers, its largest-ever operating budget at \$1.5 million, and a growing community of theater artists engaged in its productions and audience enrichment events. The Lantern's innovative **Theater Artist Fair Pay Initiative** 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 96 nominations and 19 awards, including the 2009 Excellence in Theatre Education and Community Service Award for its education program, *Illumination*. Following *The Craftsman*, the Lantern's 2017/18 season continues with *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 Craftsman

WRITTEN BY:

Bruce Graham

DIRECTED BY:

M. Craig Getting

CAST:

Mary Lee Bednarek as Johanna van Meegeren

Dan Hodge as Boll

Anthony Lawton as Han van Meegeren

Brian McCann as Augustun/Rotke/Judge

Paul L. Nolan as Abraham Bredius

Ian Merrill Peakes as Joseph Pillel

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Meghan Jones, Scenic Designer

Kayla Speedy, Costume Designer

Shannon Zura, Lighting Designer

Christopher Colucci, Sound Designer

Janelle Kauffman, Projection Designer

Dale Roth Nadel, Props Master

Rebecca Smith, AEA Stage Manager

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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 \$26 – \$43

Discounts available for students, seniors, military, and groups of 10 or more

PREVIEWS:

Thursday, November 9 at 7 p.m.

Friday, November 10 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, November 11 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, November 12 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, November 14 at 6:30 p.m.

OPENING:

Wednesday, November 15 at 7 p.m.

REGULAR RUN:

Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. on November 21, November 28, and December 5

Wednesday at 2 p.m. on November 22 [AIC], November 29 [AIC], and December 6

Wednesday at 7 p.m. on November 22, November 29, and December 6

Thursday at 7 p.m. on November 16, November 30, and December 7

(no performance November 23 due to Thanksgiving)

Friday at 8 p.m. on November 17, November 24, December 1 [PUB], and December 8

Saturday at 2 p.m. on November 18, November 25, December 2, and December 9

Saturday at 8 p.m. on November 18, November 25, December 2, and December 9

Sunday at 2 p.m. on November 19 [AIC], November 26 [AIC], December 3, and December 10

Sunday at 7 p.m. on November 26 only

CLOSING PERFORMANCE:

Sunday, December 10 at 2 p.m.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

▪ **[AIC] Artists in Conversation**

Post-show discussions with the cast immediately follows 2 p.m. performances on Sunday, November 19; Wednesday, November 22; Sunday, November 26; and Wednesday, November 29.

▪ **[PUB] Lantern Pub Night**

Lively conversation over a complimentary pub beverage immediately follows the 8 p.m. performance on Friday, December 1.

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

From the ashes of World War II, Dutch patriots discover that one of their own – a rich and reputable art dealer – has sold rare Vermeer paintings to the Nazis. Accused of treason and on trial for his life, he must decide whether to destroy his own reputation or to reveal bigger secrets behind these works that the Dutch consider national treasures. Commissioned and developed through the Lantern's New Works Initiative, this world premiere by celebrated Philadelphia playwright Bruce Graham spins a darkly ironic tale of ambition, genius, and deception.

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.