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Lantern Theater Company Presents
In Conversation: Wild(e) Modern Celebrities

PHILADELPHIA – Lantern Theater Company will present the second of a four-part *In Conversation* series. The 2015/16 *In Conversation* series consists of four one-night events on Monday evenings throughout the season, expanding on themes found in each of the mainstage productions. This installment will explore themes from our current production, *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths*.

The second installment of the In-Conversation series is ***Wild(e) Modern Celebrities***, an in-depth discussion of Oscar Wilde's cultivation of himself as a world celebrity and the nature of crafting a public persona. The panel will explore "Tall Poppy Syndrome", the social phenomenon of putting celebrities on a pedestal only to tear them down, and how Wilde was perhaps the prototypical victim of this particular brand of public scrutiny.

Moderated by **Kathryn MacMillan** (Lantern Associate Artistic Director), the panel will include culture, style, and celebrity blog icons **Tom Fitzgerald** and **Lorenzo Marquez** of *TomandLorenzo.com*; **Dr. Marylu Hill**, Director, Villanova Center for Liberal Education and the Graduate Program in Liberal Studies; and **Charles McMahon**, Lantern Artistic Director and *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* playwright.

Tom Fitzgerald and Lorenzo Marquez launched *Project Rungay* in 2006 after ten years as a couple, and happily spent several years as fan-bloggers for *Project Runway*. Nine years later, they run *TomandLorenzo.com*, a full service pop culture site with a special focus on fashion and style with an audience in the millions. They are co-authors of the book *Everyone Wants to Be Me or Do Me: Tom and Lorenzo's Fabulous and Opinionated Guide to Celebrity Life and Style*. Written in 2014, the book received rave reviews in *Cosmopolitan*, *New York Daily News*, *New York Post*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, and was voted "Style Book of the Year" by the readers of *Entertainista.com*. Tom and Lorenzo also host a podcast: *Pop Style Opinionfest*.

Dr. Marylu Hill received her Ph.D. from the University of Delaware, and she is the Director of the Augustine and Culture Seminar Program at Villanova University where has taught for 18 years. In 2014, she received the ACTC/WISC Oxford Scholar-In-Residence award, and she spent two months at Oxford researching Oscar Wilde and the influence of his classical education there. The result of that research is her essay "Wilde's New Republic: Platonic Questions in Dorian Gray", which will appear in a forthcoming volume entitled *Oscar Wilde*

and *The Classics*, as well as a larger book project on Wilde and Platonic dialogue. Her first book entitled *Mothering Modernity: Feminism, Modernism, and the Maternal Muse* was published in 1999.

Charles McMahon is the co-founder and Artistic Director of Lantern Theater Company. He has directed all but one of the company's Shakespeare productions over the past 20 years, beginning with *All's Well That Ends Well* in the 1997/98 season. He has been nominated twice for the Barrymore Award for Excellence in Theatre for Outstanding Direction of a Play: in 2006 for *Richard III* and in 2004 for *The Comedy of Errors*. In the 2006/07 season, McMahon directed the world premiere of his new translation of *La Ronde* by Arthur Schnitzler, and in 2014 he co-created the world premiere adaptation of the Dylan Thomas poem *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, which went on to receive four Barrymore nominations and two awards. *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* represents McMahon's first foray into penning an original full-length play for production.

Moderator MacMillan says, "I'm excited to present *Wild(e) Modern Celebrities* to our audiences because it reinforces our belief that all our plays--even if they take place in the 19th century, even if they focus on a famous literary figure, as *From the Depths* does--that all plays are about our audiences in the here and now. The story is a very contemporary one: a celebrity of immense talent is set up for a great fall--idolized by a fickle public who demands he conform to their expectations or be ruined. It is also the story of a man learning to shout "This is who I am! This is my voice!" despite the limits of mainstream acceptance. Maybe this makes it sound like our discussion will be very, very serious--it won't. Like Oscar Wilde himself, we will approach the discussion with wit and a sharp tongue. It's going to be a blast, actually."

Other *In Conversation* topics for the 2015/16 season include:

- ***Rosalind's Escape and Why We Should Unplug***, an exploration of the positive effects of the main character's exile in *As You Like It* where we consider how, in the constantly plugged-in culture of the 21st century, we never have the chance to find ourselves. Panelists include Mary Bly (Shakespeare scholar and tenured professor at Fordham University) and Susan Moeller (Director of the International Center for Media and the Public Agenda).
- ***Art-World Movers and Shakers***, an examination of works of Asian art specific to Lantern's production of *36 Views*, the ethics of trading foreign works, and an insider's perspective on the secrets and surprises in the buying and selling of art. Panelists include Frank Chance (Associate Director of Academics, Center for East Asian Studies) and Linda Chance, Ph.D. (Associate Chair of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania).

Each *In Conversation* event begins at 7pm and will last approximately an hour and a half, including the panel discussion and an audience question and answer session. Each event will be followed by a wine and dessert reception in the Lantern lobby, the cost of which is included in the price of a ticket.

2015/16 In Conversation Series

Wild(e) Modern Celebrities

Monday, February 1, 2016 at 7pm

Rosalind's Escape and Why We Should Unplug

Monday, April 4, 2016 at 7pm

Art-World Movers and Shakers

Monday, June 20, 2016 at 7pm

Subscription to three series events: \$30

Single tickets: \$15 for individuals; \$12 for Lantern subscribers.

Tickets and information at www.lanterntheater.org or the Lantern box office (215-829-0395).

2015/16 Mainstage Season

Lantern Theater Company's 2015/16 season includes the current World Premiere play entitled *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* written by Lantern Artistic Director Charles McMahon and directed by **M. Craig Getting** (January 14 – February 14, 2016); **William Shakespeare's** timeless comedy *As You Like It*, directed by Charles McMahon (March 10 – April 17, 2016); and the Philadelphia Premiere of *36 Views* by **Naomi Iizuka**, directed by Peter DeLaurier and starring **Joanna Liao**, **Bi Jean Ngo** and **Joe Guzman** (May 26 – June 26, 2016).

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994, Lantern Theater Company is committed to an authentic and intimate exploration of the human spirit in its choice of classics, modern, and original works. The Lantern seeks to be a vibrant, contributing member of its community, exposing audiences to great theater, inviting participation in dialogue and discussion, educating audience members about artistic and social issues, and employing theatrical language and techniques to enrich learning in the classroom. The Lantern has received 88 Barrymore Award nominations, winning 19 times including the 2009 Barrymore Award for Excellence in Theatre Education and Community Service for its innovative education program, *Illumination*. Lantern Theater Company has been in residence at St. Stephen's Theater at 10th & Ludlow Streets in Center City Philadelphia since 1996, managing the performance space and developing it into an affordable multi-purpose performing arts venue. For more information, please visit www.lanterntheater.org.