

Media Contacts:

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

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

Online Press Room & Downloads:

www.lanterntheater.org/press

Lantern Theater Company Presents the Philadelphia Premiere of *Informed Consent* by Deborah Zoe Laufer, Jan. 12 – Feb. 12, 2017

***Based On True Events, Laufer's Gripping and Compelling New Drama Asks
"Are Our Identities Defined By Our Bodies Or By Our Most Sacred Stories?"***

PHILADELPHIA (December 19, 2016) – **Lantern Theater Company** kicks off the new year with the Philadelphia premiere of *Informed Consent* by acclaimed playwright **Deborah Zoe Laufer**. *Informed Consent* was commissioned by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, which empowers playwrights to create original and compelling work about science and technology. Lantern resident director **Kathryn MacMillan** will direct a cast that includes **Samantha Bowling, Justin Jain, Maria Konstantinidis, Kittson O'Neill, and Lindsay Smiling**. Theater critics and members of the press are invited to attend **opening night on Wednesday, January 18 at 7 p.m.** A full schedule is included in the fact sheet below.

Are our identities defined by biology or culture? In *Informed Consent*, ambitious geneticist Jillian races to solve scientific mysteries that could save both an ancient people and her own family. She jumps at the chance to do groundbreaking research on a Native tribe in the Grand Canyon whose members are ravaged by diabetes, but her research threatens to destroy the tribe's most sacred traditions. At the same time, Jillian and her husband confront a time bomb lurking in her own DNA – and possibly their four-year-old daughter's. This timely and relevant human story was inspired by a landmark court case involving the Havasupai tribe of the Grand Canyon.

Informed Consent continues the Lantern's ongoing exploration of science and art, and the ways in which they reflect humanity's most pressing concerns. "Every advance in science and technology has the potential to bring a new order to our lives, but it may also contain the seeds of chaos," said Lantern Theater Company Artistic Director **Charles McMahon**. "These disruptions can be both material and psychological, and the latter can be

far more damaging than the former. The question at the root of *Informed Consent* is, ‘Who are we really?’ We derive our sense of identity from many things: our family, our beliefs, our history, our values. But at some level we need to be able to define for ourselves who we are. This play is a gripping drama about how different individuals answer this question for themselves and of what happens when those answers clash.”

“One of the best things about being a playwright is that I can write about what I want to learn about,” said playwright **Deborah Zoe Laufer**. “It’s a great luxury to be able to spend a year researching a topic that I find fascinating. I wanted to learn more about the human genome, so when a friend sent me the article about the actual court case, the issues it raised seemed ripe for a play – the cutting edge of scientific research, moral ambiguity, two deeply divergent points of view. And I like to explore that area where science and religion bump up against each other uncomfortably. The tribe’s creation story is that they sprang forth from the Grand Canyon, and the researcher traced their origins to Eastern Asia. That contradiction of their religious beliefs devastated them. It was a clash of cultures that required more than a simple consent form to sort out.”

“Deb’s play is challenging and subtle: she invests each character with integrity, sympathy, and high stakes and places them in conflict,” said Lantern resident director and *Informed Consent* director **Kathryn MacMillan**. “What results is a play without obvious villains or easy answers. It’s also, surprisingly, very funny and theatrically playful. It is a rich, complex, contemporary drama and I am thrilled that we are bringing it to Philadelphia audiences.” MacMillan is a two-time Barrymore Award nominee and has directed sixteen Lantern productions to date, including three science-themed plays: *Photograph 51* by Anna Ziegler in 2015, *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard in 2014, and *QED* by Peter Parnell in 2006.

Tickets for *Informed Consent* start at \$24 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 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. 3-Play Flex Packages are also available for \$105 and include free ticket exchange privileges and discounts on dining and nearby parking. Lantern Theater Company is located at St. Stephen's Theater, 10th & Ludlow Sts. in Center City Philadelphia.

About the Playwright

Deborah Zoe Laufer’s plays have been produced across the United States at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Cleveland Play House, Geva Theatre Center, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Portland Stage, Ensemble Studio Theatre, and in Canada, Germany, and Russia. *Informed Consent* was commissioned by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, which empowers playwrights to create original and compelling work about science and technology; the play was co-produced in 2015 by Primary Stages and

Ensemble Studio Theatre at the Duke Theatre in New York. Her play *End Days*, another Sloan commission, was awarded the ATCA Steinberg citation and appeared at Ensemble Studio Theatre through an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation grant. Laufer's other plays include *Leveling Up*, *Sirens*, *Out of Sterno*, *The Last Schwartz*, *Meta*, *The Three Sisters of Weehawken*, *Fortune*, *The Gulf of Westchester*, *Miniatures*, and *Random Acts*. Laufer is a recipient of a 2009 Helen Merrill Emerging Playwriting Award, a 2010 Lilly Award for playwriting, as well as grants and commissions from the Edgerton Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National New Play Network. She is a graduate of The Juilliard School and a member of the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop and the Dramatists Guild of America.

About the Cast and Production Team

Kittson O'Neill takes on the role of One/Jillian, a genetic anthropologist who oversteps the bounds of consent for what she believes to be strong professional and personal reasons. *Informed Consent* marks O'Neill's fourth production with the Lantern; she most recently appeared as Hannah Jarvis in *Arcadia* (2014). She serves as artistic director of Shakespeare in Clark Park and artistic associate at InterAct Theatre Company, where she recently starred in the one-woman show *Grounded*, also directed by Kathryn MacMillan.

Lindsay Smiling (Two/Graham) previously appeared at the Lantern in the Barrymore Award-winning production of *Richard III*. Recent Philadelphia stage credits include *The Hard Problem* at The Wilma Theater, *Metamorphoses* at Arden Theatre Company, *Moon Man Walk* at Orbiter 3, and *Red Velvet* at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey.

Los Angeles-based actress **Samantha Bowling** will make her Lantern debut as Three/Arella, the primary spokesperson for the tribe. Also a writer, director, comedian, and art director, Bowling is founding member and creative designer for Chrysalis Pictures Productions and an artist ensemble member at Native Voices at the Autry Museum of the American West, the country's only Equity theater company dedicated exclusively to producing new works by Native American, Alaska Native, and First Nations playwrights.

Also making his Lantern debut is **Justin Jain** (Four/Ken), a resident artist in The Wilma Theater's HotHouse with recent roles in *Antigone* and *An Octoroon* (Barrymore nomination). He has worked with theaters across the county and locally, including with his Barrymore Award-nominated alt-comedy theater company, The Berserker Residents.

Maria Konstantinidis makes her Lantern debut as Five/Mother. Her Philadelphia stage credits include numerous productions with Walnut Street Theatre, Act II Playhouse, Shakespeare in Clark Park, and EgoPo Classic Theater.

The talented design team for *Informed Consent* includes scenic designer **Lance Kniskern** (*Oscar Wilde: From the Depths, The Taming of the Shrew*—Barrymore nomination), costume designer **Natalia de la Torre** (*An Iliad*), lighting designer **Lily Fossner** (Lantern debut), sound designer and composer **Larry D. Fowler, Jr.** (*Photograph 51*), projection designer **Nicholas Hussong** (Lantern debut), and artistic consultant **Tim Martin**.

Special Event: In Conversation with Ezekiel Emanuel

Following the 6:30 p.m. performance on **Tuesday, January 24**, the Lantern will host oncologist and bioethicist **Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel** for a discussion on the nature of scientific progress, particularly in medicine where the engagement of human subjects is both necessary and ethically challenging. One of the leading thinkers on medicine and society of our time, Dr. Emanuel is currently Vice Provost for Global Initiatives, the Diane v.S. Levy and Robert M. Levy University Professor, and Chair of the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy at the University of Pennsylvania. From 2009 to 2011 he served as special advisor for health policy to the director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Obama Administration, and from 1997 to 2011 he was chair of the Department of Bioethics at the National Institutes of Health. He has also authored three books and is a columnist for *The New York Times*.

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994, Lantern Theater Company has launched its twenty-third season with a record number of subscribers, its largest-ever operating budget at \$1.3M, and a growing community of theater artists engaged in its productions and audience enrichment events. Last season, the Lantern launched the **Lantern Theater Artist Fair Pay Initiative**, a pioneering program to increase the compensation of its contract theater artists by 50% over the prior season. 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*. Following *Informed Consent*, the Lantern's 2016/17 season continues with *Coriolanus* by William Shakespeare (March 9 – April 16, 2016) and *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord* by Scott Carter (June 1 – July 2, 2017). More information is online at www.lanterntheater.org.

FACT SHEET

Informed Consent

WRITTEN BY:

Deborah Zoe Laufer

DIRECTED BY:

Kathryn MacMillan

CAST:

Samantha Bowling as Three/Arella

Justin Jain as Four/Ken

Maria Konstantinidis as Five/Mother

Kittson O'Neill as One/Jillian

Lindsay Smiling as Two/Graham

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Scenic Designer – Lance Kniskern

Costume Designer – Natalia de la Torre

Lighting Designer – Lily Fossner

Sound Designer and Composer – Larry D. Fowler, Jr.

Projection Designer – Nicholas Hussong

Artistic Consultant – Tim Martin

Stage Manager – Rebecca Smith

Production Manager – Meghan Jones

PRESS INFORMATION:

Anne Shuff, Finance & Communications Consultant

ashuff@lanterntheater.org or (215) 888-6220

or

Stacy Dutton, Executive Director

sdutton@lanterntheater.org or (610) 420-1121

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 \$24 – \$42

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

PREVIEWS:

Thursday, January 12 at 7 p.m.

Friday, January 13 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, January 14 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, January 15 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, January 17 at 6:30 p.m.

OPENING:

Wednesday, January 18 at 7 p.m.

REGULAR RUN:

Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. on January 24 [IC] and January 31
Wednesday at 2 p.m. on January 25 [AIC] and February 1 [AIC]
Wednesday at 7 p.m. on January 25, February 1, and February 8
Thursday at 7 p.m. on January 19, January 26, February 2, and February 9
Friday at 8 p.m. on January 20, January 27 [OC/PUB], February 3, and February 10
Saturday at 2 p.m. on January 28 and February 11
Saturday at 8 p.m. on January 21, January 28, February 4, and February 11
Sunday at 2 p.m. on January 22 [AIC], January 29 [AIC], February 5, and February 12

CLOSING:

Sunday, February 12 at 2 p.m.

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 Highspeed line.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

- **[IC]** In Conversation with Ezekiel Emanuel
Immediately following the 6:30 p.m. performance on Tuesday, January 24, the Lantern will host oncologist and bioethicist Ezekiel Emanuel for a discussion on the nature of scientific progress, particularly in medicine where the engagement of human subjects is both necessary and ethically challenging. One of the leading thinkers on medicine and society of our time, Dr. Emanuel is currently Vice Provost for Global Initiatives, the Diane v.S. Levy and Robert M. Levy University Professor, and Chair of the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy at the University of Pennsylvania. From 2009 to 2011 he served as special advisor for health policy to the director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Obama Administration, and from 1997 to 2011 he was chair of the Department of Bioethics at the National Institutes of Health. He is also the author of nine books and is a columnist for *The New York Times*.
- **[PUB]** Lantern Pub Night
Lively conversation over a complimentary pub beverage immediately following 8 p.m. performance on Friday, January 27
- **[AIC]** Artists in Conversation
Post-show discussions with the artists following 2 p.m. performances on Sunday, January 22; Wednesday, January 25; Sunday, January 29; and Wednesday, February 1

ACCESSIBILITY:

[OC] Open captioned performance on Friday, January 27 at 8 p.m.

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

Ambitious geneticist Jillian races to solve scientific mysteries that could save both an ancient people and her own family. She jumps at the chance to do groundbreaking research on a Native tribe in the Grand Canyon whose members are ravaged by diabetes, but her research threatens to destroy the tribe's most sacred traditions. At the same time, Jillian and her husband confront a time bomb lurking in her own DNA – and possibly their four-year-old daughter's. This provocative new play from acclaimed playwright Deborah Zoe Laufer asks: are our identities defined by our bodies or by our most sacred stories?