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#MinorsLTC

Lantern Theater Company Presents the World Premiere of *Minors*, A New Musical by Kittson O'Neill and Robert Kaplowitz Onstage May 23 – June 30, 2019

PHILADELPHIA (March 23, 2019) – Lantern Theater Company's 25th anniversary season comes to a musical close with the world premiere of *Minors*, which begins previews tonight. Commissioned and developed through the Lantern's New Works Program, this intimate American roots rock drama is the inaugural work of **Kittson O'Neill** and Tony Award-winning sound designer and composer **Robert Kaplowitz**. Barrymore Award-winner **Matthew Decker** directs an ensemble cast of Philadelphia musical theater veterans and newcomers, including **Ben Dibble**, **Jennie Eisenhower**, **Brady Fritz**, **Marybeth Gorman**, **Paul L. Nolan**, **Terran Scott**, **Sav Souza**, **Grace Tarves**, and **Mekhi Williams**. **Amanda Morton** serves as the production's music director. Theater critics and members of the press are invited to request tickets for **opening night on Wednesday, May 29 at 7 p.m.** by contacting Anne Shuff at ashuff@lanterntheater.org. The expanded six-week performance schedule runs **Thursday, May 23 through Sunday, June 30, 2019**; a complete schedule of performances and audience enrichment events is included in the fact sheet below.

Inspired by the "kids for cash" scandal in Pennsylvania's Luzerne County in the early 2000s, this compelling new work of musical theater tells the story of four families fighting against a corrupt political machine that turned their children into commodities. The musical follows the children – middle and high school students, played by young professional actors – on their journey through the local criminal justice system. Incarcerated for minor infractions and without proper due process, they and their parents try to overcome a sense of helplessness in the face of institutional corruption, including judges taking bribes from the privately-owned prison operator who seeks to keep the cells fully occupied. Through song, the families express their frustrations with their present lives buffeted by economic and educational limitations, and their hopes for a better future.

Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon** commissioned Lantern collaborators Kittson O'Neill and Robert Kaplowitz to create *Minors*, believing they were uniquely qualified to bring this story to the stage. "The scandal was seared into my memory as a quintessential example of the negative unintended consequences when public goods like justice are privatized," McMahon said. McMahon was also confident that a musical was the theatrical form best suited to tell this story: "Musical theater, like opera, can often best serve as the most emotionally resonant form of storytelling when injustice and tragedy are at stake. Music can play a powerful role in rousing our emotions – and in healing them."

Philadelphia director, actor, and new play dramaturg **Kittson O'Neill** created the book and co-wrote the lyrics for *Minors*. In describing her inspiration, O'Neill explains "the potency of this story is that this injustice was visited on kids. For me, there is a really precious and magical thing that happens when you're a teenager, which is this coming to understand the world you live in and your place in it. This kind of exploitation radically disrupts that in a way that, for some of these kids, was very difficult to ever repair."

Robert Kaplowitz, O'Neill's husband and writing partner, found his own inspiration in composing the play's American roots rock music. While acknowledging that roots rock might be unexpected for a musical, Kaplowitz felt it was the right choice to tell the story of *Minors*. "Finding that way to have the driving energy of an electrically amplified instrument that sings in the same vocal range as the human and tells story has been a really interesting adventure."

Lantern Theater Company will delve into the world of *Minors* on its **Lantern Searchlight blog**, available online at lanterntheater.org/searchlight. Published articles will explore the judicial scandal that inspired *Minors*, the push for privatization of our public services, polemical theater from Shaw to Brecht to today, the stylistic and thematic range of the modern American musical, and an expanded interview with creators Kittson O'Neill and Robert Kaplowitz. New content will be added throughout the production's run.

Tickets for *Minors* are \$28 – \$43 and are available online at lanterntheater.org or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Discounts are available for students, seniors 65 and up, U.S. military personnel, and groups of 10 or more. Lantern Theater Company is located at St. Stephen's Theater, 10th & Ludlow Sts. in Center City Philadelphia.

About the Creative Team and Cast

Robert Kaplowitz (Music and Lyrics) has spent the last 25 years composing and designing sound, and has been honored with a Tony Award for his design of *Fela!* and an OBIE Award for Sustained Excellence in Sound Design. As an artist, Kaplowitz focuses his work on the aspects of stories best told through music, and how those stories interact with society. A Philadelphian since 2010, his work has been heard at the Lantern (*A*

Child's Christmas in Wales and *Coriolanus*), Opera Philadelphia, National Constitution Center, The Wilma Theater, InterAct Theatre Company, Arden Theatre Company, Lucidity Suitcase, Pig Iron Theatre Company, PlayPenn, Azuka Theatre, and Philadelphia Theatre Company. Beyond Philadelphia, his credits include the Apollo Theater, Signature Theatre, The Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, the National Theatre of England, Sundance, the O'Neill, Pilobolus, BAM, the National Museum of the Czech Republic, and the Expo Center in Lagos.

Kittson O'Neill (Book and Lyrics) is an actor, director, and emerging playwright. She was a staff writer for *The Onion* and has had readings of her work at New Jersey Repertory Company and Relentless Theater in New York City. O'Neill's Lantern credits include directing *Copenhagen* and performing in *Informed Consent*, *Arcadia*, and *Julius Caesar*. Other recent directing credits include productions with Hedgerow Theatre, the world premiere of *A Knee That Can Bend* at Orbiter 3 (Barrymore nomination), and multiple productions with Shakespeare in Clark Park, where she serves as artistic director.

Matthew Decker (Director) is a three-time Barrymore Award-winning director whose local credits include productions with Theatre Horizon, 11th Hour Theatre Company, and Arden Theatre Company, where for eight seasons he served as the associate artistic director.

Amanda Morton (Music Director) is two-time Barrymore Award-winning music director whose local credits include productions with The Wilma Theater, Theatre Horizon, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Ars Nova, Pig Iron Theatre Company, Arden Theatre Company, and Merry-Go-Round Playhouse. This fall, Morton will go on the first national tour of *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical*. In addition to serving as music director for *Minors*, she will also play keys and lead bandmates **Nero Catalano** on guitar, **Mike Reilly** on drums, and **Josh Totoro** on bass.

The cast of *Minors* includes Philadelphia musical theater veterans **Ben Dibble** as Frank Sr. (Lantern credits include *Measure for Measure*, *Doubt*, *Private Lives*, and the title role in *Henry V*), **Jennie Eisenhower** as Eileen (Lantern debut; credits include productions with Walnut Street Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, and many others), and **Marybeth Gorman** as Angela (Lantern debut; credits include Walnut Street Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, 11th Hour Theatre Company, and many others). **Paul L. Nolan** returns to the Lantern mainstage as The Judge; his recent Lantern credits include *Copenhagen* and the world premiere of *The Craftsman*. The young professional actors portraying the children are all making their Lantern debuts with *Minors*: recent University of the Arts graduates **Brady Fritz** as TJ and **Terran Scott** as Kelli, **Mekhi Williams** as Frankie Jr., and **Grace Tarves** as Amber, whose theater credits include multiple productions with Arden Theatre Company and City Theater Company. Recent University of the Arts graduate **Sav Souza** also makes their Lantern debut as the Breaker Boy.

The talented design team that will create *Minors*' physical world includes scenic designer **Nick Embree** (Lantern credits include *Hapgood* and *Copenhagen*), costume designer **Alison Roberts** (*Don't Dress for Dinner*), lighting designer **Mike Inwood** (Lantern debut), and sound designer **Nick Kourtides** (Lantern debut).

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994, Lantern Theater Company is concluding its 25th anniversary season with a record number of subscribers 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 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 and 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 been recognized with 100 nominations and 19 awards, including the 2009 Award for Excellence in Theatre Education and Community Service. The company's upcoming 2019/20 season includes the Philadelphia premiere of Bertolt Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, adapted by Ralph Manheim (September 5 – October 13, 2019); the Philadelphia premiere of *The Last Match* by Anna Ziegler (November 7 – December 15, 2019); the return of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*, created by Anthony Lawton, Christopher Colucci, and Thom Weaver (expanded run dates of December 6 – 29, 2019); the Philadelphia premiere of *The Vertical Hour* by David Hare (January 9 – February 16, 2020); *Othello* by William Shakespeare (March 12 – April 19, 2020); and a world premiere adaptation of Molière's *The Misanthrope* by Peter DeLaurier, which is being commissioned and developed through the Lantern's New Works Program. More information is online at lanterntheater.org.

Lantern Theater Company – 25th Anniversary Season
FACT SHEET
Minors

BOOK:

Kittson O'Neill

MUSIC:

Robert Kaplowitz

LYRICS:

Kittson O'Neill and Robert Kaplowitz

DIRECTED BY:

Matthew Decker

MUSIC DIRECTION BY:

Amanda Morton

CAST:

Ben Dibble as Frank, Sr.

Jennie Eisenhower as Eileen

Brady Fritz as TJ

Marybeth Gorman as Angela

Paul L. Nolan as The Judge

Terran Scott as Kelli

Sav Souza as Breaker Boy

Grace Tarves as Amber

Mekhi Williams as Frankie, Jr.

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Nick Embree, Scenic Designer

Alison Roberts, Costume Designer

Mike Inwood, Lighting Designer

Nick Kourtides, Sound Designer

Dale Roth Nadel, Props Master

Rebecca Smith, AEA Stage Manager

Janet Embree, Production Manager

PRESS INFORMATION:

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TICKET INFORMATION:

Online: www.lanterntheater.org

By Phone: (215) 829-0395

In Person: Lantern Box Office, 10th & Ludlow Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19107

TICKET PRICING:

\$28 – \$43

PERFORMANCES:

Thursday, May 23 – Sunday, June 30, 2019

PREVIEWS:

Thursday, May 23 at 7 p.m.

Friday, May 24 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, May 25 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, May 26 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, May 28 at 6:30 p.m.

OPENING NIGHT:

Wednesday, May 29 at 7 p.m.

REGULAR RUN:

Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. on June 4, 11, 18, and 25

Wednesday at 2 p.m. on June 5 [AIC], 12 [AIC], 19, and 26

Wednesday at 7 p.m. on June 5, 12, 19, and 26

Thursday at 7 p.m. on May 30, June 6, 13, 20, and 27

Friday at 8 p.m. on May 31, June 7 [PUB], 14, 21, and 28

Saturday at 2 p.m. on June 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29

Saturday at 8 p.m. on June 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29

Sunday at 2 p.m. on June 2 [AIC], 9 [AIC], 16, 23, and 30

CLOSING PERFORMANCE:

Sunday, June 30 at 2 p.m.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

▪ [AIC] Artists in Conversation

Moderated post-show discussions with the cast immediately follow 2 p.m. performances on Sunday, June 2; Wednesday, June 5; Sunday, June 9; and Wednesday, June 12.

▪ [PUB] Lantern Pub Night

Lively conversation over complimentary pub drinks immediately follows the 8 p.m. performance on Friday, June 7.

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

Inspired by the “kids for cash” scandal in Pennsylvania's Luzerne County in the early 2000s, this compelling new work of musical theater gives voice to the families who fought back against a corrupt political machine that turned children into commodities. Commissioned and developed through the Lantern's New Works Program, this intimate American roots rock drama is the inaugural work of Kittson O'Neill and Tony Award-winning sound designer and composer Robert Kaplowitz.

PERFORMANCE VENUE:

St. Stephen's Theater, 923 Ludlow Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107

PARKING/TRANSPORTATION:

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