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M E D I A R E L E A S E

Milwaukee Chamber Theatre presents the World Premiere of

A Thousand Words

by Gwendolyn Rice

February 16 – March 11, 2012

Broadway Theatre Center's Studio Theatre

Milwaukee, WI. ... Milwaukee Chamber Theatre (MCT) presents the **world premiere** of **A THOUSAND WORDS** by Wisconsin-based playwright Gwendolyn Rice, February 16 - March 11, 2012 in collaboration with **Forward Theater Company** of Madison. **A THOUSAND WORDS** performs in the Broadway Theatre Center's Studio Theatre in Milwaukee's Historic Third Ward.

In **A THOUSAND WORDS**, Sally Quinn, a quick-witted curator from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, travels to the Midwest in search of antique quilts for a new exhibit. But she stumbles upon something altogether more intriguing: a young woman who might provide a special connection to some rare photographs, and the renowned photographer Walker Evans. Jumping back and forth from the present to the 1930s, Rice explores the complexities of the art world, personal relationships and, above all, the stories we hold dear.

In 2008 **A THOUSAND WORDS** was chosen as a Wisconsin Wrights New Play Project award recipient which led to a staged reading as part of MCT's 2008-2009 Montgomery Davis Play Development Series.

Playwright Gwendolyn Rice originally conceived **A THOUSAND WORDS** after reading a small article in the newspaper about the discovery of a cache of Evans's photos in a Key West, Florida, bar. "This story fascinated me. Unfamiliar with the photographer Walker Evans, or his work, I started researching him and studying his remarkably evocative pictures. He eventually became a main character in the play."

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Rice describes the play as, “focusing on many types of art – from the stunning black and white pictures commissioned by the Farm Security Administration, to crude patchwork quilts from Kansas. It also explores the relationship between art and commerce, and the search for authenticity on both personal and artistic levels.”

Based in Madison, playwright **Gwendolyn Rice** has won awards for short fiction as well as playwriting, and has had plays produced in Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa. She is also the author of the book *The Coronado Theatre: Rockford's Crown Jewel*. When not writing, she works in marketing and fundraising for non-profit arts organizations and she currently serves as the communications director at **Forward Theater Company**. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa and a master's degree from UW-Madison.

This unique collaboration between **Milwaukee Chamber Theatre** and **Forward Theater Company** begins with a three-week run of **A THOUSAND WORDS** at the Overture Center in Madison, January 19 – February 5, 2012. Then the entire production (cast, set, costumes, etc.) moves to Milwaukee for a run at the Broadway Theatre Center's Studio Theatre, February 16 - March 11, 2012.

Forward Theater Artistic Director **Jennifer Uphoff Gray** directs a cast of six, featuring American Players Theatre company member **Sarah Day** (THE DESERT QUEEN, MADAME DE SADE), **Josh Aaron McCabe** (THE MOONLIGHT ROOM, MISALLIANCE), Milwaukee favorites **Georgina McKee** (CRIMES OF THE HEART) and **Molly Rhode** (TRYING). **Libby Amato** and **T. Stacy Hicks** make their MCT mainstage debuts in A THOUSAND WORDS.

CAST

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Jessica Shoemaker/Abbie Lehman</i> | Libby Amato |
| <i>Sally Quinn</i> | Sarah Day |
| <i>Roy Stryker/Brian Walters/John Connors</i> | T. Stacy Hicks |
| <i>Walker Evans</i> | Josh Aaron McCabe |
| <i>Andrea Munroe</i> | Georgina McKee |
| <i>Shirley Hughes</i> | Molly Rhode |

PRODUCTION STAFF

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Director</i> | Jennifer Uphoff Gray |
| <i>Scenic Designer</i> | Nate Stuber |
| <i>Costume Designer</i> | Hyewon Park |
| <i>Lighting Designer</i> | Jason Fassl |
| <i>Sound Designer</i> | Paul Hurley |
| <i>Properties Master</i> | Charles J. Trieloff II |

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PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

| February 16 – March 11, 2012 | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| | 16 7:30 p.m. ^P | 17 8:00 p.m. ^O | 18 4:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m. | 19 2:00 p.m. |
| 22 7:30 p.m. ^V | 23 7:30 p.m. ^T | 24 8:00 p.m. | 25 4:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m. ^G | 26 2:00 p.m. |
| 29 1:00 p.m. [*] | Mar 1 7:30 p.m. ^T | 2 8:00 p.m. | 3 4:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m. | 4 2:00 p.m. |
| 7 7:30 p.m. | 8 7:30 p.m. ^T | 9 8:00 p.m. | 10 4:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m. | 11 2:00 p.m. |

P = Preview; *O* = Opening; *T* = Talkback; *V* = ViewPoints; *** = Talk Theatre; *G* = John Gurda

SPECIAL EVENTS:

--Pre-performance **ViewPoints**: a free, pre-show presentation by A THOUSAND WORDS playwright **Gwendolyn Rice** on Wednesday, February 22 at 6:30 p.m. in the Skylight Bar & Bistro.

--Special Presentation by Milwaukee historian **John Gurda**: A presentation on Milwaukee in the 1930s with a special focus on the WPA (Works Progress Administration) on Saturday, February 25 at 6:30 p.m. in the Skylight Bar & Bistro. Cost \$10; Tickets 414.276.8842.

--Pre-performance **Talk Theatre**: MCT Producing Artistic Director C. Michael Wright will lead a lively and informative chat with playwright Gwendolyn Rice and director Jennifer Uphoff Gray beginning at 12:00 noon before the matinee on Wednesday, February 29 in the Skylight Bar & Bistro.

--Post-performance **Talkbacks**: Post-show discussion with the cast and playwright Gwendolyn Rice following performances on Thursday, February 23, Thursday, March 1 and Thursday, March 8.

The world premiere of **A THOUSAND WORDS** takes place February 16 – March 11, 2012 in the Broadway Theatre Center's Studio Theatre, 158 N. Broadway in Milwaukee's Historic Third Ward. Tickets, \$31-\$36, are available Monday through Saturday from noon-6:00 p.m. at the Broadway Theatre Center Box Office, 158 N. Broadway, or by phone at **(414) 291-7800**. Tickets can be purchased online - 24 hours a day at **milwaukeechambertheatre.com**. Group, student and senior discounts are also available. For more information, visit milwaukeechambertheatre.com. **A THOUSAND WORDS** is co-sponsored by the Sheldon & Marianne Lubar Charitable Fund, Michael & Shirley Mosesson, The Dental Offices of Dr. David Paris and the John & Carolyn Peterson Charitable Foundation, Inc.

BIOGRAPHIES:**LIBBY AMATO – Jessica Shoemaker/Abbie Lehman**

Libby Amato makes her MCT mainstage debut after appearing in the Young Playwrights Festival for four years. In addition to A THOUSAND WORDS she appeared in Forward Theater's inaugural production of ALL ABOUT EVE. Other credits include productions at First Stage Children's Theater, In Tandem Theatre, Alchemist Theatre, Windfall Theatre, Bunny Gumbo and New Court Theatre. She also does a variety of on-camera work, including commercials and print ads. She is a graduate of Carroll University with a BFA in theater performance.

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SARAH DAY – Sally Quinn

Sarah Day returns to MCT where appearances include THE DESERT QUEEN (staged reading) and MADAME DE SADE. She is a founding member of Forward Theater Company, and serves on its advisory company. In addition to A THOUSAND WORDS, she has appeared in Forward's productions of ALL ABOUT EVE and WHY TORTURE IS WRONG AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE THEM. She has been a member of the acting company at American Players Theatre in Spring Green since 1986.

T. STACY HICKS - Roy Stryker/Brian Walters/John Connors

T. Stacy Hicks makes his MCT mainstage debut after appearing in the Young Playwrights Festival in 2009. Milwaukee credits include Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Milwaukee Shakespeare, Renaissance Theaterworks, In Tandem Theatre, Uprooted Theatre, Youngblood Theatre and Optimist Theatre. Regional credits include Chicago Shakespeare and Southwest Shakespeare Company. He teaches movement at UW-Whitewater where he recently coached for their world premiere of THE EDWIN BOOTH COMPANY PRESENTS.

JOSH AARON MCCABE - Walker Evans

Josh Aaron McCabe returns to MCT after playing Adam in THE MOONLIGHT ROOM and Johnny in MISALLIANCE. He is a company member with Shakespeare & Company where he has performed many roles, including the title role in MACBETH, A WINTER'S TALE (Camillo), AS YOU LIKE IT (Oliver), RICHARD III (Catesby), THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR (Host), DANGEROUS LIAISONS (Valmont), THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND (Birdboot), WAR OF THE WORLDS (Pierson) and the American premiere of THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES (Sherlock Holmes). He performed Off Broadway as Mike in PEEP SHOW at Actor's Playhouse. Regional theatre credits include Madison Repertory Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks and Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati. He has appeared in various daytime serials and on Saturday Night Live. He received his MFA in acting from UW-Madison.

GEORGINA MCKEE – Andrea Munroe

Georgina McKee returns to MCT after appearing as Meg in CRIMES OF THE HEART. Recent Milwaukee credits include the title roles in SYLVIA and MARY'S WEDDING with Next Act Theatre, Viola in TWELFTH NIGHT with Optimist Theatre, Carly in REASONS TO BE PRETTY with Renaissance Theaterworks, Eve/Barbara/Ella in THE APPLE TREE and Lori in ROMANTIC FOOLS with In Tandem Theatre and A CHRISTMAS CAROL with Milwaukee Repertory Theater. Regional work includes productions with American Players Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Fireside Dinner Theatre. She holds a BFA in acting from Southern Oregon University.

MOLLY RHODE – Shirley Hughes

Molly Rhode returns to MCT after directing MAIN-TRAVELLED ROADS and appearing as Sarah in TRYING. In addition to A THOUSAND WORDS, she performed the title role in Forward Theater's ALL ABOUT EVE. She has performed with companies including Skylight Opera Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Renaissance Theaterworks, First Stage Children's Theater, Next Act Theatre, Milwaukee Shakespeare, American Players Theatre, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Door Shakespeare and American Folklore Theatre. In addition to acting and directing, she also works as a choreographer and theater educator and makes her entire artistic living in Wisconsin. She holds a BFA in theatre studies from Southern Methodist University.

JENNIFER UPHOFF GRAY – Director

Jennifer Uphoff Gray returns to MCT after directing a staged reading of A THOUSAND WORDS as part of the Montgomery Davis Play Development Series in 2008-2009. She serves as artistic director of Forward Theater Company where her directing credits include THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION, MOONLIGHT AND MAGNOLIAS, IN THE NEXT ROOM, ALL ABOUT EVE and WHY TORTURE IS WRONG AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE THEM. Before helping to found Forward Theater, she directed LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST for Milwaukee Shakespeare and THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK for Madison Repertory Theatre. Other directing credits include the national tour of COPENHAGEN; CABARET, THE BLUE ROOM (starring Nicole Kidman) and THE LIFE on Broadway; and the world premiere of SUBURB Off Broadway.

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