



Contact: Cathy Taylor / Kelsey Moorhouse
Cathy Taylor Public Relations, Inc.
Cathy@cathytaylorpr.com
773-564-9564

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**Rivendell Theatre Ensemble
presents the World Premiere of
Look, we are breathing
by Chicago playwright Laura Jacqmin**

April 2 – May 16, 2015

Chicago, IL—**Rivendell Theatre Ensemble (RTE)**, Chicago's only Equity theatre dedicated to producing new work with women at the core, announces the second production of its 20th Anniversary Season, the world premiere of ***Look, we are breathing***, written by Chicago playwright **Laura Jacqmin** and directed by **Megan Shuchman**. The production runs **April 2-May 16, 2015**, at Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago. **The press opening is Saturday, April 11, 2015, at 7:00pm.**

Those who die young are mourned for their lost potential. But what if Mike, a high school hockey player killed while driving drunk, never really showed much potential? While sorting through their own deeply conflicted feelings in the aftermath of the accident, his mother Alice, his AP English teacher Leticia, and his one-time hookup, Caylee, try to understand who Mike was - and who he might have become. In ***Look, we are breathing***, Chicago playwright Laura Jacqmin turns her unblinking eye on the grieving process as the three most important women in Mike's life realize that in order to move on, they might first have to confront some hard truths about themselves.

Look, we are breathing was developed at the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab on Governors Island, NYC.

"Over the past 20 years, Rivendell has emerged as a haven for new work with women at the core here in Chicago. When Laura and Megan first approached me with ***Look, we are breathing***, I knew immediately it would be the perfect centerpiece in our 20th Anniversary season as we focused on challenging our own personal biases and took a deep look into what lies behind our default societal perceptions and knee-jerk ideas about right versus wrong," **comments RTE Artistic Director Tara Mallen**, who plays Alice. "The opportunity to collaborate with such a dynamic artistic team—and the incredible bonus of having Laura with us in the room developing the script alongside us—seemed an opportunity not to be missed. I am delighted to add ***Look We Are Breathing*** to list of world and regional premieres mounted by RTE over the years."

The cast of ***Look, we are breathing*** includes: RTE Artistic Director **Tara Mallen**, **Brendan Meyer**, **Brenann Stacker**, and **Lily Mojekwu**.

The core design team includes: RTE members **Diane Fairchild** (lighting) and **Janice Pytel** (costumes), as well as **Chris Kriz** (sound) **Mike Mroch** (scenic) and **Jamie Karas** (props).

The ***Look, we are breathing*** Production Sponsor is **The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation**.

Title: ***Look, we are breathing***

Written by: Chicago playwright **Laura Jacqmin**
Directed by: Steppenwolf Associate Director of Education **Megan Shuchman**
Featuring: RTE Artistic Director **Tara Mallen, Brendan Meyer, Brenann Stacker, and Lily Mojekwu**
Previews: April 2 – April 10, 2015
Press opening: Saturday, April 11, 2015 at 7:00pm
Gala opening: Sunday, April 12 at 6:00pm with reception following
Regular run: through May 16, 2015

Schedule: Wednesdays-Saturdays at 8:00pm
Saturdays at 4:00pm

Location: **Rivendell Theatre Ensemble**, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago
Tickets: **General Admission**

Previews: \$25
Pre-sale: \$32
Walk-up: \$35

Student, Senior, Active Military, Veteran

Preview: \$15
Pre-sale: \$22
Walk-up: \$25

Pay What You Can: Five seats (10% of the house) are available for each performance. Reservations are made on a first come first served basis.

Flex Pass: \$110 (\$80 for Student/ Senior/ Active Military/ Veteran)

Includes four tickets to use in any combination for the season.

Box Office: (773) 334-7728 or www.RivendellTheatre.org

Parking and transportation: Free parking is available in the Senn High School parking lot (located a block and a half from the theatre behind the school off Thorndale Avenue). There is limited paid and free street parking in the area and the theatre is easily accessible via the Clark (#22) or Broadway (#36) bus and is a short walk from the Bryn Mawr Red Line El station.

Notes of Interest

Look, we are breathing continues Rivendell's 20th Anniversary Season.

Director Megan Shuchman and playwright Laura Jacqmin have been collaborating for seven years. This represents the fourth world premiere production they have staged in Chicago. (*Pluto Was a Planet*, *Dental Society* *Midwinter Meeting* and *Dead Pile*)

Laura Jacqmin has a career in television (staff writer, "Lucky 7," ABC, 2013; story editor, "*Grace and Frankie*," Netflix, 2015) and video games ("Minecraft: Story Mode," Telltale Games). She has consistently returned to Chicago to make theater, with the world premieres of *Do-Goooder* (16th Street Theater) and *Ghost Bike* (Buzz22 Chicago) in 2014, and now with the world premieres of *Look, we are breaking* at Rivendell Theater and *We're Going to be Fine* at DePaul University.

Jacqmin is one of [The Kilroys](#), a 13-member Los Angeles-based group of playwrights and producers agitating for gender parity in the American theater. Their first action was the release of The List, an industry-nominated list of their favorite unproduced or under-produced plays by women. The story was the subject of a [New York Times](#) feature and is continuing to garner attention.

Cast Bios

Brendan Meyer (Mike) is performing at Rivendell Theatre for the first time. His Chicago credits include *Lord of the Flies* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *Julius Caesar* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater) and *Fallow* (Steep Theatre). Other credits include *American Buffalo*, *Alcestis*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Doctors Dilemma* (American Players Theatre). He is a graduate of the Chicago College of Performing Arts.

Lily Mojekwu (Leticia) last performed with RTE in *Self-Defense, or death of some salesmen* at Steppenwolf Theatre's Merle Reskin Garage Theatre as part of its Visiting Company Initiative (2005 After Dark Award - Best Ensemble). Lily just appeared as Lorena in Amanda Peet's new play *The Commons of Pensacola* (Northlight Theatre). Some favorite Chicago credits include *Welcome Home Jenny Sutter*, *The Overwhelming* (Jeff Nomination – Best Production) and *Well* with Next Theatre Company, *fml: How Carson McCullers Saved My Life*, *The Elephant Man*, *The Brother Sister Plays* (Steppenwolf), *Romeo and Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare), *A Twist of Water* (Route 66 Theatre Co), *Greensboro: A Requiem* (Steep Theatre, Non-Equity Jeff Nomination – Best Supporting Actress) and *In Arabia We'd All be Kings* (Steep Theatre, Non-Equity Jeff Award – Best Ensemble).

Brenann Stacker (Caylee) Brenann is making her Rivendell Theatre. Her most recent Chicago credits include *Airline Highway* at Steppenwolf Theatre, *Bedroom Farce* at Eclipse Theatre, *Under Construction* at Jackalope Theatre, *Pretty, Smart, Poetic* at Odradek Theatre, *The Breadwinner* at Citadel Theatre and ongoing roles at Walkabout Theatre and Redmoon Theater. Regional credits include The Williamstown Theatre Festival and Double Edge Theatre. TV/film credits include *Sirens* and films *Washed*, *Persephone* and *The Origins of Wit & Humor*. Brenann earned a BA in Drama at Tufts University and is a graduate of the O'Neill National Theater Institute, the St. Petersburg Theatre Academy and The School at Steppenwolf.

Tara Mallen (Alice) is a founder and the current Artistic Director at Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, now in its 20th season. Most recently she was seen on stage in Rivendell Theatre Ensemble's Jeff Nominated world premiere production of *Rasheeda Speaking*. Prior to that she appeared in the Steppenwolf Theatre Company production of *How Long Will I Cry: Stories of Youth Violence* written by Chicago Journalist Miles Harvey. For Rivendell, Tara has both produced and acted in over thirty productions as well as a myriad of productions regionally. She received a Joseph Jefferson award for Best Supporting Actress for her portrayal of Gwenyth in *WRENS* as part of that production's Jeff-winning ensemble. She was nominated the following year for Best Actress in a Principal Role for her work in *My Simple City*.

Screen credits include Steven Soderbergh's film *Contagion* opposite Kate Winslet, the Starz series *Boss* starring Kelsey Grammer, the NBC pilot of *Chicago Fire*, the CBS/Sony Pictures pilot *Doubt*, the NBC series *Chicago P.D.* and the new Netflix series *Sense8* directed by Lana and Andy Wachowski.

For Rivendell, Tara co-conceived and directed the World Premiere of *Women At War*, directed the Jeff nominated Midwest premieres of *The Electric Baby* by Stefanie Zdravec, *26 Miles* (in co-production with Teatro Vista); *Fighting Words* by Sunil Kuruvilla; *Psalms of a Questionable Nature* by Marisa Wegryn; the co-production of *Elliot, a Soldier's Fugue* with Stageworks/Hudson in Hudson, NY; and the brief and brilliant *Shady Meadows* by Lisa Dillman as part of the 2007 Chicago Humanities Festival.

Megan Shuchman (Director) serves as Associate Education Director for Steppenwolf for Young Adults. As a director and dramaturg, she has worked with Goodman Theatre, Northlight Theatre, TimeLine Theatre, American Theatre Company, Chicago Dramatists and Lifeline Theatre and is a proud company member of 2nd Story. Most recently, Megan directed Philip Dawkins' Jeff Award-winning play, *Miss Marx or the involuntary side effect of living* with Strawdog Theatre Company and the world premiere of Shayne Kennedy's *Agreed Upon Fictions* at 16thStreet Theatre. meganshuchman.com

Laura Jacqmin (Playwright) is a Chicago-based playwright, originally from Cleveland. She's the winner of the Wasserstein Prize, two NEA Art Works Grants, the ATHE-Kennedy Center David Mark Cohen Playwriting Award, two MacDowell Fellowships, an Illinois Arts Council Individual Artist Grant, and was a finalist for the Heideman Award, the Laurents/Hatcher Prize, the BBC International Playwriting Competition, and the Princess Grace Award. Plays: *January Joiner* (Long Wharf Theatre), *Ski Dubai* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *We're Going To Be Fine* (DePaul University, May 2015, dir. Dexter Bullard), *Two Lakes*, *Two Rivers* (O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, Royal Court Theatre's International Residency), *Dental Society Midwinter Meeting* (Chicago Dramatists/At Play, remounted 16th Street Theater and Theater on the Lake), *Do-Goooder* (16th Street Theater), *Ghost Bike* (Buzz22 Chicago) and more. Commissions: South Coast Rep, Goodman Theatre, DePaul University, Arden Theater Company, InterAct Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater/NNPN, and Ensemble Studio Theatre/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Science & Technology Project. Television: "Grace and Frankie" (Netflix, forthcoming 2015); "Lucky 7" (ABC, 2013). Jacqmin is also a video game writer, currently writing for "Minecraft: Story Mode"

with Telltale Games. She received her BA from Yale University and earned an MFA in Playwriting from Ohio University.

RTE@20: You Are Here

This year Rivendell Theatre Ensemble turns twenty years old. When it came to planning the 20th season, we found ourselves at a crossroads, reflecting back on the journey so far...and looking ahead to the future. So in honor of this milestone anniversary, we've mapped out three exciting new plays as well as a remount of last season's Jeff-nominated world premiere. Each work explores the tricky topography of personal choice--and the often uncharted biases that drive how--and why--we make our most life-changing decisions.

The 20th season continues with ***How the World Began*** (September 3-October 17, 2015) by Catherine Trieschmann, featuring RTE member Rebecca Spence.

The previously announced remount of *Rasheeda Speaking* has been postponed. Tara Mallen explains, "*Rasheeda Speaking* was scheduled to be remounted at Steppenwolf, where cast member Ora Jones is an ensemble member. Unfortunately Ora has other conflicts this spring so we look forward to revisiting *Rasheeda Speaking* again in the future."

About Rivendell Theatre Ensemble

Founded in 1994, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble advances women's lives through the power of theatre. Rivendell cultivates the talents of women artists -- writers, actors, directors, designers and technicians -- by seeking out innovative plays that explore unique female experiences and producing them in intimate, salon environments.

Rivendell fills an important role in the Chicago region as the *only* Equity theatre dedicated to producing artistically challenging and original plays created by and about women. After years of being an itinerant company, we moved into our own theater space in 2010 in Edgewater. As new members of the neighborhood, we are focused on becoming an integral community partner and serving as a catalyst to engage our audiences in a discussion of local social issues.

For more information about Rivendell Theater Ensemble, <http://rivendelltheatre.org>. Follow RTE on Facebook at [Facebook.com/rivendelltheatre](https://www.facebook.com/rivendelltheatre) and on Twitter @RivendellThtr

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