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**Rivendell Theatre Ensemble in association with Brian Nitzkin
announces cast for the World Premiere of
Alias Grace
By Margaret Atwood
Adapted for the Stage by Jennifer Blackmer
Directed by RTE Co-Founder Karen Kessler**

**Cast features RTE members Ashley Neal and Jane Baxter Miller with Steve Haggard,
Maura Kidwell, Ayssette Muñoz, David Raymond, Amro Salama and Drew Vidal**

September 1 – October 14, 2017

Chicago, IL—**Rivendell Theatre Ensemble** (RTE), Chicago's only Equity theatre dedicated to producing new work with women at the core, in association with Brian Nitzkin, announces casting for the world premiere of *Alias Grace* by **Margaret Atwood**, adapted for the stage by **Jennifer Blackmer**, and directed by RTE Co-Founder **Karen Kessler**. *Alias Grace* runs **September 1 – October 14, 2017**, at **Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago**. The press opening is Wednesday, September 13 at 7:00pm.

This production of *Alias Grace* replaces the previously announced *Cal in Camo*, which will now be presented in January 2018.

The cast includes RTE members **Ashley Neal** (Grace Marks) and **Jane Baxter Miller** (Mrs. Humphrey), with **Steve Haggard** (Simon Jordan), **Maura Kidwell** (Nancy Montgomery), **Ayssette Muñoz** (Mary Whitney), **David Raymond** (James McDermott), **Amro Salama** (Jerimiah /Jerome Dupont) and **Drew Vidal** (Thomas Kinnear).

The designers include RTE member **Elvia Moreno** (scenic), RTE member **Janice Pytel** (costumes) and **Michael Mahlum** (lighting).

A world premiere adaptation of Margaret Atwood's acclaimed novel *Alias Grace* takes a look at one of Canada's most notorious murderers. In 1843, 16-year-old Grace Marks was accused of brutally murdering her employer and his housekeeper. Imprisoned for years, Grace swears she has no memory of the killings. A doctor in the emerging field of mental health arrives to try to find out the truth of the matter. *Alias Grace* is a fascinating study of memory, culpability, and the shadowy spaces within the human mind.

This play was originally developed in collaboration with the Department of Theatre and Dance at Ball State University (<http://cms.bsu.edu>).

Following the success of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* on hulu, *Alias Grace* has been adapted into a six-part miniseries to debut this fall on Netflix. The miniseries was adapted and produced by Sarah Polley (*Away From Her*), directed by Mary Harron (*American Psycho*), and features Anna Paquin.

About the Artists

Karen Kessler (Director) is returning to Rivendell Theatre, a company she was helped found. She is a member of the ensemble at A Red Orchid Theatre where she most recently directed a production of Jennifer Healy's *The Nether*. Among Karen's directing credits are: *Wrens* (1996 and 2012), *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*, *Hamlet*, and *Ten Tiny Fingers*, *Nine Tiny Toes* at Rivendell; *Solstice*, *Blasted*, *Gagarin Way*, and *Mr. Kolpert* at Red Orchid; *A Number*, *God of Hell*, *Into the Woods*, and *War* at other theatres around Chicago; *Glengarry Glen Ross* at the Northern Stage Ensemble in Newcastle, UK; *Macbeth*, *Scapin*, *The Three Musketeers*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *All's Well That Ends Well* at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Karen is a professor of Directing and Shakespeare at Ball State University.

Jennifer Blackmer (Playwright) is the 2015 PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre Award winner for Emerging American Playwright. Her plays have been seen in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Berkeley and St. Louis, and include *Human Terrain*, *Unraveled*, *Alias Grace*, *Delicate Particle Logic*, and *Borrowed Babies*. In 2016, Jennifer's screenplay for *Human Terrain* won the prestigious Alfred P. Sloan Foundation prize through the Tribeca Film Institute, and the film is currently in pre-production. Jennifer has also been a finalist for the Sundance Film Institute Sloan Prize, the David Charles Horn Prize for Emerging Playwrights, the Fratti-Newman Political Play Contest, the Firehouse Festival of New American Theatre, and The O'Neill National Playwrights' Conference, and her writing has been short-listed for both the Princess Grace Award and the Shakespeare's Sister Fellowship. Her work has been developed by Seven Devils, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, The Playwrights' Center, The Lark and Activate Midwest. Jennifer is a Professor of Theatre and Associate Provost for Entrepreneurial Learning at Ball State University.

Steve Haggard (Simon Jordan) most recently appeared at Rivendell as Evan in *Winter*. Chicago credits: *3C*, *Sender*, *The Mutilated*, *Accidentally Like A Martyr*, *The Aliens*, *Kimberly Akimbo* and *The Mandrake* (A Red Orchid Theatre) *Tribes* (Steppenwolf); *Doubt*, *Old Glory*, *The Subject Was Roses*, and *Our Town* (Writers'); *Funnyman*, *Season's Greetings*, and *She Stoops to Conquer* (Northlight); *Wasteland* (Timeline); *King Lear*, *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare). Regional Credits: *Arcadia*, *R+G are Dead*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Tempest*, *Hay Fever*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Ah Wilderness* (American Players Theatre); *Almost Maine* (Milwaukee Repertory) and *Fallen Angels* (Indiana Repertory). Steve has appeared in *Chicago Fire*, *Prison Break* and several national commercials. He is an ensemble member of A Red Orchid Theatre and a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University.

Maura Kidwell (Nancy Montgomery) is making her Rivendell debut in *Alias Grace*. In her eleven years acting in Chicago, Maura has enjoyed working on stage at Theatre Wit, The Gift, Erasing the Distance (ensemble member), and Court Theatre, on television in the series' *Sirens*, *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago Justice*, *Mind Games* and *Boss*, in various films including *Canal Street ET* and Tim Kasher's debut feature *No Resolution*, and as an on-camera instructor at Vagabond School of the Arts.

Jane Baxter Miller (Mrs. Humphrey) is a member of Rivendell Theatre Ensemble. RTE credits include *American Wee-Pie*; *Falling*; *A Wake*; *Self-Defense, or the death of some salesmen*; *Silence*; *Faulkner's Bicycle*; *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 ¾*; and *WRENS*. Additional Chicago credits include *Dandelion Wine* with Chicago Children's Theatre; *The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer* with Next Theatre; *Mr. Kolpert* with A Red Orchid Theatre; *The Irish and How They Got That Way* at the Mercury Theatre, *Cowgirls* with Northlight Theatre and *Pump Boys and Dinettes* at Theatre at the Centre. Her film credits include NBC's *Chicago Justice* and an upcoming *Captive State* feature film. Jane is a singer and songwriter appearing on numerous recordings through Bloodshot Records. She composed the children's musical *Dirty Cowboy* (with fellow RTE ensemble member Victoria Delorio) for Lifeline Theatre. Her critically acclaimed solo recording, *Harm Among the Willows*, is available through Bloodshot Records and iTunes.

Aysette Muñoz (Mary Whitney) is an ensemble member with Teatro Vista, where her credits include *Wolf at The End of the Block*; *In the Time of the Butterflies*; *Between You, Me, and the Lampshade*; *Romeo & Juliet*; and *A View from the Bridge*. Additional Chicago credits include *Ah, Wilderness*; *Marisol* (Goodman Theatre) and understudying in *Short Shakes! Romeo & Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre).

Regional credits include *The Comedy of Errors*; *Richard III* (Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival). Television credits include *Chicago P.D.* and she was featured as one of the *Chicago Tribune's* "Top 10 Hot New Faces of Chicago Theatre" in 2015.

Ashley Neal (Grace Marks) is an RTE ensemble member and has appeared in many productions including: *WRENS*, *26 Miles*, *The Walls*, *Be Aggressive*, and others. Ashley most recently appeared in A Red Orchid Theatre's *The Nether* where she also appeared in *A Red Handed Otter*. Other shows you may have seen her in include: *London Wall*, *Men Should Weep* and *Stage Door* with Griffin Theatre, *The Life and Sort of Death of Eric Argyle* with Steep Theatre, as well as work with Chicago Dramatists, Pine Box, Irish Theatre Company, Step Up, Jackalope Theatre, Victory Gardens, Strawdog, The Greenhouse Theatre, and others. Ashley is a graduate of Columbia College Chicago and The School at Steppenwolf.

David Raymond (James McDermott) has appeared in Chicago in *Good People* (Redtwist Theatre), *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* (Brightside Theatre), and *Posh* (u/s Steep Theatre, Jeff Award Winner–Best Ensemble). Bay Area credits include work with San Francisco Playhouse, Stanford Repertory Theater, and Custom Made Theatre Company's 2015 production of *This Is Our Youth* for which David won an SF Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award (Best Principal Actor). He has also appeared in commercials and online content. David is a graduate of the School at Steppenwolf (2016).

Amro Salama (Jerimiah / Jerome Dupont) is making his Rivendell Theatre debut. His theatre credits include *Yasmina's Necklace*, the 2016 Jeff Award nominee for Best New Work at 16th Street theatre. Additional Chicago theater credits include the Goodman Theatre where he will be reprising his role in *Yasmina's Necklace* this fall at the Goodman Theatre. He has performed in numerous play readings at Silk Road Rising and Dramatists. Regional credits: St. Louis: Mustard Seed Theatre; Los Angeles: Cornerstone Theatre, Pacific Resident Theatre, The Hudson Theatre and ACME; NYC: (Off Broadway) Theatricum Botanicum with the premiere of the 2004 Pulitzer Nominated *Omnium Gatherum*. TV Credits include: Recurring role on the upcoming TV show *The Chi* for Showtime. Past TV and Film includes: *Chicago PD*, *Shameless*, *Modern Family*, *Law and Order*, *Children's Hospital* and *Suite Life on Deck*.

Drew Vidal (Thomas Kinnear) is returning to Rivendell, having started there as a Fight Director on *Silence*. Coming up in Chicago, Drew appeared on stage with *Famous Door*, *The Hypocrites*, *Defiant*, *Boxer Rebellion*, *Red Hen*, *Collaboration* and *Tin Fish*, among others. More recently, acting credits include *The Glass Menagerie* (Jim) at Human Race, *The Book Club Play* (Rob) at KU Rep, *Angels in America* (Joe) at Ball State, and *The Three Musketeers* (D'Artagnan) at Illinois Shakespeare Festival; and as a Fight Director, *Solstice* at A Red Orchid, *Water by the Spoonful* at Off Square Theatre Company, and *Holes* at Indiana Repertory Theatre.

Title: *Alias Grace*
By: Margaret Atwood
Adapted for the stage by: Jennifer Blackmer
Directed by: RTE Co-Founder Karen Kessler

Previews: **September 1 – 9, 2017**
Friday, September 1 at 8:00pm
Saturday, September 2 at 8:00pm

Wednesday September 6 at 8:00PM
Thursday, September 7 at 8:00pm
Friday, September 8 at 8:00pm
Saturday, September 9 at 8:00pm

VIP Opening: **Sunday, September 10, 2017 at 6:00pm**
Press opening: **Wednesday, September 13, 2017 at 7:00pm**
Regular run: **September 14 – October 14, 2017**

Schedule: **Thursdays-Saturdays at 8:00pm**
Saturdays at 4:00pm (select performances)
Sunday, October 8th at 3:00pm

Town Hall Discussions will follow select Saturday matinees

Location: Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago
Tickets: **General Admission**
Previews: \$28
Regular: \$38
Student, Senior, Active Military, Veteran
Previews: \$18
Regular: \$28

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.

Subscriptions: \$59-\$80 for 3-plays

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.

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, visit <http://rivendelltheatre.org>. Follow RTE on Facebook at [Facebook.com/rivendelltheatre](https://www.facebook.com/rivendelltheatre) and on Twitter @RivendellThtr.

Rivendell Theatre Ensemble is supported by generous grants from; The Lester and Hope Abelson Fund; The Alphawood Foundation; The Arts Work Fund for Organizational Development; The Chicago Community Trust; The Chicago Foundation for Women; The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation; The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; The MacArthur Funds for Arts and Culture at The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation; The Reva and David Logan Foundation; The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust; SIF Fund at The Chicago Community Trust; Cultural Outreach Program Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events; and the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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