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Casting and calendar
April – May 2018

**Rivendell Theatre Ensemble announces complete casting for
the Midwest Premiere of
The Cake
by Bekah Brunstetter
directed by Lauren Shouse
featuring RTE Founders Tara Mallen and Keith Kupferer,
RTE Member Krystal McNeil, and Tuckie White**

April 8 - May 20, 2018

Chicago, IL—**Rivendell Theatre Ensemble (RTE)**, Chicago's only Equity theatre dedicated to producing new work with women at the core, announces the Midwest premiere of ***The Cake*** by **Bekah Brunstetter**, directed by **Lauren Shouse**, and featuring RTE Founders **Tara Mallen** and **Keith Kupferer**, RTE Member **Krystal McNeil**, with **Tuckie White**. ***The Cake*** runs **April 8 – May 20, 2018**, at **Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago**. The press opening is Wednesday, April 18, 2018 at 7:00pm.

The cast of *The Cake* includes RTE Founders (and real life married couple) **Tara Mallen** (*Della*) and **Keith Kupferer** (*Tim*), RTE Ensemble Member **Krystal McNeil** (*Macy*), and **Tuckie White** (*Jen*).

Jen lives in New York but has always dreamed of getting married in her small North Carolina hometown, so she heads down south with her partner to ask Della, her late mother's best friend, to do the honors of making the wedding cake at her bakery. Della's cakes are legendary, even earning her a spot as a contestant on the "Great American Baking Show." She is overjoyed at Jen's request until she realizes there's not just one bride, but two, forcing her to re-examine some of her deeply-held beliefs, as well as her own marriage. Faith, family and frosting collide in this touching and timely new play.

The Cake comes from Bekah Brunstetter, Emmy-nominated producer and writer of the hit NBC drama "This Is Us." The timely play is inspired in part by the *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, which is currently in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. In the coming months, our nation's highest court will determine whether it was legal for a Colorado baker to turn away two men who wanted to place an order for their wedding reception.

The creative team includes RTE member, **Janice Pytel** (Costume Design), as well as **Arnel Sancianco** (Scenic Design), **Cat Wilson** (Lighting Design), Shannon Marie O'Neill (sound design) and **Danielle Myerscough** (Properties Design). The stage manager is **Jennifer Thusing** and the "Cake Designer" is Erin Martin of **ECBG cake+pastry studio**.

ARTIST BIOS

Bekah Brunstetter (Playwright) hails from Winston-Salem, North Carolina and currently lives in Los Angeles. Her plays include *The Cake* (Ojai Playwrights Conference), *Going to a Place where you already*

are (South Coast Repertory), *The Oregon Trail* (Portland Center Stage Fall 2016, O'Neill Playwrights Conference; Flying V) *Cutie and Bear* (Roundabout commission), *A Long and Happy Life* (Naked Angels commission), *Be A Good Little Widow* (Ars Nova, Collaboraction, The Old Globe), *Oohrah!* (Atlantic Theater, Steppenwolf Garage, Finborough Theater/London), *Nothing is the end of the World (except for the end of the world)* (Waterwell Productions), *House of Home* (Williamstown Theater Festival) and *Miss Lilly Gets Boned* (Ice Factory Festival). She is an alumna of the CTG Writers Group, Primary Stages Writers Group, Ars Nova Play Group, The Playwright's Realm, and the Women's Project Lab. She is currently a member of the Echo Theater's Playwright's Group. She has previously written for MTV (*Underemployed*; *I Just Want My Pants Back*), ABC Family's *Switched at Birth* and Starz's *American Gods*. She is currently a Co-Producer on NBC's *This Is Us*. She received her B.A. from UNC Chapel Hill and her M.F.A. in Dramatic Writing from the New School for Drama.

Lauren Shouse (Director) is a director, dramaturg and teacher. She is currently the Artistic Associate and Literary Manager at Chicago's Northlight Theatre. Her recent directing credits include: *The Legend of Georgia McBride* at Northlight Theatre, *Nice Girl* and *Betrayal* at Raven Theatre, *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn*, *Superior Donuts*, and *A Christmas Story* at Nashville Repertory Theatre, the world premiere of *Long Way Down* with 3Ps productions (nominated for American Theatre Critics Association Steinberg New Play Award 2011); the world premiere of *Religion and Rubber Ducks* with Ovio Arte; *Parallel Lives*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *The Last Five Years* and *Chess in Concert* with Street Theatre Company; the world premiere of *Rear Widow* at Chaffin's Barn Theatre, and Sylvia Plath's *3 Women*. As Artistic Associate at Nashville Rep, Lauren directed the Ingram New Works Play Lab and Festival, which developed new works by John Patrick Shanley, David Auburn, Steven Dietz and Victoria Stewart. Lauren also co-founded Ten Minute Playhouse, a company that produces short plays by local playwrights. Before moving to Nashville, Lauren lived in London, UK and worked with Producer/Director Hugh Wooldridge. Her work abroad includes: Production Executive for *The Night of 1000 Voices* (celebrating John Kander and Fred Ebb and starring Joel Grey with *Avenue Q*) at The Royal Albert Hall; Production Executive of *An Evening with Michael Parkinson* at The Theatre Royal - Windsor, Children's Director/Assistant to the Director of *A Gift of Music*, and Assistant Director of *The Night of 1000 Voices* at The Odyssey Arena in Belfast, Ireland. Lauren holds an MA in Performance Studies from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill where she adapted and directed *The Time Traveler's Wife*. She received her MFA in theatre directing at Northwestern University where she directed *Stop Kiss*, *Eurydice* and *In the Next Room or the Vibrator Play*. In Chicago, Lauren has also worked with Steppenwolf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, Rivendell Theatre, Sideshow Theatre, The Gift Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, and Stage Left Theatre.

Tara Mallen (*Della*) is an actor, director, producer and the Artistic Director at Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, Tara was most recently on stage in Rivendell's production of *The Firebirds Take the Field*. Other recent credits include Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* at Arena Stage; Rivendell's Jeff Nominated, world premiere productions of *Look, we are breathing* and *Rasheeda Speaking*; *How Long Will I Cry: Stories of Youth Violence* at Steppenwolf's Theatre for Young Audiences; Rivendell's World Premiere, Jeff nominated production of *The Walls and Self Defense, or the Death of Some Salesmen* — both productions part of Steppenwolf Theatre Company's Visiting Theater Initiative. For Rivendell, Tara has both produced and acted in over thirty productions. She received a Joseph Jefferson award for "Supporting Actress" for her portrayal of Gwenth in *WRENS* as part of that production's Jeff-winning ensemble. She was nominated the following year for "Actress in a Principal Role" for her work in *My Simple City*. Screen credits include Steven Soderbergh's film *Contagion*; *Boss* (STARZ); *Chicago Fire* (NBC); *Chicago P.D.* (NBC); *FOOLS* (Feature film); *Sense8* (Netflix); and the CBS/Sony Pictures pilot *Doubt*. Tara co-conceived and directed the critically acclaimed World Premiere of *WOMEN AT WAR*, a theatrical exploration of women in today's military that played to sold out houses in the fall of 2014 and is now touring throughout the mid-west.

Keith Kupferer (*Tim*) is a founding member of Rivendell Theatre Ensemble where he was most recently seen in their critically acclaimed production of *Cal in Camo*. Other Chicago credits include *The Qualms*, *Good People*, *Middletown*, *South of Settling*, *Of Mice & Men*, *Carter's Way*, *Men of Tortuga*; *Things Being What They Are*; *Jesus Hopped The A Train* and *Tavern Story* at Steppenwolf Theatre; *The Humans* at American Theatre Company, *Men's Support Group*, *God of Carnage*, *High Holidays*, *Passion Play* and *The Old Neighborhood* at the Goodman Theatre; *The Mystery of Love and Sex* (where he received a Jeff nomination for "Supporting Actor"), and *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Wolf* at Writer's Theatre; *Hillary and Clinton*, *Never the Sinner*, and *Appropriate* at Victory Garden's Theatre; *Gypsy* at Chicago

Shakespeare Theater; *End Days* at Windy City Playhouse; *Execution of Justice* with About Face Theatre; *Cat Feet* and *The Old Neighborhood* at Northlight; *Desire Under The Elms*, a co-production between Philadelphia's Freedom Theatre and Chicago's Court Theatre; *The Unseen*, *The Meek*, *Canus Lunis Balloonis*, (nominated for a 1998 Joseph Jefferson award for Best Ensemble), and *The Physicists* for A Red Orchid Theatre; and *Big Lake*, *Big City*, *Trust* and *Hillbilly Antigone* for Lookingglass Theatre. Film credits include the soon-to be released *Widows*; *The Dilemma*; *Dark Knight*; *Public Enemies*; *The Express*; *Stranger Than Fiction*; *Road to Perdition*; *Finding Santa*; *Fred Klaus*; *The Last Rights of Joe May*; *The Merry Gentleman* directed by Michael Keaton, *Resurrecting McGinn*; and *Open Tables*. TV credits include *Better Call Saul*; *Empire*; *Chicago P.D.*; *Betrayal*; *Crisis*; *Chicago Fire*; *Detroit 187*; *The Beast*; *Prison Break*; *The Jamie Kennedy Experiment* and *Early Edition*.

Krystal McNeil (*Macy*) is an ensemble member at RTE where she performed in the production *WOMEN AT WAR*. Most recent credits Include *In The Next Room or The Vibrator Play* (Timeline Theater Company), *Bootycandy* (Windy City Playhouse), *The Compass* (Steppenwolf SYA) , and understudying and performing in *Objects in the Mirror* and *Carlyle* at Goodman Theater Company. Krystal also does voiceover work and appeared in an episode of *Chicago P.D.* She is represented by Big Mouth Talent.

Tuckie White (*Jen*) most recently appeared in Raven Theatre's *Red Velvet* and *The Play About My Dad*. Over the years, she has been part of productions at Chicago Shakespeare, Steppenwolf, Cock & Bull, Lifeline, Victory Gardens, and Goodman Theatre. Film/TV credits include: *The Drunk*, *After Effect*, and *Chicago Med*. She is a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University and an alum of iO and Second City. She is represented by Grossman & Jack Talent.

The Cake was originally produced by The Echo Theater Company, Los Angeles, California; Chris Fields, Artistic Director and Jesse Cannady, Producing Director. *The Cake* received a developmental reading at The Alley Theatre, Gregory Boyd, Artistic Director and Dean R. Gladden, Managing Director. *The Cake* was developed at The Ojai Playwrights Conference, Robert Egan, Artistic Director/Producer.

Fact Sheet / The Cake

April 8 - May 20, 2018

Title: *The Cake*
Written by: Bekah Brunstetter
Directed by: Lauren Shouse

Featuring: RTE Founders **Tara Mallen** (*Della*) and **Keith Kupferer** (*Tim*), RTE Ensemble Member **Krystal McNeil** (*Macy*), and **Tuckie White** (*Jen*)

Creative Team: **Arnel Sancianco** (Scenic Design) and RTE member **Janice Pytel** (Costume Design), as well as **Cat Wilson** (Lighting Design), **Shannon Marie O'Neill** (sound design), **Danielle Meyerscough** (Properties Design), and **Jennifer Thusing** (Stage Manager).

Previews: **April 8 – 14, 2018**
Sunday, April 8 at 3:00 pm
Thursday, April 12 at 8:00pm
Friday, April 13 at 8:00pm
Saturday, April 14 at 8:00pm

VIP Opening: Sunday, April 15 at 6:00pm
Press Opening: Wednesday, April 18 at 6:00pm
Press Opening: Wednesday, April 18 at 7:00pm
Regular run: Thursday, April 19-Sunday, May 20, 2018

Schedule: **Thursdays-Saturdays at 8:00pm**
(EXCEPT Thursday, May 10 – no performance that day)
Saturdays at 4:00pm
Sunday, May 6 and May 20 ONLY at 3:00pm

Town Hall Discussions will follow Saturday 4pm matinees on May 5 and May 19 to be moderated by director Lauren Shouse

Friday April 20: Performance to benefit Planned Parenthood of Illinois with \$10 of every ticket sold going to PPIL

Friday April 27: Mama's night – all moms, aunts, friends, etc. are welcome to join us in our rehearsal studio following the show for great conversation and drinks

Thursday May 3: Open captioned performance - \$15 tickets with the code ACCESS

Location: Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago

Tickets: **General Admission**
Previews: \$28
Regular Run: \$38
Student, Senior, Active Military, Veteran
Preview: \$18
Regular Run: \$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.

Three-show pass: \$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. 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, RTE moved into its own theater space in 2010 in Edgewater. As new members of the neighborhood, the company is focused on becoming an integral community partner and serving as a catalyst to engage 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](https://twitter.com/RivendellThtr).

Rivendell Theatre Ensemble is supported by generous grants from: The Lester and Hope Abelson Fund; The Alphawood Foundation; Paul M. Angell Family 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; The Alfred Pick Jr. Fund; 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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