Rivendell Theatre Ensemble announces the World Premiere of *The Tasters* by Meghan Brown, directed by RTE member Devon de Mayo featuring RTE members Paula Ramirez and Eric Slater with Daniella Pereira, Collin Quinn Rice, and Shariba Rivers

**January 10 - February 16, 2020**

Chicago, IL—Rivendell Theatre Ensemble (RTE), Chicago’s only Equity theatre dedicated to producing new work with women at the core, presents the world premiere of *The Tasters* by Meghan Brown, directed by RTE member Devon de Mayo. *The Tasters* runs January 10 – February 16, 2020 at Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago. The press opening is Monday, January 20 at 7:00pm

With so many government leaders getting poisoned these days, the Tasters have a critical job to do. They sample mouthwatering gourmet meals...then wait to see if they die in agony. When government forces capture renowned resistance leader Elyse, they make her a Taster and assume they've won. But Elyse has a plan of her own, which kicks off a series of events that might just alter the course of history...and put all the other Tasters' lives at risk.

Fresh out of Victory Garden's 2019 IGNITION Festival, Meghan Brown's chilling and sharply observed new play examines the nuances of political resistance, self-interest, and individual action that creates hope in the face of oppression.

Artistic Director Tara Mallen comments, “As we approach what may be the most critical election in U.S. history, Meghan Brown's darkly comic allegory circles around the rise of authoritarianism and the intersection of motherhood, sacrifice, and political rebellion—this absolutely unsettling dystopia suddenly seems all too near. Our production reunites Meghan with director Devon de Mayo, fresh on the heels of their collaboration this past summer in the Ignition Series at Victory Gardens and will surely stir the pot. I cannot imagine a better way to kick off our 25th anniversary season as we dive into unpacking the issues driving our nation's current discourse.”

The cast includes RTE members Paula Ramirez (Bianca) and Eric Slater (The General), with Daniella Pereira (Corrine), Collin Quinn Rice (Lt. Sawyer), and Shariba Rivers (Elyse).

The creative team includes Yeaji Kim (projection & scenic design), Heather Sparling (lighting design), Becca Duff (costume design), Hannah Foersch (sound design), Deanna Myers (assistant director), Lucia Lombardi (stage manager) and Sara Beaman (production manager).

Rivendell’s Town Hall Series: During the run of each production, Rivendell hosts Town Hall Discussions after select Saturday matinees. These are an essential touchstone for our organization to extend the conversation from the stage to the community. Panelists help field questions, present observations, and participate in supporting a
thoughtful, in-depth dialogue for all involved. Audience participants need not be present for the Saturday matinee and are welcome to join the conversation following the performance.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Meghan Brown (Playwright) is an Ovation Award-winning playwright, screenwriter, and lyricist based in Los Angeles. Her work has been described as “moving and dangerous” (John Patrick Shanley), “poetic and sensuous” (the Huffington Post), and “brilliantly crafted” (Stage Raw). Her plays include What Happened While Hero Was Dead, The Pliant Girls (winner of the 2014 Ovation Award for Playwriting for an Original Play), The Kill-or-Dies (Max K. Lerner Fellowship winner, Princess Grace Award semifinalist), Psyche (Princess Grace Award finalista, The Fire Room (Hollywood Fringe Festival Award winner), The Gypsy Machine, This Is Happening Now. Perfect Teeth for Crocodile Land, and Shine Darkly. Illyia. Current projects include the new musical These Girls Have Demons (music by Sarah Taylor Ellis, workshop at Pittsburgh CLO in spring 2018), Cowboy Elektra (with Rogue Artists Ensemble, music by the Dustbowl Revival's Zach Lupetin, workshop in Los Angeles, summer 2018), and the film adaptation of The Kill-or-Dies.

Devon de Mayo (Director) directed the world premieres of Laura and the Sea by Kate Tarker and Scientific Method by Jenny Connell Davis for Rivendell Theatre Ensemble. Other Directing credits include: If I Forget (Victory Gardens Theatre); First Love is the Revolution (Steep Theatre); Women Laughing Alone With Salad (Theatre Wit); The Burn (Steppenwolf Theatre), Harvey (Court Theatre), Sycamore (Raven Theatre), You on the Moors Now (The Hypocrites), Animals Out of Paper (Shattered Globe Theatre), You Can’t Take it With You, and Lost in Yonkers (Northlight Theatre), Jet Black Chevrolet (side project); Compulsion and Everything is Illuminated (Next); Roadkill Confidential, The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler, and Clouds (Dog & Pony). Directing and devising credits: Don’t Look Back/Must Look Back (Pivot Arts); Guerra: A Clown Play (La Pliara, Mexico); The Whole World is Watching, As Told by the Vivian Girls and The Twins Would Like to Say (Dog & Pony). She received her MFA from Middlesex University in London and did further studies at the Russian Academy of Dramatic Arts in Moscow and the Indonesian Institute for the Arts in Bali, Indonesia.

Paula Ramirez (Bianca) returns to Rivendell Ensemble Theatre, where she is an ensemble member and was last seen in their world premiere productions of Laura and the Sea and Women at War. Originally from Venezuela, Paula has spent the last two years touring the country performing scripted and improvised material as a Sexual Assault Prevention Educator with Catharsis Productions. Other Chicago stage credits include Another Word for Beauty (Goodman Theatre; ensemble + u/s), Fufu and her Friends (Goodman Theatre/Rivendell Theatre as part of the Latino Theatre Festival), Heat Wave (CBD/Steppenwolf Garage), PUTASI!, Crossed, GL2010 and Gen Sex (Teatro Luna). Recent TV/Film credits include Mixtape (Netflix), Chicago Fire (NBC) and Brujos (OTV).

Eric Slater (The General) returns to Rivendell where he is an ensemble member. Previous credits at Rivendell include: Cal In Camo, Alias Grace, Winter, Self Defense, Expecting Isabell and Silence. Other Chicago credits include: Small Jokes About Monsters (16th Street Theatre); Support Group for Men (Jeff Award Nomination: Ensemble), Feathers and Teeth, Smokefall (Goodman Theatre); The Doppelganger (Steppenwolf Theatre Co.); Tiny Beautiful Things and Hand to God (Victory Gardens Theater); Kill Floor (American Theatre Co.); and The Diary of Anne Frank (Writers Theatre). Off-Broadway credits include Juvenile Players (The Kitchen); The Dudley's: A Family Game! (Theatre for a New City); Our Greatest Year (Kraine and The Brick); Original cast of Gloryana (Workshop Productions at The Public Theatre and The York Theatre Company); and Cyanocitta (The Beckett on Theatre Row). Regional credits include American Repertory Theatre, Boston Institute of Contemporary Art, Detroit Institute of Arts Museum, Madison Repertory Theatre, Grand Arts and the Dobama Theatre. Film and TV credits include: Widows and Coming To You, Fargo and Chicago Fire.

Daniella Pereira (Corrine) is making her Rivendell Theatre debut. Some of her most recent credits include Elizabeth Rex (OPFT), Bus Stop (Eclipse Theatre); Women Laughing Alone With Salad (Theater Wit); The Taming of The Shrew (OPFT) and Letters Home (Griffin Theatre). She is also an ensemble member of Strawdog Theatre, most recently appearing in The Effect and Cymbeline. TV credits include Empire (FOX) and Chicago PD (NBC).

Collin Quinn Rice (Lt. Sawyer) is working with Rivendell for the first time! They were most recently seen in All Quiet on the Western Front (Red Tape Theatre), Mike Pence Sex Dream (First Floor Theater), Trans Voices Cabaret (Steppenwolf LOOK OUT Series), The Harvest (Griffin Theatre Co.), Hatfield & McCoy (The House), Le Switch (About Face Theatre), Masque Macabre (Strawdog Theatre Company), Going to a Place… (Redtwist Theatre), The Ode at Pint's End (Birch House Immersive), and The Hilary
Duff Project (MCL Chicago). Film credits include The Right Swipe and The Play Cycle. Collin is a graduate of Northwestern University.

Shariba Rivers (Elyse) is making her Rivendell Theatre debut. She has worked with various theater companies around Chicago and, most recently, the Geva in Rochester, NY. This year’s stage credits include Hoodoo Love (Raven Theatre), Black Ballerina (Fleetwood Jourdain) and Small Jokes About Monsters (16th Street Theater). TV credits include Empire, Chicago PD, Chicago Med, and The Chi.

Fact Sheet The Tasters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>The Tasters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written by:</td>
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<td>January 10 – January 18, 2020</td>
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Town Hall Discussion will follow the 4:00pm matinee on Saturday February 8th

Additional performances on Wednesdays, February 5 & 12 at 8PM and Sunday, February 16 at 3PM (final performance)

Special performances are as follows:

Sunday, January 12 at 3PM: Industry Performance (& NNPN Night)
Following the performance join in the conversation with playwright Meghan Brown and director Devon de Mayo in our rehearsal studio
$15 Industry tickets and post-show reception with the code: NEW WORK

Saturday, January 18th: Edgewater Night
Neighbors from our Edgewater community are invited to join Rivendell Artistic Director Tara Mallen pre-performance in our rehearsal studio for wine, cheese, and great conversation Followed by the 8PM preview performance.
$15 tickets with the code: EDGE.

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 the lives of women through 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 an intimate salon environment.

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, Rivendell moved into its own theater space in 2011 in Edgewater. 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 Rivendell on Facebook at Facebook.com/rivendelltheatre, on Twitter @RivendellThtr, and on Instagram at @rivendelltheatre.

Rivendell Theatre Ensemble is supported by generous grants from: 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 League of Chicago Theatres and ComEd; The Luria Family Foundation; The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust; Shubert Foundation; 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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