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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Geva Theatre Center presents *PRIVATE LIVES*

Rochester, N.Y., February 28, 2017 – Geva Theatre Center presents *Private Lives*, Noël Coward's hilarious comedy of manners. *Private Lives* is directed by **Mark Cuddy** and will be performed in the Wilson Stage from **March 21 to April 16**.

Elyot and Amanda have been divorced from each other for five years, so imagine their surprise when, whilst honeymooning on the French Riviera with their new spouses, they find themselves in adjacent suites. Sparks fly, reigniting a passion between them too powerful to fight in Noël Coward's 1930 champagne cocktail of a comedy about the fine line between love and loathing.

Born in the London suburb of Teddington in 1899, **Noël Coward** made his professional stage debut at the age of 12, leading to many child actor appearances over the next few years. His breakthrough in playwriting was the controversial *The Vortex* (1924) which featured themes of drugs and adultery and made his name as both actor and playwright in the West End and on Broadway. During the 1920s and 1930s, Coward wrote a string of successful plays, musicals and intimate revues including *Fallen Angels* (1925), *Hay Fever* (1925), *Easy Virtue* (1926), *This Year of Grace* (1928), and *Bitter Sweet* (1929). His professional partnership with childhood friend Gertrude Lawrence, started with *Private Lives* (1931), and continued with *Tonight at 8.30* (1936). During World War II, he remained a successful playwright, screenwriter and director, as well as entertaining the troops and even acting as an unofficial spy for the Foreign Office. His plays during these years included *Blithe Spirit* which ran for 1997 performances, outlasting the War (a West End record until *The Mousetrap* overtook it), *This Happy Breed* and *Present Laughter* (both 1943). His two wartime screenplays, *In Which We Serve*, which he co-directed with the young David Lean, and *Brief Encounter* quickly became classics of British cinema. After the war, Coward re-invented himself as a cabaret and TV star, particularly in America, and in 1955 he played a sell-out season in Las Vegas featuring many of his most famous songs, including "Mad About the Boy," "I'll See You Again" and "Mad Dogs and Englishmen." He enjoyed a renaissance in the early 1960s becoming the first living playwright to be performed by Britain's National Theatre, when he directed *Hay Fever* there. Late in his career he was lauded for his roles in a number of films including *Our Man in Havana* (1959) and his role as the iconic Mr. Bridger alongside Michael Caine in *The Italian Job* (1968). Writer, actor, director, film producer, painter, songwriter, cabaret artist as well as an author of a novel, verse, essays and autobiographies, he was called by close friends 'The Master'. His final West End appearance was *Song at Twilight* in 1966, which he wrote and starred in. He was knighted in 1970 and died peacefully in 1973 in Jamaica.

In 1929, Coward was in the middle of an Asian tour when he fell ill with the flu. He spent his two-week period of recuperation outlining *Private Lives* and completed the actual writing of it in four days (he spent several weeks making changes to it). *Private Lives* premiered at the King's Theatre in Edinburgh in August of 1930 directed by Coward and starring Coward as Elyot with Gertrude Lawrence as Amanda, Laurence Olivier as Victor and Adrienne Allen as Sybil. After a brief out of town tour, the production opened at the Phoenix Theatre in London in September for a strictly limited, three-month season (Coward disliked long runs). Despite sold-out houses, the play closed in December 1930. *Private Lives* opened at the Times Square Theatre on Broadway in January 1931 with Coward, Lawrence and Olivier reprising their roles, joined by Jill Esmond as Sybil. The play ran in New York through May and closed after 256 performances. *Private Lives* was first revived in 1944 and has had numerous West End and Broadway revivals since then featuring stars of stage and screen in the roles of Elyot and Amanda.

Making their Geva Theatre Center debuts in *Private Lives* are **Bill Christ** (Broadway productions of *Born Yesterday*, *The Miracle Worker* and *Inherit the Wind*) as Victor, **Jenny Leona** (New York productions of *The Beekeeper's Daughter* and *Fire. Water. Night*) as Sybil, **David Andrew Macdonald** (Broadway productions of *Skylight*, *Rocky*, *Mamma Mia!* and television's "Guiding Light") as Elyot and **Monette Magrath** (Broadway's *All the Way* and Showtime's "Weeds") as Amanda. **Alexis Russo** (Geva's production of *A Christmas Carol*) completes the cast as Louise.

Private Lives is directed by **Mark Cuddy**. The design team includes **Nicholas Dorr** (scenic design), **Gregory Gale** (costume design), **Derek Madonia** (lighting design), **Dan Roach** (sound design), **Bettie O. Rogers** (Wig/Hair Design) and **David S. Leong** (fight choreographer).

The 2016-2017 Wilson Stage Series is sponsored by **ESL Federal Credit Union**. The Honorary Wilson Stage Series Sponsor is **Dr. Dawn Lipson**. *Private Lives* is produced with support from Co-Producers **Flaum Management Co. Inc. and MassMutual**; Associate Producer **Nixon Peabody LLP** and Media Sponsors **WXXI** and **The Buzz 98.9**.

***Private Lives* begins performances March 21 and runs in the Wilson Stage through April 16.**

For photos, or to arrange interviews, please contact
Dawn Kellogg, Communications Manager, (585) 420-2059 or email: dkellogg@gevatheatre.org.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

PREVIEWS: Tuesday, March 21 @ 7:30pm
Wednesday, March 22 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, March 23 @ 7:30pm
Friday, March 24 @ 8pm
Saturday, March 25 @ 2pm (Open Captioned Performance)

OPENING NIGHT: Saturday, March 25 @ 8pm

PERFORMANCES:

Sunday, March 26 @ 2pm and 7pm
Tuesday, March 28 @ 6pm
Wednesday, March 29 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, March 30 @ 7:30pm (Community Night: Out at Geva)
Friday, March 31 @ 8pm
Saturday, April 1 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, April 2 @ 2pm (Sunday Salon) and 7pm
Tuesday, April 4 @ 7:30pm
Wednesday, April 5 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, April 6 @ 7:30pm
Friday, April 7 @ 8pm
Saturday, April 8 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, April 9 @ 2pm (Audio Described Performance) and 7pm
Tuesday, April 11 @ 7:30pm
Wednesday, April 12 @ 2pm & 7:30pm (Open Captioned Performances)
Thursday, April 13 @ 7:30pm (ASL Interpreted Performance)
Friday, April 14 @ 8pm
Saturday, April 15 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, April 16 @ 2pm (Sunday Salon)

TICKET PRICES:**Start at \$25****RESERVATIONS:****(585) 232 GEVA (4382), Website: www.gevatheatre.org****LOCATION:****Geva Theatre Center, 75 Woodbury Blvd, Rochester, NY 14607**

*Open captioning is provided with support from Hearing Loss Association of America – Rochester Chapter.

GEVA THEATRE CENTER

Founded in 1972, Geva Theatre Center is a not-for-profit, professional theatre company dedicated to creating and producing professional theatre productions, programs and services of a national standard. As Rochester's leading professional theatre, Geva Theatre Center is the most attended regional theatre in New York State, and one of the 25 most subscribed in the country, serving up to 160,000 patrons annually, including more than 16,000 students.

The 522-seat Elaine P. Wilson Stage is home to a wide variety of performances, from musicals to American and world classics. The 180-seat Ron & Donna Fielding Stage is home to Geva's own series of contemporary drama, comedy and musical theatre; Geva Comedy Improv; Geva's New Play Reading Series and the Hornets' Nest - an innovative play-reading series facilitating community-wide discussion on controversial topics. In addition, the Fielding Stage hosts visiting companies of both local and international renown.

Geva Theatre Center offers a wide variety of educational, outreach and literary programs, nurturing audiences and artists alike. Since 1995, the organization has been under the artistic direction of Mark Cuddy.

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