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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GEVA THEATRE CENTER'S 2017-2018 FIELDING STUDIO SERIES BEGINS WITH *SMART PEOPLE*

Rochester, N.Y., September 19, 2017 – Geva Theatre Center's 2017-2018 Fielding Studio Series begins with *Smart People* by Lydia R. Diamond. This production comes to Geva from the **Kitchen Theatre Company in Ithaca, NY** with the original cast and design team and is directed by **Summer L. Williams**. The production begins performances on **October 5** and runs in the Fielding Stage through **October 22**.

On the eve of the 2008 Presidential Election, four intellectuals find themselves embroiled in a complex web of social and sexual politics. Brian, a neuroscientist, is studying the brain's responses to race and its societal implications. Ginny, a psychiatrist, is studying low-income Asian-American women's reaction to stress. Jackson, a young doctor, has opened a clinic for low-income patients. Valerie, a talented actor, is struggling to make ends meet by working as a maid. Everyone wants to be successful, to find love, and to feel as if they've made a positive impact on the world. But what influence does race have on that quest? A brilliantly hilarious and incisive play by the playwright of the award-winning Broadway play, *Stick Fly*.

In addition to *Smart People*, **Lydia R. Diamond's** award-winning plays include *Stick Fly*, *Voyeurs de Venus*, *The Bluest Eye*, *The Gift Horse*, *Harriet Jacobs*, *The Inside*, and *Stage Black*. Theatres include Arena Stage, Cort Theatre (Broadway), Chicago Dramatists, Company One, Congo Square, Goodman, Hartford Stage, Huntington, Jubilee, Kansas City Rep, Long Wharf, Lorraine Hansberry, McCarter, Mo'Olelo, MPAACT, New Vic, Playmakers Rep, Plowshares, Second Stage, Steppenwolf, and TrueColors. Commissions include Arena Stage, Steppenwolf (4), McCarter, Huntington, Center Stage, Victory Gardens and The Roundabout. A recipient of many playwrighting awards, Lydia was also an '05/'06 W.E.B. Du Bois Institute non-resident Fellow, a 2007 TCG/NEA Playwright in Residence at Steppenwolf, an 06/07 Huntington Playwright Fellow, a 2012 Sundance Institute Playwright Lab Creative Advisor, is a Board Member at Chicago Dramatists, and a 2012/2013 Radcliffe Institute Fellow. Lydia is an NU graduate ('91), has an Honorary Doctorate of Arts from Pine Manor College and is 2013-14 Playwright in Residence at Arena Stage.

Smart People had its premiere at Boston's Huntington Theatre in 2014 and premiered Off-Broadway in 2016.

The cast of *Smart People* all make their Geva Theatre Center debuts in Kitchen Theatre's production. **Jake Lee Smith's (Brian)** recent productions include the world premiere of Idris Goodwin's *The Blueprint* directed by Jenny Koons, *Buried Child* directed by Pam Berlin, and *The Winter's Tale* directed by Mark Wing-Davey. He also recently starred in the feature film *The Dreams of Rene Sendam*, his second collaboration with LA director Joshua Zev Nathan, and has acted internationally at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre and the ancient Greek amphitheatre at Oiniades. **Shannon Tyo's (Ginny)** Off-Broadway credits include *Kentucky*, *Bikeman: A 9/11*

Play, Dear Edwina. Favorite regional credits include *The White Snake* at the Old Globe, San Diego; *Miss Saigon* at the Pioneer Theatre Co, Music Theatre of Wichita and Cape Fear Regional; *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* at Northern Stage, Tuacahn PAC and Pioneer Theatre Co.; and *Broadway Bounty Hunter* at Barrington Stage. **Folami Williams (Valerie)** is a New York City based theatre artist and actor. Recent work includes *The Maids* at INTAR Theatre, *Soot & Spit* for Our Voices Project and *Othello* at CSC. She has a M.F.A. in Acting from Columbia University where some of her favorite credits included *Blue Window*, *Lulu*, and *Jacques, or the Submission*. Some past credits include *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night* for Manhattan Shakespeare Project; *Auto De Fe* and *Reconstruction* for International WOW Company; *King Lear* for Teatro La TEA; and *AUTOMOTIVE* for East River Commedia. **Bryce Michael Wood (Jackson)** is a native of Phoenix, AZ. Recent credits include *Welcome to Fear City* (Jacques) for Contemporary American Theatre Festival; *An Absolute Turkey* (Pontagnac), *King Lear* (Edgar), *Sense and Sensibility* (John Willoughby), *The Laramie Project* (Matt Galloway & Others), *Lysistrata* (Kenesias), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Demetrius) for CRT; *Row* (Muhammed Ali) for Goodspeed Opera House, *Oedipus* (Oedipus) for Hope Summer Rep., and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Mitch Mahoney) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oberon) for Monomoy Theatre.

Smart People is directed by **Summer L. Williams**. The creative team includes **Tyler M. Perry** (Scenic & Lighting Design), **Lisa Boquist** (Costume Design), **Rasean Davonte Johnson** (Projection and Sound Design).

Smart People by Lydia R. Diamond marks the fifth production originating at Kitchen Theatre Company to be seen by Geva Theatre Center audiences. Previous productions include *Sex with Strangers* (2017) *Dancing Lessons* by Mark St. Germain (2016), *A Body of Water* by Lee Blessing (2015) and *Black Pearl Sings!* by Frank Higgins (2014).

***Smart People* begins performances on October 5 and runs in the Fielding Stage through October 22.**

The Fielding Studio Series is supported in part by the Gouvernet Arts Fund at The Community Foundation.

Photo Attached: Folami Williams, Bryce Michael Wood, Shannon Tyo and Jake Lee Smith in *Smart People*. Photo by Julia Pacheco-Cole.

**For further information, additional photographs or to arrange interviews, please contact:
Dawn Kellogg, Communications Manager, (585) 420-2059**

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Previews: Thursday, October 5 @ 7pm
Friday, October 6 @ 7pm
Saturday, October 7 @ 2:30pm (Open Captioned performance)

Opening: **Saturday, October 7 @ 7:30pm**

Performances: Sunday, October 8 @ 3pm
Tuesday, October 10 @ 7pm

Wednesday, October 11 @ 7pm
Thursday, October 12 @ 7pm
Friday, October 13 @ 7pm
Saturday, October 14 @ 2:30pm and 7:30pm
Sunday, October 15 @ 3pm
Wednesday, October 18 @ 7pm
Thursday, October 19 @ 7pm
Friday, October 20 @ 7pm
Saturday, October 21 @ 2:30pm and 7pm
Sunday, October 22 @ 3pm

TICKET PRICES: All Seats at \$35.

RESERVATIONS: (585) 232-GEVA (4382), Website: www.gevatheatre.org

LOCATION: Fielding Stage, Geva Theatre Center, 75 Woodbury Blvd, Rochester, NY 14607

KITCHEN THEATRE COMPANY, ITHACA, NY

Kitchen Theatre Company is celebrating its 27th Season. Located in a LEED certified building, KTC's intimate 99-seat Percy Browning Theatre invites a bold relationship between the actors and the audience. An anchor of Ithaca's thriving West End, Kitchen Theatre Company is an Equity theatre with performances running for 10 months a year, from September to June. The production of *Smart People* by Lydia R. Diamond marks the fifth production originating at KTC to be seen by Geva Theatre audiences. Previous productions include *Sex with Strangers* by Laura Eason, *Dancing Lessons* by Mark St. Germain, *A Body of Water* by Lee Blessing, and *Black Pearl Sings!* by Frank Higgins.

Kitchen Theatre Company is committed to producing new and contemporary work fully reflecting the diversity of the community and selecting plays that allow for "important conversations." Kitchen Theatre Company strives to create connections and community: connection between the artist and the audience, connections among community members, and connections between our community and the larger world.

This year marks the beginning of a new era for the Kitchen with the start of Producing Artistic Director, M. Bevin O'Gara's tenure. More information about the Kitchen is available at kitchentheatre.org or by calling [607 272-0403](tel:6072720403).

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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