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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**GEVA'S 45<sup>TH</sup> WILSON STAGE SEASON CONTINUES WITH THE  
WORLD PREMIERE OF  
*THE AGITATORS***

***The Story of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass***

***Second production in the ESL/Rochester Regional Health 2017-2018 Wilson Stage Series centers on the 45-year friendship between two of Rochester's (and the world's) most famous citizens.***

**Rochester, N.Y., September 27, 2017** – Geva Theatre Center's 2017-2018 Season continues with the World Premiere of *The Agitators*, by **Mat Smart** and directed by **Logan Vaughn** in the **Elaine P. Wilson Stage** from **October 17 through November 12.**

***The Agitators* tells of the enduring but tempestuous friendship of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass. Great allies? Yes. And at times, great adversaries. Young abolitionists when they met in Rochester in the 1840s, they were full of hopes, dreams and a common purpose. As they grew to become the cultural icons we know today, their movements collided and their friendship was severely tested. This is the story of that 45-year friendship - from its beginning in Rochester, through a Civil War and to the highest halls of government. They agitated the nation, they agitated each other and, in doing so, they helped shape the Constitution and the course of American history.**

Playwright **Mat Smart** began his relationship with Geva Theatre Center during the 2007-2008 Season with a reading of *Thomas Repair* in the American Voices New Play Reading Series. In 2013, *Tinker to Evers to Chance* was developed in the Plays in Progress series and then premiered at Geva Fielding Stage in the spring of 2014. Recent projects include *Kill Local* (premiere at the La Jolla Playhouse), *The Elephants* (a work-in-progress commission from The Second City and the La Jolla Playhouse) and *Eden Prairie, 1971* (workshop at the Goodman Theatre's New Stages Festival 2017). Other plays include *The Royal Society of Antarctica* (Gift Theatre in Chicago, recipient of the 2015 Jeff Award for Best New Work; Stage West in Fort Worth), *Samuel J. and K.* (Williamstown Theatre Festival; Steppenwolf), *The Hopper Collection* (Magic Theatre; Huntington), *The 13th of Paris* (City Theatre; Seattle Public Theatre), and *Naperville* (Slant Theatre Project; Theatre Wit). He has received two Jerome Fellowships, a McKnight Advancement Grant, two Edgerton Foundation New Play

Awards, and was the recipient of the 2014 Otis Guernsey New Voices Award from the William Inge Center for the Arts. An avid traveler and baseball fan, he has been to all of the states, all of the continents, and all of the current MLB stadiums.

In 2013, when Mat Smart was in Rochester and at Geva preparing for a reading of his play, *Tinker to Evers to Chance*, he went on a tour of the Susan B. Anthony Museum & House. The docent mentioned that Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass were life-long friends, but had a big disagreement over the Fifteenth Amendment which gave black men the right to vote but not women. "I couldn't believe that I had never heard that Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass were friends," said Mat. Down the street from the house is Pepsy Kettavong's beautiful statue "Let's Have Tea" which shows Susan and Frederick having tea and talking. "I was so moved by the familiarity that the statue invites – where kids can go up and climb on them and pretend to talk to them – that I wanted to investigate their friendship and write about it. We don't know what they said to each other behind closed doors, but we do know that they were often with each other, their families were friends, they were at the same conventions and meetings frequently throughout their lives."

Making their Geva debuts in *The Agitators* are **Cedric Mays** (*What I Learned in Paris* at Indiana Repertory Theatre, *Fish Men* at the Goodman Theatre, TV's "Chicago Code" and "Detroit 1-8-7") as Frederick Douglass and **Madeleine Lambert** (*How I Learned to Drive* at Cleveland Play House and TV's "Empire" and "Chicago PD") as Susan B. Anthony.

*The Agitators* is directed by **Logan Vaughn** (Playwrights Horizons Director in Residence 2012-2013; member of Director's Lab, Lincoln Center). The design team includes **Jack Magaw** (scenic design), **Jessica Ford** (costume design), **Christine Binder** (lighting design), **David Wilson** (sound design), **Juliette Jones** (Composer), and **Dave Bova** (Wigs and Makeup Design).

The 2017-2018 Wilson Stage Series is sponsored by **ESL Federal Credit Union** and **Rochester Regional Health**. The Honorary Wilson Stage Series Sponsor is **Dr. Dawn Lipson**. *The Agitators* is produced with support from Associate Producer **M & T Bank**; and Media Sponsors **13WHAM TV** and **WHAM 1180**. *The Agitators* was commissioned by Geva with support from the **New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature**. *The Agitators* is a recipient of an **Edgerton Foundation New Play Award**.

***The Agitators* begins previews on October 17, opens Oct. 21 and runs through November 12.**

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

## PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

- Previews:** Tuesday, October 17 @ 7:30pm  
Wednesday, October 18 @ 7:30pm  
Thursday, October 19 @ 7:30pm  
Friday, October 20 @ 8pm  
Saturday, October 21 @ 2pm (Open Captioned Performance\*)
- Opening:** Saturday, September 9 @ 8pm
- Performances:** Saturday, October 21 @ 8pm  
Sunday, October 22 @ 2pm and 7pm  
Tuesday, October 24 @ 6pm  
Wednesday, October 25 @ 7:30pm  
Thursday, October 26 @ 7:30pm  
Friday, October 27 @ 8pm  
Saturday, October 28 @ 4pm and 8:30pm  
Sunday, October 29 @ 2pm (Sunday Salon) and 7pm  
Tuesday, October 31 @ 6pm  
Wednesday, November 1 @ 7:30pm  
Thursday, November 2 @ 7:30pm  
Friday, November 3 @ 8pm  
Saturday, November 4 @ 4pm and 8:30pm  
Sunday, November 5 @ 2pm (Audio Described performance) and 7pm  
Tuesday, November 7 @ 7:30pm  
Wednesday, November 8 @ 2pm and 7:30pm (Open Captioned Performances)  
Thursday, November 9 @ 7:30pm (ASL Interpreted Performance)  
Friday, November 10 @ 8pm  
Saturday, November 11 @ 4pm and 8:30pm  
Sunday, November 12 @ 2 pm (Sunday Salon)
- Ticket Prices:** Tickets start at \$25.
- Reservations:** (585) 232-GEVA (4382), Website: [www.gevatheatre.org](http://www.gevatheatre.org)
- Location:** Geva Theatre Center, 75 Woodbury Blvd, Rochester, NY 14607

\* Partial support for open captioning provided by Theatre Development Fund.

### 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.