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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GEVA'S 46TH SEASON CONTINUES WITH **THURGOOD**

ESL Federal Credit Union/Rochester Regional Health 2018-2019 Season continues with the inspiring story of the first African American Supreme Court Justice.

Over 3,000 area school students will learn more about this great American through student matinees and in-school workshops.

Rochester, N.Y., September 25, 2018 – Geva Theatre Center presents *Thurgood*, by **George Stevens, Jr.** and directed by **Lou Bellamy**, in the Elaine P. Wilson Stage from **October 16 through November 18**.

The inspiring story of the first African-American to sit on the Supreme Court of the United States. *Thurgood* spans the impressive 58-year career of Justice Thurgood Marshall, from his early days as the civil rights lawyer arguing the landmark case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, to the end of institutionalized segregation in 1954, and his appointment to the highest court in the land.

George Stevens, Jr.'s interest in Thurgood Marshall began with a miniseries he wrote and directed, *Separate But Equal*, the story of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* school desegregation case on which Marshall was the lawyer for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Stevens is the founder of the American Film Institute and a writer, director, and producer. Motion pictures include *The Thin Red Line*; *George Stevens: A Filmmaker's Journey*; *John F. Kennedy: Years of Lightning, Day of Drums*; and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Work for television includes *Separate But Equal* with Sidney Poitier and Burt Lancaster, *The Murder of Mary Phagan* with Jack Lemmon and Peter Gallagher, *The Kennedy Center Honors* (1978 – 2007), *The American Film Institute Life Achievement Awards* (1973 – 1998), *America's Millennium*, and *D-Day to Berlin*. Alfred A. Knopf recently published his book, *Conversations with the Great Moviemakers of Hollywood's Golden Age*. Awards include eight awards from the Writers Guild of America, two George Foster Peabody Awards, and two Emmys. *Thurgood* is his first play and premiered in 2006 at Westport Country Playhouse. It opened on Broadway at the Booth Theatre in 2008. The play was screened on HBO in 2011.

Making his Geva debut as Thurgood Marshall is **Lester Purry**. Veteran actor Lester Purry was introduced to the world of theatre during his senior year in high school, which led to 17 lead roles while attending Mars Hill University. Lester started acting professionally with summer stock, but it was what seemed an ambitious move to Minnesota for an actor of his "type" with only \$13 in his pocket that proved to be the key to launching a long and thriving career filled with extraordinary acting opportunities. A highly respected Regional Theatre performer, Lester has graced numerous stages over his thirty-year tenure in the business, including Penumbra Theatre Company, Baltimore's Center Stage, The Philadelphia Theatre Company, Studio Theatre in Washington D.C., Arden Theatre in Philadelphia, Dallas Theatre Company, The Southern Appalachian Theatre Company, Savannah Theatre Company, Nebraska Shakespeare Festival and The Alabama Shakespeare Festival where he met lovely his wife Toni Johnson-Purry. The long time company member, credits Penumbra founder Lou Bellamy and his performance in *Fool for Love* during his first year in the Twin Cities, that inspired him and it was attending August Wilson's play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at Penumbra that fueled his determination to become a Penumbra company member where he has performed in *Two Trains Running*, *King Hedley II*, *Jitney*, *The Piano Lesson* and *Fences* as Cory Maxson.

Thurgood is directed by **Lou Bellamy**. Mr. Bellamy is the founder and artistic director emeritus of Penumbra Theatre. During his 40-year tenure, Penumbra evolved into one of America's premier theatres dedicated to dramatic exploration of the African American experience. Under his leadership, Penumbra has grown to be the largest theatre of its kind in America and has produced over 40 world premieres, including August Wilson's first professional production. Penumbra is proud to have produced more of Mr. Wilson's plays than any theatre in the world. Bellamy is an OBIE Award-winning director, an accomplished actor, and for 38 years was appointed as an Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. Mr. Bellamy most recently directed Penumbra's production of *For Colored Girls....* He has directed at theatres around the U.S. including Indiana Repertory, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Arizona Theatre Company, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Signature Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Guthrie Theater, Kennedy Center, Kansas City Repertory, Gem Theater, Round House, Portland Playhouse, and Hartford Stage.

The creative team for *Thurgood* includes **Vicki Smith** (scenic design), **Casey McNamara** (costume design), **Don Darnutzer** (lighting design), **Justin Ellington** (sound design), **Rasean Davonte Johnson** (projection design) and **Jean Gordon Ryon** (dramaturg).

In addition to the 35 public performances of *Thurgood*, there will be six student matinees, ensuring that over 3,000 area school students will be able to learn more about this great American. Student Matinees entitle

teachers and students to not only see the production, but also to enjoy surrounding programming, such as in-school Discovery Workshops, to enrich students' experience at Geva and to deepen their connection to the play and curriculum. All student matinees are currently sold out, but interested teachers can contact Eric Evans, Education Associate (eevans@gevatheatre.org) to be added to the waiting list for tickets.

The 2018-2019 Season is sponsored by **ESL Federal Credit Union** and **Rochester Regional Health**. The Honorary Season Producer is **Dr. Dawn Lipson**. *Thurgood* is produced with support from Co-Producer **Harter Secrest & Emery LLP**; and Media Sponsors **Fox Rochester** and **Legends 102.7**.

***Thurgood* begins previews on October 16, opens October 20 and runs through November 18.**

**For further information, photographs or to arrange interviews, please contact:
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PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Previews: Tuesday, October 16 @ 7:30pm
Wednesday, October 17 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, October 18 @ 7:30pm
Friday, October 19 @ 8pm
Saturday, October 20 @ 2pm (Open Captioned Performance*)

Opening: Saturday, October 20 @ 8pm

Performances: Sunday, October 21 @ 2pm and 7pm
Tuesday, October 23 @ 6pm
Wednesday, October 24 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, October 25 @ 7:30pm
Friday, October 26 @ 8pm
Saturday, October 27 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, October 28 @ 2pm (Sunday Salon) and 7pm
Tuesday, October 30 @ 6pm
Wednesday, October 31 @ 7:30pm
Thursday, November 1 @ 7:30pm
Friday, November 2 @ 8pm
Saturday, November 3 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, November 4 @ 2pm (Audio Described performance) and 7pm
Tuesday, November 6 @ 7:30pm
Wednesday, November 7 @ 2pm and 7:30pm (Open Captioned Performances)
Thursday, November 8 @ 7:30pm (ASL Interpreted Performance)
Friday, November 9 @ 8pm
Saturday, November 10 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, November 11 @ 2 pm (Sunday Salon)
Friday, November 16 @ 8pm
Saturday, November 17 @ 4pm and 8:30pm
Sunday, November 18 @ 2pm

Ticket Prices: Tickets start at \$25.

Reservations: (585) 232-GEVA (4382), Website: 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 516-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'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.