



NEWS RELEASE

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COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY OPENS 30TH SEASON

LANESBORO, MN — The Commonwealth Theatre Company is pleased to announce the opening of its 30th season of producing professional, live theatre in historic Lanesboro, MN. In honor of this momentous occasion, Autumn Johnson, mayor of Lanesboro has officially designated April 7, 2018 as Commonwealth Theatre Day across the community. The designation marks, among others, the Commonwealth's dedication to the "betterment of the City of Lanesboro through cultural excellence" and for the organization's focus on the "creation of an intellectual and emotional environment in the city." In responding to this special honor, Commonwealth Executive Director Hal Cropp stated, "On behalf of the entire company, we are deeply touched by the recognition of the Lanesboro City Council in its proclamation highlighting the company's key role in creating and maintaining a unique community in our picturesque home base of Lanesboro."

Fresh off of receiving an award for excellence from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits in 2017, the Commonwealth kicks off a season of celebration full of compelling dramas and wildly funny comedies.

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"In celebrating our 30th season," says Cropp, "we are thrilled to offer both a balanced season of plays and, in keeping with both our affinity for the works of Henrik Ibsen and an enduring celebration of what women have to offer, plays which have either been crafted by, directed by, or focus on the role of strong women in our society." The organization is thrilled to announce the opening of the season's first production, *Silent Sky* on April 7th. The production is the featured event in a series of special festivities planned for the anniversary weekend.

Written by Lauren Gunderson, currently America's most produced playwright, *Silent Sky* tells the story of Henrietta Leavitt and her team of female "computers" at the Harvard Observatory in the early 20th century. Without being able to make use of the Harvard lab telescopes, Ms. Leavitt made groundbreaking discoveries about the nature of the universe that remain vital to this day, more than a century later. Told with warm-hearted wit and adding a bit of romance, *Silent Sky* is an important story of courage and overcoming obstacles.

Longtime Commonweal professional resident ensemble member and associate artistic director Adrienne Sweeney leads the production as director and features ensemble member Megan K. Pence in the role of Henrietta Leavitt. Along with Pence, the cast includes ensemble members Stela Burdt, Abbie Cathcart, Elizabeth Dunn, and Eric Lee in the role of Peter Shaw, Ms. Leavitt's fellow astronomer and love interest.

Stage Manager Philip Muehe and Assistant Stage Manager Amanda Pyfferoen lead the production team consisting of designers Kit Mayer (set), Janis Martin (costumes), Matt Vichlach (sound) and Brandt Roberts (props).

Beginning on Friday, April 6th and continuing through the weekend, in collaboration with Lanesboro Arts, there are several special events planned for the grand opening of the theatre's milestone season. Those events include a screening of the film *North/Central* followed by a moderated discussion with artist and filmmaker Rini Yun Keagy as the culmination of her month-long residency with Lanesboro Arts, a Commonweal retrospective panel discussion with former resident ensemble members of the theatre and a mobile planetarium, to name a few. For further information on all of the events planned, visit CommonwealTheatre.org and LanesboroArts.org.

All performances of *Silent Sky* are at the Commonweal Theatre, 208 Parkway Avenue North, in downtown Lanesboro. Ticket prices are \$35 with discounts available for students, seniors and groups of ten or more. Employees and residents of Fillmore and Houston Counties are offered free admission to the

County Free Night performance on Thursday, April 12th. For ticket reservations or information about any Commonwealth event or program, call 800-657-7025. To purchase tickets online, visit CommonwealTheatre.org.

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