Writers Theatre continues 2019/20 Season with
The Niceties
Written by Eleanor Burgess
Directed by Marti Lyons
Featuring Ayanna Bria Bakari and Mary Beth Fisher
November 6 – December 8, 2019

Glencoe, IL—Writers Theatre, under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and Executive Director Kathryn M. Lipuma, continues its 2019/20 Season with The Niceties, written by Eleanor Burgess and directed by Marti Lyons. The Niceties runs November 6 – December 8, 2019 in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre at 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe. The Press Opening is Wednesday, November 13, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

What happens when theoretical arguments suddenly turn personal in the ivory tower of an elite East Coast university? Don’t miss the thrilling, provocative new play that The Washington Post calls “one of the best plays about who gets to tell the story of America, and how.”

In The Niceties by Eleanor Burgess, an accomplished Ivy League professor holds routine office hours with an ambitious young student to discuss her thesis: if history is written by the victors, who tells the story of the oppressed? Before long, quibbles over vocabulary and Wikipedia citations turn into a dangerous debate as both women passionately defend their perspective and their personal worldview—until one of them puts everything on the line to make her case.

This taut, intelligent new play will make you question your own assumptions and reevaluate whether generation gaps can be bridged while gaps in knowledge—and in experience—remain. Director Marti Lyons (Witch) returns to WT to stage this intellectual thriller of a play that examines equality, revolution and what happens when people set aside the niceties and reveal what’s really on their minds.

The cast includes: Ayanna Bria Bakari (Zoe) and Mary Beth Fisher (Janine).

The creative team includes: Courtney O’Neill (Scenic Designer), Mieka van der Ploeg (Costume Designer), Heather Gilbert (Lighting Designer), Andre Pluess (Co-Sound Designer), Christopher M. Laporte (Co-Sound Designer), Rachel Watson (Properties Master), Rachel Flesher (Fight Director) and Mia Vivens (Assistant Director). The Production Stage Manager is David Castellanos.

Single tickets for The Niceties are currently on sale, priced $35 - $80 and are available at www.writerstheatre.org, by phone at 847-242-6000 or in person at the box office at 325 Tudor Court in Glencoe.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Eleanor Burgess (Playwright) has written The Niceties, Start Down, Chill and These Dying Generations. Her work has been produced at Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre Center, Geffen Playhouse, Huntington Theatre Company, the Alliance Theatre, the Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, Portland Stage Company and Centenary Stage, and developed with The New Group, New York Theatre Workshop, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Alley Theatre, Writers Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, Salt Lake Acting
Company, the Hermitage Artists Retreat, the Lark Play Development Center and the Kennedy Center/NNPN MFA Playwrights Workshop. She’s also been a member of the Dorothy Strelsins New American Writers Group at Primary Stages, Page ’73’s writers’ group Interstate 73, The Civilians’ R&D Group, and New York Theatre Workshop’s 2050 Fellowship. Originally from Brookline, Massachusetts, she studied history at Yale College and Dramatic Writing at NYU/Tisch.

Marti Lyons (Director) previously directed Witch and The Mystery of Love & Sex, and assistant directed Days Like Today and The Letters at Writers Theatre. Marti most recently directed the second production of Witch by Jen Silverman at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles. Marti recently directed Cambodian Rock Band by Lauren Yee at City Theatre in Pittsburgh as part of a co-production with Victory Gardens and Merrimack Repertory Theatre. This past season Marti also directed How to Defend Yourself by Lily Padilla for the 2019 Humana Festival as part of a co-world premiere with Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago, where Marti will direct the play again in 2020. Marti has directed Botticelli in the Fire by Jordan Tannahill (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company), The Wolves by Sarah DeLappe, Kings by Sarah Burgess (Studio Theater), Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner (Court Theatre), Short Shakes! Macbeth, Short Shakes! Romeo and Juliet (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), Title and Deed by Will Eno (Lookingglass Theatre Company), The Merry Wives of Windsor, Twelfth Night (Montana Shakespeare), Wondrous Strange by Meg Miroshnik, Jieh Park and Martyna Majok for the 2015 Humana Festival (Actors Theatre of Louisville), Mine, Bethany by Laura Marks (The Gift Theatre), Prowess by Ike Holter (Jackalope Theatre) Give it all Back by Calamity West, 9 Circles by Bill Cain and Maria/Stuart by Jason Grote (Sideshow Theatre). This season Marti will direct How to Defend Yourself by Lily Padilla (Victory Gardens Theater), Jen Silverman’s The Moors (A Red Orchid Theatre) and the world premiere of The Scarlet Letter by Kate Hamill (South Coast Repertory). Marti is an ensemble member with The Gift Theatre, an Artistic Associate with Sideshow Theatre and a proud member of SDC.

Ayanna Bria Bakari (Zoe) makes her Writers Theatre debut this season with The Niceties and Stick Fly. She graduated with a BFA in acting from The Theatre School at DePaul University in 2017. Since graduating, some of her theatre credits include Cat in The Originalist (Indiana Repertory Theatre), Izzie Mae/Clerk Son in Robert O’Hara’s Insurrection: Holding History (Stage Left Theatre, Jeff nominated), Sister Felicity in Suddenly Last Summer (Raven Theatre), Dr. Love in Paul Michael Thomson’s Leave Me Alone! (The Story Theatre), Ekaterina in Fun Harmless Warmachine (The New Colony), Natalie Charles in the world premiere of How to Catch Creation by Christina Anderson (Goodman Theatre) and Evelyn Brandon in the Midwest premiere of Too Heavy For Your Pocket by Jireh Breon Holder (TimeLine Theatre). Ayanna Bria’s television credits include Chicago PD (NBC) and a recurring role on The CHI (Showtime). She will make her film debut in Holiday Heist coming this holiday season. Ayanna Bria is currently an ensemble member with The Story Theatre and is represented by Stewart Talent.

Mary Beth Fisher (Janine) returns to Writers Theatre where she appeared in the 2004 production of My Own Stranger. She most recently appeared as Nora in A Doll’s House, Part 2 (Berkeley Rep/Huntington Theatre) and as pilot Jackie Cochran in the West Coast premiere of They Promised Her the Moon (Old Globe). Chicago credits include: Blind Date, Vanya & Sonia & Masha & spike, The Little Foxes, Luna Gale, The Seagull (Goodman Theatre), Domesticated, Dead Man’s Cell Phone, The Dresser (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner, Long Day’s Journey Into Night, Three Tall Women, The Year of Magical Thinking and The Wild Duck (Court Theatre). She has performed at Northlight, Remy Bumppo, AboutFace, Chicago Shakespeare and regional theatres all over the country including the 2019 Eugene O’Neill Playwriting Conference. Her NY credits include: Frank’s Home (Playwrights Horizons), Boy Gets Girl, The Radical Mystique (Manhattan Theatre Club), The Night of the Iguana (Roundabout) and Extremities (Westside Arts). Her TV/Film credits include: Sense8 (Netflix), Chicago Justice, Chicago Fire, Profiler, (NBC), Without a Trace, Numb3rs (CBS), Prison Break (Fox), NYPD Blue (ABC), Dragonfly, and the newly released independent film by Kelly O’Sullivan and Alex Thompson, Saint Frances. Ms. Fisher has received two Joseph Jefferson Awards, a Los Angeles Drama Critic’s Circle Award, Chicago’s Leading Lady Award from the Sarah Siddons Society, as well as Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, and San Francisco Bay Area Critics Circle Award nominations. She was a Beinecke Fellow at Yale and an Inaugural Lunt-Fontanne Fellow at the Ten Chimneys Foundation. Ms. Fisher made her directorial debut at Cardinal Stage with Holland Taylor’s Ann and directed The Summer in Gossensass for the 2019 Maria Irene Fornés Festival at the University of Notre Dame.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Post-Show Conversation: The Word
Join us after every Tuesday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) for a 15-minute discussion of the play, facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.
Post-Show Conversation: The Artist
Join us after every Wednesday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) for a 15-minute talk-back featuring actors from the production, facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

Pre-show Conversation: Up Close
Join us at 7pm in the Patron’s Lounge before every Thursday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) for a 15-minute primer on the context and content of the play facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

From Page to Stage
From Page to Stage is a collaborative program between Writers Theatre and select North Shore libraries and community partners, now in its 15th season. This series of special events, lectures, demonstrations and performances is designed to enhance and enrich your appreciation of a Writers Theatre production each season. RSVP is requested. Visit www.writerstheatre.org/from-page-to-stage-series for more information and a current list of upcoming events.

Visit www.writerstheatre.org/events for more information about any of these special event opportunities.

RIDE METRA TO WRITERS THEATRE
In an effort to promote taking public transit to the Theatre, Writers Theatre launched a new promotion in 2013. Any audience member who purchases a ticket to a Writers Theatre production and rides Metra’s Union Pacific North Line to the Theatre may snap a photo of themselves on the train and post it to their Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account with a tag of @WritersTheatre (@Writers_Theatre on Instagram) and #TheNicetiesWT, and upon showing the post at the Writers Theatre Box Office, receive $5 in cash to put toward the cost of your fare as a thank you for going green.

This promotion is available for a limited time only and may end without warning. Ticket must have been paid for in advance. Not valid on comp tickets. More information available at writerstheatre.org/metra

WRITERS THEATRE PARTNERS
Writers Theatre is pleased to recognize BMO Harris Bank as the Season Sponsor and ComEd as the Official Lighting Sponsor of the 2019/20 Season. The Major Production Sponsors are Maryellen and Richard Keyser. The Artists Council Sponsors are Jane and Richard Lipton and Karen and Jim Frank.

For more information about Writers Theatre’s 2019/20 partners, visit writerstheatre.org/our-supporters.

ABOUT WRITERS THEATRE
For more than 25 years, Writers Theatre has captivated Chicagoland audiences with inventive interpretations of classic work, a bold approach to contemporary theatre and a dedication to creating the most intimate theatrical experience possible.

Under the artistic leadership of Michael Halberstam and the executive leadership of Kathryn M. Lipuma, Writers Theatre has grown to become a major Chicagoland cultural destination with a national reputation for excellence, being called the top regional theatre in the nation by The Wall Street Journal. The company, which plays to a sold-out and discerning audience of more than 60,000 patrons each season, has garnered critical praise for the consistent high quality and intimacy of its artistry—providing the finest interpretations of both classic and contemporary theatre in its two intensely intimate venues.

In February 2016, Writers Theatre opened a new, state-of-the-art facility. This established the company's first permanent home—a new theatre center in downtown Glencoe, designed by the award-winning, internationally renowned Studio Gang Architects, led by Founder and Design Principal Jeanne Gang, FAIA, in collaboration with Theatre Consultant Auerbach Pollock Friedlander. The new facility has allowed the Theatre to continue to grow to accommodate its audience, while maintaining its trademark intimacy. The new facility resonates with and complements the Theatre’s neighboring Glencoe community, adding tremendous value to Chicagoland and helping to establish the North Shore as a premier cultural destination.

Find Writers Theatre on Facebook at Facebook.com/WritersTheatre, follow @WritersTheatre on Twitter or @Writers_Theatre on Instagram. For more information, visit www.writerstheatre.org.
Fact Sheet / The Niceties

Title: The Niceties
Written by: Eleanor Burgess
Directed by: Marti Lyons

Featuring: Ayanna Bria Bakari (Zoe) and Mary Beth Fisher (Janine)

Creative Team: Courtney O’Neill (Scenic Designer), Mieka van der Ploeg (Costume Designer), Heather Gilbert (Lighting Designer), Andre Pluess (Co-Sound Designer), Christopher M. Laporte (Co-Sound Designer), Rachel Watson (Properties Master), Rachel Flesher (Fight Director), Mia Vivens (Assistant Director) and David Castellanos (Production Stage Manager).

Dates:
First performance: Wednesday, November 6, 2019
Press opening: Wednesday, November 13, 2019 at 7:30pm
Closing performance: Sunday, December 8, 2019

Schedule:
Tuesdays – Fridays: 7:30pm
Saturdays: 3:00pm (except November 9) and 7:30pm
Sundays: 2:00pm and 6:00pm (except November 10 & December 8)
Additional Wednesday matinee performances on November 27 & December 4 at 3:00pm
There will be no performances on Thanksgiving (Thursday, November 28)

Open-Captioned performance: Saturday, December 7, 2019 at 3pm

Location: The Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre
325 Tudor Court, Glencoe

Prices: Prices for all performances range from $35 - $80
Purchase early for best prices

Box Office: The Box Office is located at 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe; 847-242-6000; www.writerstheatre.org

Notes of Interest

The Writers Theatre production of The Niceties is the first in the Chicago area. The show received its Off-Broadway premiere in October 2018 at the Manhattan Theatre Club and was produced in association with Huntington Theatre Company and McCarter Theatre Center. The production, which was directed by Kimberly Senior and starred Lisa Banes and Jordan Boatman, transferred to the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles for its West Coast premiere in 2019. This theater season audiences can catch The Niceties in London, Chicago, Milwaukee, Rochester, Philadelphia, Austin, Idaho, Naples, New Hampshire and more.

In addition to her plays The Niceties, Start Down, Chill and These Dying Generations, Eleanor Burgess was also a staff writer for HBO’s upcoming Perry Mason series starring Emmy Award winner Matthew Rhys (The Americans). Robert Downey Jr. serves as an executive producer of the limited series which also stars Tatiana Maslany (Orphan Black) and John Lithgow.

Eleanor Burgess was inspired to write The Niceties in part by a real-life incident that occurred at Yale University in 2015. What began as a controversy surrounding Halloween costumes and sensitivity to certain racial and ethnic groups became a debate that spread all over campus and the nation.

Marti Lyons previously directed Witch and The Mystery of Love & Sex, and assistant directed Days Like Today and The Letters at Writers Theatre. Her production of Cambodian Rock Band recently played at Victory Gardens before moving to City Theatre Company and Merrimack Repertory Theatre.
Two-time Jeff Award-winner **Mary Beth Fisher** returns to the Writers Theatre stage for the first time since appearing in the 2004 production of *My Own Stranger*.

**Ayanna Bria Bakari** (Zoe) makes her Writers Theatre debut this season with *The Niceties* and *Stick Fly*. She graduated with a BFA in acting from The Theatre School at DePaul University in 2017 and can be seen in a recurring role on Showtime’s *The CHI*.

# # #