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25th Anniversary Season
A Noise Within, L.A.'s Acclaimed Classical Repertory Theatre Company, presents
***The Maids* by Jean Genet**
September 18-November 12, 2016

Directed by Stephanie Shroyer

(August 17, 2016 – Pasadena) A Noise Within (ANW), the acclaimed classical repertory theatre, presents the second production of their 25th Anniversary Season, *The Maids*, by French dramatist **Jean Genet**. The show will be directed by Stephanie Shroyer, who staged Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* – the critically-acclaimed sleeper hit of ANW's 2015-2016 season. *The Maids* begins on Sunday, September 18 and performs through Saturday, November 12, with a press opening on September 24.

In *The Maids*, Solange and Claire are two housemaids who construct elaborate role-play rituals when their mistress (Madame) is away. The focus of their role-play is the murder of Madame and they take turns portraying both sides of the power divide. Jean Genet loosely based his play on the infamous sisters Christine and Léa Papin, who made headlines by brutally murdering their employer and her daughter in Le Mans, France, in 1933.

"*The Maids* demonstrates our commitment to the rarely-produced gem," said A Noise Within Artistic Director Geoff Elliott, "It is the dark – and darkly funny – side of what is '*beyond our wildest dreams*' – the theme woven throughout our 25th anniversary season productions."

He continues, "*The Maids* was certainly a genre-breaker when it was first produced in 1947, and it continues to be timely – especially the idea of playing out the fantasies and dreams of the people hurt by the more powerful in their lives. Trapped in a master/servant relationship and dehumanized, the maids go through a variety of high emotional states -- psychopathic, perhaps even sexual, employing these fantasies as a turn-on, and eventually suicidal."

Director Stephanie Shroyer said, "This play questions the idea of *ownership* and examines the very fickle nature of how power is decided. All three characters in some way are enslaved. Even the Madame – who lives a life of so much privilege – is enslaved to her boyfriend by her blind dedication to him; he himself has been imprisoned by a false letter from the two maids."

"Genet has written a dark and twisted power triangle and placed us, the audience, in the voyeuristic role of observer. We should know better than to watch what's behind closed doors – but isn't it a darkly funny human trait that we simply can't resist putting our eye to the keyhole?"

Jean Genet (1910 – 1986) was a novelist and exponent of the theater of the absurd. Discovered and championed by the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, Genet was an orphan, thief, and homosexual who had spent most of his youth in prison. There he developed his personal credo: to harden himself against pain.

Genet's plays are the finest products of his art. His plays – *The Maids* (1947), *Deathwatch* (1949), *The Balcony* (1956), *The Blacks* (1958), and *The Screens* (1961) – have themes that find the characters between illusion and reality, life and death, good and evil, strong and weak, old and young, and conscious and unconscious. Although on their surface hedonistic and ostensibly amoral, these plays nevertheless approach religious ritual and can best be understood as sacred drama, through which, by sharing in the theatrical ceremony, the audience's deepest feelings are aroused.

Genet is the inventor of a highly personal metaphoric imagery with a unique structure of mysterious relationships and analogies, and energetically rhythmic dramatic sequences. His plays, while shocking but never vulgar, have been a powerful force in the renewal of modern drama.

Sartre, in his famous introduction to the play, wrote, “Appearance, which is constantly on the point of passing itself off as reality, must constantly reveal its profound unreality. Everything must be so false that it sets our teeth on edge ... as the maids’ mistress, Madame retains an absolute being ... [the maids] are *others*. “

“The domestics are pure emanations of their masters ... they *love* Madame. This means, in Genet’s language, that both of them would like to become Madame, in other words, to be integrated into the social order instead of being outcasts ... [and] they *hate* Madame ... low, hypocritical, disagreeable and mean because their employers dream them that way, they belong to the ‘pale and motley race that flowers in the minds of decent people.’ Every evening five hundred Madames can sing out, ‘Yes, that’s what maids are like,’ without realizing that they have created them.”

Shroyer said, “Even the most kind and sensitive fall into role-playing. One treats a waiter like a waiter when expecting to be served in a restaurant. Seeing him or her as a human being becomes secondary to the roles of the agreed interaction. Yet, the waiter has a life as alive as those they serve. Madame’s “role” is as the master who treats, however kindly, these two maids as subservient. And yet, it was the accident of birth that put her in that position and they in theirs.”

Sartre continues, “When the curtain rises, Claire is standing in front of the dressing-table of her mistress. She is experimenting with Madame’s gestures and language. By imitating the gestures of her superior, the domestic treacherously draws her into herself and becomes saturated with her ... as for the role itself, we recognize quite easily one of Genet’s favorite themes: to begin with, the maids *want*, to the point of despair and horror, the servile condition that is imposed upon them ... in order to live their wretchedness to the point of *passion*, they must make themselves the cause of it.”

The Maids (in French: *Les Bonnes*; literally *The Good Ones*) was first performed at the Théâtre de l'Athénée in Paris in a production that opened on April 17, 1947, directed by Louis Jouvet. In Britain, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, at the Mercury Theatre, Notting Hill Gate, London, first presented the play in French in 1952, directed by Peter Zadek. Zadek also directed the play's first British production in English, which opened on June 5, 1956 at the New Lindsey Theatre Club. The American debut was at Tempo Playhouse in New York in 1955, with Julie Bovasso as Claire and later as Solange; Bovasso won the first best actress Obie Award for *The Maids*. The 1974 film starred Glenda Jackson, Susannah York and Vivian Merchant. In 2013, a production starring Cate Blanchett and Isabelle Huppert played Lincoln Center. Additionally in 2016, there was a new production starring Uzo Aduba as Solange and Laura Carmichael as the Mistress at Trafalgar Studios in London.

The cast includes Jaimi Paige* as Claire, Donnla Hughes* as Solange, and Emily Kosloski* as Madame. * Denotes member of Actors' Equity

Single ticket prices for *The Maids* start at \$44.00. Contact the **A Noise Within** box office in person, via phone at 626-356-3100, or online at www.ANoiseWithin.org for updated pricing and seat availability. A Noise Within is located on the corner of Foothill Boulevard and Sierra Madre Villa Avenue at 3352 East Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107.

Symposium, Conversations, and Pay What You Can

The engagement of *The Maids* includes a symposium on Wednesday, Sept 21 at 6 pm and post-performance conversations with the artists on Sunday, October 2 at 2:00 pm, Friday, October 21 at 8:00 pm and Friday, October 28 at 8:00 pm.

Pay What You Can tickets (Thursday, Sept 22 at 7:30 pm) go on sale at the box office window the day of the performance, starting at 2pm, and are sold on a cash-only basis based on availability; limit of two tickets per person.

About the 25th Anniversary Season 2016-2017 – *Beyond our Wildest Dreams*

The theme of the season *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams* resonates with all of the plays for the season – *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard (Sept 4- Nov 20, 2016), *The Maids* by Jean Genet (September 18-November 12), Molière’s *The Imaginary Invalid*, adapted by Constance Congdon based on a new translation by Dan Smith (October 9-November 19), which all play in repertory this fall.

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, adapted for the stage by Geoff Elliott (December 2-23, 2016), returns for its fifth holiday season in December.

Tom Stoppard’s *Arcadia* concerns the relationship between past and present, order and disorder, and certainty and uncertainty, and is set in Sidley Park, an English country house in Derbyshire, taking place in both 1809 to 1812 and the present day. The activities of two modern scholars and the house’s current residents are juxtaposed with those of the people who lived there in the earlier period. Many critics have praised it as the finest play from one of the most significant contemporary playwrights in the English language.

Molière’s *The Imaginary Invalid*: As his medical debts mount, Argan, a man whose mental neuroses grossly outweigh his physical maladies, concocts a scheme to marry his daughter off to a family of physicians. High comedy ensues—replete with thwarted love, false identities, dexterous wordplay, musical interludes, and a healthy dose of derision towards the medical profession.

Next spring, ANW presents Shakespeare’s *King Lear* (February 12- May 6, 2017), *Ah, Wilderness!* by Eugene O’Neill (March 5-May 20, 2017), and *Man of La Mancha* by Dale Wasserman, music by Mitch Leigh and lyrics by Joe Darion (March 26-May 21, 2017), which round out their celebratory season. With *Lear* and *Man of La Mancha* being performed on the same set, audiences will be able to see both plays performed on the same day in *The Great Escape*, on two days— Saturday April 22 and Saturday May 6.

About A Noise Within

A Noise Within, celebrating its 25th Anniversary during the 2016-2017 season, was recently named “one of the nation’s premier classical repertory companies” by The Huffington Post, and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, CA. ANW’s award-winning resident company practices a rotating repertory model at their state-of-the-art, 283-seat performing space. This venue, established in 2011, has allowed ANW to expand its audience, surpassing its previous box office, subscription, and attendance records each year. In addition to producing world-class performances of classical theatre, the organization runs robust education programs committed to inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. Helmed by Producing Artistic Directors Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, who hold MFAs from San Francisco’s American Conservatory Theatre, A Noise Within truly delivers CLASSIC THEATRE, MODERN MAGIC.

www.anoisewithin.org

Calendar Listing: *The Maids*

The Maids by Jean Genet

Directed by Stephanie Shroyer

At A Noise Within, 3352 E Foothill Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91107

Performances:

Sunday, September 18 at 2pm

Wednesday, September 21 at 7:30pm

(*Symposium* at 6pm)

Thursday, September 22 at 7:30pm

(*Pay What You Can*)

Friday, September 23 at 8pm

Saturday, September 24 at 8pm (*Opening*)

Sunday, September 25 at 2pm

Sunday, October 2 at 2pm and 7pm (*Conversations* after 2pm)

Friday, October 21 at 8pm (*Conversations*)

Saturday, October 22 at 2pm and 8pm

Thursday, October 27 at 7:30pm

Friday, October 28 at 8pm (*Conversations*)

Sunday, November 6 at 2pm and 7pm

Saturday, November 12 at 2pm and 8pm

Tickets and information:

Website: www.anoisewithin.org; Phone: 626-356-3100 ex 1

Prices: Single Tickets from \$44.00, Student Rush with ID an hour before performance \$20.00

Groups (10 or more): Adults from \$30/ticket; Students from \$18/ticket

Pay What You Can Performance: *Pay What You Can* tickets (Thursday, September 22 at 7:30 pm) go on sale at box office on day of performance at 2pm, and are sold cash-only, based on availability; limit two tickets per person.

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