



NEWS RELEASE

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LAUREN GUNDERSON'S CELEBRATION OF DISCOVERY, ORIGINALITY AND CURIOSITY, *SILENT SKY*, COMES TO ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY STAGES

Arizona Theatre Company (*Sean Daniels, Artistic Director; Billy Russo, Managing Director*) announces that ***Silent Sky***, written by the nation's most-produced playwright two of the last three years, Lauren Gunderson, is coming to stages in Tucson and Phoenix.

Based on the true story of 19th-century astronomer Henrietta Leavitt and her astonishing discoveries, ***Silent Sky*** is a celebration of discovery, originality and curiosity that *The Chicago Sun-Times* described as a story which "unfolds with a beauty and complexity worthy of the skies she mapped."

Silent Sky will be at the Temple of Music & Art, 330 S. Scott Ave. in Tucson from Oct. 22 through Nov. 9 and at the Herberger Theater Center, 222 E. Monroe in Phoenix, from Nov. 14 through Dec. 1.

"From the moment I saw her perform her own material in high school, I have known that Lauren Gunderson would be a force in the American Theatre," said ATC Artistic Director Sean Daniels. "As someone who has been lucky enough to direct her work at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and Off-Broadway, I know that few writers are as in touch with their generation and the moment as she is. She writes with

such warmth and joy, and so much smarts, about the women history don't credit. She makes sure that as a country, as a people and a theatre community, we acknowledge the shoulders we all stand on, especially when it's the shoulders of women who made some of breakthroughs that fuel modern science today.

"She also officiated at my wedding, so in addition to writing amazing plays, she can write a fantastic ceremony if you need it."

Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, writing about Gunderson in *The New Yorker* magazine, said that "although men still write three-quarters of the plays that get produced, Gunderson has built a national reputation with works that center on women's stories." He added that "a typical Gunderson protagonist resembles her author: smart, funny, collaborative, optimistic – a woman striving to expand the ranks of a male-dominated profession."

Silent Sky tells the story of ahead-of-her-time astronomer Leavitt (Veronika Duerr), who, in 1900, was hired at Harvard University as a "human computer" mapping stars as part of Dr. Edward Pickering's "harem," but without any scientific credit. And, without being able to use Harvard's Great Refractor telescope.

She was only able to log stars photographed by men in the department. And yet, undeterred, she began recording changes in the stars leading to scientific discovery that would have profound and lasting impact on the field of astronomy. Her obsessive work ethic put strains on relationships with her sister Margaret (Tori Grace Hines), her love interest Peter Shaw (Nardeep Khurmi) and her colleagues Annie Cannon (Inger Tudor) and Williamina Fleming (Amelia White).

In this exquisite blend of science, history, family ties and fragile love, as portrayed by ATC's very diverse cast, a passionate young woman must map her own passage through a society determined to keep a woman in her place.

Silent Sky will be directed by award-winning theater, opera and film director Casey Stangl, who directed ATC's production of ***Erma Bombeck: At Wit's End*** last season and previously directed ***Lombardi*** for ATC. The creative team also includes Scenic Designer Jo Winiarski, Costume Designer Kish Finnegan, Lighting Designer Jaymi Lee Smith, Sound Designer Paul James Prendergast and Projection Designer Jeffrey Teeter. Glenn Bruner is the stage manager.

Silent Sky will be followed by ***Cabaret, “Master Harold” ... and the Boys, The Legend of Georgia McBride*** and ***Women in Jeopardy!***.

The 2019/2020 season is sponsored by I. Michael and Beth Kasser.

For more information, go to www.arizonatheatre.org or call the box office in Tucson at (520) 622-2823 or in Phoenix at (602) 256-6995.

BIOGRAPHIES

Lauren Gunderson (Playwright) Lauren is the most produced playwright in America of 2017/18, a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award. She is also a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation’s 3-Year Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University, and Dramatic Writing at NYU’s Tisch School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her work has been commissioned, produced and developed at companies across the US including South Coast Rep, The Kennedy Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The O’Neill, The Denver Center, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre, Synchronicity, Berkeley Rep, Shotgun Players, TheatreWorks, Crowded Fire and more and was seen in London with Hampstead Theatre’s production of *I and You* in 2018. She co-authored *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* with Margot Melcon, which was one of the most produced plays in America in 2017. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You; Exit Pursued By A Bear; The Taming and Toil And Trouble*), Dramatists Play Service (*The Revolutionists; The Book of Will; Silent Sky; Bauer and Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book *Dr Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon* was released from Two Lions/Amazon in 2017.

Casey Stangl (Director) Casey Stangl returns to ATC where she directed *Erma Bombeck: At Wit’s End* last season and *Lombardi* in 2012. Recent projects include *Ragtime* at Chance Theater in Anaheim, *Diana of Dobson’s* at Antaeus Company in Los Angeles, *The Children* at the Jungle Theater in Minneapolis, *The Cake* at La Jolla Playhouse and a workshop of Anna Ziegler’s *Antigones* for the 2019 O’Neill National Playwrights Conference. Casey directs for theaters across the country including South Coast Repertory, American Conservatory Theater, The Guthrie Theater, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Portland Stage, Cleveland Playhouse and Everyman Theater in Baltimore, where her production of Lauren Gunderson’s *The Revolutionists* was named “Best Play in Baltimore 2017” by The Baltimore Sun. Casey is the Associate Artistic Director at Ojai Playwrights Conference, where she recently directed Kimberly Belflower’s *John Proctor is the Villain*. Casey has developed new plays at the Humana Festival, Pacific Playwrights Festival, PlayPenn, Perry-Mansfield New Works, Playlabs, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre’s GroundFloor. For her work as the founding artistic director of Eye of the Storm Theatre in Minneapolis, Casey was named Minnesota Artist of the Year. Casey proudly serves on the Executive Board of SDC, the national labor union for professional stage directors and choreographers.

CAST

Veronika Duerr (Henrietta Leavitt) Veronika is a proud member of Actors Equity and a huge Lauren Gunderson fan. She is thrilled to be making her debut at Arizona Theatre Company with her fourth Gunderson play. A recent transplant to Arizona, Veronika graduated from Savannah College of Art and Design with a BFA in theatre. Since then she has lived and worked in NYC, LA, Atlanta, Boston, and now Arizona! Favorite Regional Theatre roles include Zoe in *Ripe*

Frenzy at The New Rep in Boston, *Émilie* in *Émilie: La Marquise Du Chatelet Defends Her Life Tonight* with The Weird Sisters Theatre Project (which she co-founded) in Atlanta, *Vanda in Venus in Fur* at Actors Express in Atlanta and *Lurleen* in *Tall Girls* at The Alliance Theatre in Atlanta.

Victoria Grace (Margaret Leavitt) ATC: Debut; Regional: *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* (Jane) and *Silent Sky* (Margaret) Merrimack Repertory Theatre. *Henry IV Parts 1 & 2* (Lady Mortimer) Shakespeare and Company. *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Nina) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (Aggie) Asolo Repertory Theatre. Film: *Youth Min* (Rachel) IFF Boston Audience Award.

Nardeep Khurmi (Peter Shaw) Nardeep is thrilled to be making his ATC debut. He is a graduate from NYU and is a Los Angeles based filmmaker and actor. Recent theater credits include: *US vs. Bhagat Singh Thind* (East West Players), *Samsara* (Coourage Theater Company), *Still Life* (Rogue Machine), *Émilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* (Greenway Court Theater), and *Dallas Non-Stop* (Playwrights' Arena). Recent Film/TV credits include: *9-1-1*, *Makeshift Society*, *Safe Space*, *Pagg*, *S.W.A.T.*, *Orbital Redux*, *Jane the Virgin*, *Angie Tribeca*, and *The Odd Couple*. You can follow him on Instagram at @nardeepthoughts and check out more of his work at www.nardeepkhurmi.com.

Amelia White (Williamina Fleming) Amelia White's Broadway credits include *Crazy for You*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *The Heiress*. She's worked Off-Broadway at the Mint Theatre, Atlantic Theater Co. and Ground-Up Prods. She received a Theatre World Award for her work in *The Accrington Pals* at the Hudson Guild. Los Angeles appearances include *The Matrix*, and many shows at The Antaeus Company. Her extensive regional theatre credits include *Silent Sky* and *Shakespeare in Love* at South Coast Rep. She's appeared at The Cleveland Playhouse, The Old Globe, Studio Arena Theatre, Hartford Stage, two seasons at Cincinnati Playhouse in The Park, the Guthrie Theater, GeVa Theatre, Denver Center, Weston Playhouse, and most recently, *A Dolls House Part Two* at TheaterWorksHartford. Film and television include *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*, *The Bastard*, *The Siege of Golden Hill*, *Three Ways to the Sea*, *Judging Amy* and *The Young and The Restless*. She works on radio with the California Artists Radio Theatre. Amelia was born in Nottingham, trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London, and is married to actor Geoffrey Wade. She is a proud AEA member.

Inger Tudo (Annie Cannon) Tours: *Steel Magnolias* (LA Theatre Works), *Mama, I Want to Sing* (Germany and Japan). Regional: *The Exorcist* (Geffen Playhouse), *Stuff Happens* (Mark Taper Forum), *Bailey's Café* (Hartford Stage). Other: *I Go Somewhere Else* (Playwrights Arena – Stage Raw nomination, Best Ensemble), *Antigone* (A Noise Within), *Going to St. Ives* (Actors Coop - LA Stage Scene Award, Stage Raw and NAACP nominations, Best Lead Actress), *The Maids* (Stage 54 – 4 NAACP Theatre Award nominations), *Romeo and Juliet: Antebellum New Orleans, 1836* (Boston Court – NAACP Theatre Award nomination, Best Supporting Actress); Rogue Machine Theatre: *The Suppliant Women*, *Honky* (Stage Raw nomination, Best Comedic Actress), *Stop Kiss*; Chalk Repertory: *Diet of Worms*; Theatre of NOTE: *What May Fall*, *Just Say No*, *Bomba Trilogy*, *Food for Fish*. Television: *The Trial of Tim Heidecker*, *Goliath*, *Doubt*, *Aquarius*, *Hand of God*, *House*, *NCIS*, *Without a Trace*, *Las Vegas*, *General Hospital*, *The Young & The Restless*, *Passions*. Film: *Voodoo Macbeth*, *On Time* (Best Actress Awards - Ikuska Film Festival, Spain and Grand Off Film Festival, Poland), *Elizabeth Blue*, *Lemon*, *Stairways*, *The Social Network*, *The Making of "Grits"* (Mockumentary Festival - Best Actress Award). Education: London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Harvard Law School, Harvard College.

CREATIVE TEAM

Scenic Design: Jo Winiarski

Costume Design: Kish Finnegan

Lighting Design: Jaymi Lee Smith

Sound Design: Paul James Prendergast

Projection Design: Jeffrey Teeter

Production Stage Manager: Glenn Bruner

Tickets for ***Silent Sky*** start at \$25 and are subject to change depending on time, date and section, and are available at www.arizonatheatre.org or by calling the box office at (520) 622-2823 in Tucson or (602) 256-6995 in Phoenix. Discounts are available. Active Military/Vets/Service/1st Responders receive \$10 off the price of tickets (except Premium.) Students with valid ID pay \$15 for all performances. Half-price rush tickets are available for balcony seating for all performances one hour prior to curtain at the ATC box office (subject to availability). **\$15 Community Night** performance in Tucson is Tuesday, Oct. 29 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 17 at 7 p.m. in Phoenix. (Tickets must be purchased at the Temple of Music and Art or the Herberger Theater Center starting one hour prior to curtain. Tickets are first-come, first served. *Cash preferred*. Two tickets maximum per person.) For discounts for groups of 10 or more, call (520) 884-8210, x7213.

Arizona Theatre Company offers accessibility services for patrons with disabilities for select performances. Audio Description provides patrons with vision loss a running audio description of the movement and activities onstage through an infrared broadcast system. An Audio-Described performance is offered in Tucson on Thursday, Nov. 7 at 2 p.m. and in Phoenix on Saturday, Nov. 30 at 2 p.m. Interested patrons with vision loss may request a tactile tour one hour prior to curtain. **American Sign Language Interpretation** is presented by professional, theatrically trained ASL interpreters for people who have deafness or hearing impairment. An ASL-interpreted performance is offered in Tucson on Thursday Nov. 7 at 7:30 p.m. and in Phoenix on Saturday, Nov. 30 at 2 p.m. **Open Captioning** allows patrons to read the play's dialogue on an LED screen as the play progresses. An open captioned performance is offered in Tucson on Thursday, Nov. 7 at 2 p.m. and in Phoenix on Sunday, Sunday, Nov. 24 at 7 p.m. For open-captioned or ASL-interpreted performances, patrons should request seats best suited to ASL interpretation or captioning when purchasing tickets. Large print and Braille playbills and infrared listening amplification devices are also available at every ATC performance with reservation. TTY access available via Arizona Relay at (800) 367-8939 (TTY/ASCII) for the box office in Tucson at (520) 884-9723, or (602) 256-6995 in Phoenix.

Fact Sheet:

Silent Sky

By Lauren Gunderson

Directed by Casey Stangl

Tucson Venue:

Temple of Music and Art
330 S. Scott Ave., Tucson

Previews Begin: Tuesday, Oct. 22 at 7:30 p.m.

Opening Night: Friday, Oct. 25 at 7:30 p.m.

Closing Performance: Saturday, Nov. 9 at 7:30 p.m.

Phoenix Venue:

Herberger Theater Center

222 E. Monroe St., Phoenix

Previews Begin: Thursday, Nov. 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Opening Night: Saturday, Nov. 16 at 7:30 p.m.

Closing Performance: Sunday, Dec. 1 at 2 p.m.

Ticket prices begin at \$25 and are available in-person at the Temple of Music and Art box office or via phone at (520) 622-2823, or at the Herberger Theater Center box office or by calling (602) 256-6995 in Phoenix. Tickets also can be purchased online at www.arizonatheatre.org.

Contact:

Steve Carr, The Kur Carr Group, Inc., (602) 317-3040

About Arizona Theatre Company: Under new leadership, and now celebrating its 53rd-season, Arizona Theatre Company is truly “The State Theatre.” Our company boasts the largest subscriber base of any performing arts organization in Arizona, with more than 130,000 people each year attending performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson, and the elegant Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix.

Each season of high quality productions reflects the rich variety of world theatre – from classic to contemporary plays, from musicals to new works – audiences enjoy the rich emotional experience and joy that can only be captured through live theatre. ATC is the preeminent professional theatre in the state of Arizona. Under the direction of Artistic Director Sean Daniels and Managing Director Billy Russo, ATC operates in two cities – unlike any other League of Resident Theaters (LORT) company in the country.

ATC shares the passion of the theatre through a wide array of outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives, and community events. With more than 700 Education & Engagement activities through the schools and summer programs, ATC focuses on teaching Arizona’s youth about the creative power of dramatic literature and how it can enrich their own lives in multiple ways.

ATC reaches far beyond the metropolitan areas of Tucson and Phoenix, enriching the theatre learning experience for current and future audiences.