BJ Jones
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Timothy J. Evans
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

presents

CURVE OF DEPARTURE

BY
RACHEL BONDS

DIRECTED BY
BJ JONES

Scenic Design Lauren Nigri
Costume Design Alexis Chaney
Lighting Design Heather Gilbert, USA
Sound Design Andre Pluess, USA
Production Stage Manager Rita Vreeland, AEA
Casting Paskal Rudnicke Casting

OPENING NIGHT: SEPTEMBER 21, 2018
at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie

Commissioned and first produced by South Coast Repertory
NORTHLIGHT THEATRE IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY:

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CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Penelope Walker* ........................................................................................................... Linda
Mike Nussbaum* ................................................................. Rudy
Sean Parris* ................................................................................................. Felix
Danny Martinez ................................................................................. Jackson

Understudies: Eduardo Xavier Curley-Carrillo (Jackson), Bernell Lassai (Felix),
Ross Lehman* (Rudy), Renee Lockett (Linda)

Understudies will not substitute for listed players
unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance.

*Member of the Actors Equity Association,
the union of professional actors and stage managers.

Setting
At a hotel not too far from the airport near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Curve of Departure will be performed without an intermission.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Director .................................................................................. Mikael Burke
Properties Master .................................................................................. Lydia Hanchett
Production Assistant ............................................................................ Katy Garcia
Production Dramaturg ........................................................................... Kristen Osborn
Assistant Dramaturg ........................................................................... Pyper Hayden

Special Thanks to Cameron Jones.

The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers
in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic
Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

This Theatre operates under an agreement between the League
of Resident Theatres and Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of
Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Video and/or audio recording of this performance
by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.
At the heart of Rachel Bonds’ delicate family play *Curve of Departure* lies a particularly poignant theme, the essential human impulse to help, to support, to contribute and to forgive. The primal need to love and be loved has drawn these characters together in this tiny hotel room for the purpose of putting to rest one of their own, who may have failed them all, but who brought them together in death.

Each character has their own reason for resentment, for an excuse to escape like the deceased son Rudy had. But unlike Cyrus, this “ragtag little group of humans,” are centrifugally pulled together by basic human decency, learning from their experience with him what they value most.

These are such divisive times. I think we all mourn the lost sense of community and dedication to democracy that our country was founded on. The great enemy looming over us right now is the lack of civic cohesion and the prevalence of fear. In this motel room, we see a microcosm of what our country is and can be, given the same sense of mutual responsibility and forgiveness. In this room we see respect for elders, and responsibility to future generations. And we see self-sacrifice, something we desperately need more of as a country right now.

BJ Jones, Artistic Director

**CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION**

When the play is over, the conversation we hope it inspires has only just begun! Join us for a discussion led by Northlight Artistic staff along with cast members and/or a featured guest expert.

Discussions will be held after performances:

- Sunday, September 16, 2:30
- Tuesday, September 18, 7:30
- Sunday, September 30, 2:30
- Wednesday, October 3, 1:00
- Thursday, October 4, 7:30
- Wednesday, October 10, 1:00
- Thursday, October 11, 7:30
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What was your inspiration for writing *Curve of Departure*?

Around the time I started writing the play, I had read this beautiful piece in the *New York Times Magazine* about a woman coming to terms with Alzheimer’s and how she and her family made some surprising decisions about the end of her life. I had also been listening to *The Longest Shortest Time*, a podcast on parents and children, and was really absorbed in the story of two young people very newly in love who were suddenly thrust into caring for a young child. I was also interested in looking at how to grieve for someone who was important to you, but for whom your love felt complicated, difficult. So these stories were floating around in my brain when I sat down to write, as were all my own thoughts and worries about becoming a parent myself. I was 16 weeks pregnant when we did the first public reading of this play at Pacific Playwrights Festival.

Are there elements of your own life experience and family that you bring into the relationships we see onstage?

Sure, there always are. In my experience, there are a lot of relationships created by a marriage that don’t necessarily end when the marriage does. I also have a Jewish grandfather who likes to tell jokes and was the first person who ever took me to New York.

**Rudy speaks with such poetic beauty about his love for New York City, and in a way New York almost becomes another character in the play. What is your relationship with New York like? Are any of Rudy’s feelings a reflection of your own experience in the city?**

It took me a couple years to really fall in love with New York, but I did, and I fell hard. Which is strange, because I’m from a tiny town in the mountains of Tennessee. But there are some similarities. You can walk everywhere. You find your neighborhood, and that becomes like its own small town. We know our neighbors, we know their dogs, they know our son, we have our dry cleaner and our butcher and our bodega. There’s something energizing about all the activity, and even if you’re just at home on your couch watching Netflix, you can hear all the activity happening around you. Just knowing that it’s there is deeply comforting to me. And there’s always someone awake, no matter the hour. I love that too.
We love that the title is inspired by a line in Sharon Olds’ “First Thanksgiving.” Can you speak at all to why this line in this poem stood out as an appropriate title for the play?

The poem is so much about parents and children and about letting go, letting your children fly off on the paths of their own making. And I think the play is a lot about that idea of letting go—for Felix, letting go of his father and his ideas about his own limitations, and for Linda, letting go of Rudy and her pattern of self-sacrifice.

In many of your plays, you address grief and how we process its presence in our everyday lives - do you feel there is power in communal processing?

Yes. I think that’s why I work in theatre. I started writing because I was grieving and I didn’t know where to put all of that. And I’ve found there’s no other catharsis than sitting in a room in the dark with a bunch of people breathing together. It’s that sense of “oneness” that Ayad Akhtar wrote about in his piece for the Times. And we’ve got a lot of grief to process right now....so maybe theatre can, even on a small scale, be an antidote.

What are you working on next?

I am working on my commission from The McCarter. It’s a play about motherhood, and about creativity and madness, and about growing apart from your friends. I’m also writing a play with music (or maybe just a straight up musical?) with composer Zoe Sarnak for The Geffen. I’m also developing a fictional podcast through a residency created by SPACE on Ryder Farm and Stitcher.
Would you know what to ask for if the Devil came knocking on your door?

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ComEd
**DANNY MARTINEZ (Jackson)** makes his Northlight debut. As a company member of Jackalope Theatre he has appeared in *Exit Strategy*, *Four*, and *Long Way Go Down*. As an American Players Theatre apprentice he has appeared in *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Comedy of Errors*. TV credits include *Chicago PD* and *South Side*. Danny is a Chicago native with a BA from Columbia College Chicago. He is represented by Stewart Talent. Special thanks: B. J. R. A. L. N.

**MIKE NUSSBAUM (Rudy)** returns to Northlight where he previously appeared in *Relativity*, *Awake and Sing!*, *Better Late*, *Grace*, and Mitch Albom’s *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Curve of Departure marks his 16th appearance with Northlight. As an actor in Chicago for more than 60 years, he was recently seen at TimeLine in *Bakersfield Mist* and *The Price* and at the Goodman in the much loved *Smokefall* by Noah Haidle. According to Actors’ Equity Association, he is the oldest actor still working on stage.

**SEAN PARRIS (Felix)** returns to Northlight where he was previously seen in *The Whipping Man*. Other Chicago credits include a two man show entitled *Space Age* with real life intimate partner Ricardo Gamboa (Free Street Theatre); *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Court); *The Magic Play* (Goodman, Portland Center Stage at the Armory, Syracuse Stage); *Compass*, *Animal Farm*, *The Drunken City* (Steppenwolf); and *A Girl With Sun in Her Eyes* (Pinebox Theatre). TV: *Chicago PD* (NBC), *The Chi*, (Showtime), and *Brujos* (OpenTV’s original web series). Sean was born in L.A., raised in Miami and Georgia by his amazing mom, and currently lives in Chicago. Sean received his MFA from DePaul University’s Theatre School, is a graduate of Black Box Acting Academy and is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency.

**PENELOPE WALKER (Linda)** is ecstatic to return to Northlight after previously appearing in *Eclipsed*, *Gee’s Bend*, and *bee-luther-hatchee*. Other Chicago credits include *Life Sucks*, *Black Diamond*, *The Years the Locusts Have Eaten* (Lookingglass); *The House That Will Not Stand*, *No One As Nasty* (Victory Gardens); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Story, Crowns, Matchmaker* (us), *Gem of the Ocean* (us) (Goodman); *Love & Information* (Remy Bumppo); *We’re Gonna Be Okay*, *The Projects*, *Agnes of God*, *Doubt*, *People’s Temple* (American Theatre Company); *Will You Stand Up* (Erasing the Distance Theatre Company); *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wandering New England* (Theatre Wit); *Love Lies Bleeding* (Steppenwolf); *10 Virgins*, *Voyeurs de Venus* (Chicago Dramatists); and *The Clink* (Rivendell Theatre). She created and performed her own solo show *How I Jack Master Funked The Sugar in My Knee Caps*. Film/Web/TV: *Dubious Ruffians*, *Olympia: An Instruction Manual for How Things Work*, *Severed Ties*, *Flowers, Matching Pursuit*, *Chicago Med*, *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago Justice*, and *Boss*.

**BJ JONES (Director/Artistic Director)** is in his 21st season as Artistic Director of Northlight. Mr Jones is a two-time Joseph Jefferson Award Winning actor and a three-time nominated director. He has directed the world premieres of *Relativity*, *Charm*, *Faceless*, *White Guy on the Bus*, *Chapatti*, *The Outgoing Tide*, *Better..."
Late, and Rounding Third. Notably he has directed productions of Outside Mullingar, Grey Gardens, The Price, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, and The Beauty Queen of Leenane. As a producer he has guided the world premieres of Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley, Shining Lives, The Last Five Years, and Studs Terkel’s ‘The Good War.’ Additional directorial credits include Pitmen Painters (Timeline); 100 Saints You Should Know (Steppenwolf); Glengarry Glen Ross (Alliance Theatre, Atlanta); The Lady with All the Answers (Cherry Lane, New York); Animal Crackers (Baltimore Center Stage); Three Musketeers, The Tempest, Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing (Utah Shakespeare Festival), and four productions at the Galway International Arts Festival. As a performer, he has appeared at Northlight, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Court and other theatres throughout Chicago. Film/TV credits include The Fugitive, Body Double, Law and Order: Criminal Intent, Early Edition, Cupid, and Turks, among others.

**RACHEL BONDS (Playwright)** Rachel Bonds’ plays have been developed or produced by South Coast Rep, Ars Nova, Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre, Roundabout Underground, Atlantic Theater Company, Studio Theatre, New Georges, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and New York Stage & Film, among others. Her plays include: Curve of Departure (South Coast Rep commission, PPF 2016, Kilroys List 2016); Five Mile Lake (South Coast Rep, McCarter, Weissberger Award); The Wolfe Twins (Studio Theatre, Kilroys List 2015); Swimmers (Marin Theatre Co., Rella Lossy Award, Sky Cooper Prize, Kilroys List 2014); Sundown, Yellow Moon (Ars Nova/WP); Alma (Atlantic Theatre Company).
commission); Firecracker (Kilroys List 2016); At The Old Place (Arden); Michael & Edie (NY Times Critic’s Pick, 2010); Winter Games (Actors Theatre of Louisville, Heideman Award); and Anniversary (EST, Sam French OOB Festival Winner). She is an Alumna of the EST’s Youngblood, Ars Nova’s Play Group and SPACE on Ryder Farm’s Working Farm Writers’ Group. She was recently named the 2016 Tow Foundation Playwright in Residence at Ars Nova. Current commissions include The Geffen and McCarter. Bonds is a graduate of Brown University.

LAUREN NIGRI (Scenic Design)
Recent design credits include A Midsummer Nights Dream (Chicago Shakespeare); Hinter, The Few (Steep); Nice Girl, Betrayal (Raven); Souvenirs (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); The Scorpions Sting (Lyric Opera/Lyric Unlimited); Intimate Apparel (University of Illinois at Chicago); Sleeping Beauty (Marriott Theater); Adding Machine: A Musical (The Hypocrites); My American Cousin (Silk Road Rising). Recent associate design credits include The Beauty Queen of Leenane (Northlight) and Southern Gothic (Windy City Playhouse). She received her MFA from Northwestern in Stage Design and was awarded as one of ten design exhibitors chosen for the United States at the 2015 Prague Quadrennial. laurennigri.carbonmade.com

ALEXIS CHANEY (Costume Design) is delighted to be making her debut with Northlight Theatre. Recent credits include Gloria (Hatch Arts Collective), Pato Pato Maricon (Ars Nova Ant Fest), No Child (Definition Theatre Company), and Richard III (Muse of Fire). She received her MFA in Costume Design from Carnegie Mellon University. She is a proud founding member of First Floor Theater in Chicago. You can find her work at alexiscarrie.com

HEATHER GILBERT (Lighting Design) returns to Northlight where she previously designed You Can’t Take It With You, Mothers and Sons and Faceless. Ms. Gilbert’s lighting designs have been seen on many Chicago stages including Hypocrites, Goodman, Court, Steppenwolf, Steep, Victory Gardens, Remy Bumppo, Chicago Children’s Theatre, Writers, Timeline, About Face and countless storefronts. Regional credits include Oregon Shakespeare, American Repertory, Kansas City Repertory, Milwaukee Repertory, Huntington, Williamstown, Alley, Berkeley Repertory and Actors Theatre of Louisville. International credits include Almeida in London and Singapore Repertory. Heather was a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Grant and the 3Arts Award. Heather serves as the Head of Lighting Design at Columbia College Chicago, and received her MFA at the Theatre School at DePaul.

ANDRE PLUESS (Sound Design) has designed the Broadway productions of Metamorphoses, I Am My Own Wife and 33 Variations (Drama Desk Award nomination) as well as the world premiere of The Clean House at Yale Repertory and Lincoln Center. Based in Chicago, his work has appeared on most of the city’s stages including Northlight (Shining Lives with Amanda Dehnert), Goodman, Steppenwolf, Court and Lookingglass, where he is an associate artist. He has composed music and designed sound for theaters around the U.S., most frequently at the Oregon and California Shakespeare Festivals, Berkeley Repertory, Arena Stage, American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Repertory, La Jolla Playhouse and Center Theater Group. Choral works include: Winesburg, Ohio, Eastland, Whitman and Undone (with Ben Sussman) and Paris By Night (with Amy Warren).
RITA VREELAND (Production Stage Manager) is proud to begin her 12th season at Northlight where she is fortunate to have been the stage manager for 30 productions as well as two trips to Galway. Recent credits elsewhere in the Chicagoland area include productions at Theatre at the Center (Munster, IN), Victory Gardens, Route 66 Theatre Company, Goodman, and the annual Christmas Schooner at Mercury Theater. She is the proud wife of actor Tom Hickey and mom to five-year-old Charlie, and has been a member of Actors’ Equity for over 17 years. Thank you for supporting live theatre!

TIMOTHY J. EVANS (Executive Director) leads Northlight Theatre’s overall strategic, management and long-range initiatives. Prior to his arrival at Northlight, Tim spent over 20 years at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in management and producing positions. He created, curated and produced Steppenwolf’s acclaimed TRAFFIC Series including a partnership with Chicago Public Radio for subsequent broadcasts. Tim founded Steppenwolf Films, of which he is still a partner with Gary Sinise, Terry Kinney and Jeff Perry, to develop film and television projects. He has served on the Board of Trustees of the League of Chicago Theatres and on the theater selection panel for the Princess Grace Foundation Awards. He also serves on the USA selection committee for The Eisenhower Fellows, Philadelphia, PA. Previously, Tim served on the board of the Independent Film Project (IFP) and was a charter member of the Governor’s Task Force for Media Development.
ABOUT NORTHLIGHT THEATRE

Northlight distinguishes itself in the landscape of Chicago theatre through its compelling and compassionate work onstage and innovative and impactful work offstage, including dynamic education and community engagement programs. Northlight’s story begins in 1974, when Gregory Kandel, Mike Nussbaum, and Frank Galati established the Evanston Theatre Company in the Kingsley Elementary School Theater on Green Bay Road in Evanston. The company evolved and expanded in the two decades that followed, moving between several different locations in the North Shore area and adopting the name Northlight Theatre.

Northlight settled into its current home at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie in 1997. From then on, Northlight began a new era of growth, quickly developing into one of the largest nonprofit theatres in the Chicagoland area led by Artistic Director BJ Jones, who took over in 1998. In 2007, he was joined by Executive Director Timothy J. Evans. Under their joint leadership, Northlight has established itself as a regional magnet for critical and professional acclaim and a home for talent of the highest quality.

Today, Northlight’s programming includes:

**MAINSTAGE** Northlight produces five mainstage productions per season, with a spectrum of work ranging from timely world premieres to refreshed classics.

**NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT** By the end of the 2018-19 season, Northlight will have brought over 40 world-premiere plays to life and is the recipient of ten Edgerton Foundation for New Play Awards.

**EDUCATION** Our comprehensive arts education program serves over 3500 students per year through workshops, low-cost performance access, and in-school residencies ranging from adaptations of familiar stories to student-devised theatre for social change.

**AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT** A variety of free audience events such as Backstage with BJ, community panels, and post-show discussions add depth and context to each production and offer a platform for civil discourse.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT** These tailored programs use theatre arts and theatre-related skills to build bridges with other non-profit organizations, working to both support their missions and extend our reach to diverse audiences.

Through its work onstage and in the community, Northlight Theatre aspires to promote a change of perspective and encourage compassion by exploring the depth of our humanity across a bold spectrum of theatrical experiences.
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