NORTHLIGHT THEATRE

BJ Jones
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Timothy J. Evans
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

presents

the World Premiere of

LANDLADIES

BY SHARYN ROTHSTEIN

DIRECTED BY JESS MCLEOD

Scenic Design Arnel Sancianco
Costume Design Christine Pascual, USA
Lighting Design Sarah Hughey, USA
Sound Design Stephen Ptacek
Production Dramaturg Lauren Shouse
Production Stage Manager Katie Klemme, AEA
Casting by Paskal Rudnicke Casting

OPENING NIGHT: MARCH 22, 2019
at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie

Landladies is an original commission by Northlight Theatre as the recipient of the Selma Melvoin Playwriting Award.
CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Shanesia Davis* .......................................................... Marti
Leah Karpel* .......................................................... Christine
Julian Parker* .......................................................... Poet

Understudies: Rinska Carrasco (Christine), Roberto Mantica (Poet), Merrina Millsapp (Marti)

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.

Landladies will be performed without intermission.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Director ............................................................ Seph Mozes
Assistant Dramaturgs ................................................... Seph Mozes, Gabrielle Seed
Properties Master ............................................................ Jared Davis
Production Assistant .................................................... Katy Garcia
Intimacy Consultant ........................................................ Rachel Flesher

Video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

SPECIAL THANKS

Zayna Dib, Grace Kelly, and Mariana Minarik
FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

As I write this we are experiencing arguably the coldest set of days in Chicago’s history. Businesses, schools, restaurants, and theatres, including Northlight, closed for safety’s sake. The streets were empty in my one foray out into the 20 below. The shelters in Evanston were full and the heroes who serve the homeless population were pitching in to house as many as they could during the cold crisis. In this extreme weather, I thought about Landladies. I thought about all the families who struggle to make the rent, let alone heat their homes, in times like these. Nationwide, one in five renting families miss their utility bills and are disconnected. There are 900,000 evictions every year in America amounting to 2.6 million people, many of them children. There are thousands on the edge of poverty struggling to keep their heads above water, when at one time they were securely in the middle class.

Inspired by Matthew Desmond’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book Evicted, Sharyn Rothstein’s Landladies examines the razor’s edge of poverty and the working class fight to keep up in an economy some say is booming. And therein lies the harsh reality. When two parents are working full-time and can barely make expenses, the lie of prosperity comes clearly into view. Single mothers working three jobs to survive is not the definition of an economic boom, it is the definition of wage inequality. Senior citizens, an often overlooked population, struggle to live on Social Security alone while the price of food and rent skyrocket, tarnishing their “Golden Years.” The cost of prescriptions continues to accelerate, making the choice of rent or health a critical decision for many.

Landladies is not a political play, it is a compassionate examination of human travail in America today. It focuses on two women on two different rungs of the economic ladder. Today those rungs are more perilous and slippery than ever. Here on the North Shore, behind the curtain of affluence, is a population that struggles to keep up. So when Sharyn suggested a play about the kind of circumstances described in Evicted, I knew it would be the kind of play you would respond to.

BJ Jones
Two years ago, I picked up a book that changed the way I saw America. Matthew Desmond’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Evicted, a deep dive into the housing crisis and cycle of poverty that is crippling our country, is a brilliantly-written and researched work that exposes the cruelty and injustice that forces 1 in 8 Americans into eviction at some point in their lives.

A disproportionate amount of the evicted are mothers with children. As with so many social problems in this country, the difficulties and inequities these women face is rarely discussed, and even more rarely ameliorated by social policy.

Desmond addresses all of the issues faced by poor women on the brink of eviction, but he also presents the landlords who rent to these women as fully human, complicated small-business people, trying to keep afloat in the most challenging and problematic real estate markets in the country.

But the landlords and the tenants Desmond presents aren’t just struggling victims of an unfair system. They are also strong-minded. They are funny. They are shrewd. They are survivors.

They are Marti and Christine, a landlady and her new tenant; two complicated, sharply funny, wiser-than-their-years women, whose unexpected friendship is the heart of Landladies.

Theatre allows us into the lives of others. It beckons us to imagine what we’ve never experienced, and to question our assumptions. I hope you fall in love with these women the way I have, that you walk away with an understanding of what they’re up against, and a newfound respect for their ability to laugh, love, and survive what to so many would be simply insurmountable.

I am so grateful to my gorgeous cast and brilliant director, and to BJ Jones and everyone at Northlight, for their support and passion for this play, and their commitment to telling under-told stories about people we as a society too often overlook and underestimate.

Thank you for opening your heart to Landladies.

Sincerely,
Sharyn Rothstein
Northlight has always put an emphasis on new work, and since the inception of the Interplay program in 2006, we’ve been able to put increased focus and investment in its creation. Through Interplay, Northlight is able to customize support to serve the specific needs of play development — that support can take the form of playwright commissions, workshops with actors, and private or public readings.

Playwright commissions allow Northlight to directly invest in a playwright’s creative process by providing support and time to bring first idea to first draft. When we produced *By the Water* by Sharyn Rothstein in 2017, we immediately knew Sharyn’s voice was a great fit for a Northlight commission. She has a specific ability to capture the vulnerability, honesty, and humor in human struggle. BJ Jones approached Sharyn to see if she had thoughts for a new play and they began to discuss the beginning idea of a story that would eventually become *Landladies*.

Sharyn was inspired to write a play about poverty in America after reading Matthew Desmond’s *Evicted*. While *Landladies* is not directly based on any of the stories or people in *Evicted*, it examines the human relationship between a single mother living in poverty and her landlord.

Once we read the first draft of the play, then titled *Make It Nice*, we knew we wanted to produce it in our 2018-19 season, as it ignites an important conversation about the cycle of poverty and the housing crisis. Sharyn worked through multiple drafts of the play and we hosted a table reading at Northlight. As part of that process, the title changed to *The Janice* and finally to *Landladies*, based on re-writes Sharyn was working on with feedback from the Northlight artistic team. In December 2018, we had a four-day workshop for Sharyn to hear the play and make changes with the actors and director in the room. And finally with the Edgerton Award, we were granted an extra week of rehearsal to have time to incorporate new ideas as the actors dig deeper into their characters.

Actor Leah Karpel says of the new play process, “Working on a brand new play is one of my favorite things to do because there’s potential for sort of anything to happen. When you start working on a new play the spine is there, but it’s never completely realized. I love the actor’s job in that...
process, which is really to figure out what the playwright is intending to communicate, what story they’re trying to tell, and then to map how my character helps tell that story.”

The final ingredient is you, our audience. As we refine the play during previews, we incorporate changes based on what we are learning from audience response to the play. Director Jess McLeod says, “What I’d love audiences to take away is that however hard life is, how even as we’re trying to make it on our own, how crucial human connection remains.” *Landladies* marks the 41st world premiere in Northlight’s 44-year history—the latest in a long line that has established Interplay as a valuable incubator for new work in American theatre. The American theatrical canon needs new plays for this industry to sustain itself, to grow, and for this art form that we love to thrive for new artists and future generations. Northlight is proud to be an important contributor to that process.

-Lauren Shouse, Associate Artistic Director

**DEDICATION**

Seventeen years ago, one of Evanston’s esteemed citizens, Joe Levy, along with his cousin Hugo Melvoin, set up the Melvoin Award, to be given to a playwright in support of the development of their work here at Northlight. The first recipient was Jenny Laird’s *Sky Girls*, a touching, humorous, and spiritual celebration of the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots.

Since then Joe and Hugo have supported so many plays, including *The Outgoing Tide*, *Better Late*, *Shining Lives*, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Rounding Third*, and this season, the last of the Melvoins, *Landladies* by Sharyn Rothstein. These plays have brought us artistic and box office success and have found their way to New York, to the Galway International Theatre Festival, and to theatres nationwide. We are so proud of that.

But most of all we are grateful to Joe. Joe passed away in February, unable to see his last gift come to fruition. But it’s fitting that these plays live on, given life by this visionary. He and his wife Carol have given so much to the community they worked in. So, though I always told him how grateful I was, and how much he meant to our community, I’ll say it again: Thank you Joe and Carol, on behalf of so many playwrights, directors, actors, designers, and thousands of audience members who enjoyed the work you helped develop. I’m sure you never truly realized how important your gift was, but without it, seventeen years of new work would not exist. And I would have missed out on the inspiration of knowing you.

- BJ Jones
There’s trueness within in a neighborhood of possibilities. A distinct makeup of underlying values and beliefs. A respect for openness. An expression of kindness. A welcoming dynamic that allows us to live to the fullest, to explore and connect in more thorough and thoughtful ways.

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SHANESIA DAVIS (Marti) returns to Northlight where she previously appeared in Permanent Collection and Bee-luther-hatchee. She was last seen as Gertrude in The Gift Theatre’s Hamlet. Chicago credits include: Billy Elliot the Musical (Porchlight, Jeff Nomination); Richard III (Gift Theatre); The Glass Menagerie, Our Lady of 121st St. (Steppenwolf); Brothers of the Dust (Best Actress, Black Theater Alliance Award, Black Excellence Award), What I Learned in Paris (Congo Square); Immediate Family, Drowning Crow, Black Star Line (Goodman); Native Son, Othello (Court) among others. Regional: Jazz (Baltimore Center Stage); Immediate Family (Mark Taper Forum); Gee’s Bend (Cleveland Playhouse); The Syringa Tree, A Raisin in the Sun (Kansas City Repertory); Intimate Apparel (Baltimore Center Stage, South Coast Repertory); and Hamlet (San Diego Repertory). Film: Blueprint, External Rivals, Working Man, Consumed, Morning Due, The Weatherman, Life Sentence, and Chicago Cab with Honors. TV: Proven Innocent, The Chi, Cleveland Abduction, Empire, Chicago Fire, Making a Case for Murder: The Howard Beach Story, CRISIS, Detroit 187, Missing Person, and Early Edition.

LEAH KARPEL (Christine) returns to Northlight after previously appearing in The Commons of Pensacola. Other Chicago credits include: Appropriate, The Whale, We Are Proud to Present... (Victory Gardens); Buena Vista, The Glass Menagerie, The Hot L Baltimore (Steppenwolf); The Diary Of Anne Frank (Writers); Punk Rock (Griffin). NYC credits include: Lewiston/Clarkston (Rattlestick), The Harvest (LCT3), Pocatello (Playwrights Horizons), PORTO (Women’s Project). Regional: Miller, Mississippi (Dallas Theatre Center, Longwharf Theatre); Residence (Actors Theatre of Louisville Humana Festival); 4000 Miles (Long Wharf Theatre); Ten Chimneys (Milwaukee Repertory). Film/TV: Chicago Med, Patriot, Olympia.

JULIAN PARKER (Poet) returns to Northlight after appearing in Charm. Stage credits include: Pass Over, Gospel of Franklin, BlackTop Sky, and understudy in Head of Passes (Steppenwolf); Genesis, Dutchman, and The Brothers’ Size (Definition Theatre Company); Seize the King (La Jolla Playhouse); Hamlet, Julius Caesar, Smart People (Writers); Prowess (Jackalope); Hairy Ape (Oracle Productions, Jeff Award recipient for Actor in a Principal Role); and The Royale (American Theatre Company). TV/Film: Pass Over (Amazon Studios, directed by Spike Lee); The Chi (Showtime); Chicago PD and Chicago Fire (NBC); and Home for the Weekend (Comedy Central). He is represented by Grossman & Jack Talent and managed by Authentic Talent. He is a co-founding member of Definition Theatre Company and received his BFA from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

SHARYN ROTHSTEIN (Playwright) is a playwright and television writer, whose plays and musicals have been workshopped and produced around the country, as well as internationally. Her play By The Water was first produced by Manhattan Theater Club and Ars Nova and was the recipient of the American Theater Critic’s Association Francesca Primus Prize. Her play All The Days was the recipient of the Edgerton Foundation Award and was produced at the McCarter Theater Center, directed by Emily Mann. In addition to playwriting, Sharyn is a writer and consulting producer for the USA Network drama SUITS. She is currently working on a television pilot for Apple, a theater commission from Manhattan Theater Club, as well as a stage adaptation of the beloved film Hester Street. In 2019, Sharyn’s comedy Tell Me I’m Not Crazy will premiere at The Williamstown Theater Festival and her drama Right To Be Forgotten will premiere at Arena Stage in Washington, DC. She holds an MFA in dramatic writing from NYU and a Masters in Public Health from Hunter College, with a concentration in Urban Health. She lives in Brooklyn with one husband, two kids, two cats, and a mountain of laundry.
JESS MCLEOD (Director) is the Resident Director of Hamilton Chicago. Recent Chicago credits include Fulfillment Center (A Red Orchid Theatre), There’s Always the Hudson (Goodman Theatre, 2017 Michael Maggio Fellow), Hang Man (The Gift Theatre), Marry Me A Little (Porchlight Music Theatre), How We Got On (Haven), Season on the Line (The House Theatre), L-vis Live! (Victory Gardens Theater, 2018 Next Generation Artistic Fellow), Venus (Steppenwolf Next Up!), Short Shakes! Midsummer (Chicago Shakespeare), and five short operas developed with Chicago community groups (Lyric Opera of Chicago). New York credits include The Last Five Years and The Unauthorized Musicology of Ben Folds (New York Musical Theatre Festival, Director of Programming). Festival Coordinator, Louder Than A Bomb Youth Poetry Festival @ Young Chicago Authors (2016-17). Teaching Artist, Storycatchers Theatre. M.F.A., Northwestern University.

ARNEL SANCIANCO (Scenic Design) makes his Northlight debut with Landladies. He has designed all around the United States and has received an Equity Jeff nomination for Scenic Design. Credits include The All Night Strut (Milwaukee Rep); Crumbs from the Table of Joy (Raven); Rhoda and the Fossil Hunt, Empower (Lyric Unlimited); The Cake (Rivendell); Master Class, Boy (Timeline); Photograph 51, The Belle of Amherst (Court); We Are Proud to Present, The Crucible (Steppenwolf); The Wiz, Little Fish (Kokandy); Hangman, Pilgrims (The Gift); Hookman, Earthquakes in London (Steep); Peerless (First Floor); The Total Bent, The Displaced, How We Got On (Haven); You on The Moors Now (The Hypocrites); Carousel, Titanic, Rock of Ages (Timberlake Playhouse); and Xanadu (American Theatre Co.) For a more in depth look at his work visit www.ArnelDesigns.com

CHRISTINE PASCUAL (Costume Design) is delighted to be making her Northlight debut. Recent credits include: The Total Bent, The Displaced (Haven Theatre); La Ruta (Steppenwolf); Crumbs From The Table of Joy (Raven Theatre); Lady in Denmark, Feathers and Teeth, The Happiest Song Plays Last, Fish Men, El Nogalar, Massacre, New Stages Festival (Goodman); Put Your House in Order (Jackalope Theatre); Hang (Remy Bumpo); Traitor (Red Orchid); Simpatico (McCarter Theatre). She has also worked at American Theater Company, Teatro Vista, Victory Gardens, Chicago Children’s Theatre, Theatre Wit, Court, Congo Square Theatre. Off-Broadway credits include The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity (Second Stage Theatre). Regional credits include work at American Players Theatre, Virginia Stage Company and Centerstage. Pascual was a 2010 Henry Hewes Design Award nominee and a 2018 3Arts Awardee.

SARAH HUGHEY (Lighting Design) is pleased to be working on her eighth design with Northlight after Miss Bennet, The City of Conversation, Discord, Butler, The Commons of Pensacola, Tom Jones, and Black Pearl Sings! Recent Chicago credits include Vietgone, The Scene, Doubt: A Parable, The Diary of Anne Frank (Writers); Mr. and Mrs. Pennyworth (Lookingglass); Straight White Men (Steppenwolf); Moby Dick (Blair Thomas & Co.); Cocked, The Who and the What, Samsara (Victory Gardens). Other recent credits include Crossing Mnisose and Sense and Sensibility (Portland Center Stage); The Cake (Asolo Rep); and As You Like It (Guthrie Theater). Ms. Hughey has received a Jeff Award (Scorched, Silk Road Rising), and the Maggio Emerging Designer Award. She holds an MFA from Northwestern University.

STEPHEN PTACEK (Sound Design) Credits include: Nell Gwynn, QBrothers Christmas Carol (Chicago Shakespeare); Mies Julie (Victory Gardens); Long Way Home (Q Brothers w/ Chicago Children’s Choir); The Skin of Our Teeth (Remy Bumpppo); The Pride, The Flowers, Stupid Kids, The Young Ladies Of... (About Face); How We Got On (Haven); Killer Angels (Lineline); Breach, Roadkill Confidential, Dead Letter Office, The Twins Would Like To Say, God’s Ear, As Told By The Vivian Girls (Dog & Pony); Faster (Side Project). Film: May Days, What Remains, Some Girls Never Learn. TV: Brujos. Education: BA in English, Theatre Arts, University of
www.StephenPtacek.com

KATIE KLEMME (Production Stage Manager) is pleased to return to Northlight after serving as Assistant Stage Manager on You Can’t Take It With You. Recent credits include Hamilton: An American Musical (Chicago, Rehearsal, Sub ASM); Sorin: A Notre Dame Story (National Tour); Indecent, Lettie (Victory Gardens); The Realistic Joneses (Theater Wit & Shattered Globe); Southern Gothic (Windy City Playhouse); and Mother and Me (Geva Theater Center, Rochester, NY). She’s also served as resident production stage manager from 2008-2018 for over 25 productions at American Theater Company where highlights include the world premieres of Disgraced (Pulitzer Prize) and The Project(s) as well as columbinus which played to audiences in Chicago and Boston (ArtsEmerson).

She is on the faculty at Loyola University Chicago and is a proud member of Actors Equity Association.

BJ JONES (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 Innishmore, 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

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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.

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.
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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.
When the play is over, the conversation we hope it inspires has only just begun! Join us for a discussion and Q&A on the greater context of the play with artists related to the production.

Post-show discussions will be held after performances:

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