

FOR RELEASE JUNE 1, 2007

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Girl Friday Productions
Fresh, Professional Staging of an American Masterpiece
Our Town

Minneapolis, MN – Noted for his illuminating productions of classic texts, acclaimed local theater artist Craig Johnson will direct Girl Friday Production's staging of **Our Town**, by Thornton Wilder, opening Friday, July 6, at the Minneapolis Theater Garage.

Rich, relevant and universal in its themes, this Pulitzer Prize-winning American masterpiece will be given a fresh approach by an outstanding 14 member ensemble cast, which includes: Whistler Allen, Kirby Bennett, Shelby Flannery, Jenny Hollingsworth, Ryan Kathman, Sam Landman, Bob Malos, John Middleton, Ian Miller, Laura Salveson, Collan Simmons, Heather Stone, Scott Taulman, and Julie Weaver. Under Johnson's direction and with this talented cast, Girl Friday's production will take a deeper look at this classic play, including an innovative ensemble approach to the role of the Stage Manager.

Rarely given the professional attention it deserves, **Our Town** has recently received renewed interest, including a thought-provoking essay in **The New York Times** ("The Genius of Grover's Corners," April 1, 2007, by Jeremy McCarter), which asks us of the play "...how well do we really understand it?" Wilder wrote in his 1957 "Preface" to Three Plays published by Harper and Row: "**Our Town** is not... a picture of life in a New Hampshire village; or a speculation about the conditions of life after death. It is an attempt to find a value above all price for the smallest events in our daily life..." The structure of the play indeed represents the cycles of life: act one focusing on birth, vitality and daily life; act two centering on coming of age and the quest for companionship; and act three connecting ordinary life with the enigma of death. The story underscores the sacredness of everyday moments and the common threads that link every human journey, including the contrary and darker realities, which as McCarter aptly notes are often lost in revivals of **Our Town**.

Director **Craig Johnson** is a well known and highly praised Twin Cities actor and director, and was noted recently for his insightful direction of Torch Theater Company's *The Miracle Worker*, and for his writing and performance in History Theatre's *The Lutefisk Champ and Other Frozen Holiday Tales*. Ivey-Award winner **Joel Sass** will provide scenic design, with **Jen DeGolier** on designing lighting, **Katharine Horowitz** on sound and **Carolann Winther** on costumes. Producers are **Kirby Bennett** and **Natalie Diem**. This is Girl Friday Productions' second theatrical presentation. The first, **An Empty Plate in the**

Café du Grand Boeuf, was mounted in July 2005 to critical acclaim and audience support. Like *Empty Plate*, **Our Town** features the signature qualities of a Girl Friday production: solid literature, humanity, relevance, and stimulating theatricality.

The Ensemble

Actor Name/Character Name/Selected Credits

Whistler Allen (Joe Crowell/Si Crowell) – History Theatre (*Orphan Train*)

Kirby Bennett (Mrs. Gibbs) – Park Square Theatre (*The Left Hand Singing, The Triumph of Love, Noises Off*); Minnesota Jewish Theatre (*Hanukkah Lights in the Big Sky*); Girl Friday Productions (*An Empty Plate in the Café du Grand Boeuf*); Commonweal Theatre (*Steel Magnolias*)

Shelby Flannery (Rebecca Gibbs) – Torch Theater (*The Miracle Worker*); History Theatre (*Orphan Train*)

Jenny Hollingsworth (Emily Webb) – Theatre in the Round (*Twelfth Night*); East End Playhouse and Charleston Stage Company (*Romeo and Juliet*); Theatre Memphis (*Wisdom from Whispers*)

Ryan Kathman (Howie Newsome/Sam Craig) – Jungle Theater (*The Rivals*); Joking Apart Theatre (*Communicating Doors, Woman in Mind*); Hardcover Theater (*The Sea Wolf*)

Sam Landman (Simon Stimson/Mr. Morgan) – Penumbra Theatre (*Sex Diary of an Infidel*); Theatre Pro Rata (*Hamlet, Rosencrantz & Guildenstern*); Girl Friday Productions (*An Empty Plate in the Café du Grand Boeuf*); History Theater (*Fireball: The Hinckley Fire Musical, Axel and His Dog*)

Bob Malos (Dr. Gibbs) – Starting Gate Productions (*True West*); Gremlin Theatre (*Bach at Leipzig*); Paul Bunyan Playhouse (*The Drawer Boy*); Girl Friday Productions (*An Empty Plate in the Café du Grand Boeuf*); Hardcover Theater (*The Sea Wolf*); Fifty Foot Penguin (*American Buffalo, 12 Angry Men, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*); City Pages Best Actor (Male) Award 2006

John Middleton (Editor Webb) – Torch Theater (*A Thousand Clowns*); Gremlin Theatre (*Bach at Leipzig*); Fifty Foot Penguin (*Requiem for a Heavyweight*); Emigrant Theater (*Kid Simple*), Frank Theatre (*Aplombov*); The Children's Theatre Company (16 productions)

Ian Miller (George Gibbs) – Theatre in the Round (*The Mousetrap, Twelfth Night*); The Guthrie Theater (*A Christmas Carol*); Orion's Left Foot Theatre (*Savage/Love, Geography of a Horse Dreamer*)

Laura Salvesson (Mrs. Soames) – Mary Worth Theatre Company (*Tabloid Dreams, Out of the Dust*); Theatre in the Round (*The Cherry Orchard, Into the Woods*); Paul Bunyan Playhouse (*Steel Magnolias*); Upstart Theatre (*Four Stories/Goblin Market, Soapbox, Bartelby and Louisa, Love Letters*)

Collan Simmons (Wally Webb) – KidsACT (*A Midsummer Nights Dream*)

Heather Stone (Mrs. Webb) – Sandbox Theatre (*Zelda, Victoria in Red*); Pioneer Place Theatre (*Crimes of the Heart*); 15 Head (*Vacationland!, Sacred Space, The Enchanted, Red/Instructions to Follow*); Joking Apart Theatre (*Norman Conquests Trilogy*); Theatre Unbound (*Bits and Pieces, Simply Gerta*)

Scott Taulman (Constable Warren/Joe Stoddard) – Minnesota Shakespeare Project (*Troilus & Cressida*); Paul Bunyan Playhouse (*Arsenic & Old Lace, Twelfth Night*); Starting Gate Productions (*Death of a Salesman*); The Chamber Theatre of Milwaukee (*Present Laughter, Heartbreak House*)

Julie Weaver (Professor Willard/Reverend Ferguson/Mrs. Carter) – Park Square Theatre (*You Can't Take It With You*); Minnesota Jewish Theatre (*Lovers and Traitors: The Killing of the Rosenbergs, Miklat*); Troupe America (*How to Talk Minnesotan: The Musical* – original cast)

Girl Friday Productions presents **OUR TOWN**, by Thornton Wilder

July 6-28, 2007

At the Minneapolis Theater Garage

711 West Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis (on the corner of Lyndale Avenue South and Franklin Avenue)

Ticket Prices

\$18

\$15 students and seniors Group rates available

Reservations

(612) 729-1071

Performance Schedule

Friday, July 6 7:30 PM opening and reception

Saturday, July 7 7:30 PM

Friday, July 13 7:30 PM
Saturday, July 14 7:30 PM
Sunday, July 15 3:00 PM
Monday, July 16 7:30 PM industry night/pay what you wish

Thursday, July 19 7:30 PM
Friday, July 20 7:30 PM
Saturday, July 21 7:30 PM
Sunday, July 22 3:00 PM

Thursday, July 26 7:30 PM
Friday, July 27 7:30 PM
Saturday, July 28 7:30 PM closing

Web site

www.girlfridayproductions.org

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