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**Girl Friday Productions
Stages Rarely Produced American Classic Comedy
THE MATCHMAKER by Thornton Wilder**

Minneapolis, MN – Because adventure should be shared, Girl Friday Productions is delighted to present **THE MATCHMAKER by Thornton Wilder, directed by Craig Johnson and opening July 10, 2015** on the new Andy Boss Thrust Stage at Park Square Theatre. A tonic for our troubled times, this joyous romp celebrates the spirit of generosity.

Wilder's hilarious farce about love, money and adventure features the signature humanity, wit and relevance of one of America's greatest playwrights. When wealthy merchant Horace Vandergelder engages the services of legendary matchmaker Dolly Levi, he gets much more than he bargained for. Under Dolly's clever guidance, a swirl of innocent clerks, spirited millineresses, snooty waiters and other eccentric characters become delightfully entangled in 19th century New York. Amidst the physical comedy, secret rendezvous and mistaken identities of THE MATCHMAKER, Wilder infuses wry observations about wealth, class and employment.

Aside from serving as the source material for a certain famous musical, THE MATCHMAKER is highly acclaimed in its own right, offering captivating literature and greater charm and relevance for the present day. Girl Friday is offering a rare opportunity for Twin Cities' audiences: a hit on Broadway during its inaugural run in 1955-1957, to Girl Friday's knowledge THE MATCHMAKER has not had a local professional production in 38 years.

Girl Friday Productions has a special affinity for the works of Thornton Wilder, having created critically acclaimed productions of OUR TOWN in 2007 and THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH in 2009. *"We are delighted to return to Thornton Wilder," says **Girl Friday Productions' Artistic Director Kirby Bennett.** "THE MATCHMAKER celebrates living life to the fullest while also delivering a potent message about generosity that holds sharp relevance for all Americans today. Wilder reminds us that money, like adventure, should be shared!"*

A noted veteran of the Twin Cities theatre scene, **director Craig Johnson** is one of the region's most sought after talents, with more than 25 years experience as an actor and director. He is the recipient of two Ivey Awards: the first for his direction of Girl Friday Productions' STREET

SCENE in 2011, and the second for his performance as Oscar Wilde in Walking Shadow Theatre Company's 2013 production of GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE. In 2013 the City Pages named Craig one of its Artists of the Year. In addition to directing STREET SCENE, Craig returns to Girl Friday Productions after acting in its 2013 production of CAMINO REAL and directing its production of OUR TOWN. Craig is an Artistic Associate with Torch Theater, most recently directing their production of BOEING BOEING.

"THE MATCHMAKER has always been a favorite of mine," commented Johnson, "though it's a fairly large play and tricky to produce. Girl Friday has made its mark as the little theater that does big plays, so I am excited to complete our triumvirate of Wilder's major works with this production. THE MATCHMAKER is, of course, a delightful comedy with moments of zany farce, sweet romance, and vivid characters. But in studying the script, I have been taken by Wilder's pointed remarks about our relationship to work and money: How much money is enough? Do we look at the world as a place of scarcity or abundance? How does employment define or limit us? A melting pot of questions bubbles beneath THE MATCHMAKER's humorous surface."

THE MATCHMAKER features an ensemble cast of 12 gifted actors, including many Twin Cities' favorites as well as exciting new faces: **Christian Bardin, Kirby Bennett, David Beukema, Vincent Hannam, Elizabeth Hawkinson, Dan Hopman, Sam Landman, Lindsay Marcy, Sam Pearson, Alan Sorenson, Dana Lee Thompson** and **Karen Wiese-Thompson**. The exceptional design team includes scenic designer **Rick Polenek**, lighting designer **Dietrich Poppen**, sound designer **Katharine Horowitz**, costume designer **Kathy Kohl** and properties designer **Sarah Holmberg**.

THE MATCHMAKER is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the **Metropolitan Regional Arts Council**, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund; and by the **Saint Paul Cultural STAR Program**. THE MATCHMAKER is being produced by Girl Friday Productions as part of Park Square's "Theatres in Residence" Series. Girl Friday Productions, along with Sandbox and Theatre Pro Rata, will bring diverse aesthetic approaches and artistic forms, fresh talent as well as favorite faces to Park Square's seasons over the next three years.

About Girl Friday Productions

Girl Friday Productions creates bold theatre exploring American stories. The company's mission is to nurture artists, inspire audiences and illuminate the human condition. Focusing on larger scale American plays of exceptional literary merit that are less frequently produced today, Girl

Friday chooses not to do a multi-play season but to rather focus on a singular major project every other year in order to provide the most artistically rewarding experience possible. This approach maximizes efforts to work with challenging texts, large and skilled ensemble casts, and distinguished directors and designers. Girl Friday's work is characterized by exceptional literature, humanity, relevance and stimulating theatricality. The little company that does big plays, Girl Friday has been steadily building a niche for itself in the Twin Cities' theater scene.

Founded in 2004 by Artistic Director Kirby Bennett, Girl Friday Productions' most recent productions were CAMINO REAL (Lavender Magazine notable performances in 2013) and STREET SCENE (2011 "Top Ten"/Year End Highlights in the Star Tribune, Pioneer Press and Lavender Magazine; Ivey Award for director). Other highlights include THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH (MinnPost "Favorite for 2009") and OUR TOWN (Pioneer Press "Top Ten Shows of 2007").

Girl Friday Productions presents THE MATCHMAKER by Thornton Wilder

July 10-26, 2015

Location: Andy Boss Thrust Stage at Park Square Theatre

Historic Hamm Building
Downtown St. Paul
20 West Seventh Place
St. Paul, MN 55102

Tickets: \$25 - discounts for seniors, students, groups, fringe buttons, MPR members

Reservations: 651.291.7005 or www.parksquaretheatre.org

Information and company website: www.girlfridayproductions.org

Performance Schedule (13 performances over 3 weeks)

Evening shows at 7:30 pm, Sundays at 2:00 pm. The specific performance dates are:

Thursday, July 9 at 7:30 pm

Preview

Friday, July 10 at 7:30 pm

Opening night and reception

Saturday, July 11 at 7:30 pm

Sunday, July 12 at 2 pm

Thursday, July 16 at 7:30 pm

Friday, July 17 at 7:30 pm

Post show discussion

Saturday, July 18 at 7:30 pm

Audio description and sensory tour

Sunday, July 19 at 2:00 pm

Monday, July 20 at 7:30 pm

Pay what you wish

Thursday, July 23 at 7:30 pm

ASL interpretation

Friday, July 24 at 7:30 pm

Saturday, July 25 at 7:30 pm

Sunday, July 26 at 2 pm

Open captioning; closing performance

- End -