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**Rivendell Theatre Ensemble presents
the Midwest Premiere of
Grizzly Mama
by George Brant
directed by RTE member Megan Carney
featuring RTE Artistic Director Tara Mallen**

September 8 – October 15, 2016

Chicago, IL—**Rivendell Theatre Ensemble (RTE)**, Chicago's only Equity theatre dedicated to producing new work with women at the core, announces the Midwest premiere of ***Grizzly Mama*** by **George Brant**. The production, directed by RTE member **Megan Carney**, runs **September 8 – October 15, 2016**, at **Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago**. The press opening is **Monday, September 12 at 7:00pm**.

Set in an Alaskan cabin where Deb, a divorced suburban mom is attempting to reinvent herself as a righteous, liberal avenger is *Grizzly Mama* -- the final production of Rivendell's 2016 season "The Body Politic" in which the political is deeply personal. Deb is fresh from the funeral for her recently deceased, famous activist mother. Her daughter, Hannah, is a typical texting teenager – that is, until she discovers the real reason why mom moved them next door to a certain Alaskan presidential candidate. A dark comedy about motherhood, murder and moose.

"The Republican nominee for president recently called for '*some second amendment people to do something about Hillary Clinton*.' Maybe he was just cracking a joke about gun owners stepping up and taking aim against our first female presidential candidate. Who knows, right? Well here is one thing I do know, this kind of rhetoric and the terrifying state of our current political climate has made George Brant's darkly comic play suddenly more relevant than ever," comments **Tara Mallen**, "These days it seems we all think of ourselves as "activists" simply because we repost someone else's good idea on Facebook or align with a hashtag movement. Very few of us actually get our hands dirty. Very few of us take action. So telling stories about what it means to actually put action behind our beliefs is not just important these days, it's essential."

The cast includes Artistic Director **Tara Mallen** (Deb), **Taylor Blim** (Hannah) and **Jenna Ebersberger** (Laurel).

The design team includes RTE members **Megan Wilkerson** (set), **Janice Pytel** (costumes), **Diane Fairchild** (lights), with **Sarah Putts** (sound) and **Jamie Karas** (props). The fight choreographer is **David Blixt**. The stage manager is **Jennifer J. Thusing**.

George Brant (*Playwright*). His plays include *Grounded*, *Marie and Rosetta*, *Elephant's Graveyard*, *The Mourners' Bench*, *Any Other Name*, *One Hand Clapping*, *Night of the Mime* and *Three Voyages of the*

Lobotomobile. An Affiliated Writer at the Playwrights' Center, his scripts have been produced internationally by the Atlantic Theater Company, Trinity Repertory Company, the Studio Theatre, Cleveland Play House, the Alley Theatre, Gate Theatre, Page 73, and the Traverse Theatre, among others. His plays have received a Lucille Lortel Award, the Smith Prize, a Fringe First Award, a Creative Workforce Fellowship, an Off-West End Theatre Award, three OAC Individual Excellence Awards, an NNPN Rolling World Premiere and the Keene Prize for Literature. He is published by Samuel French, Oberon Books and Smith & Kraus. Brant is a graduate of Northwestern University and the Michener Center at UT-Austin.

Megan Carney (director) has a Rivendell Theatre Ensemble member since 2005. Most recently she directed *Body/Courage* by Danielle Pinnock and wrote *WOMEN AT WAR*, which premiered last season and continues to tour. Megan also directed *American Wee Pie* and *The Walls*, two premieres by Lisa Dillman. Carney's playwriting and directing credits include eight years with About Face Theatre creating original works based on true stories and topics ranging from queer youth experiencing homelessness, creation of chosen families, identity development, and the evolution of language that were produced in Chicago and toured around the country to schools and conferences (About Face Theatre, Goodman Theatre, MCA, Theatre Building Chicago, etc.), *Open Systems*, a commission from The Goodman Theatre Education and Community Engagement Program examining impacts of Hurricane Katrina in Baton Rouge and Chicago, *Let Them Eat Cake*, debating same sex marriage with Holly Hughes and Moe Angelos (Dixon Place, NYC), and *Pittsburgh Project Remix* on the legacy of the steel industry in her hometown (Pump House, Homestead Steel Mill). Carney's work as an artist and educator has been recognized with multiple After Dark Awards, a TCG Observership Grant, the GLSEN Pathfinder Award, an APA Presidential Citation, induction in Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame, a Rockefeller Foundation MAP Grant, and a GLAAD Media Award nomination. Megan is currently the Director of the Gender and Sexuality Center at University of Illinois at Chicago, one of the Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change, where she designs and facilitates programs and directed resources to reveal LGBTQ identities and histories in order to strengthen the capacity of individuals and communities and create positive social change. She is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the School of Theatre & Music at UIC and has a MFA in Theatre Arts from Virginia Tech with a focus on Directing and Public Dialogue.

Tara Mallen (Deb), an actor, director, producer and the Artistic Director at Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, was most recently seen on stage in the world premiere production of Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* at Arena Stage. She appeared in RTE's world premieres *Look, we are breathing* and *Rasheeda Speaking*; and the Steppenwolf SYA production of *How Long Will I Cry: Stories of Youth Violence*. Tara was part of the ensemble in Rivendell's critically acclaimed, World Premiere productions of *The Walls* and *Self Defense, or the Death of Some Salesmen*—both performed in the Steppenwolf Garage as part of their Visiting Theater Initiative. Throughout Rivendell's 23-year history, Tara has produced and acted in over 25 productions. She received two Joseph Jefferson awards for Supporting Actress and Best Ensemble for the RTE World Premiere of *WRENS* and was nominated the following year for "Actress in a Principal Role" for her work in *My Simple City*. Tara co-conceived in partnership with Megan Carney and directed the critically-acclaimed World Premiere of *Women At War*, a theatrical exploration of women in today's military that is now touring throughout the mid-west; directed the Midwest premieres of *The Electric Baby*; *26 Miles* (in co-production with Teatro Vista); *Fighting Words*; *Psalms of a Questionable Nature*; and the co-production of *Elliot, a Soldier's Fugue* with Stageworks/Hudson in Hudson, New York. Screen credits include Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion*; *Boss* (STARZ), both *Chicago Fire* and *Chicago P.D.* (NBC); *Sense8* (Netflix); and the CBS/Sony Pictures pilot *Doubt*.

Taylor Blim (Hannah) is working at Rivendell for the first time. Chicago credits include: *Mary Page Marlowe* (Steppenwolf) and *Sucker Punch* (Victory Gardens Theater), along with several productions at The Theatre School at DePaul University. Her film and TV credits include "Chicago Med," *Forever*, *The Disposal*, *The Year That Changed Us* and *They Wake Up*.

Jenna Ebersberger (Laurel) is making her professional debut at Rivendell. She is an alumna of Columbia College Chicago and The Second City Conservatory program. She was previously an understudy for *Feathers and Teeth* at The Goodman and *Bad Jews* at Theater Wit.

Title: *Grizzly Mama*
Written by: George Brant

Directed by: RTE Member Megan Carney
Featuring: RTE Artistic Director Tara Mallen, additional cast TBA

Previews: **September 8 – 10, 2016**
Thursday, September 8 at 8:00pm
Friday, September 9 at 8:00pm
Saturday, September 10 at 8:00pm
Sunday, September 11, at 4:00pm

Press opening: Monday, September 12 at 7:00pm
VIP Opening: Tuesday, September 13 at 7:00pm
Regular run: September 15-October 15, 2016

Schedule: **Thursdays-Saturdays at 8:00pm**
Saturdays at 4:00pm
Saturday September 17 at 4:00pm: Neighborhood matinee
And Creative class: *For an additional \$5 Rivendell teaching artists will provide a creative dramatics class during the show for ages 6-12. This will take place next door in the rehearsal/reception space at 5775 N. Ridge. The class is open to families with an adult watching that performance of Grizzly Mama.*

Town Hall Discussions will follow the Saturday matinees on September 24 and October 1

Location: **Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge Avenue in Chicago**
Tickets: **General Admission**

Previews: \$25
Pre-sale: \$32
Walk-up: \$35

Student, Senior, Active Military, Veteran
Preview: \$15
Pre-sale: \$22
Walk-up: \$25

Pay What You Can: Five seats (10% of the house) are available for each performance. Reservations are made on a first come first served basis.
Flex Pass: \$110 (\$80 for Student/ Senior/ Active Military/ Veteran)
Includes four tickets to use in any combination for the season.

Box Office: (773) 334-7728 or www.RivendellTheatre.org

Parking and Transportation: Free parking is available in the Senn High School parking lot (located a block and a half from the theatre behind the school off Thorndale Avenue). There is limited paid and free street parking in the area and the theatre is easily accessible via the Clark (#22) or Broadway (#36) bus and is a short walk from the Bryn Mawr Red Line El station.

About Rivendell Theatre Ensemble

Founded in 1994, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble advances women's lives through the power of theatre. Rivendell cultivates the talents of women artists -- writers, actors, directors, designers and technicians -- by seeking out innovative plays that explore unique female experiences and producing them in intimate, salon environments.

Rivendell fills an important role in the Chicago region as the *only* Equity theatre dedicated to producing artistically challenging and original plays created by and about women. After years of being an itinerant company, we moved into our own theater space in 2010 in Edgewater. As new members of the

neighborhood, we are focused on becoming an integral community partner and serving as a catalyst to engage our audiences in a discussion of local social issues.

For more information about Rivendell Theater Ensemble, <http://rivendelltheatre.org>. Follow RTE on Facebook at [Facebook.com/rivendelltheatre](https://www.facebook.com/rivendelltheatre) and on Twitter @RivendellThtr.

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