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#WanderersLTC

Lantern Theater Company Opens 2024/25 Season with Philadelphia Premiere of Anna Ziegler's *THE WANDERERS*, Directed by Jesse Bernstein, September 5 – October 6, 2024

PHILADELPHIA (September 3, 2024) – **Lantern Theater Company** launches its 2024/25 season with the regional premiere of *The Wanderers*, a funny, moving, and thoughtful drama by award-winning playwright **Anna Ziegler**. Guest director **Jesse Bernstein** directs an ensemble cast that includes Lantern newcomers **Robert DaPonte, Zoe Nebraska Feldman, Adam Howard, Arielle Siler, and Alanna J. Smith**. *The Wanderers* runs **Thursday, September 5 through Sunday, October 6, 2024**, at St. Stephen's Theater in Center City Philadelphia; a complete schedule of performances and audience enrichment events is included in the fact sheet below. Theater critics and members of the press are invited to request press tickets for **opening night on Wednesday, September 11 at 7 p.m.** by contacting Anne Shuff at ashuff@lanterntheater.org.

Hailed by *Wall Street Journal* theater critic Charles Isherwood as “absorbing, twisty, and thoughtful” and “the finest play of the year,” *The Wanderers* is a story about faith – in a higher power, in ourselves, and in the relationships we build – and what happens when that faith no longer sustains us. Set within and outside the Hasidic Satmar community of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, *The Wanderers* is a story of two couples whose separate worlds are more similar than they might at first appear.

We meet Orthodox newlyweds Esther and Schmulik on the night of their wedding and follow them through the early years of their marriage. Also in Williamsburg, but a world away, urbane novelists Sophie and Abe live a more secular life. When luminous movie star Julia Cheever attends one of Abe's readings and strikes up a correspondence, the cracks in his long union with Sophie threaten to split them apart – just as Esther and Schmulik find themselves deeply at odds about what constitutes a fulfilling life. Featuring Ziegler's signature

mix of sharp wit and deep curiosity about the human heart, this is a story about intimacy, history, generational patterns, and the ache in our heart's most secret place for the thing that will finally content us.

The Wanderers was commissioned by the Old Globe in San Diego, where it received its world premiere in 2018. Several regional and international productions have followed, including a 2023 run at Roundabout Theatre Company in New York City. Philadelphia audiences know Ziegler's incisive and funny writing from the Lantern's 2015 production of *Photograph 51*, about groundbreaking British scientist Rosalind Franklin, and 2019's *The Last Match*, about a champion tennis player and the up-and-comer looking to dethrone him.

"Since her international breakout with *Photograph 51* almost a decade ago, Anna Ziegler has emerged as one of the most creative and refreshing voices in American theater," said Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon**. "Her storytelling is beautifully structured and deeply informed with insight, empathy, and wit. *The Wanderers* marks the Lantern's third production of her work, and we continue to be inspired by her extraordinary range and artistry."

"I'm very excited to be making my Lantern directorial debut, and especially with this play," said *The Wanderers* director **Jesse Bernstein**. "It is a beautiful, intimate portrayal of the restlessness inside us all and the ways we write and rewrite the narratives of ourselves and our loved ones. Why do we wander and what are we trying to find – or escape? And we have a terrific cast to bring that theme to life."

Lantern Theater Company will delve into the world of *The Wanderers* on its **Lantern Searchlight blog**, available online at lanterntheater.org/searchlight. Articles will be published throughout the production's run, exploring the extraordinary work of Anna Ziegler and Williamsburg's Satmar community, as well as behind the scenes conversations with the artists.

Tickets for *The Wanderers* are \$30 – \$47 and are available online at www.lanterntheater.org or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Discounts are available for students, seniors 65 and up, U.S. military personnel, and groups of 10 or more. Performances of *The Wanderers* will take place at **St. Stephen's Theater**, located at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia. Face masks are welcome, but not required.

About the Lantern Artists

Jesse Bernstein will make his Lantern directorial debut with *The Wanderers*. He is the Artistic Director of Theatre Ariel, a Philadelphia-based professional theater company that presents new and established plays inspired by the past, present, and future of the Jewish experience – its heritage and humor, struggles and

triumphs, ethics and intersections. A director, actor, writer, educator, and producer, Bernstein has over 30 years' experience working in theater, film, and television in Philadelphia and beyond, including productions with Theatre Ariel, Walnut Street Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, Philadelphia Young Playwrights, New York Shakespeare Festival, and the Berkshire Theatre Festival, among others. He serves on the board of directors of the Alliance for Jewish Theatres.

The Wanderers cast includes **Robert DaPonte** as Abe (Lantern debut; Philadelphia Theatre Company, People's Light, The Wilma Theater, Theatre Exile, others), **Zoe Nebraska Feldman** as Esther (Lantern debut; actor, intimacy coordinator, and producer with Azuka Theatre, InterAct Theatre Company, Theatre Ariel, The Wilma Theater, Playwrights Horizons, others), **Adam Howard** as Schmuli (Lantern debut; Theatre Exile, Arden Theatre Company, Theatre Exile, Delaware Theatre Company, Azuka Theatre, others), **Arielle Siler** as Sophie (Lantern and Philadelphia debut; Boston Court Theatre, TheatreSquared, others), and **Alanna J. Smith** as Julia Cheever (Lantern debut; Amazon Freevee, Walnut Street Theatre, The Media Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, Peterborough Players, Hangar Theatre, film and television).

Bernstein has assembled a talented creative team that includes scenic designer **Will Lowry** (2023 Barrymore Award nominee for his work on the Lantern's production of *The Royale*), costume designer **Kelly Myers** (Lantern productions of *The Comedy of Errors*, *Tartuffe*, *A Man for All Seasons*), lighting designer **Amanda Jensen** (*The Lifespan of a Fact*, *The Last Match*, *The Heir Apparent*), sound designer **Larry D. Fowler, Jr.** (10+ years of Lantern productions, including *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine*; *The Vertical Hour*; and the upcoming *American Moor*), and intimacy consultant **Leo Mock** (the Lantern's education production of *Romeo and Juliet*). Lantern 2024/25 Season Professional Apprentice **Carlo Benavides** will serve as assistant director, alongside longtime Lantern Stage Manager **Rebecca Smith**.

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994 and now entering its 31st season, Lantern Theater Company's mission is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. The Lantern serves the Greater Philadelphia region with award-winning productions and education programming, notably partnering with middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District to provide in-classroom residencies in support of curricular learning. The Lantern became a national leader in streaming theater during the Covid health crisis, producing ten fully designed plays that were created and filmed in the company's resident home at St. Stephen's Theater, garnering coverage in national media including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and reaching more than 30,000 people in 15 countries and all 50 states.

Following *The Wanderers*, the Lantern's 2024/25 season will continue with *American Moor*, a poetic exploration of Shakespeare, race, and America by **Keith Hamilton Cobb**, directed by **Kash Goins (Press Opening: Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at 7 p.m.)**; William Shakespeare's classic romantic comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon (Press Opening: Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at 7 p.m.)**; and *The 39 Steps*, **Patrick Barlow's** rollicking adaptation of the classic **John Buchan** adventure novel and **Alfred Hitchcock** film, also directed by **McMahon (Press Opening: Wednesday, May 21, 2025, at 7 p.m.)**. More information is available online at www.lanterntheater.org.

Lantern Theater Company – 2024/25 Season
FACT SHEET
The Wanderers

WRITTEN BY:

Anna Ziegler

DIRECTED BY:

Jesse Bernstein

CAST:

Robert DaPonte as Abe

Zoe Nebraska Feldman as Esther

Adam Howard as Schmul

Arielle Siler as Sophie

Alanna J. Smith as Julia Cheever

CREATIVE TEAM:

Jesse Bernstein, Director

Will Lowry, Scenic Designer

Kelly Myers, Costume Designer

Amanda Jensen, Lighting Designer

Larry D. Fowler, Jr., Sound Designer

Leo Mock, Intimacy Consultant

Rebecca Smith, Stage Manager

Carlo Benavides, Assistant Director

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TICKET INFORMATION:

Online: www.lanterntheater.org

By Phone: (215) 829-0395

TICKET PRICING:

\$30 – \$47 / Students: \$25

PERFORMANCES:

Thursday, September 5 – Sunday, October 6, 2024

PREVIEWS:

Thursday, September 5 at 7 p.m.

Friday, September 6 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 7 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, September 8 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, September 10 at 6:30 p.m.

OPENING NIGHT PERFORMANCE:

Wednesday, September 11 at 7 p.m.

REGULAR RUN:

Wednesday at 2 p.m. on September 18 [AIC], September 25 [AIC], and October 2

Wednesday at 7 p.m. on September 18 and September 25 (no performance on October 2)

Thursday at 7 p.m. on September 12, September 19, and September 26 (no performance on October 3)

Friday at 7:30 p.m. on September 13, September 20, September 27, and October 4

Saturday at 2 p.m. on September 14, September 21, September 28, and October 5

Saturday at 8 p.m. on September 14, September 21, September 28, and October 5

Sunday at 2 p.m. on September 15 [AIC], September 22 [AIC], September 29, and October 6

CLOSING PERFORMANCE:

Sunday, October 6 at 2 p.m.

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION [AIC]

Moderated post-show discussions with the cast immediately follow 2 p.m. performances on Sunday, September 15; Wednesday, September 18; Sunday, September 22; and Wednesday, September 25. Lantern Resident Dramaturg **Meghan Winch** will lead the discussions.

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

Two couples – Esther and Schmul, Abe and Sophie – seem destined for each other, but are torn apart by their conflicting sense of obligation and independence. From the writer of Lantern hits *Photograph 51* and *The Last Match* comes this moving exploration of estrangement and the great human yearning for connection, told with keen humor and deep empathy.

PERFORMANCE VENUE:

St. Stephen's Theater at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia