

**JAMES VAN DER BEEK, KATHY BAKER,
JAIME RAY NEWMAN AND CHRIS MULKEY SET FOR
AMERICAN PREMIERE OF *THE GIFT***

***Award-Winning Australian Playwright Joanna Murray-Smith's American Premiere
Helmed by Internationally-Acclaimed Director Maria Aitken***

Opening Night Wednesday, February 6, 2013

LOS ANGELES, January 4, 2013 — James Van Der Beek, best known for his starring roles on *Dawson's Creek* and in *Varsity Blues* and who currently can be seen on ABC's *Don't Trust the B— in Apartment 23*, is set to appear in the American premiere production of **Joanna Murray-Smith's *The Gift*** at the Geffen Playhouse. Joining Van Der Beek is Golden Globe and Emmy award winner **Kathy Baker** (*Picket Fences*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *All the King's Men*) as well as acclaimed stage and screen actors **Chris Mulkey** (*First Blood*, *Southland*, *Twin Peaks*) and **Jaime Ray Newman** (*Eastwick*, *Catch Me If You Can*). Helmed by international powerhouse director/actor **Maria Aitken**, *The Gift* begins in previews in the Gil Cates Theater at the Geffen Playhouse on January 29, 2013 and officially opens on **Wednesday, February 6, 2013**.

The Gift follows the great success of the 2010 Geffen Playhouse production of Murray-Smith's play, *The Female of the Species*, which ran to sell-out houses in Los Angeles and was also produced on the West End where it was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. Much like the provocative subject matter of *The Female of the Species*, Murray-Smith's ***The Gift*** has already sparked debate and discussion overseas in its premiere production in Melbourne. The Daily Mail said, "Murray-Smith has Oscar Wilde's gift for one-liners." The Melbourne Age said, "Unnerving and vital enough to have you arguing about it all the way home."

Murray-Smith's play *Honour* was produced on Broadway, the West End, and at the Royal National Theatre in London; she adapted Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes From a Marriage* for Sir Trevor Nunn and is about the premiere a new adaptation of Hedda Gabler. She has written 16 full-length plays that have been performed throughout North America and around the world in many languages; *Variety* described her as Australia's foremost female playwright.

When two couples meet while vacationing at a ritzy resort, they instantly transition from strangers to the best of friends. Despite their almost comical differences — Ed (Chris Mulkey) and Sadie (Kathy Baker) are middle-aged, rich and traditional, while Martin (James Van Der Beek) and Chloe (Jaime Ray Newman) are young artists glowing with their potential to change the world — they find themselves spending the rest of their week together. When one seemingly inconsequential event throws both their lives into a tailspin, the couples find themselves wrestling with a moral dilemma: while it's human nature to want what you don't have, is it unnatural to abandon something that you do? This provocative new work draws audiences in with a beguiling hilarity that gives way to an unsettling twist, posing searing questions rather than providing comfortable answers.

The Gift was originally commissioned by Melbourne Theatre Company and received its world premiere in the MTC Theatre in Australia in 2011. Opening night festivities for *The Gift* will be sponsored by **Qantas Airlines** and special events during the run include the theater's **Signature Series** performances for no additional cost. These evenings include an intellectual, thought-provoking post show Q&A at Talk Back Tuesdays; a scintillating, one-of-a-kind after-party at Girls Night Out; a cultural happy hour with Lounge Fridays and complimentary wine tastings during Wine Down Sundays. For more information, please view www.geffenplayhouse.com/giftevents.

THE GIFT

Written by Joanna Murray-Smith

Directed by Maria Aitken

Preview Performances: Tuesday, January 29 – Tuesday, February 5, 2013

Opening Night: Wednesday, February 6, 2013

Closing Night: Sunday, March 10, 2013

Cast

Kathy Baker	Sadie
Chris Mulkey	Ed
Jaime Ray Newman	Chloe
James Van Der Beek	Martin

Production Credits

Scenic Designer	Derek McLane
Costume Designer	Laura Bauer
Lighting Designer	Peter Kaczorowski
Sound Designer	John Gromada
Media Designer	Howard Werner
Production Stage Manager	Mary Michele Miner
Assistant Stage Manager	Gary J. Breitbach
Casting	Phyllis Schuringa
Dramaturg	Amy Levinson

Performance Schedule

Monday	No performances
Tuesday – Friday	8:00pm
Saturday	3:00pm; 8:00pm
Sunday	2:00pm; 7:00pm

Ticket Info

Ticket prices currently range from \$37 to 57 for preview performances and from \$47 to \$77 for the regular run.

Tickets are available in-person at the Geffen Playhouse box office, via phone at 310-208-5454 or online at

www.geffenplayhouse.com.

Biographies

KATHY BAKER (*Sadie*)

Kathy Baker is a multi-award winning actress. She has received seven Emmy Award nominations and won three, along with a Golden Globe Award and a SAG Award, for her work on the hit television series *Picket Fences*. Kathy's extensive film work includes *Take Shelter*, *The Jane Austen Book Club*, *All the King's Men*, *Nine Lives*, *Cold Mountain*, *The Cider House Rules*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Jackknife*, *Clean and Sober*, *Street Smart* and *The Right Stuff*. On the stage, Baker originated the role of May in Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love*, and took the part to New York along with co-star Ed Harris, where she won an Obie Award. The following year, Kathy played Abbie in *Desire under the Elms* and Lemon in *Aunt Dan and Lemon*. She returned to the stage in 2006 in the Tracy Letts play *A Man from Nebraska*, directed by Academy-Award winning filmmaker William Friedkin.

CHRIS MULKEY (*Ed*)

Chris Mulkey's collection of work is extensive. You can see him now in theaters in *Any Day Now* with Alan Cumming. In March, he will be in Sony's *Capt. Philips* with Tom Hanks. Next fall, Chris stars in *Last Weekend* with Patricia Clarkson. Some of his other film credits include *First Blood*, *Radio*, *Bullworth*, *The Fan*, *48 Hours*, *North Country* and *Cloverfield*. Chris was nominated for SAG Spirit Awards, best actor and best screenplay for *Patti*

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Rocks. Chris is currently recurring on TNT's *Southland*. His other TV credits include *Twin Peaks*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Saving Grace*, HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* and the miniseries *Broken Trail* with Robert Duval. Chris won a Los Angeles Drama Critic's Circle Award for *Blue Window* at South Coast Repertory. He was a member of the Minneapolis Children's Theatre Company. Recent stage work includes: *Jesse Boy* (Ruskin Theater, Santa Monica, CA); *August Osage County* (Park Square Theater, St. Paul, MN). Off-Broadway: *Pure Confidence* with wife Karen Landry and Jane Martin's *Flags* at 59E59 Theater in NYC.

JAIME RAY NEWMAN (*Chloe*)

Jaime Ray Newman is originally from Detroit, Michigan. She studied acting at Boston University School for the Arts and earned her B.A. at Northwestern University. On television, she starred on the ABC series *Eastwick* and has recurred on many shows, including *Grimm*, *NCIS*, *CSI: NY* (playing Gary Sinise's wife), *Eureka*, *Drop Dead Diva*, *Veronica Mars* and *Nip/Tuck*. She can soon be seen as a series regular on ABC's *Red Widow* opposite Radha Mitchell. Film credits include *Catch Me If You Can*, *Rubberneck*, the upcoming indie *Red Robin* opposite Judd Hirsch, as well as the remake of *Tarzan* to be released in 2013. Last year, Jaime made her Off-Broadway debut at The Atlantic Theater Company in New York City, starring in David Auburn's *The New York Idea*. In Los Angeles, she has done several plays including *Some Girls* at the Geffen Playhouse, written and directed by Neil LaBute, and starred opposite David Schwimmer in *Turnaround* at the Coast Playhouse. Jaime lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Guy Nattiv.

JAMES VAN DER BEEK (*Martin*)

James Van Der Beek is currently starring on the hit ABC show *Don't Trust the B**** in Apartment 23* where he plays a demented version of himself. The show is currently in its second season. Van Der Beek got his big break and is best known for playing Dawson on the WB show *Dawson's Creek*. A multifaceted actor, he has done a variety of stage, TV, online and film work including the New York play *Finding the Sun*, Funny or Die videos and the hit film *Varsity Blues*. Van Der Beek will next be seen starring alongside Kate Winslet in the Paramount film *Labor Day* directed by Jason Reitman.

MARIA AITKEN (Director)

Directing credits include: *Betrayal* (Huntington Theatre, Boston); *Private Lives* (Huntington Theatre, Boston); *Man and Boy* (Broadway); *The Gift* (Melbourne Theatre); *Educating Rita* (Huntington Theatre, Boston); *As You Like It* (Shakespeare Theatre DC); *Quartermaine's Terms* (Williamstown Festival); *The 39 Steps* (Broadway, Tony nomination Best Director, current Olivier Award-winning 5-year-old West End production. Leading roles include: *Blithe Spirit*, *Bedroom Farce* (Royal National Theatre); *Travesties*, *Waste* (Olivier Award nomination Best Actress); *Happiest Days of Your Life* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Humble Boy*, *Sylvia*; *Other People's Money*; *The Vortex*; *The Women*; *Sister Mary Ignatius*; *Design for Living*; *Private Lives* (Olivier Award nomination Best Actress); *A Little Night Music* (all London's West End) and a BAFTA nominated role in *A Fish Called Wanda*. In addition Maria teaches Master classes in High Comedy and in Noel Coward at Juilliard, Yale, NYU, Actors Center NYC, Academy for Classical Acting (DC) and the Royal National Theatre Studio (UK).

JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH (Playwright)

Joanna Murray-Smith has written 16 full-length plays which have been performed throughout the country and around the world, in many languages. They have all been commissioned and first produced in Melbourne, Australia. Her plays include *Songs for Nobodies*; *Day One*, *A Hotel*, *Evening*; *Rockabye*; *Ninety*; *Bombshells*; *Rapture*; *Redemption*; *Love-Child* and *Atlanta*, among others. Her play *Honour* had its first public reading in New York with Meryl Streep in 1996 and was subsequently produced on Broadway, on the West End and at the Royal National Theatre in London, for which Dame Eileen Atkins won an Olivier Award. Her play *The Female of the Species*, produced at the Geffen Playhouse in 2010 with Annette Bening, was produced on the West End, where it was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. She adapted Bergman's *Scenes From a Marriage* for Sir Trevor Nunn and is about to premiere a new adaptation of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. Joanna has also written three novels, all published by Penguin, and two operas and has written for television. In 2013, she will have two new plays premiering, *Fury* at the Sydney Theatre Company and *True Minds* at the Melbourne Theatre Company. In 2008 *U.S. Variety* described Joanna as "Australia's foremost female playwright." Her plays have won many awards.

ABOUT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

The Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and second productions, the Geffen Playhouse continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company was founded by Gilbert Cates, and is currently helmed by Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Ken Novice and Chairman of the Board Frank Mancuso. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen Playhouse welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains an extensive education and outreach program, designed to engage young people and the community at large in the arts. For more information, please visit geffenplayhouse.com.