

AMERICAN PREMIERE OF JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH'S *THE GIFT* OPENS AT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

*Cast Features Kathy Baker, Chris Mulkey, Jaime Ray Newman and James Van Der Beek
Helmed by Internationally-Acclaimed Director Maria Aitken*

Opens February 6, 2013

LOS ANGELES, February 5, 2013 — The American premiere of **Joanna Murray-Smith's *The Gift*** opens in the Gil Cates Theater at the Geffen Playhouse on **Wednesday, February 6, 2013**. Helmed by international powerhouse director/actor **Maria Aitken**, *The Gift* features an acclaimed cast which includes award winning stage and screen actors **James Van Der Beek** (*Dawson's Creek, Varsity Blues, Don't Trust the B— in Apartment 23*), Golden Globe and Emmy award winner **Kathy Baker** (*Picket Fences, Edward Scissorhands, All the King's Men*), **Chris Mulkey** (*First Blood, Southland*) and **Jaime Ray Newman** (*Eastwick, Catch Me If You Can*).

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."

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.

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THE GIFT

Written by Joanna Murray-Smith

Directed by Maria Aitken

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 \$47 to \$77. Tickets are available in-person at the Geffen Playhouse box office, via phone at 310-208-5454 or online at www.geffenplayhouse.com.

Press Photo Contact

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4311 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles CA 90010 w 323-954-7510 | c 213-500-8532 p.goldman@dcpublicity.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*, *The Party is Over*, *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*. Recent television includes: *Door to Door*, *Jesse Stone*, *Too Big to Fail* and *Against the Wall*. Recent theater includes: *Man from Nebraska* by Tracy Letts and *Memory House* by Kathleen Tolan. Upcoming film: *Model Home*, *Saving Mr. Banks* and *Return to Zero*.

CHRIS MULKEY (*Ed*)

Most recent film credits include: *Any Day Now* with Alan Cumming; *Captain Phillips* with Tom Hanks; *The Purge* with Ethan Hawke and *Last Weekend* with Patricia Clarkson. Other film credits include: *First Blood*, *Radio*, *Bullworth*, *The Fan*, *48 Hours*, *North Country* and *Cloverfield*. Chris was nominated for two Spirit Awards for his work in *Patti Rocks* (best actor and best screenplay). Television credits include: series regular on *Any Day Now*, *Bakersfield P.D.*, *Twin Peaks*; and recurring roles on *Friday Night Lights*, *Saving Grace*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *24*, *Sleeper Cell* and the miniseries *Broken Trail* with Robert Duvall. Chris got his start in the theater as a member of the Tony award winning Minneapolis Children's Theatre Company. His most recent stage work includes: starring with his wife Karen Landry in the premiere of Jane Martin's *Flags* (Mixed Blood Theater, Minneapolis), *Pure Confidence* (Mixed Blood and off-Broadway); *Jesse Boy* (Ruskin Theater, Santa Monica); and *August: Osage County* (Park Square Theater, St. Paul). Chris won a LADCC Award for *Blue Window* at South Coast Repertory Theater. Chris is also a musician and a songwriter.

JAIME RAY NEWMAN (*Chloe*)

Jaime Ray Newman is thrilled to return to the Geffen after her turn in *Some Girl(s)*, written and directed by Neil LaBute and *Fat Pig*, directed by Jo Bonney. She made her Off-Broadway debut last year in the Atlantic Theater Company's *The New York Idea*. On television, she can soon be seen as a series regular on ABC's *Red Widow*. She starred on ABC's short lived series *Eastwick* (based on *The Witches of Eastwick*), and has reoccurred on a slew of shows, including *Grimm*, *CSI:NY* (playing Gary Sinise's wife), *Eureka*, and *Drop Dead Diva*. Film credits include the upcoming indie *Red Robin* opposite Judd Hirsch, and the remake of *Tarzan*, to be released in 2013. She is a graduate of Northwestern University. This New Year's Eve Jaime married her best friend and North Star, Guy Nattiv.

JAMES VAN DER BEEK (*Martin*)

James Van Der Beek is excited to be making his LA stage debut, having made his NY bow 19 years earlier in Edward Albee's *Finding the Sun* at the Signature Theater. Other stage credits include *My Marriage to Ernest Borgnine* at the Vineyard Theater, *Shenandoah* at the Goodspeed Opera House and Lanford Wilson's *Rain Dance*, also at the Signature. For six years he played the title character on the hit TV show *Dawson's Creek*. Van Der Beek has played various killers, lovers, doctors, psychopaths, cops and everything in between on the big screen, on television, in Funny Or Die skits, and even a Ke\$ha video. His many film credits include *Varsity Blues* (MTV Movie Award), *The Rules of Attraction* and *Formosa Betrayed* (Best Actor – San Diego Film Festival). He will next be seen on the big screen in the upcoming Jason Reitman film *Labor Day*, with Josh Brolin and Kate Winslet for Paramount Pictures. He currently stars in the ABC comedy *Don't Trust the B---- in Apt 23*, which is in its second season. Van Der Beek would like to thank his wife Kimberly, and their children, Olivia and Joshua, for their love and support.

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.

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