



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**RENAISSANCE THEATERWORKS OPENS ITS 34TH SEASON WITH THE WORLD
PREMIERE OF GREAT WHITE THRONE**

***Developed through RTW's Br!NK New Play Festival, Cara Johnston's dark comedy takes
the stage as part of World Premiere Wisconsin (WPW)***

September 17, 2026 (Milwaukee, Wis.) - Renaissance Theaterworks (RTW) opens its 34th season, OFF THE MAP, with the World Premiere of GREAT WHITE THRONE, a provocative and darkly funny new play by Cara Johnston. Directed by María Amenábar Farias, the production runs October 18-November 8, 2026, with preview performances on October 16 and 17, at the Theater at 255 S. Water Street in Milwaukee's Harbor District.

GREAT WHITE THRONE was developed through Renaissance Theaterworks' Br!NK New Play Festival, where Johnston served as a 2025 Br!NK Resident Playwright. Following an intensive development process and public staged reading, RTW now brings the play to the stage for its first fully realized production.

"Br!NK exists to give playwrights the time, resources and artistic support needed to move a new play forward," said RTW Artistic Director Emily Trask. "Producing the World Premiere of GREAT WHITE THRONE just one year after audiences first encountered it through Br!NK is a thrilling example of that commitment in action. Cara's play is fearless, funny and deeply human - exactly the kind of story that invites us to live life off the map."

The production is also part of World Premiere Wisconsin (WPW), a yearlong, statewide celebration of new plays and musicals. The only statewide festival of its kind in the country, World Premiere Wisconsin brings together theaters and artists across Wisconsin to develop, produce and celebrate original theatrical work.

PLAY SYNOPSIS

A darkly comic examination of power and inheritance, GREAT WHITE THRONE follows a pastor's wife as she collides with the limits, expectations and hypocrisies of public ministry. In her darkest hour, she comes face to face with the last person she wants to see, igniting a reckoning with faith, influence and the cost of living a life on display.

The production features Libby Amato as Pastor's Wife and Marcella Kearns as Deacon's Wife.

GREAT WHITE THRONE has an estimated running time of 90 minutes with no intermission. The production is suggested for ages 13 and older and contains mature themes and language.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets are available at rtwmke.org 24 hours a day, by phone at 414-278-0765, or in person at the box office at 255 S. Water St. The box office is open Monday-Friday from noon-5:00 p.m. and two hours before performances.

Group Sales of 10 or more tickets receive a 20% discount, automatically applied online.

The Pay-What-You-Choose Preview is Friday, October 16 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets for this performance go on sale in person at the box office beginning at 6:30 p.m. on the day of the performance.

ACCESSIBILITY

Throughout the run of GREAT WHITE THRONE, RTW offers accessibility services including Open Captioned, ASL-Interpreted, Sensory-Friendly and Audio Described performances. The venue is fully wheelchair accessible and features a hearing loop system.

Caption Companions (closed captions), T-coil receivers and headsets, sensory kits, and Audio Description receivers and headsets are available for checkout at the Accessibility Cart during every performance.

GREAT WHITE THRONE ARTISTIC TEAM

CAST

PASTOR'S WIFE.....	Libby Amato*
DEACON'S WIFE.....	Marcella Kearns*
U/S PASTOR'S WIFE.....	Maggie Marks
U/S DEACON'S WIFE.....	Victoria Hudziak

PRODUCTION TEAM

DIRECTOR.....María Amenábar Farias
 PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER.....Bailey Wegner*
 ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER.....Devin Luck
 TECHNICAL DIRECTOR.....Anthony Lyons
 SCENIC DESIGN.....Laura Ledin
 LIGHTING DESIGN.....Jason Fassl**
 COSTUME DESIGN.....Jason Orlenko**
 PROP DESIGN.....Jim Guy
 SOUND DESIGN.....Josh Schmidt**
 DRAMATURGE.....Deanie Valone
 DIALECT COACH.....Emily Trask
 HEAD ELECTRICIAN/BOARD OPERATOR.....Alex Yang
 WARDROBE SUPERVISOR.....Shelby Kaishian

*Member of Actors' Equity Association

**Member of United Scenic Artists

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: CARA JOHNSTON

Born and raised in Dallas, Texas, Cara Johnston now proudly calls Milwaukee her home. Fans of RTW will remember Cara's unforgettable turns as an actor in our mainstage seasons, *THE VIOLET HOUR* (2017) and *L'APPARTEMENT* (2024), as well as performing in almost every Br!NK festival since its inception. Her debut play, *THE LITTLE GLASS SLIPPER AS PERFORMED BY THE QUEEN OF FRANCE AND HER FRIENDS* was televised on PBS stations across her home state of Texas. In 2023, Cara performed her original one-person play, *THE MADWOMAN*, at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland, where she received five stars and an Offies nomination. Her play, *GREAT WHITE THRONE* was a finalist in Tennessee Williams Literary Festival. www.sisterjohnston.com

SELECT ARTIST BIOS

MARÍA AMENÁBAR FARIAS, DIRECTOR

María is thrilled to be working with RTW after being a longtime fan! She is a Guatemalan director currently serving as the Associate Producer at Milwaukee Rep. She has previously worked with Indiana Repertory Theatre, the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, and the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Favorite directing credits include *ROMEO AND JULIET* (Illinois Shakespeare Festival); *HEATHERS: THE MUSICAL* (Summer Stock Stage); *GOOD KIDS*, *BONNIE AND CLYDE: THE MUSICAL*, *THE THANKSGIVING PLAY* (Illinois State University); *HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE* (University of Notre Dame); among others. Next spring she will be directing Mathew López' *SOMEWHERE* at Milwaukee Rep. www.mariaamenabar.com

LIBBY AMATO, PASTOR'S WIFE

Libby is thrilled to be returning to the Renaissance stage. Previous Renaissance credits include TOP GIRLS, THE BEST OF BRINK BRIEFS, and the staged reading of GREAT WHITE THRONE at the 2026 BRINK festival. Upcoming credits include IN THE NEXT ROOM, or the Vibrator Play with Next Act Theatre, where she also serves as Managing Director. She is honored to be working with Cara, Maria, Marcella, and the entire Renaissance team on this exceptional world premiere. Libby is an unapologetic cat lady, and would like to acknowledge Rory, Percy, Frances, and Wilfred for the chaos and snuggles. And as always...love you, Mom.

MARCELLA KEARNS, DEACON'S WIFE

Marcy's happily returning to Renaissance after GORGONS and THE WOLVES. A Milwaukee-based director and actor, she also serves as Artistic Associate at Forward Theater and core faculty for First Stage's Young Company. She is a former Fulbright Fellow (Austria) and holds an MFA in Acting (University of South Carolina). Past Wisconsin favorites onstage include VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE and 44 PLAYS FOR 44 PRESIDENTS (Forward Theater) and BOEING BOEING and FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE (MCT).

ABOUT BRINK

Br!NK is Renaissance Theaterworks' new play development festival dedicated to advancing the work of Midwestern women and nonbinary playwrights. Through an intensive development process that brings playwrights together with directors, dramaturgs and professional actors, Br!NK gives artists the opportunity to explore and strengthen new work before sharing it with audiences through public staged readings.

GREAT WHITE THRONE was featured in the 2025 Br!NK New Play Festival, with playwright Cara Johnston participating as a Br!NK Resident Playwright.

ABOUT WORLD PREMIERE WISCONSIN

World Premiere Wisconsin is a statewide organization supporting Wisconsin's theater ecosystem through new play festivals and ongoing efforts to build relationships among theater-makers, foster the development of new plays and musicals, and draw attention to the dynamic work being created by theaters throughout Wisconsin.

The 2026 World Premiere Wisconsin Festival runs January 1-December 31, 2026, and features World Premiere productions, workshops, readings and community events across the state. Learn more at worldpremierewisconsin.com.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Week 1

Friday, October 16, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | Pay-What-You-Choose Preview

Saturday, October 17, 2026 | 4:00 p.m. | Preview

Sunday, October 18, 2026 | 5:00 p.m. | Opening Night

Week 2

Wednesday, October 21, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | Wine Wednesday

Thursday, October 22, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | Meet Artistic Director Emily Trask at 6:30 p.m.

Friday, October 23, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | Pride Night and Talkback

Saturday, October 24, 2026 | 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 25, 2026 | 2:00 p.m. | Play Club

Week 3

Wednesday, October 28, 2026 | 1:30 p.m. | Open Captions and Talkback

Wednesday, October 28, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | Wine Wednesday

Thursday, October 29, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | ASL Interpreted

Friday, October 30, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | Pre-show Talk

Saturday, October 31, 2026 | 4:00 p.m. | Open Captions

Sunday, November 1, 2026 | 2:00 p.m.

Week 4

Wednesday, November 4, 2026 | 1:30 p.m. | Sensory-Friendly

Wednesday, November 4, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | Wine Wednesday

Thursday, November 5, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | ABCD Night

Friday, November 6, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. | Audio Described

Saturday, November 7, 2026 | 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 8, 2026 | 2:00 p.m. | Closing Performance

SHOW SPONSORS

Sponsor: Bob Balderson

Co-Sponsors: David Glenn and Sandy Laedtke

SEASON SPONSORS

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Donna & Donald Baumgartner

George & Sandy Dionisopoulos

Sandy Zingler

Greater Milwaukee Foundation

Wisconsin Arts Board

United Performing Arts Fund

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The Herzfeld Foundation
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ABOUT RENAISSANCE THEATERWORKS

Renaissance Theaterworks is Milwaukee's first professional theater company founded and led by women and the nation's second-oldest professional theater devoted to gender equality. With the mission "Theater by Women, for Everyone," RTW creates moving theater that connects artists and audiences through shared experiences onstage and off.

RTW is a resident company at 255 S. Water St. in Milwaukee's Harbor District, with increased capacity and improved accessibility.

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