

Portland Center Stage at

THE **ARMORY**

PRESS CONTACT: Kate Kerns

503.445.3715

[katek@pcs.org](mailto:katek@pcs.org)

M E D I A R E L E A S E

PORTLAND FAVORITES GRETCHEN CORBETT AND SHARONLEE MCLEAN

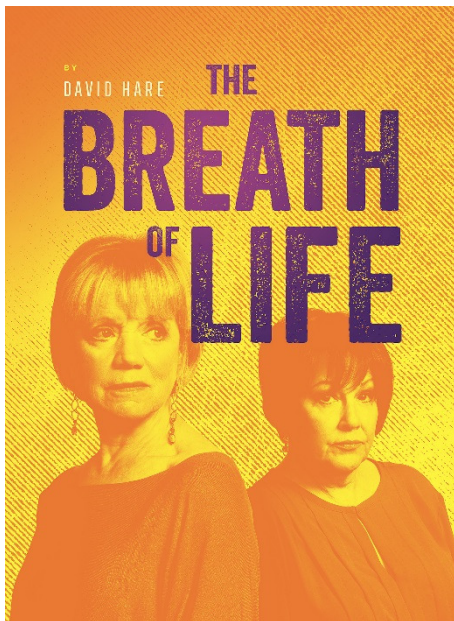
STAR IN DAVID HARE'S SARDONIC DRAMA, *THE BREATH OF LIFE*

*"One of Hare's finest ... bitingly funny ... deeply affecting."*

*-The Daily Telegraph*

Previews Begin May 4 | Opening Night is May 10 | Closes June 16

Tickets start at \$25



**April 5, 2019 — PORTLAND, OR.** Portland favorites Gretchen Corbett and Sharonlee McLean take the stage beginning May 4 to star in David Hare's *The Breath of Life*, a two-woman play *The Daily Telegraph* called "bitingly funny." When Francis Beale (McLean) decides she wants one last word with her ex-husband's ex-lover (Corbett), both women are forced to confront their past, their failed relationships, dashed ideals and the lens through which they choose to view their futures. Ken Rus Schmoll (readings in six of the last ten JAW Festivals at The Armory, productions at Playwrights Horizons and New York Theatre Workshop) will direct.

Corbett (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 2018 JAW Festival at The Armory) initially proposed this nuanced, character-driven play to Portland Center Stage at The Armory and did an early reading of the script with McLean (*The Receptionist* and 25 others at The Armory). "It's like doing Shakespeare, or Chekhov," Corbett said of Hare's script in a recent *Artslandia* interview. "He's a

spectacular writer, and that you get that opportunity to work with a really accomplished writer — as an actor — it's such a privilege ... He's a funny, smart playwright."

"It's hard," McLean said of tackling this script. "It goes into the human condition of who we are as people. In one shape, or one degree or another, we've all had these types — not the exact experience —but certain relationships that are similar. For me, it's about the process of letting go, having enough guts to ask the questions and get the answers, moving on with life."

The Armory will host post-show discussions with members of the cast and creative team at matinee performances on May 16, 18, 23, 30, June 1, 6, and 15.

### **ABOUT THE PLAY**

Frances was the dutiful wife. Madeleine was the not-so-dutiful lover. In this sardonically funny play, Frances and Madeleine meet face-to-face and find common ground in their independence from the man they unknowingly shared. Featuring Portland favorites Sharonlee McLean and Gretchen Corbett.

### **THE PLAYWRIGHT**

Celebrated playwright David Hare has written over thirty stage plays which include *Plenty*, *Pravada* (with Howard Brenton), *The Secret Rapture*, *Racing Demon*, *Skylight*, *Amy's View*, *The Blue Room*, *Via Dolorosa*, *Stuff Happens*, *The Absence of War*, *The Judas Kiss*, *The Moderate Soprano*, and *I'm Not Running*. For film and television he has written over twenty-five screenplays which include *Licking Hitler*, *Dreams of Leaving*, *Saigon: Year of the Cat*, *Wetherby*, *Damage*, *The Hours*, *The Reader*, *Denial*, *The Worricker Trilogy: Page Eight*, *Turks & Caicos* and *Salting the Battlefield*. Most recently Hare created the four-part series *Collateral* for the BBC and Netflix starring Carey Mulligan and Billie Piper. His new film about Rudolf Nureyev's defection to the West, *The White Crow*, opened in the UK in March, and his update of Ibsen's classic *Peter Gynt* opens at the National Theatre in June.

### **THE CAST**

Gretchen Corbett has appeared on and off Broadway and in leading roles in prominent regional theaters across the country, including Shakespeare Festivals in New York, New Jersey and Oregon, Circle in the Square Theatre, the Eugene O'Neill International Festival of Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and Center Theatre Group. She has appeared in numerous films and television series. Her local stage appearances include productions for Portland Center Stage at The Armory, Portland Playhouse, Third Rail Repertory Theatre, CoHo Productions, and Sojourn Theatre. She received lead actress awards for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Happy Days*, *Molly Sweeney*, *It Had to Be You*, and *A Lesson from Aloes* in Portland and for *The Fox* and *Voice of the Prairie* in Los Angeles. Gretchen is also an award-winning theater director.

Sharonlee McLean has performed locally at Portland Center Stage at The Armory, Artists Repertory Theatre, CoHo Productions, Clackamas Repertory Theatre, and Portland Repertory Theater. This will be Sharonlee's 26th production at The Armory. She received Drammy Awards for *A Question of Mercy* (Artists Repertory Theatre), for *The Thugs* and *The Receptionist* (The Armory), for *Body Awareness* (CoHo Productions), and a Drammy nomination for *Luna Gale* (CoHo Productions). In 2018 she received a PAMTA Award for Achievement in theater, and has also received PAMTA nominations for *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Billy Elliot*. She won Best Actress for *Go Missing* at the McMinnville Short Film Festival. Her recent film credits include *Thunderbolt In Mine Eye* (feature) and *Kathy* (online commercial short film). She reigns from Los Angeles. In her 37 something years in Hollywood, she did her share of film, television, and stage.

## **THE CREATIVE TEAM**

Director Ken Rus Schmoll (OBIE Awards for *A Map of Virtue* and *Telephone*) leads a team that includes Scenic Designer Lizzie Bracken (*The Magic Play* at The Armory, *Lord of the Flies* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company), Costume Designer Bryn Almlı (Broadway, Hartford Stage, The Shakespeare Theatre), Lighting Designer Solomon Weisbard (*Otello* at Festspielhaus Baden Baden, Germany; *Il Trovatore* at Teatro Comunale di Bologna and Teatro Regio di Parma, Italy), Sound Designer Sharath Patel (*Wolf Play* and *Teenage Dick* at Artists Repertory Theatre), Dialect Coach Jane Guyer Fujita (Broadway, Ensemble Studio Theater, LCT3), Stage Manager Janine Vanderhoff, Production Assistant Sarah Stark, and Assistant Lighting Designer Avi Sheehan.

## **TICKET AND PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

**When:** May 4 – June 16, 2019\*

\*Opening Night/Press Night: Friday, May 10 at 7:30 p.m.

Preview Performances: May 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 at 7:30 p.m.

**Where:** In the Ellyn Bye Studio at [The Armory](#)

128 NW Eleventh Ave., Portland, Ore., 97209

**To Purchase:** Regular tickets range from \$25 to \$57. Tickets may be purchased at [www.pcs.org](http://www.pcs.org), 503.445.3700, or in-person from the box office (128 NW Eleventh Avenue, Portland, OR). Rush tickets are \$20. Students; patrons who are 30 or younger; and active duty or veteran military personnel and their families get 50% off tickets in seating areas 1-3. \$5 tickets are available for Oregon Trail Card holders through the Arts for All program. *All prices vary by date and time, and are subject to change.*

**Online:** [www.pcs.org](http://www.pcs.org)

**By Phone:** 503.445.3700, 12–6 p.m.

**In Person:** The box office is at 128 NW Eleventh Avenue

12 p.m. to 8 p.m. on performance days

12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on non-performance days

**Groups:** Discounts available for groups of 10+ by calling 503.445.3794.

**More Info:** [www.pcs.org/breath](http://www.pcs.org/breath)

**Showtimes:** Tuesday through Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m. (excluding May 11, 19 and June 2, 4, 11, 16); Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. (excluding May 4, 5, 11, 25 and June 8); and Thursday matinees at noon (excluding May 9 and June 13).

**Please Note:** Recommended for ages 14 and up. Contains strong language. Children under 6 are not permitted at any production at The Armory.

**Accessibility:** Learn about our accessibility options at [www.pcs.org/access](http://www.pcs.org/access).

## **PORTLAND CENTER STAGE AT THE ARMORY**

[Portland Center Stage at The Armory](#) is the largest theater company in Portland and among the top 20 regional theaters in the country. Established in 1988 as a branch of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the company became independent in 1994, and is under the leadership of Artistic Director Marissa Wolf and Managing Director Cynthia Fuhrman. Around 150,000 visitors attend The Armory annually to enjoy a mix of classic, contemporary, and world premiere productions, along with a variety of high quality education and community programs. Eleven productions are being offered this season, in addition to roughly 400 community events created — in partnership with 170+ local organizations and individuals — to serve the diverse populations in the city. As part of its dedication to new play development, the company has produced 26 world premieres and presents an annual new works festival, JAW: A Playwrights Festival. Home to two theaters, The Armory (originally built in 1891) opened its doors in 2006 as the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue in the country, to achieve a LEED Platinum rating.

## **THE 2018-2019 SEASON**

The [2018-2019 season](#) is funded in part by Season Superstars Tim and Mary Boyle and Lead Corporate Champion Umpqua Bank. Further support comes from Season Sponsors the Regional Arts and Culture Council, and Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency funded by the state of Oregon and the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Wallace Foundation. Support for *The Breath of Life* comes from Drs. Ann Smith Sehdev and Paul Sehdevm, and Dr. Barbara Hort. Mark Spencer Hotel is the official hotel partner for the company. Portland Center Stage at The Armory was selected as a participant of the Wallace Foundation's [Building Audiences for Sustainability Initiative](#), a four-year effort with a nationwide cohort of 26 performing arts organizations.

###