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## M E D I A   R E L E A S E

### A Line Will Be Drawn in the Sands of Palm Springs when *Other Desert Cities* Opens at Portland Center Stage

Playing February 27 – March 22, with Previews Beginning February 21

**“Power, passion, and superbly crafted palaver stippled with blowdarts of wit—this is what Baitz (*The Substance of Fire, TV’s Brothers and Sisters*) does best.”**

- *New York Magazine*



**January 23, 2015 – PORTLAND, OR.** Ideological collisions and plot twists abound in Jon Robin Baitz’s powerful family drama, *Other Desert Cities*, opening at Portland Center Stage on February 27, 2015. “Jon Robin Baitz has penned a play that resonates deeply for those of us who lived through the travails of the 60s and 70s, and yet it speaks with profound and timely relevance as it echoes many of the arguments that plague and define our partisan divided nation today,” said **Timothy Bond**, who will direct. *Other Desert Cities* is co-produced with Syracuse Stage, where Bond serves as producing artistic director. Playing the family whose secrets risk exposure are five actors making their PCS debuts: **D’Arcy Dersham** as Brooke Wyeth, **Barbara Broughton** as Polly Wyeth, **Ned Schmidtke** as Lyman Wyeth, **Joel Reuben Ganz** as Trip Wyeth and **Susan Cella** as Silda Grauman.

*Other Desert Cities* begins preview performances February 21, opens February 27 and runs through March 22, 2015 on the U.S. Bank Main Stage in PCS’s Gerding Theater at the Armory. **Regular tickets start at \$36.** Preview tickets start at \$29. Rush tickets are \$20. Showtimes are 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays (excluding March

8, 17 and 22); 2 p.m. matinees on select Saturdays and Sundays; matinees at noon on select Thursdays. Tickets can be purchased at pcs.org or 503.445.3700. A complete schedule can be found at <http://www.pcs.org/desert/>.

## **ABOUT THE PLAY**

In *Other Desert Cities*, Brooke Wyeth returns home after a long absence to celebrate Christmas with her well-connected, conservative parents in Palm Springs. In a dramatic shift, Brooke announces that she is about to publish a memoir dredging up a pivotal and tragic event in the family's history — a wound they don't want reopened. In effect, she draws a line in the desert sand and dares them all to cross it. Of the story, playwright Jon Robin Baitz has said, "I've written about one thing again and again and again, and it's the accidental process by which we discover what our real politics are, which are quite distinct from the ones we announce, and *Other Desert Cities*, more than any other play I've ever written, synthesizes that notion very clearly."

Baitz originally titled the play *Love and Mercy* from the Brian Wilson song of the same name. A quote from the song appears at the beginning of the script: *I was sittin' in a crummy movie with my hands on my chin / Oh the violence that occurs seems like we never win / Love and mercy, that's what you need tonight / So, love and mercy to you and your friends tonight*. It is accompanied by a quote from Joan Didion's *The White Album*: "The apparent ease of California life is an illusion, and those who believe the illusion will live here in only the most temporary way." Baitz changed the title after seeing a sign on Interstate 10 near Palm Springs. "There's the turn-off for Palm Springs and then you see a sign: 'And Other Desert Cities,'" he said, "and it goes out into this huge existential desert of America, surrounded by Joshua trees and windmills, and you just don't know what's out there ... and it's terrifying. And wonderful." (*Los Angeles Times*)

*Other Desert Cities* opened Off-Broadway in 2011 at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater and moved to Broadway's Booth Theatre later that year. It earned Jon Robin Baitz the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding New Off-Broadway Play, a *New York Times* Critics' Pick and a Lucille Lortel nomination for Outstanding Play. It was also a Pulitzer Prize finalist and Tony Award nominee for Best Play. Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* called it a "seriously satisfying new play" and said "Mr. Baitz makes sure our sympathies keep shifting among the members of the wounded family portrayed here. Every one of them emerges as selfish, loving, cruel, compassionate, irritating, charming and just possibly heroic ... it leaves you feeling both moved and gratifyingly sated."

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## **JON ROBIN BAITZ**

Baitz has a celebrated career as both a playwright and screenwriter. His plays include *The Film Society*, *The Substance of Fire*, *A Fair Country* (Pulitzer Prize finalist, 1996), *Mizlansky/Zilinsky*, *Ten Unknowns* and *The Paris Letter*, as well as a version of *Hedda Gabler* (Broadway, 2001). He created the TV series *Brothers and Sisters*, and wrote episodes for *The West Wing* and *Alias*, and PBS' version of *Three Hotels* (Humanitas Award). Baitz is also the author of two screenplays: The film script for *The Substance of Fire* (released in 1996, featuring Tony Goldwyn, Timothy Hutton and Sarah Jessica Parker) and *People I Know* (released in 2002, with Al Pacino, Kim Basinger, Téa Leoni and Ryan O'Neal). He is also a founding member of Naked Angels Theatre Company in New York City, and on the faculties of the M.F.A. programs at The New School for Drama and SUNY Stony Brook/Southampton.

## **THE CAST: ALL PCS DEBUTS**

Making up the Wyeth family is **D'Arcy Dersham** as Brooke, the daughter whose memoir shakes up the family. Dersham's recent productions include *Dusk Rings a Bell* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre), *The Sisters Rosensweig* (Portland Stage Company), *Social Creatures*, *House & Garden*, *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Trinity Repertory Company). Playing her mother Polly is **Barbara Broughton** (Broadway credits include the original *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Music Music* at City Center Theatre; television/film work includes *Law & Order*, *The Sunset Gang* (PBS) and *The Producers*). Her husband Lyman is played by Ned Schmidtke (two seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, recently *You Can't Take It With You*, *The Curse of Oedipus*, *Macbeth* and *Tonight At Eight Thirty* for Antaeus Company in Los Angeles). Their son Trip is played by **Joel Reuben Ganz** (Broadway production of *War Horse*; recent regional work includes *Measure for Pleasure* (Woolly Mammoth); television credits include *Unforgettable* and *What Would You Do?*). Finally, **Susan Cella** plays the left-leaning Aunt **Silda Grauman**. Cella's Broadway credits include *The Graduate*, *Crazy He Calls Me*, *Me and My Girl*, *Evita*, *On the Twentieth Century*, *Allegro* and *Lady in the Dark*; national tours include *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Hairspray*, *42nd Street*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *Can-Can*, *Me and My Girl*.

## **THE CREATIVE TEAM**

Director **Timothy Bond**, in his eighth season as producing artistic director of Syracuse Stage, has ties to Oregon (Associate Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival from 1996-2007) and Washington (Artistic Director of Seattle Group Theatre from 1991-1996). **William Bloodgood** will design the scenery (most recently at PCS *The Imaginary Invalid*, *Oklahoma!* and *Sweeney Todd*); joined by Costume Designer **Devon Painter** in her PCS debut (recent designs for Guthrie Theater and Oregon Shakespeare Festival among many others; her work

was included in the exhibit *Curtain Call: Celebrating a Century of Women Designing for Live Performance*); Lighting Designer **Dawn Chiang** (previously at *PCS Crowns* and *The Old Settler*); PCS Resident Sound Designer Casi Pacilio (most recently *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* and *Dreamgirls*); with Stage Manager **Liam Kaas-Lentz** (an ensemble member of Sojourn Theatre and regular at many local theaters).

## TICKET AND PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

**When:** February 21\* – March 22, 2015

\*Opening Night is Friday, February 27, 7:30 p.m.

Preview Performances: February 21, 22, 24, 25 and 26 at 7:30 p.m.

**Showtimes:** 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays (excluding March 8, 17 and 22); 2 p.m. matinees on select Saturdays and Sundays; matinees at noon on select Thursdays.

**Where:** On the U.S. Bank Main Stage at the [Gerding Theater at the Armory](#)  
128 NW Eleventh Ave., Portland.

**More Info:** <http://www.pcs.org/desert/>

**To Purchase:** Regular tickets range from \$36-69. Preview tickets start at \$29. Rush tickets are \$20.  
Discounts for students, those under 25 and groups. Prices subject to change.

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

**By Phone:** 503.445.3700, 12–6 p.m.

**In Person:** PCS's box office is at 128 NW Eleventh Avenue  
12 p.m.–curtain on performance days  
12–6 p.m. on non-performance days

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

**Please Note:** *Other Desert Cities is recommended for ages 16+; contains strong language and mature content.*

**Accessibility:** PCS is committed to making our performances and facilities accessible to all of our patrons.  
Learn more at <http://www.pcs.org/access/>.

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[Portland Center Stage](#) inspires our community by bringing stories to life in unexpected ways. Founded in 1988, PCS is the city's leading professional theater and one of the top 20 largest regional theater companies in the U.S. PCS attracts more than 150,000 theatergoers annually with its blend of classical, contemporary and premiere works, along with its summer playwrights festival, JAW. PCS also offers a variety of education and community programs tailored for patrons of all ages.

[The Gerding Theater at the Armory](#) houses the 590-seat U.S. Bank Main Stage and the 190-seat black box Ellyn Bye Studio. It was the first building on the National Register of Historic Places – and the first performing arts venue – to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification. The Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public on Oct. 1, 2006.

Support for *Other Desert Cities* is provided by Show Sponsors Don and Mary Blair, Andy and Nancy Bryant, Arlene Schnitzer and Helen and Jerry Stern. [Portland Center Stage's 2014-2015 season](#) is funded in part by Season Superstars Tim and Mary Boyle and Lead Corporate Champion Umpqua Bank; Season Sponsors the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Oregon Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Regional Arts and Culture Council, Work for Art, and Season Supporting Sponsor KINK FM. The Mark Spencer Hotel is the official hotel partner for Portland Center Stage. Portland Center Stage is a participant in the Audience (R)Evolution Program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the professional not-for-profit American theater.

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