

**The Wallis Presents the West Coast Premiere of
Anthony Giardina's Timely Political Play**

The City of Conversation

**Starring
Christine Lahti,
Jason Ritter,
Steven Culp, Michael Learned, Deborah Offner,
Nicholas Oteri, Johnny Ramey, David Selby
and Georgia King**

New Production Directed by Michael Wilson

May 17-June 4; Opening Set for Fri, May 20

(Beverly Hills, CA April 8) The divisive world of Washington D.C. politics moves to center stage of the Bram Goldsmith Theater at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts when Anthony Giardina's searing political comic drama ***The City of Conversation*** opens for a limited run in May. Starring **Christine Lahti, Jason Ritter** and **Georgia King** in a new production directed by **Michael Wilson**, *The City of Conversation* is an inside-the-Beltway play about politics in family—and families in politics—as it delves into the ever-changing tapestry of U.S. Government and the people who shape it off the senate floor. Previews begin Tuesday, May 17, and the Opening Night is Friday, May 20, through June 4.

"Presenting the West Coast Premiere of *The City of Conversation* is both exciting for The Wallis and quite timely," said Paul Crewes, The Wallis' new Artistic Director. "Tony's play brilliantly expresses both sides of political discourse in a way that reflects the current heated presidential election cycle. Michael Wilson's vision coupled with his incredible cast will elevate this political drama to a new level surely to resonate with our audiences and throughout our community."

When the play opened at Arena Stage in Washington D.C. earlier this year, *The Washington Post* said "*The City of Conversation*' achieves something that eludes many other plays about Washington: a savvy depiction of social skill as political art, in a city that's defined by political science...Giardina's handiwork presents to the world one of the most fair-minded, even compassionate views of the partisan struggles of the city's political classes you're likely to encounter these days."

About *The City of Conversation*

In 1979, Washington D.C. was a place where people actually talked to each other—where adversaries fought it out on the Senate floor and smoothed it out over drinks and hors d'oeuvres. But it was all about to change.

In *The City of Conversation*, spanning 30 years and six presidential administrations, Hester Ferris throws high-powered Georgetown dinner parties that can change the course of Washington's politics. But, when her beloved son suddenly turns up with an ambitious Reaganite girlfriend and a shocking new conservative world view, Hester must choose between preserving her family and defending the causes she's spent her whole life fighting for.

From the prolific pen of novelist, essayist and playwright Anthony Giardina, *The City of Conversation* was nominated for Best Play by the Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Lucille Lortel Awards when it premiered at Lincoln Center in 2015. It received its Washington D.C. premiere at the Arena Stage earlier this year.

About the Cast

Christine Lahti (Hester) Broadway credits include: Dustin Lance Black's *8*, *God of Carnage*, *The Heidi Chronicles*, *Loose Ends*, *Present Laughter*, *Scenes and Revelations* and *Division Street*. Her Off-Broadway credits include: *The Exonerated*, Adam Rapp's *Dreams of Flying Dreams of Falling* (Drama League nomination), *Body of Water*, *Little Murders* (Obie Award), *Three Hotels* (Drama Desk nomination), *Landscape of the Body* and *The Woods* (Theatre World Award). Her regional theater credits include: *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*, *Third*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Summer and Smoke* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Her film credits include: *Truck Stop*, *Petunia*, *Touchback*, *Flying Lessons*, *Smart People*, *Yonkers Joe*, *Obsessed*, *Swing Shift* (Academy Award nomination, NY Film Critics Award, Golden Globe nomination), *Running on Empty* (L.A. Film Critics Award, Golden Globe nomination), *The Doctor*, *Housekeeping*, *Just Between Friends*, *...And Justice for All*, *Whose Life Is it Anyway?*, *Gross Anatomy*, *Leaving Normal* and *Funny About Love*. Her television credits include: "The Blacklist," "The Good Wife," "Hawaii 5-0," "The Cleaner," "Law & Order: SVU," "The Closer," "Studio 60," "Ally McBeal," "Chicago Hope" (Emmy Award, Golden Globe Award), "Jack and Bobby" (Golden Globe nom), "No Place Like Home" (Cable Ace Award, Golden Globe Award, Emmy nom), "Crazy From The Heart," "Out of the Ashes," "The Pilot's Wife," "Open House," "The Book of Ruth," "Amerika" (Emmy nom, Golden Globe nom), "An American Daughter" (Golden Globe nom). Directing: *My First Mister* (opening night, Sundance Film Festival), "Chicago Hope," *Lieberman in Love* (Academy Award).

Georgia King (Anna) began her career starring opposite Emma Roberts in Universal's *Wild Child*. She then starred in the Toronto International Film Festival-selected *Tanner Hill* with Rooney Mara and Brie Larson. In 2013, *Variety* chose Georgia as one of their "Top 10 Brits To Watch," following her leading role in Ryan Murphy's "The New Normal" (NBC). In the last three years, Georgia has launched her directing and writing career with short films *I Think, Therefore* and *Your Hands*, the latter in which she also stars. Georgia will next be seen in her series regular role on HBO's "Vice Principals," alongside Danny McBride, Busy Philipps and Walton Goggins.

Jason Ritter (Colin/Ethan), a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts where he studied at the Atlantic Theatre Company, played the title character in the Lincoln Center production of Wendy Wasserstein's *Third*, opposite Dianne Wiest, Charles Durning, Amy Aquino and Gaby Hoffmann, directed by Daniel Sullivan. His additional theater credits include: the Off-Broadway production of Tom Donaghy's *The Beginning of August*, starring Mary Steenburgen, directed by Neil Pepe; and the role of 'Tim' in the world premiere of Neil LaBute's play *The Distance from Here* at London's Almeida Theatre, directed by David Leveaux. Jason most recently played 'Charles' in the Atlantic Theater Company's production of *Ghost Stories: The Shawl & Prairie Du Chien*, a collection of short plays written by David Mamet. His television credits include: "Girls," "Another Period," "Gravity Falls," "The Event," "Parenthood," "The Class" and "Joan of Arcadia." His film credits include the upcoming features: *The Tale*, *Intervention* and

The Meddler. His other film credits include: *We'll Never Have Paris*, *Seven Minutes*, *Hits*, *You're Not You*, *Good Dick*, *Wild Canaries*, *The Education of Charlie Banks*, *Our Very Own*, *Happy Endings* and *Raise Your Voice*.

Steven Culp (Chandler) Theatrical appearances include: the premieres of Beau Willimon's *The Parisian Woman*, Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's *Doctor Cerberus*, *Art* and *Raised in Captivity* (South Coast Rep); *Angels in America* (Drama-Logue Award for Outstanding Performance), *Blackbird* and *The Quality of Life* (A.C.T.); *Old Times* (Shakespeare Theatre Co., D.C.); *If Memory Serves* (Pasadena Playhouse); the premieres of Tony Kushner's *Slavs!* and Phyllis Nagy's *Trip's Cinch* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); *Light Up the Sky* (Ahmanson Theatre); *The White Rose* (Old Globe); *Sweet Sue* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Coastal Disturbances* (Circle in the Square); *Highest Standard of Living* (Playwrights Horizons); *Richard III* (NY Shakespeare Festival); and many more. His film credits include: *Thirteen Days* (as RFK), *The Emperor's Club*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, *Firehouse Dog*, *Spartan*, *Nurse Betty*, *James and the Giant Peach* and the recently completed *The Last Word*. His television credits include: regular and recurring roles on "Desperate Housewives" (two SAG awards for Outstanding Ensemble in a Comedy), "Bosch," "Revolution," "Zoo," "Grey's Anatomy," "Traveler," "The West Wing," "Jag," "ER," "Star Trek: Enterprise," the Emmy-winning miniseries "Gore Vidal's Lincoln," and many, many guest stars.

Michael Learned (Carolyn) Recent theatrical credits include: *Mothers and Sons* (The Zach Theatre in Austin, Texas, and the Philadelphia Theatre Company). She has received three Emmy Awards for "The Waltons," an Emmy Award for "Nurse," four Golden Globe nominations, a People's Choice Award, three DramaLogue Critics Awards (*A Month in the Country*, *Woman in Mind* and *You Shall Give Me Grandsons*) and a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award (*Hapgood*). Her Broadway credits include: Gore Vidal's *The Best Man*, *The Sisters Rosenweig* and *The Three Sisters*. She has appeared in the following world premieres: Arthur Miller's *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*, Neil Simon's *Actors and Actresses*, *Looking for Normal* and *The Good Doctor*. National tours include: *On Golden Pond*, Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women*, *Love Letters* and *Driving Miss Daisy*. Her American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T) credits include: leading lady roles in *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Private Lives*, *Little Murders*, *Importance of Being Earnest*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The Misanthrope*, *The Relapse*, *Three Sisters* and *Cyrano*. Her television credits include starring roles in "The Waltons," "Nurse," countless movie-of-the-week and Arthur Miller's "All My Sons," with co-starring roles in "The Young and the Restless," "Scrubs," "Law and Order: SVU," "Cold Case," "General Hospital," "Gunsmoke," "St. Elsewhere" and "Murder She Wrote." Feature film roles include: *Life During Wartime*, *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* and *Power* directed by Sidney Lumet.

Deborah Offner (Jean) New York theatrical acting credits include: *Act One* and *Everett Beekin* at Lincoln Center, *Hair* on B'way, *The Singing Forest*, *Rebel Women*, *The Merry Wives Of Windsor*, *Don Juan*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at The Public Theatre, *Say Goodnight Gracie* and *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*. Los Angeles theater credits include: *The Job*, *Perestroika* and *The Normal Heart*. Her film and television credits include: Louis CK's "Horace and Pete," "The Jim Gaffigan Show," "Orange Is The New Black," "Blue Bloods," *The Boy Downstairs*, *Top Five*, *Black Swan*, "Six Feet Under," "Medium," "Law & Order," *The Naked Brother's Band*, "ER," "The Guardian," *Cruel Intentions*, *Unlawful Entry* and *True Believer*.

Nicholas Oteri (Young Ethan) At five years old Nicholas Oteri saw his first theatre performance and fell in love with the stage. Now, only seven, he is already a working actor. Nicholas can be seen on television in Nickelodeon's "Henry Danger" and Lifetime's "My Haunted House" series. His film credits include

supporting roles in *Threshold*, *Ira* and *Rick the Dick*. This Christmas, Nicholas can be seen playing young Asa Butterfield in Tim Burton's *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*. When he's not acting Nick loves to play make believe and take care of his dog, Pepper. Nicholas is represented by Myrna Lieberman Management and The Osbrink Agency.

Johnny Ramey (Donald), since graduating from the Juilliard School, has had the fortune to be a part of several great projects as an actor, producer, writer and director—working with Cinestories.com, Fusion Cinema and King Margot Productions, companies he helped build beginning in 2009. *FATALITY*, his latest project which he directed, produced, wrote and starred in, will be shown at major North American festivals. Johnny won the highly sought after Helen Hayes Best Actor Award for *Superior Donuts*, the Irene Diamond Excellence in Acting Award, and recently, the Best Actor Award for his film *Laser Wolf* at the Philadelphia Film Festival. Also, for his role in *The Whipping Man*, he was nominated by Broadway World (BWW.com) for best actor. He made his Broadway debut with *The Liquid Plain*, and is ecstatic to be working on *The City of Conversation* with The Wallis. His latest television/film credits include: “Forever” (ABC/Disney), “Royal Pains” (USA), *Most Likely to Die* (Mar Vista) and *New Year's Eve* (New Line Cinema). Stay updated with Johnny [@jramesjr](https://twitter.com/jramesjr) and johnnyramey.com.

David Selby (George) Theatrical credits include: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Toys in the Attic*, *The Heiress*, *Hedda Gabbler*, *Sticks and Bones*, *Ghandi*, *Henry IV - parts 1&2*, *Money and Friends*, *The Crucible*, *Night of the Iguana*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *St. Nicholas*, *The Heavens Are Hung in Black*, *Necessary Sacrifices*, *Divine Rivalry*, *A Delicate Balance* and *Front Door Open*. His television credits include: “Dark Shadows,” “Flamingo Road,” “Falcon Crest,” “Soldier of Fortune,” “Tell Me You Love Me,” “King of the Olympics,” “Washington Behind Closed Doors,” “Mad Men” and “Deck the Halls.” His film credits include: *Rich and Famous*, *Rich Kids*, *Up the Sandbox*, *Night of Dark Shadows*, *Mighty Ducks III*, *Dying Young*, *White Squall*, *Alone*, *Surviving Christmas*, *Super Cops*, *Raise the Titanic*, *The Social Network*, *Are You Here*, *Equals*, *Dr. Del* and the animated film *Batman: The Dark Night Returns*, parts 1&2.

About the Director

Michael Wilson directed the 2013 Broadway revival, as well as the 2014 Emmy-nominated Lifetime/Ostar Productions film, of Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful*, for which he received a 2014 DGA nomination for Best Director. He is the recipient of Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards for his acclaimed staging of the nine-hour epic *The Orphans' Home Cycle*. Also on Broadway, he has directed Gore Vidal's *The Best Man*, *Enchanted April* and *Old Acquaintance*. Internationally, he directed Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* for the 1995 Venice Biennale. His next project is the Los Angeles premiere this summer of the musical *Grey Gardens* starring Betty Buckley and Rachel York for CTG's Ahmanson Theater.

About the Playwright

Anthony Giardina's plays, including *Living at Home*, *The Child*, *An American Tragedy*, *Scenes from La Vie de Boheme*, *The Beach*, *Black Forest* and *Custody of the Eyes*, have been produced in New York at Playwrights Horizons and the Manhattan Theater Club, and regionally at Arena Stage, Seattle Rep, Yale Rep, Long Wharf and the Cleveland Playhouse. *The City of Conversation*, which premiered at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater at Lincoln Center in 2014, was nominated for the Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk Awards for best play of the 2014/15 season. He is also the author of five novels, most recently *White Guys* and *Norumbega Park*.

About the Production Team

The creative team includes: Jeff Cowie (Scenic Designer), David C. Woolard (Costume Designer), Lap Chi Chu (Lighting Designer), John Gromada (Sound Designer), Hana S. Kim (Projection Designer), Carol Doran (Wig, Hair, Makeup Designer), Beth Lipari (Casting Director), Robert Bennett (Production Stage Manager) and Jereme Kyle Lewis (Assistant Stage Manager).

For more information about the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, visit TheWallis.org.

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TICKET INFORMATION:

What: *The City of Conversation*
Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts
Bram Goldsmith Theater
9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills, CA, 90210

When: May 17 – June 4, 2016
May 17 – 19, 2016 (Previews)
May 20 (Opening Night)

Tickets: Single tickets: \$29 – \$110 (prices subject to change)
Online – TheWallis.org
By Phone – 310.746.4000
Box Office – Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Ticket Service
9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd, Beverly Hills, CA, 90210

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