

UNICORN · COLONIAL · FITZPATRICK
BERKSHIRE
THEATRE GROUP

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**Berkshire Theatre Group Presents *Thoreau or, Return to Walden*,
a World Premiere Written and Performed by David Adkins, at The Unicorn Theatre**

Pittsfield, MA– Berkshire Theatre Group presents *Thoreau or, Return to Walden*, a world premiere written and performed by David Adkins, at the Unicorn Theatre in Stockbridge. Opening Night is Saturday, June 20 at 8pm. Preview performances begin on Thursday, June 18 at 7pm and the production closes Saturday, July 11 at 8pm.

Tickets to *Thoreau or, Return to Walden* are \$50, all preview tickets are \$42. Tickets may be purchased in person at the Colonial Ticket Office at 111 South Street, Pittsfield; by calling (413) 997-4444 or online at www.BerkshireTheatreGroup.org. All plays, schedules, casting and prices are subject to change.

In this world premiere, BTG Alum, David Adkins takes the stage as New England Transcendentalist, poet, and philosopher, Henry David Thoreau. Long-time BTG Artist, Eric Hill, who most recently wrote and directed Adkins in the wildly well-received *Poe*, will direct this production.

The writing of Henry David Thoreau comes to life in this dramatic and uplifting tale as he battles with himself, with his own thirst for blood and the for the soul of our American conscience. It's 1859. The Union is on the verge of civil war over the issue of slavery. Passion, politics and prose collide on the shores of Walden Pond when beloved American naturalist and prophet of peaceful resistance learns that freedom fighter and abolitionist John Brown has been sentenced to hang. How did the beloved poet and naturalist, hero of children's books, inspirer of Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., and writer of *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience* come to write, **"I do not wish to kill nor to be killed, but I can foresee circumstances in which both these things would be by me unavoidable** (*A Plea for Captain*

John Brown)." When you come to your final moment, will you know that you have truly lived?"

Artistic Director/CEO of Berkshire Theatre Group, Kate Maguire, says, "This particular piece is important because it speaks to who we are today. Not much has changed in a lot of ways, and Thoreau is out there screaming to the wilderness about certain inequalities that continue to exist, and about our sensitive relationship with nature. I'm so grateful that David brought *Thoreau or, Return to Walden* to us. *Poe* marked the beginning; this is the second in a series on legendary Americans."

Adkins says, "This play came out of a very deep need, from my perspective watching all that's been going on in the world, and my own struggles in life."

Hill says, "We associate Thoreau with Walden, nature, solitude, but what causes the tension inside this play, or one of the things, is the hanging of John Brown and his family at Harper's Ferry. The play is very timely in that sense because Brown was willing to give his life in the cause of standing up against slavery as an institution in our country. We are seeing the result of racial tension now in our country, and asking what it means to be an American, to stand up against the institutions that perpetuate racism and anything that goes against the individual spirit that Thoreau represents. So as an individual there is a moral crisis: do I hold true to my individual moral belief or am I a citizen of a country whose government I deeply disagree with?"

Henry David Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817 in Concord, Massachusetts as the son of a business owner; his father owned a pencil factory that Thoreau would work in periodically throughout his life. Ralph Waldo Emerson's work, *Nature*, largely influenced Thoreau in his writing; this truly sparked the Transcendentalist flame in him. He even lived with Emerson for a bit, and it was on Emerson's land by Walden Pond where Thoreau built his simplistic home that inspired Thoreau to write his defining work, *Walden*. Thoreau was driven by the idea of individuality and believed that everyone must embark on their own unique adventure, as he did with Walden Pond, in order to come to any true realizations about oneself. He was also an ardent abolitionist who wholeheartedly believed that slavery was wrong and questioned whether a government that supports such an institution was worthy of loyalty; his work, *Civil Disobedience*, inspired such Human Rights activists as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi.

In partnership with The Bookstore in Lenox, MA, David Adkins will read excerpts from *Thoreau or, Return from Walden* on June 23 at 1pm in the store located at 11 Housatonic Street in Lenox. This event is free to attend and is open to the public.

Thoreau or, Return to Walden

WORLD PREMIERE

written by David Adkins

directed by Eric Hill

featuring David Adkins

at The Unicorn Theatre, Stockbridge

The Larry Vaber Stage

Previews: Thursday, June 18 and Friday, June 19

Press Opening/Opening Night: Saturday, June 20 at 8pm

Talkback: Monday, June 22 after 7pm performance

Closing: Saturday, July 11 at 8pm

Tickets: Preview: \$42

Tickets: A: \$50

Sponsored by: Bobbie Hallig and Leah and Benjamin Barber

Performance Dates

Thursday, June 18 at 7pm (Preview)

Friday, June 19 at 8pm (Preview)

Saturday, June 20 at 8pm (Opening)

Monday, June 22 at 7pm (Talkback)

Tuesday, June 23 at 7pm

Wednesday, June 24 at 7pm

Thursday, June 25 at 7pm

Friday, June 26 at 8pm

Saturday, June 27 at 2pm and 8pm

Monday, June 29 at 7pm

Tuesday, June 30 at 7pm

Wednesday, July 1 at 7pm

Thursday, July 2 at 2pm and 7pm

Friday, July 3 at 8pm

Saturday, July 4 at 2pm

Monday, July 6 at 7pm

Tuesday, July 7 at 7pm

Wednesday, July 8 at 7pm

Thursday, July 9 at 2pm and 7pm

Friday, July 10 at 8pm

Saturday, July 11 at 2pm and 8pm (Closing)

For more information about Berkshire Theatre Group and our upcoming season, please visit www.BerkshireTheatreGroup.org

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About Berkshire Theatre Group

The Colonial Theatre, founded in 1903, and Berkshire Theatre Festival, founded in 1928, are two of the oldest cultural organizations in the Berkshires. Having united in November of 2010 under the leadership of Artistic Director and CEO Kate Maguire, these two institutions are providing the Berkshires and beyond with the finest in live theatre, music, dance and the visual arts in Stockbridge, MA and Pittsfield, MA. The Fitzpatrick Main Stage (300 seats), cataloged by the National Register of Historic Places, was originally designed and built by Stanford White as the Stockbridge Casino in 1888. The intimate Unicorn Theatre (122 seats) is a home for emerging artists and new theatrical ideas. The Colonial in Pittsfield (780 seats) re-opened in August of 2006, following a \$21 million restoration, and boasts pristine acoustics, classic gilded age architecture and state-of-the-art technical systems. BTG also performs at The Garage, a music venue located in the lobby of The Colonial. BTG serves over 100,000 patrons per year and reaches over 13,000 students through its educational and outreach programs. To purchase tickets, call (413) 997-4444 or go online to www.BerkshireTheatreGroup.org.