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**For immediate release please: Friday, June 1, 2018**

**Berkshire Theatre Group
Kicks-Off Milestone 90th Anniversary Season with**

***Church & State***

**By Jason Odell Williams
Directed by Charlotte Cohn

Cast Features**

**Judy Jerome,** **Keira Naughton, Graham Rowat and** **Andy Talen**

**Special Talkbacks to Follow Each Performance**

**Pittsfield, MA**– Berkshire Theatre Group presents celebrated Emmy Award-nominated
**Jason Odell Williams**’provocative and humorous ***Church & State***. Directed by **Charlotte Cohn** (founding producer of the New York Music Theatre Festival and Mainstreet Musicals), *Church & State* features **Judy Jerome** (*Two By Tennessee*) as Sara Whitmore; **Keira Naughton** (*The Rivals*; BTG: *I Saw My Neighbor on the Train and I Didn't Even Smile*) as Alex Klein; **Graham Rowat** (*Meteor Shower*; BTG: *Arsenic and Old Lace*) as Senator Charles Whitmore and **Andy Talen** (*The Tempest*) as Tom/Marshall/Reporter/Security Guy. Performances begin Thursday, June 14, 2018 for a limited run through Saturday, June 30, 2018 at The Unicorn Theatre, The Larry Viber Stage (6 East Street) in Stockbridge, MA. Opening night is Saturday, June 16 at 8:00 p.m.
Hailed as “crackling, resonant, humorous” by *NPR* and written by Emmy Award-nominated **Jason Odell Williams** (*Brain Games*), ***Church & State*** is a fast-paced and witty look at the life of a politician, whose belief system gets shaken to the core…three days before his bid for re-election. *Church & State* will have you talking, and Tweeting, long after the curtain closes. *Church & State* is sponsored by: Lead Sponsor, Bobbie Hallig; Furlano and Arace, PC, Massachusetts Cultural Council, The Shubert Foundation.

***Church & State*** premiered in Los Angeles in 2016 and received three Ovation Award nominations, including Best Playwriting for an Original Play and Best Production. For its Off-Broadway premiere in 2017 it received an Off-Broadway Alliance Award nomination for Best Play.

***Church & State*** will play the following performance schedule: Monday – Thursday at 7:00 p.m., Friday and Saturday at 8:00 p.m., Wednesday and Saturday at 2:00 p.m. Special Talkbacks will follow each performance.

Tickets for Church & State are $56, and $47 for Previews. Tickets may be purchased in person at the Colonial Ticket Office at 111 South Street, Pittsfield or by calling (413) 997-4444 or online at [www.BerkshireTheatreGroup.org](http://www.berkshiretheatregroup.org/). The Ticket Office is open Monday-Saturday 10am–5pm, Sundays 10am–2pm or on any performance day from 10am until curtain. All plays, schedules, casting and prices are subject to change.

**A talkback with will follow every performance. Names and dates of guest speakers are subject to change without notice. Special talkback guests are as follows:**
6/16 - **Charlotte Cohn** (*Church & State* director) and **Jason Odell Williams** (*Church & State*playwright)

6/18 - **Laurie Norton Moffatt** (Director and CEO of Norman Rockwell Museum)

6/19 - **Adam Hinds**(Senator)

6/20 - **Dr. Alan Chartock (**WAMC President/CEO)

6/20 - **Jennifer Goewey**and **Tess Lane (**Elizabeth Freeman Center representatives)

6/21 - **Jodi Faith Sherman (**Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Alumna) and **Charlotte Cohn** (*Church & State* director)

6/22 - **Philip R. McKnight** (Constitutional Law Professor; B.A., Williams College, J.D., University of Chicago Law School)

6/23 - **Anne Thalheimer** (Everytown Survivor Fellow)

6/23 - **Malcolm Nance** (Author, Counterterrorism and Weapons expert, WAMC and MSNBC contributing analyst) and **Joe Donahue**(WAMC Senior Director of News and Programming)

6/25 - **Mark Barden** (Sandy Hook Promise), his daughter, **Natalie Barden** and **Greg Gibson** (Author of *Gone Boy;* Representative of Everytown for Gun Safety and Antiquarium book seller)

6/26 - **Greg Gibson** (Author of *Gone Boy;* Representative of Everytown for Gun Safety and Antiquarium book seller

6/27 - **Chris Haley**(Director of MA Department of Mental Health)

6/27 - TBA

6/28 -**Josh Horwitz**(Coalition to Stop Gun Violence)

6/29 - **Jane Tillman** (Evelyn Stefansson Nef Director of the Erikson Institute for Education and Research of the Austen Riggs Center)

6/30 - **Charlotte Cohn** (*Church & State* director) and **Jason Odell Williams** (*Church & State*playwright)

6/30 - **Dr. Andrew Gerber**(Director of Austen Riggs Center)

**Church & State**

by Jason Odell Williams

directed by Charlotte Cohn

at The Unicorn Theatre

The Larry Vaber Stage

BTG’s Stockbridge Campus, 6 East Street

Previews: Thursday, June 14 at 7pm and Friday, June 15 at 8pm

Press Opening/Opening Night: Saturday, June 16 at 8pm

A talkback will follow each performance.

Closing: Saturday, June 30 at 8pm

Tickets: Preview: $47

Tickets: $56

Sponsored by: Lead Sponsor, Bobbie Hallig; Furlano and Arace, PC, Massachusetts Cultural Council, The Shubert Foundation **ABOUT THE ARTISTS:**
**Jason Odell Williams** (Playwright)is an Emmy-nominated writer and producer. His play *Church & State* was recently produced as an NNPN Rolling World Premiere at JCC CenterStage and Skylight Theatre Company where it was nominated for three L.A. Ovation Awards including Best Playwriting for an Original Play. Other playwriting credits include *The New York Times* Critics' Pick *Handle With Care* (Westside Theatre, published by DPS), *Baltimore in Black & White* (the cell theatre), *Someone Else* (NC Stage), and *The Science of Guilt* (DR2). Readings: Primary Stages, The Blank, The Lark, and EST. Jason's novel, *Personal Statement,* was optioned for a three-picture deal and he is currently adapting it for the screen with his wife and collaborator Charlotte Cohn.

**Charlotte** **Cohn** (Director) was born in Denmark and raised in Israel where she served in the Israeli Army as a Commanding Officer. She is a founding producer of the New York Music Theatre Festival (NYMF) and Mainstreet Musicals. Other producing credits include: *Baltimore in Black & White* (the cell theatre - Resident Artist), *Rated P for Parenthood*, The New York Times Critics’ Pick *Handle With Care*(both at the Westside Theater Off-Broadway), and the upcoming *Church & State*. Charlotte has collaborated with her husband Jason Odell Williams on a variety of writing projects including their screenplay *Personal Statement* and their TV pilot “Birdland,” which was a Top Ten Finalist in the Tracking Board’s 2015 Launch Pad Pilot Competition. Charlotte’s screenplay *By the Book* was a finalist in the NYWIFT 2015 competition, sponsored by Meryl Streep.

**Judy Jerome** (Sara Whitmore) is a native New Yorker. She is a lifetime member of The Actors Studio, and proud member of the unions Actors Equity and SAG/AFTRA. She recently performed Off-Broadway in the piece *Two By Tennessee,* at the St. Luke's Theater. Favorite roles include: Lisa in *Collected Stories,* Lori in *Baltimore in Black and White*and Lady Booby in *Joseph Andrews.* You can see her in the award-winning indie film, *Cost Of A Soul,*available on Amazon. She is co-creator of the television series in development, *Tick Tock.*Check out [ticktockseries.com](http://ticktockseries.com/) to find out more.

**Keira Naughton** (Alex Klein) has appeared on Broadway in *The Rivals*(Lincoln Center Theater), *Dance of Death*, and *The Three Sisters*. Off-Broadway credits include: Rolin Jones' *These Paper Bullets*and *The Jammer*(both at Atlantic Theater Co.), *Hunting and Gathering*(Primary Stages), *Indoor/Outdoor*(SPF/DR2), *All My Sons*(Roundabout), *The American Clock*(Signature) among others. Regional credits include *These Paper Bullets*(Geffen Playhouse and Yale Rep), *Elevada*(Yale Rep), *I Saw My Neighbor on the Train and I Didn't Even Smile*(New Neighborhood/BTG), *May Queen*(Cape Playhouse), *A Delicate Balance* (Yale Rep), *The Dining Room*(Westport); *Becky Shaw*(Huntington); *Proof*(Arena Stage, Helen Hayes Award nomination); Sarah in *Company* (Kennedy Center Sondheim Celebration); productions at the Berkshire Theatre Group, Barrington Stage, Shakespeare & Company and Williamstown Theatre Festival. Keira also directed the world premiere of *Cedars* by Erik Tarloff at Berkshire Theatre Group and she directed at the 92nd Street Y Lyrics and Lyricists series. Her television appearances include *The Exorcist* (Fox), *Body of Proof*, *3* *Lbs*., *Law & Order: SVU*, *Sex and the City*, and *All My Children.*Film:*The Independents, Book of Shadows: Blair Witch 2*and*Cradle Will Rock*. She is a founding member of New Neighborhood. She has been a singer/songwriter in the theatrical band The Petersons since 2001. Together, the quintet has performed at venues including Joe’s Pub, The Bottom Line, The Whitney Museum, Caroline’s Comedy Club and New York Stage and Film where they co-wrote an original musical. MFA from NYU Graduate Acting.

**Graham Rowat** (Senator Charles) recently completed the Broadway run of the new Steve Martin comedy, *Meteor Shower,* starring Amy Schumer. Other Broadway credits include: *Sunset Boulevard* (2017), *Mamma Mia, Guys and Dolls*, *LoveMusik*, *Dracula* and *Beauty and the Beast.* Off-Broadway: *The Blue Flower* (Second Stage), *The Boys in the Band* (Transport Group) and *The Minister's Wife* (Lincoln Center Theater). He has appeared nationally and abroad in *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* (San Francisco, Detroit, Toronto), and *Les Misérables* (US and China). Regional: *Constellations, Bells Are Ringing, A Little Night Music* (Berkshire Theatre Group), *Arcadia* (Yale Rep), *The Game* (Barrington Stage), *Saved* (Kansas City Rep), *A Funny Thing…Forum* (Two River Theater, Williamstown Theatre Festival). TV: *Elementary, The Good Wife, Law and Order, As the World Turns.* Recordings: *LoveMusik* (Broadway Cast Recording)*, Life Begins at 8:40, Sweet Bye and Bye* (PS Classics), multiple audiobooks. grahamrowat.com @grahamny

**Andy Talen** (Tom/Marshall/Reporter/Security Guy)New York: *Blue Man Group* (Astor Place Theatre), *Church & State* (New World Stages), *The Tempest, Iphigenia 2.0*(Classic Stage Company), *The Fallen*(Abington Theatre), *The Two Reds*(Classical Theatre of Harlem), *Caucasian Chalk Circle*(Columbia Stages). Regional: Madison Repertory Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Over ten Productions at Shakespeare & Company in the Berkshires including *Love’s Labor’s Lost,* *Mother Courage* (with John Douglas Thompson & Olympia Dukakis)*, Les Faux Pas,* *Richard III*, *Winters’ Tale*, *Julius Caesar, The Amorous Quarrel* and *Venetian Twins* to name a few. Television: *A Crime to Remember*. Training: MFA Columbia University. andytalen.com

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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. In 2010, under the leadership of Artistic Director and CEO Kate Maguire, the two organizations merged to form Berkshire Theatre Group (BTG). Berkshire Theatre Group's mission is to support wide ranging artistic exploration and acclaimed performances in theatre, dance, music and entertainment. Every year, BTG produces and presents performances to over 68,000 attendees and, through our Educational Program, serves over 13,000 Berkshire County school children annually.