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Birmingham Repertory Theatre and Northern Stage in association with Nuffield Southampton Theatres present the

EUROPEAN PREMIÈRE of

A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

By Ursula Rani Sarma

Based on the book by Khaled Hosseini

- The European première opens at Birmingham Repertory Theatre with dates also at Northern Stage, Nuffield Southampton Theatres and Hackney Empire.
- Khaled Hosseini's book has been adapted by Ursula Rani Sarma and will be directed by Artistic Director, Roxana Silbert, her last as Artistic Director of Birmingham Repertory Theatre.
- The cast includes Waleed Akhtar, Pal Aron, Sujaya Dasgupta, Munir Khairdin, Naveed Khan, Mollie Lambert, Shala Nyx, Liza Zahra and Amina Zia.

A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini's spiritual sequel to *The Kite Runner* will have its European première at Birmingham Repertory Theatre from 2 – 18 May before playing at partner venues Northern Stage (30 May – 15 June) and Nuffield Southampton Theatres (25 June – 6 July). The show will also tour to Hackney Empire (22 -25 May).

The cast features **Waleed Akhtar** (*Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*/ Lasse Hallström; *What Shadows* / Birmingham Repertory Theatre and *The Kite Runner*/Nottingham Playhouse & Liverpool Everyman); **Pal Aron** (*Behind the Beautiful Forevers*/National Theatre; *Stella*/ Sky One); **Sujaya Dasgupta** (*Death of a Salesman*/Royal & Derngate, Press/BBC); **Munir Khairdin** (*Whitechapel*/ITV); **Naveed Khan** (*Tamburlaine and Tartuffe* /RSC); **Mollie Lambert** (*The White Devil*/Shakespeare's Globe); **Shala Nyx** (*Miss Prue*/Bristol Old Vic; *The Shadow Factory*/Nuffield Southampton Theatres) and **Liza Zahra** (*The Kite Runner*/Wyndham's) and **Amina Zia** (*Tartuffe*/RSC).

Khaled Hosseini's international best-selling novel is the powerful story of three generations of women discovering strength in unity and finding hope in the unlikeliest of places. Set in 1992 in an Afghanistan ravaged by war, an orphaned Laila is left alone in an increasingly threatening world. Her older neighbour Rasheed is quick to open his home and takes Laila as his second wife.

Rasheed's first wife Mariam has no choice but to accept her younger, and now pregnant, rival. As the Taliban take over, life for all of them becomes a desperate struggle against starvation, brutality and fear, and the two women find themselves unlikely allies. In **A Thousand Splendid Suns**, love grows and sustains the human spirit even during the hardest of times.

Roxana Silbert directs A Thousand Splendid Suns, her final show as Artistic Director of Birmingham Repertory Theatre. She said:

"In Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns we are given a rare glimpse into 30 years of contemporary Afghan history and thanks to Ursula Rani Sarma's emotionally stirring adaptation audiences will be able to bear witness to the extraordinary story of two radiant women who struggle to survive the terrifying political situation they find themselves in. I can't wait to bring this inspiring and enlightening story to the stage."

Playwright Ursula Rani Sarma said:

"This play is about the immense strength and endurance of women and how they can survive tremendous suffering to keep those they love alive. It is also about how even in the darkest of times and places, love can grow and sustain the human spirit beyond all pain and hard-ship. It's about friendship and loyalty, courage and selflessness, grief and violence. What the play has to say about love, endurance, and survival is very much worth listening to for a contemporary audience. There is beauty and strength at the heart of A Thousand Splendid Suns, and I feel so proud to be part of its evolution from novel to stage."

Ursula Rani Sarma is a scriptwriter for stage and screen. Her previous credits include *Delicious* (Sky), the award-winning film *Anywhere But Here*, *Yerma* (West Yorkshire Playhouse) and *The Dark Things* (Traverse Theatre).

Khaled Hosseini is one of the most widely read and beloved novelists in the world, with over 38 million copies of his books sold in more than seventy countries. *The Kite Runner* was a major film and was a Book of the Decade, chosen by The Times, Daily Telegraph and Guardian. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was the Richard & Judy Best Read of the Year in 2008. Hosseini is currently a Goodwill Envoy to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency and the founder of The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation which provides humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. He was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, and lives in northern California.

A Thousand Splendid Suns will have set and costume designs by **Ana Inés Jabares-Pita**, lighting design by Simon Bond, composition by **Mahmood Kamen**, sound design and co-composition by **Dave Price** with **Ben Hart** as magic consultant.

ENDS

For further information please contact Clare Jepson-Homer on 0121 245 2072 / 07807 132041 / clare.jepsonhomer@birmingham-rep.co.uk

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Tour Listings

2 – 18 May

Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Box Office: 0121 236 4455 / birmingham-rep.co.uk

22 – 25 May

Hackney Empire

Box Office: 020 8985 2424/hackneyempire.co.uk

30 May – 15 June

Northern Stage

Box Office: 0191 230 5151 / northernstage.co.uk

25 June – 6 July

Nuffield Southampton Theatres

Box Office: 023 8067 1771 / nstheatre.co.uk

Notes to Editors:**Birmingham Repertory Theatre**

Birmingham Repertory Theatre Company is one of Britain's leading producing theatre companies. Its mission is to inspire a lifelong love of theatre in the diverse communities of Birmingham and beyond. As well as presenting over 60 productions on its three stages every year, the theatre tours its productions nationally and internationally, showcasing theatre made in Birmingham.

The commissioning and production of new work lies at the core of The REP's programme and over the last 15 years, the company has produced more than 130 new plays. The theatre's outreach programme engages with over 7000 young people and adults through its learning and participation programme, equating to 30,000 individual educational sessions. The REP is also committed to nurturing new talent through its youth theatre groups and training for up and coming writers, directors and artists through its REP Foundry initiative.

Many of The REP's productions go on to have lives beyond Birmingham. Recent tours and transfers include *The Lovely Bones*, *Brief Encounter*, *Nativity! The Musical*, *What Shadows*, *LOVE*, *The Winslow Boy*, *The Government Inspector*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Anita and Me*, *Penguins* and *The King's Speech*. The theatre's long-running production of *The Snowman* celebrated its 25th anniversary as well as its 21st consecutive season at London's Peacock Theatre in 2018.

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Northern Stage

Northern Stage, in Newcastle, makes ambitious, intelligent, enjoyable theatre. The company has a reputation for reviving classic plays in fresh adaptations and creating bold new work. It has been one of the UK's most popular national touring companies for the last 20 years. Alongside its own work, Northern Stage presents the best regional, national and international theatre. Its extensive Creative Residencies programme supports local and national theatre-makers to develop their work at Northern Stage and a year-round programme of projects and events encourages people of all ages and backgrounds to take part in making theatre.

northernstage.co.uk

@northernstage

Nuffield Southampton Theatres is one of the UK's leading professional theatre companies. The company is led by Samuel Hodges, supported by a team of associates: directors Blanche McIntyre, Natalie Abrahami and Michael Longhurst, playwright Adam Brace, choreographer Drew McOnie and poet Inua Ellams. NST develops and produces work with some of the UK's most exciting and dynamic regional theatres. NST's awards include Best Director at UK Theatre Awards 2013 for *The Seagull*, Regional Theatre of the Year at The Stage Awards 2015, Best Design at UK Theatre Awards 2015 for *The Hudsucker Proxy* and the 2017 Renee Stepham UK Theatre Award for Best Presentation of Touring Theatre for *Fantastic Mr Fox*. In 2018 NST was nominated for three awards in the UK Theatre Awards 2018 - Best Design for *The Shadow Factory*; The Renee Stepham Award for Best Presentation of Touring Theatre for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Achievement in Marketing and Audience Development for the NST City opening campaign.

NST City is Nuffield Southampton Theatres new venue which opened in Southampton's city centre in 2018. The theatre's programme runs alongside NST Campus situated on the Highfield Campus at the University of Southampton.

Nuffield Southampton Theatres is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation and a registered charity, receiving additional core funding from the University of Southampton and Southampton City Council.

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