



**Award-winning Actor David Morse And His Wife Susan Wheeler To Perform A.R. Gurney's
"Love Letters" In Valentine's Day Benefit For Quintessence Theatre**

PHILADELPHIA, PA – This Valentine's Day, Quintessence Theatre is celebrating love in all of its messy glory with a performance starring award-winning television, film and stage actor David Morse* and his wife, Susan Wheeler. The couple is performing A.R. Gurney's *Love Letters*, for a one-night only benefit in support of the Campaign for Quintessence at the Sedgwick. *Love Letters* is a tender, romantic comedy, where two childhood friends share a series of love letters over 50 years of life, only realizing in the end the relationship they shared. A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, it was written and structured for actors to arrive at the theater without memorizing lines in advance and spontaneously become 'Melissa Gardner' and 'Andrew Makepeace Ladd III' - a couple who have known and loved each other for nearly all their lives, married other people, but share their friendship, challenges, wins, and losses through that most precious form of lost communication - words on paper.

"Quintessence Theatre is an important part of the community and the Philadelphia theatre scene. We're happy to support them as they take their next big step as a vital regional theater, " said the couple. Morse and Wheeler also make their home in Northwest Philadelphia.

The evening starts with a champagne, specialty cocktail and hors d'oeuvres reception starting at 7PM with the performance beginning at 8PM. The event takes place at Quintessence's home - the historic Sedgwick Theater located at 7137 Germantown Avenue in Mt. Airy.

"What better way to share Valentine's Day with your Valentine than by reading the love letters of others. Or even better, having them read to you by two great actors. It is an honor to celebrate Valentine's Day with David Morse and Susan Wheeler, and a privilege to watch them take on A.R. Gurney's beloved and classic American romance," said Alex Burns, Producing Artistic Director. "We are grateful to them for understanding the importance of regional theatre, and for joining us in raising support and awareness as we acquire and renovate the historic Sedgwick Theater."

David Morse received Emmy nominations for his roles on *House* and HBO's *John Adams*, and has appeared in numerous television shows, including Emmy-nominated *Escape at Dannemora*, *Hack*, *Treme*, *True Detective*, *Outsiders*, and *St. Elsewhere*. Morse's film credits include *The Green Mile* (1999), *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), *16 Blocks* (2006), *The Hurt Locker* (2009), *World War Z* (2013), and *Concussion* (2015). A stage veteran, Morse was most recently seen on Broadway in the 2022 revival of *How I Learned to Drive* and the 2018 revival of *The Iceman Cometh*, for which he received Tony Award nominations. His other notable stage performances include the 1984 Los Angeles production of *Of Mice and Men*; Lanford Wilson's *Redwood Curtain*, in which he originated the role of Lyman; Heather MacDonald's *An Almost Holy Picture*; the Broadway production of *The Seafarer*; the Off-Broadway production of *The Unavoidable Disappearance of Tom Durnin*; and the original Off-Broadway production of *How I Learned to Drive*, for which he won a Lucille Lortel Award, a Drama Desk Award, and an Obie Award. He can also be seen in Apple's *The Last Thing He Told Me*, and *The Morning Show*, Netflix's *The Chair*, HBO's *The Deuce*, and Showtime's *The Good Lord Bird*. Upcoming films are *Cabrini*, *Blood Knot*, and *La Gloria*. He is represented by Gersh, Kipperman Management, and Katz, Golden & Rosenman LLP.

Susan Wheeler trained at William Esper Studio in New York. Theater roles include *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth), an award-winning LA production of *Of Mice and Men* (Curly's wife) and *Did Someone Yell Fire?* TV includes George C. Scott's daughter in *Mr. President*, Candice Bergen's stepmother on *Murphy Brown*, *LA Law*, *Deadly Intentions*, and *The Twilight Zone*. Films include *Miracles*; *Personal Foul*. These days she writes as Susan Morse, stepping back onstage briefly when David adapted her bestselling memoir (*The Habit*) into a play called *Susan Reads The Habit*. She is now working on a book about duplicate bridge while playing all over the country. Her articles can be seen in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin.

American playwright A.R. Gurney wrote plays for nearly fifty years, including *Scenes From American Life*, *Children*, *The Dining Room*, *The Middle Ages*, *Richard Cory*, *The Golden Age*, *What I Did Last Summer*, *The Wayside Motor Inn*, *Sweet Sue*, *The Perfect Party*. Another *Antigone*, *The Cocktail Hour*, *Love Letters*, *The Snow Ball* (adapted from his novel), *The Old Boy*, *The Fourth Wall*, *Later Life*, *A Cheever Evening*, *Sylvia*, *Overtime*, *Let's Do It* (A Cole Porter Musical), *Labor Day*, *Far East*, *Darlene and the Guest Lecturer*, and *Ancestral Voices*. Gurney wrote the libretto for *Strawberry Fields* with music by Michael Torke, part of the Central Park Opera trilogy presented by the New York City Opera in the Fall of 1999. His novels include *The Gospel According to Joe*, *Entertaining Strangers*, and *The Snow Ball* and awards include Drama Desk, N.E.A., Rockefeller Foundation, New England Theatre Conference, Lucille Lortel, American Association of

Community Theatres, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Gurney was on the faculty of M.I.T. where he taught literature until 1996. He was a member of the Theatre Hall of Fame and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Gurney passed away June 14, 2017.

Love Letters has been a favorite of actors who would rotate through weekly schedules around other stage or film work in New York and has been performed by paired couples Kathleen Turner and John Rubenstein, Colleen Dewhurst and Jason Robards, Jane Curtin and Edward Hermann, Swoosie Kurtz and Richard Thomas, Elaine Stritch and Cliff Robertson, Nancy Marchand and Fritz Weaver, Rita Wilson and Tom Hanks, Sally Field and Bryan Cranston, among others, even reaching across the pond for a performance by Jenny Seagrove and Martin Shaw. *Love Letters* is theatrical joy, and is brought to life by the individual voices and personalities of each couple. For this unique performance, the couple is real!

All tickets include a champagne, specialty cocktail and hors d'oeuvres reception starting at 7PM, with mingling and conversation. The performance follows at 8PM. There will be brief comments from the stage after the curtain call, with the lobby open for post-show chats and photos. Everyone will leave with a custom gift of Valentine's Day chocolate (of course!) from Mt. Airy's own High Point Espresso and Pastry Shop. Ticket prices vary. There are six exclusive Tables for Two with intimate club-style seating placed in front of the stage that include a personal bottle of champagne, at \$1000 per table (seats two). Premium Center seats in the first four rows of the theatre are \$500 per person. Premium seating to the left, right, and rear of Premium Center are \$250 per person. House left and right General Admission seating is \$150 per person. Seating is limited. All proceeds benefit the Campaign for Quintessence at the Sedgwick. Tickets are available at QTGREP.ORG, or by calling the Box Office at 215-987-4450.

*denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association.

About Quintessence Theatre

Founded in 2009, the award-winning Quintessence Theatre is dedicated to bringing epic works of classic drama and literature to the contemporary stage.

As Philadelphia's text-based, actor-focused repertory theatre, Quintessence re-envision the classics to inspire our community to consider what is essential in theatre and in human nature.

Now in its 14th season at the Sedgwick Theater in Philadelphia's Northwest neighborhood of Mt. Airy, Quintessence is led by Producing Artistic Director, Alex Burns and Executive Director, Grace Grillet. The Sedgwick Theater is almost 100 years old and has served the neighborhood and surrounding communities as a movie palace, as a warehouse, as the Sedgwick Cultural Center, and, since 2009, as the home of Quintessence Theatre. Quintessence will purchase and renovate the Sedgwick Theater as its permanent home and a gathering place for the community.

Public and street parking is available throughout the Mt. Airy neighborhood.

QUINTESSENCE THEATRE

Administrative Office

7135 Germantown Ave, 2nd Floor

Philadelphia, PA 19119

www.QTGrep.org

Press@QTGrep.org

215.987.4450

THE SEDGWICK THEATER BOX OFFICE

7137 Germantown Ave.

Philadelphia, PA 19119

215.987.4450