

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT**

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**RUBICON THEATRE TAKES LAGUNA PLAYHOUSE  
AUDIENCES ON A JOURNEY OF AMERICAN FOLK**

World Premiere continues in Laguna Jan. 10 thru Feb. 5, 2012

(Laguna Beach, CA) – The Laguna Playhouse continues its 2011-2012 Season with the World Premiere concert of the Rubicon Theatre production of *Lonesome Traveler*, a musical event that takes audiences on a journey down the rivers and streams of American folk music -- from the hills of Appalachia to the nightclubs of San Francisco and New York; from the 1920s to the 1960s. Written and directed by Rubicon Theatre Company's Artistic Director, James O'Neil, with Musical Direction and Arrangements by Dan Wheetman, *Lonesome Traveler* begins January 10 and continues through February 5 at The Laguna Playhouse. Presented in the style of a concert with story line, *Lonesome Traveler* is performed by nine artists who create musical portraits inspired by folk immortals such as Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Lead Belly, The Kingston Trio, Peter Paul & Mary and others whose music and influence changed American music – and America itself – forever.

Laguna Playhouse Artistic Director Ann Wareham enthusiastically remarks, "We are thrilled to continue our association with the Rubicon Theatre. Jim O'Neil has brought together a remarkable and uniquely talented cast of performers who take us on a memorable journey through decades of American folk music. There are songs we know, some that are less familiar, woven together with stories that enlighten and entertain us along the way. We're pleased and proud to begin the new year of 2012 with this joyous production."

The company includes Jennifer Leigh Warren (*Little Shop of Horrors* in New York), Anthony Manough (*The Lion King* on Broadway), L.A.-based singer/songwriters Justine Bennett and Brendan (B. Willing) James, Sylvie Davidson (a Seattle actress/singer whose credit includes work at ACT), Nicholas Mongiardo-Cooper and Justin Flagg (who plays the title character), plus second-generation musicians James Webb and Trevor Wheetman.

A few of the well-known song titles include “Will the Circle Be Unbroken,” “This Land is Your Land,” “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “Goodnight Irene,” “Puff, the Magic Dragon,” “Mr. Tambourine Man,” “We Shall Overcome,” and “Maggie’s Farm.”

### **About the Production**

The concept for *Lonesome Traveler* comes from the imagination of James O’Neil. O’Neil is the co-founder and Artistic Director at Rubicon, and recently accepted the L.A. Drama Critics’ Circle Award for *Sustained Excellence* on behalf of the company. The journey to *Lonesome Traveler* for O’Neil was years– even decades – in the making.

“My relationship with this music goes back to when I was six or seven-years-old,” O’Neil remarks. “My father was a child of the Great Depression. He grew up in Oklahoma and came to California during the Dust Bowl. As I was growing up in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, our house was filled with the sounds of the folk revival.”

“Music is a declaration of a particular kind of humanity – one that perseveres through life’s difficulties and respects and cares for others. The title of *Lonesome Traveler* essentially comes from the idea that we all take a solitary journey through life – we come in and out of this world alone. But music is a great unifier – a great healer. It can help us feel a little less, lost or alone.”

O’Neil’s thoughts are echoed by Musical Director Dan Wheetman: “This music was born out of hardscrabble living. However, it reflects the joy of life; no matter how many

obstacles we face, the human spirit rises above and rejoices in being alive.”

Throughout the process, O’Neil has been working closely with designer Tom Giamario, with whom he has collaborated on numerous shows.

“From the outset, Jim was clear that he wanted to engage the audience – he didn’t want to create a revue where the audience could be detached or distant,” says Giamario.

“Folk music is very much about participation, not observation. We hope the experience will be much as it might have been back in the day.”

### **General Information**

#### *Ticket Prices:*

\$30 to \$65

#### *Performances:*

January 10, 2012 – February 5, 2012

Tuesday – Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m.

Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Thursday matinees January 12 & 26, 2012 at 2:00 p.m.

*(Dates and times subject to change)*

FOR INFORMATION & TO PURCHASE TICKETS:

CALL: 949.497.ARTS (2787) - GROUP SALES: 949.497.2787 ext. 229

VISIT: [www.lagunaplayhouse.com](http://www.lagunaplayhouse.com)

### **About The Laguna Playhouse**

949-497-2787

[www.lagunaplayhouse.com](http://www.lagunaplayhouse.com)

Administrative Hours:

Monday – Friday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Box Office Hours:

Tuesday – Sunday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

(open until 8 pm on performance days)

Moulton Theatre Address:

606 Laguna Canyon Rd., Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Founded in 1920 and celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011-2012, The Laguna Playhouse is

one of the oldest continuously-operating theatres on the West Coast. In January 2011, The Laguna Playhouse was honored at the Laguna Spirit Awards and received The Laguna Beach Chamber of Commerce Premiere Business of the Year award.

More than 100,000 theatergoers annually attend performances at the Laguna Playhouse. Its continued artistic excellence, audience popularity and critical acclaim have helped make The Playhouse one of Southern California's most important nonprofit theatre companies. The Playhouse has produced national tours of *The Belle of Amherst* (with Julie Harris) and *Copenhagen*, and has presented many world, national and regional premieres.

Over the years, the Laguna Playhouse has garnered numerous awards from LA Drama Critics Circle, NAACP, Backstage, OC Weekly, and many more, and was named Best Arts Organization by ArtsOC. Notable performers that have performed at The Laguna Playhouse include Bette Davis, Harrison Ford, Charles Durning, Marlo Thomas, Roddy McDowell, Rita Rudner, Cloris Leachman, and Sally Struthers.

The Laguna Playhouse is noted for its Youth Theater Education and Outreach programs. In 1989, its Youth Theater was recognized as "Outstanding Children's Theatre" by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education. The theater's touring production, TheatreReach, brings books to life on stage for elementary school children throughout southern California.

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