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PRESS RELEASE

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Brown University Theatre Presents ***The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer***

Brown University Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and Sock & Buskin present the second show of their 2016–17 season. *The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, written by Carson Kreitzer and directed by Professor Spencer Golub, runs November 3 through 6 and 10 through 13 in Stuart Theatre on the main campus at Brown University.

Providence, RI — *The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer* by Carson Kreitzer explores the life of one of the greatest American scientific minds of the twentieth century. J. Robert Oppenheimer, the lead scientist in the quest to unlock the secrets of atomic energy in the 1940s, spent the latter part of his life trying to make sense of the impact of his research. Under his direction, a number of the greatest physicists of the day, some Jewish and exiled, were secluded in the American South West and given unprecedented resources to pursue their research. From their work emerged one of the most terrible weapons the world has ever seen—the atomic bomb. Speaking about his work on the project, Oppenheimer famously quoted from the Bhagavad Gita, “Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.” What happens when the pragmatic forces of the military co-opt unshackled scientific freedom?

The play weaves together ideas of freedom, religion, war, and love to question how we should understand the purpose of scientific endeavor. A group of diverse thinkers, unknown to the public and working in secrecy, find themselves swept up in the military response to Hitler's rise in Europe. These cultural outsiders know they are building a new weapon intended to defeat Hitler but, upon completion of the project, are shocked at the power of their invention. As the military moves ahead with the results of their labor, they realize they have become a part of the military machine. For Oppenheimer, the understanding of what he has wrought will haunt him for the rest of his life. As he becomes the poster child for the new atomic age, how does he find peace from his conscience, and what effect will his journey have on the people around him?

Speaking about this production, director Spencer Golub (Professor, Brown University Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies) says:

F. Scott Fitzgerald famously said, "there are no second acts in American lives," which strikes at the heart of this play. Oppenheimer found himself thrust into the spotlight, where he wrestled with the celebrity and moral weight of having become the face of the United States atomic energy program in the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Oppenheimer's mind, spirit, and complex character struggled to balance the competing demands of science and politics, idealism, and pragmatism, and of theoretically beautiful abstract problems whose applied solutions became catastrophically real. Kreitzer's play demonstrates how mass trauma is mapped onto the individual bodies and minds of Oppenheimer and his various "loves."

This year's performance season grew out of ongoing conversations on campus at Brown University about issues of diversity and inclusion. Sock & Buskin, the student-faculty board that selects the Brown University Theatre season, wanted to represent this conversation through their choice of plays, writers, directors, and casting. The season aims to reflect the strengths and the challenges that students face in making contemporary performances that embrace diversity and can effect social change. This play continues the season's investigation into the layers of history and meaning that inform our understanding of diversity in the current moment. How can we understand shifting cultural constructions of the religious outsider through the lens of Jewish identity in the mid-Twentieth century? And how do we match the need for intellectual diversity with the demands of the immediate present?

The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer runs November 3 to 6 and November 10 to 13 in Stuart Theatre on the main campus at Brown University (75 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02912). Performances take place Thursday through Saturday at 8pm, and 2pm on Sundays.

Brown University Theatre's 2016–17 performance season is produced by Brown University Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and by Sock & Buskin,

a student-faculty board that has an unbroken record of producing theatre at Brown University for over 100 years.

Tickets are \$15 (adults) / \$12 (seniors) / \$7 (students). For more information visit brown.edu/theatre. To book tickets, call (401) 863-2838, or visit the Box Office in the Leeds Theatre Lobby (83 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02912), Tuesday–Friday from 12–4pm during the semester, or email boxoffice@brown.edu. To book online, visit: brown.edu/tickets.

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