

January 26, 2018

For Immediate Release

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PRESS RELEASE

**Epic Adventure by Best-Selling Author
Comes to Life on Stage
In Co-Production of
The Coterie and UMKC Theatre**

OVERVIEW:

WHAT: *The Secret of Courage*
Written by Laurie Brooks
Based on the short story "Imaginary Friends" by Terry Brooks
Directed by Graham Whitehead

WHEN: January 23 – February 11, 2018
Press / Opening Night: Friday, January 26, at 7:00 p.m.

WHERE: The Coterie, Level one of Crown Center, 2450 Grand Blvd., Kansas City, MO

PRICE: \$11.00 for youth under 18, full-time students, and seniors age 60 and older;
\$15.00 for adults

INFO / RESERVATIONS: The Coterie Box Office
Phone: (816) 474-6552 Online: www.thecoterie.org

Kansas City, MO – The Coterie Theatre, nationally-recognized as a one of the top creators of new works of theatre for youth and family audiences, presents the world premiere of *The Secret of Courage*,

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adapted from the short story, "Imaginary Friends," by best-selling author Terry Brooks. A co-production of The Coterie and UMKC Theatre, ***The Secret of Courage*** is adapted by playwright Laurie Brooks, directed by Graham Whitehead, and will be performed live at The Coterie Theatre, January 23 – February 11, 2018. In support of the play, author Terry Brooks will appear at a special event at Woodneath Library Center on Saturday, January 27, 2018.

ABOUT THE PLAY

An inspiring hero's journey filled with magic and wonderment, ***The Secret of Courage*** begins with 13-year-old Jack McCall learning some very bad news about his health. His best friend Waddy is not as concerned, since he has heard stories of people getting over this illness all the time. As the seriousness of the news sets in, reality begins blending with fantasy and Jack is drawn back to the magical park and imaginary friends of his childhood. He soon finds himself, along with an elf, an owl, a troll, and a ghost, on an adventure to save the park from an evil imprisoned in a massive tree. But when Jack begins to question whether the adventure is real or imagined, he quickly learns how facing this adversary may be the key to facing his illness.

The Secret of Courage is adapted from the short story, "Imaginary Friends," written by Terry Brooks, whose beloved *Shannara* series has made him one of the most celebrated fantasy writers in the country. "He has been writing best-selling books for forty years but this marks the first time his work has been brought to life on stage," explains The Coterie's producing artistic director, Jeff Church. "***The Secret of Courage*** is a rare excursion into epic fantasy for live theatre. The expense and technical requirements make it very challenging, and would usually be prohibitive. However, as a co-production with UMKC Theatre and with support from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Mid-America Arts Alliance 'Artistic Innovations' award, we have been able to transform The Coterie's intimate space into an installation gallery. Using music, innovative lighting, and projected media, the technical contributions far exceed what the theatre has ever attempted before, allowing us to truly make all the charm and wonder of Brooks' fantastic world come alive." ***The Secret of Courage*** will be adapted for stage by Laurie Brooks, who, in addition to being sister to author Terry Brooks, is The Coterie's resident playwright. She has worked with The Coterie for over twenty years, including writing several plays commissioned and/or produced by The Coterie, such as the premieres of *No Talking*, *Afflicted: Daughters of Salem*, and *The Wrestling Season*.

The Secret of Courage will run approximately 70 minutes with no intermission and will be appreciated by families with ages eleven and older. The Coterie is funded in part by Missouri Arts Council, ArtsKC Fund, Theater League, and the Neighborhood Tourist Development Fund. Additional support for ***The Secret of Courage*** was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and Mid-America Arts Alliance.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The cast of *The Secret of Courage* features Jay Love (as Jack McCall), Roan Ricker (as Waddy), Amy Billroth-MacLurg (as Mom), Megan Sells (as Dr. Claudia Mueller), Charlie Spillers (as Uncle Frank), Heather Michele Lawler (as Deirdre), Duncan McIntyre (as Pick), Ken Sandberg (as Wartag), and Rafael Toribio (as Keokuk).

The artistic and production company includes Graham Whitehead (director), William J. Christie and Danielle Walsh (production stage managers), Mark A. Exline (set designer), Bryce Foster and Shane Rowse (lighting designers), L.A. Clevenson (costume designer), Jeffery Cady (projections designer), Shannon Barondeau (Associate Projections Designer), Wallace McCanless and Maddie Rowe (sound designers), Hunter Andrews (UMKC technical director), Sandra Lopez and Selena Gonzalez-Lopez (properties), Kate Hershberger (UMKC production assistant), and Elizabeth Sampley (Coterie production assistant).

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Laurie Brooks (playwright) was a child performer who truly loved acting, singing, and dancing, and simply never outgrew it. She morphed from a performer to playwright when she took a MA at New York University and became interested in Theatre for Young Audiences. Laurie is now an award-winning playwright and YA fiction author. Her Coterie experience is extensive, including several plays commissioned and/or produced by The Coterie, such as *No Talking*, *Afflicted: Daughters of Salem*, *The Tangled Web*, *Everyday Heroes*, *Selkie: Between Land and Sea*, *Ben Franklin's Apprentice*, and *The Wrestling Season*, which was featured at The Kennedy Center's One Theatre World 2000, named winner of "Best of" awards in Seattle, Kansas City, and Dallas, and published in "Lies and Deceptions Quartet," a collection of plays for young adults. Additional award-winning plays include *Brave No World*, commissioned and premiered at The Kennedy Center, and *All of Us*, named "Best of Fringe 2011" in Kansas City. Laurie's novel for young adults, *Selkie Girl*, was published by Knopf in 2008. When Laurie is not writing plays or guest lecturing, she enjoys riding horses and cooking.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Terry Brooks (author) has thrilled readers for decades with his powers of imagination and storytelling. He is the author of more than thirty books, most of which have been *New York Times* bestsellers. His *Shannara* series has sold more than 50 million copies worldwide, making it one of the most popular fantasy epics of all time. The first book in the series, *The Sword of Shannara*, was published in 1977. It took Terry seven years to write the book, and it was an instant hit, remaining on the *New York Times* bestseller list for five months. In 2017, Terry Brooks celebrated the 40th anniversary of his beloved

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Shannara series with the release of *The Black Elfstone*. Terry Brooks lives with his wife, Judine, in the Pacific Northwest.

ABOUT THE CO-PRODUCTION

The Secret of Courage will be presented as a co-production between The Coterie and UMKC Theatre, a collaborative relationship that has become an annual tradition for The Coterie since it began in 1992, with *The Red Badge of Courage*, and continued most recently with *Hana's Suitcase* in 2017. Originally founded as a program that offered MFA actors the chance to work alongside established theatre professionals, the co-productions have since grown to feature both student actors as well as MFA designers and coaches from nearly every area of UMKC's Department of Theatre. The Coterie is proud to continue its long-standing relationship with UMKC Theatre, which benefits up-and-coming young professionals by providing practical, professional work experience, both on stage and behind the scenes.

SHOW DATES, TIMES & TICKETS

The Coterie, now in its 39th Season and named "One of the Five Best Theaters for Young Audiences in the U.S." by *TIME* magazine, will perform *The Secret of Courage* January 23 – February 11, 2018, in The Coterie Theatre, located on level one of the Crown Center Shops in Kansas City, MO. Press Night will be held on Friday, January 26, 2018, at 7:00 p.m.

- **Individual Tickets:** Tickets are \$11.00 for youth under 18, students, and seniors age 60 and older; and \$15.00 for adults.
- **Subscriptions:** In lieu of season subscriptions, The Coterie offers the Spotlight Club Pass, which works like a season ticket without committing to a set schedule. Spotlight Club members pay \$100.00 for a flexible pass that includes 10 tickets - a savings of 40% off individual ticket prices that can be used for any show or combination of shows in the 2017/2018 Season. All tickets and Spotlight Club Passes are on sale now and may be purchased by calling The Coterie's box office at (816) 474-6552, dropping by the box office on level one of the Crown Center Shops, or by visiting www.thecoterie.org.

NOTABLE PERFORMANCE EXTRAS

During the run of *The Secret of Courage*, The Coterie invites audiences to take advantage of these special, free performance extras (with paid admission):

Friday, January 26, 7:00 p.m.: Opening Night Celebration. A free post-performance reception with the company, staff, board of directors, and authors.

Saturday, January 27, and Sunday, January 28, 2:00 p.m.: **Question & Answer session.** A free Q&A with members of The Coterie's staff and artistic company will immediately follow the performance.

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Saturday, February 3, 2:00 p.m.: Interpreted performance in American Sign Language.

PERFORMANCE CALENDAR

THE SECRET OF COURAGE

JANUARY 23 - FEBRUARY 11, 2018						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		23 9:45 am	24 9:45 am	25 9:45 am 11:45 am	26 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm 📺	27 2 pm 📺
28 2 pm 📺	29	30 9:45 am 11:45 am	31 9:45 am 11:45 am	1 9:45 am 11:45 am	2 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	3 2 pm 📺
4 2 pm	5	6 9:45 am 11:45 am	7 9:45 am 11:45 am	8 9:45 am 11:45 am	9 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	10 2 pm
11 2 pm						

CALENDAR LEGEND



Opening Night



Post-performance **Question and Answer session** with the company



Interpreted performance in American Sign Language



Jay Love (as Jack McCall) in *The Secret of Courage*. Photo by J. Robert Schraeder.

Production photos of *The Secret of Courage* are available online at www.thecoterie.org/press-room

MEET THE AUTHOR AT A SPECIAL FREE EVENT



The Coterie, Rainy Day Books, and Mid-Continent Public Library will host a special free event featuring author Terry Brooks, one of the most celebrated fantasy writers in the country and author of “Imaginary Friends,” the short story that has been adapted into the play *The Secret of Courage*. Attendees are invited to join Terry Brooks for a Q&A about his career and popular works and then meet the author during a book sale and signing as part of the Mid-Continent Public Library’s Story Center Speaker Series at Woodneath Library Center, 8900 NE Flintlock Road, Kansas City, MO 64157. Q&A begins at 2:00 p.m. and book sale and signing at 3:00 p.m. The event is free and open to the public however reservations are required. Details and RSVP online at www.thecoterie.org.

Photo of author Terry Brooks by Michael Clinard.

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THE REMAINING 2017/2018 SEASON

Following *The Secret of Courage*, The Coterie's 2017/2018 Season continues with *Tuck Everlasting*, the classic tale about never growing older, February 27 – April 5, 2018; a bi-lingual, interactive adaptation of the classic fairy tale, *Jack and the Bean Magico!*, April 17 – May 20, 2018; and the summer musical for all ages, *Goosebumps: The Phantom of the Auditorium – The Musical*, June 19 – August 5, 2018.

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Due to the nature of live theatre, play selection, performance schedule and casting are subject to change.

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