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For Immediate Release

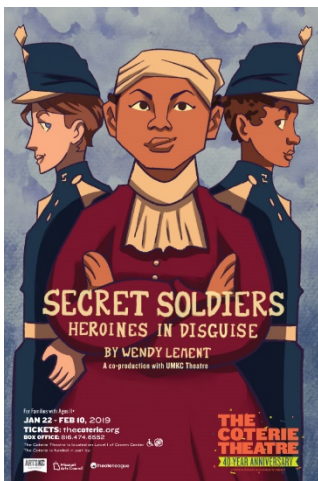
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**Coterie & UMKC Theatre Co-Production
Reveals True Stories of Women
Who Served as Men in the Civil War**

***Secret Soldiers:
Heroines in Disguise***

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OVERVIEW:

WHAT: *Secret Soldiers: Heroines In Disguise*

Written by Wendy Lement

Co-directed by Jeff Church & Bree Elrod

A co-production with UMKC Theatre

WHEN: January 22 – February 10, 2019

Press / Opening Night: Friday, January 25, at 7:00 p.m.

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

PRICE: \$12.00 for youth under 18, full-time students, and seniors age 60+;

\$15.00 for adults; \$5.00 - \$6.50 for Groups of 20 or more

INFO / RESERVATIONS: The Coterie Box Office

Phone: (816) 474-6552

Online: www.thecoterie.org

Kansas City, MO – The Coterie Theatre continues its 40th season of live theatre for families and young audiences with ***Secret Soldiers: Heroines in Disguise***, a co-production with UMKC Theatre. An interactive play for families with ages ten and older, ***Secret Soldiers*** tells the true story of several woman who disguised themselves as men to fight in the Civil War. Co-directed by Jeff Church and Bree Elrod, ***Secret Soldiers*** will be produced in community partnership with Girls on the Run and will be performed live on The Coterie’s stage, January 22 – February 10, 2019.

THE PLAY

The U.S. military recorded over 250 cases of women who fought in the Union Army disguised as men. At least three African American women are known to have fought in “colored” regiments. Cases of Confederate women who fought in disguise are also known. ***Secret Soldiers: Heroines in Disguise*** details the true accounts of four brave women who, for varying reasons, served as men during the Civil War. The interactive drama begins with the audience being sworn in as medical officers who are asked to advise a nurse who has been treating a woman injured in combat fighting as a man. The nurse is faced with the dilemma of recording her patient’s alias or revealing her true identity, knowing severe consequences may follow. The audience assists as she faces a decision that will forever change lives. Woven into the story of this unique and interactive play are a look at the early suffrage movement, as well as the formation of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment - the first African American regiment in U.S. history - and Harriet Tubman.

Told through a series of interlocking stories, ***Secret Soldiers*** incorporates the audience into the performance, continuing The Coterie’s tradition of bringing prominent historical moments to life through unique live interactive productions. Like the previously-staged true stories of the Salem Witch Trials, Rosa Parks, and the Little Rock Nine, The Coterie’s production of ***Secret Soldiers*** will encourage thought-provoking conversation, both during the performance as the actors engage the audience from the stage as well as long after the performance is over. Written for middle and high school ages, ***Secret Soldiers*** is an inventive and captivating introduction to the long history of the suffrage movement.

The Coterie’s production of ***Secret Soldiers: Heroines in Disguise*** will run approximately 65 minutes with no intermission and will be best appreciated by families with ages ten and older. The show is a co-production with UMKC Theatre and is produced in community partnership with Girls on the Run. The Coterie is funded in part by the Missouri Arts Council, ArtsKC Fund, and Theater League.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Secret Soldiers is written by Wendy Lement, playwright and the co-founder of [Theatre Espresso](#), where ***Secret Soldiers*** was originally produced. The company creates interactive dramas that bring historical debates and dilemmas to life for students to foster a generation of involved citizens. Lement’s plays *The Nine Who Dared: Courage in Little Rock* and *And Justice for Some: The Freedom Trial of Anthony Burns* were previously produced by The Coterie. Like the company’s other pieces, ***Secret Soldiers*** also challenges students to make critical judgments, explore social relationships, and reflect on the role of law and human rights in our society. Since 1992, Theatre Espresso has toured their plays to schools, museums, and courthouses, primarily in Massachusetts. The plays are linked both to the curriculum and to exhibits at selected sites. They also provide workshops, teacher training, and curriculum materials for teachers and students. In

2012, Theatre Espresso was awarded a “Challenge America Grant” from the National Endowment for the Arts. And in 2013, the company received a citation from the Massachusetts State Senate.

THE ARTISTS

The cast of ***Secret Soldiers*** will feature Freddy Acevedo (as Newspaper Report #1/Army Doctor/Private Perry Wilder/Maj. Edwin P. Davis), Yetunde Felix-Ukwu (as Nurse Hughes/Harriet Tubman/Mary Lewis/Barmaid), Jason Francescon (as Dr. William Hire), Khalif Gillett (as Joseph O. Cassell), Emilie Karas (as Sarah Wakeman), Chelsea Kinser (as Nurse Bartlett/Celeste/Sarah Emma Edmonds), Marianne McKenzie (as Nurse Jacobs/Lois/Loreta Janeta Velazquez), and Roan Ricker (as Floyd Matthews/Sgt. William Austin). The artistic and production company includes Jeff Church (co-director), Bree Elrod (co-director), Danielle Renee (production stage manager), Scott Hobart (Coterie technical director), Hunter Andrews (UMKC Technical Director), Kelli Harrod (set designer), Stephen Jarvis (sound designer), Bryce Foster (lighting designer), Jordan New (costume designer), Lee Barker (properties/set dressing), Zoe Spangler (master electrician), Bree Elrod (assistant director), Zan deSpelder (assistant lighting designer), Christian Taylor (scenic charge artist), Zoie Perahoritis (Coterie production assistant), and Sheridan McKinley (UMKC Production Assistant).

A CO-PRODUCTION

Secret Soldiers 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 *The Secret of Courage* in 2018. 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.

IN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

The Coterie will produce ***Secret Soldiers*** in community partnership with [Girls on the Run](#), a nonprofit organization and positive youth development program for girls 3rd through 8th grade. More than 4,000 girls in the greater Kansas City area will participate with Girls on the Run in 2019. The 10-week program is led by more than 800 trained volunteer coaches and takes the girls through lessons such as banning negative self-talk, the dangers of gossip, healthy eating habits, and a community service project, to name a few. Each spring and fall season concludes with the Girls on the Run 5K, a non-competitive celebration of the girls’ achievements. *Why it matters:* Girls’ self-confidence begins to drop by age nine, 50% of girls ages 10-13 experience bullying, and

physical activity levels decline at age 10 and continue to decrease throughout adolescence. Girls on the Run combats these and many other challenges young girls face by teaching them to be joyful, healthy, and confident. [Find out how to bring Girls on the Run to your school.](#)

SHOW DATES, TIMES & TICKETS

The Coterie, now in its 40th Season and named “One of the Five Best Theaters for Young Audiences in the U.S.” by *TIME* magazine, will perform ***Secret Soldiers: Heroines in Disguise*** January 22 – February 10, 2019, 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 25, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.

Individual Tickets: Tickets are \$12.00 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 Pass, which works like a season ticket without committing to a set schedule. Spotlight Pass holders pay \$110.00 for a flexible pass that includes 10 tickets that can be used for any show or combination of the shows remaining in the 2018/2019 Season.

Group Pricing: The Coterie offers groups of 20 or more a special preview rate of \$5.00 per person the first week of each production. After preview week, groups pay only \$5.00 - \$8.00 per person depending on performance date.


All tickets and Spotlight 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.



Pictured: Left: Roan Ricker (as Private Floyd Matthews) and Emilie Karas (as Sarah Wakeman a.k.a. Private Lyon Wakeman). Middle: Emilie Karas (as Sarah Wakeman a.k.a. Private Lyon Wakeman). Right: Khalif J. Gillett (as Joseph O. Cassell) and Yetunde Felix-Ukwu (as Harriet Tubman). Photos by J. Robert Schraeder.

Performance Calendar

**SECRET SOLDIERS:
Heroines in Disguise**

JANUARY 22 - FEBRUARY 10, 2019						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		22 9:45 am	23 9:45 am	24 9:45 am 11:45 am	25 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm 	26 2 pm
27 2 pm	28	29 9:45 am 11:45 am	30 9:45 am 11:45 am	31 9:45 am 11:45 am	1 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	2 2 pm 
3 2 pm	4	5 9:45 am 11:45am	6 9:45 am 11:45 am	7 9:45 am 11:45 am	8 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	9 2 pm
10 2 pm						



Secret Soldiers will feature a unique **interactive forum** built into every performance exploring the play's themes, **plus a Q&A** to follow each performance.

CALENDAR LEGEND



Opening Night



Interpreted performance in American Sign Language

NOTABLE PERFORMANCE EXTRAS

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

- **All Performances:** *Secret Soldiers* features a unique interactive forum built into every performance exploring the play's themes, plus a Q&A to follow each performance.
- **Friday, January 25 9, 7:00 p.m.: Opening Night Celebration.** A free post-performance reception with the director, company, staff, and board of directors.
- **Saturday, February 2, 2:00 p.m.: Interpreted performance** in American Sign Language.

When available, production photos will be posted online at:

www.thecoterie.org/press-room

THE REMAINING 2018/2019 SEASON

Following *Secret Soldiers*, The Coterie's 40th Anniversary Season continues with a musical retelling of the beloved *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, February 26 – March 31, 2019; the stage adaptation of the Netflix series featuring music made famous by The Beatles, *Beat Bugs: A Musical Adventure*, April 16 – May 19, 2019; and the return of one of The Coterie's all-time audience favorites, Mo Willems' *Elephant and Piggie's "We are in a Play!"*, June 11 – August 4, 2019.

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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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