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Ilesa Duncan Joins Lifeline Theatre as Artistic Director **Beginning January 2019**

CHICAGO - Lifeline Theatre welcomes **Ilesa Duncan** as artistic director beginning January 2019. Reporting directly to Lifeline's Board of Directors and working in partnership with Managing Director **Allison Cain**, Duncan will be responsible for stewarding the vision of the artistic ensemble, engaging and inspiring Lifeline's extended family, seeking out meaningful collaborative opportunities and upholding the mission of the organization. Duncan succeeds **Dorothy Milne**, who has served as artistic director since 1999 and will continue in the role until Duncan's duties commence in January 2019. Duncan joins the Lifeline artistic ensemble immediately and Milne will continue as a member of the artistic body following her departure from her artistic director role. Meanwhile, Lifeline's 2018-19 season will open with the world premiere MainStage production of *Frankenstein* (running September 7–October 8) and the KidSeries production of *Bunnacula* (running October 20–November 25).

Duncan is a producer, director, writer, educator and theater-maker who has been Pegasus Theatre's executive artistic director since 2013, and producer of the Young Playwrights Festival since 2006. An avid collaborator of new work, her recent directing credits include Lifeline's Jeff Recommended *Neverwhere* (2018), *Shakin' The Mess Outta Misery* (Jeff Nominated), *Rutherford's Travels* (Jeff Nominated, co-adapter), *The Green Book*, *For Her as a Piano*, and *Blacula: Young, Black & Undead* at Pegasus; *Broken Fences* at 16th Street Theater; the Jeff Award-nominated *The Nativity* with Congo Square; and the Jeff Award-winning *Jar the Floor* at ETA Creative Arts. Duncan has also worked with Goodman Theatre, Writers Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, Stage Left, and Chicago Dramatists, as well as Contemporary American Theatre Company (Ohio), The Alliance Theatre (Atlanta), Arena Stage (Washington DC), and Lincoln Center Theater (New York). As an educator, Duncan has led youth development and arts education programs in Chicago for over twelve years. Duncan is a past awardee of an NEA/TCG Directing fellowship and a Ragdale's Fellow with 3Arts. She is member of the Lincoln Center Theatre Director's Lab and the Chicago Director's Lab, and she is an associate artist with Chicago Dramatists (where she previously served as education and community engagement director).

"I'm elated to join Lifeline and work with this incredible board, staff and ensemble," said Duncan. "I look forward to celebrating the theatre's amazing history while cultivating future hopes, dreams and journeys."

Managing Director Allison Cain said, "After working with Ilesa as a guest artist in the past, we are delighted to welcome her to the ensemble and to the artistic director position at Lifeline. Her long-time engagement with new work, her experience with all aspects of theatre administration, her passion for youth programming, and her collaborative spirit all make her a perfect match as we work to ensure that we continue our legacy of artistic excellence and educational and community partnerships in our neighborhood of Rogers Park and the city at large."

Now entering its 36th season, Lifeline Theatre is driven by a passion for story. Our ensemble process supports writers in the development of literary adaptations and new work, and our theatrical and educational programs foster a lifelong engagement with literature and the arts. A cultural anchor of Rogers Park, we are committed to deepening our connection to an ever-growing family of artists and audiences, both near and far. Lifeline Theatre – Big Stories, Up Close.

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