

Nineteenth Season

TENNESSEE REPERTORY THEATRE

David Grapes, Producing Artistic Director

THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK

a play by **Frances Goodrich & Albert Hackett**
newly adapted by **Wendy Kesselman**

Director

Brant Pope**

Assistant Director

Kel Haney

Scenic Design

Gary C. Hoff

Lighting Design

Chris Wilson

Properties Master

Steven Lepley

Costume Design

Polly Boersig***

Sound Design

Darin F. Karnes

Production Stage Manager

Erin Joy Swank*

Dramaturg

Robert Neblett****

* Member of Actors' Equity Association

**Member Society of Stage Directors & Choreographers

***United Scenic Artist

****Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas

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The Director and Choreographer are members of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.



The Diary of Anne Frank is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.



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This is not the story of Anne Frank.

This is the story of a book. A book that was nearly lost to the ages. A book that survived unspeakable horrors which its author unfortunately did not. A book that stands as a testament of the incredible power of hope and faith in the face of adversity and human cruelty.

In this production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the artistic staff of Tennessee Rep celebrates the words of a young girl whose story has inspired millions.

Gary C. Hoff's scenic design, while attempting to accurately depict the historical geography of the Annex, does not situate the locale within the literal, naturalistic environment of 1940s Amsterdam; instead, the world of the play is surrounded by Anne's words, painstakingly recreated from handwriting samples from her actual diary. Brant Pope's direction is centered around the simple event of the discovery of the book by Anne's father after his return from Auschwitz. Anne's words bring the action to life onstage, and breathe life into the characters who populate the abandoned warehouse behind Mr. Frank's office. And it is this quirky red and white checkered book, so innocuous in its daily entries of family gossip, lessons, and chores during their time in hiding, that teaches us so much

about the human condition at large.

Anne's diary, beloved around the world, recounts only a small part of the story of the Jewish Holocaust and its victims. It is limited in its scope because its narrator is not only speaking in a highly subjective and personal manner, but also because her knowledge of the outside world was restricted by her physical circumstances. Unlike other traditional pieces of Holocaust literature, *The Diary of Anne Frank* does not chronicle the violent horror of the pogroms or the concentration camps, even though Anne herself did tragically die of typhus in Bergen-Belsen in 1945. Instead, it is an examination of eight people forced to coexist in hiding under the strict regime of Nazi oppression, quirky in its humor and unflinching in its honesty. The book ends before the betrayal and capture of the residents of the Secret Annex and only hints at their fates in an epilogue prepared by Otto Frank and an editorial board. It is the product of an adolescent mind, rife with the sexual confusion that accompanies the onset of puberty, the universally-recognizable frustration of a young girl dealing with

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her family, and the naïve wonder of a world that is just beginning to open up as a place of infinite possibilities. However, as unconventional as it may be, the *Diary* is irrefutably the most widely-read work about the Holocaust, not to mention the bestselling nonfiction book in history, after the Bible.

When the acclaimed play by Goodrich and Hackett premiered on Broadway in 1955, followed by a film version in 1959, Anne's story became an international sensation, and sales of the *Diary* skyrocketed. The new adaptation of the play by Wendy Kesselman, which premiered in 1997, incorporates many passages that Otto Frank thought were too harshly critical about his dead wife or explicitly described Anne's own questions about her burgeoning sexuality. It also strives to correct many misconceptions about the Annex and its inhabitants, who in the original were little more than stereotypes who existed to highlight Anne's humanity. The van Daans and Dr. Dussel, especially, are fleshed out in an attempt to reconcile Anne's adolescent impressions with evidence surrounding their historical corollaries, the van Pelses and Dr. Fritz Pfeffer, so that they may become more three-dimensional characters.

It is easy to become humbled by Anne's optimism or Otto's strength of character or

Miep's unassuming modesty and, thus, view them as larger-than-life heroic figures. But if there is anything that Anne's diary teaches us, we all possess the power to do good in this world, despite our very human flaws. In fact, her diary suggests it is precisely because of those flaws that we are truly human.

On a personal note, working on this production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* has resulted in a much richer experience than I ever felt possible when I signed on to participate in this project. Poring

through the innumerable volumes of research, including many chilling firsthand accounts of the Holocaust and the events contained within Anne's writings, I have wept many times to think of what we — all of us — are capable of doing during times of turmoil. And there will come a time when we

must choose which path we will take. I must ask myself, will I be a person who sinks in despair and succumbs to the negative pressures around me, becoming in essence a collaborator with evil through my own apathy? Or will I, like Anne, even in the most private manner, do what I can to seek out truth and, "in spite of everything, believe that people truly are good at heart"?

— Robert L. Neblett,
Production Dramaturg

