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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THE WORLD PREMIERE CONCERT FILM OF
*F*CK7THGRADE* BEGINS STREAMING ON JANUARY 25th**

Singer/Songwriter Jill Sobule Shares Her Rock & Roll Life Story On Screen



Performers: Jill Sobule, Kristen Henderson, Sarah Siplak, and Julie Wolf

Pittsburgh, PA (January 10, 2021): As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to prevent a safe return to indoor performances, City Theatre is **excited to announce the world premiere concert film of *F*ck7thGrade*.**

*F*ck7thGrade* began its journey at City Theatre three years ago when Associate Artistic Director and dramaturg **Clare Drobot** met singer/songwriter **Jill Sobule** in New York. City Theatre paired Ms. Sobule with playwright **Liza Birkenmeier**, who wrote the book for the show, and workshopped and presented what would become *F*ck7thGrade* in the theater's 2018 Momentum Festival of New Plays.

After adding OBIE Award-winning director **Lisa Peterson** and music director **Julie Wolf** to the creative team, the show was further developed at the Colorado New Play Festival in Steamboat Springs and at Actor's Express in Atlanta, supported by the National New Play Network.

The world premiere production was slated as the final show of City Theatre's 2019/20 season when the Covid-19 pandemic stopped live performances across the country. The team at City Theatre created an outdoor, drive-in venue at Hazelwood Green and staged the concert version of the show over three nights in front of an invited audience. Videographers **Mickey and Molly Miller** of **Human Habits** captured the show live and served as editors, working closely with the directors, sound engineer Brad Peterson, and City Theatre's artistic staff to create this theatrical, multi-camera concert film.

In addition to Ms. Sobule in the starring role, the film features performances by musicians **Kristen Henderson** (founder of the band Antigone Rising), Ms. Wolf (Indigo Girls, Ani DiFranco, Carly

Simon, and others), and Pittsburgh-based actor and musician **Sarah Siplak** (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, City Theatre, 2003).

“We are thrilled to finally be able to share *F*ck7thGrade* with audiences,” said Associate Artistic Director Clare Drobot. “After three years in development, it was beyond inspiring to see the ingenuity, perseverance, and dedication from the artists, creative team, City staff, and production crew who made the drive-in concerts possible. Against all odds, we came together to create a rock’n’roll concert odyssey in the midst of a pandemic. We are so excited for its release.”

Following strict safety protocols, including physical distancing, PPE, and testing, City Theatre deployed a “creative bubble” approach, allowing the artists to adapt the show for a concert presentation and rehearse over three weeks in August. The organization, in consultation with Allegheny Health Network, developed a comprehensive plan covering all aspects of the process, from travel and housing to performances. This plan was one of the first developed by any theater in the nation.

*F*ck7thGrade* will be available for streaming on-demand beginning **Monday, January 25, 2021**. Ticket-holders are invited to a virtual premier “watch” party that evening beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Filmed live at the Drive-In Stage at Hazelwood Green, the creative team includes: **Julie Wolf** (Music Director), **Rachel Hauck** (Scenic Design), **Madison Hack** (Costume Design), **Cat Wilson** (Lighting Design), **Zachary Beattie-Brown** (Sound Design), **Jinah Lee** (Stage Manager), **Clare Drobot** (Dramaturg), and **Human Habits** (Videographers).

City Theatre **Board President Alex Condron, and his wife Tonja**, provided critical support for the project and are its Production Sponsors. Additionally, City Theatre received funding from the **Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation**, **The Heinz Endowments**, and the **Richard King Mellon Foundation** to support the creation of the Drive-In Stage at Hazelwood Green.

TICKETS & PRICING

Digital tickets for *F*ck7thGrade* are “pick-your-price” and start at just \$15 (per household) for at-home viewing, available to watch at any time.

More information and tickets are available at CityTheatreCompany.org. Tickets go on sale January 25, 2021. Those who previously held tickets to *F*ck7thGrade* as part of the 2019/2020 season will automatically receive access to the digital production. New subscribers not previously ticketed to attend *F*ck7thGrade*, with on-account funds, can now reserve tickets online. For more information visit CityTheatreCompany.org or call the box office.

For phone sales or other questions, the box office is currently open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10:00am to 3:00pm; and Wednesdays from 12:00pm to 5:00pm. Call 412-431-CITY (2489).

ABOUT *F*ck7thGrade*:

Music, Lyrics & Concept by Jill Sobule

Book by Liza Birkenmeier

Directed by Lisa Peterson

Starring: Jill Sobule, Kristen Henderson, Sarah Siplak, and Julie Wolf.

In this world premiere concert film, award-winning singer-songwriter Jill Sobule —whose 1990's hits include "Supermodel" and the original "I Kissed a Girl" —takes audiences through a Rock & Roll celebration of coming of age and coming out.

Run Time: 80 minutes.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS:



JILL SOBULE (Music, Lyrics, Concept, Performer) In 12 albums and nearly three decades of recording, Jill Sobule has mused on topics such as the death penalty, anorexia, shoplifting, reproduction, the French resistance movement, adolescence, and the Christian right. Early hit songs included “I Kissed a Girl”—the first song about a lesbian romance ever to crack the Billboard Top 20—and 90s alt-rock anthem “Supermodel,” which was featured in an iconic scene in the film *Clueless*. Jill has shared stages with the likes of Billy Bragg, Cyndi Lauper, X, Warren Zevon, Jackson Browne, Paul McCartney, and Neil Young. Her latest record, *Nostalgia Kills* was on many critics "best" list.

Over the years, Jill has been active in numerous social and political causes, performing at prisons as part of Wayne Kramer’s Jail Guitar Doors project, playing dates with Lady Parts Justice’s “Vagical Mystery Tour,” and curating Monster Protest Jamz Volume 1, featuring protest songs by Tom Morello, Billy Bragg, Amanda Palmer, Jackson Browne, and many other great artists—as well as Jill’s own pre-2016 election song, “When They Say We Want Our America Back, What the F#@k Do They Mean?,” which traces the history of anti-immigrant sentiment in America.

In November 2020, she was featured, singing as herself, in an episode of *The Simpsons*. She felt she finally made it!



LIZA BIRKENMEIER (Book) is excited to return to City Theatre. She graduated from the CMU Dramatic Writing MFA program in 2012, and in 2017, her play *radio island* was part of City’s Momentum Festival. She now lives in Brooklyn and was recently Tow Playwright in Residence at Ars Nova, where her play *Dr. Ride’s American Beach House* premiered last November. She has been a Relentless Finalist, on the Kilroys List, and is a Macdowell and Yaddo Fellow.



LISA PETERSON (Director) is a two-time OBIE award winning director and writer. She created and co-wrote *An Iliad* with Denis O'Hare, based on Homer's epic poem. She also recently directed their second collaboration, *The Good Book*, at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Last summer, she reimaged and remounted her musical adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, with music by David Bucknam and Adam Gwon, at New York Stage & Film. In addition to many classic plays, Lisa has directed the premieres of new works by Tony Kushner, Beth Henley, Donald Margulies, Naomi Wallace, Caryl Churchill, Janusz Glowacki, Marlane Meyer, Culture Clash, Jose Rivera and many others at theaters including New York Theater Workshop, The Public, Vineyard, MTC, Primary Stages, Mark Taper Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Guthrie, Actors Theater of Louisville, Berkeley Rep, McCarter, Arena Stage, OSF, and many more.



SARAH SIPLAK (Bass, Viola) is a musician, actor and community activist. She and her husband Scott are the primary members of The Wreckids, a folk-comedy duo. She is also a singer, violist and instrumentalist for many Pittsburgh-based bands. In 2003, she played Yitzhak in City Theatre's production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. She has a BS in Music Therapy from Duquesne University and spends much of her time encouraging her aspiring musician son, Wyatt, to play music and perform.



KRISTEN HENDERSON (Drums, Percussion) (or Kristen Ellis-Henderson) is a founding member, guitarist, and songwriter for the all-female popular rock band Antigone Rising. She is also the author of a memoir, *Times Two, Two Women in Love and The Happy Family They Made* (Free Press/Simon & Schuster). In 2013, Kristen and her bandmates founded a nonprofit, Girls Rising (girlsrising.org) to empower and inspire girls and LGBTQ youth to pursue careers in STEAM. The band has performed outreach workshops in schools and community centers around the country as well as the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and Mexico. Kristen maintains a blog, *Hangin' with Hendo*, where she voices opinions simply by telling her own personal stories on politically charged issues like same sex adoption and marriage equality. She and her wife, Sarah Kate Ellis-Henderson, are vocal advocates on LGBTQ issues, especially marriage and family equality. In 2013, Kristen made the BuzzFeed's *Most Powerful LGBT Icons and Allies* list alongside The Pope, Madonna, President Obama, Edie Windsor, and Elton John.



JULIE WOLF (Music Director, Keys, Guitar) is a music producer, multi-instrumentalist, composer, music director, and teacher. Over the last 30+ years, she has appeared on stages around the world and on numerous critically acclaimed recordings. She has collaborated with Carly Simon, Indigo Girls, Ani DiFranco, Jill Sobule, Maceo Parker, Bruce Cockburn, Sia, Amy Ray, Dar Williams, Eliza Gilkyson, Rumer, and Allison Miller among many others. She has music directed with Berkeley Repertory Theatre (World Premiere of Todd Almond's *Girlfriend*); California Shakespeare Theater; Actors Theatre of Louisville; La Jolla Playhouse; and, most recently, she was honored with a 2015 L.A. Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical Direction for her work in the Center Theatre Group/Kirk Douglas Theatre production of *Girlfriend* (book by Todd Almond, music by Matthew Sweet, directed by Les Waters). Her original music for the 2009 documentary *Sweet Crude* was nominated for Best Original Score at the Maverick Movie Awards and received special mention in *Variety*. Julie lives in Oakland, California and runs Julie Wolf Music. Recent producing credits include composer/jazz drummer Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom release *Glitter Wolf*; The Lost American Jazzbook's *Taxonomy of Pleasure*; songwriter Katie Cash's *Gift Horse*; and more. Julie also teaches music and production clinics, workshops and private students.

ABOUT CITY THEATRE:

Founded in 1975, City Theatre is in its 46th season as Pittsburgh's home for bold new plays. Located in the historic South Side on its four-building cultural campus, the company produces a season of regional and world premieres; its renowned Young Playwrights Festival, celebrating its 21st year; a season-long reading series of new works in progress; and the annual Momentum Festival. City Theatre's mission is to provide an artistic home for the development and production of contemporary plays of substance and ideas that engage and challenge a diverse audience. With a pre-Covid annual average operating budget of \$3 million, City is the largest performing arts organization not located in Pittsburgh's downtown Cultural District and is a constituent and core member of the League of Resident Theaters (LORT), Theatre Communications Group (TCG), and the National New Play Network (NNPN). Marc Masterson returned as Artistic Director in July 2018, after an 18-year absence, to join Managing Director James McNeel as co-leaders of the organization.

*Like all almost all performing arts organizations, City Theatre was forced to halt its 2019-2020 season on March 12, 2020 due to the Covid-19 national crisis. Its modified 46th season began in September with a reimagined line-up of shows, including the creation of a live, outdoor drive-in theatrical experience at Hazelwood Green. Over the course of seven weeks, City Theatre provided more live performances – including presenting 11 local organizations and groups, as well as Manual Cinema's *Frankenstein* – than any other Pittsburgh organization. The 2020-21 season has continued this winter with virtual content and productions, including *Claws Out: A Holiday Drag Musical*, *F**k7thGrade* by Jill Sobule & Liza Birkenmeier, and the 21st Young Playwrights Festival. City Theatre looks to return to in-person performances when safe and allowed by health officials.*

City Theatre has received significant general operating support and/or recent Covid emergency funding from the Allegheny Regional Asset District, The Heinz Endowments, Hillman Family Foundations, Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the Shubert Foundation.

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