“Alias Grace” will play in the Clarence Brown Theatre’s Carousel Theatre September 26 – October 14. Based on the novel by Margaret Atwood, the production-- adapted for the stage by Jennifer Blackmer and directed by Karen Kessler--premiered at Chicago’s Rivendell Theater in 2017 and has since earned a Chicago Joseph Jefferson 2018 nomination for “Best New Play Adaptation.” The production is sponsored by the Clayton Foundation with support from the Tennessee Arts Commission and the Mildred Haines and William Elijah Morris Lecture Endowment Fund. Media sponsors are WUOT, WUTK, B97.5, the Daily Beacon, and the Knoxville News Sentinel.

A Young Professionals pre-show coffee and cookies reception with the playwright will take place prior to the Sunday, September 30 matinee performance. Following the matinee performance, a special talk back/panel discussion with the playwright and other expert panelists in the fields of Sociology, Criminology and Law will take place. The Open Captioned performance is Sunday, October 14 at 2:00 pm.

In this adaptation of Atwood’s acclaimed novel, “Alias Grace” takes a look at one of Canada’s most notorious murderers. In 1843, 16-year-old Grace Marks was accused of brutally murdering her employer and his housekeeper. Imprisoned for years, Grace still swears she has no memory of the killings. A doctor in the emerging field of mental health arrives to try to find out the truth of the matter.

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist, inventor, teacher and environmental activist. She has published seventeen books of poetry, sixteen novels, ten books of non-fiction, eight collections of short fiction, eight children’s books, and one graphic novel, as well as a number of small press editions of poetry and fiction. She has won numerous awards and honors including the Man Booker Prize, Arthur C. Clarke Award, Governor General’s Award, and the National Book Critics and PEN Center USA Lifetime Achievement Awards. Most recently, both “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “Alias Grace” have been made into very popular televised miniseries.

“Ms. Atwood is a brilliant writer and created a brilliant character in Grace. Jennifer Blackmer also is a brilliant writer who rigorously and doggedly sifted through the book and created a script that is a theatrical distillation of this novel. I am the one lucky enough to be given the chance to bring Grace’s story to life,” said Director Karen Kessler.

Jennifer Blackmer (Playwright) is the 2015 PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre Emerging American playwright. Based in the Midwest, she is a Professor of Theatre and Associate Provost for Entrepreneurial Learning at Ball State University. Her plays have been seen in New York, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Berkeley and St. Louis, and her work has been developed by Seven Devils, Activate Midwest, Nashville's Ingram New Works Lab, Illinois Shakespeare Festival and The Lark. Jennifer's screenplay for “Human Terrain” is a 2016 winner of the Tribeca Film Institute/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Filmmaker Fund. Her work has been a finalist for the David Charles Horn Prize for Emerging Playwrights (Yale Drama Competition), the Fratti-Newman Political Play Contest, the
Firehouse Festival of New American Theatre, the O’Neill National Playwrights’ Conference and Jennifer was shortlisted for the Princess Grace Award and the Shakespeare's Sister Fellowship.

Karen Kessler (Director) returns to the Clarence Brown Theatre where she previously directed “Hank Williams: Lost Highway.” She directed the world premiere of “Alias Grace” at Rivendell Theatre in Chicago, a company that she helped found almost 25 years ago. She is an ensemble member of Chicago’s A Red Orchid Theatre Company. Other Chicago credits include: The Underpants by Steve Martin, War by Roddy Doyle, A Number by Carol Churchill, and Hamlet. She also has directed at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, the Connecticut Repertory Theatre; and at the Northern Stage Ensemble in Newcastle, UK. Karen is a professor of directing and Shakespeare at Ball State University.

The production features visiting guest actors, UT faculty, graduate and undergraduate Theater students.

Visiting guest actor Katie Norwood Alley (Mrs. Rachel Lavell) is an alumnus of the UT Theatre program. She co-founded The Actors Co-op and co-created eight seasons of productions. She was last seen playing Katherine in the CBT’s “The Secret Rapture” in 2008. Currently, she teaches and directs the talented students at Bearden High School.

Visiting guest actor Tim Decker (Jeremiah) is delighted to make his CBT debut. He has performed at the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, The Goodman Theater, and The Apollo Theatre. Film and TV work include the soon to be released feature film “Slice” with Chance the Rapper, “Chicago Med” (NBC) “Chicago Fire” (NBC) “Empire” (FOX) and two seasons on “Boss” (STARZ).

UT Theater faculty, graduate and undergraduate actors include: Brian Gligor (Simon Jordon); Collin Andrews (Thomas Kinnear); Emily Cullum (Mary Whitney); Emily Helton (Nancy Montgomery); Brady Moldrup (James McDermott); and Brenda Orellana (Grace Marks).

The creative team for this production includes: Erin Reed (Costume Designer); UT MFA candidate Becca Johnson (Scenic Designer); visiting guest designers Joe Court (Sound Designer) and Jordan Vera (Lighting Designer); Kathy Logelin (Text/Dialect Coach); John Sipes (Fight Choreographer); and Casey Sams (Intimacy Director). Also contributing to the production is Delaynie Rizer (Stage Manager).

The Previews for “Alias Grace” are Wednesday, September 26 and Thursday, September 27 followed by Opening Night Friday, September 28. The production runs through October 14. The Clarence Brown Theatre only sells tickets online through Knoxville Tickets. For tickets, call the Clarence Brown Theatre Box Office at 865-974-5161 or order online 24/7 at www.clarencebrowntheatre.com

With a dual mission to train the next generation of theatre artists and to provide top quality professional theatre, the Clarence Brown Theatre at the University of Tennessee Knoxville is one of only 12 academic LORT (League of Resident Theatre) institutions in the nation. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Calvin MacLean and Managing Director Tom Cervone, the CBT season runs from September through May and features eight productions ranging from musicals to drama.

For more information, tickets or accessibility accommodation requests including Open Captioning, American Sign Language, and assistive technologies, please call the CBT Box Office at 865-974-5161 or visit us online at clarencebrowntheatre.com/access. Stay Connected to the Clarence Brown Theatre on Facebook (Clarence Brown Theatre), follow us on Twitter (@ClarenceBrown) (#CBT1819Season), Instagram (@clarencebrowntheatre) and view Clarence Brown videos on YouTube (Clarence Bro).