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Full Casting Announced for Washington Ensemble Theatre's Production of *The Nether*, Jennifer Haley's Striking Play about the Tension between Technology and the Human Condition

April 27 - May 14, 2018

By Jennifer Haley

Directed by Bobbin Ramsey

(Wednesday, March 28, 2018 — SEATTLE) **Washington Ensemble Theatre** has announced full casting for the Seattle premiere of ***The Nether***, Jennifer Haley's award-winning play that asks: What responsibility do humans have for one another as we dive deeper and deeper into a technology-centered world? Featuring a stellar cast, including **Pilar O'Connell** as Morris and **James Weidman** as Sims/Papa, *The Nether* is part crime drama, part haunting sci-fi thriller about a futuristic and disturbing virtual wonderland that provides sensory immersion devoid of consequence for its users. WET's lead producer and casting director **Bobbin Ramsey** directs this thoughtful and unsettling tale that amplifies the ways anonymity allows a human being to be someone (or something) else behind a literal and metaphorical pane of glass.

"What excites me the most about *The Nether* is the questions it asks about our responsibility as individuals in relation to the power of the virtual world," said director **Bobbin Ramsey**. "For me, this is not a play about pedophilia. It's a play about the power of technology and how we respond to these digital advances as empathetic beings. In a future where virtual reality is so similar to the world we know, how do we build rules, ethics, and definitions of 'real' and not? And how do our relationships take on new forms when we can be whoever we want to be, who we've always dreamt of being, and the person inside of us we were always afraid to reveal?"

The Nether plays **April 27 - May 14, 2018** at **12th Avenue Arts** (1620 12th Avenue in Capitol Hill). Tickets range from \$15 - \$25 and are on sale now at www.washingtonensemble.org.

What happens when you let your desire and darkest secrets run wild? Detective Morris must investigate and expose an interactive playground world where unforgivable sexual fantasies are enjoyed by men who

feel they can't live without them. *The Nether* tackles both the seductive pull of the morally ambiguous virtual world and the science fiction future of intimacy. It will have you squirming in your seats.

About the Cast

Pilar O'Connell makes her WET debut as Morris. She is a performer, director, and casting director from Santa Fe, New Mexico who graduated from Cornish College of the Arts in 2012. Locally, she has worked with Seattle Repertory Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Wooden O, Sandbox Collective, The Icicle Creek New Play Festival, Ese Teatro, ACTlab, Seattle Public Theatre, Forward Flux Productions, The 1448 Projects, Annex Theatre, Theater Schmeater, Live Girls, and Playing in Progress. She is currently on the casting staff at Forward Flux Productions, Seattle Public Theater and Theater Schmeater. Pilar is a proud Latinx Theatre artist who is constantly working for gender, racial and body equity on and off stage.

James Weidman returns to the WET stage as Sims/Papa. He has previously performed with WET in *Love Horse*, *Every Five Minutes*, and *Monstrosity* (co-produced with the University of Washington). Two decades on Seattle stages include ten *Twilight Zone* episodes at Schmeater, six school tours with Book-It All Over, and company membership at Annex. Most recently James was seen as a Blue Meanie and a Harbor Seal at 1448. James couldn't do this without the support of his family and the love of Pamala, Harriet and Hugo.

Kevin Kelly* returns to the WET stage as Woodnut. He is a member of Washington Ensemble Theatre and was last seen in their production of *Teh Internet is Serious Business*. For the past two years he has performed locally with Seattle Shakespeare Company in *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Government Inspector*, and *The Comedy of Errors*, at ACT Theatre in *Fool for Love*, and ArtsWest in *Death of a Salesman* and *Violet*. Favorite roles have included Hal in Strawberry Theatre Workshop's *Proof* and Run in Theater Schmeater's *Money and Run*. He has acted and created new work at the Dixon Place Theatre in New York, trained with Black Box Acting and the Improv Olympic Theatre in Chicago, and has worked with the Trinity Rep Theatre in Providence. Kevin is a graduate of Brown University.

Steven Stern makes his WET debut as Doyle. He is a director, actor, teaching artist, and photographer who has performed with Ghost Light Theatricals, 14/48 Projects, Annex, Infinity Box, Seattle Public Theater, Theater Anonymous, Live Girls!, and others. Stern is a teaching artist in the Seattle Public Theater Youth Program, and is married to playwright Jennifer Dice. They have two theatrical offspring, Olivia and Aaron.

Gabriella O'Fallon makes her WET debut as Iris. Outside plenty of student theatre, she makes her first return to a Seattle stage since playing Gladys in Seattle Public Theater's *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. After graduating from Lakeside School this spring, she looks forward to making even more theatre in college.

About the Director

Bobbin Ramsey* is a Seattle-based theatre director and producer. She is a founding member of The Horse in Motion and has directed all their major productions including *Attempts on her Life*, *BrechtFest*, and *Wellesley Girl*. She is also the lead producer and casting director for Washington Ensemble Theatre where she directed *The Things are Against Us* and *Revolt. She said. Revolt again*. Ramsey has worked with a variety of other Seattle companies including ACT Theatre, Intiman, Book-It Repertory, New Century Theatre

Company, and On the Boards, among others. Her first feature film, *DEAD BODY* premiered in 2015 at the New York Horror Film Festival and currently available on multiple VOD platforms. She has a BA from the University of Washington. Upcoming: *The Great Noise* at On the Boards' Northwest New Works Festival.

About the Creative Team

The Nether showcases scenic and projections design by **Tristan Roberson***, lighting design by **Ryan Dunn***, costume design by **Jenn Oaster***, and sound design by **Mariah Brougher**. Additional staff includes **Maggie Rogers*** (assistant director and dramaturg), **Milo Robinson** (properties designer) and **Joceline Wynn*** (stage manager).

*Member of Washington Ensemble Theatre

About the Playwright

Jennifer Haley is a playwright whose work delves into ethics in virtual reality and the impact of technology on our human relationships, identity, and desire. She won the 2012 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for her play, *The Nether*, which premiered with Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles and has been produced off-Broadway, on London's West End, across the US and internationally. Other plays include *Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom*, a horror story about suburban video game addiction, and *Froggy*, a noir thriller with interactive media. Jennifer has worked with the Royal Court Theatre, Headlong, MCC, Sonia Friedman Productions, Woolly Mammoth, the Humana Festival of New Plays, The Banff Centre, Sundance Theatre Lab, O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, Lark Play Development Center, PlayPenn, and Page 73. For television, she has written on Netflix's *Hemlock Grove* and *Mindhunter*. Jen is a member of New Dramatists in New York City and lives in Los Angeles, where she founded the Playwrights Union.

2017/18 Season Sponsors

Special thanks to production sponsors Carlo and Lalie Scandiuzzi. Additional thanks to 4Culture and Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, media sponsor *The Stranger*, and restaurant sponsor Omega Ouzeri.

About Washington Ensemble Theatre

Through collaborative artistic leadership, Washington Ensemble Theatre fearlessly creates audacious stories for adventurous Seattle audiences. A resident company at 12th Avenue Arts in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, WET is committed to maintaining an environment wherein its members, as well as artists from the community, are challenged to grow through its work as an ensemble. For more information about Washington Ensemble Theatre, please visit washingtonensemble.org.

The 2017/2018 Ensemble is Samie Spring Detzer, Jeffrey Azevedo, Maria Manness, Rachel Liuzzi, Bobbin Ramsey, Tristan Roberson, Karla Davenport, Joceline Wynn, Jenn Oaster, Ryan Dunn, Erika Bailey, Maggie Rogers, Sophie Franco, Reiko Huffman, Rachel Guyer-Mafune, Kevin Kelly, and Erin Bednarz.

THE NETHER | Washington Ensemble Theatre

For Calendar Editors

WHEN Opening Night: Friday, April 27, 2018 (press opening)
Closing Day: Monday, May 14, 2018

SHOW TIMES Thursdays - Mondays at 7:30 PM

WHERE 12th Avenue Arts (1620 12th Avenue in Capitol Hill)

TICKETS Please visit www.washingtonensemble.org for tickets ranging \$15-\$25

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