



**PRIME STAGE
THEATRE**

“Where Literature Comes to Life”

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• Prime Stage Theatre receives NEA grant for world premiere of “Speak”

PITTSBURGH — **Prime Stage Theatre** is pleased to announce it has been approved by the National Endowment for the Arts for a Grants for Arts Project award of \$15,000 to support the world premiere play adapted from the novel *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

Published in 1999, *Speak* tells the story of high school freshman Melinda, treated as a pariah by her peers after suffering a sexual assault. Melinda refuses to discuss her experience and then stops talking completely until eventually finding the courage with the support of a teacher to once again “speak” as a whole person.

Ms. Anderson’s novel won numerous awards and has been a perennial best-seller in the young adult genre. It was adapted into a 2004 film starring Kristen Stewart. Prime Stage Theatre commissioned nationally renowned playwright **Laurie Brooks** to create this new and important stage play. Ms. Brooks has received three Distinguished Play Awards and developed plays at The Kennedy Center’s New Visions/New Voices.

“This story about the traumatic effects of rape, bullying and social ostracism has resonated enormously with youth, parents and educators,” says Prime Stage Theatre artistic director **Dr. Wayne Brinda**. “We’ve already had people thanking us for the courage to bring it to the stage.”

Prime Stage Theatre will premiere *Speak* Feb. 28-Mar. 16, 2025 at New Hazlett Theater, presented in collaboration with Pittsburgh Action Against Rape.

“All our plays are presented with a group partner representing the community,” says Brinda. “At the performances of *Speak*, we’ll provide resources and professional guidance on ways teens and adults can cope with serious emotional crisis.”

Prime Stage Theatre received a National Endowment for the Arts grant in 2023 for its world premiere of *Perseverance* based on the memoir of a Pittsburgh Holocaust survivor.

In announcing the grant, NEA Chair **Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson** stated that “Projects like this exemplify the creativity and care with which communities are telling their stories, creating connection and responding to challenges and opportunities in their communities all through the arts.

“So many aspects of our communities such as cultural vitality, health and wellbeing, infrastructure and the economy are advanced and improved through investments in art and design,” she noted. “The National Endowment for the Arts is committed to ensuring that people across the country benefit.”

Since its 1996 founding with the mission of “bringing literature to life”, Prime Stage Theatre has produced over 100 plays and is a national leader in educational theatre.

Prime Stage Theatre’s 2024-25 season includes *Great Expectations* (Nov. 2-10, 2024); *Look Forward: The Ruby Bridges Story* (Jan. 17-26, 2025); *Speak* (Feb. 28-Mar.16, 2025); *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (Apr. 3- 5, 2025); *Twelve Angry Men* (May 2-11, 2025).

“Each of our five plays for this season exemplify themes of strength, voices and hope, with youth and family as a central focus in each,” says Brinda.

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* **For more information on Prime Stage Theatre’s upcoming 2024-25 season** please contact Connie Brinda, Prime Stage Theatre General Manager at (724) 773-0700 or cbrinda@primestage.com