Weber State University Presents a Workshop Production of *Mockingbird*, Which Will Explore Critical Issues Involving Autism and Gun Violence in America’s Schools

*Utahans invited to witness life through the ‘eyes of a young girl with autism’*

Ogden, Utah - March 17, 2014 – The Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities at Weber State University (www.weber.edu/cah) today announced the Department of Performing Arts workshop production, *Mockingbird*, a play by award-winning playwright, Julie Jensen, and directed by Theatre Professor, Tracy Callahan will play to Utah audiences March 27 through April 5, 2014. Commissioned by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the world premiere, also directed by Callahan will take place at the Kennedy Center opening on January 17, 2015 and will run for three weeks in the Kennedy Center Family Theater.

“Because we see the action of the play through the eyes of the young girl with autism, we are offered a powerful perspective into the world she copes with,” said Tracy Callahan, Professor of Theatre at Weber State University. “The State of Utah has one of the highest rates of autism of any location in the country. Our aim with this play is to bring together teachers, community members, civic leaders and parents of children with autism to promote dialogue on these important topics and seek ways we can collaborate with one another to find solutions which promote acceptance and understanding.”

The workshop production of *Mockingbird* is based on an award-winning novel, *Mockingbird*, by Kathryn Erskine. The book depicts the story of Caitlin, a young girl with Asperger’s Syndrome, an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Caitlin encounters a world that for her is very chaotic and threatening. Her resulting anxiety makes it difficult for her to understand others or to be understood. In addition, the young girl must chart a new course after the untimely death of her brother, Devon, whom she had always relied on for help in navigating the world. Now, Caitlin must look to herself. In that process, she comes to learn that the world holds surprises and rewards she did not know were there.

A special community panel is scheduled to be held in conjunction with this performance on Thursday, March 27 at the conclusion of the opening night performance. The intent of the panel is to showcase the various “voices of autism” in our community. Those participating on the panel include:

- Kimberly Jensen, City of Ogden and mother of son with Autism
- Dr. Natalie H. Roth, Doctor of Clinical Psychology
- Laura Anderson, President-Elect Autism Council of Utah
Neil Garner, City of Ogden Councilman, Ward 1

In addition, a special Nurse Appreciation night is scheduled for the Friday, April 4 performance. Nurses are especially invited to this evening and special discounted tickets are available with a current ID.

Tickets are on sale now for the workshop production of *Mockingbird* which opens on Thurs., March 27, 2014 and runs through April 5, 2014. A special daytime performance for local area schools is scheduled for Wednesday, April 2 at 10 a.m. In addition, two matinee performances have been added for March 29 and April 5 at 2 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at (www.weberstatetickets.com) or by phone at 801-626-8500.

For more information and updated details on events surrounding the performances please visit: (www.weber.edu/cah).

**About the Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities**
The Weber State University Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities teaches students to excel as they seek, understand, question and express complexities critical to the experience of being human. The Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities offers five degree programs in the following areas: Communication, English, Foreign Language, Performing Arts and Visual Arts. Master’s degrees also are offered in Communication and English. The college serves nearly 2,000 undergraduate majors and 200 graduate students. The Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities is the Western region’s foremost institution for student-centered teaching and research that investigates the human experience and aims to educate global citizens who are responsible, creative and critical artists, performers and communicators. For more information please visit (www.weber.edu/cah) or online at (www.facebook.com/WSUartsandhumanities).

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