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**Pulitzer Prize–Winning Playwright Ayad Akhtar and Maya Moverman Commissioned by
Milwaukee Repertory Theater to Adapt Pulitzer Prize–Winning Book
Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond**

New Play Commission Deepens Milwaukee Rep’s Commitment to Nurturing Artists and Expanding the American Theater Cannon

EMBARGOED March 5, 2026 at 11am CT (Milwaukee, WI) - [Milwaukee Repertory Theater](#), one of the nation’s first regional theaters and Wisconsin’s largest performing arts organization, announced today a major new commission: ***Evicted***, a stage adaptation by **Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright Ayad Akhtar** and **Maya Moverman**, based on **Matthew Desmond’s** groundbreaking, Pulitzer Prize–winning book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*.

The commission builds on Milwaukee Rep’s longstanding commitment to nurturing the next generation of American theater and expanding the stories represented on stages nationwide through the John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program. Past notable productions to grow out of this program include Lloyd Suh’s *The Heart Sellers* and *Run Bambi Run* by Gordon Gano and Eric Simonson.

Published in 2016, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* became an instant *New York Times* bestseller and one of the most influential works of nonfiction of the decade. Hailed as “wrenching and revelatory” (*The Nation*) and “vivid and unsettling” (*New York Review of Books*), the book follows eight Milwaukee families navigating housing insecurity, exposing the human cost of eviction and the systemic forces that perpetuate poverty in America. Its unforgettable portraits of hope, loss, and resilience have reshaped national conversations around housing justice and public policy. Akhtar and Moverman’s adaptation marks the first major theatrical dramatization of this landmark work.

“*Evicted* is a story born in Milwaukee, and it belongs on a Milwaukee stage,” said Artistic Director **Mark Clements**. “Developing this piece with longtime friend and collaborator Ayad Akhtar and Maya Moverman, ensures that the humanity of this work remains rooted in the community that inspired it. It shows Milwaukee Rep’s dedication to championing new and important work that speaks directly to our city while contributing meaningfully to the national conversation.”

“I was originally drawn to Matthew Desmond’s *Evicted* not only as a playwright, but as someone shaped by Milwaukee,” said **Ayad Akhtar**. “The book captures, with extraordinary clarity and compassion, the human stories behind forces that continue to define American life. Working on *Evicted* is both a return to my hometown and a continuation of my exploration of American identity, inequity, and the forces that shape civic life.”

Native to Milwaukee, Ayad Akhtar has a long relationship with Milwaukee Rep as it is the only regional theater to have produced all of his plays – *Disgraced*, *The Who & The What*, *The Invisible Hand*, *Junk* and onstage now – *McNeal*. He is currently a Trustee of the theater and his debut novel, *American Dervish*, will have its World Premiere in Milwaukee Rep’s 2027/28 Season.

In addition to *Evicted*, over the next two years Milwaukee Rep will produce the World Premiere of Tami Workentin’s *George & Gracie: A Love Story*; Aaron Posner’s *The Cherry Tortured*; Matt Zembrowski’s *MKE MVP*; Katie Bender’s *Instructions for a Séance*; and a new American Premiere by Andrew Bovell. Milwaukee Rep has also commissioned new works from Gloria Majule and Nygel D. Robinson with workshops and premieres planned for upcoming seasons. Led by Artistic Director Mark Clements and Literary Director Annika Perez-Krikorian, the program centers on long-term investment—developing, producing, and shepherding plays beyond their first production and into the national landscape.

Since its launch in 2016, the John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program has supported world premieres by leading playwrights including Dael Orlandersmith, Catherine Trieschmann, Eleanor Burgess, Lloyd Suh, Eric Simonson, Idris Goodwin, Craig Lucas, Andrew Bovell, Antonio Edwards Suarez, Joanna Murray-Smith, Mark Clements, and Deanie Vallone. Several of these productions went on to receive acclaim including Suh’s *The Heart Sellers* which won the 2024 Harold and Mimi Steinberg/ATCA Award and one of the most produced plays in the country for two consecutive seasons; *Antonio’s Song* by Dael Orlandersmith and Antonio Edwards Suarez that transferred to the Goodman Theatre; *Run Bambi Run* by Gano and Simonson which was named one of the 10 Best Productions of 2023 by *The Chicago Tribune*; and *The Craic*, the all-time best-selling show in the theater’s Stackner Cabaret, that is returning in the 2026/27 Season.

For more information about the John (Jack) D. Lewis New Play Development Program, visit www.MilwaukeeRep.com/NewPlays.

About Matthew Desmond

Matthew Desmond is a professor of sociology at Princeton University and the principal investigator of The Eviction Lab. His research focuses on poverty, housing insecurity, public policy, and urban inequality. His book *Evicted* won the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Critics Circle Award, Carnegie Medal, PEN/John Kenneth Galbraith Award, and numerous other honors. A MacArthur “Genius” Fellow and contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine*, Desmond is widely recognized as one of the most influential voices on poverty and housing in America.

About Ayad Akhtar

Ayad Akhtar is a novelist and playwright. His work has been published and performed in over two dozen languages. He is the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Edith Wharton Citation of Merit for Fiction, and an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Akhtar is the author of *Homeland Elegies* (Little, Brown & Co.), which *The Washington Post* called “a tour de force” and *The New York Times* called “a beautiful novel...that had echoes of *The Great Gatsby* and that circles, with pointed intellect, the possibilities and limitations of American life.” His first novel, *American Dervish* (Little, Brown & Co.), was published in over 20 languages. As a playwright, he has written *McNeal* (Lincoln Center, Broadway), *Junk* (Lincoln Center, Broadway; Kennedy Prize for American Drama, Tony nomination); *Disgraced* (Lincoln Center, Broadway; Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Tony nomination); *The Who & The What* (Lincoln Center); and *The Invisible Hand* (NYTW; Obie Award, Outer Critics Circle John Gassner Award, Olivier, and Evening Standard nominations).

Among other honors, Akhtar is the recipient of the Steinberg Playwrighting Award, the Nestroy Award, the Erwin Piscator Award, as well as fellowships from the American Academy in Rome, MacDowell, the Sundance Institute, and Yaddo, where he serves as a Board Director. In 2021, Akhtar was named the New York State Author, succeeding Colson Whitehead, by the New York State Writers Institute. Akhtar is a trustee of Milwaukee Repertory Theater.

About Maya Moverman

Maya Moverman is a New York-based writer. She received her MFA in Creative Writing from The New School in 2023. She previously assisted Ayad Akhtar on his play, *McNeal*, and is currently working on her first novel.

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About Milwaukee Repertory Theater

Milwaukee Rep is the largest performing arts organization in Wisconsin. Its new artistic home, the Associated Bank Theater Center, opened Fall 2025 with three unique performance venues—the Ellen & Joe Checota Powerhouse Theater, Herro-Franke Studio Theater, and Stackner Cabaret. For over seven decades, Milwaukee Rep has been a centerpiece of Milwaukee’s vibrant arts and cultural scene with productions ranging from Broadway musicals to Shakespeare to American Classics and New Works that are entertaining, inclusive and impactful. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mark Clements and Executive Director Chad Bauman, Milwaukee Repertory Theater ignites positive change in the cultural, social and economic vitality of its community by creating world-class theater experiences that entertain, provoke and inspire meaningful dialogue among an audience representative of Milwaukee’s rich diversity. More information visit www.MilwaukeeRep.com

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