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**RIVENDELL THEATRE ENSEMBLE PRESENTS
THE MIDWEST PREMIERE OF *THESE SHINING LIVES*
JANUARY 7 - 31**

**Melanie Marnich's Gripping True Story of Four Women Who Find
Independence, Friendship and Strength While Working at the Radium Dial
Company During the Roaring Twenties**

CHICAGO – Rivendell Theatre Ensemble (RTE) is proud to present the Midwest premiere of Melanie Marnich's *These Shining Lives* running Wednesday, Jan. 7 through Saturday, Jan. 31, 2009 at the West Studio in the Raven Theatre Complex, 6157 N. Clark Street. RTE member Rachel Walshe directs with assistant director and RTE member Shera Street. Single tickets are \$18 and may be purchased at www.rivendelltheatre.net or at 773.334.7728.

During the 1920's, thousands of young women in their teens and twenties found work with extraordinary pay and comfortable working conditions painting watch faces at the Radium Dial Company. Due to soldiers using Radium Dial watches in World War I, the company's hand painted watches were in much demand by Americans. Radium Dial Company became the largest dial painting company in the United States employing more than 1,000 women and producing nearly one million watches each year. *These Shining Lives* chronicles a 10-year span of the real lives and pain of four women employed at the Radium Dial Company in Ottawa, Illinois during the early 20th century.

The women's newly found income, independence and good fortune slowly gave way to a more frightening reality. The product used to paint the dials of the clocks was a mixture of phosphorus and radium called Luna. Although the company fought to hide the fact that the women were being exposed to toxic levels of radiation, the employees' bodies revealed the truth. The women were suffered from debilitating joint pain, bone fractures, infections tumors, anemia and eventually a painful death. With time running out, *These Shining Lives* follows the four women as they gather their remaining strength and bravely file a class action lawsuit to hold the company accountable for its negligence.

Northlight Theatre in Skokie originally commissioned *These Shining Lives*. The Northlight dramaturge who spearheaded the commission, Gavin Witt, now works at Baltimore's CENTERSTAGE where *These Shining Lives* received its world premiere in May 2008.

These Shining Lives brings together many of the Chicago's leading creatives including RTE ensemble members Tara Mallen, producer; Shera Street, assistant director, Diane Fairchild, lighting design and Stephanie Hurovitz as production stage manager. Other members of the design team are Jessica Keuhnau, scenic design; Nick Keenan, sound design; and Ruthanne Swanson, costume design. The cast includes RTE ensemble member Rachel Walshe with Rebecca Spence, Sean Cooper, Justine Turner, Jessie Fisher and Ron Wells.

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Rivendell Theatre Ensemble is a professional theatre company committed to cultivating the talents of women theatre artists and to seeking out innovative plays that explore the unique female experience in an intimate, salon environment. During the past fourteen years, Rivendell has grown to fill an important role in the Chicago theatre community as the only Equity Theatre in Chicago committed to producing works about women.

These Shining Lives at the West Stage in the Raven Theater Complex, runs Wednesday, Jan. 7 – Saturday, Jan. 31. The regular run is Thursday and Friday at 8:30 p.m., Saturday at 4 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$18 and \$15 for students and seniors. There will be an industry night performance Monday, Jan. 19 at 7:30 p.m. with all tickets \$10. Tickets may be purchased at www.rivendelltheatre.net or at 773.334.7728.

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