

Media Release

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For Immediate Release

Contact: JT Buck at jtuck@akronwomanscityclub.org

Rare Agatha Christie PREMIERE leads Coach House Theatre's 90th Season 'Reboot'

Coach House Theatre, which was on the brink of closing earlier this summer, will instead open its 90th Season on September 7th with the regional premiere of Agatha Christie's 'Murder in the Studio', a suite of BBC radio dramas never before seen onstage in this part of the world.

The series is comprised of three short radio dramas, one new one performed each weekend, accompanied by dinner in the elegant ballroom of the Akron Woman's City Club. Each of the three pieces in the series will be directed by a young woman early in her directing career. Show and dinner tickets are available online at www.coachhousetheatre.org or by calling 330-434-7741.

"Could there be a better way to open our 90th Season? Dame Agatha is practically Coach House's resident playwright and has been for decades. To offer our audiences three Christie plays they've never seen is a real thrill," says JT Buck, Coach House's Artistic Director. Buck stepped into the role earlier this summer after Nancy Cates, Coach House's previous Director abruptly resigned.

The scripts comprising 'Murder in the Studio' were written for the BBC and performed during WWII. They were lost during 'the blitz' more than 50 years ago, according to Agatha Christie's estate. They were resurrected in 2013 for a production in Florida. Licensing company Samuel French reissued new versions of the scripts this summer. Coach House is the very first theatre in the world to perform these new editions of the plays, and only the second to perform them since their 'rediscovery'.

For Buck, this production also helps demonstrate his vision for how the theatre can move forward. This involves leveraging the very best assets of both the theatre and its parent organization the Akron Woman's City Club.

"To be able to present them in a unique, live-radio style in the fabulous ballroom with dinner is a dream. And most satisfying is the ability to offer three Akron women, each early in their directing career, a platform to allow their artistic vision to guide the process. This represents the very best of the Akron Woman's City Club's nine-decade legacy as the proud parent of Coach House Theatre."

The first play, a haunting story of ghostly infidelity entitled 'Personal Call' is directed by Miranda Dolson, who most recently directed a sell-out run of the Rocky Horror Show at the Akron Civic.

Weekend two will feature 'Yellow Iris', a 'Hercule Poirot' detective story about a gruesome murder directed by Francine Parr, founder of Akron's Millennial Theatre Project.

The run will conclude with 'Butter in a Lordly Dish', a courtroom drama directed by New World Performance Lab company member Rosilyn Jentner.

Each of the three plays will be accompanied by a dinner crafted for the show by City Club Executive Chef Kris Krieger.

Tickets range in price from \$35-\$40 for non-season ticket holders.

This won't be the first Akron 'premiere' for Coach House's 90th season. All five productions, in fact, are of scripts never before produced in Akron. These include a world premiere holiday show, 'Christmas in Akron', an original musical comedy set in downtown's historic O'Neil's department store penned by Akron native and Hollywood screenwriter Rob Loos.

Buck is also committed to expanding Coach House as a platform for women's voices. In addition to the three directors of 'Murder in the Studio', Buck has hired Kirsten Williams as the theatre's technical director, and is working to ensure that the majority of the theatre's volunteer leadership remains in women's hands. This also means choosing plays with strong women authors and leading characters, as in the theatre's upcoming staging of Daphne du Maurier's 'The Birds' and in the season-closing musical 'Queen of the Mist', a musical about the first woman to traverse Niagara Falls in a barrel of her own design and survive.

"Looking ahead to season 91 and beyond, Coach House can become known regionally as a theatre committed to women's voices in the arts. This can be the Akron Woman's City Club's legacy as a champion of women. We have a long way to go, but by opening the season with three women directing a pioneering female author's work we've made a sincere start. I look forward to this journey."

A list of the remaining shows in Coach House's 90th Season follows:

November 24th – December 24th

“Christmas In Akron”

A new Akron musical!

Book and lyrics by Rob Loos

Music Craig Knudsen

Directed by JT Buck

Diane Diamond, the head copywriter at O’Toole’s Department Store in Downtown Akron, Ohio, is hiding a secret – this year she’s scheduled to direct O’Toole’s Annual Christmas Spectacular with the help of her friends -- sarcastic art director, Roger Hamlin, and the energetic piano player from Men’s shoes, Benjamin “Bevo” Beaverman, who is in love with her. The mere 48 hours they have to launch the production becomes a wild race to find the “talent,” get the show up on its feet, and celebrate the holiday season, while trying to avoid the store’s VP, the bitter Irene Richardson, who wants to shut the whole thing down. Our team, along with some of the craziest acts in Northeastern Ohio, is somehow able to pull it off in one of the most delightful Christmas shows ever.

Part backstage musical, part Christmas celebration, part human comedy, it’s an event for the whole family filled with unforgettable characters and memorable songs. It’s been described as “A CHRISTMAS STORY meets THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER.” Winner of GTC New Play Initiative, CHRISTMAS IN AKRON is destined to be a perennial.

Performances:

Nov. 24, 25 at 7:30pm

Sunday, Nov. 26 2:30

Nov. 30 December 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 21 22, 23 at 7:30pm

December 3, 10, 17, 24 at 2:30pm.

Feb. 22nd – March 11th

The Birds

by Conor McPherson

Directed by Alex J. Nine

Daphne du Maurier's short story, also the basis for Alfred Hitchcock's classic film, is boldly adapted by Conor McPherson—a gripping, unsettling, and moving look at human relationships in the face of societal collapse. In an isolated house, strangers Nat and Diane take shelter from relentless masses of attacking birds. They find relative sanctuary but not comfort or peace; there's no electricity, little food, and a nearby neighbor may still be alive and watching them. Another refugee, the young and attractive Julia, arrives with some news of the outside world, but her presence also brings discord. Their survival becomes even more doubtful when paranoia takes hold of the makeshift fortress—an internal threat to match that of the birds outside.

“Deliciously chilling...spring-loaded with tension...claustrophobic, questioning, frightening; and with a twist.” —Irish Independent. “Never has [McPherson] been more in control...he keeps us on the edge of our seat.” —The Irish Times. “[THE BIRDS] was a powerful piece of theatre and a reminder to me of just how important that story has become...truly frightening...a night in the theatre that should not be missed.” —Tippi Hedren, star of the 1963 Alfred Hitchcock film, *The Birds*.

Performances:

Feb 22, 23, 24 7pm

Feb 25 2:30pm

March 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 7:30pm

March 4, 11 230pm

April 12th-29th

Bach at Leipzig

by Itamar Moses

Directed by JT Buck

Leipzig, Germany — 1722. Johann Kuhnau, revered organist of the Thomaskirche, suddenly dies, leaving his post vacant. The town council invites musicians to audition for the coveted position, among them

young Johann Sebastian Bach. In an age where musicians depend on patronage from the nobility or the church to pursue their craft, the post at a prominent church in a cultured city is a near guarantee of fame and fortune -which is why some of the candidates are willing to resort to any lengths to secure it. BACH AT LEIPZIG is a fugue-like farcical web of bribery, blackmail, and betrayal set against the backdrop of Enlightenment questions about humanity, God, and art.

REVIEWS

"The most stylish and substantive play based on classical music since Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*." – *Ithaca Times*

"A funny, fiercely intelligent romp." – *Los Angeles Times*

"A fleet-footed, quick-witted, brain-teasing farce. It's a joy." – *San Francisco Chronicle*

"If you like super-smart silliness, be ready to laugh until your ribs are sore. A who's-on-first farce full of theatrical trickery and fizzy verbal slapstick." – *The Wall Street Journal*

"A remarkably silly yet intellectually stirring comedy. Deserves to be a minor classic. Reaches for an ineffable beauty and mystery that is hard to shake." – *Queen Anne News*

"Lovely, wise, tender, strong, and the best play I've seen — or can imagine — by a young playwright." – *Chicago Reader*

"An intellectual fun-house of a play. With its wordplay, brainy allusions and virtuoso manipulations of artistic form, it has a 'look-Ma-no-hands' swagger. A poignant meditation on the artistic temperament and the transporting power of music." – *Washington Post*

"Itamar Moses' brainy comedy doesn't settle for cheap laughs, though it has a lot of them. He's got more — much more — on his mind...a look at pride, the meaning and duties of talent, and deep, discursive ruminations on whether music and people can — or should — evolve without spiritual faith." – *Seattle Weekly*

"Moses may be some kind of genius." – *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

"Brilliant. What consistently amazes and delights is not just the wealth but the breadth of the intellectual fencing, which never misses a comedic beat. Moses reveals a remarkable ability to make a complex, intellectual play funny, with the feather-light touch of a modern Moliere." – *Shepherd Express Milwaukee*

Performances:

April 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28 at 7:30

April 15, 22, 29 at 2:30

May 24 - June 10th

Queen of the Mist

A new musical

By Michael John La Chiusa

Directed by JT Buck

Based on an astounding and outrageous true story, Anna Edson Taylor, who, in 1901 at the age of 63, set out to be the first woman to shoot Niagara Falls in a barrel of her own design. Navigating both the treacherous Falls and a fickle public with a ravenous appetite for sensationalism, this unconventional heroine vies for her legacy in a world clamoring with swindling managers, assassins, revolutionaries, moralizing family, anarchists and activists. Convinced that there is greatness in her and determined not to live as ordinary, she sets out to battle her fear and tempt her fate. With a soaring score that incorporates turn of the century themes with Lachish's signature complexity and insight, *Queen of the Mist* is the story of a single great fall, and how one woman risked death so that she could live.