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CITY THEATRE WELCOMES THE HOLIDAYS WITH AN ORIGINAL VIRTUAL DRAG MUSICAL

World Premiere Online Show to Stream December 4 – January 10
Live Interactive Events December 5, 8, 12 & 19

Pittsburgh, PA (November 2, 2020): As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to prevent a safe return to indoor performances, City Theatre is **excited to announce an all-new holiday story created for the digital stage.**

After the success of last year's *Santa's Ted Talk*, City Theatre commissioned playwrights **Monteze Freeland** and **Shua Potter** to create a full-length drag musical. Adding original music by **Douglas Levine**, the trio created *Claws Out: A Holiday Drag Musical* set to hit the digital stage on December 4, 2020, co-directed by **Monteze Freeland** and **Marc Masterson**, starring **Monteze Freeland** and **Shua Potter**.

Originally intended to make its world premiere on stage in the Hamburg Studio this holiday season, City Theatre and the creative team had to re-imagine the show for an online platform as the ongoing pandemic prevents a safe return to indoor performances. Working with union partner SAG/AFTRA and employing an artistic team of media and theatrical designers, *Claws Out* demonstrates a new and original model for how theaters must adapt to make art and serve their communities during the Covid-19 crisis. To overcome one of the many new hurdles facing the sector, City Theatre developed, in consultation with its medical advisors and CDC guidelines, a comprehensive safety plan (including frequent testing) for the project's cast and crew.

"This has been a rough year. But the moments I choose to remember are those that made me laugh," said **Monteze Freeland**, City Theatre Associate Producer. "So, I want others to feel that silly smile creep up and enjoy a small break from the world. *Claws Out* is fun, shady, campy, bawdy, and familiar. It's original but full of iconic pop-culture references that only drag queens can resurrect with no shame. Grab your favorite auntie and have a good time with us this holiday season!"

Claws Out will be available **to stream anytime from December 4 – January 10. Live and interactive virtual events** are also available on **December 5, 12, and 19 at 7:30pm**. Freeland and Potter will host preshow holiday events including crafts, games, and holiday treats (personally delivered to your home by the elves of City Theatre). Each live virtual event will partner with another nonprofit in Pittsburgh.

“Inspired by the show’s creative team and our core values, City is proud to use the virtual production to highlight the work of organizations supporting Pittsburgh’s LGBTQIA+ community. Through the theater’s City Connects program we are partnering with PGH Equality Center, True T PGH, and Proud Haven,” said **Clare Drobot**, City Theatre Associate Artistic Director. “Each live event will highlight a different organization and encourage patrons to engage with their imperative work.”

In a continued effort to keep ticket prices accessible, City Theatre will also offer a **Pay-What-You-Want Virtual Live Event on December 8 with tickets starting at \$5 (plus fees).**

TICKETS & PRICING

Digital tickets for *Claws Out* are “pick your price” and start at just \$15 (per household) for the streaming performance and \$50 for the live virtual events on December 5, 12 & 19 at 7:30 p.m.(the December 8 live event is Pay-What-You-Want starting at just \$5). Limited tickets are available to the live events.

More information and tickets available at CityTheatreCompany.org. Tickets go on sale November 9, 2020. Subscribers with on-account funds can now reserve tickets online. For more information visit CityTheatreCompany.org or call the box office.

For phone sales or other questions, the box office is currently open Monday – Friday from 10:00am to 3:00pm. Call 412-431-CITY (2489).

ABOUT CLAWS OUT: A Holiday Drag Musical:

Book by: **Monteze Freeland & Shua Potter**

Lyrics by: **Shua Potter & Douglas Levine**

Music by: **Douglas Levine**

Co-Directed by: **Monteze Freeland & Marc Masterson**

The Story: After attempting to give the north a new look, Mrs. Rachel Claus finds herself face-to-face with a contract clause allowing her to be replaced by North-Pole-Newcomer Roberta. With her crown in jeopardy, the stage is set for an epic showdown. From the team that brought you Santa's Ted Talk (City Theatre, 2019), comes a new holiday drag musical where the North Pole has never been so icy.

Claws Out: A Holiday Drag Musical will be available online (December 4 – January 10) through City Theatre’s website and has a run-time of 80 minutes (the live, interactive events will be two hours).

Filmed in studios at WQED and Steeltown Entertainment, the creative team includes: **Caite Hevner** (Digital Media Design & Editing), **Tony Ferrieri** (Scenic & Props Design), **Howard Patterson** (Sound Design), **Madison Hack** (Costume Design), **Human Habits** (Videography), **Ryan Looke** (Production Coordinator), and **Clare Drobot** (Dramaturg and Script Supervisor). Additional support from **Frank Warninski** (WQED Lighting Director), **Cheryl El-Walker** (Wig Artisan) and **Tru Verret-Fleming** (Makeup Artist).

ABOUT THE LEAD ARTISTS:



Monteze Freeland (performer, co-director, co-creator) is a multi-disciplined artist from Baltimore, Maryland and graduate of Point Park University. In 2017, Monteze was named the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* "Performer of the Year" for his performances in *Dreamgirls*, *A Christmas Story*, *East Texas Hot Links*, and *Wild With Happy*. Select acting credits include Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors*, Kent in *King Lear* and Evan in *Sweat*. Monteze has directed for Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company, Prime Stage, Kuntu Rep, CLO Summer Academy, Demaskus Theater Collective, Pittsburgh Public's PlayTime: Online Series, and City Theatre Company. As a playwright, his original musical *Kalopsia* (with Michael Meketa)

received funding from the Heinz Endowments culminating in a staged workshop produced by the New Hazlett's CSA Performance Series. Select writing credits include *JH: Mechanics of a Legend* (with Anya Martin), *Santa's Ted Talk*, *Fishy Woo Woo*, and the feature film *House of Stones* (with Maurice Redwood). Monteze is the current Associate Producer of City Theatre Company.



Douglas Levine (Composer, Co-lyricist, Orchestrator) is filled with gratitude for the opportunity to return to City Theatre this year. Previous City shows include *POP!*, *Sam Bendrix at the Bon Soir*, *Hearts are Wild*, *Long Story Short* and *Intimate Apparel*. His original scores have been premiered by companies including: Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Microscopic Opera Company, The Warhol, The Playhouse REP, Conservatory and Junior Companies, Attack Theatre, Pennsylvania Dance Theatre, Pittsburgh Classical Theatre, Pittsburgh International Children's Theater Festival, Dreams of Hope, Gateway to the Arts, Renaissance City Women's Choir, Junior Mendelssohn Choir, Pittsburgh Musical Theater, Opera

Theatre of Pittsburgh and WQED FM. Heartfelt thanks to his co-writers for their boundless talent and inspiration, and to City Theatre for their commitment to keeping theatre alive and sleighing! Levinemusic.com



Marc Masterson (co-director) has been a leader in the American Theater for over 35 years with a demonstrated track record of artistic accomplishment, civic engagement, and organizational development. He previously served as Artistic Director of City Theatre for 20 years and helped to build the organization and its current facilities on the South Side. In a distinguished career he has commissioned and developed over 100 world premieres including Pulitzer finalists, Broadway and Off-Broadway successes and notable works in the American theatre canon including *A Doll's House, Part 2* by Lucas Hnath, *The Parisian Woman* by Beau Willimon, *Vietgone* by Qui Nguyen, *Mr. Wolf* by Rajiv

Joseph and *Office Hour* by Julia Cho. More than 50% of the new plays he has produced were written by women. Previously, he served as Artistic Director of South Coast Repertory in California where he conceived and launched two major initiatives for diverse voices in the American theatre, the CrossRoads commissioning program and the Dialogos bi-lingual site-specific project. He served for 11 years as artistic director of Actors Theatre of Louisville where he produced more than 200 productions and the Humana Festival of New American Plays. Plays directed at the Humana Festival include works by Charles Mee, Wendell Berry, Craig Wright, Eric Coble, Adam Bock, Gina Gionfriddo, Melanie Marnich, and Rick Dresser. Recent directing credits include *Shakespeare in Love*, *All the Way*, *Going to a Place where you Already Are*, *Zealot*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Eurydice* and *Elemeno Pea* at SCR; *Cry It Out* at Dorset Theatre Festival; *Hand to God* at the Alliance Theatre; *Byhalia*, *Mississippi* by Evan Linder at the Contemporary American Theatre Festival; *As You Like It* for the Houston Shakespeare Festival; and *The Kite Runner* at Actors Theatre of Louisville and the

Cleveland Play House. He is thrilled to back home in Pittsburgh with many friends and some of the best audiences in the world.



Shua Potter (performer and co-creator) is a joy enthusiast with a penchant for performing. After graduating with a BFA in musical theater from Point Park University, Shua has performed in dozens of productions across the United States, including the Broadway production of *Mary Poppins*. In 2012, Shua began working as a professional drag queen named Schwa de Vivre, creating campy cabaret shows to keep everyone laughing. *Claws Out* marks the first full-scale musical Shua has written, bringing together his love of theater, drag, and music in a way that's never been done before. Dedicated to LMJ. thatdragqueen.com

ABOUT CITY THEATRE:

Founded in 1975, City Theatre is in its 46th season as Pittsburgh's home for bold new plays. Located in the historic South Side on its four-building cultural campus, the company produces a season of regional and world premieres; its renowned Young Playwrights Festival, celebrating its 20th year; a season-long reading series of new works in progress; and the annual Momentum Festival. City Theatre's mission is to provide an artistic home for the development and production of contemporary plays of substance and ideas that engage and challenge a diverse audience. With a pre-Covid annual average operating budget of \$3 million, City is the largest performing arts organization not located in Pittsburgh's downtown Cultural District and is a constituent and core member of the League of Resident Theaters (LORT), Theatre Communications Group (TCG), and the National New Play Network (NNPN). Marc Masterson returned as Artistic Director in July 2018, after an 18 year absence, to join Managing Director James McNeel as co-leaders of the organization.

*Like all almost all arts organizations, City Theatre was forced to halt its 2019-2020 season on March 12, 2020 due to the Covid-19 national crisis. Its modified 46th season began in September with a reimagined line-up of shows, including the creation of a live, outdoor drive-in theatrical experience at Hazelwood Green. The 2020-21 season continues this winter with a series of virtual productions and events, including *Claws Out: A Holiday Drag Musical* and *F**k7thGrade* by Jill Sobule & Liza Birkenmeier. City Theatre looks to return to in-person performances in spring 2021 if safe for both artists and audiences and allowed by health officials. The organization encourages the public to visit SaveOurStages.com to learn more about how to help the cultural sector during this difficult time.*

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