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CITY THEATRE ANNOUNCES REIMAGINED 2020/2021 SEASON

Pittsburgh, PA (August 10, 2020): City Theatre is proud to announce its updated 2020/2021 season which includes a live drive-in experience, virtual content, and more.

Due to the on-going uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, City Theatre has adapted its 46th season. Beginning September 10, the 2020/2021 season will open with the **Drive-In Community Arts Festival at Hazelwood Green**, celebrating Pittsburgh's cultural community and featuring artists curated by eight different arts organizations. It will be immediately followed by **Manual Cinema's *Frankenstein*** for an extended run. All programming will be performed live on stage while projected on an adjacent screen in a parking lot next to Mill19 at the Hazelwood Green development. City Theatre has partnered with Hazelwood Green to create this innovative outdoor experience.

The Drive-In festival will mark the first in-person performances from City Theatre since mid-March when government health mandates restricted indoor gathering and instituted "stay-at-home" requirements. The organization quickly pivoted to a digital footprint, **creating over 40 unique virtual events** and performances – from short educational playwriting exercises to full-length play readings as part of the Momentum Festival – that **has had over 28,000 unique viewers**.

At the same time, City Theatre staff began developing strategies on how to present programming outdoors (a throwback to the organization's origin story as its first performances were held in parks around Allegheny County), including scouting for possible sites that could accommodate a drive-in stage and screen, raising the necessary funding, and crafting a detailed safety plan for audiences, artists, and staff.

"One of our very first steps this spring was to develop an internal Safety Committee representing every aspect of the City Theatre operation – from the public's experience to backstage – and sought out the advice and counsel of experts from the medical field," **said James McNeel, Managing Director**. "The drive-in concept quickly became the most obvious and exciting path forward as it provides a low-risk environment for the performers and for our patrons, who will be safely inside their vehicles. It's a real testament to our team that we have found a way to perform again while also following the incredibly important health guidelines necessary to defeat this pandemic."

The Drive-In Arts Festival at Hazelwood Green consists of **12 nights of Pittsburgh-based programming**. Community partners include: 91.3 WYEP, The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, 1Hood Media, MCG Jazz, Drinking Partners, City of Asylum, The August Wilson Center and more. A full schedule of events and tickets will be available on August 17th for City Theatre subscribers and August 24th for the general public.

“As construction continues at Hazelwood Green, we are pleased to be able to welcome visitors to the site and to host this unique festival experience,” said **Todd Stern, Hazelwood Green project director and managing director at U3 Advisors**. “The vision for Hazelwood Green, and in particular the public Plaza, which will be completed in late fall 2020, is one that embraces collaboration with local artists and arts organizations. We look forward to many more opportunities to safely present events, performances and community programming.”

“The arts have always had the ability to bring people together and the Drive-In Arts Festival was designed to do just that,” explained **Associate Artistic Director Clare Drobot**. “The response from our partner organizations has been tremendous as we build a much-needed venue for live performances that’s safe for audiences and artists alike. It’s really thrilling to be able to work with so many different partners and support Pittsburgh’s vibrant performing arts community. We’ll also be collaborating with a number of Hazelwood-based organizations to celebrate the neighborhood as part of the festival.”

Following the festival, the original season opener, *Frankenstein by Manual Cinema*, will take place on the drive-in stage, running through October 18.

“The thrilling theatricality of Manual Cinema’s *Frankenstein* is a unique take on Mary Shelley’s classic—a perfect fit for a fall evening on the drive-in stage,” said City’s **Artistic Director, Marc Masterson**. “With a live score played against an original silent film using shadows and light to tell the tale, this is a Frankenstein like no other. We can’t wait to share this family-friendly production with Pittsburgh.”

The 46th season will continue with a brand-new **world premiere holiday musical, *Claws Out***. Monteze Freeland and Shua Potter (the team behind *Santa’s Ted Talk* last holiday season) are joined by composer Douglas Levine to present a new interactive holiday production **created specifically for the digital stage**.

“Collaborating with Shua Potter and Doug Levine in the midst of a pandemic to create a gut-busting original holiday drag musical comedy has easily been a creative highlight of my 2020,” said **co-creator and City’s Associate Producer, Monteze Freeland**. “We are anxious to share the laughs and love that went into creating this project with audiences from the comfort and safety of their home. All I can say about the piece is the North Pole has never been so icy, henny! A competition for the title of Mrs. Claus leaves Rachel and Roberta fighting for the crown and the beautiful gowns. We hope you’ll find time to join us for this fabulous ‘slay’ ride this holiday season.”

Acknowledging the inherent uncertainty that the pandemic presents, City Theatre is cautiously optimistic about a return to regular performances in early 2021. All decisions about programming will be based on the guidance of the CDC and state and local health departments, as well as advice from hired medical advisors from Allegheny Health Network. **Additional titles slated for winter and spring include *AmericUs from Universes*, *Vietgone* by Qui Nguyen, *The Garbologists* by Lindsay Joelle (world premiere), and *The Sound Inside* by Adam Rapp**.

In addition to live and virtual productions, City Theatre will continue to curate stage readings, artist discussions, and community engagement programs through City Connects. The 21st season of the **Young Playwrights Festival will return in January**, featuring three new plays by local students Elena Eiss, Amelia Kovach, and Rivers Leche.

When the COVID-19 crisis began in mid-March, City Theatre was forced to cancel its runs of *Cry It Out* by Molly Smith Metzler and the world premiere of *PerkUp PerkUp* by Isaac Gomez. Both were shared with ticket-holders through a virtual platform. At the time, City Theatre had planned to re-

start its programming with the **postponed world premiere of *F*ck7thGrade* by Jill Sobule and Liza Birkenmeier**. While the organization was unable to reach an agreement to produce the show live this fall, the creative team has pivoted to create a unique, **one-of-a-kind concert version of the show to be distributed online only**.

Ticket-holders for *F*ck7thGrade* will be provided private access to this digital production later this fall along with behind-the-scenes artist conversations. Those with tickets to the show will be contacted with more information by the City Theatre box office.

Due to local safety guidelines, **THE BASH, City's street party fundraiser scheduled for September 12** has been canceled for the fall. Two productions originally scheduled for the 46th season, *Paradise Blue* by Dominique Morisseau and the world premiere of James McManus's community-based production funded by a RADical Impact grant, will be rescheduled for the 2021/2022 season.

Current season ticket-holders should look for correspondence from the theater regarding their subscriptions. Season updates and programming details available at CityTheatreCompany.org

ABOUT CITY THEATRE:

Founded in 1975, City Theatre is entering 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 in the middle of March due to the Covid-19 national crisis. Its modified 46th season begins in September with a reimagine line-up of shows, including the creation of a live, outdoor drive-in theatrical experience.

About Hazelwood Green

Located in the city of Pittsburgh's Hazelwood neighborhood and situated along the Monongahela River, Hazelwood Green is envisioned to become a world-class model for sustainable development. Once the home of Jones & Laughlin Steel Company (J&L Company) and then later, LTV Steel, the site was purchased in 2002 by Almono LP, which was formed by four Pittsburgh foundations. Today, Almono LP comprises the Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Heinz Endowments and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation -- with Almono LLC acting as the managing partner for the project. The site's development is being designed to catalyze investment within the Hazelwood neighborhood while drawing from the deep history and culture that remains intact through the people and the physical fabric of the neighborhood.

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