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Fostering Bold Voices and Honoring a Legacy: The Richard P. Stahl Festival of New American Theatre

(December 30, 2024 – PHOENIX) – The Phoenix Theatre Company is excited to announce a new chapter in its commitment to fostering bold, imaginative storytelling.

The Festival of New American Theatre, has been renamed The Richard P. Stahl Festival of New American Theatre, honoring the late Richard P. Stahl, a lifelong supporter of the arts and a beloved member of the Arizona community.

A true celebration of creativity and collaboration, The Richard P. Stahl Festival of New American Theatre serves as a premier platform for emerging and established voices to showcase their latest works and explore the possibilities of live performance.

“This festival is a vital part of the Phoenix arts community, and we are proud to rename it in honor of Richard Stahl’s extraordinary legacy,” said Vincent VanVleet, Executive Director of The Phoenix Theatre Company. “His passion for the arts and his unwavering support of creativity inspire everything this festival stands for.”

The Richard P. Stahl Festival of New American Theatre runs from January 17 to February 2, 2025.

Featured events during the festival include: a play reading, two musical readings, Choreography Lab, the beloved 24-Hour Theatre Project, First Draft Series: Young Playwrights, New Works Design Panel, as well as two Composer Lyricist Cabarets highlighting the works of Maiga Vidal and Michael Kooman and Christopher Dimond.

“Our Festival showcases the collaborative spirit of theatre, featuring a wide range of events from readings to cabarets to talkbacks and panel discussions to celebrate the developmental process” said Festival Director Michelle Chin. “The 2025 Festival will also uplift a diverse array of artists, allowing the community to experience a varied mix of stories and styles and a unique opportunity to participate in the new work journey.”

For theatre enthusiasts, creatives, and first-time attendees, the Richard P. Stahl Festival of New American Theatre offers a one-of-a-kind experience to engage with the evolution of storytelling and celebrate the artistry that defines live theatre.

The 2025 Richard P. Stahl Festival of New American Theatre works in development include:

“Judgment of the Eye” Play Reading

Director **Maren Maclean**

The play tells the true story of Han van Meegeren, a struggling Dutch artist in the 1940s who discovers he has an incredible talent for forging the paintings of Old Masters like Vermeer and Frans Hals. To make money, he creates dozens of fake Vermeers and sells them for millions to art experts and Nazi officials like Goering. After the war, he is accused of being a Nazi collaborator for selling a "national treasure" to the enemy. To escape execution, Han claims the paintings are clever forgeries he painted. He offers to paint another fake Vermeer to prove his innocence.

What follows is a tale about the subjective nature of art, a flawed man's quest for aesthetic perfection, and an exploration of the contradictions between artistic genius and artificial deception. Written by Simon Bowler, this play reading will be presented on January 17 at 7:30pm and January 19 at 2:00pm.

“Loch Lomond” Musical Reading

Director **Jeff Whiting** | Music Director **Jeff Kennedy**

*OH, YE'LL TAKE THE HIGH ROAD
AND I'LL TAKE THE LOW ROAD*

These Scottish lyrics have been sung the world over for hundreds of years, but few know the legend behind them. Through a Celtic-inspired modern musical theater score, the new musical Loch Lomond breathes stunning life into a fable previously lost to time.

1745. The height of the Scottish Jacobite rebellion. When two Scottish rebel brothers are captured by the English, they are faced with an impossible choice, a ticking clock, and the end of their heroic ambitions. With only six hours left until their fate is decided, brothers Lyle and James must reconcile their desire for freedom and glory with their loyalty to each other... and their love for the women they leave behind. At once a sweeping tale of rebellion and an intimate family portrait, Loch Lomond will take you beyond the lyrics and into the heart of a universal struggle for freedom and love that stands the test of time.

Book and lyrics by Maggie Herskowitz with music by Neil Douglas Reilly. This musical reading will be presented on January 24 at 7:30pm and January 26 at 2:00pm.

“Genius” Musical Reading

Director **Michael Heitzman** | Music Director **Alan Plado**

Genius is a hilarious romp set in the Esquavil-groovy sixties, starring the most selfish, irresponsible charmer ever to moon an Oscar audience: Leander Starr, is a Hollywood

director in the tradition of Orson Welles, whose artistic aspirations soar as high as his checks bounce.

Fleeing creditors, the IRS, and miscellaneous ex-wives, Starr escapes to Mexico with his faithful-to-a-fault valet, only to discover his hacienda is run by the bombshell from his first film, and inhabited by an ex-collaborator he cheated -- Patrick Dennis, legendary author of Auntie Mame, who proceeds to skewer Starr and his hangers on with wit as dry as a gin martini. When sad-sack IRS Agent Guber shows up with handcuffs, Starr hatches a plan to pay off all his debts in one fell swoop: join forces with an unscrupulous exiled Hollywood producer and make a movie starring everyone from the wreckage of his past.

But it is Starr's estranged daughter, Emily, a sheltered debutant who brings Starr's genius plan to its full fruition—causing him to behave, for once, unselfishly.

Written by Michael Heitzman and Ilene Reid with music and lyrics by Ilene Reid. This musical reading will be presented on January 31 at 7:30pm and February 2 at 2:00pm.

Ticket pricing includes:

- Play and Musical Readings: \$20
- 24-Hour Theatre Project: \$20
- Choreography Lab: \$20
- Composer Lyricist Cabarets: \$15
- Design Panel: \$15
- First Draft Series: Young Playwrights: Free

For more information visit

<https://phoenixtheatre.com/engage-learn/the-festival-of-new-american-theatre/> or call the Box Office at (602) 254-2151.

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ABOUT THE PHOENIX THEATRE COMPANY

The Phoenix Theatre Company is not only the largest professional regional theatre company in the state, with nearly 500 performances each year on multiple stages, but it's also the first arts organization in Arizona and a founding member of the Central Arts District. Committed to advancing the performing arts in the Valley, The Phoenix Theatre Company's mission is to create exceptional theatrical experiences that inspire hope and understanding. For more information about our upcoming shows, campus venue, located at 1825 N. Central Ave. in Phoenix, outreach programs, and more, visit www.phoenixtheatre.com.