

## **One of Only 19 Theatres in the Country - The Phoenix Theatre Company Gets Actors' Union Approval to Hire During Pandemic**

Theatre's COVID-19 safety plan heralded for keeping performers' safety top priority

(PHOENIX, AZ—Feb. 9, 2021) Members of Actors' Equity Association (AEA) are getting back to work in Phoenix. The actors' union and The Phoenix Theatre Company have reached an agreement that protects member safety. It is the first of its kind in the state of Arizona and one of only 19 in the country since the pandemic hit.

"After nearly a year of not being able to see true live theatre on our stages, it was essential to find a way to keep the arts alive, particularly during this time of heightened isolation, political polarization and loneliness." said Vincent VanVleet, managing director at The Phoenix Theatre Company. "Live performances have the power to uplift and inspire, to create empathy as well as understanding of perspectives different from our own."

Committed to finding a way to safely reopen its operation for both artists and patrons alike after darkening its stages in March 2020, the Company built a socially-distanced outdoor venue that opened in November 2020. The first three shows were concert-style productions in a safe environment.

"Our mission of bringing hope and understanding is more important now than ever during these difficult times, as a member of Actors' Equity Association myself, I am proud that we were able to help artists feel confident about returning to our stages so we can bring the community together again – safely and under strict CDC guidelines -- to do some much-needed healing," said VanVleet.

The fourth show in the outdoor venue, *Murder for Two*, has been approved by AEA to hire AEA-affiliated talent. The outdoor venue was a key component to the AEA agreement that mandates both patrons and staff wear masks. There are temperature checks upon arrival along with frequent sanitization, social-distancing measures and strict adherence to city, state and CDC public health and safety guidelines. In addition, the agreement requires that staff and actors undergo frequent testing, and that the Theatre commits to contact tracing, intensive cleaning and sanitization protocols, masking during rehearsals and strict social-distancing from rehearsal through performance.

"I am honored and excited to be a part of this historic performance," said Seth Tucker, an AEA actor in The Phoenix Theatre Company's *Murder for Two*. "This is the first Equity approved show in Arizona since March and I'm hopeful and full of pride that this is the first of many performance opportunities in the months to come. Being a part of this monumental show feels like a homecoming."

AEA represents more than 51,000 professional actors and stage managers nationwide. It ensures that theatres have adequate workplace health and safety rules in place, as well as fair compensation. AEA will issue future approvals on a show-by-show basis.

"We applaud Actors' Equity Association for its diligence in protecting the health and safety of its members," said Michael Barnard, producing artistic director at The Phoenix Theatre Company and a member of Actors' Equity Association. "We share the commitment to maintaining robust health and safety standards for our staff, our artists and our audiences. Our non-profit mission is to bring relief by illuminating our community and bringing joy and happiness to the forefront even if it's only for two hours. We believe we can do that and keep people safe."

*Murder for Two* plays at The Phoenix Theatre Company's socially-distanced outdoor venue and runs February 17 through February 28. Tickets are \$59. To purchase tickets, visit [www.phoenixtheatre.com/murderfortwo](http://www.phoenixtheatre.com/murderfortwo) or call 602-254-2151.

To learn more about what The Phoenix Theatre Company is doing to keep its artists, staff, patrons and community safe, visit [www.phoenixtheatre.com/health](http://www.phoenixtheatre.com/health).

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#### **ABOUT THE PHOENIX THEATRE COMPANY**

The Phoenix Theatre Company is the largest professional regional theatre company in Arizona. As the first arts organization in Arizona and a founding member of the Central Arts District, The Phoenix Theatre Company is committed to advancing performing arts in the Valley with nearly 500 performances each year on multiple stages. Located at 1825 N. Central Ave in Phoenix, The Phoenix Theatre Company's mission is to create exceptional experiences by using the arts to articulate messages that inspire hope and understanding.

To learn more about digital content and outdoor performances, visit [www.phoenixtheatre.com](http://www.phoenixtheatre.com) and connect on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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