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THE FESTIVAL OF NEW AMERICAN THEATRE
Celebrates its 25th Year at The Phoenix Theatre
Company

Audiences will be immersed in the creative process

(Feb. 6, 2023 – PHOENIX) Hosted annually by The Phoenix Theatre Company, the Festival of New American Theatre amplifies new voices and expands the canon of American theatre. Returning for its 25th year, the Festival will continue honoring a longstanding commitment to the development of new works, playwrights, and performers and include a variety of events that allow artists of all kinds to see their work come alive onstage, from April 7 - 23.

“The process of storytelling is as old as time, and to have played a part in expanding the American Theatre canon is both gratifying and humbling,” said Producing Artistic Director, Michael Barnard. “For 25 years, the Festival of New American Theatre has provided a place for playwrights, actors and directors to take artistic risks that maintain the accessibility and relevancy of our work and increasingly reflect the lived experiences of a diverse community.”

"The array of distinct perspectives being recognized in this year's festival is particularly thrilling," added the Festival of New American Theatre + Summer Camp Director, Michelle Chin. "New work development is a collaborative process, so we are placing a spotlight not only on playwrights, composers, lyricists, and book writers, but also on the creative team – directors, music directors, choreographers, and designers. We are proud to be celebrating both local and national artists and the important roles they play in creating new American Theatre."

This year's festival will feature: a play reading, two musical readings, two Composer Lyricist Cabarets, Choreography Lab, First Draft Series, a brand-new event showcasing the role of designers in new work development, and a return of the 24-hour Theatre Project. The 25th Anniversary will also feature collaborations with Spotlight Youth Theatre and Arizona State University. This is an opportunity to witness how a production goes from the page to the stage.

The 2023 Festival of New American Theatre readings in development include:

The Evolution of Dar

The Evolution of Dar takes place over a five-year span in the early 1970's. Set to the soundtrack of selected top 40 hits from the era, the play follows a young boy named Dar, from nine years old to fourteen years old. He is raised by his alcoholic mother who is desperately lonely and insecure. Her two turbulent marriages are unbearable for Dar, as well as the endless bullying he endures at school. One way he copes with the torture of emotional and physical abuse is by escaping into a fantasy world of popular television variety shows. A story about how pain and suffering can often provide us with the courage to overcome adversity.

Written by Rusty Ferracane, this play reading will be presented on April 7 at 7:00 pm and April 8 at 3:00 pm.

Content warning: This play portrays emotional and physical abuse as well as violent, graphic, and some obscene language.

Onward and Upward

In 1983, Walter Griffin made national headlines after tying a cluster of weather balloons to a lawn chair and flying 16,000 feet into the sky. Nearly two decades later, Walter is still searching for his next great invention, but he struggles to get his ideas off the ground. His wife, Helen, encourages him to find a steady job, while their son, Mikey, searches desperately for recognition of his own. After a surreal encounter with his idol, high-wire artist Philippe Petit, Walter believes he's found his ticket to success and goes to extreme lengths to fund his new prototype.

Meanwhile, Mikey finds an unlikely friend in a pregnant classmate, Maria, who soon lands him a job at her Aunt Chris's questionable small business. Helen is overjoyed at her family's newfound stability, but she soon discovers that their situation is more precarious than it seems, threatening to topple down off the wire at any moment.

Music by Charlie Romano, lyrics by Will Wegner, and book by Will Wegner and Charlie Romano. Based on the play *Up (The Man in the Flying Chair)* by Bridget Carpenter. This musical reading will be presented on April 14 at 7:00 pm and April 16 at 3:00 pm.

Do No Harm

Growing up in small-town, working class 19th century Ireland, Charlotte is told what to do, what to think, and how to behave. But this spirited lass refuses to follow the well-worn path of generations of servile, domesticated women before her. Fueled by a joyless childhood and an unflappable ambition, Charlotte is determined to become a doctor even if it means living her life in disguise — as a man. Over the course of our story, Charlotte reinvents herself as Dr. Charles Baker, sacrificing her womanhood for a greater cause. In the process she becomes the first female surgeon to perform a successful C-section, in which both mother and child survive. Tragically, her accomplishments go undiscovered until her death when the world finally learns that the real Dr. Charles Baker was a feisty maverick woman, Charlotte Anne Berry. Inspired by a true story.

Written by Ken Davenport with music by Doug Katsaros and lyrics by Amanda Yesnowitz, this musical reading will be presented on April 21 at 7:00 pm and April 23 at 3:00 pm.

For more information or to get tickets, visit <https://phoenixtheatre.com/the-season/25th-annual-festival-new-american-theatre>.

ABOUT THE PHOENIX THEATRE COMPANY

The Phoenix Theatre Company is the largest professional regional theatre company in the state. 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 North Central Avenue in Phoenix, The Phoenix Theatre Company's mission is to create exceptional theatrical experiences by using the arts to articulate messages that inspire hope and understanding. For more information, visit www.phoenixtheatre.com.