ACT Theatre Announces 50th Anniversary Season
What Was. What Is. What Will Be...

Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris · Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Threesome (world premiere) · Hold These Truths
Travesties · Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play

Seattle, WA, August 20, 2014 - ACT - A Contemporary Theatre under the Artistic Direction of Kurt Beattie is proud to announce the Mainstage productions taking place in the 50th Anniversary Season in 2015. The mid-century mark will reflect ACT’s contribution to the field throughout history and looking to the future with the theme, What Was, What is, and What Will Be. 2015 brings cause to celebrate two other milestone anniversaries: ACT will celebrate the 40th year of producing founder Gregory A. Falls’ adaptation of A Christmas Carol, as well as the 90th anniversary of the 1925 Fraternal Order of Eagles building, ACT’s historic landmark home since 1996. Commemorative celebrations and engagement opportunities will occur throughout the year. A brief history of ACT’s founding is included following the season titles.

Beginning in March, ACT continues to partner with the 5th Avenue Theatre, co-producing a musical that appears on each organization’s season and performed at ACT. Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris begins in March and runs for 10 weeks in the Falls Theatre, directed by David Armstrong. The musical revue of songs by the then-little-known Belgian singer/songwriter opened in 1968 Off-Broadway and astounded the audiences who came to see it. It ran for four years and went on to be performed around the world. Packed with wit, intelligence and emotion, Brel’s songs radiate stories of love, loss, and hope.

Next, ACT looks to its inaugural season in 1965. Gregory Falls programmed Tennessee Williams’ 1955 Pulitzer Prize winner Cat on a Hot Tin Roof in the company’s first year of exploring contemporary stories and ideas. 50 years later, the play is a mainstay in the theatre canon, produced regularly around the world and with Broadway revivals occurring nearly every decade. Set on a southern plantation on the night of the patriarch’s birthday, Brick, Maggie, Big Daddy and Big Mama yearn for truth but cling to secrets and denial that tear them apart. Kurt Beattie directs this stormy classic about sex, lies, and family dynamics in the Allen Arena in April/May.

In June, ACT will co-produce the world premiere of Yussef El Guindi’s Threesome, in partnership with Portland Center Stage. In 2011 ACT presented the premiered of El Guindi’s Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World which garnered him the prestigious Steinberg Award. He also co-adapted the epic Ramayana in 2012. In his latest play, Leila and Rashid are Egyptian Americans with ties to Cairo. They attempt to solve their relationship issues by inviting a relative stranger into their bedroom to engage in a threesome. What begins as a hilariously awkward evening soon becomes an experience fraught with secrets, raising issues of sexism, possession and independence. Portland’s Chris Coleman directs the premiere in the Falls Theatre.

Earlier this month, Jeanne Sakata’s play Hold These Truths enjoyed a sold-out four-day run as part of ACT’s Central Heating Lab program. The one-man show is based on UW student Gordon Hirabayashi’s resistance to the internment of Japanese-Americans in WWII. Inspiring, touching, and often funny, Hold These Truths offers a glimpse into a time in American history when many innocent citizens’ rights were
taken from them. In July/August of 2015, the play will enjoy its first multi-week run at ACT directed by Lisa Rothe.

A second throwback to ACT’s history in 1977—and one of Kurt Beattie’s all-time favorite comedies—is Tom Stoppard’s *Travesties*, playing in the Allen Arena in September/October. The play focuses on the fictional meeting of three important revolutionary figures in Zurich in 1917: the communist leader Lenin, the dadaist poet Tristan Tzara, and the modernist author James Joyce. Humorous complications spring from misunderstandings, mistaken identity, and plot twists that Stoppard borrows from Oscar Wilde’s farcical masterpiece, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. As Stoppard cleverly juxtaposes his three central figures’ theories on Marxism, Dadaism, and modernism, he addresses complex questions on the nature and function of politics and art and the role of the artist. Kurt Beattie will direct.

The Mainstage season concludes with ACT Associate Artistic Director John Langs directing the highly acclaimed new comedy *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play*, by Anne Washburn. Hailed by the *New York Times* as one of the Top Ten Plays of 2013 and “downright brilliant,” *Mr. Burns* is a post-apocalyptic tale when survivors must begin again and bond together to create a new society. Not Shakespeare. Not Dickens. No, the greatest common cultural icon is the popular “Cape Feare” episode of *The Simpsons*. This imaginative dark comedy propels us forward nearly a century, following a new civilization stumbling into its future. The *New York Times* raves, “Anne Washburn’s *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play* has arrived to leave you dizzy with the scope and dazzle of its ideas.” Mr. Burns will be performed in the Falls Theatre in October/November.

Following the Mainstage season, Langs will also direct the 40th Anniversary production of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* in the Allen Arena. Greg Falls’ taut 90-minute adaptation has been entertaining hundreds of thousands of families in Seattle since 1975. In honor of the artists who have participated in the more than 1,500 performances, ACT will host a special reunion event to celebrate the continuation of this beloved holiday tradition.

**TICKETS**
Subscription packages for 2015 are on sale now, with priority given to renewing season ticket holders. Subscribers will enjoy special 50th Anniversary commemorative gifts with their purchase, including an ACT tote bag and poster. All Mainstage shows are also available on the ACTPass monthly membership. Single Tickets will go on sale to the general public on February 11, 2015. All ticket purchases and information are available at www.acttheatre.org or (206) 292-7676.

**HIGHLIGHTS: 50 YEARS OF ACT**
On the evening of Tuesday, July 9, 1965, Seattle's historic Queen Anne Hall was the site of a major event in the cultural development of the Northwest—the opening performance of Seattle's first professional summer stock theatre, A Contemporary Theatre, now ACT. Gregory A. Falls, Founder and Artistic Director, was also at that time head of the Drama Department at the University of Washington. "ACT was established," he said, "to present current, important plays to Seattle audiences, plays they would otherwise not get a chance to see. And if we have a function it's to live dangerously."

Since that opening performance of Arthur Kopit’s *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama’s Hung You in the Closet and I’m Feelin’ So Sad*, ACT has presented the important theatrical works of our time. On the ACT Mainstage alone there have been many world, American, and West Coast premieres presented to Seattle and Pacific Northwest audiences. The plays presented have been honored with numerous Pulitzer Prizes, Obie Awards, and Tony Awards, most within two years of their original productions. A variety of other
awards and distinguished honors have been compiled by the more than 290 plays that have made up the fifty Mainstage seasons of ACT.

Along with the desire to expose northwest audiences to contemporary work, Falls also aimed to provide professional opportunities for the actors and designers in the area, creating a community where artists could live and work in the region. Decades later, ACT is proud to collaborate with the University of Washington and Cornish College of the Arts artist training programs, and to have featured hundreds of their alumni on the stage and behind the scenes of ACT’s productions.

A major turning point for ACT occurred in 1996 when, after an ambitious fundraising campaign and renovation, the company moved to downtown Seattle, in the historic Eagles building. The eight-story building had seen better days and required a massive amount of renovation to turn it into a theatre space. Now the building hosts annual attendance of over 150,000, and is home to ACT’s five performance and event spaces as well as the administrative offices and production facilities for building scenery, costumes, and props.

In 2007, artistic leader Kurt Beattie wrote his revered Manifesto, proclaiming ACT as a reef, where a community could gather, share resource, and collaborate in the creation of new works. From that moment, the Central Heating Lab was established to nurture and support new works and local artists spanning not only theatre but also cabaret, music, dance, spoken word, and visual art. The seven years since the inception of the Lab has brought more than 100 artists and partner organizations to ACT. Audiences have enthusiastically supported the innovative programming model.

Today, ACT is a Theatre of New Ideas, bringing Art and Community Together.
We are -
• A destination for the culturally curious to experience new voices, stories, and art through our established Mainstage Play series, the innovative Central Heating Lab producing partnerships, and the educational Young Playwrights Program.
• A community hub where artists and the public witness, contemplate, and engage in dialogue on today's issues, ideas, and art, presented with intelligence, insight, and humor.
• Dedicated to the advancement and preservation of contemporary work for future generations.
• Stewards of preservation, producing contemporary works in our renovated 1925 building, with five performing spaces in the historic Eagles Auditorium; now part of Seattle’s Downtown Historic Theatre District.

Artistic Leadership
Gregory A. Falls, 1965-1987
Jeff Steitzer, 1988-1994
Peggy Shannon, 1995-1997
Gordon Edelstein, 1998-2003
Kurt Beattie, 2003-present

Organizational History
• 1965 ACT opens in a former community hall in lower Queen Anne. The brainchild of Gregory A. Falls, then head of the University of Washington’s School of Drama, Falls sought to produce contemporary plays as an alternative and a complement to the then two-year old Seattle Repertory Theatre
- **1996** Longtime Managing Director Susan Trapnell leads ACT’s fundraising, renovation, and transfer to downtown Seattle in the eight-story Eagles Auditorium, now on the National Register of Historic Places
- **2002** Launch of the Young Playwrights Program
- **2007** ACT debuts the Central Heating Lab
- **2009** With the success of CHL, the monthly ACTPass Membership is created as a new all access ticket package
- **2012** The Downtown Historic Theatre District is established by the City of Seattle, including ACT Theatre and four other venues producing live events in historic buildings
- **2015** ACT celebrates its 50th Anniversary Season, the 40th Anniversary of *A Christmas Carol*, and the 90th Anniversary of the historic Eagles Building.

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About ACT – A Contemporary Theatre

ACT is the only local theatre dedicated to producing contemporary work with promising playwrights and local performing artists since 1965. ACT is a cultural engine that makes plays, dance, music, and film that touch us through its annual Mainstage Play series and new works generated from the Young Playwrights Program, the Central Heating Lab, and New Works for the American Stage commissioning program. Because contemporary life demands examination, ACT is driven to inspire and strengthen our diverse community through works that advance our understanding of human life. ACT is an interactive community where artists and the public witness, contemplate and engage in dialogue on today’s thought-provoking issues, ideas and art, presented with intelligence, insight, and humor. Dedicated to the advancement and preservation of today’s contemporary work for future generations, ACT is a destination for contemporary theatre and arts in downtown Seattle.

*ACT gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our Season Sponsors: ArtsFund, The John Graham Foundation, 4Culture, The Mayor’s Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs, and The Shubert Foundation.*

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