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**The Catastrophic Theatre Announces 2017-2018 Season**

The Catastrophic Theatre is proud to announce its 2017-2018 season, which is slated to be the theatre’s most ambitious season yet. The new season includes three world premieres, an avant-garde classic, and a mini-festival of work by Catastrophic favorite, Mickle Maher.

Artistic director Jason Nodler says, “May 6, 2018 is the 25th anniversary of the first play Tamarie and I made together, and it feels really appropriate that we should be producing our most exciting, most ambitious season in all those 25 years.

“We begin with a one-two punch from Wallace Shawn’s latest play, which has a lot to say about the dangers of the current political climate, and the anti-fascist Ionesco comedy that set me on this course when I read it at 14 years old. Next, we introduce Houston to a thrilling new voice, the emerging playwright Chana Porter, a writer so singular that we will produce her work again and again. And we triple-down on our most oft-produced playwright, in a three-play Mickle Maher mini-fest. We can’t talk about the first play in that series yet except to say it’s new, and we’ve been working on it for two years. The next two are a return to the first play of his we produced, THE STRANGERER, which will run in rep with its spiritual sequel, JIM LEHRER AND THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE AND JIM LEHRER’S DOUBLE. Tamarie rounds out the season by making good on a request she’s received over and over again: she’s ‘bringing back the bus’ from TAMALALIA 2 over 20 years ago!

“When I think of rolling out these plays, one after the other, and reflect on how this season took 25 years to achieve—seven plays that celebrate everything that Catastrophic does best—I cannot wait to share each and every one with our audience.”

***EVENING AT THE TALK HOUSE* by WALLACE SHAWN**

\*Regional Premiere\*

October 5 – October 21, 2017

In an imagined near future, the creative team behind a critically lauded but ultimately unsuccessful play called “Midnight in a Clearing With Moon and Stars” have gathered at their old haunt, The Talk House. It’s the ten-year anniversary of what turned out to be one of the last plays ever performed. Over the course of a night spent snacking, drinking, and reminiscing, the characters begin revealing disturbing secrets about what their lives have become. The unnamed country they live in is ruled by a charming but frightening autocrat, and many people are finding themselves increasingly complicit and morally compromised in surprising and ominous ways.

Catastrophic is pleased to present this new, darker-than-dark comedy by Catastrophic favorite Wallace Shawn (THE DESIGNATED MOURNER, MARIE AND BRUCE, OUR LATE NIGHT).

EVENING AT THE TALK HOUSE features a powerhouse cast of Houston favorites: Jeanne Harris, Jovan Jackson, Sean Patrick Judge, Rebecca Randall, Charlie Scott, Kyle Sturdivant, Anne Quackenbush, and Abraham Zeus Zapata. Sets by Ryan McGettigan, Lights by Hudson Davis, Costumes by Macy Lyne, Sound by Shawn St. John, and Props by Tina Montgomery. *This production will be the third ever, after the London (2015) and New York (2017) premieres.*

***RHINOCEROS* by Eugene Ionesco**

November 17 – December 10, 2017

A rhinoceros suddenly appears in a sleepy town, trampling through the peaceful streets. Soon another appears, and another, and another until it becomes clear that ordinary citizens are actually transforming into beasts as they learn to “move with the times.”

The Catastrophic Theatre continues its tradition of presenting avant-garde classics with Eugene Ionesco’s anti-fascist, absurdist comedy RHINOCEROS. Full of biting wit and nightmarish anxiety, RHINOCEROS is a modern masterpiece that comments on the plight of the human condition, made tolerable only by self-delusion.

Despite its canonical status, the play has received relatively few professional productions in the U.S. The Catastrophic Theatre’s production will be directed by Catastrophic co-founder Tamarie Cooper who first fell in love with the play when as a student at Houston’s High School for the Performing and Visual Arts.

***LEAP AND THE NET WILL APPEAR* by Chana Porter**

\*World Premiere \*

February 9 – March 4, 2018

Margie was raised to be a good girl, but Margie has a secret: she wants to be a lion. LEAP AND THE NET WILL APPEAR traces one woman’s highly theatrical, time-hopping search for adventure, for love, and for her true self. Packed with wildly eccentric family members and unpredictable lovers, Margie’s journey is at turns uproariously funny and probingly melancholic. Her fierce insistence that she can discover her most fundamental nature takes her across the globe in a romantic and bewildering whirlwind.

The Catastrophic Theatre’s world premiere production of LEAP AND THE NET WILL APPEAR continues the theatre’s long history of being ahead of the curve in identifying and championing the most exciting, emerging voices in American theatre. Porter’s plays have been developed and produced at La MaMa, Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, Primary Stages, Movement Research, PS122, and The White Bear in London. However, this is the first full production of Porter’s work. Two time Obie Award-winning playwright and director Craig Lucas says of LEAP AND THE NET WILL APPEAR: “No one else is doing what Chana Porter is doing—unhinging logic and time from their outward solidity, revealing enduring landscapes within the scenes resembling *life* but doing it one better each time.” Wallace Shawn, who acted in a workshop version, was moved to write, “There will never be another play like this one.” LEAP AND THE NET WILL APPEAR will be directed by Porter’s collaborator, New York City-based director Tara Ahmadinejad. You don’t want to miss it.

***SMALL BALL* by Mickle Maher (book & lyrics)**

**Merel Van Dijk and Anthony Barilla (composers)**

\*World Premiere\*

April 6 – May 13, 2018

Michael Jordan has some problems. First off, he’s not *that* Michael Jordan. Instead, he’s a melancholy journeyman basketball player who’s found himself bouncing around various obscure international leagues. Second, he’s recently become the star player for the Lilliput Existers—yes, Lilliput, the same one from *Gulliver’s Travels*—so his teammates are each six inches tall. It’s tough to pass a regulation size ball to a six-inch player, so the team hasn’t been doing too well, and the post-loss press conferences are getting rough.

This is the surreal, magical world of SMALL BALL, a world premiere musical with book and lyrics by Catastrophic Theatre favorite Mickle Maher (SONG ABOUT HIMSELF, THE HUNCHBACK VARIATIONS, THERE IS A HAPPINESS THAT MORNING IS*)* and original music by Merel Van Dijk and Anthony Barilla. Catastrophic artistic director Jason Nodler, who teamed with Barilla in the past to create the critically acclaimed rock operas SPEEDING MOTORCYCLEand BLUEFINGER, will direct SMALL BALL. Barilla will serve as music director. SMALL BALL was commissioned by Daryl Morey, General Manager of the Houston Rockets, a Catastrophic Theatre board member, and a lifelong musical theatre lover.

SMALL BALL began from a question from Catastrophic artistic director Jason Nodler to Morey: "What about a basketball musical? We both love basketball and we both love Mickle's work, so what if we asked him to write a basketball musical for us? Whatever that means." Morey agreed to serve as a producer, and Maher, an avid basketball fan, leapt at the chance to write the script. “Having Daryl involved is like having the world's most informed dramaturg. Anytime I have a question about basketball, even the most obscure one, he has both the answer and usually a compelling story to go along with it. The fact that he also knows a huge amount about musical theater is naturally a plus,” Maher said.

Said Maher of composers van Dijk and Barilla: “They are madly talented, have such distinct vision and voices, and it's a small miracle that the world has conspired to bring us three together.” Nodler, who teamed with Barilla in the past to create world premiere musicals in cooperation with Pixies frontman Frank Black and cult singer-songwriter Daniel Johnston, will direct SMALL BALL. Barilla will serve as music director.

The Catastrophic Theatre will present two additional Mickle Maher plays in repertory, to overlap with the final week of SMALL BALL: a revival of the Catastrophic/Maher hit THE STRANGERER (2008) and that play’s spiritual sequel, JIM LEHRER, THE THEATRE AND ITS DOUBLE, AND JIM LEHRER’S DOUBLE.

Commissioned by Houston Rockets General Manager Daryl Morey.

***THE STRANGERER* by Mickle Maher**

May 11 – June 3, 2018

George W. Bush wants to kill PBS newsman Jim Lehrer. He wants to kill him right on the stage of his first presidential debate with John Kerry. A surreal reimagining of real events, THE STRANGERER delves deeply into the minds of the three characters, especially Bush, in surprising, often hilarious, and sometimes unsettling ways. Partly inspired by the works of author-philosopher Albert Camus—particularly Camus’ novel THE STRANGER—which the real Bush once placed on his summer reading list—Catastrophic Theatre favorite Mickle Maher (SONG ABOUT HIMSELF, THE HUNCHBACK VARIATIONS, THERE IS A HAPPINESS THAT MORNING IS) explores the fascinating ground between murder and philosophy.

This production reunites the cast of The Catastrophic Theatre’s 2008 production of THE STRANGERER: Paul Locklear as Bush, Troy Schulze as Kerry, and Seán Patrick Judge as Lehrer. Catastrophic Theatre artistic director Jason Nodler returns to direct. Of the original production *The Houston Chronicle* wrote, “*The Strangerer*may be Theatre of the Absurd — yet it's also the funniest and most acutely meaningful example of the genre I've encountered in ages.” *The Houston Press* called the play “a must-see” and raved: “Locklear gives the performance of his life, nailing W. with his weird pauses and malaprops…. He glides through the difficult non sequitur monologues, giving Bush a comprehensible, maddening humanity. Just as spot-on are Judge and Schulze. Matter of fact, the entire production is incredibly realized. ‘Perfectness,’ as W. might say.”

THE STRANGERER is presented in repertory with two other Mickle Maher plays, both directed by Nodler: the original musical SMALL BALL and JIM LEHRER AND THE THEATRE AND ITS DOUBLE AND JIM LEHRER’S DOUBLE.

***JIM LEHRER AND THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE AND JIM LEHRER’S DOUBLE* by Mickle Maher**

May 12 – June 3, 2018

Jim Lehrer, legendary PBS news anchor and presidential debate moderator, is now retired and sitting alone on a gloomy evening in his suburban Washington, DC home. Suddenly his double, Jim Lehrer the aspiring playwright, bursts in, having narrowly escaped the rabidly angry audience from the opening night of his first produced play. Lehrer II must now convince his twin their lives are in danger from the mysteriously incensed mob. At the same time, something—or someone—keeps making odd noises from deep within the house. This gothic horror-comedy uniquely blends the writings of Edgar Allan Poe and mad theatre genius Antonin Artaud with the politics and theatre of our day.

The Catastrophic Theatre’s mini-festival of Mickle Maher plays continues with this wildly inventive sequel to THE STRANGERER, Maher’s play that combines the existentialist writings of Albert Camus with the first 2004 presidential debate between George W. Bush and John Kerry and moderated by Jim Lehrer. Both plays, presented together in repertory, feature Seán Patrick Judge as Lehrer and are directed by Catastrophic Theatre artistic director Jason Nodler.

In repertory with THE STRANGERER

***THE TAMARIE COOPER SHOW: FIELD TRIP!* by Tamarie Cooper and friends**

\*World Premiere\*

June 29-August 12, 2018

For the 21st installment in Tamarie Cooper's series of wildly popular summer shows, Tamarie is getting back to her roots. The first of her shows was one of the earliest instances of 'immersive theatre' in Houston, way back in 1996. Her second show was legendary for taking the audience on a field trip on an actual school bus to experience performances in the unlikeliest places. This year Tamarie's bringing back the bus and you're all invited!

Audiences will board the bus from Catastrophic's home base, MATCH, then travel around town and deep into Tamarie's own twisted psyche, dreams and lamentations. Tour a gallery of bad ideas! Take a whirl around Tamarie's mid-life crisis! Go to the bathroom with Tamarie! Original songs, a live band, tap dancing, games, tasty treats, and a motley crew of some of Houston's finest, funniest performers are all part of the 21st of Tamarie’s original summer musicals. Make sure to bring your permission slips. This will be one amazing ride!

**JOIN THE CONVERSATION**

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**ABOUT THE CATASTROPHIC THEATRE**

Formed in 2007 by Jason Nodler, Tamarie Cooper, The Catastrophic Theatre is Houston’s premier creator and producer of new work for the theatre. The nationally acclaimed organization is dedicated to developing productions that foster a meaningful exchange between artists and audiences. A recipient of two prestigious MAP Fund commissioning grants, the theatre has gained an international reputation for its original pieces, which have attracted audiences from across the United States, Europe, and Australia. Artistic director Jason Nodler is the recipient of a NEA/MacDowell Colony fellowship, a Houston Press Mastermind award, and an unsolicited and unrestricted creative grant from Creative Capital. Named Houston’s Best Theatre Company by the Houston Press in 2009, The Catastrophic Theatre offers Houston audiences a repertoire of challenging, innovative work that can't be seen anywhere else in the country.

**TICKET INFORMATION:** All performances are held at The Midtown Arts Theatre Center (MATCH). Tickets can be ordered online (catastrophictheatre.com OR matchouston.org) or by phone (713-521-4533). ALL PERFORMANCES ARE PAY-WHAT-YOU-CAN.

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