



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 13, 2021

Contact: Sarah Mills Bacha
614.563.1066
smbacha@earthlink.net

CATCO's *New Works Festival* set for Jan. 30-Feb. 13

Artists, playwrights, audiences to engage in developing the plays of tomorrow

Following its long tradition of developing new works and involving theatre fans in the evolution of new plays, CATCO presents the *New Works Festival* Jan. 30 through Feb. 13, featuring readings of three new plays, one for young audiences and two for general audiences.

The three plays – *George and the Hidden Dragon*, *Prima Donna* and *20K Leagues Under the Sea* – were selected from more than 70 submissions, said CATCO Artistic Director Leda Hoffmann, who will direct *George and the Hidden Dragon*. All three plays were written by Ohio-based playwrights.

“CATCO is investing in developing the plays of tomorrow by providing opportunities for playwrights to work on their projects in the early phases of development, while also presenting an exclusive opportunity for theatre fans to see and participate in the creation of a new work,” Hoffmann said. “Our goal with our festival is to assist plays in taking the next step toward full production, and to share the excitement of the new play process with our subscribers and theatre patrons.”

The *New Works Festival* plays are:

- *George and the Hidden Dragon*
By Ashley Cambers
Directed by Leda Hoffmann
Saturday, Jan. 30, 1 p.m.

When a war sends George and his sister, Ginny, to the countryside, they discover a world of mysterious relatives and secret passageways. Sometimes you have to battle a dragon to face your fears and stand up for yourself.

Recommended for ages 6 and up

- *Prima Donna*
By Chris Leyva
Directed by Laura Gordon
Saturday, Feb. 6, 7 p.m.

Opera star Irene Adler adventures across Europe, leaving intrigue in her wake. Inspired by a Sherlock Holmes story, *A Scandal in Bohemia*, *Prima Donna* explores the costs of revenge and deftly deconstructs the difference between a person and their persona.

Recommended for ages 15 and up

- *20K Leagues Under the Sea*

adapted for our time
from the novel by Jules Verne
By Alexandria Rayford West, Carlos Washington and Matt Foss
Saturday, Feb. 13, 7 p.m.

A provocative and timely discussion of societal upheaval and social justice around the world, *20K Leagues Under the Sea* transforms Jules Verne's famous text with dynamic music, movement, and imagery.

Recommended for ages 13 and up

Each script will go through a one-week workshop process, followed by a public reading on Saturday. Performances will be followed by talkbacks, allowing audience members to provide feedback about the play. Like other CATCO productions this season, the readings will be presented virtually with actors reading from their own spaces and audiences watching from their own spaces.

New Works Festival tickets are available by purchasing CATCO's 2020-2021 virtual season pass for \$35 at www.catco.org/season-pass. A pass with access to all three readings is \$12; individual passes are \$5 each. Tickets are available at www.catco.org/new-works-festival

Cambers is a graduate of the University of Michigan, where she focused on performance and cultural studies, and New York University, where she recently completed her M.A. in Educational Theatre in Colleges and Communities. As a multi-passionate creative, she believes in the importance of the arts and enjoys working with children in theatre, and currently works with Perrysburg Musical Theatre and Perrysburg Youth Theatre. Cambers' plays can be found on New Play Exchange. She is a member of SAG-AFTRA and the Dramatists Guild.

Leyva's previous plays have been commissioned and developed by CATCO, CLIMB Theatre, MadLab Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Curtain Players New Play Initiative, Great Plains Theatre Conference, and the Columbus School for Girls, among others. His plays, *The Throne of Oz* and *Cowgirls Don't Ride Zebras*, both premiered at CATCO is Kids. He received an M.F.A. from the Playwrights Workshop at The University of Iowa, a B.A. in Directing from Coe College, and is a member of the Dramatists Guild. His work can be found at <https://www.chrisleyva.com/plays-for-adults.html>

Foss is an associate professor of theatre at the University of Toledo, and a playwright and director, whose works have received numerous national awards, including his adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which received the Kennedy Center's David Mark Cohen Playwriting Award in 2019. Professional credits include Red Tape Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Oracle Theatre, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, American Blues Theatre, The Jewish Ensemble Theatre and Tipping Point Theatre. He received his M.F.A. in acting from Chicago's Roosevelt University and Ph.D. in theatre studies and directing from Wayne State University.

Carlos Washington is in his fourth and final year as a theatre major at the University of Toledo. He performed in the award-winning *All Quiet on the Western Front*, as well as Annie Baker's *The Flick* as Avery Sharp. Recently he was a part of the writing and directing team for *20K Leagues Under the Sea* and performed as Professor Aronnax and puppeteer for Ned Land. He will be studying at the Moscow Art Theatre through the University of Toledo's study abroad program in the near future.

Alexandria Rayford-West is a senior performance theatre major at the University of Toledo, where her credits include Muller in *All Quiet on the Western Front*; Ona in *The Jungle*; Matt in *Mr. Burns: A Post*

Electric Play; and Rose in the student-written play, *The Binding*. She co-wrote, co-directed, choreographed and portrayed Captain Nemo in the university's 2020 adaptation of *20K Leagues Under the Sea*. She plans to continue her education and hopes to teach theatre at the college level in the future.

Hoffmann recently directed CATCO's virtual production of *A Columbus Christmas Carol*. Before joining CATCO, she served as the artistic director of Chicago-based Strawdog Theatre Company and was a member of Milwaukee Rep's artistic staff, working in the education and literary departments and founding Milwaukee Rep's community engagement department. Also in Milwaukee, as the artistic director of Luminous Theatre, Hoffmann produced and directed site-specific productions of *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play* and *The Penelopiad*. Her work as a director has been seen nationwide at Milwaukee Rep, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Texas Shakespeare Festival, University of Miami, Door Shakespeare, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Jedlicka Performing Arts Center, Northbrook Theatre, The Alchemist theatre, Max and Louis Productions, and Riverside Theater Iowa City. She has also been a teaching artist for more than 10 years, directing youth and teaching with Hartford Stage, Milwaukee Rep, Mudlark Theater, Northbrook Park District, and Skyline Studios.

Presenting sponsor for the *New Works Festival* is the Robert Weiler Company.

CATCO and CATCO is Kids' 36th season is sponsored by support from The Ohio Arts Council, which helps fund the theatre with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, education excellence, and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans, and supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

CATCO also appreciates the support of the Bernhart J. Mertz and Barbara B. Coons funds of The Columbus Foundation, assisting donors and others in strengthening our community for the benefit of all of its citizens, and the Greater Columbus Arts Council, supporting the city's artists and arts organizations since 1973. Other supporters include The Shubert Foundation Inc. and Nationwide Insurance Foundation.

About CATCO

CATCO is central Ohio's professional Equity theatre company, providing quality theatre and educational programs for all ages with CATCO is Kids, CATCO's imaginative, captivating theatre program for central Ohio's young theatre lovers and their families. Together, the theatres have adopted an innovative strategy, building creative alliances that can sustain growth and development.

CATCO Mission Statement

Theatre is a shared experience that illuminates the mysteries of our humanity. Its magic has the power to transform us whether on stage, in the classroom or in our diverse communities. CATCO creates theatre that delights, challenges, and transports. For more information, visit catcoistheatre.org.

###