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Contact: Sarah Mills Bacha
614.563.1066
smbacha@earthlink.net

CATCO Opens 2021-22 Season with *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* Oct. 28

***Post-apocalyptic tale of survival, compassion, the need for storytelling
and the enduring power of *The Simpsons* produced in multiple theatres***

CATCO will open its 2021-22 season with an acclaimed, imaginative theatrical experience, *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*, a post-apocalyptic tale of survival, compassion, and the enduring power of *The Simpsons* Oct. 28-Nov. 14 at the Vern Riffe Center.

Written by Playwright Anne Washburn with the score composed by Michael Friedman and directed by CATCO Artistic Director Leda Hoffmann, *Mr. Burns* combines music, laughter, and tears in a thrilling immersive theatrical experience that explores the need for community, entertainment, and storytelling in a world where everything familiar has disappeared. Emphasizing the building community theme, audience members will move together to various theatres at the Riffe Center to experience the play.

“During the past year and a half, I have thought a lot about this play, which is one of my all-time favorites, because it begins with a pandemic and resonates perfectly with our current moment,” Hoffmann said. “We specifically selected plays for our upcoming season that would inspire empathy and bring us together and *Mr. Burns* aligns with our goal. The play is a reminder that we can rebuild community after a world-changing event when we have each other. Working together we can develop new ways of thinking to help us define more clearly the values that shape us and our world.”

Mr. Burns, which focuses on a famous episode of one of the most popular animated sitcoms of our contemporary times, *The Simpsons*, premiered at the Washington, D.C.-based Woolly Mammoth Theatre in 2012. Its New York City debut occurred at Playwrights Horizons in 2013. The run time is approximately two and a half hours.

Recommended for ages 12 and up, *Mr. Burns*, features a combination of longtime CATCO actors and new faces to the CATCO stage. Performing in the cast are:

- Scott Douglas Wilson (Matt/Burns), whose recent regional credits include *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* (Evolution Theatre Company); *A Better Nobler Man* (Red Herring Theater Company); *Terms of Endearment* (Ember Women's Theatre Company); *The Zoo Story* (Columbus Civic Theater); *Frankenstein* (Actors' Theatre of Columbus); and *The NSA's Guide to Sex and Love* (MadLab Theatre), previously performed in *Dr. Seuss's The Cat in the Hat* and *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery* at CATCO.
- Nicolette Montana (Jenny/Edna) performed in *Sex with Strangers*, *Avenue Q*, *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and *Evil Dead: The Musical* at CATCO. Other favorite roles include Rosie in *Bye Bye Birdie* and Yitzhak in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. She has choreographed local high school,

community and professional productions including *West Side Story* (Columbus Children's Theatre), *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Weathervane), *Newsies* (Gallery Players), and *Spring Awakening* (All-Ohio).

- Acacia Duncan (Maria/Scratchy) returns to the CATCO stage where she was last seen in *The Rubenstein Kiss*. As a founding member of Available Light Theatre, she has had numerous roles: actor, director, choreographer, costume designer, and writer in productions as varied as *Every Brilliant Thing*, *Dance Nation*, *You Got Older*, *John Cage 101*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *Don Quixote* and *Cymbeline*.
- Brian Gray (Sam/Homer) is a singer/actor living on the East side of Columbus, who is making his CATCO debut. Previous credits include [*Porto*], *Dance Nation*, and *Bootleg Radio* at Available Light Theatre; *Rent* (Collins), *Hairspray* (Seaweed) and *Sister Act* (TJ) at Imagine Productions; *Annie* (Rooster) and *1940's Radio Hour* (Neal) at SoArtsPro; and *Zanna Don't* (Arvin) at Evolution Theatre.
- Oluchi Nwokocha (Colleen/Marge), a Miami University assistant professor of theatre, makes her CATCO debut. Credits include *Lights Up!* at City Lights Theatre; *Under Milk Wood* at The Pear Theatre; *Sappho* at Cutting Ball Theatre; *The Claim* at Shotgun Players; *Slaughter City* at Performers Under Stress; *The Lady Scribblers* at Custom Made Theatre; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Marin Shakespeare Company; *Macbeth* at African-American Shakespeare; and *We are Proud to Present...* at San Jose Stage.
- Jonathan Putnam (Gibson/Itchy) appeared in the first show at CATCO's old Park Street Theatre in 1986. Since then he has acted in or directed more than 50 shows for CATCO. Most recently he performed *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Vanya), *The Final Table* (Richard Nixon), and *Educating Rita* (Frank). Locally, he has also appeared at Tantrum Theatre, Evolution Theatre and Short North Stage.
- Shauna Davis (Quincy/Lisa) recently performed in *Ain't Misbehavin'* with Trinity Theatre Company at District West in Columbus. Recent CATCO productions include *My Way*, *A Musical Tribute to Frank Sinatra* in 2019 and *Eubie!* in 2018, featuring the music of Eubie Banks, the famous jazz/swing musician and composer in a special presentation at the Lincoln Theatre.
- Eli Brickey (Bart) returns to the CATCO stage where she was last seen in *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. Her most recent credits include *Carrie White (Carrie)* at Columbus Immersive Theatre and *Poppy (Noises Off)* at Short North Stage. She also has toured as an actor and arts educator with Columbus Children's Theatre. Additional local credits include *Agnes (Agnes of God)* and *Mary Warren (The Crucible)*.

Before joining CATCO last year, Hoffmann was the artistic director of Chicago-based Strawdog Theatre Company. She was a member of Milwaukee Rep's artistic staff for seven years, 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 Louie 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. Her CATCO directing credits include *A Columbus Christmas Carol*, *Working: A Musical* and *An Iliad*.

Members of the creative team are: James Blackmon, music director; Montana, choreographer; Brad Steinmetz, set designer; Braden Graves, assistant set designer; Marly Wooster, lighting designer; Dave Wallingford, sound designer; Tabitha Abney, co-costume designer; Esther Sands, co-costume designer; Jennifer Maynard, props designer; Ben Sostrom, specialty props builder; Rachel Heine, stage manager; Shanelle Park, directing observer; Tony Koehler, production manager; and Caroline Dittamo, interim production manager.

Tickets for *Mr. Burns* are \$45 each and can be purchased at <https://www.catco.org/2021-22/mr-burns-a-post-electric-play/>. Thursday, Oct. 28, 7:30 p.m., is a preview performance; opening night is Friday, Oct. 28, 8 p.m. Performances during the run are Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays, 8 p.m.; and Sundays, 2 p.m. Students may purchase \$20 tickets two hours before any performance at the Riffe Center box office, 77 S. High St., Fourth Floor. One ticket per valid student ID can be purchased based upon availability.

As part of our commitment to ensure our theatre is accessible to every member of the central Ohio community, CATCO is introducing a Pay-What-You-Can (PWYC) ticket option this season for the first performance of every play at both mainstage and theatre for young audience productions. For *Mr. Burns*, the opening performance is Thursday, Oct. 28, 7:30 p.m. PWYC works like this:

PWYC tickets can be purchased in advance by calling 614.469.0939 or visiting the CBUSArts Ticket Center at 39 E. State St. Downtown. The ticket center is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the telephone center receives calls Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Same-day tickets are available two hours before the show in-person at the Riffe Center box office, 77 S. High St., Fourth Floor.

For the safety of our staff, actors and audience beginning in October, CATCO will require proof of COVID-19 vaccinations or proof of a negative PCR test within 72-hours of attending a production for all patrons 12 years of age and older. We will additionally require mask-wearing indoors at our theater for all audience members and staff until further notice.

Remaining shows in CATCO's 2021-22 season are *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*, Nov. 27-Dec. 12, 2021; *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play*, Jan. 27-Feb. 13, 2022; *Luchadora!*, Feb. 17-March 6, 2022; *Head Over Heels*, March 17-April 3, 2022; and *Prima Donna*, April 28-May 15, 2022.

Presenting sponsor for *Mr. Burns* is The Robert Weiler Company.

CATCO's 37th season is made possible in part by state tax dollars allocated by the Ohio Legislature to the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically. They also are supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

CATCO also appreciates the support of the William C. & Naoma W. Denison Fund 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 leading professional Equity theatre company, providing exceptional productions and educational programs for adults and young people, in response to our community's needs. We believe theatrical storytelling transforms people of all ages by immersing them into immediate, communal experiences. CATCO

exists to harness the transformational power of theatre that engages with our current moment to inspire a community of empathy. For more information, visit catco.org.

CATCO's Vision

CATCO strives to become a nationally recognized, anti-racist contemporary theatre company that anchors a thriving Columbus theatre ecosystem in an empathetic, equitable world.

CATCO's Purpose/Mission

To harness the transformational power of theatre that engages with our current moment to inspire a community of empathy.

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