

Media Release

PTE Announces 2008-2009 Season

Challenging dramas and delightful comedies fill out 36th Season

WINNIPEG March 19, 2008 – Prairie Theatre Exchange Artistic Director **Robert Metcalfe** announced today the full playbill for the 2008-2009 season. The season of five adult plays offers a wide range of experiences for theatre-goers and continues Metcalfe's balance of thoughtful works by leading Canadian and international playwrights with a mix of smart comedies. Season ticket packages will range from \$109 - \$148 for all five productions and includes underground parking at no-charge. Subscription orders are being taken at the PTE box office, 942-5483.

Daniel MacIvor's new family drama *How It Works* received extraordinary praise at its opening at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre late last year and was scooped up for the first show of the 36th season. MacIvor's *Marion Bridge* was an audience favourite when it was produced at PTE in February 2006.

*"I'm very pleased that we are able to bring Daniel's play to Winnipeg. It is an amazing show and Daniel is one of the leading Canadian playwrights of his generation and just seems to get better. Most people associate him with his work as a solo artist but once again, like with **Marion Bridge**, he taps into the family dynamic and the new family dynamic that I think will resonate with many Winnipeggers,"* say Artistic Director, Robert Metcalfe.

Praise for MacIvor's new play – *How It Works*

The Toronto Sun says:

★★★★½

"It's a fine family drama, marked by MacIvor's quirky wit and a lovely blend of cynicism and hope ..."

The Toronto Star says:

Daniel MacIvor – "...one of our great theatre innovators..."

"This is a wise, witty and warm family drama, shot through with in-sights about the human condition. Only the truly gifted playwright can whisk an audience from laughter to tears and back again in a matter of moments."

Eye Weekly says:

"for once, we see a picture of how a real teenager speaks and acts, not yet another freakish automaton from film or television."

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Wingfield's Inferno will heat up the PTE stage as the snow begins to fly. The latest in the Wingfield series is expected to bring out the very loyal fans Rod Beattie has developed over the years. Once again, Beattie brings us back to Persephone Township and expertly tells the tale of the rural community with a one-man show. ***Wingfield on Ice*** was a huge hit when it was performed at PTE in the spring of 2006. That was his first appearance at PTE and Metcalfe is delighted Rod's returning for the latest installment.

"Rod Beattie is phenomenon of sorts. His work has been performed more than 3,500 times. While many playwrights and performers struggle to find a demand for their work, Rod and playwright Dan Needles are always sought after. It takes skill to perform the many characters he does and the story Needles tells is so genuine that you cannot help but be drawn in. Their success is very well deserved," says Metcalfe.

Edmonton Journal says of *Wingfield's Inferno*:

"The most popular solo series in the country's theatre history."

"You have to salute the precision and sophistication that is Beattie's to command."

Edmonton Sun says:

"Beattie is a natural storyteller with the delivery of a vaudeville comic, the timing of a Swiss watch and enough warmth and charm to stop an Arctic cold front."

The Sudbury Star says:

"Wingfield gets better with age..."

January's show, *The Vertical Hour* by British playwright David Hare, takes on the hot political issue of the US and Britain's involvement in the Iraqi war. As a new American president – whether it is McCain, Obama or Clinton – takes the reins of power, the ongoing conflict will once again be front and centre. Dramas about controversial and serious subjects have been exceptionally well received by the PTE subscription base. *Copenhagen*, *blue/orange* and *Chimera* have all brought sincerely positive phone calls and emails from patrons expressing their appreciation for programming that is demanding.

"The PTE patrons are surprisingly eager for engaging, intelligent discussions about issues presented in a theatrical format. Artistically this widens the play options I have. There aren't cut and dry answers to so many of these questions, but theatre and dramas like Hare's give us an alternative way to discuss issues. Nights of theatre like this can be particularly powerful ," says Metcalfe.

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The Independent says of *The Vertical Hour*:

"The Vertical Hour shows that it's deluded and damaging to suppose that you can set aside personal agonies and equally harmful to view the outside world as a projection of private passions. So how do you relate the inner to the outer? This difficult question that animates a play that is sometimes schematic but which, as sensitively and subtly realised here, will continue to nag the mind long afterwards."

The Guardian says

"If you want a definition of good drama, this is it a rich, intellectually gripping play."

"In a nutshell, Hare's play, whatever its flaws, is about big ideas. Not just the tragic mess of Iraq. It also deals with the lawlessness of elected politicians, Anglo-American cultural differences, the dangers of denial, the futility of isolating politics from private life. At a time when the bulk of Broadway theatre - and, to be honest, much of the West End too - is designed to offer sensation and escape, Hare's play engages the heart and mind. After a diet of commercial candyfloss, it was like being offered a five-course meal; and the Music Box spectators, having looked up, were grateful, as I was, to have been so nourishingly fed."

Playwright Michael Melski returns to PTE with another powerful and poignant play. *The Flyfisher's Companion* is a comedy about two buddies who have shared the highs and lows of their lives for more than 50 years. Melski's last hit at PTE was *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* about the trials and tribulations of love at rinkside.

*"There's a real charm to Michael's writing. He tells a story of these two men that you can immediately empathise with. So many of us are at that stage in their life where they are becoming more contemplative. Much like **Mesa** really struck cord with Winnipeggers, this one will too,"* says Metcalfe.

The season closes with a touch of Hollywood magic. *Gone With the Wind* is a movie of huge significance in pop culture and in the long history of film, but it almost never got made. ***Moonlight & Magnolias*** tells the comic tale of how one of the great movies of the 20th Century went from disaster to movie history in five short days.

"It is nice to end the season with a bit of fun. We've challenged our subscribers with some extraordinary dramas but when the snow is melting it's time for a complete change of pace. I love that this story is about a film almost everyone has seen or at least thinks they've seen because it has been so engrained in our cultural consciousness. But it's more than empty calories – this play asks us to contemplate our actions in the face of injustice and reflect on the notion of a hyphenated identity, while we laugh," says Metcalfe.

Chicago Sun Times says:

"...a Hollywood dream-factory farce...At once a hyperventilating slapstick comedy, an impassioned love song and a blazing critique of Hollywood."

New York Daily News says:

"Frankly, my dear, this is one funny play...a rip-roaring farce...[with] witty, pointed dialogue and hilarious situations..."

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Munsch will return to PTE's line up in its normal December/January slot. ***Munsch Ado About Nothing*** was another hilarious interpretation. ***Little Munsch on the Prairies*** will be the newest title to be included in PTE Munsch library. Story titles are not chosen yet, but Debbie Patterson will return for another brilliant adaptation.

*"Debbie has a real knack of transforming Munsch. The adaptations she has worked on, not only work with the children but the adults too. To connect with both parent and child is impressive and with a title like **Little Munsch on the Prairies** you can only imagine what she has up her sleeve,"* says Metcalfe.

Season ticket prices range from \$109.65 - \$148.55 and orders for subscriptions can be taken by Box Office now at 942-5483.

Dates and titles at a Glance

October 16 – November 2, 2008 (preview October 15)

How it Works by Daniel MacIvor

November 13 – 30, 2008 (preview November 12)

Wingfield's Inferno by Dan Needles

January 22 – February 8, 2009 (preview January 21)

The Vertical Hour by David Hare

February 19 – March 8, 2009 (preview February 18)

The Fly Fisher's Companion by Michael Melski

March 26 – April 12, 2009 (preview March 25)

Moonlight & Magnolias by Ron Hutchinson

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The 2008-2009 Season

October 16 – November 2, 2008 (preview October 15)

How it Works by Daniel Maclvor

When your teenage daughter is struggling with drugs, boys and the law, it's probably not the best time to start dating. But after suffering through a messy divorce, Al is looking for a new start. Enter Christine, who not only soothes the scars of Al's marital breakdown, but may even know what it takes to heal the girl with the angry heart. Told with Maclvor's characteristic wit, humour and passion for the power of storytelling, *How it Works* is a moving portrait of how we can recreate the idea of family in the modern world.

November 13 – 30, 2008 (preview November 12)

Wingfield's Inferno by Dan Needles

A devastating fire at the Orange Hall in Larkspur leaves it a smouldering ruin. Walt Wingfield leads the charge to get it rebuilt, but lighting a fire under his fellow committee members proves a daunting task, not mention dealing with the insurance industry. Add in sleep deprivation from his infant daughter's ear infections, and his attempts to train a neighbour's stubborn horse for the race track, and poor Walt really has his hands full. Gentle humour, engaging characters, inspired storytelling and pure acting genius carry the latest installment of the Wingfield saga to its heartwarming conclusion.

January 22 – February 8, 2009 (preview January 21)

The Vertical Hour by David Hare

Straight from Broadway, *The Vertical Hour* is political commentary at its most engaging. War correspondent Nadia Blye has survived the carnage of Baghdad and Bosnia. But she's totally unprepared for the turmoil she'll encounter over dinner at a quiet home in the Welsh countryside. Who would have guessed that a simple "meet the Parents" trip would turn into a heated philosophical sparring match over the Iraq war? Political and cultural values collide in this timely, explosive and outrageously funny verbal clash of personalities.

February 19 – March 8, 2009 (preview February 18)

The Fly Fisher's Companion by Michael Melski

Don and Wes have survived war, marriages and each other's company for over half a century. But things have changed since these two old friends started fishing together. Lures, (f)lies, and the big ones that got away aren't the only topics of conversation at the cabin this weekend. A touching comedy about two old farts wishing they could remember some things better, and others they'd rather forget. This poignant and powerful play explores love, loss and the hope for forgiveness against a background of a complicated friendship and fading memories.

March 26 – April 12, 2009 (preview March 25)

Moonlight & Magnolias by Ron Hutchinson

Hollywood, 1939. Producer David O. Selznick has just five days to turn the disastrous script of *Gone With the Wind* into a blockbuster or he's ruined for life. He recruits director Victor Fleming and screenwriter Ben Hecht (who has never read the book) to help salvage the project, but it's not exactly a willing collaboration. Selznick, desperate to save a movie many consider to be a train wreck in the making, locks them all in his office for a marathon rewrite session. This funny and fascinating behind-the-scenes play comes to vivid life as three icons of the film industry battle over what became one of greatest movies ever made.