



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – SEPTEMBER 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## **IGNITION THEATRE TO SUSPEND '20/'21 PROGRAMMING DUE TO ONGOING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

RED DEER – Ignition Theatre will suspend regular seasonal programming for the 2020-21 season due to ongoing concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. While Ignition intends to remain hard at work developing new theatrical and film productions until it is safe for audiences to return to the theatre and we can ensure safe working conditions for all of our artists, we will continue to work behind the scenes preparing for upcoming projects and strengthening the foundation of Central Alberta's premiere and most prolific professional theatre company. We will continue to monitor and stay up to date on all the information and recommendations from health officials and react and respond accordingly.

“This has been a challenging time worldwide, this virus doesn't discriminate and has decimated a broad spectrum of industries, which is to say nothing of the countless lives lost and changed forever. It has been a tremendously difficult adjustment as we all learn to navigate our new normal while simultaneously anticipating a return and more familiar day to day.

Having said that, it's no secret the entertainment industry has been hit especially hard. Government support hasn't been easily, or at all, accessible for many artists and arts organizations, there have been limited options for artists to return to work – even in an adjusted capacity that would come close to their previous amount of opportunities and levels of income. “ – *Matt Grue, Artistic Director, Ignition Theatre*

In 2019-2020, Ignition was celebrating it's milestone fifteenth anniversary when our final production, *The Drowning Girls*, was forced to suspend rehearsals and postpone due to concerns surrounding a relatively unknown virus spreading across the globe. Ignition worked diligently to transition our artists out of their contracts during an extremely challenging time and it is our intention to re-assemble that team once we are able to return to the stage at which point we will fulfill our commitment to present this groundbreaking Canadian play, one of the most thought provoking and technically elaborate productions in our history.

“Ignition was in a position in which we had to cancel a production already in rehearsals, meaning certain contract payments had been issued, marketing materials developed and paid for, travel and accommodations secured for out of town artists, etc – none of which is recoupable. Additionally, Ignition paid out 50% of all artist contracts in an effort to ease the

burden experienced by our entire team who suddenly went from employed for the five weeks, to out of work in one.

There is a significant amount of uncertainty about what happens once we're able to return. Will audiences be comfortable returning to the theatre in the early stages of being able to do so? Will local businesses be in a position to support our company via advertising dollars and sponsorship opportunities? Will patrons be able and willing to maintain their contributions; the donations that represent to bulk of our programming dollars? Will it make financial sense for artists to travel to Red Deer and accept semi-professional contracts in a time during which they too are attempting to stabilize their personal finances? These are all questions that will require answers in the coming months as we prepare to return to the stage for the 2021-2022 season – but make no mistake, **we will be back.**" *Matt Grue, Artistic Director, Ignition Theatre*

Ignition Theatre, est. 2004, has presented some of the most memorable, provocative and ultimately rewarding live theatre in Central Alberta's history; including such critically acclaimed and box office hits such as: *Proof, Tuesdays with Morrie, The Drawer Boy, Deathtrap, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, The Glass Menagerie (co-pro; Prime Stock Theatre), Marion Bridge, Speech & Debate, tick, tick...BOOM!, My Name is Rachel Corrie, Oleanna, Red Light Winter, The Shape of Things, [title of show], Bug, Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead, Year After Year, The Year of Magical Thinking, Edges, Tape, The Shape of a Girl and Gruesome Playground Injuries*. Additionally, Ignition is perhaps most known for producing one of Central Alberta's most beloved annual holiday traditions, *It's a Wonderful Life: The Live Radio Drama*. Ignition Theatre has also produced several World Premieres including: *Year After Year, Fertile Choices, Divide and Oral Fixations*; two multidisciplinary arts festivals: *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Bohemian Rhapsody: Redux*; and our popular Live From New York Series! Featuring: *Seth Rudetsky's Big Fat Broadway Show, Rhapsody in Seth, Miranda Sings!, Anthony Rapp: On Love, Loss, and the musical Rent* and *Adam Pascal: In Concert*. Finally, in 2013, Ignition expanded its artistic mandate and began producing feature films; the first, *Year After Year*, based on Ignition's original stage musical of the same name, screened internationally and was nominated for 5 AMPIA Awards including Best Picture; the second, *Break On Through* recently wrapped up its award winning festival run, which also included an AMPIA nomination for Best Screenplay, and is now available on Vimeo VOD, featured on several platforms such as Apple TV, Roku and Google Chromecast.

With several films, musicals and plays in development, Ignition looks forward to the next fifteen years of dynamic, rewarding and provocative entertainment experiences for Central Albertan audiences and all of those beyond.

Ignition Theatre has been under the artistic direction of Matt Grue since its inception.

-30-

MEDIA CONTACT:

Matt Grue, Artistic Director  
403.348.9556  
matt@ignitiontheatre.ca