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ACTING UP STAGE COMPANY ANNOUNCES A MAJOR EXPANSION

UNVEILS NEW VISION AND NEW NAME

The Musical Stage Company

THE MUSICAL STAGE CO.

2017-2018 season to include:

[ONEGIN](#) * [LIFE AFTER](#) * [UNCOVERED: DYLAN & SPRINGSTEEN](#)

*[AND the 2015 Tony Award Winner for Best Musical FUN HOME](#)

Toronto – With great pride and excitement today, **Acting Up Stage Company** makes a series of major announcements about a significant expansion, along with a robust 14th season, new musical development initiatives, major producing partnerships, and a brand new name and vision.

After more than a decade in Toronto as the leading not-for-profit musical theatre company in the city and across the country, **Acting Up Stage Company becomes The Musical Stage Company** - a name that proudly affirms its chosen artistic discipline and boldly represents its ambitions.

Under this new mantle, the company will undertake three significant strategic goals:

1. Making Canada a leader in musical theatre, creating original musicals that break new ground.
2. Reaching thousands more Torontonians with diverse and relevant musical stories.
3. Expanding nationally and internationally, promoting the work of Canadian musical artists and our homegrown stories across borders.

The **2017-2018 season will see the company more than double its operating budget and annual performance schedule, triple projected attendance, triple its development initiatives and support to Canadian musical creators, and quadruple its free youth training reach. The**

substantial growth is supported by a \$1 million dollar creative capital campaign currently underway and now 50% to completion.

The 2017-2018 season also brings an unprecedented performance schedule to the company. Between May 2017 through to May 2018, the newly monikered organization will produce original stagings of the Canadian musicals **ONEGIN** (touring to, and produced in collaboration with, Canada's National Arts Centre) and **LIFE AFTER** (co-produced with Canadian Stage and Yonge Street Theatricals and part of the new three-year *Crescendo Series* program which will see The Musical Stage Company producing three new works by Britta Johnson over the next three years); present their **annual UNCOVERED Concert** – this year featuring the music of **Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen**; and produce the **2015 Best Musical Tony Award-winner FUN HOME** (presented by David Mirvish as part of the Off-Mirvish series).

"I am so proud of how we have been able to impact musical theatre in Toronto since our establishment in 2004. But there is more work to be done," said **The Musical Stage Company Artistic & Managing Director Mitchell Marcus**.

"Our history of artistic success, financial stability, and investment in Canadian artists, coupled with the renaissance of musical theatre happening across Canada right now, uniquely positions us to grow, creating a musical theatre institution in Toronto with significant local, national and international impact. Of particular note, I am over the moon about our inaugural season as The Musical Stage Company. Each of Onegin, Life After, UnCovered and Fun Home reflects our commitment to thought-provoking musical theatre with contemporary relevance. These works, coupled with extraordinary partnerships with Mirvish Productions, Canadian Stage, Yonge Street Theatricals and The National Arts Centre, affirms our new strategic priorities – a strong commitment to advancing Canadian musicals, a significant local expansion, and a national and international presence."

Expanded Season

ONEGIN

In May/June of 2017, The Musical Stage Company brings Toronto the smash hit original-Canadian musical, **ONEGIN**, in a brand new production produced in collaboration with Canada's National Arts Centre. Co-created by **Amiel Gladstone and Veda Hille**, part of the team that created *Do You Want What I Have Got? A Craigslist Cantata*, **ONEGIN** premiered in Vancouver in 2016 to rave reviews and was extended multiple times, with critics calling the show 'thrilling', 'revelatory', and even 'perfection'. Following the Toronto run, The Musical Stage Company production of **ONEGIN** will **open Ottawa's National Arts Center Mainstage season in the fall.**

LIFE AFTER

In the Fall, The Musical Stage Company will produce **LIFE AFTER**, a reworked and expanded version of the new musical by **Britta Johnson** that was one of the runaway hits of the 2016 Toronto Fringe Festival. Johnson has slowly been catching attention since co-writing the heralded immersive musical **BRANTWOOD** at Sheridan College in 2015. In 2016, she was nominated for two Dora Awards for Best New Musical – one for her original **JACOB TWO-TWO** score at Young People's Theatre (with Anika Johnson), and one for Acting Up Stage Company's **REFRAMED** (with Sara Farb) inspired by and performed in front of a painting at the Art Gallery of Ontario. **LIFE AFTER** won the inaugural Paul O'Sullivan Prize for musical theatre and was the runner up for the 2015 Stage West Pechet Family Musical Award. **LIFE AFTER** is co-produced

with Canadian Stage and Yonge Street Theatricals (producers Linda Barnett and Natalie Bartello) and **onstage September 23 – October 22, 2017** – opening Canadian Stage’s season at the Berkeley Street Theatre.

LIFE AFTER also marks the beginning [THE CRESCENDO SERIES](#) – an unprecedented breakthrough for a composer of musical theatre in Canada through a three-year residency and commitment to produce three of their new musicals. **Britta Johnson is the inaugural Crescendo artist** and she will receive an annual residency fee as well as a commitment from The Musical Stage Company to produce one of her works in development each year for the next three years.

“I am over the moon to have been chosen as The Musical Stage Company’s inaugural Crescendo artist,” says Johnson. “I am so constantly invigorated and inspired by the work that Mitchell Marcus and his team do. It is an amazing feeling as an artist to be met with this kind of support and an honour to be part of such a thrilling time for musical theatre in this country.”

[UNCOVERED: DYLAN & SPRINGSTEEN](#)

Also in the fall of 2017, The Musical Stage Company will produce its annual signature concert **UNCOVERED**, transforming popular songs through a storytelling lens in the glorious Koerner Hall. This year, UNCOVERED unveils a focus on the songs of **Bob Dylan & Bruce Springsteen**, with performers **Brent Carver, Melissa O’Neil, Sara Farb, and Andrew Penner all confirmed to return**. UNCOVERED is **on stage November 14 – 16, 2017**.

[FUN HOME](#)

In 2018, The Musical Stage Company will break new ground, **producing the 2015 Tony Award-Winner for Best Musical, FUN HOME, presented by David Mirvish** in the Off-Mirvish Series at the Panasonic Theatre – the first time a local musical production has been featured in the Off-Mirvish Program. FUN HOME will be on stage **at the Panasonic Theatre April 13 – May 6, 2018 and feature an all-Canadian cast**.

FUN HOME is **adapted by Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori from Alison Bechdel’s 2006 graphic memoir** of the same name. FUN HOME portrays Alison, a 43 year-old lesbian cartoonist, who is struggling to untangle her complex relationship with her deceased father. Moving between past and present, Alison relives an unusual childhood growing up in a funeral home, her sexual awakening and unanswerable questions about her father’s secret life.

FUN HOME opened Off-Broadway at the Public Theater in September 2013 to sensational reviews. Its run was extended several times, until January 2014. The Public Theater production of FUN HOME was nominated for nine Lucille Lortel Awards (winning three, including Outstanding Musical), two Obie Awards and eight Drama Desk Awards, among others. It was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2014.

The original Broadway production began previews at the Circle in the Square Theatre in March 2015 and opened in April 2015. It was **nominated for twelve Tony Awards, winning five, including Best Musical**, and its **cast album received a nomination for the 2016 Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album**. The production closed on September 10, 2016.

[New Musical Development](#)

In addition to The Crescendo Series that will see three original Britta Johnson musicals produced in the next three years, The Musical Stage Company's commitment to new musical development is expanding further in 2017-2018 with the addition of [The Aubrey & Marla Dan Fund for New Musicals](#).

Thanks to a major gift from the Aubrey & Marla Dan Charitable Foundation, this new fund will result in **\$25,000 a year, for three years**, invested in commissioning new Canadian musicals.

The Crescendo Series and The Aubrey & Marla Dan Fund are administered by The Musical Stage Company in addition to its **Noteworthy** program (now in its seventh year), the company's annual matching lab that brings together Canadian composers, lyricists and playwrights for a paid two-week residency to hone their musical theatre writing skills and to forge collaborative relationships.

[Education & Community Programs](#)

The Musical Stage Company is equally focused on building and enriching communities through musical storytelling, continuing and expanding the longstanding history of Acting Up Stage Company to curate free, community-based programming.

Now entering its 12th year, [One Song Glory](#) is an annual training program offered to 45 young people from across Ontario, 100% free of charge. 2017 will also see the launch of a single-day satellite of the program in different Ontario communities to expand the reach of this professional musical theatre training program offered to all participants free of charge.

Some notable One Song Glory graduates include: Sara Farb (Stratford Festival), Alexis Gordon (Stratford Festival), Nathan Carroll (*Once*, Mirvish), Gray Monczka (National Tour and Toronto Mirvish production of *Matilda*) and Chris Tsujiuchi (*Onegin* Music Director)

Now entering its 6th year, The Musical Stage Company will continue [The Banks Prize & The RBC Apprentice Program](#). Each year under this program, six artists, working in different areas of musical theatre, are awarded an apprenticeship, receiving a cash prize, mentorship and showcase opportunities to hone their skills through one full season.

Past participants include Graham Scott Fleming (*Kinky Boots*, Mirvish; *Broadway's Miss Saigon*), Alexis Gordon (Stratford Festival), and Jahlen Barnes (Shaw Festival; *Passing Strange*, Acting Up Stage/Obsidian).

Joining these initiatives in 2017 is [Make Me a Song](#). Offered in partnership with the **Regent Park School of Music**, eight Canadian composers are commissioned to write original choral compositions based on the stories of the youth participants in the Regent Park School of Music choirs. These songs become the annual curriculum for the choir. A creative collaboration between Canadian musical theatre writers and young people in one of Toronto's highest priority neighbourhoods, Make Me a Song extends a relationship with the Regent Park School of Music that began with the school's choirs performing in UNCOVERED in 2015.

Tickets starting at \$35 are now available for ONEGIN and tickets to UNCOVERED: DYLAN & SPRINGSTEEN are now available for groups of 8 or more. Audiences can learn more about the

productions and make ticket purchases at MusicalStageCompany.com

Facebook: MusicalStageCo

Twitter: MusicalStageCo

Instagram: MusicalStageCo

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The Musical Stage Company 2017-2018 Season

Produced by The Musical Stage Company in collaboration with Canada's National Arts Centre

ONEGIN – May 13- June 4, 2017

Berkeley Street Theatre Downstairs

At The National Arts Centre Mainstage Fall 2017

By Amiel Gladstone and Veda Hille

Based on the poem by Pushkin and the opera by Tchaikovsky

"Spectacular: 4/4 stars" Globe and Mail

A thrilling, contemporary adaptation of Pushkin's timeless poem and Tchaikovsky's renowned opera, *Onegin* features a high-energy musical score to tell a sweeping tale of unrequited love, infatuation, and intrigue. When the young and innocent Tatyana falls in love with the self-obsessed aristocrat Onegin, he firmly rejects her, arousing passionate love letters, noble duels and second chances.

A new Canadian musical from two of the creators of *Do You Want What I Have Got? A Craigslist Cantata*, *Onegin* wowed west coast audiences in 2016 winning an unprecedented 10 Jessie Awards. Through Hille and Gladstone's original, rousing score, audiences are swept into a musical experience as immersive as love itself.

Directed by Amiel Gladstone

Music Direction by Chris Tsuijiuchi

Choreography by Linda Garneau

Musical Supervision by Veda Hille

The Company:

Rebecca Auerbach (*The Wild Party*, Acting Up Stage/Obsidian) as Larin

Shane Carty (Stratford Festival) as Gremin

Josh Epstein (*The Wild Party*, Acting Up Stage/Obsidian; *Craigslist Cantata*, Acting Up Stage) as Lensky

Peter Fernandes (*Passing Strange*, Acting Up Stage/Obsidian; *Spoon River*, Soulpepper) as Many Others

Hailey Gillis (*Spoon River*, Soulpepper; *Triple Sensation*, season 2) as Tatyana

Daren A. Herbert (*The Wild Party*, Acting Up Stage; *If/Then* National Tour) as Onegin

Elena Juatco (Mirvish's *Kinky Boots* & *Les Miserables*; Canadian Idol, season 2) as Olga

Tickets now available at www.canadianstage.com

Produced by The Musical Stage Company, Canadian Stage and Yonge Street Theatricals

LIFE AFTER – September 23 – October 22, 2017

Berkeley Street Theatre Downstairs

Book, music and lyrics by Britta Johnson

“Extraordinary. Hugely Ambitious.” NOW

As a celebrated Self-Help Guru, Frank Carter seems to have the answer to the meaning of life, but when he smashes into a truck on her 16th birthday, his daughter Alice is left to pick up the pieces and solve the puzzle for herself. An expanded and reworked production of the 2016 hit Fringe musical, *Life After* is a genuine and funny story of love, loss and vivid imagination from one of the most exciting new voices in Canadian musical theatre.

Directed by Robert McQueen

Music Direction by Reza Jacobs

Canadian Stage subscriptions available now, single tickets on sale April 12, 2017

The Musical Stage Company production

UNCOVERED: DYLAN & SPRINGSTEEN – November 14 -16, 2017

Koerner Hall

“Like A Rolling Stone”, “Born To Run”, “The Times They Are A-Changin’”, “Dancing In The Dark” and “Blowin’ In The Wind”. The songs of Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen were the soundtracks of two generations, giving voice to their protests and hopes. In The Music Stage Company’s signature concert, experience music director Reza Jacobs’ wildly imaginative arrangements of these iconic songs in the exquisite Koerner Hall.

The 11th annual *UnCovered* all-star cast features Tony Award-winner Brent Carver, Stratford’s Sara Farb, Soulpepper’s Andrew Penner, Canadian Idol’s Melissa O’Neil and many more as they come together to reinterpret Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen’s greatest hits.

Tickets for groups of 8 or more are currently available from THE Group Tix Company: 647-438-5559, outside GTA 1-866-447-7849

David Mirvish presents The Musical Stage Company production of

FUN HOME - April 13-May 6, 2018

Panasonic Theatre

Music by Jeanine Tesori

Book and Lyrics by Lisa Kron
Based on the Graphic Novel by Alison Bechdel

“Fun Home is an instant classic of the American Musical Theatre and a monumental piece of art.” - Huffington Post

Alison, a 43 year-old lesbian cartoonist, struggles to untangle her complex relationship with her deceased father. Moving between past and present, Alison relives an unusual childhood growing up in a funeral home, her sexual awakening and unanswerable questions about her father’s secret life.

This ground-breaking new musical based on Alison Bechdel’s best-selling graphic memoir was the winner of 5 Tony Awards, including ‘Best Musical’, and has received worldwide critical acclaim for its stunning musical score and heartbreaking storytelling.

[About The Musical Stage Company](#)

The Musical Stage Company is Canada’s largest not-for-profit, professional theatre company dedicated to musical theatre. We create transformative experiences through musical storytelling locally, nationally and internationally by:

- 1. Connecting audiences to stories that matter**
- 2. Connecting Canadian stories to the world**
- 3. Connecting young people to their voices**
- 4. Connecting diverse voices to each other**

Established in 2004 as Acting Up Stage Company, we unveiled our new name in 2017 alongside the ambitious goals of making Canada a leader in musical theatre, reaching every Torontonians through diverse musical stories, and creating a national and international presence.

Our productions – including award-winning contemporary musicals, world premieres and concerts – are seen live by 30,000 people over the 80+ nights that we are onstage annually in venues both traditional and surprising. We incubate new Canadian musicals from development to production, investing in Canadian musical theatre writers and building national and international partnerships. To date, our work has been recognized with 53 Dora Award nominations, 10 Dora Awards and 10 Toronto Theatre Critics’ Awards.

Beyond the stage, we build and enrich communities through musical storytelling. Our robust education programs develop the artists and audiences of tomorrow, offering musical theatre training that boosts self-confidence and self-expression for over 100 young people each year without cost to the participants. We also curate innovative musical programs in partnership with diverse organizations, maximizing the resonance of our work across disciplines and communities.

For more information visit: www.musicalstagecompany.com