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ENCORE ARTS PROGRAMS

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2
ENCORE STAGES
Sequencing the DNA in a patient’s cancer cells to help guide us in finding the most effective treatment is one extraordinary way the Swedish Cancer Institute delivers care. But there’s another side to being extraordinary. It means treating the patient, and not just the disease, with nutrition advice, naturopathic care, music and art therapy, and emotional support for the entire family. What this means is that we provide care for the body and caring for the soul at a level that’s certainly not ordinary.

Learn about personalized medicine, the biggest news in cancer treatment in years, at SwedishCancerInstitute.org
URBAN JUNGLE
An unexpected oasis has popped up in an alleyway in Amazon-land, thanks to artist Spencer Finch’s new installation There Is Another Sky. South Lake Union developer Vulcan Real Estate commissioned the glass canopy that sits four stories above the street and stretches the length of a city block, mimicking the light and feel of walking through a forest. On the ground, the landscaped plaza will include water features, even heated seating areas—a lovely creature comfort for the nature-loving indoor-cats among us.
MOBILE VERSES

Poetry on Buses is Back

There are plenty of reasons to ride the bus—affordability, environmentalism, time to read, decreased road rage—but often bus rides get lumped in with workaday drudgery. In a bid to elevate the experience, 4Culture and King County Metro are re-launching the beloved public art program Poetry on Buses, rebooted for 2014 on Metro’s Wi-Fi-ready RapidRide lines.

“Most of us are always pecking on our phones,” says 4Culture project manager Tamar Benzikry-Stern, “so why not offer a cultural experience in that moment?” Beginning Nov. 10, four dedicated RapidRide buses rolled out with nothing but poetry in the space generally reserved for advertising; all other RapidRide buses will feature a single poem. Meanwhile the Poetry on Buses website will add a new poem every day for a year, 52 of which will be accompanied by portraits of the poets and audio recordings of them reading their work in their native languages.

Poet and teaching artist Roberto Ascalon is the project’s Poet Planner. Originally from New York—where he experienced public poetry by great writers like Langston Hughes on the subway—he arrived in Seattle in 2000. “One of the first things I noticed was poetry on the buses,” he remembers. “I loved knowing that person next to me could have written them. That was my moment of meditation before I hit the day, and it was great.” In 2003, Ascalon had a poem of his own selected for the project—his very first publication.

“Anyone, everyone in King County was invited to see themselves as a poet,” says Benzikry-Stern of the program’s return. Submissions had to be 50 words or less on the theme “Writing Home” and could be written in English, Russian, Somali, Spanish or Vietnamese, King County’s five most frequently spoken languages.

Liaisons within those communities helped find poets to co-host (with Ascalon) workshops exploring the poetic traditions and innovations of each language. In the end, the 365 poems were selected from 627 submissions by a seven-person panel, including a poet representative from each language. “It was awesome to have them all in the room and read or sing the poems to us and tell us why they fit with a tradition, or how they innovated on a tradition that many of us didn’t know about,” says Benzikry-Stern.

Funding for Poetry on Buses didn’t come from King County Metro’s strapped operating budget, nor could this funding have been spent on Metro operations. The program is funded by the 1% for Arts budget, the 1973 ordinance that legally requires all Capital Construction projects to set aside one percent of funds to be spent on public art. The original Poetry on Buses program ended in 2007 due to a lack of financial resources; the re-launch only includes plans for the one year.

 “[Poetry on Buses] challenges Seattle’s sense of itself,” Ascalon says. “It’s actually proof that Seattle’s not as staid and, quite frankly, as white as we believe it is. Everyone has these rich traditions that they’ve brought here—what does that make Seattle? It shakes up our city’s identity from the inside out.”
Ali Mohamed el-Gasseir, the 35-year-old casting director at Intiman Theatre Festival and co-director at Washington Ensemble Theatre. Originally from Lafayette, Calif., el-Gasseir came to Seattle five years ago. “I am one of those pluviophiles who actually loves the rain. Seattle always held a very romantic place in my imagination. Perhaps I listened to too much Morrissey and Depeche Mode growing up.”

STAR-CROSSED CRUSH A girl in high school lured el-Gasseir down the thespian path. At the end of his junior year he followed her to a summer Shakespeare camp. “We ended up playing MacBeth and Lady MacBeth but I left that summer more in love with theatre than her.” el-Gasseir entered grad school at San Francisco State intending to enter academia, but he changed his mind. “I wanted to stop talking about art and instead make what I want to experience.”

THE LOOK “Professorial gentleman meets rakish dilettante. I try to look like a young businessman and like someone who can lecture on the history of 19th century American theatre. I’m a tie, pocket square and blazer guy with bright, crisp accent colors for most occasions. I started going grey when I was 17, but only on the sides of my head, so I’ve had the same Reed Richards hair for my entire adult life.”

ICONS “Comedian Richard Ayoade, singer Dave Gahan, Dr. Indiana Jones (but only his classroom ensemble). I don’t dress like Noel Fielding, but he’s artistically inspiring.”

UP NEXT In January, el-Gasseir is directing the world premiere of Josh Conkel’s Sprawl with Washington Ensemble Theatre. Sprawl christens the new 12th Avenue Arts building as its first-ever theatre offering and should be “unforgettably wild with robotics, drones, drag, full nudity and crazy insect swarms.”

BY AMANDA MANITACH
AMERICAN ROOTS

A Crucial Collection of First Nations Pop

On Nov. 25, Light in the Attic Records releases the most ambitious compilation in the label’s history. Native North America (Vol. 1): Aboriginal Folk, Rock, and Country 1966–1985 collects 34 recordings by 23 artists and groups from Canada and Alaska, all made by members of Alaska Native and First Nations tribes. The project, over a decade in the making, comes from the label responsible for unearthing the career of Sixto Rodriguez, subject of the Oscar-winning Searching for Sugar Man documentary, and for generating Seattle’s Wheedle’s Groove revival.

“A lot of eyes are on Light in the Attic since the Rodriguez work and the success of Searching for Sugar Man,” says Kevin “Sipreano” Howes, the Vancouver-based DJ, writer and musicologist who curated the Native collection. “People might be looking to their reissues, but this is a cultural release, a spiritual release even, not just an obscure album from the ‘70s. Not to take away from that, but this has a far greater weight as far as I’m concerned.”

“This is a cultural release, a spiritual release even, not just an obscure album from the ’70s. Not to take away from that, but this has a far greater weight as far as I’m concerned.”

Alaska Natives along with First Nations peoples—the name applied to Canada’s pre-Columbian natives—have a millennia-long legacy across the upper reaches of the continent, spanning dozens of tribes, languages and cultures. Starting in the 1950s, at the dawn of Canada’s homegrown music industry, musicians around the world began absorbing the sounds of pop music, first American country and folk and later rock ’n’ roll. First Nations musicians were no different. As pop spread via radio and vinyl to the farthest corners of a country full of far corners, they too were influenced by Johnny Cash and Neil Young, Bob Dylan and the Beatles.

“It’s fantastic to hear this fusion going on with the artists inspired by these developments in pop culture and combining it with their heritage,” Howes says. Among Native North America’s 34 selections, the
ENCORE ARTS NEWS

music spans genres from country jangle to protest folk to psych rock. Songs are mostly sung in English but there are some native-tongue tunes as well. The only common thread is that each of the performers and bands is Native.

Fifteen years ago, Howes encountered an early album by Willie Dunn, a musician, filmmaker, politician and one of Canada’s only genuine First Nations stars. With that find, Howes was inspired to dig deeper into a musical subgenre he never knew existed.

“The music draws you in, gives an insight into a different perspective,” Howes says. “I’m learning about aboriginal culture through these recordings, about the history of our country.”

For years, he and crate-digging partner Dane Goulet made trips across Canada scouring used record shops, thrift stores and yard sales for obscure vinyl. “You find these records in random remote paces, looking through a box of Barbra Streisand records and come across John Angaiak and you wanna find out more because of the musical merit,” he says.

Research in Canadian music-history texts and online forums revealed next to nothing about the artists whose records he found, many of whom are still alive, living in isolated communities across Canada. “Street-level research” led him to Vancouver Island, Ontario and Quebec, face-to-face with many of the musicians whose music he discovered.

“I got a call from Willie Thrasher”—another of the artists included in the compilation—“and he said talking about the music reminded him of some of the struggles he went through. It was a good thing.”

The interviews Howes conducted comprise much of the exhaustive, 190-page liner notes he wrote. Those notes—rich with history personal and social—could easily form the basis of a college-level musicology course. It’s an invisible history writ in rock ‘n’ roll, giving voice to communities little known beyond their own borders. The whole package adds up to an education, sure, but the music stands on its own, beautiful, tragic, impassioned and energized.

If Vol. I is successful, Howes says, he and Light in the Attic have a Lower-48-focused Vol. II ready for subsequent release.

“These projects can only touch on a fraction of the art and music created in those seminal years,” Howes says. “The things they’re singing about, from the ’60s to the ’80s, are just as relevant today, if not more so. Issues of land claims, the environment, rights of Native America people. It’s a timely release. This is just the beginning. The learning continues. Music and culture are endless.” JONATHAN ZWICKEL

Who’s at Cornish?

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Continued from page 7
ACT – A Contemporary Theatre presents

Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens
Adapted by Gregory A. Falls

Music Composed and Conducted by Adam Stern

Beginning November 28, 2014 • Opening Night November 30, 2014

COMPANY
Scott W. Abernethy, Anne Allgood*, Sydney Andrews*, Rob Burgess, Peter Crook*, Khanh Doan*, Brian David Earp, David Foubert*, Elinor Gunn, Kamaria Hallums-Harris, Ryder Moon Hobbs, Nate Kelderman, Bobbi Kotula*, James Lapan*, Charles Leggett*, Jason Marr, Maya McQueen, Kelly Grace Richardson, Alex Silva, Cedric David Martin Wade, R. Hamilton Wright*

CREATIVE TEAM
John Langs Director
Shelley Henze Schermer Scenic Designer
Deb Trout Costume Designer
Michael Wellborn Lighting Designer
Brendan Patrick Hogan Sound Designer and Music Director
Steven M. Klein Original Sound Designer
Wade Madsen Choreographer
JR Welden* Stage Manager
Erin B. Zatloka* Assistant Stage Manager
Ruth Eitemiller Production Assistant
Ann Ciecko Assistant Lighting Designer
Marianna de Fazio Dialect Coach


Running Time: This performance runs approximately 90 minutes. There will be no intermission.

*Members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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Peter Crook and R. Hamilton Wright will alternate playing the role of Ebenezer Scrooge. Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance. Check the cast board in the lobby for program changes.

This production is based on the 1996 production directed by Leslie Swackhamer.

Audience members are cordially reminded to silence all electronic devices. All forms of photography and the use of recording devices are strictly prohibited. Please do not walk on the stage before, during, or after the show. Patrons wearing Google Glass must power down the device if wearing them in the theatre.
Welcome to ACT

It’s always a particular pleasure to welcome audiences to our production of Charles Dickens’ immortal *A Christmas Carol*, and to share this wonderful story that’s become as much a tradition for us at ACT as it is for you. Like you, every December we unpack our festive ornaments, decorate our house, rearrange the furniture, get out the special holiday outfits—which of us doesn’t have that colorful holiday sweater or waistcoat?—and gather our friends around to help celebrate the joys of the season. You might think it would take some persuading to get actors to give up so much of their lives to a production at this time of the year, but this is a tale that everyone loves to tell, and for many *A Christmas Carol* veterans participating in it has become a treasured facet of their own holiday rites and revels.

The story is, of course, about Scrooge and his life-changing encounter on Christmas Eve with a series of ghostly visitors come to save his shriveled soul. And counterpoised to him are the Cratchits, who represent, at least in most of the tale, everything he isn’t, and needs to become, and who carry the heart of the story every bit as much as he does. Their care for one another, even in their impoverished circumstances, gives us a sense of the greater possibilities of life and pleasure that can exist because of human love.

Dickens hated the political economists of his day, in particular the utilitarian thinkers inspired by Jeremy Bentham who believed that the principal and most important relationships between people were the economic ones, and that it should be the right and necessary course for those who couldn’t keep up their part in the marketplace to die, as failed experiments in the “natural” competitive process towards the most advanced and prosperous society. But of course, the very center of all that is good in this story is found in the small person of Tiny Tim, who, being (in Dickens’ words) “a cripple,” is useless in such a value system. He certainly can’t earn his keep. This isn’t important to his family—his health and well-being are what matters to them. In fact, as the novelist Walter Allen pointed out, he is the center of love in the story, and an ultimate source of goodness and inspiration for all. Scrooge is drawn to him because buried deep in his psyche is the memory of another vulnerable little boy, himself. And with the rediscovery of that younger, tenderer self, enlightenment comes to Scrooge, and through him to us all.

Every December Dickens reaches out to remind us again that no matter how dark and frightening the world may seem, no matter how closely the shadows gather, each of us has the power at any and every moment to shine a light and change ourselves, and the world, for the better. Not necessarily overnight, or with one grand gesture, but slowly, incrementally, as water wears a stone, through small persistent acts of individual kindness, generosity and compassion between one person and another. “There are quiet victories and struggles,” Dickens wrote in another Christmas story, *The Battle of Life*, “great sacrifices of self, and noble acts of heroism… done every day in nooks and corners, and in little households, and in men’s and women’s hearts—any one of which might reconcile the sternest man to such a world [as this], and fill him with belief and hope in it.”

We believe, and we hope. So gather round the fire. Make room for the little ones in front. It’s time for us, and our actors, to give our holiday gift to you, and invite you to pass its spirit on in whatever way you are able.

It’s time to tell the story.

Warm wishes and blessings to you all for the coming year,

Kurt Beattie, Artistic Director
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...PLUS quarterly parties!
Welcome all—young and old—to this grand holiday tradition. For the past 38 years ACT Theatre has celebrated the season by staging this remarkable adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. I’m not sure if Greg Falls, the founder of ACT, expected that 39 years later his adaptation would continue to bring its unique magic to Seattle audiences, yet here we are. And what of Charles Dickens who, over a century ago, in order to shine a light on the abominable conditions of London’s poor and to bolster his own finances after the failure of his previous novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, sat down to quill this ghostly story of redemption. Did he have any inkling that it would become an enduring classic? Yet here we are.

So it is with all of us, that the actions we set in motion ripple into the future, creating events and emotions far beyond our ability to imagine. *A Christmas Carol* reminds us that we need not be an artist or writer to leave behind an enduring story. Our stories are written in each other’s hearts through simple acts of kindness, charity, support, and affection. Just like Messrs. Dickens and Falls, our actions may create a legacy that will outlive us all and bring unexpected joy to many or, if we are not mindful, the opposite. This story always inspires big questions, and the important big picture “how am I living my life?” thoughts.

To continually raise these thoughts in this vibrant communal space is the gift of live theatre, and so, once again for the 39th year, with open hearts and a fresh perspective, it is a great pleasure to present Greg Falls’ adaptation of Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. May the stories you leave behind bring great comfort and joy.

Happy Holidays!
John Langs, Director and ACT Associate Artistic Director

Our stories are written in each other’s hearts through simple acts of kindness, charity, support, and affection.
It’s been said that with *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens “invented” Christmas, and this was also a popular opinion at the time of its publication in 1843. (When the author died, a London barrow-girl who had probably never read a word of Dickens, if indeed she could read at all, was heard to exclaim, “Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die too?”) It is, of course, an exaggeration, though as with most exaggerations it contains an element of truth.

Peter Ackroyd points out that in the early 19th-century Christmas bore little resemblance to the prolonged festival we know today.

“...It was not yet the ‘festive season’ which Dickens desired to make of it; it did not possess what he described as ‘the Christmas spirit, which is the spirit of active usefulness, perseverance, cheerful discharge of duty, kindness and forbearance!’ Christmas cards were not introduced until 1846, and Christmas crackers until the 1850s. Typically it was still a one-day holiday when presents were given to children, but there was no extravagant exchange of benevolence and generosity...What Dickens did was to transform the holiday by suffusing it with his own particular mixture of aspirations, memories, and fears. He invested it with fantasy and with a curious blend of religious mysticism and popular superstition, so that, in certain respects, the Christmas of Dickens resembles the more ancient festival which had been celebrated in rural areas and in the north of England. In addition, he made it cozy, he made it comfortable, and he achieved this by exaggerating the darkness beyond the small circle of light...Beyond the hearth were the poor, the ignorant, the diseased, the wretched; and do we not enjoy the flames of the Christmas fire more because of the very shadows which it casts?...In *A Christmas Carol,* and the stories that succeed it, there is a constant contrast between warmth and cold, between the domestic interior and the noisome streets, between the rich and the poor, between the well and the ill, between the need for comfort and the anxiety about homelessness...”

In a sense, it may be more accurate to say that Dickens re-invented Christmas. His perception that the spirit of the holiday needed to be rearticulated and redefined was connected to his awareness that British society, and London in particular, was moving rapidly away from its rural agricultural roots and taking on a more urban, economically-driven character. In his holiday story Dickens touched on a yearning in the hearts of his London readers of which they themselves may not have been fully conscious: a longing for the old, 12-day country Christmas of the carol, filled with friends and parties, music and generosity, that in the increasingly industrialized society of 19th-century England had dwindled to a single day off from work. One of his great achievements in *A Christmas Carol* is to translate the elements of the old Christmas into a new form.

“The traditional Christmas celebration was an extended affair,” writes Paul Davis in his essay *Bringing Christmas to the City.* “Lasting for the twelve days of Christmas, or even...”
We’ve always sort of been Anglophiles… we spent a good deal of time in England. We’ve read a lot of Dickens over the years. My husband and I have been married for 25 years and about 20 years ago we just thought it would be neat to read *A Christmas Carol* and so we read it to one another before we had kids. We’re kind of nerdy. My husband’s a librarian, and I was a teacher and so it just took off and when our first born was a baby, we just kept reading. We decided at one point that what we would do is read it by candlelight, so we get out all the candles in the house and we pull the drapes and we turn off all the electric lights and we sit and we read...

It takes a long time to read, it’s not like a quickie little *Night Before Christmas*. It’s a commitment. I think Stave Three is the longest. It probably takes us an hour and fifteen minutes or so to read it.

We read it over five nights… a stave a night, every night until Christmas Eve.

And we talk about Christmas and Christmas traditions. When we read the stave that has The Ghost of Christmas Past, we talk about Christmases we remember. My husband and I share Christmases we remember from when we were little and then the kids share Christmases that they remember. That’s an evolution that’s been fun. And the same with Christmas Present and Christmas Future. We talk about how much we appreciate what we have at Christmas Present, the things that we’re doing and the traditions that we have or the people that are a part of our world. And the Christmas Future is always fun too because we think about things like, ‘Things will change in the future and what do we think will be different?’

About 12 years ago my husband was in an old bookstore, and he bought an anthology of Dickens from 1889, so we read *A Christmas Carol* out of a book that’s more than 100 years old. It’s this crazy big book that’s got I think 7 of his books in it; it’s huge, like 12 inches by 9 inches and it’s heavy. So we read *A Christmas Carol* out of this ancient book. I think it adds to our appreciation of the written word and the spoken word.

We’ve been doing it for 20 years and so the kids are all acclimated to this little sort of *Christmas Carol* tradition that we have.

What Dickens did was to transform the holiday by suffusing it with his own particular mixture of aspirations, memories and fears.
Celebrating Out Loud
On Stage with Charles Dickens & A Christmas Carol

From its first publication in December 1843 A Christmas Carol was seized upon by playwrights looking for a surefire success, and within three months no fewer than eight unauthorized stage adaptations could be seen on the West End, but the most famous and most effective of A Christmas Carol’s stage performances were those given by Dickens himself, who as a young man had hoped to become an actor. Happily for English literature, if perhaps unhappily for the English stage (the evidence suggests that had he wanted a stage career he’d have been second to none), Dickens didn’t pursue his theatrical ambitions, but he remained an avid theatre-goer, attending every week for the rest of his life, participating enthusiastically in amateur theatricals of all kinds, and eventually returning to his first love with solo performances of selections from his own work.

He gave his first public reading of A Christmas Carol in 1853 at Birmingham before an audience of nearly 2,000 people, an immense crowd for the time. Despite his raging popularity, in this century before radio and television, very few of his devoted readers knew what Dickens looked like or sounded like, and the opportunity actually to see him in person and reading from his own work was an event not to be missed. Dedicated fans would camp on the pavement outside the auditorium the night before tickets went on sale, as if for a rock concert or the World Series, and although Dickens always made sure that some seats were priced within reach of the working class at just a shilling each, tickets were scalped regularly at prices far in excess of their face value.

Many in his audience were, at first, disappointed. Dickens was not an imposing figure physically, nor did he have the commanding vocal range of the most notable public speakers of the day. Still, he carried himself well and with a certain panache; what his voice lacked in scope it more than made up in flexibility, resonance and color; and once he began to read, people soon forgot their initial reservations. Beyond his undoubted gifts as an actor, Dickens also had enormous charisma, and an ability to enthrall an audience through sheer force of personality that we would describe now as “star quality.” Eyewitnesses describe the energy of his movements as he walked briskly to the podium, his marvelously mobile and expressive face, and most of all the twinkle in his large, deeply set brown eyes as he announced in his rapid, emphatic way “Marley-was-dead-to-begin-with...” as if he were already anticipating the thrills and delights of the story he was about to tell and could hardly wait to get on with it. An American journalist wrote that to hear Dickens read the A Christmas Carol was like hearing the very sound of Christmas bells, and in time the readings became a holiday tradition for many people that they carried on within their own families each Christmas, as in fact many still do today.

—Margaret Layne

Christmas Traditions

CANDY CANES started out as straight sticks of white sugar, and legend has it that they were invented by a German choirmaster in 1670 worried about keeping children quiet through the long Christmas service; he shaped them like a shepherd’s crook, to remind them of the shepherds that visited the manger in Bethlehem. The first evidence of a candy cane isn’t till 200 years later, though, so this charming story is probably a Christmas tall tale. The red stripes were added around 1900.

CHRISTMAS TREES, brought into the house and decorated with candles, nuts, berries, and later, shimmering glass ornaments, are a German tradition brought to England by German-born Prince Albert when he married Queen Victoria in 1840. When the Illustrated London News ran a picture in 1848 of the large royal family gathered around their Christmas tree, the custom took off, and crossed the Atlantic to the U.S. in the same year.

EGGNOG is probably descended from the Medieval “posset,” a beverage made with hot milk and served in a small wooden mug used for serving alcohol that in Middle English was called a “noggin.” The first American eggnog was made at Captain John Smith’s Jamestown settlement in 1607 and was called “egg and grog,” the latter being the term for any drink containing rum; the name is thought to derive from a contraction, perhaps after a few tankards, to “egg ’n’ grog,” and eventually to “eggnog.”

MISTLETOE is a very ancient tradition going all the way back to the Druids, who believed hanging it in the house brought good luck and kept evil spirits at bay. In Norse mythology it also symbolized love and friendship. Kissing Under the Mistletoe is an English invention (kissing in public wasn’t done in Victorian England, one needed an acceptable excuse!) and the original custom was that one of the white mistletoe berries was picked from the sprig before each kiss. When the berries ran out...no more kissing!

Victorian Christmas carolers
Who's Who in A Christmas Carol

Scott W. Abernethy (Middle Scrooge/Alibi Baba/Spirit 3) is delighted to spend the holidays this year with ACT. Recent Seattle credits: Guildenstern in New City Theatre's Hamlet; Servant of Two Masters, Seattle Rep; Oswald in King Lear and Boyet in Love's Labour's Lost with Seattle Shakespeare Company; Count Ivarson in Anna Karenina with Book-It Repertory Theatre; and Reverb in Tall Skinny Cruel Cruel Boys with Washington Ensemble Theatre. Regional credits: Hastings in Henry IV part 2 and Bazin in Man in the Iron Mask with Shakespeare Santa Cruz; Autolycus in Winter's Tale with Island Stage Left; and Frankie Avid in Shine!: A Burlesque Musical at Theatre Off-Jackson. Film: Only Connect and Just a Taste. He also teaches acting in the greater Seattle area. Scott received his M.F.A. in Acting from the University of Washington in 2012.

Anne Allgood (Mrs. Cratchit) happily joins A Christmas Carol again, having previously played Mrs. Cratchit in 2001 and Mrs. Fezziwig in 2011. Also at ACT: Mary Stuart, The Price, Sugar Daddies, Ramayana, The Pinter Festival, The Prisoner of Second Avenue, Rock ‘n’ Roll, Das Barbeci, The Women, The Clean House, Vincent in Breton, Eurydice, Miss Witherspoon. Her credits encompass Broadway (Carousel, The Most Happy Fella, The Sound of Music, Beauty and the Beast, Imaginary Friends), National Tours (Floyd Collins, Parade, Evita, South Pacific, Unirentown), and regional theatres across the country. She has appeared at every major theatre in Seattle, notably in Boeing Boeing, You Can’t Take It With You, The Constant Wife, and Bad Dates at Seattle Rep, in Angels in America and Cymbeline at Intiman, and in a dozen productions at the 5th Avenue Theatre, including Carousel this coming February. Merry Christmas!

Sydney Andrews (Spirit 1) is so happy to be returning to ACT! Most recently she played Nina in Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike. Sydney will play Irina in The Seagull Project's upcoming production of The Three Sisters at ACT this January. She will also be performing with Book-It Repertory as Sarah in Little Bee this April. She has worked with New Century Theatre Co. (The Trial), Seattle Shakespeare (Antony & Cleopatra), Seattle Children's Theatre (Pippa Longstocking), Book-It Repertory (Jesus' Son, Hotel on the Corner of Bitter & Sweet), and Annex (Undo). Other regional work includes: Zach Scott Theatre (Doubt, Fiction, Becky's New Car, and Love, Janis), Austin Shakespeare Theatre (An Ideal Husband), the Berkshire Theatre Festival (James & the Giant Peach), and the Children's Theatre of Charlotte (The Cantonville Ghost). Sydney holds an M.F.A. from the University of Texas at Austin.

Rob Burgess (Mr. Fezziwig/Topper) Northwest born and bred, Rob is happy to be sharing the holidays with this wonderful group of artists and, of course, you! He has been seen in numerous productions spanning several years in the Seattle area. Some of Rob's recent work includes Harold Goring in Black Comedy and Ben Weeks in The Normal Heart (Strawberry Theatre Workshop), Mr. Barrymore in Hound of the Baskervilles (Seattle Repertory Theatre), co-creating Adventures with Spot and penning the lyrics for Harold and the Purple Crayon (Seattle Children’s Theatre) and puppeteer/ensemble member in This Land (Strawberry Theatre Workshop). He is a proud papa (Madison and Lily) and partner (Melanie) and holds his turn as Electron Boy's sidekick, Lightning Lad (Make-a-Wish), as one of his favorite memories—Energize!

Peter Crook (Ebenzer Scrooge) most recently appeared as Polonius in Hamlet (New City Theatre). He was Dorn in The Seagull here at ACT and toured with the The Seagull Project to the Ilkhom Theatre in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Other favorite Seattle credits include: The Normal Heart (Strawberry Theatre Workshop), The Walworth Farce (NCTC), The Cider House Rules (Book-It), Angels in America (Intiman), Clydeburn Park (Seattle Repertory Theatre), and The Wizard of Oz (Seattle Children’s Theatre). On Broadway and toured in Moscow in Amadeus. Television and film credits include: Designing Women, Chaplin, and Snow Falling on Cedars. He is a graduate of PCPA and The Juilliard School.

Brian David Earp (Fred/ Dick Wilkins) is a two-time recipient of the 5th Avenue Award for Best Actor and has performed in leading roles in over fifty plays, musicals, and films throughout the U.S. and England. Recent Seattle credits include: Photograph 51 (Ray Gosling, Seattle Repertory), The Producers (Leo Bloom, Village Theatre), and Spring Awakening (Melchior Gabor, Balagan). Yale University credits include: Arcadia (Septimus), Noises Off (Frederick Fellowes), Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (Nick), and The Importance of Being Earnest (Algernon). At ACT, Brian was most recently seen in the World Premire readings of Bloomday by Steven Dietz and The Change Room by Carly Mensch. He will play Cliff in Cabaret later this season at the Village Theatre. In addition to being an actor-singer, Brian is also a scientist and philosopher, holding degrees from Yale, Oxford, and Cambridge universities in cognitive science, psychology, and the history and philosophy of science. He is working on a book about “love drugs.”

David Foubert (Marley) is excited to be a part of this seasonal tradition. His recent credits include playing the title character in The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's production of Henry VIII, Cisco in The Unseen Hand and The Magician in Patter for the Floating Lady for ACT's An Evening of One Acts, and Bolingbroke in Shakespeare's Richard II. Other theatres include North Carolina Shakespeare Festival, Colorado Shakespeare Theatre Festival, and New York's Acting Company National Tour. He received his M.F.A. from The University of Delaware's PTPP.

Elinor Gunn (Ladies’ Understudy) is so grateful to be a part of the A Christmas Carol family! She last performed at ACT as Chloe in Sugar Daddies by Sir Alan Ayckbourn. Recent credits include Twelfth Night and King Lear with Seattle Shakespeare Company, The Nerd at Centerstage Theatre, and Holiday of Errors with Sound Theatre Company. Happy Holidays!

Kamaria Hallums-Harris (Martha Cratchit/Miss Fezziwig) is from Greer, South Carolina. It is in South Carolina where she originally discovered her love for the theatre. Kamaria attended South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities for her last two years of high school as a drama student. It was then that she decided Seattle was the place for her to be
during this time of her life. She knew that she wanted to be in a city where the environment was as lush and awe-inspiring as the arts surrounding it. Kamaria is now a graduate of Cornish College of the Arts with a degree in Original Works, and she could not be happier with where this journey has led her thus far and where it will continue to take her.

Nate Kelderman
(Singing Thief/ Undertaker’s Assistant/Turkey Boy) is very pleased to return to ACT, having appeared in the 2013 production of A Christmas Carol as Peter Cratchit and Young Scrooge. Other roles include: Thomas/Tommy in The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay at Book-It Repertory Theatre, Buddy in The Edge of Peace at Seattle Children’s Theatre/The University of Texas at Austin, and Luther in Inspecting Carol at Seattle Repertory Theatre. Nate has participated in the Summer Season through Seattle Children’s Theatre’s Drama School. Shows there include: Singin’ in the Rain, Young Playwrights Program, A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Jungle Book. Besides acting, Nate is an accomplished violinist and performs with Seattle Youth Symphony’s Debut Orchestra. He is a member of Kaleidoscope Dance Company. Nate would like to thank his parents, sister, dog, and chickens for their continued and wonderful support and affection. A very merry Christmas to you all and enjoy the show!

Bobbi Kotula
(Mrs. Fezziwig/Mrs. Dilber) Happy to make her ACT debut, Ms. Kotula’s career in film, television, radio, and stage has taken her Off-Broadway, and to the Village, The 5th Avenue, Seattle Children’s, Intiman, Showtunes!, and Seattle Repertory theatres. Some of her favorite roles include: Kate, Taming of the Shrew, Maggie, Lead Me A Tenor; Miss Hannigan, Annie (Footlight Award); Vic, Stu for Silverton (Gregory Award nominee); Hildret Heinz, Iron Curtain (Footlight Award); Golde, Fiddler on the Roof; Mrs. Brice, Funny Girl; and Mrs. Potts, Beauty and the Beast. Look for her this spring in Village Theatre’s devlish new musical comedy, No Way to Treat A Lady; she’ll be playing most of the ladies. Thanks for being here and happiest of holidays to you.

James Lapan
(Bob Cratchit) Jim is delighted to make his ACT debut in A Christmas Carol. He’s lived and worked in Seattle for over 25 years, performing at Book-It, Seattle Shakespeare, Intiman, Village, and Seattle Public Theatre, to name a few. Favorite roles performed include Lenny in Of Mice & Men (SPT), George in Once in a Lifetime (The Schmee), and the title role in Grendel (Book-It). Jim recently wrote and performed his first solo piece, 25,000 Posts, at West of Lenin. Also a director and arts educator, he’ll be directing The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe at Youth Theatre Northwest in the spring of 2015.

Ryder Moon Hobbs
(Peter Cratchit/Young Scrooge) is 12 years old and lives on Whidbey Island. He is in 6th Grade at Wellington Day School. His main passion is theatre, and he has been performing since he was four years old. He loves acting, singing, dancing, and football. Some of his favorite roles are Harold Hill in The Music Man, and the Tin Man The Wizard of Oz. He is thrilled to be a part of A Christmas Carol. He is deeply grateful for the amazing support from his family, friends, his teacher Ms. Itaya, and the community.

Maya McQueen
(Belinda Cratchit/Fan) is grateful and honored to make her ACT debut in A Christmas Carol and couldn’t imagine a better family to spend the holidays with. A sophomore at The Overlake School, Maya has participated in many productions, including work with Seattle Children’s Theatre (Mulan, The Little Mermaid, Seussical), Village Theatre KIDSTAGE (Seussical), CORE Theatrics (Godspell), the Hi-Liners (Runaway), Watershed Opera, and with Stagedoor Manor in New York (A Little Princess, High School Musical, The Boy Friend—awarded Outstanding Lead Actress in a Musical). Maya sends thanks to her family and friends for their endless love and support and much gratitude and appreciation to her mentors, Ann, Tony, Emily, Laura, and Megan for helping her follow her dreams. Thanks to the ACT community for this amazing experience! Happy holidays!

Charles Leggett
(Spirit 2/Old Joe) At ACT: Victor Franz, The Price; Ben, The Dumb Waiter; George Brown, The Pitmen Painters; Ray, Yankee Tavern; Sheriff, The Trip to Bountiful; Joe, Becky’s New Car; Spirit 2, A Christmas Carol (2002-06, ’08); Marshall Herrick, The Crucible. Charles is a recipient (and three-time nominee) of the Theatre Puget Sound ‘Gregory’ Award for his work at Seattle Repertory Theatre, ACT, and Seattle Shakespeare Company; and has appeared at Intiman, Village Theatre, 5th Avenue Theatre Company, Seattle Children’s Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Empty Space, and numerous smaller local companies.

Kelly Grace Richardson
(Elizabeth Cratchit/Lil Fezziwig/ Want) is ecstatic to be making her ACT debut in A Christmas Carol! Spending Christmas with her “theatre family” is one of the best gifts for Christmas! She is an 11 year old who absolutely loves to act, sing, and dance. Kelly Grace has been in Village Theatre’s Willy Wonka and has fallen in love with the acting profession. She is enrolled in Village Theatre’s Institute training program and is a competitive dancer at the Connection PAC in Mukilteo, WA. Lots of love to her mom, dad, brother DJ, dogs, grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends, and teachers for all their support in her acting pursuits.

Jason Marr
(Gentlemen’s Understudy) is delighted to be working with ACT again. He last appeared as Oliver in The Pitmen Painters. Most recently he played Proteus this summer in Two Gentlemen of Verona with Wooden O. Regional Credits include Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Island Stage Left, North Carolina Shakespeare Festival, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company in D.C. Locally he has performed with Book-It Repertory, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Washington Ensemble Theatre, Seattle Public, Theater Schmear, GreenStage, Taproot Theatre, ArtsWest, Harlequin Productions, the 14/48 Festival, and Theatre Anonymous. He’s also a co-founder of One Lump or Two Productions (Elsinore Diaries, Holiday of Errors). Jason has a B.F.A in Acting and Directing from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and an M.F.A from the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University. He is married to the lovely and exceptional Jill Snyder Marr.

Alex Silva
(Charles Cratchit/Master Fezziwig) is happy to be returning to ACT for A Christmas Carol. He last appeared here as the Boy in Seattle Shakespeare’s Waiting for Godot. He has appeared with the Seattle Children’s Theatre as the Porter in Macbeth as well as Elya Yelnats in Holes. He also performed with Seattle Shakespeare Company’s Short Shakes as Leonato and Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing. He is currently in seventh grade has appeared in school productions as Barnaby in The Matchmaker, Nick Bottom in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Peter Pan in Peter Pan. Alexander lives locally with his parents and a very patient brother.
Some of his favorites include enjoying directing a wide variety of productions. Over the course of his career he has from the University of North Carolina School of Company. John received his directing degree at Playwrights Horizons NY, with many great artists. His 16-year freelance job has been associated with ACT designing props, scenery, and costumes for the mainstage, cabaret, and children’s productions since 1971 including: A Month for the Misbegotten, Later Life, Custer, Amadeus, Fool for Love, On the Razzle, Little Shop of Horrors, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, and two versions of A Christmas Carol. Her design work, locally, nationally, and internationally, includes theatre scenery, interactive museum exhibits, special events, conventions, and interior design, including that of ACT here at Kreielsheimer Place. She has also developed and produced shows locally and is currently in the process of putting together a book on the history of ACT. Defining ACT 1965-1996.

Deb Trout (Costume Designer) was last at ACT with Alan Ayckbourn’s Sugar Daddies. Recent shows include Seattle Rep’s The House of the Shakhespeare Santa Cruz, and Syracuse Stage. Trout co-founded the New York millinery company Mackey and Trout, holds an M.F.A. from Seattle Opera. His work has been heard nationally at The Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, Philadelphia Drama Guild, Utah Shakespearean Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, Mark Taper Forum, and Arizona Theatre Company.

Wade Madsen (Choreographer) has been teaching, performing, and choreographing in Seattle since 1977. Since 1979, he has been producing work with his own company, Wade Madsen & Dancers, including national and international tours. He has received grants and fellowships for choreography from King County Arts Commission, Seattle Arts Commission, Bossak Heilbron Foundation, and Allied Arts. He has twice been awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Choreographer Fellowship, and his choreography has been commissioned by various dance groups, Seattle Opera, ACT, and Seattle Repertory Theatre. Wade is currently a professor of dance at Cornish College of the Arts, where he has been on faculty since 1985.

JR Weiden (Stage Manager) has stage managed Uncle Ho to Uncle Sam, Mary Stuart, One Slight Hitch, Eurydice, The Underpants, and A Christmas Carol at ACT. He stage managed 10 seasons at Intiman working on productions including The Grapes of Wrath, Nickel and Dimed, and The Mandrake Root with Lynn Redgrave. At Seattle Rep, his credits include Blue Door, The Chosen, and Pygmalion.
Kurt Beattie (Artistic Director) has been creating theatre for Puget Sound audiences for over 40 years as an actor, playwright, and director. His productions at ACT include Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike; Grey Gardens; Ramayana (with Sheila Daniels); The Pittmen Painters; Double Indemnity; In the Next Room, or the vibrator play; The Lieutenant of Inishmore; Rock 'n' Roll; Becky's New Car; Intimate Exchanges; First Class; The Pillman; Mitzi's Abortion; The Underpants; Bach at Leipzig; Vincent in Boris; Black Coffee; Alki, Moon for the Misbegotten; Fuddy Meers; Fully Committed; Via Dolorosa, and the holiday classic, A Christmas Carol. Elsewhere, he has directed at Seattle Repertory Theatre, The Empty Space, Intiman Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, University of Washington, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, The Alley Theatre in Houston, and Ojai Playwrights Festival. As an actor, he has appeared in leading and major roles at ACT (most recently as Ebenezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol), Seattle Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, The Empty Space, Seattle Shakespeare Company, as well as many regional theatres throughout the country. Beattie is a recipient of the Theatre Puget Sound Gregory A. Falls Sustained Achievement Award, and the Outstanding Achievement in the Arts Award from ArtsFund.

Carlo Scandiuzzi (Executive Director) is a founder of Agate Films and Clear Pictures, producing such films as Prototype, Dark Drive, Outpatient, and The Flats, and Indiefix, a distribution company. In 1979, Scandiuzzi started Modern Productions, bringing to Seattle such legendary bands as The Police, Devo, Nina Hagen, Iggy Pop, The Ramones, John Cale, Robert Fripp, James Brown, Muddy Waters, and many more. He performed in several plays at The Empty Space including Aunt Dan and Lemon, The Return of Pinocchio, and Dracula. In the early '80s, he collaborated with many Seattle performance artists such as Norman Durkee, Alan Lande, and Jesse Bernstein. He also acted in various films including Bugsy, The Public Eye, Another You, Casanova's Kiss, and Killing Zoe. He graduated from the Ecole Superieure D’Art Dramatique of Geneva. Carlo currently serves as a member of the Seattle Arts Commission.

Special Thanks

ACT gratefully acknowledges the following professionals and organizations who have helped make this season a success:

Keith Johnsen, Daqopa Brands LLC • Seattle Children’s Theatre • AJ Epstein • Seattle Repertory Theatre • UW Drama • Mike Dodge • Avast! Recording Co. • Serenza Salon & Spa • Intiman Theatre • Carlson Audio • Morgan Rowe, Youth Actor Casting Associate • Youth Actor Audition Volunteers: Macall Dunahoe Gordon, Laura Hanson, David Hsieh, Jon Lutyens

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

In the event of an emergency, please wait for an announcement for further instructions. Ushers will be available for assistance.

Emergency Number

The theatre’s emergency number in the Union lobby is (206) 292-7667. Leave your exact seat location with your emergency contact in case they need to reach you.

Smoking Policy

Smoking is NOT allowed in any part of the theatre or within 25 feet of the entrance.

Firearms Policy

No firearms of any kind are allowed in any part of the theatre.
ACT Theatre is turning 50 — and what a year of celebration we’re about to have together!

For our 50th Anniversary we’ll share new favorites and revisit old ones—like *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*—but in order to make it the best year yet we need your help.

Gifts from individuals like you make up 25% of ACT Theatre’s annual budget, which means your gift, of any size, truly matters at ACT.

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Ryan Higgins  
Monika Holm  
Becky Plant  
Robin Obourn  
Luke Sayler  
Adam Vanhée  
Audience Services  
Christine Jew  
Audience Services Affiliate

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Jeffrey K. Hanson  
Production Stage Manager
JR Welden  
Erin B. Zatklo  
Stage Managers
Ruth Eitemiller  
Production Assistant

COSTUME DEPARTMENTS

Carolyn Keim  
Costume Director
Connie Rinchiuso  
Costume Shop Foreman
Candace Frank  
Costume Coordinator
Kim Dancy  
Cutter
Sally Melis  
Wardrobe Master
Joyce Degerfelder  
Wig Master

STAGE OPERATIONS

Nick Farwell  
Stage Operations Supervisor
James Nichols  
Master Stage Carpenter
Pam Mulkins  
Master Electrician
Max Langley  
Master Sound Engineer
Brendan Patrick Hogan  
Resident Sound Designer
Michael Cornforth  
Central Heating Lab Technician

FOR THIS PRODUCTION

Lacey Hart  
Julia Trimarco  
Stitcher
Rebecca Malten  
Shelie Moomey  
Marta Olson  
Dressers
Ron Darling  
Scenic Carpenter
Jason Montgomery  
Thomas Verdos  
Stage Carpenters
Deborah Armstrong  
Child Supervisor

* Deceased
† Denotes staff member has worked at ACT for 10 years or more
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CURSE THE ASCENDANCE of restaurant brunch! The first meal of any awesome Sunday is now way too anxious. Seattle’s ever-expanding brunch-industrial complex has turned what should be a mellow gustatory sojourn into an over-caffeinated arms race toward maximum trendiness.

Morning Star Café is a graceful release from brunch-related pressure. The pop-up series launched last year by chef Tarik Abdullah has outgrown its early home at Hillman City’s cozy Tin Umbrella Coffee Roasters and is finding quarter at various offbeat locales around South Seattle. On a recent Sunday, for the second weekend in a row, Abdullah and his partner Jimaine Miller (aka the Turnover King, aka Tha Def Chef) worked within the kitchen at Jaam Rek Studios on 20th and Jackson.

The itinerant nature of Abdullah’s project ensures its paucity of pretense: The focus is on food and ambiance, not the line out the door that serves as a beacon to mindless brunch-zombies at more established places.

Abdullah and Miller serve comfort foods—Miller’s Southern-style, Abdullah’s with

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**Bomb Brunch**

Tarik Abduallah’s cooking is high quality and low stress.

**BY JONATHAN ZWICKEL**

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Tarik Abduallah’s cooking is high quality and low stress.

October sunshine wafted through the open door. Café tables dotted the spare space, a dozen or so people seated in groups of conversation or hovering solo over newspapers. Windows aglow comprised one wall, another was exposed brick. A PA on a small stage played sinuous trip-hop and acid jazz.

Maybe it was the weather, but the whole room seemed to smile, as if happily resigned to indulge in a glorious autumn afternoon in Seattle. I ordered from a literally smiling counter person. The coffee came in a Styrofoam cup and was excellent. The chicken and waffles—crisp wings over a thick puff of waffle topped with spiced apple compote, Mrs. Butterworth’s and a side of smoked-gouda scrambled eggs—came on a paper plate with bioplastic flatware and also was excellent. A fruit salad of melon and kiwi and slivered almonds went beyond fruit-salad expectations, sweetened with rose water and dusted with sumac, a mild spice that tickled the nose more than the tongue.

Wearing a wide grin, Abdullah came out from the kitchen to ask about my dish. I raved.

“It’s the bomb-diggity,” he replied.

Abdullah, 41, grew up in a Muslim family, among the smells and flavors of the Middle East. He cooked in kitchens around Seattle, first as a teen at Dick’s and Red Robin and more recently—and seriously—at Cicchetti. His original popup series, started in 2010, was named A DJ and a Cook, but a year ago the DJ moved to LA. The Chef kept the name and downshifted from elaborate, multi-coursed, wine-paired dinners to casual walk-up fare.

“It’s what the neighborhood wants,” he says. “Good food shouldn’t be just for people who can afford it. It doesn’t have to have über-crazy technique, it just needs to be well seasoned and special with a good energy behind it.”

Abdullah and Miller also run Midnight Mecca, a late-night popup at La Bodega in Pioneer Square that features Caribbean-style dishes and DJs like Cat Harris-White of THEESatisfaction and OC Notes. He notifies fans of upcoming events via his website.

“It’s nothing over the top, just a good time,” Abdullah says. “We just wanna do things for our community and our people.”
“PEOPLE GET KIND OF CRAZY in there,” Puzzle Break co-founder Lindsay Morse says, gesturing toward a closed door in this warehouse bathed in fluorescent light. On the other side of the door, she has set up something that looks like a hoarder’s lightly tidied living room, full of lockboxes, trinket-loaded shelves, curtains covered in iconography and much more. The spacious, well-lit room straddles the line between order and chaos—and for the game that takes place inside, that’s the whole point.

Every weekend, Morse locks 12 people at a time in each of Puzzle Break’s two rooms, then gives them an hour to find a key that will let them out. The scenario doesn’t always bring out the best in its players. “They know they have a time limit, so they get excited,” Morse says. “They rush. Sometimes they get careless and break things.”

The rooms have been redesigned with durability in mind since Puzzle Break debuted in the Pike-Pine corridor, next door to Moe Bar, in December of last year. But Morse and co-founder Nate Martin haven’t made the puzzles any easier. “Maybe 25 percent of players actually solve the puzzle” within the hour time limit, Morse estimates, but she insists teams have a good time whether they solve the puzzle or not.

Morse and Martin met years ago through circles of co-workers—professors at the University of Puget Sound and video game designers at Electronic Arts, respectively—and found a common interest in elaborate puzzles. They’d heard about weird, exotic puzzle rooms popping up in Japan, England and Hungary, and were shocked to realize no American companies had followed suit.

After trying out a Japanese company’s puzzle room built in San Francisco—and failing to solve it—the duo decided to create its own. A few successful months later, they quit their day jobs to run Puzzle Break full-time. (Martin operates the company’s San Francisco room.)

The most challenging part is surprising new players and forcing them to team up for an hour. “A puzzle-loving team that can’t communicate will lose,” Morse says.

Puzzle Room fans already want more such surprises. The operation added a second puzzle option in March, and plans to replace its original, astrology-themed puzzle by the end of this year with a brand-new puzzle, complete with elaborate designs and custom circuitry systems.
Album Review: Murder Vibes

It’s November 2014 in Seattle and the Sound of the Moment comes from the electro-pop duo. As we speak, more than half a dozen of these stripped-down, digitally enhanced outfits are making music. Usually they function as one singer-person and one producer-person, often (but not always) a female singer and a male producer. Sometimes live instruments are involved, almost certainly a laptop running Ableton. Each branches out from hip-hop or house/downtempo beat construction and strives for tight, catchy tunes.

Who are we talking about? Navvi, Rolodex, Crater, Sisters, Fly Moon Royalty, Purple Crush, Ever So Android, Made in Heights. To name a few.

And, to name one more, Murder Vibes. The two-dude duo arrived in November seemingly out of nowhere and immediately stands out from their peers. Their eponymous, self-released debut is ambitious but intimate; dark, smoky and sinister but invested in a broad emotional palette; bedrocked on shifty electronic beats by Jordan Evans but dependent on refined songwriting and virtuosic vocals via singer/guitarist Peter Hanks.

Murder Vibes feels genuinely, lovingly handmade. Hanks’ versatile voice alters mood and meaning with acrobatic upswells in register and tone. On some songs it soars with Antony Hegarty-esque exultation (“Not Alone Tonight”); on others it smolders like the National’s Matt Berninger (“Silly Life”). It spans the entire range in album opener “Come for Me,” motivating the song from weary abstract musing to dance floor overdrive over six minutes and 40 seconds.

Evans counters Hanks’ formidable vocals with glossy production that’s both airtight and wide-open. His touchstones are brooding, danceable ’80s bands like Pet Shop Boys, Depeche Mode and the Church, but he leaves room for Hanks’ guitar to unwind on some tracks, adding shades of blues-inflected rock attitude. “Dead Girl” (ugh, that title) is an update on Chris Isaak’s “Wicked Game,” all self-loathing and languid sexual longing. “Mode” and “Tired” are the slowest on the record, barely there in sonic weight but portentous in emotional impact.

“I wanna drown in an ocean of you,” Hanks wails on “Wicked Girl,” a late-album highlight. Detailed, dramatic and monumental, the song lives up to the full potential of this emerging electro-duo format. At its best—as in the hands of Murder Vibes—this music is simultaneously classic and current. Or in other words, timeless. JONATHAN ZWICKEL
Explore the Dark

“We are merging the worlds of the audience with a fantastical contemporary fairy tale about a girl dictator. In this scene Ximena the dictator (myself) is confiding in the Jester (Paul Budraitis). Our Cornish residency allows us to bring our team together for intensive development, and put our ideas in front of an audience to find out what is working and what isn’t. It was a 10-day boiling pot of collaborators coming together.”

—Haruko Nishimura, co-founder and co-director of Degenerate Art Ensemble, which shared Predator Songstress with the public on Oct. 18 following a two-week performance residency at Cornish College of the Arts. DAE is combining live music, movement, animation, architecture and video to create multimedia portraits of six imagined anti-heroines.
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