



Raven Theatre
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**RAVEN THEATRE ANNOUNCES 26th SEASON: A POWERFUL PRISON
DRAMA, A WORLD PREMIERE AND AN IBSEN CLASSIC**

CHICAGO – Michael Menendian announces Raven Theatre’s 2008/2009 Season, which includes Stephen Adly Guirgis’ searing *Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train*, the world premiere of Tom Patrick’s darkly comic *Misamerica*, and Jon Robin Baitz’s adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s classic *Hedda Gabler*. Raven kicks-off the season with a Stark Raven Mad! - Raven’s Gala Celebration on Friday, August 1. Season subscriptions are available. Visit www.raventheatre.com or call 773-338-2177.

Raven Theatre’s 2008/2009 Season

Previews: Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:00 p.m.

Openings: Sundays at 7:00 p.m.

Performances continue Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 p.m. and Sundays at 3:00 p.m.

All performances take place on Raven Theatre’s East Stage, 6157 N. Clark

Tickets are \$15 during previews and \$25 during the regular run (\$20 for students/seniors)

Free parking is provided in a lot adjacent to the theatre; additional street parking is available

Raven Theatre is handicapped accessible

Tickets/information: www.raventheatre.com or 773-338-2177

Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train

by Stephen Adly Guirgis

directed by Michael Menendian

Previews: October 7 through 11, 2008 at 8:00 p.m.

Opening Night: Sunday, October 12, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Performances continue through December 6, 2008

No performance on Thursday, November 27 (Thanksgiving)

Raven begins its 26th season with the playwright responsible for *The Last Days of Judas Escariot* and *Our Lady of 121st Street*. Guirgis’ plays mine his conflicted youth (attending Catholic parochial school in Harlem) to combine spiritual and religious themes with the rough streets of New York. His plays are controversial and at times ferocious, but also stimulating and fiercely intelligent, inspiring audiences to question and debate long after they leave the theatre. *Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train* centers on Angel, a young Latino man in jail for shooting a religious cult leader. Also in prison is an infamous, born-again serial killer who raises the question: Is faith enough to save those who have not practiced what they believe?

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Stephen Adly Guirgis is a playwright, actor, television writer and longtime member of the New York City LAByrinth Theater Company. *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train*, his second play, had a successful run Off-Broadway, won the Fringe Festival Award at the Edinburgh Festival, and was nominated for the Laurence Olivier Award as Best New Play. Guirgis' television credits include *NYPD Blue*, *The Sopranos* and others. He also continues acting for stage and film.

Director **Michael Menendian** is a founding member and the Artistic Director of Raven Theatre, where he has simultaneously directed and set designed many productions, earning several Joseph Jefferson and After Dark awards. His productions include *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *The Sea Gull*, *American Buffalo*, *A Few Good Men*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Golden Boy*, *Marvin's Room*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *A View from the Bridge*, *You Can't Take It with You*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and others. Raven founding member and Co-Artistic Director **JoAnn Montemurro** plays Mary Jane Hanrahan, the lawyer uncontrollably drawn to Angel's case.

Misamerica

A world premiere by Tom Patrick

directed by Greg Kolack

Previews: January 27 through 31, 2009 at 8:00 p.m.

Opening Night: Sunday, February 1, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

Performances continue through March 28, 2009

Somewhere in the Mid-east, in the near future, an entrepreneurial American corporation is ready to tackle the next big market. Basic supplies are hard to come by and dangerous fighting continues throughout the area, but Starbucks and McDonald's are popping up everywhere, and the Operation American Sole sandal company isn't about to miss out. A darkly humorous tale of American hubris, *Misamerica* takes an unapologetic look at our country's policies and priorities.

Tom Patrick is a playwright, actor and director. His plays, including *Middleman*, *The Vow*, and *Descent (A Darwinian Comedy)*, have been staged by Stage Left, Chicago Dramatists, and other theaters in Chicago, as well as in Milwaukee and New York. As an actor and director, he has worked with Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, Next, Shakespeare on the Green, and Shakespeare's Motley Crew, where he staged their critically acclaimed production of *Twelfth Night*.

Director **Greg Kolack**, recipient of three Jeff Citations and three After Dark Awards, directed the Chicago premieres of *columbinus* (Jeff Award, Direction) and *The Exonerated* at Raven and *Embedded* at Prop Thtr. He served as Co-Artistic Director of Circle Theatre for seven years, where he directed numerous plays including the world premiere of Rebecca Gilman's *The Crime of the Century*. Kolack also has directed for Pegasus, Chicago Dramatists, Stage Left, and Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace.

Hedda Gabler

by Henrik Ibsen, adapted by Jon Robin Baitz

directed by Michael Menendian

Previews: April 28 through May 2, 2009 at 8:00 p.m.

Opening Night: Sunday, May 3, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

Performances continue through June 27, 2009

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Ibsen's masterpiece depicts a woman's inevitable road to tragedy. Hedda has recently married a kind and reliable yet unexciting scholar. She is visited by two old acquaintances: a female schoolmate and another scholar. The former has saved the latter from an unsavory lifestyle, helping him find success as a writer; Hedda is resentful both of his talent and her schoolmate's influence on it. Out of jealousy and boredom, she proceeds to destroy each of the people around her, and finally herself. Is Hedda a heroine, a villain, a victim... or all of the above?

Henrik Ibsen wrote a total of 26 plays and has been called the Father of Modern Drama. In addition to foregoing romanticism for realism, his plays comment on liberty, social justice and feminism, all groundbreaking ideas during the Victorian era. Ibsen's characters are at odds with society and with their own choices, ultimately passing judgment on themselves.

Adapter **Jon Robin Baitz** writes for stage, film and television. He is the recipient of a Rockefeller Foundation Award, two Drama Desk Award nominations, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1996, he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for his semi-autobiographical play *A Fair Country*. Baitz also has written for television (*The West Wing* and *Alias*), and is the creator and executive producer of ABC's *Brothers & Sisters*.

Raven Theatre's Gala Stark Raven Mad!

Stark Raven Mad!

Raven Theatre's 26th Annual Summer Gala

On Friday, August 1, 2008, join us for a really fun night of laughter, food and drink - the three basic ingredients of life - as we celebrate another year of great success. On this special evening we present scenes from some of our favorite comedies from the past and a few sneak previews from next season and beyond, featuring Raven's terrific ensemble. Raven Theatre is also proud to honor our special guests: Arnold Ordman, Mark Yates and Allan Price. Each (past and current) board president has played such a key role in guiding Raven Theatre on its tremendous journey from our old and charming storefront location to our new beautiful complex. Dinner and libations are served courtesy of Ann Sather's Restaurant and Champions Tavern. 6:30-8:00pm Dinner and Drinks and 8:00-10:00pm: Entertainment, Desserts and Live Auction

For tickets and more information call (773) 338-2177.

Raven Theatre

Founded in 1983, Raven Theatre is dedicated to breathing new life into American classics and exploring other works that illuminate the American experience. In addition to its regular season, Raven produces a Workshop Series of new and experimental productions, as well as a Youth Program, including teaching partnerships with various Chicago Public Schools, summer youth classes and original children's shows performed at Raven Theatre.

Raven Theatre Company is funded in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, Polk Bros. Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, Yates-Feldman Foundation, The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Prince Charitable Trust, The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation, The Alphawood Foundation, The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, The Northern Trust Centennial Fund, S & C Electric Company, The Department of Cultural Affairs, CityArtsIII, a city agency, and The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation.