



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Harlequin concludes “Restart: Rethink” season with Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home***

**Olympia, WA** – September 12, 2022 – Harlequin Productions concludes its 2021-2022 season with *Fun Home*, the Tony Award-winning musical by Lisa Kron, Jeanine Tesori, and Alison Bechdel, October 7 – October 29, 2022, at the State Theater. Michael Jenkinson will direct. *Fun Home*, a unique coming-of-age musical told from a queer, female perspective, caps Harlequin’s carefully curated “Restart: Rethink” season, which sought both to promote unsung, often marginalized works and to let those stories be told by the artists for whom they were written.

*Winner of five 2015 Tony Awards including Best Musical, Fun Home is a refreshingly honest, wholly original musical about seeing your parents through grown-up eyes. When her father dies unexpectedly, graphic novelist Alison dives deep into her past to tell the story of the volatile, brilliant, one-of-a-kind man whose temperament and secrets defined her family and her life. Moving between past and present, Alison relives her unique childhood playing at the Bechdel Funeral Home, her growing understanding of her own sexuality, and the looming, unanswerable questions about her father’s hidden desires.*

In his 2021-2022 Season Announcement, Producing Artistic Director Aaron Lamb positioned the long pandemic shutdown as, “An opportunity to begin to recognize the little and sometimes not so little inequities and injustices that surround us every day and recognize ourselves as complicit. We have an obligation – as a community and as an organization – to make sure that we do not restart our world...in a manner that allows the same inequities and injustices to continue.” Harlequin’s productions in 2021 and 2022 have made good on that promise – from *Lady Day* and the post-Ferguson experiences of *Until the Flood* to the deep historical injustices of *Sovereignty*, to the punk-rock perspective of *Hedwig* and the heart-breaking confusion of the children in *This Flat Earth*. *Fun Home* closes this season with what star Cassi Q Kohl calls, “a bucket list role for every queer, AFAB person who does musical theatre. As a gay woman myself, being able to actually portray a gay woman onstage (as the protagonist!) is unfortunately not as commonplace as it should be.”

In this season of celebrating the unsung, Harlequin’s production of *Fun Home* presents one more fascinating wrinkle: Deaf actor Michelle Mary Schaefer will play the role of Joan. Harlequin audiences have seen the beautiful results of this casting decision before - Deaf actor Monique Holt played Aldonza in 2019’s *Man of La Mancha*. Writes Ms. Schaefer, “[I] am glad [that] with this production, authentic representation comes alive onstage! *Fun Home* is a show that I have always wanted to be part of. I am looking forward in bringing Joan out in a very authentic way, especially as a Deaf Queer...Signing the songs - Goosebumps just thinking about it! Anything is possible with theatre, once folks open their mind, eyes, and heart.”

## Production Information

**Michael Jenkinson** (he/him) - *Director* makes his directorial debut with Harlequin Productions with *Fun Home*. Michael resides in Southern Oregon, where he serves as Associate Artistic Director for Collaborative Theatre Project (CTP). Prior to his move to Oregon Jenkinson worked for PCPA, Pacific Conservatory Theatre on the beautiful central coast of California. For PCPA Michael functioned as an educator in the conservatory, an AEA actor, choreographer, and director. Other theatre companies include Sacramento Theatre Company, Sierra Repertory Theatre, The Oregon Cabaret Theatre, The Phoenix Theatre Company, Ensemble Theatre Company, SLO Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Bozeman Intermountain Opera, Delaware Theatre Company, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Utah Festival Opera, Texas Shakespeare Festival, University of Miami, Geva Theatre Center, The Alliance Theatre, and The Old Globe (San Diego). Michael also performed with both the North American, and international tours of *Grease*, and *Fame the Musical*. Upcoming projects include *Little Women* (CTP), and *Into the Woods* (CTP).

**Cassi Q Kohl\*** (she/her) - *Alison* last performed with Harlequin in *Man of La Mancha* (2019). She graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in classical vocal performance and moved to NYC, where she originated a role in the Off-Broadway production of *Soul Doctor* (New York Theater Workshop) and joined the original cast of *Motherhood the Musical* (GFour Productions). She later traveled as a Mainstage performer with Disney Cruise Line and performed in the international tour of *Martha Speaks*. She is now based in Seattle.

**Galloway Stevens\*** (he/his) – *Bruce Bechdel* returns to Harlequin Productions, having played Cervantes/Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha* (2019). He comes to us from Ashland, OR where he is currently the Associate Artistic Director for the Oregon Cabaret Theatre. Tour credits include *The Addams Family Musical* (2nd National and International). Other regional credits include Harold Nichols in *The Full Monty*, Sweeney Todd in *Sweeney Todd*, Sagot in *Picasso At The Lapin Agile*, Sam Phillips in *Million Dollar Quartet*, The Emcee in *Cabaret*, Billy Flynn in *Chicago* (Oregon Cabaret Theatre); VP Panch in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, Nick Arnstein in *Funny Girl*, Lank Hawkins in *Crazy For You* (Prather Entertainment), Jud Fry in *Oklahoma* (Pacific Conservatory Performing Arts), Gomez Addams in *The Addams Family Musical* (Temple Theatre Company), Gaylord Ravenal in *Showboat* (Lees-McRae Summer Theatre).

The remaining cast stars a mix of Harlequin veterans and first-timers, many of whom are Olympia locals, as well as two veteran Harlequin actors working as understudies, a necessity in the late-COVID era. Returning to Harlequin are local actors **Eleise Moore** (*The Women, Sherlock Holmes...*), **Wade Mutchler** (*A Christmas Carol*), **Christian Bolduc** (*Hedwig*), and understudies **Heather Matthews** (*Hedwig, The Women*) and **Bruce Haasl** (*Tenderly..., The 1940s Radio Hour*). Making their Harlequin debuts are local child actors **Zoey Matthews** and **Lane Nixon**, as well regional actors **Renée Hewitt** and **Michelle Mary Schaefer**.

**WHAT:** Harlequin Productions presents *Fun Home*, the Tony Award-winning musical by Lisa Kron, Jeanine Tesori, and Alison Bechdel. Directed by Michael Jenkinson.

**WHEN:** October 7 – October 29, 2022

**WHERE:** State Theater, 202 4<sup>th</sup> Ave East, Olympia, WA 98501

**TICKETS:** Tickets are available online at [harlequinproductions.org](http://harlequinproductions.org), by phone at **360-786-0151**, or in person **12-5:30 pm, Tuesday-Saturday at the Harlequin Productions Box Office** at the State Theater and **beginning 2 hours before performances.**

General admission tickets are \$42

Senior 60+/Military \$38

Student/Youths Under 25 \$25

Rush Tickets (half-hour prior to showtime) General \$21; Senior/Military \$19, Student/Under 25 \$12.50; Teens/Under 20 \$5

**SPECIAL DATES FOR THE AUDIENCE:**

**Preview:** Thursday, October 6 at 7:30 pm

*Tickets to the Preview are \$20 General Admission*

**Opening Night:** Friday, October 7 at 7:30 pm

**Wednesday Matinee:** Wednesday, October 26 at 2:00 pm

**Pay-What-You-Can:** Three performances TBA prior to opening

**CATEGORY:** Musical

**AGE RECOMMENDATION:** 11 and over with guidance

**CAST:**

Cassi Q Kohl*	<i>Alison</i>
Eleise Moore	<i>Medium Alison</i>
Zoey Matthews	<i>Small Alison</i>
Galloway Stevens*	<i>Bruce Bechdel</i>
Renée Hewitt	<i>Helen Bechdel</i>
Lane Nixon	<i>Christian Bechdel</i>
Wade Mutchler	<i>John Bechdel</i>
Christian Bolduc	<i>Roy/Mark/Pete/Bobby Jeremy</i>
Michelle Mary Schaefer	<i>Joan</i>

**Understudies:**

Heather Matthews	<i>Understudy Alison and Helen Bechdel</i>
Bruce Haasl	<i>Understudy Bruce Bechdel and Roy/Mark/Pete/Bobby Jeremy</i>

**Musicians:**

Jeff Bell	<i>Music Director/Piano</i>
Deb Collins	<i>Violin</i>
Christine Gunn	<i>Cello</i>
David Broyles	<i>Guitar</i>
Rick Jarvela	<i>Bass</i>
Aaron Wolff	<i>Reeds</i>
Andy Garness	<i>Percussion</i>

\* Indicates membership in the Actor's Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

*Harlequin Productions is a professional not-for-profit theater company in Olympia, WA. We seek to invigorate, educate, and empower our community and all people to feel more, think more, play more, and judge less through the mirror of real live theatre.*

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