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Playwright Kate Danley puts female characters ‘front and center’ in screwball *Building Madness*

Olympia, WA – February 14, 2023 – Harlequin Productions presents the professional world premiere of [Panowski Playwriting Award](#)-winner *Building Madness* by regional playwright and USA Today best-selling novelist Kate Danley, March 17 – April 1, 2023 at the State Theater in downtown Olympia, WA. Scott Nolte, co-founder and Producing Artistic Director Emeritus of Taproot Theatre Company, will direct.

Max and Paul are just trying to keep their architecture company afloat, but they accidentally hired the mob to build a police retirement home. They may never get the project done in this screwball comedy, but they are most definitely building madness. If you love those great old comedies from Hollywood’s Golden Era of the 1930s, you will love this!

In selecting this play for the 2023 season, Harlequin takes the opportunity to produce a new voice from this region. In an interview with playwright Kate Danley, she writes:

I'm so excited to see my words brought to life by the professional team at Harlequin. As a playwright, I have found a script is never done. It is always a conversation, and each production deepens my understanding of the characters and the world and enlightens me in ways I never would have seen on my own. It is what makes this art form so exciting. When you publish a book, that's that. But when you send a script out into the world, it's just the beginning. It becomes greater than you and a conglomerate of each person who touches it.

And I have to say, in addition to this being *Building Madness's* professional world premiere, this is *my* first professional production, full stop. It is an enormous honor, and I am eternally grateful to Harlequin Productions for taking the risk to support new work and my voice.

(And I will absolutely be there to see the show multiple times! I can hardly wait!)

When Ms. Danley submitted her play to Producing Artistic Director Aaron Lamb, he was immediately intrigued that a playwright would write a 1930s-style screwball comedy in the current day. Asked about that decision, she writes:

One of the tropes of screwball was placing female characters front and center and there were enormous opportunities for comedic women during this era. I think as we continue to have the conversation about women in comedy, the world of screwball gives the actors of today a "norm" of freedom that is rare to find in modern plays.

They say, "Write what you know," but I'm more of a believer that you should "Write what you love." And I have always loved the storytelling of the Golden Age. Some of my

favorite memories were sitting around with my family watching Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers every Sunday night and listening to the radio shows of Gracie Allen and George Burns.

The writing from this era is so rooted in wit, language, rhythms, and wordplay. That is a ball pit of joy to dive into and explore.

In his first time directing at Harlequin, Scott Nolte will bring a mixture of Harlequin veterans (Nathan Rice, Matt Shimkus*, Helen Harvester and Angela DiMarco) and first-timers (Emma Baker and James William Clark) to the stage. Writes Mr. Nolte, "I'm the 'new guy' and very pleased with the collective enthusiasm and mutual support that everyone has brought to our production. And everyone has been generous in bringing me into Harlequin's style and process of creating great theatre for its audiences. *Building Madness* is comedy - full stop. I think the cast and I will need to focus on the mechanics of snappy dialogue, comedic timing, and the physical shenanigans like slamming doors, spinning chairs, and pratfalls. All actors and directors know that comedy is hard work!"

Production Information

WHAT: Harlequin Productions presents the professional world premiere of [Building Madness](#), a screwball comedy inspired by Hollywood's Golden Age by Kate Danley, directed by Scott Nolte.

WHEN: March 17 – April 1, 2023

WHERE: State Theater, 202 4th Ave East, Olympia, WA 98501

TICKETS: Tickets are available online at harlequinproductions.org, by phone at 360-786-0151, or in person 12-5:30 pm, Tuesday-Saturday at the Washington Center, and beginning 2 hours before performances at the State Theater.

General admission tickets \$43

Senior 60+/Military \$40

Student/Youths Under 25 \$28

Rush Tickets (half-hour prior to showtime) General \$22.50; Teens/Under 20 \$5

SPECIAL DATES FOR THE AUDIENCE:

Preview: none

Opening Night: Friday, March 17 at 7:30 pm

Pay-What-You-Can: TBA prior to Opening

Closing Night: Saturday, April 1 at 7:30 pm

CATEGORY: Screwball Comedy

AGE RECOMMENDATION: All ages with guidance

CAST:

Emma Baker

Trixie Fuller

Nathan Rice

Max Marshall

Matt Shimkus*

Paul Fielding

Helen Harvester *Glen Gladwell*
Angela DiMarco *Ruby Deleoni*
James William Clark *Vito Deleoni*

SELECT BIOS:

Kate Danley (*Playwright*) is a USA TODAY Bestselling author and twenty-five-year veteran of stage and screen with a B.S. in theatre from Towson University. She has sold over a million books globally. Her debut novel, [The Woodcutter](#), was honored with the Garcia Award for the Best Fiction Book of the Year. Her book [Maggie for Hire](#) spent five weeks on the USA Today Bestselling list as part of the boxed set *Magic After Dark* and has been optioned for film and television development. [The Woodcutter](#) will be headed to the moon in a lunar time capsule in 2023. Her first full-length play [Building Madness](#) won the prestigious 2016 Panowski Playwriting Competition. Her second full-length play, [Working for Crumbs](#) (formally *BureauCRAZY*), was a semi-finalist in the O'Neill National Playwriting Conference and the Moss Hart & Kitty Carlisle New Play Initiative. She was a co-founder of the Seattle Playwrights Salon and currently sits on the national council for the Dramatists Guild.

Scott Nolte (*Director*) has been directing in the Seattle area since 1976 and recently stepped aside from his role as co-founder and Producing Artistic Director of Taproot Theatre Company after 45 years at the helm. Over the course of those years, he directed over 200 mainstage and touring productions for TTC ranging from *The Odyssey* to *Godspell*, and *Around the World in 80 Days* to *The Whipping Man*. Most recently he directed *Babette's Feast* and *The Spitfire Grill* for Taproot, and *Kim's Convenience* for Tacoma Arts Live. Scott has been an adjunct professor at the Eduardo Turrall Cultural Association (Leon, Spain) and Seattle Pacific University's School of Fine and Performing Arts. Scott is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. The Noltes, Scott and his wife, actor/teacher Pamela Nolte, are both second-generation Seattleites and have two adult children. This is his first time directing with Harlequin.

* 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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