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Media Contact

Amy Killion

amy.killion@newmusictheatre.org

703.559.9714

In celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution
ALLIANCE FOR NEW MUSIC-THEATRE ANNOUNCES

THE VÁCLAV HAVEL PROJECT

in a Double Bill

PROTEST* and *VANEK UNLEASHED

First season as Theatre-in-Residence at Dupont Underground

October 29-November 17, 2019

Washington DC-Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, **Alliance for New Music-Theatre** kicks off its first season as the Theatre-in-Residence at **Dupont Underground** with **The Havel Project** - a double bill of Václav Havel's ***Protest*** and its own original music-theatre production ***Vaněk Unleashed***. Directed by Artistic Director Susan Galbraith, the production is in partnership with the Embassy of the Czech Republic's Mutual Inspirations Festival and runs from October 29 thru November 17 at the Dupont Underground, Washington DC.

Written in 1978 by Václav Havel, who would go on to become president of Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic, ***Protest*** exposes a society under a totalitarian regime that spies on its citizens and demonstrates the thin line between acquiescence and culpability, between comedy and creepy terror. For twenty years, it was illegal in Czechoslovakia to perform the works of Havel and other dissidents

because of their political opposition to the Russian-controlled communist regime then in power. Havel and colleagues found a clever solution to get around the ban, sharing this two-person play and other performances secretly, usually “underground” in private apartments. New Music-Theatre’s decision to stage the production at Dupont Underground pays homage to the courage and the camaraderie of the original performers and audiences.

Based on Havel’s letters from prison to his wife Olga, the musical fantasy ***Vaněk Unleashed*** is a uniquely American response to the same, most beloved central character of Vaněk. (Other “Vaněk plays” had cropped up in the seventies and eighties as expressions of solidarity by several international writers including Samuel Beckett, Tom Stoppard, and Arthur Miller. In this original music-theatre piece -- New Music-Theatre’s own tribute, with **Book by Susan Galbraith, Music composed by Maurice Saylor, and Lyrics shared between them**, audiences will find Vaněk still struggling with issues of the slipperiness of identity as he careens imaginatively between prison and the more terrifying and absurd world outside.

In 2014 New Music-Theatre performed an unfinished workshop of ***Vaněk Unleashed***, and in 2017 the company was invited to perform ***Protest*** at the Czech Ambassador’s residence for a special Czech delegation that included Havel’s widow. In May of 2017, the company went “underground” with ***Protest***, performing as the first theatre production run in the then very raw space of Dupont Underground.

“The audience response revealed how powerful Havel’s play is, and how the protest to the totalitarian regime has stood the test of time and still resonates with audiences today.” says ANMT Artistic Director Susan Galbraith. “With his incisive hits against the undermining of the individual by such a system, his understanding of human psychology, his courage to expose his own weakness in the alter-ego of his character, Vaněk, and most especially his impish wit, Havel makes us wince but also laugh. The work carries within it a spirit of universality as it probes into the importance of individual conscience and choice. We hope our own work adds to his legacy and does the same.”

ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

Susan Galbraith, Artistic Director of Alliance for New Music Theatre and Co-lyricist for *Vaněk Unleashed* with composer, Maurice Saylor, is a founding member of the company. Trained in theatrical styles that include both western and far-eastern performance, she has directed and also performed in classical repertory theatre, new plays, and experimental crossover forms of dance-theatre. In 2013, Susan began a 7-year partnership with the Embassy of the Czech Republic, first working with director Mirenka Čechová to perform in *Unveiling* by Václav Havel as part of the Czech Embassy's annual Mutual Inspiration Festival. The following year, she began work on an original "companion piece" about Havel entitled *Vaněk Unleashed* with composer Maurice Saylor and directed an adaptation of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* that was also featured in the Czech Embassy's Mutual Inspirations Festival and at the Prague Fringe Festival. In 2015, she initiated a series of annual workshops to explore the stories of Afghan women with writer Yalda Baktash, which led to the sharing of a work still in development, *Women of Troy: Voices from Afghanistan*, with co-composers Dawn Avery and Quraisi at the Kennedy Center's Page to Stage Festival. In the works also is a partnership with the Indonesian Embassy to create a work using traditional gamelan orchestra, dance, and shadow puppetry, about water and the environment, entitled *The Garuda Project*.

Maurice Saylor, composer and co-lyricist for *Vaněk Unleashed*, has been praised by *The Washington Post* for his "evocative, powerful, communicative music..." Maurice's music has been described as "irresistible from start to finish, clever, deeply engaging, and performed with enthusiasm..." His tuneful and quirky scores often showcase an interest in unusual combinations of instruments and blur the boundaries of style and genre. For the stage, Saylor has written music, and words, for opera, musical theater, dance, and incidental music for plays. His film scores have been written for the **Snark Ensemble**, which he co-founded in 2005, in order to present live performances of the composer/performers' new scores for vintage silent films. His music has been performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.; the Library of Congress; the American Film Institute; the Library of Congress; and throughout the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East. It has also been broadcast over both commercial and National Public Radio.

ABOUT THE CAST

Peter Boyer (Landovsky/Foreman) has performed in several DC area theatres, including Ford's Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre, Imagination Stage, Adventure Theatre, Olney Theatre, Rep Stage, Infinity Theatre, Metro Stage, where he played Scrooge in *A Broadway Christmas Carol* for 4 seasons, and Washington Stage Guild, where he played Dickens in the regional premiere of *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens, and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord*. He has also performed in many theatres across the country. He first encounter with Vaclav Havel's work was in 1994 when he took part in an informal staged reading of *The Memorandum*. Though most often a performer, Peter has also worked as a director, mask and puppet designer, and playwright. Peter is a proud member of Actors' Equity.

Michelle Eugene (Eva) is a professional actress, singer, and voice specialist. She was born in Fairfax, VA and has spent most of her life on the East Coast, living in DC, NY and Philadelphia. After studying classical voice in college, she remained in the world of voice by earning a master's degree in speech pathology (studying voice on the side at the renowned Indiana University School of Music), becoming a voice therapist and joining the practice of internationally recognized otolaryngologist Robert Sataloff in Philadelphia. It was there that Michelle was drawn back into performance, this time in theatre. Michelle has combined her life as an actor with her private practice as a voice therapist, singing voice specialist and performance coach. She has continually sought out master teachers and has been lucky enough to study with Catherine Fitzmaurice, Kristin Linklater, Tony nominee Forrest McClendon, and Joan Lader. During recent seasons, Michelle has had the opportunity to play Brooke in *Other Desert Cities* and Ruth in *Blithe Spirit*, both at Cape May Stage, and garnered a New York Innovative Theatre Awards Nomination for Outstanding Actress in a Leading Role for her portrayal of Helen in *The Detour* at Metropolitan Playhouse in NY.

Meghan McCall, (The Blonde Soprano) singer-actress of many musical genres, has performed with the Alliance since 2013, described by *The Washington Post* as having "bell-like clarity and fine control" and "a radiant full-bodied voice." In 2013, Meghan McCall created the role of Catherine in the world premiere of Alliance's *Sandaya: Burmese Lessons* by composer Kit Young. The following year, Ms. McCall took part

in the prestigious Prague Fringe Festival at Divadlo na Pradle, creating the role of Blonde Soprano in the preliminary workshop of *Vaněk Unleashed*. With composer Maurice Saylor and librettist Susan Galbraith, she has also helped in the development of a musical adaptation, *R.U.R.: A Retro-Futuristic Musical*, of Karel Čapek's prescient drama *R.U.R.* about robots and AI. It was showcased at the Kennedy Center in the 2015 Page to Stage Festival. Meghan is a graduate of University of Maryland's Opera Studio.

David Millstone (Staněk) ANMT Acting member joined in 2014 to perform in the company's original adaptation of *Kafka's Metamorphosis* with cherished memories of singing and acting alongside animated objects. David Millstone was "a beast" in the role of the Father (Mr. Samsa) for Alliance for New Music-Theatre, which he performed in both Washington, DC, at the Woolly Mammoth Theatre space and DC Fringe and later in the Prague Fringe. In 2017 he was featured as Staněk in the company's production of *Protest*, which was seen in "apartment performances" in diverse venues as the Czech Embassy residence, FIU University, the Dupont Underground, and in a private bar for Cuban resistance fighters. He currently is working on a film adaptation of the company's production of *Protest* in collaboration with Petr Jancarek. Other theater credits include two years in rotating repertory with the American Shakespeare Center, where in eight productions he played twenty roles. David has also been worked in television with appearances on NBC's *The Blacklist*, and in the feature film *Sarah Q*. David can also be seen in the PBS documentary, *The Sultan and the Saint*, as well as in a number of independent films. He holds an MFA in theatre from the University of Houston Professional Actor Training Program under Jack Young. MA, English Education, Teachers College of Columbia University. Proud Member, Actors Equity Association and Artistic Member, Alliance for New Music-Theatre. Please visit www.davidmillstone.com for more information.

Drew Valins, (Vaněk)Acting member of Alliance for New Music-Theatre since 2013, he has portrayed Václav Havel's alter ego, Vaněk, in 3 different shows. Drew Valins continues his performance streak as the dissident playwright Ferdinand Vaněk in Fall 2019 as part of the 30th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, starring in both Václav Havel's *Protest* and *Vaněk Unleashed*. Drew Valins is a native of Tampa Florida, and a NYC based actor for the past fifteen years. Drew is a member of the Drilling Company in NYC, the producer of the longstanding tradition "Shakespeare in the Parking Lot" and "Shakespeare in Bryant Park," where he has performed in many plays and most recently directed and played *Puck* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Drew has two solo shows based on the life and work of Franz Kafka: *A Report to an Academy*, and *Franz/Drew* which was nominated for best actor and playwright in the Midtown International Theater Festival in NYC. Drew is delighted and honored to continue this exciting work with the Alliance and Dupont Underground. "It's Living In Truth!"

N. Thomas Pedersen (Music Director) recently retired as head of the music theater division at the Catholic University of America.(Artistic Director of Theatre Ten Ten NYC, The Washington Savoyards, assoc. Summer Diner Theatre). Off-Broadway credits include *Beggars Opera*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *Cowardy Custard*. Regional credits include Long Beach Civic Light Opera *Man of La Mancha* and *Night Club Confidential*; Library Theatre: *Gypsy*, *A Little Night Music*, *Most Happy Fella'* and *She Loves Me*; Michigan Opera Theatre: *Mikado*, *Die Fledermaus* and *Marriage of Figaro*. Baritone soloist with conductors, Bernstein, Abravanel, Dorati, and Shaw with The Detroit Symphony, June Opera Festival and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Musical Supervisor/Conductor for Barbara Eden, Shari Lewis, Gary Sandy, David Canary, John McCook, Rebecca Luker, Jana Robbins, Mel Tillis and Pam Tillis. Most recently Mr. Pedersen was on the creative teams for the world premieres of *Kleptocracy* and *Jubilee* at Arena Stage.