

The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio

The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio Opens Their 23-24 Season with POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive

Chaos reigns supreme in the White House as a series of ill-conceived comments by the President threaten to derail everything in this fast-paced comedy.

With the fate of the nation hanging in the balance, a rather unique group of women bands together to try to keep things running smoothly all while preventing the public from finding out the truth in Selena Fillinger's play, *POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive*. The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio's Artistic Director, Leda Hoffmann, directs this fast-paced comedy which is packed with hilarious one-liners and outrageous situations, that celebrate the strength and resilience of women in the face of adversity. The show will be produced by The Contemporary (formerly CATCO) September 21 through October 8, 2023, in Studio One, Vern Riffe Center.

"This play tells the story of a group of seven very different women who surround a powerful man who makes life difficult for the people around him," said Hoffmann. "It follows them as they conduct damage control to manage his various scandals that unfold in spectacular fashion. It's a hilarious play with outrageous moments including drug-induced chases around the White House, and a great message about the power of women when they join together."

"Like our entire season, this play was chosen based on continuing conversations with the Columbus community which revealed that the topics covered in this play are important for them to explore," said Christy Farnbauch, Executive Director. "Audiences will appreciate that this show is not about a particular President or even a particular political party. Everyone will laugh out loud at this outrageous farce."

Variety calls *POTUS* “A rollicking new Broadway farce,” while the New York Times says it’s “a farce about women’s relationship to male power—how they access it, what they are allowed to do with it, and who else they subjugate along the way.” Entertainment Weekly says “*POTUS* is a farce. Full stop. The likelihood that you will laugh until your face hurts is one of near certainty.”

Performing in the ensemble cast are:

Laurie Carter Roise plays Harriet, the Chief of Staff, and is making her Contemporary Theatre debut in her home state. Originally from Cincinnati and a graduate of Miami University, Laurie has lived and performed in NYC, LA, Tokyo and London before landing in Chicago. Favorite regional theatre credits include *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (Arts Center of Coastal Carolina), *Butterflies are Free* (Riverside Theatre), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (NC Stage), *The Roommate* (Theatre Silco), *The Cake* (Human Race), *Good People* (New Harmony Theatre), *Menopause the Musical* (Fireside Theatre), *Lifespan of a Fact* and *It Shoulda Been You* (Farmers Alley Theatre), and *Calendar Girls* (Clinton Showboat). London’s West End and US National Tours include *Sunset Boulevard* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Noelle Anderson, a Columbus native, plays Jean, the Press Secretary, in her first show with The Contemporary. She has been a professional performer for over 20 years as a singer, musician, and actor. Currently, she works as Shadowbox Live’s Director of Data Systems. Some of her favorite past roles include Maureen in *Rent*, and Simon Zealot in *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Kelsey Hopkins plays Stephanie, the President's Secretary, and is returning to The Contemporary after appearing in *9 to 5* as Margaret. Favorite Regional credits include: *The Taming*, *Heathers*, *As you Like It*, *Dracula*, *Pete the Cat*, *August Osage County*, *Into the Woods*. Receiving her BFA in Acting (Musical Theatre) from Wright State University, backed by the Tom Hanks Scholarship, Kelsey went on to live and work in NYC and traveled nationwide as an actor before returning to her hometown of Columbus where she works as an acting coach and local theatre artist.

Arriah Ratanapan, who plays Dusty, the President’s Dalliance, is making her Contemporary Theatre of Ohio debut after recently graduating from The Ohio State University. She has previously worked with the company as an Artist Educator. Recent performances include *Freaky Friday* with Off the Lake Productions and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* with Actors’ Theatre of Columbus.

Christina Yoho, who plays Bernadette, the President’s sister. She has been involved in Columbus theater since '98. Recent shows include *Machinal* (The Sound Company), *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Dracula*, and *Tale of Two Cities* (Actors' Theatre), *Whiskey Wars*, *Ghost Story Tours*, and *Uptown Scrooge* (Good Medicine).

Shanelle Marie, who plays Chris, a Journalist, is returning to The Contemporary’s stage where she was last seen acting in *Home* and directing *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play*. She is an Available Light Theatre company member. Some of her favorite moments on stage include

performing for Ruby Dee in *Legends and Legacies*, "Ruth" in *A Raisin in the Sun*, and as a Tedx Columbus Women speaker.

Anita Davis plays Margaret, the First Lady. She has worked throughout the U.S. as an actor, writer, vocalist, dancer and model. Stage productions include the award-winning *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, as well as *Steal Away*, *Stepper's Ball*, *Sisters*, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *The Trip* and numerous others. Onscreen roles include the films *The Endangered*, *Compensation*, *Cruel and Unusual*, and *Turning the Corner*, along with made-for-TV movies *Skin Complex* and the Emmy-award winning *Our Father*.

POTUS originated on Broadway in April of 2022 and ran through August of the same year. It starred Julianne Hough, Vanessa Williams, Rachel Dratch, Lea DeLaria, Lilli Cooper, Suzy Nakamura, and Julie White and scored three Tony Award nominations.

"We are one of the first regional theatres to produce this play following its Broadway run," said Hoffmann.

Tickets for *POTUS* are \$48 each and can be purchased online.

Thursday, September 21, 7:30 p.m. and Friday, September 22, 8 p.m. are preview performances; opening night is Saturday, September 23, 8 p.m. Performances during the run are Thursdays, 7:30 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays, 8 p.m., and Sundays, 2 p.m. The play has two acts, runs for just under 2 hours with an intermission, and is recommended for patrons 14 years of age and older.

The theatre also offers a Pay-What-You-Want (PWYW) ticket option for every preview this season. PWYW tickets may be purchased in advance by telephone (614.469.0939), in-person at the CBUSArts ticket office, 55 E. State St., or at the venue starting two hours before showtime. The Contemporary also offers \$20 student rush tickets to every performance. Tickets (one per student with a valid ID) are sold at the box office, 77 S. High St., Fourth Floor, up to two hours before curtain and are subject to availability.

This season patrons can enter the theatre from the High Street entrance, or through the parking garage entered from Front Street.

Nationwide is the season sponsor for The Contemporary's 39th season, and sponsors for *POTUS* are Community Strategy Partners, LLC, and Larry & Donna James. Season support comes from The Greater Columbus Arts Council, the city of Columbus, and Franklin County, as well as The Shubert Foundation, Inc., and the Ohio Arts Council, a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically with state tax dollars from the Ohio Legislature. The Contemporary also appreciates the support of Leona and Rowena Kesler Memorial Fund, Helen W. Wildermuth Fund for Drama and Music with the assistance of the Ingram-White Castle Foundation of The Columbus Foundation who assists donors and others in strengthening our community for the benefit of all of its citizens.

About The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio

The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio is central Ohio's leading professional Equity theatre company, providing exceptional productions and educational programs for adults and young people, in response to our community's needs. We believe theatrical storytelling transforms people of all ages by immersing them into immediate, communal experiences. The Contemporary exists to harness the transformational power of theatre that engages with our current moment to inspire a community of empathy. For more information, visit TheContemporaryOhio.org.

The Contemporary Ohio's Vision

We strive to become an anti-racist, nationally recognized contemporary theatre company that anchors a thriving Columbus theatre ecosystem in an empathetic, equitable world.

The Contemporary's Purpose/Mission

To harness the transformational power of theatre that engages with our current moment to inspire a community of empathy.

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