

The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio

Cult-Classic Musical *Ride the Cyclone* Takes Center Stage at The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio
Critically Acclaimed Quirky, Edgy Musical Blends Comedy and Tragedy Inspiring Millions of Views
on TikTok

COLUMBUS, Ohio, March 4, 2024 -- The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio (formerly CATCO) proudly presents the cult-classic musical, *Ride The Cyclone*, April 18 – May 5, 2024, in Studio One in the Vern Riffe Center. *Ride the Cyclone* was written by Canadian playwright Jacob Richmond, with music and additional lyrics by Brooke Maxwell. The musical made its debut in 2008 in Victoria, Canada with subsequent major productions at Chicago Shakespeare, Off-Broadway at MCC Theater, as well as Arena Stage and McCarter Theatre Center.

Directed by Leda Hoffmann, Artistic Director at The Contemporary, and music-directed by Malik Khalfani, *Ride the Cyclone* tells the story of a tragic roller coaster accident which claims the lives of several high school choir students. While stuck in purgatory, the students meet The Amazing Karnak, a mechanical fortune-teller. He foresees that only one student can be returned to earth, and it is up to them to decide which among them is most deserving. As the teens compete to prove their worthiness, they sing and dance their way through a series of hilarious and touching performances, revealing their deepest hopes and fears.

Ride the Cyclone-related videos, memes, and cosplays gained significant traction on TikTok, with some amassing over 400,000 likes and millions of views. “This musical has so many fans because it gets to the heart of what it is to be human. We expect to welcome devoted fans of *Ride the Cyclone* and soon-to-be devotees to this show,” said Hoffmann. “It leaves you feeling happy to be alive and singing the songs which are extremely catchy and memorable.”

Ride the Cyclone has received numerous accolades, including three Toronto Theatre Critics Awards, the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Touring Production in 2012, and being listed by The New York Times as one of the Best Shows of 2016 alongside *Dear Evan Hansen* and others. The show was a candidate for a Broadway run, however COVID-19 halted all plans and meanwhile, the show gained popularity on social media.

“If you enjoyed *Beetlejuice*, *SIX*, or *The Good Place*, you’ll love *Ride the Cyclone*,” said Christy Farnbauch, Executive Director of The Contemporary. “It’s a familiar story framework where ordinary teens fight injustice to save themselves and others all while navigating dystopian regimes or angry gods. It strikes a chord with Gen Z and others. It is also in the same vein as the musical *A Chorus Line*, where characters reveal their unique worldview one by one.”

“The New York Times” called it a ‘delightfully weird and just plain delightful show,’ and went on to say ‘High-spirited and just plain fun from start to finish... a supremely witty book... the kind of thrills we look for in all musical comedies... This oddball charmer radiates warmth and wit from spooky start to surprisingly sob-worthy conclusion.’

“Chicago Theatre Review” hailed it ‘A wonderful, touching and memorable roller coaster ride of a theatrical experience, for teen and adult audiences alike. With the show’s supernatural atmosphere... this is, quite simply, a beautiful ‘Dream of Life’ come true.’ Vulture called it ‘both eerie and funny, as well as subversive, serious, touching, and great,” and “The Washington Post” lauded it as an “Ingeniously dark and funny musical.’

Performing in the musical are Becky Keeshin as Ocean, Brian C. Gray as Karak, George Lorimer as Mischa, J’von Jones as Ricky, Mackenzie Leland as Jane Doe, Nicholas McInturff as Noel, and Shauna Marie as Constance.

The Creative Team for the production includes Leda Hoffmann as Director, Malik Khalfani as Music Director, Annie Fischer as Choreographer, Courtney O’Neill as Scenic Designer, Lee Fiskness as Lighting Designer, Kelsey Gallagher as Associate Lighting Designer, Alex Oliszewski as Media Designer, Davonte Johnson as Projection Designer, Tabi Abney as Costume Designer, Katherine Simon as Props Designer, Jaclyn Benedict as Stage Manager, and Nina Martin as Assistant Stage Manager.

Tickets for *Ride the Cyclone* are \$48 for and can be purchased online at <https://www.thecontemporaryohio.org/2023-24/ride-the-cyclone/>.

Preview shows are scheduled for Thursday, April 18, at 7:30 pm, and Friday, April 19, at 8 pm. The production will continue its run through May 5, with shows on Thursdays at 7:30 pm, Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 pm, and Sundays at 2:00 pm. The play runs for 90 minutes with no intermission and is recommended for patrons 13 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.

Patrons can enter the building 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. Funding for *Ride the Cyclone* is provided by Thompson Hine and The Robert Weiler company. 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 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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PR Contact:

Meredith Liepelt

Meredith@RisingStarPublicity.com

614.403.8840