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Crowded Fire Theater Company Announces its 2010 “Season of Danger”

Mainstage productions include the World Premiere of
Forever Never Comes by local playwright Enrique Urueta
and *The Secretaries* by the nationally renowned Five Lesbian Brothers.
Crowded Fire’s Matchbox of New Works in Development to feature vital new voices.

San Francisco’s Crowded Fire Theater announces its 2010 ‘Season of Danger,’ featuring both local and national playwrights. Lighting up its second season under the leadership of Artistic Director Marissa Wolf and Managing Director Tiffany Cothran, Crowded Fire’s line-up includes plays by emerging artists in varying stages of their careers, along with a look back at a formidable all female writing ensemble of the 80’s and 90’s. Uniting all of the plays is “an incredible urgency,” says Wolf, “an investigation of power, sexuality, folklore, and world politics. Each play, or work-in-progress, offers an element of danger, from a mythological shape-shifter figure, to illegal pirated radio, to lumberjack-killing secretaries, the plays brush up against the precipice of humanity, the sublime and the grotesque.”

The mainstage season, produced at the Boxcar Theater in SOMA, begins in June with *Forever Never Comes* by local playwright Enrique Urueta. This psycho Southern queer country dance tragedy, commissioned by Crowded Fire through a Theater Bay Area New Works grant, offers a poetic, soul searching journey from Virginia to San Francisco, with forays into the depths of the underworld. In *Forever Never Comes*, the small, rural town of South Boston, Virginia is under the watchful gaze of a mysterious and mythical figure, The Fox Confessor. Wracked by guilt over her brother’s death, Sandra makes a deal with The Fox Confessor, and not even the hope of sweet new love with Dylan (once Deborah) can keep Sandra’s nightmares at bay. When The Fox Confessor demands payment, secrets are revealed and family sins are not easily washed away.

In his plays, emerging playwright Enrique Urueta offers a searing and intricately nuanced voice in the American theater landscape as he examines representations of race and gender onstage. “Collaborating with Bay Area writer Enrique Urueta, whose voice is deeply insightful, bold, and humorous, offers an exciting opportunity to invest in the career of a local writer,” adds Wolf. “It’s a tremendous year for him.” A 2009 finalist for the Yale Drama Series Award, and lauded by The Queer Latino Artists Coalition and The Queer Cultural Center, Urueta is celebrating another world premiere in 2010, *Learn To Be Latina*, currently in production at Impact Theatre in Berkeley. Internationally renowned director Mary Guzmán, whose fresh and powerful renderings of queer identity both in theater and film have won her vivid acclaim, is directing both of these premieres.

In September, Crowded Fire will produce *The Secretaries*, a campy and irreverent feminist satire by The Five Lesbian Brothers. In the play, Patty is the top graduate in her class, a “good girl” and a pretty young thing. She is also the newest addition to Cooney Lumber Mill’s chainsaw wielding murderous secretarial pool. Amidst giggles, Slim-Fast shakes, celibacy pacts, and clandestine encounters, the Cooney girls take down Big Bone, Oregon...one lumberjack at a time. *The Secretaries*, performed by The Lesbian Brothers themselves at Theatre Rhinoceros and New York Theater Workshop in 1994, received rave reviews. Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* predicted the piece was “destined to find a cult of its own,” while in *The San Francisco Examiner*, Rob Hurwitt proclaimed it “95 minutes of gritty, bawdy, bloody humor pregnant with incisive social commentary.”

Coming out of the underground theater scene in the late 80's and early 90's, the Obie Award Winning writing/acting team called The Five Lesbian Brothers included Maureen Angelos, Babs Davy, Dominique Dibbell, Peg Healy, and now solo playwright Lisa Kron (Tony Award nominated *Well*). Kron's *The Wake*, co-written with Leigh Silverman, premieres at Berkeley Repertory Theatre this season. The Five Lesbian Brothers' work has become a vital resource in theater and queer/feminist studies courses in universities throughout the nation. The piece will be directed by Crowded Fire's Artistic Director, Marissa Wolf (*DRIP, Gone, Thom Pain (based on nothing)/Cutting Ball*) whose interest in reinvestigating the work of The Five Lesbian Brothers comes from "their incredible humor that reveals sharp truths about systems of injustice in this country. This riotously funny, campy satire inserts the female voice and body onto the American stage, where, as Emily Glassberg Sands' valuable 2009 Princeton study has discovered, women have been underrepresented."

In addition to these two mainstage productions of *Forever Never Comes* and *The Secretaries*, Crowded Fire's development program for new works, The Matchbox, continues to offer the opportunity to develop and showcase a diversity of new voices, both local and national. "Audience is key to the development of new work," says Wolf. "By inviting our patrons into the process of a play's creation and development early on, we encourage them to become integral investors in the work, stake holders in the play's growth." Crowded Fire remains dedicated to nurturing new plays through the stages of development, providing resources for the playwright in the process of creating the work.

In April, The Matchbox will feature a small scale, site-specific production of a piece written and directed by Crowded Fire Resident Artist Elana McKernan under the working title, *The Lysistrata Project*. In this play, it is 1958 and women across the country, including three best friends, find themselves at once intrigued, excited, and infuriated by an underground radio personality broadcasting illegally over the airwaves. Inspired by the Greek heroine, the pirated program's anonymous host takes on 'Lysistrata' as her moniker. With untoward honesty and humor she addresses the sexual repression and cultural anxiety of the time, putting herself and the women who love her in danger.

The piece is structurally inspired by Maria Irene Fornes' *Fefu and her Friends*, which, when first written and performed in a SoHo loft, divided the audience into four separate groups, moving between four rooms/sets. Similarly, *The Lysistrata Project* will be performed in a residential setting. Each audience member will choose one of three female lead characters to follow, thus creating one play with three possible audience experiences.

Further development work in The Matchbox includes a *Matchbox Reading Series* in November, featuring two to four staged readings of works in progress, one of which is a commissioned piece by Crowded Fire with local playwright Christopher Chen (*The Window Age/Central Works*). Developed in partnership with Playwrights Foundation, Chen's play *The Hundred Flowers Project* will be directed by Mark Jackson and will premiere with Crowded Fire in 2012. During rehearsals for a play about Mao Tse-Tung, events from the actors' real lives become the subject of their own epic propaganda play. Mirroring history, the actors blindly follow their trusted, beloved director into a strange new realm where the line between theatrics and reality is blurred, and all ownership of self is sacrificed. *The Hundred Flowers Project*, a story of self-generating narratives, is at once a cautionary tale of history and a parable of the media's role in the politics of today.

Ticketing prices for productions vary. "It's important for us to provide tickets to folks at the most affordable price," says Managing Director Tiffany Cothran, adding, "We know what operating on a shoestring budget is like. That's why we offer Pay-What-You-Can-Previews and student/senior rates that start as low as \$10 a ticket."

"Most importantly," Cothran advises, "come early in the run! Small theaters depend on word of mouth—we want you in early so you can tell everyone what a great time you had—and we provide incentives for you to come. We offer progressive pricing from week to week of the run, so you're going

to find an increase in ticket costs as the show gets closer to closing. We also operate out of a 50 seat house, so our final weekends are usually sold out long in advance.”

Tickets for mainstage productions will go on sale through the company’s website at www.crowdedfire.org one month prior to each show’s opening. Complimentary tickets for the press may be reserved by emailing marissa@crowdedfire.org, or calling (415) 255-7846. Press photos can be downloaded from our online press room: www.crowdedfire.org/pressroom.shtml

For Calendar Editors

CROWDED FIRE THEATER COMPANY

www.crowdedfire.org or 415-255-7846

2010 MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS:

Forever Never Comes

(Enrique Urueta; dir, Mary Guzmán)

June 5 - June 26

The Boxcar Playhouse

(505 Natoma St., San Francisco)

The Secretaries

(The Five Lesbian Brothers; dir, Marissa Wolf)

September 18 – October 9

The Boxcar Playhouse

(505 Natoma St., San Francisco)

TICKETS:

Ticket prices vary for mainstage productions. We offer Pay-What-You-Can Preview performances and student/senior/group rates. Visit www.crowdedfire.org for information on ticketing.

2009 in THE MATCHBOX (program for new works in development):

Matchbox Production: *The Lysistrata Project*

(Elana McKernan, writer and director)

April 2010

The Regent House

2836 Regent St., Berkeley

TICKETS:

Tickets for *The Lysistrata Project* are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door. Visit www.crowdedfire.org for purchasing information.

Matchbox Reading: *The Hundred Flowers Project*

(Christopher Chen; dir, Mark Jackson)

November 2010

The Boxcar Playhouse

(505 Natoma St., San Francisco)

Additional titles for Matchbox Readings to be announced.

TICKETS:

The Matchbox Reading Series is free and open to the public. Information on reservations for these presentations will be listed on Crowded Fire’s website. Donations for this important new works development program are also accepted at www.crowdedfire.org.

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