

history theatre

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Rachel Flynn, 651.292.4323 x106
pr@historytheatre.com

“Most of this happened, and some of it didn’t because the mind plays tricks and... I might embellish here or there to make a point, but the heart of it true. It’s true in my heart.”

—Ronnie, *The Incredible Season of Ronnie Rabinovitz*

SAINT PAUL, MN – History Theatre will produce the world premiere of a new play by Wisconsin native and the writer of the Broadway hit *Lombardi*, Eric Simonson. ***The Incredible Season of Ronnie Rabinovitz*** tells the remarkable story of an ordinary 13-year-old boy in Sheboygan, Wis.—Ronnie—who happened to be friends with two extraordinary men: his pen pal, baseball legend and civil rights advocate Jackie Robinson, and the Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, who was campaigning for the Presidential nomination in the Wisconsin primary.

In February of 1960 the town of Sheboygan, Wisconsin was an unlikely intersection of politics, civil rights, and baseball when Jackie Robinson and John F. Kennedy were guests in the Rabinovitz home. The events depicted in the play all happened, though their details have been faded a bit by memory (and some artistic license). The play is set during two separate occasions: a visit from Jackie Robinson that was disrupted when someone sprayed racially-charged graffiti on the wall of Mr. Rabinovitz’s office building; and a visit from Jack Kennedy when his campaign stop was interrupted by a raw egg thrown by an agitator during a Union rally. Sharp wit, humor, Midwestern sensibilities, politics, baseball, and some Nesbitt’s Orange Soda light up the stage in this bright new play by Eric Simonson.

The Incredible Season of Ronnie Rabinovitz was commissioned by History Theatre and was part of the 2013 RAW STAGES New Works Festival and a Next Stages workshop in the fall of 2013. This world premiere production will feature Ansa Akyea as Jackie Robinson, Peter Middlecamp as Senator John F. Kennedy, and Jack Alexander as Ronnie Rabinovitz. They will be joined by Mark Benninghofen, Teri Parker Brown, E.J. Subkoviak, and Jim Stowell.

The Incredible Season of Ronnie Rabinovitz

OPENS: Saturday, February 1, 2014

CLOSES: Sunday, February 23, 2014

PLAYING: Thurs, Fri, Sat. @ 8 p.m. | Sun. @ 2 p.m. | Thurs. @ 10 a.m.
Complete performance schedule is included on page 2

TICKETS: Tier 1 **\$40**; Tier 2 **\$36**; Tier 3 **\$32**

Seniors (60+ years old) get \$2 off | Students (5 to 18 years old): **\$15**

Discount rates are available for groups of 12 or more.

Audio Described and ASL interpreted performance on 2/16/14 at 2:00 p.m.

Performing at History Theatre, 30 East Tenth Street | St. Paul, MN 55101

History Theatre Box Office at 651.292.4323 or www.historytheatre.com/tickets/

Production photos will be available at www.historytheatre.com/about/press after January 30, 2014.

continued

About the Artists

Eric Simonson

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Mr. Simonson, a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has been a member of the Steppenwolf ensemble since 1993. His plays include *The Last Hurrah*, *Work Song: Three Views of Frank Lloyd Wright* (with Jeffrey Hatcher), *Edge of the World*, *Lombardi*, and *Speak American*. His work has been produced in Japan and throughout the United States at theaters including The Huntington Theatre Company, L.A. Theatre Works, City Theatre of Pittsburgh, The Kennedy Center, Arizona Theatre Company, Madison Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre and Crossroads Theatre Company. His adaptation of *Moby Dick* at Milwaukee Repertory Theater was chosen as one of *Time* magazine's top ten productions of 2002. Eric is also an accomplished theatre, film, and opera director. His production of Steppenwolf's *The Song of Jacob Zulu* received six Tony® Award nominations, including one for best direction. He received the 2006 Academy Award for his documentary short *A Note of Triumph*, as well as the 2005 Princess Grace Statue Award for sustained artistic achievement. He is currently in New York City overseeing the opening of his newest play, *Bronx Bombers*, at Circle in the Square Theatre on Broadway.

Ron Peluso^{*†}

THE DIRECTOR

Now in his 19th season as Artistic Director, Ron has commissioned over 60 playwrights and composers and produced more than 50 original works, including the popular *Sisters of Swing* and *Beyond the Rainbow*. He has also commissioned and directed Jeffrey Hatcher's critically acclaimed scripts *A Piece of the Rope* and *Tyrone & Ralph*. He commissioned *The Incredible Season...* from Eric Simonson after directing his Broadway-hit play *Lombardi* in 2012. He has directed over 150 professional productions with such companies as Florida Stage, Riverside Theatre, Pennsylvania Opera Theater, Mixed Blood Theatre, Old Creamery Theatre, and the Minnesota Opera. Ron holds an M.F.A. in Directing from the University of Minnesota.

Ansa Akyea*

JACKIE ROBINSON

Ansa is proud to be part of this great cast and production. He was last seen at HT in the role of Kirby Puckett in the play *Kirby*. Ansa was recently seen in *Clybourne Park* at the Guthrie Theater, and as "Number 2" in Marcus Gardley's *The road weeps, the well runs dry* at the Pillsbury House Theater. He has also worked throughout the Twin Cities at Mixed Blood, Ten Thousand Things, Children's Theatre Company, among others, and can be seen in the upcoming films *Rosie* and *Memorial Day*. Ansa is a MFA graduate of the University of Iowa's Acting program, a PWC McKnight Center recipient, and was named 2007's Best Actor by Citypages. Follow Ansa on twitter, at @ansaakyea. Merci et a bientot!

Peter Middlecamp

SEN. JOHN F. KENNEDY

Peter is happy to return to History Theatre after playing Charles Lindbergh and Bruno Hauptmann in History Theatre's fall production of *Baby Case*, and appearing in last season's *Lombardi* (also written by Eric Simonson). A graduate of St. Olaf, Peter has performed recently with Frank Theatre, The Moving Company, the Jungle Theater, Skylark Opera, Nimbus Theatre, and others. Up next he will be performing in Skylark Opera's production of *Candide*. He thanks his family and friends.

Jack Alexander

RONNIE RABINOVITZ

Jack is a straight-A student at Maple Grove Junior High. He recently appeared as Billy Jr. in *On Golden Pond* at Yellow Tree Theatre. Previously, Jack was in several plays at Stages Theatre: *Diary of a Worm*, *a Spider and a Fly*, and *Zen Shorts*. Jack's other hobbies include Tae Kwon Do, where he earned his 2nd degree black belt; the motto he lives by is "Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance." He is an avid reader and enjoys creating his own plays and films with his friends. He thanks Ron Peluso, and the cast and crew, for being so generous with their time and advice. And a HUGE thank you to his mother for always supporting him and driving him to all the rehearsals and performances.

Mark Benninghofen*

DAVID RABINOVITZ

Mark previously appeared at History Theatre in *Meet Me At The Fair* and the Ivey Award-winning *Tyrone & Ralph*. His Guthrie credits include *Born Yesterday*, *Time Stands Still*, *Appomattox*, *St. Joan*, *Great Expectations*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In New York: *Asian Shade* and *Fresh Horses* off-Broadway and *Twelfth Night* at Lincoln Center, and the films *La Stanza Acanto*, *Money Talks*, *The Woolly Boys*, and *Older Than America*. He enjoyed regular roles on TV's "Chicago Hope," "Movie Stars," and "The Larry Sanders Show." In 1997 Mark was awarded an L.A. Drama Critics Circle Award for his performance in Lee Blessing's *Riches*.

Teri Parker Brown*

CHARLOTTE RABINOVITZ

Teri is pleased to be appearing in her second show at the History Theater. In the past year, she performed in *Love and Marriage* at Illusion Theater; *A Certain Age* at the Minnesota Fringe Fest and at Chanhassen Theaters as Mrs. MacAfee in *Bye Bye Birdie*. A mainstay at Chanhassen, she has appeared in over 25 productions. She has also appeared at The Old Log, the Ordway, and Children's Theater Company. Favorite roles include Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* and Maxene in *Sisters of Swing*. Best role of all; Mom to Audrey, Max and Everett.

E.J. Subkoviak*

SHERIFF

This will be E.J.'s fifth show with History Theatre, having previously appeared in *Courting Harry*, *Capital Crimes*, *1968*, and *Hiding in the Open*. Since moving to the Twin Cities in 1997, he has worked at a variety of venues including Park Square Theater, Jungle Theater, Children's Theater, Actors Theater of Minnesota, and Hey City Theater. E.J. hails from Madison, Wis., and is a graduate of the theater arts program at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Jim Stowell

HARVEY

Jim is a co-founder of the Minnesota Ensemble Theater and the Palace Theater. He has written and directed eleven full-cast plays and written and performed eleven one-man plays. His work has been performed at the Guthrie, and in New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, the back room of a bar, a barn, Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Brazil. In 2011 he was a Featured Teller at The National Storytelling Festival. Jim has spent the last eleven summers living on an island, in a lighthouse, working as a Park Ranger for the National Park Service.

Special Offers & Events

Pizza and Trivia

Saturday, Feb. 15 at 6:00 p.m.

Make the most of your Saturday night all in one place. Enjoy dinner provided by Black Sheep Pizza while you test your trivia knowledge about Jackie Robinson and baseball, John F. Kennedy and politics, and the Civil Rights movement – prizes will be awarded!

\$45 Tier 1 / \$41 Tier 2 Price includes a hot meal and a ticket to the 8 p.m. performance

Afterthoughts

Sundays at 3:30 p.m.

Patrons are invited to stay for a lively post-show discussion following every Sunday matinee.

Feb. 2 – the real Ron Rabinovitz and the cast

Feb. 9 – Frank White, a historian who has curated an exhibit about baseball's Negro League, and the real Ron Rabinovitz

Feb. 16 – the real Ron Rabinovitz and the cast

Feb. 23 – Michael O. Freeman, the son of Orville Freeman who was a former Minnesota governor and Secretary of Agriculture under presidents John F. Kennedy, and the real Ron Rabinovitz

FREE to ticketed patrons

Complete performance schedule is included on page 5

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About History Theatre

For 35 years, the History Theatre Experience has created:

- Inspiration. The History Theater Experience brings real stories about real people to the stage in an immediate experience that touches our lives.
- 111 world premiere performances, more than any other theater in the Twin Cities. The History Theatre is one of the country's most impressive new play development homes – bringing to full production new work by Jeffrey Hatcher, Melanie Marnich, Craig Wright, Kim Hines, Dorie Baizley, John Olive, Kira Obolensky, and more.
- Brave, entertaining explorations of all the histories that make up our diverse community. From *Farm Boys* to *Snapshots: Life in the City*, from the celebratory *Wellstone!* to the dark, complex *Piece of the Rope* about Minnesota's first public execution, HT has moved Minnesotans to rediscover, relive, and respect every piece of their history. More than 200,000 students have connected with history through performances at HT.

ACCESSIBILITY

History Theatre is equipped with an FM hearing enhancement system. We offer ASL interpreted and Audio Described performances. We have complimentary wheelchairs for those patrons who need extra assistance into the building. The handicap-accessible entrance is on Cedar St. Just inside the entrance is an elevator that will take patrons to the theatre level. Patrons are asked to indicate any special needs that when ordering tickets.

History Theatre
The Incredible Season of Ronnie Rabinovitz
At the HISTORY THEATRE
Performance Schedule, 2014

Thursday, January 30	<i>Preview (Pay What You Can)</i>	8:00 p.m.
Friday, January 31	<i>Preview</i>	8:00 p.m.
Saturday, February 1	<i>Opening</i>	8:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 2	<i>Afterthoughts</i>	2:00 p.m. 3:45 p.m.
Thursday, February 6		10:00 a.m. 8:00 p.m.
Friday, February 7		8:00 p.m.
Saturday, February 8		8:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 9	<i>Afterthoughts</i>	2:00 p.m. 3:45 p.m.
Thursday, February 13		10:00 a.m. 8:00 p.m.
Friday, February 14		8:00 p.m.
Saturday, February 15	<i>Pizza and Trivia</i>	6:00 p.m. 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 16	<i>Afterthoughts</i>	2:00 p.m. ASL/AD 3:45 p.m.
Thursday, February 20		10:00 a.m. 8:00 p.m.
Friday, February 21		8:00 p.m.
Saturday, February 22		8:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 23	<i>Afterthoughts</i>	2:00 p.m. 3:45 p.m.

AD/ASL = Audio Description & American Sign Language interpreted performance