



MAX REIMER, ARTISTIC MANAGING DIRECTOR

TONY AWARD-WINNING PLAY *RED* STOPS IN VANCOUVER ON A CROSS-COUNTRY TOUR!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | January 3, 2012 – Vancouver, BC... The **Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company**, in co-production with Canadian Stage and The Citadel Theatre, present **John Logan's** Tony Award-winning play, *Red*. This stark and passionate production explores the life and work of celebrated Abstract Expressionist painter Mark Rothko as he struggles to create a masterpiece in the face of fame, fortune and commercialism.

Red will be on stage at the Vancouver Playhouse from January 14 to February 4, 2012 (Opening Night: January 19). Tickets from \$33 to \$59 are available online at www.vancouverplayhouse.com, by phone at 604 873 3311, or in person at the theatre box office (at Hamilton & Dunsmuir). Following its Vancouver run *Red* will play at The Citadel Theatre in Edmonton from February 11 to March 4, 2012. In Vancouver *Red* is generously sponsored by **Hyphen Communications**.

Written by Academy Award-nominated screenwriter and playwright JOHN LOGAN (*Gladiator*, *The Aviator*) and directed by Electric Company Theatre's Artistic Associate and Siminovitch Prize-winning director KIM COLLIER (*Studies in Motion*), *Red* introduces audiences to the compelling artist Mark Rothko and his young assistant, Ken. Set in his studio in the late 1950s, the play is a fictionalized account of one of Rothko's historic artistic commissions: to create a series of murals for the new Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York City. As he paints, Rothko begins to question the project he's committed to and his role as an artist. When he sees that his great commission will reduce his paintings to being merely decorative rather than transformative, he confronts this new truth through a visceral and passionate debate of ideas, art and relevance.

THE CAST

One of Canada's leading stage actors and Shaw Festival veteran JIM MEZON plays the role of Mark Rothko with up-and-coming actor DAVID COOMBER portraying his assistant (and aspiring painter) Ken. This pairing between an experienced actor and an emerging performer echoes the master-apprentice relationship between their respective characters and brings an added layer of depth to the performance.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Grounded in months of comprehensive research, the creative team has built a stage and set that theatrically mirrors Rothko's 1950s working conditions. Former *Barenaked Ladies* musician ANDY CREEGGAN composes an original score inspired by the music Rothko listened to while painting. DAVID BOECHLER's set and costume design evokes Rothko's historic New York studio space and ALAN

BRODIE's lighting reflects the particular light in which Rothko worked and displayed his pieces. A series of accurate reproductions of Rothko's infamous "Seagram Murals" were painted by scenic artists at HAMILTON SCENIC SPECIALITY INC. Finally, video projections based on the artistic movements of the period by cinematographer BRIAN JOHNSON give a framework to the conversations happening on stage.

The creative team also includes: KER WELLS, Assistant Director; JUNG HYE KIM, Assistant Designer; JASON HAND, Associate Lighting Designer; CAMERON DAVIS, Projections Coordinator; ERIC MEADOWS, Sound Coordinator; ANDREA SCHURMAN, Stage Manager; A.J. LAFLAMME, Assistant Stage Manager; and ANDREA HARRINGTON (Sheridan College Field Placement student), Stage Management Assistant.

To build buzz and awareness about the production, Canadian Stage partnered with **Zulu Alpha Kilo**, an award-winning advertising agency based in Toronto, to create an innovative and interactive experience promoting the Canadian premiere of **Red** called "**The Mark Rothko Experience**" at ExperienceRed.ca. The interactive website allows visitors to join Rothko in his studio, playing the role of his assistant through a webcam. Users will experience the intensity of working with the temperamental and talented artist firsthand through a series of video scenes and interactions performed by Jim Mezon as Rothko.

ABOUT ROTHKO AND THE "SEAGRAM MURALS"

A self-taught painter, Rothko is considered a pioneer of the Abstract Expressionist style of painting. Beginning in the early 1950s Rothko was heralded, along with Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline and others, as the standard bearers of the New American Painting, Abstract Expressionism, an art form that was not simply a derivative of European styles.

At the peak of his fame (in the late 1950s) Mark Rothko had developed a signature style that featured two or three rectangles seemingly floating in fields of colour, called the "multiform colour field technique" by art historians and critics. His work was so popular that he received an incredible commission (for the largest sum of money offered to an artist at that time): to create a set of murals for the new Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York City. The commission of the infamous "Seagram Murals" marked a high point in Rothko's career as well as a personal turning point for the eccentric artist. What could have been the highlight of his career was instead a source of inner turmoil as Rothko worried about the value of his artistic integrity. Not content with the idea of his art being used as mere decoration in a restaurant, Rothko ultimately rejected the Four Seasons as a suitable venue to hold his collection - a tribute to both his temperament and his artistic ideals. The Seagram Murals now hang at the Tate Museum in London.

Rothko sought to create art that was timeless; paintings that expressed basic human concerns and emotions that remain constant not merely across decades but across generations and epochs. His aim was to communicate with his viewer at the most elemental level, and through his artwork, have a conversation that was intense, personal and, above all, honest. While creating a deeply expressive body of work and garnering critical acclaim, Rothko battled depression and his brilliant career ended in suicide in 1970.

Today, Mark Rothko's pieces have sold for as much as \$72.8 million each and are featured in museums and personal collections around the world. Recently, his work was seen in Toronto as part of the Art

Gallery of Ontario's popular AbEx exhibit and one of his paintings was featured on an episode of the popular television show *Mad Men*.

ENHANCED PERFORMANCES

Audio Description: Friday, Jan. 27 at 8pm is audio described for those visually impaired. Audio description begins 15 minutes prior to the performance. VocalEye Audio Description is presented in partnership with Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture.

Salon Saturday: There will be a pre-show talk on Saturday, Jan. 28 beginning at 1pm. Pre-show chats at the Playhouse enhance the experience of seeing live theatre. The guest speakers will be **Stephen Atkins** and **Marcus Bowcott** from Capilano University.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Dates to Note

JAN. 14, 16, 17, 18	Preview performances at 8pm
JAN. 19	Opening Night at 8pm
JAN. 21	Pay-What-You-Can Matinee at 2pm
JAN. 23, 31	Post-performance talkback Q&A with the cast
JAN. 25, FEB. 1, 2	Complimentary tea, coffee and cookies served at 1pm
JAN. 27	Audio Described performance begins at 7:45pm
JAN. 28	Salon Saturday pre-performance talk beginning at 1pm
FEB. 4	Closing at 2pm and 8pm

Single Ticket Prices (all inclusive):

PREVIEWS: \$33 (all seats)

ADULTS: \$41-\$59

SENIORS: \$35-\$55

STUDENTS 25 AND UNDER: \$32

RUSH SEATS: \$20 (Cash only, in person, one hour before curtain, subject to availability)

CALL **604 873 3311**

ONLINE vancouverplayhouse.com

IN PERSON **Mon.-Fri., 10am-5pm**

GROUPS (10+) CALL 604 637 3094 or groups@vancouverplayhouse.com

Red is generously sponsored by **Hyphen Communications** (Production Sponsor), **The Vancouver Sun**, **CBC Vancouver** (Media Sponsors), and **Book Warehouse** (Promotional Sponsor).

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