



**POWERFUL STORIES. BOLDLY TOLD. 40 YEARS STRONG.**

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **American Stage Launches 2017-18 Season 'WE THE PEOPLE', Local Artist Collaborations and Production Highlights**

### ***New Season Invites the Community to Come Together through Collaborations and Unique Stories***

**St. Petersburg, FL** – American Stage is excited to announce both the launch of their **2017-18 Season 'WE THE PEOPLE'** and a project to collaborate with local visual artists. Season highlights of each play selection are also included in this release.

*"To celebrate our 'We the People' movement American Stage commissioned seven talented local artists to create visual interpretations of the plays in our season. We are very proud to feature the work of these artists throughout our season and to affirm the power and beauty that emerges when we come together to share our diverse perspectives." - Stephanie Gulate, Producing Artistic Director*

*"More opportunities for everyday folks to be heard and allowed to express themselves is important to the well-being of our nation." Zulu Painter, Visual Artist for A RAISIN IN THE SUN*

Chad Mize, Visual Artist for this year's American Stage in the Park production of THE PRODUCERS added, *"I love that American Stage approached local artists, each with a different style for season artwork."*

This season, American Stage celebrates 40 years (**AS/40**) serving the Tampa Bay community as a non-profit professional theatre. In support of their 'WE THE PEOPLE' thematic movement, American Stage commissioned the talents of seven local visual artists and one photographer for three phases of artistic collaborations to highlight the season.

Laura Spencer, Visual Artist for MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING said this about American Stage's season theme, *"'WE THE PEOPLE' evokes the power and prowess of the individual, and how a group of individuals can come together, creating powerful and meaningful change."*

Phase one included artists creating visual, mixed medium elements thematically reflective of 2017-18 Season play selections. From these artistic elements, the American Stage in-house design team created the production artwork. The organic process created artwork for each of the productions in a new, refreshing way.

**-MORE-**

*"It's such a privilege to work with American Stage, it provides a way for me to be involved in the arts community, meet and work with amazing people and create something meaningful. It is especially exciting to be involved in a project that highlights the uniqueness and the equality of all people... I think it is more important than ever to come together, build a greater sense of community and collaborate on ideas and projects that will move us all forward."* - Tracy Copes, Visual Artist for BAD JEWS

The production artwork will be seen throughout the season in various collateral pieces. However, this is just the first phase of this collaboration. Phase two will include each visual artist coming together with the creative theatrical artists as they imagine each production.

To allow the artist to be fully immersed and experience the creation of a production in phase two, artists will be invited to attend rehearsals, interact with the development of the set, lighting and costume designers which will further inform each visual artist's perspective. Seeing the director, actors and designers participate in the collaborative process of theatre-making will inform the creation of a unique 24" x 36" original signature artwork by each of these seven local artists.

These signature pieces will be donated to American Stage as a fundraiser toward their **40 FORWARD campaign** and will be unveiled on Opening Nights throughout the season. Going one step further in this process, phase three will include American Stage donating the use of their gallery space to further highlight the impact of artists of all disciplines within the community.

Coralette Damme, Visual Artist for STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR, added about this collaborative project, *"This is an opportunity to share a creative process with a new team, something I don't usually get to do working on my own. It is interesting to see how different interpretations come together to create a visual image."*

Phase three is to celebrate and promote each visual artist's creative work and business. American Stage will host a solo gallery show for each visual artist in their lobby cabaret for four weeks – complete with an artist gallery opening and reception on the second Friday performance of each mainstage production. Each gallery show will run concurrently to its production. Phase three is extremely important to American Stage to be a vehicle that supports and elevates awareness for local artists' businesses.

*"I think it is great when different factions of the art community can come together and stand united on a grand scale, American Stage is that grand scale. As an artist any opportunity that allows me to take my art to a broader audience is a welcomed event."* – Herbert Scott Davis, Visual Artist for THE ROYALE

This season, American Stage asks the Tampa Bay area to be a part of the 'WE THE PEOPLE' movement. As guests explore their season line-up, American Stage invites them to take in the powerful stories and the bold artwork in a unified space.

**Artist by Show / Gallery Show Run / Artist Reception (open to the public):**

Herbert Scott Davis for THE ROYALE / Sep 20 – Oct 15 / Sep 29

Laura Spencer for MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING / Nov 8 – Dec 10 / Nov 17

Zulu Painter for A RAISIN IN THE SUN / Jan 24 – Feb 18 / Feb 2

Thirst McFly for MARJORIE PRIME / Mar 7 – Apr 1 / Mar 16

Chad Mize for THE PRODUCERS / Apr 18 – May 13 / Apr 27

Coralette Damme for STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR / May 23 – Jun 17 / Jun 1

Tracy Copes (with Chancellor Joyer) for BAD JEWS / Jul 11 – Aug 5 / Jul 20

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**Season Photographer:**

Joey Clay Photography for 2017-18 season portrait photography (mainstage, Park, and School Tour) used in the production artwork.

**In-house Creative Team:**

Roman Black, Kara Goldberg and Zachary Hines

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## 2017-18 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

The 2017-18 season will feature a diverse line-up that includes three Tampa Bay Area Premieres, a Florida Premiere of a new play discovered through **21st Century Voices** (the American Stage New Play Festival), a Shakespeare comedy, and an American classic that will launch the **American Legacy Series**.

Below are some 2017-18 season highlights for programming inclusive of their Mainstage, American Stage in the Park, and Family Series plus their 21st Century Voices: New Works Festival with date announcement.

**The Royale Highlights**

*A theatrical drama in six rounds*

Tampa Bay Premiere

Marco Ramirez is a Florida native

Directed by Lisa Tricomi

Featuring Kim Sullivan (seen in all 10 American Stage August Wilson productions)

Marco Ramirez's writing and producing credits (*Sons of Anarchy*, *Fear the Walking Dead*, and Netflix series *Orange is the New Black*, *Marvel's Daredevil*, and *The Defenders*)

**Much Ado About Nothing Highlights**

*The Original Rom-Com: Shakespeare-Style*

Directed by Artist-in-Residence Benjamin T. Ismail

Starring Producing Artistic Director Stephanie Gularte

Set Design by Jerid Fox

**A Raisin in the Sun Highlights**

*A Modern Classic*

1st Play of our American Legacy Series Play

Directed by L. Peter Callender (Artistic Director of the African American Shakespeare Company and the director of American Stage's hits *JITNEY* and *JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE*)

WINNER! -TONY AWARD for BEST REVIVAL OF A PLAY

**Marjorie Prime Highlights**

*A Captivating Sci-Fi Drama*

The Sunshine State and the Golden State join forces in this American Stage/Capital Stage Co-Production

Now a major motion picture starring John Hamm

A Tampa Bay Premiere

Directed by Producing Artistic Director Stephanie Gularte

Starring Janis Stevens (from American Stage's hit *4000 MILES*)

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**Strait of Gibraltar Highlights**

*Love in the Age of the Patriot Act*  
1st American Stage 21st Century Voices Selection  
Florida Premiere  
Directed by Jim Sorensen

**Bad Jews Highlights**

*A Serious Smart Comedy about Family, Faith and Legacy*  
A Tampa Bay Premiere  
Featuring Artist in Residence Benjamin T. Ismail

**Family Series:****It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play Highlights**

*An American Holiday Classic*  
Adapted by Joe Landry  
Directed by Stephanie Gularte  
Starring Jim Sorensen as George Bailey  
A theatre experience for the whole family

**American Stage in the Park: The Producers Highlights**

*The Outrageously Funny, Smash-Hit Mel Brooks' Musical Comedy*  
Starring Matthew McGee (Hairspray, Scott & Patti Show) as Max Bialystock and featuring Scott Daniel as Roger Debris and Jim Sorensen as Franz Leibkind  
Set Design by Jerid Fox

**ABOUT THE PLAYS:****THE ROYALE**

**By Marco Ramirez**

**September 20 – October 15, 2017**

A Tampa Bay Area Premiere

Directed by Lisa Tricomi

Featuring Kim Sullivan (Seen in all 10 of American Stage's August Wilson Productions)

**WE THE PEOPLE...WILL FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE**

From an award-winning writer on the hit TV series *Orange Is the New Black* comes one of America's hottest new plays. Jay "The Sport" Jackson wants nothing more than to prove he's the best boxer in the world. However in the Jim Crow era, his chances are as good as knocked out. When a boxing promoter hatches a plan for "the fight of the century," The Sport just might land a place in the ring with the reigning white heavyweight champion. But is the country ready for this face off? Through the sights and sounds of the early 20th century boxing circuit, THE ROYALE packs a punch that will leave you breathless.

**"...a stylized, blazingly theatrical triumph..." -Miami Herald**

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## **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**

**By William Shakespeare**

**November 8 – December 10, 2017**

**The Original Rom-Com: Shakespeare-Style**

**Directed by Artist-in-Residence Benjamin T. Ismail**

**Starring Producing Artistic Director Stephanie Gularte as Beatrice**

## **WE THE PEOPLE...ARE RIDICULOUS IN LOVE**

The original Rom-Com couple, Beatrice and Benedick, face off in a hilarious battle of wits in this American Stage take on Shakespeare's famous romantic comedy about the war between the sexes. As World War II is drawing to a close, one woman rails against the roles expected of women of her era while one man is just returning home from the war and in no hurry to be tied down. Who needs love? Full of live music and dance, and set against the backdrop of the Florida Keys' bright sunshine, this exuberant, philosophical, and festive play reminds us that no one is immune when it comes to matters of the heart.

**"...spontaneous romantic combustion..." -The Washington Post**

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## **A RAISIN IN THE SUN**

**By Lorraine Hansberry**

**JANUARY 24 – FEBRUARY 18, 2018**

**American Legacy Series**

**Directed by L. Peter Callender**

## **WE THE PEOPLE...WILL NOT HAVE OUR DREAMS DEFERRED**

Lorraine Hansberry's groundbreaking family drama is the first play in our American Legacy series. Dedicated to modern classics that lend historical perspective to stories from our past, this series seeks to draw a connection between our culture's history and the events of today.

In pursuit of the American Dream, the dynamic Younger family wrestles with the push to assimilate into a white Chicago neighborhood, and the pull of their cultural roots. These opposing forces both unite and divide the family, as each grapple with the social issues that challenge their identity – and the personal choices that will determine their future. This story of hope and inspiration remains universally relevant more than 60 years after it first hit Broadway.

**"A milestone in the American Theatre." -Ebony**

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## **MARJORIE PRIME**

**By Jordan Harrison**

**MARCH 7 – APRIL 1, 2018**

**A Tampa Bay Area Premiere**

**Directed by Producing Artistic Director Stephanie Gularte**

**Starring Janis Stevens (American Stage's 4000 MILES)**

## **WE THE PEOPLE...DEFY OUR OWN MORTALITY**

This captivating sci-fi drama explores the mysteries of human identity and the limits – if any – of what technology can replace. It's the age of artificial intelligence and 86-year-old Marjorie is worried that her memory is fading. But when a mysterious and charming young visitor appears to help Marjorie uncover the intricacies of her past, questions emerge about the limits of technology and the possibility that memory might be a purely human invention. What would we remember, and what would we forget, if given the chance?

**"...alive with humor... and terribly haunting." -The New Yorker**

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**STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR By Andrea Lepcio**

**May 23 – June 17, 2018**

**A Florida Premiere**

**Directed by Jim Sorensen**

**WE THE PEOPLE...WANT TO KNOW WHO WE CAN TRUST**

American Stage is proud to present the first play discovered through our 21st Century Voices: New Works Festival. Ms. Lepcio's STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR was selected among more than 300 submissions of new plays from across the country.

In this sexy romance turned thriller, Miriam, a young American woman, and Sameer, a Muslim man from Morocco, meet at a party and fall in love at first sight. When Sameer tells Miriam he's undocumented, she offers to help, but is everything as it seems? A smart, riveting play that looks at love, truth, prejudice, and civil rights in the age of the Patriot Act.

**"...smart, intense and powerfully topical..." -Arts Atlanta**

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**BAD JEWS**

**By Joshua Harmon**

**July 11- August 5, 2018**

**A Tampa Bay Area Premiere**

**Featuring Artist-in-Residence Benjamin T. Ismail (American Stage's THE INVISIBLE HAND)**

**WE THE PEOPLE...ARE TRYING TO KEEP THE FAITH**

The night after their grandfather's funeral, three cousins engage in a verbal (and sometimes physical) battle. In one corner is Daphna Feygenbaum, a "Real Jew" who is volatile, self-assured, and unbending. In the other corner is her equally stubborn cousin Liam, a secular and entitled young man, with his 'shiksa' girlfriend, Melody, in tow. Stuck in the middle is Liam's brother, Jonah, who tries to stay out of the fray. When Liam stakes claim to their grandfather's Chai necklace, a vicious and hilarious brawl over family, faith, and legacy ensues in this biting comedy.

**"The best comedy of the season" -NY Times**

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**AMERICAN STAGE IN THE PARK**

**THE PRODUCERS**

**APRIL 18 – May 13, 2018**

**GALA UNDER THE STARS: April 20, 2018**

**Starring Matthew McGee (Hairspray) as Max Bialystock**

American Stage in the Park brings Mel Brooks' classic cult comedy to Demens Landing! Winner of a record twelve Tony Awards including 'Best Musical', The Producers sets the standard for modern, outrageous, in-your-face humor. The story centers around down-on-his-luck Broadway producer, Max Bialystock, and his mild-mannered accountant, Leo Bloom, who come up with a scheme to produce the most notorious flop in history, bilking their backers out of millions of dollars. Only one thing goes awry: the show is a smash hit! The Producers skewers Broadway traditions and takes no prisoners as it proudly proclaims itself an "equal opportunity offender!"

**"...a sublimely ridiculous spectacle" -NY Times**

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**FAMILY SERIES****IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY****Adapted by Joe Landry****Directed by Stephanie Gularte****DECEMBER 16 – 24, 2017**

This beloved American holiday classic comes to captivating life as a live 1940's radio broadcast. With the help of an ensemble that brings dozens of characters to the stage, and live, on-stage sound effects, the story of idealistic George Bailey unfolds as he considers a world in which he'd never been born one fateful Christmas Eve.

*"A delightful experience..." -Tampa Bay Times*

*"One of the best holiday shows around." -Chicago Sun-Times*

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**FAMILY SERIES****IN THE GARDEN OF RIKKI TIKKI TAVI****By Rudyard Kipling | Adapted by Y. York****Directed by Tiffany Ford****OCTOBER 21 & 22, 2017 at 12pm**

American Stage's annual School Tour brings the finest children's literature to the stage. The 2017 School Tour of IN THE GARDEN OF RIKKI TIKKI TAVI will hit the road in September, making a stop at our mainstage for two special performances in October.

When Rikki Tikki Tavi washes up in a pristine garden, Darzee, the sassy tailor bird, is not amused and refuses to share. Darzee and her friend, Chuchu, pull out the stops attempting to run off the pesky mongoose. But watch out for Nag, the cobra! The other animals will have to band together when Nag sets his sights on Rikki! This hilarious adaptation of the Kipling classic offers a poignant message about sharing and collaboration, and encourages us all to acknowledge the power of "we" instead of "me."

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**21st CENTURY VOICES: NEW WORKS FESTIVAL**

Our 21st Century Voices is dedicated to developing and presenting new works for the stage that speak to a contemporary audience in a fresh and compelling way. 21st Century Voices includes an annual staged reading festival, workshopped performances, playwriting residencies, and fully-produced new plays that receive one of their first three professional productions.

**21st CENTURY VOICES: New Works Festival****January 11-14, 2018****A NOTE FROM THE SELECTED PLAYWRIGHT**

FOR STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR: "As a former New York-based playwright, I have always been thrilled to find good theatre across the country. Many regional theaters rely on the name recognition of a Miller, Williams or Shaw. I love that American Stage is so dedicated and their production history is ripe with new voices. They are contributing to strengthen American playwriting."

**-MORE-**

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Visit [www.AmericanStage.org/17-18\\_season](http://www.AmericanStage.org/17-18_season) for additional Season Announcement Media

## SUBSCRIPTION INFO:

### 6-Play Series

Opening Night - \$270 (Save 25%)

Weekend Evenings (Fri & Sat) - \$222 (Save 26%)

Weekend Matinees (Sat & Sun) - \$192 (Save 20%)

Weeknights (Wed & Thurs) - \$186 (Save 22%)

Thursday Preview - \$138 (Save 23%)

**Freedom Pass** - \$222 (Save up to 26%)

*The Freedom Pass gives YOU the **flexibility** to see all 6-shows, but on your own terms to accommodate your busy lifestyle. Book your dates as you go or all at once – regardless you have the **freedom** to see **all six shows** when you want.*

### 5-Play Series

Opening Night - \$235 (Save 21%)

Weekend Evenings (Fri & Sat) - \$195 (Save 22%)

Weekend Matinees (Sat & Sun) - \$170 (Save 15%)

Weeknights (Wed & Thurs) - \$165 (Save 17%)

## SERVICE & FACILITIES

**Physical Accessibility:** The theatre features accessible parking, entrances, restrooms, and seating.

*Displaying a valid disabled parking permit will allow you to park at City metered spaces for FREE, for as long as your event requires, including those posted with time limit signs (green signs). **This does not apply to loading zones or otherwise restricted parking signage (red signs).***

**Large Print Program:** Theatregoers may peruse large print programs for each Mainstage production.

**Listening System:** Theatregoers may enjoy the free infrared listening system from any seat.



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## AMERICAN STAGE | AS/40

American Stage celebrates **40 Years Strong** this season. Since 1977, American Stage, has contributed to the vitality of Tampa Bay as a regional professional theatre. American Stage's mission is to reinforce the power of live theatre with high quality productions that excite and challenge a diverse audience. Our year-round programming seeks to realize this through our Mainstage season, Spotlight Series, 21st Century Voices: New Play Festival, American Stage in the Park and Improv. American Stage Education's offerings include award-winning Teaching Artist Outreach focused on bringing theatrical arts experiences to underserved populations, helping them to excel onstage & beyond.

We believe that through the telling of dynamic stories, live theatre has the power to unite us in our shared experiences and to deepen our connection to one another through the illumination of diverse perspectives. American Stage artists and stakeholders are responsible for helping a small theatre touring company blossom into a thriving world-class professional theatre providing nearly 70,000 Tampa Bay residents and tourists with accessible, relevant art and arts education annually.

**Powerful Stories. Boldly Told. 40 Years Strong.**

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**SOCIAL MEDIA**



@americanstage

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