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Houdini

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Monday, January 28, 2008

Houdini, The Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre- February 10-March 2

Press Release
 For Immediate Release

First Class Theatre

The Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre,
 The Montreal Highlights Festival and Ernst & Young
 Present

Houdini

Book by Ben Gonshor

Music and Lyrics by Elan Kunin

Directed by Bryna Wasserman

February 10 - March 2, 2008

"We are in an age of wonder, there is magic in the air..."

From *Houdini*

MONTREAL January 2008- The Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre, in association with The Montreal Highlights Festival and Ernst & Young, proudly presents *Houdini* – a world premiere musical about the life and magic of America's first great popular entertainer. For the first time in the Festival's nine-year history, a Segal Theatre production will be one of the showcased productions.

Houdini features some of the legendary escape artist's most famous routines. Don't miss this entertaining, musical ride through Houdini's life- from his humble vaudeville beginnings to the heights of his fame.

Director Bryna Wasserman, recognized for her staging of large-scale musicals, was eager to bring Harry Houdini's story to a bigger audience after the success of the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre's *The Great Houdini* in 2000. The book for this all-new production is by Ben Gonshor, with music and

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lyrics by Elan Kunin. For Wasserman, the story speaks to modern audiences: "This is a throwback to the turn of the twentieth century, a time when theatre was there to involve and engage the public." She continues, "The idea of the world and technologies changing and moving forward was also prevalent at that time. People were moving away from live entertainment and seeking out the newer inventions, like movies." Playwright Ben Gonshor understands the complexities of mounting a musical of this scale: "It's one hell of a challenge but we're committed to making magic happen for you on stage. In a sense, we're "pulling a Houdini!"

For this very physical production, Wasserman is joined by a dazzling cast comprising Kevin Kraft in the title role, along with Valerie Boyle, Rod Campbell, Gab Desmond, Gabrielle Maes, Paul McQuillan, Christopher Ryan and Lauren Stanford. The ensemble features Paul Cagelet, Francois Dagenais, Claire Duncan, Rachel Gauthier, Holly Gauthier-Frankel, Alison Gelinas, Jason Noel, Brad Picken, Holly Raye, Lauren Roy and Jake Smith.

This production will present a live, six-piece band with such well-known Montreal musicians as Chet Doxas, Jim Doxas, Dave Martin, Morgan Moore and bandleader, John Roney. Albin Konopka is the music supervisor and John Gilbert is the music consultant.

The creative design team includes Yannik Larivée, set; Luc Prairie, lighting; Sara Brians, choreography; Sarah Armstrong, costumes and Rob Denton, sound. The magic consultant is Greg Kramer and Yves Nevue is the artistic/circus consultant. Lorna Wayne is the assistant director, Merissa Tordjman is the stage manager and Melanie St-Jacques completes the team as assistant stage manager.

"What does he mean, "be careful?!" I hang myself upside down in straight jackets

one hundred feet in the air and he's telling me to be careful!" - Houdini

88.5 CBC Radio One proudly presents *Sunday-@-the-Segal* with Dr. Joe Schwarcz

Sunday, November 18th, 11am. Admission is free.

Join us for another season of intimate conversation and riveting lectures. Dr. Joe will be sharing his insight and passion about Houdini in his lecture, Houdini: The Man and the Myth.

Monday Night Talkbacks presented by Pratt and Whitney Canada

As usual following the play, some of the actors and/or designers will remain on stage to take questions from the audience. Monday Night Talkbacks provides an intimate opportunity for audiences to engage up close and personal with the personalities bringing first class professional English language theatre to Montreal.

The **MEDIA CALL** for ***Houdini*** will be held on **Wednesday, February 6** at **12:30 pm**. This is an occasion for camera footage, interviews and still photography. **Please confirm by Monday, February 4**

Janis Kirshner, Publicist (514) 287-8912 jkirshner@sympatico.ca

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TICKETS AND MEDIA INFORMATION**Run:**

February 10-March 2, 2008

Previews:

February 10 1:30 pm

February 11-18 8:00 pm (Feb. 16 at 8:30 pm)

Sunday-@-the-Segal:

February 10 11:00 am

Media Opening Night:**Tuesday, February 19 8:00 pm****Performances:**

Monday - Thursday, 8:00 pm

Saturday 8:30 pm

Sunday 7:00 pm

Matinées:

Wednesdays 1:00 pm

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Bryna Wasserman- Director

Bryna is Artistic and Executive Director of The Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre. A graduate of New York University's prestigious Tisch School of Fine Arts, her extensive career includes work at the American Place Theatre, The Vivian Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Centre, the Mercer Street Theatre, the Vancouver Opera Company and the Folksbiene Playhouse. Recent credits with the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre include *God of Vengeance*, *Lies My Father Told Me*, *Fiddler on The Roof*, *The Golden Land*, *Double Identity*, *The Dybbuk*, *On Second Avenue* (the Drama Desk Award-nominated, historic co-production with New York's Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre) and most recently *Those Were The Days*. In 2000 she was awarded the Montreal English Critics Circle Award (MECCA) of Distinction for her contribution to the development of the Montreal theatre scene.

Ben Gonshor – Playwright

Ben Gonshor is a writer, actor and musician. A native Montrealer, he has performed bass guitar with various local artists for over fifteen years and been a contributing writer to numerous local publications. A lifelong member of The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre, he most recently starred in the company's original musical production of *Lies My Father Told Me* and performed in the orchestra for *Those Were The Days*. He holds an M.F.A. in Motion Picture Producing from the prestigious Peter Stark Producing Program of the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. He currently serves as Director of Marketing and Communications & Executive Producer of Online and New Media for the Segal Centre. *Houdini* is his first play.

Elan Kunin- Music and lyrics[The Festival International de Jazz de Montréal win...](#)[Gala des Prix Opus 2006-2007 :](#)[Une onzième édition...](#)[Équi Vox Montréal](#)[\[Montréal\] Sixtrum présente](#)[Paysages Imaginaires -...](#)[York U Music: Mark Chambers](#)[Faculty Concert Series...](#)[La Faculté de musique de](#)[l'Université de Montréal ...](#)[2009 Honens International Piano](#)[Competition Announ...](#)[Dilettante Launches Online Classical](#)[Community](#)[L'Ensemble Transatlantik](#)[Schrammel et l'accordéoni...](#)

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Elan Kunin began his professional musical career as the star and orchestrator in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* for the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre. He subsequently went on to become the lead actor, music director, composer and arranger for numerous plays including *On Second Avenue*, *Old Wicked Songs*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Double Identity*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Lies My Father Told Me* (music and lyrics) and *The Great Houdini* which won the Masque award for best semi-professional production. Elan was last seen in the Drama Desk nominated *On Second Avenue* Off-Broadway in New York and later in Los Angeles.

Kevin Kraft- Houdini

Kevin has performed extensively across the U.S. and has appeared on Broadway in *Forum* and off-Broadway in *Johnny Guitar*, *American Dreams* and *The Fartiste*. Other theatre credits include *She Loves Me* (Arena Stage), *Floyd Collins* (Actors Theatre of Louisville), *As You Like It* (The Acting Company) and *The Full Monty* (West Virginia Public). TV and film credits include: *The Nanny Diaries*, *All My Children*, *Ed* and *Duston Checks In*.

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