

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

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Act II Playhouse To Present 2 Popular One-Man Shows During Winter Break: Tony Braithwaite's Comedy Show in December, 'The Philly Fan' in February '09

AMBLER, PA – Act II Playhouse is taking advantage of a four-month winter break in its subscription season by bringing two popular one-man shows to its Ambler stage. Tony Braithwaite's one-man comedy show *Look Mom, I'm Swell!* and *The Philly Fan*, starring Tom McCarthy, have previously played to sold-out audiences in Philadelphia venues.

Braithwaite will bring *Look Mom, I'm Swell!* to Act II for 12 performances on Dec. 3-14. Press Opening is at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 3, with a reception following the show at The Shanachie Irish Pub & Restaurant in Ambler.

"I like to think of *Look Mom, I'm Swell!* as sort of a 'one-man variety show'," says Braithwaite. "It's a cabaret style show that showcases lots of my performing styles: from stand-up to Shakespeare, with songs and skits, funny stories and felt sentiment. And it's all rooted in a through-line that's basically my life as a performer, as seen through my mother's eyes."

"My dear mother Sally, who died just a few years ago, was my chief supporter and biggest fan my whole life," adds Braithwaite. "The show is a valentine to her and to her influence in my life as a performer. And Mom even shows up in the show as a character, commenting in her signature style on how the evening is going."

Braithwaite began honing his comedic talent as a small boy at family get-togethers. "There is an expression at our family gatherings: you gotta be loud and fast," says Tony. "Validation in my clan comes from who can make whom laugh loudest and hardest."

The performance schedule for *Look Mom, I'm Swell!* will follow the typical Act II schedule: 8 p.m. shows Wednesday through Saturday, and 2 p.m. matinees on Wednesday and Sunday.

In February, another Act II favorite, Tom McCarthy, stars in 14 performances of *The Philly Fan*, written by Philadelphia playwright Bruce Graham. *The Philly Fan* will be presented Feb. 17 through March 1, 2009, and Press Opening is Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 7 p.m.

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McCarthy's Philly fan, a union worker who served in Korea and is most comfortable in a flannel shirt, takes audiences on a journey through Philadelphia's sports history of the last 50 years and the frustrations that go along with it. This tell-it-like-it-is romp through the eyes of a hard core sports fan will have commiserating audiences rolling in the aisles.

McCarthy has appeared in four productions at Act II Playhouse, most recently the world premiere of *Brothers-in-Law* by Jeff Baron in March 2007. He came up with the idea for *The Philly Fan* and asked Bruce Graham if he would pen it. "I'm in my 70s," he recently told *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, "and I wanted to do something about a half-century of following Philadelphia pro sports."

The Philly Fan had its premiere at the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival in 2004 and was first rewritten after the Eagles reached the Super Bowl in 2005.

With all the recent excitement of the Phillies winning the World Series, will there be a new update to play? "The bulk of it will still take place the night before the Super Bowl and deal with that frustration (which we still have)," says Graham, "but then we're adding some scenes and projections to acknowledge the Series. In other words, it's *The Philly Fan*...with a new and improved ending."

The Phillies' long-awaited trip to the World Series put Graham, *The Philly Fan* and Act II in the Oct. 27 issue of *Sports Illustrated*, which has already generated interest for Act II's production.

Tickets for both *Look Mom, I'm Swell!* and *The Philly Fan* are \$25 for all Wednesday-Thursday performances and \$30 for Friday through Sunday shows, with discounts available for groups of 10 or more. Performance times run about 70 minutes for both. Tickets are available by calling the Act II Box Office at (215) 654-0200, in person at 56 E. Butler Ave., or online at www.act2.org.

ABOUT ACT II PLAYHOUSE

Act II Playhouse, celebrating 10 years of professional theatre in the Philadelphia suburb of Ambler, PA, is committed to creating world-class theatre in a venue whose intimacy draws audiences and actors into dynamic interrelation. Act II produces new, classic, and contemporary plays and musicals that reflect the highest artistic standards, under the direction of Bud Martin (Producing Artistic Director) and Harriet Power (Associate Artistic Director). Act II resumes its subscription season on March 10 with *Iron Kisses* by James Still, directed by Power. Press Opening is Friday, March 13 at 8 p.m.