

For Immediate Release: May 9, 2008

Press Contact: Rosemarie DeLuca, 215-431-7587 or roe@act2.org

**ACT II PLAYHOUSE MAKES KEY ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP CHANGES,
NAMING BUD MARTIN AND HARRIET POWER TO TOP ARTISTIC POSITIONS;
MARTIN WILL ALSO DIRECT THE MUSICAL COMEDY *MARRIED ALIVE!***

AMBLER, PA – Act II Playhouse has made key leadership changes that will help chart the Ambler professional theatre’s long-range course for its artistic vision. The Playhouse has named Frank “Bud” Martin as its new Producing Artistic Director and Harriet Power Associate Artistic Director.

In addition, Act II announced that Martin will direct a new comedy musical added in June to the Playhouse’s 2007-2008 season: the humorous new musical *Married Alive!* from the dynamic collaborative team of Sean Grennan and Leah Okimoto.

Martin has been serving as Executive Producer of Act II since January, working alongside founder Stephen Blumenthal to handle artistic and business responsibilities. He will take over the title of Producing Artistic Director from Blumenthal, who will stay on as Founding Artistic Director.

Assisting Martin with the artistic direction of the Playhouse will be Barrymore award-winning director and Act II regular Harriet Power, who was named Associate Artistic Director. Power is an associate professor of theatre and the graduate theatre adviser at Villanova University.

“Act II Playhouse is going to be 10 years old this year, and I am going to be 80 years old,” says Blumenthal, who founded the Playhouse in 1998. “With my dream now firmly in place, it seems like a good time for me to start kicking back. Bud has already been a big part of Act II since the beginning of the year, which has allowed me to already start cutting back my time at the theatre. Bud and Harriet have the right experience to take Act II to even greater heights. This winning combination should prove unbeatable,” adds Blumenthal.

With the change in leadership comes an upgrade of the Playhouse’s mission. Power was instrumental in shaping Act II’s new mission of “creating world-class theatre in a venue whose intimacy draws audiences and actors into dynamic interrelation.” Moving forward, the Playhouse will endeavor to produce “new, classic, and contemporary plays and musicals that reflect the highest artistic standards.”

New Artistic Leaders / MARRIED ALIVE!, continued on page 3

ACT II PLAYHOUSE

world-class theatre, intimate venue

56 East Butler Ave. • P.O. Box 555 • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (Box Office) • 215.654.1011 (Admin) • www.act2.org

Martin, for his part, is thrilled to be again part of the Philadelphia theatre community. He taught theatre in high school, college and graduate school and directed plays at Villanova and St. Joseph Universities before embarking on a professional producing and directing career in 1978. He produced and directed Off-Broadway, national tours, and regional theatre before entering the world of corporate finance in 1982. Two years ago, Martin reconnected with Philadelphia theatre, when he produced and directed Michael Friel's highly acclaimed play, *The Children of Fatima*, for Theatre Catalyst in Philadelphia in July 2006.

"A long time ago I realized that in order for me to make my dreams come true, I had to be able to finance them," says Martin. "I have been fortunate to have started and built a handful of successful companies, which for me, were just like producing and directing shows. I am blessed to now be able to go back and do what I always dreamed of doing.

"The majority of successful shows on Broadway right now had their origins in the small, professional regional theatres around the country," Martin adds. "There is no reason why Act II cannot be the originator of new and wonderful works by exciting new playwrights and composers and receive long-term benefit for developing these new works."

Martin returns to the director's chair at Act II Playhouse with the added summer show *Married Alive!*, on stage June 13 through July 6.

ABOUT MARRIED ALIVE!

Married Alive!, by librettist-lyricist Sean Grennan and composer Leah Okimoto, is a humorous new musical described by NPR Chicago as "the ideal show", calling it "laugh out loud funny" and "very romantic." The humorous look at married life celebrates marital bliss and blisters. From wedding day to empty nest and everything in between, two couples—one newlywed and one "oldywed"—affectionately applaud and poke fun at marriage. The show has sold out in previous runs and has been well-received by both critics and audience members.

"I met Sean and Leah last summer after seeing a production of the show in Chicago while they were still developing the play," says Martin. "I thought it had many of the elements that would make the show perfect for our audiences, and Sean and Leah were quite willing to consider some changes to the play to make it even better. It was funny, touching, very entertaining, and quite mindful of how important our long-term relationships are," adds Martin.

Martin has assembled a stellar cast, including Rosemary Loar, NYU Tisch graduate Sarah Shahinian, Neal Mayer, and Kevin David Thomas. In Act II's production, Shahinian and Thomas portray Erin and Paul, the newlyweds, while Loar and Mayer portray Diane and Ron, a more seasoned couple who have been married for 15 years.

New Artistic Leaders / MARRIED ALIVE!, continued on page 3

ACT II PLAYHOUSE

world-class theatre, intimate venue

56 East Butler Ave. • P.O. Box 555 • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (Box Office) • 215.654.1011 (Admin) • www.act2.org

Married Alive! had its world premiere at American Heartland Theatre in Kansas City in March 2006. "This show, more than any other I've worked on, has been a work of the heart," wrote playwright Grennan said in AHT's production notes. "I'm a big fan of marriage. I try not to take it for granted. I think people who do are called divorcees. I do think marriage is difficult. Maybe some aren't worth hanging on to, but nevertheless I think it's a very worthwhile thing to do with your life."

Katya Stanislavskaya is Music Director and Carmela Guiteras Mayo is choreographer for *Married Alive!*. The production team also includes set designer John Hobbie, costume designer Mary Folino, lighting designer Jim Leitner, and sound designer Mark Valenzuela.

Three preview performances of *Married Alive!* will be held June 13-15, with tickets discounted at \$25. Opening night is June 18, and the show runs through July 6. *Married Alive!* is sponsored by the investment banking firm Bryant Park Capital.

Tickets are \$30 for all Wednesday-Thursday performances and Saturday-Sunday matinees, and \$40 for Friday and Saturday evening shows. Tickets are available by calling the Act II Box Office at (215) 654-0200 or online at www.act2.org.

ABOUT ACT II PLAYHOUSE

Act II Playhouse is a 130-seat professional theatre located in Ambler, PA. Each September-June season, Act II presents a mix of entertaining comedies, musicals and dramas. Act II operates under a Small Professional Theatre (SPT) agreement with Actors' Equity Association. Bud Martin is Producing Artistic Director, Harriet Power is Associate Artistic Director and Steve Blumenthal is Founding Artistic Director.

New Artistic Leaders / MARRIED ALIVE!, continued on page 4

ACT II PLAYHOUSE

world-class theatre, intimate venue

56 East Butler Ave. • P.O. Box 555 • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (Box Office) • 215.654.1011 (Admin) • www.act2.org

ABOUT ACT II's NEW ARTISTIC TEAM

FRANK "BUD" MARTIN (Producing Artistic Director) graduated from DeSales University in 1972 and received an M.A. in Theatre from Villanova University in 1974. He taught theatre in high school, college and graduate school and directed plays at Villanova and St. Joseph Universities before embarking on a professional producing and directing career in 1978. He produced and directed Off-Broadway, national tours, (including the late Pearl Bailey's one woman show), and regional theatre before entering the world of corporate finance in 1982. Most recently, he was chairman of I-trax, Inc., a public company in the healthcare industry that recently merged with a division of Walgreen's. In that capacity, he received the Ernst and Young entrepreneur of the year award in business services for the Delaware Valley in the summer of 2006. Bud is thrilled to be back in the theatre and bringing his business and finance experience along with his creative energies to Act II Playhouse. Most recently, he produced and directed Michael Friel's highly acclaimed play, *The Children of Fatima*, for Theatre Catalyst in Philadelphia. Mr. Martin also produced George Stiles' (*Honk!*, *Tom Jones*, *Mary Poppins*) new musical adventure, *The Three Musketeers* at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre and North Shore Music Theatre is now preparing it for production in London next year. He is a producing partner on Dolly Parton's new musical version of "9 to 5", scheduled to open in Los Angeles in September and move to Broadway in the Spring of 2009 and is working on a number of new play development projects for commercial production.

HARRIET POWER (Associate Artistic Director) most recently directed Tony Kushner's *The Illusion* and co-curated a festival of solo performance at Villanova, where she is an associate professor of theatre and the graduate adviser. At Act II, she directed the world premiere of Jeff Baron's *Brothers-in-Law* this spring and the Barrymore-award nominated *Syncopation* in 2006. She has devoted much of her professional directing and dramaturgy career to new play development. Nationally, she has worked extensively with new plays and playwrights at New Dramatists (New York), Bay Area Playwrights Festival, West Coast Playwrights, Iowa Playwrights Festival, and the International Women Playwrights Festival. Regionally, she has directed full productions of new work at InterAct, Act II, the Walnut Studio, Philadelphia Drama Guild, Venture Theatre, and Cheltenham Center for the Arts, where she was resident dramaturg for four years; and staged readings of new plays at Philadelphia Theatre Company, Philadelphia Festival Theatre for New Plays, the Wilma, Luna Stage, and the Walnut Street Theatre. Recent directing credits include two works by Michael Hollinger: *A Wonderful Noise* (co-authored with Vance Lemkuhl) in a workshop production at New Dramatists, and *Incorruptible* (Villanova). Overseas directing credits: Donald Margulies' *Dinner With Friends* in Rome, Italy at Teatro L'Arciliuto, coproduced by The English Theatre of Rome and the American Embassy; Dorothy Louise's *LoveKnot* in Galway, Ireland for the International Women Playwrights Festival; Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed in Liege*, Belgium. Recent regional directing credits: two world premieres at InterAct Theatre, both by Seth Rozin - *Reinventing Eden* and *Missing Link* (Barrymore nomination, Outstanding New Play); Sebastian Barry's *Fred and Jane* (Villanova), *Measure for Measure* (Philadelphia Shakespeare Festival; Barrymore nomination, Outstanding Direction of a Play). She won the 1997 Barrymore award for Outstanding Direction of a Play with colleague James J. Christy for *Angels in America: Perestroika* (Villanova). Her directing will be featured during the 2008 Barrymore Awards ceremony; she is also honored to serve on selection committee of the F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist.

ACT II PLAYHOUSE

world-class theatre, intimate venue

56 East Butler Ave. • P.O. Box 555 • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (Box Office) • 215.654.1011 (Admin) • www.act2.org

ABOUT THE CAST OF *MARRIED ALIVE!*

SARAH SHAHINIAN (Erin) – Sarah is honored to be here among this awesome group of people! Most recently, you could have seen her as a pregnant woman on *Guiding Light*, but probably not... Credits include: *OKLAHOMA!* (Ado Annie - Broadway National Tour), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Lincoln Center), *I Sing!* (Heidi, Philadelphia premiere), *Beauty & the Beast* (Belle), Stephen Schwartz's *Snapshots* (Susie), and *South Pacific* (Nellie). NYU Tisch graduate. www.sarahshahinian.com

ROSEMARY LOAR (Diane) – Broadway /national tours credits include *Sunset Boulevard* (original cast recording), *Cats* (Grizabella), *You Can't Take It With You*, *Chess*, *Once Upon A Mattress*, (understudy to Queen Aggravain) *Encore* and *42nd Street* (understudy Dorothy Brock). She originated the role of Gladys Fritts, in *Radio Gals* at the John Houseman Theatre. Regionally, Loar performed: *Mame* (Mame), *Phantom* (Carlotta), *Footloose* (Vi), *Fame* (Ms. Bell), *Fair and Tender Ladies* (Ivy Rowe). Last December, she released her fourth CD, "The Quando Swing", featuring original songs and fresh arrangements of jazz standards. www.rosemaryloar.com

KEVIN DAVID THOMAS (Paul) – National tour: *Les Misérables*. Regional: *Oklahoma!*, Weston Playhouse; *Side Show*, Cleveland Play House; *A Christmas Carol*, Great Lakes Theater Festival. Graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College. Proud member of Actors' Equity.

NEAL MAYER (Ron) – Broadway: *Les Misérables*. Off-Broadway: *Bush is Bad (Original Cast, CD)*, *Forbidden Broadway*, *Walmartopia*, *Golf: The Musical*, and *That's Life! (CD)*. Regional: David Bryan and Joe Di Pietro's *Memphis* at North Shore Music Theatre, *Animal Crackers* at Arena Stage, *Starcrossed* at Goodspeed, and various roles at Weston Playhouse, Charlotte Repertory, Skylight Opera, and the Schoolhouse Theatre.

ACT II PLAYHOUSE

world-class theatre, intimate venue

56 East Butler Ave. • P.O. Box 555 • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (Box Office) • 215.654.1011 (Admin) • www.act2.org
