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Bloomington Playwrights Project, Cardinal Stage, and Pigasus Institute Announce Plans for a Three-Way Merger to Create a New Organization with a Visionary Blend of Theater and Film Production, Arts Education, and New Work Development

Organizations in negotiation with the City of Bloomington to assume management of the John Waldron Arts Center as the merged entity and plan to complete a renovation of the downtown venue in the summer and fall of 2022

The Bloomington Playwrights Project (BPP), Cardinal Stage, and Pigasus Institute are joining forces! These Bloomington cultural institutions are thrilled to announce their plans for a **three-way merger on July 1, 2022** that will create a full-scale, comprehensive performing arts organization, and one of the largest arts organizations in Southern Indiana. The new organization will carry on the important missions of the founding organizations, while expanding its operations and programming, increasing its service capacity, and delivering quality theater and film to a larger and more diverse audience.

Additionally, the three founding organizations are in the final stages of negotiation with the City of Bloomington to assume management of the John Waldron Arts Center, which will serve as the home for administrative operations of the new organization, in July. Once secured, the new organization will perform a substantial update to the building including new seating, box office, lobby bar/concessions, theatrical lighting, and more. This update, combined with the City's recent completion of deferred maintenance, would make for an investment of well over \$1 million in the building. The new organization will also continue to manage the Ted Jones Playhouse, the current home of the BPP, on 9th St, and the Pigasus Institute's film studio (home of the Bloomington Academy of Film and Theatre) on 7th St. All spaces will be programmed with the community in mind, with ample opportunity for rental to community groups and emerging artists throughout the year, and a steadfast commitment to programming for the visual arts. More details regarding the scope and timeline of the renovations and the subsequent operations of the Waldron Arts Center will be unveiled at a later date.

The mission of the new organization is to produce world-class theater and film that impacts the national performing arts industry through new work development. The new organization's productions, community events, and education programs will serve as a leading contributor to the cultural and economic vibrancy of Bloomington, Indiana. The new organization will aim to be an arts and culture leader rooted in the Midwest, redefining the development and creation of theater and film, while cultivating and sharing in the creativity of its community. On April 23, 2022, the three founding organizations will debut the new organization's name and brand and announce its first full season, at a celebratory fundraiser, fittingly titled **The Big Bang**.

The merged organization will launch operations on July 1, 2022 and present a new, enhanced season in the fall. The new organization's programming will play to the strengths of each founding organization while creating synergies across disciplines. Each season will feature a healthy balance of original plays and musicals, established works, family and holiday classics, and theater for young audiences (TYA) shows. Additionally, the organization will develop and produce multiple film projects throughout the year and a more robust creative development program will allow the organization to create a new work development pipeline where projects can progress from page, to stage, to screen (or vice versa). This

unique production model will generate national attention, allowing the organization to attract high quality talent to Bloomington.

In addition to its theatrical and film endeavors, the new organization's Education and Outreach Initiatives will have a deep and lasting impact in Bloomington and throughout the region. The organization will offer classes, camps, and experiential learning opportunities throughout the year for primary and secondary students and adults. In addition to these learning experiences, the new organization will be continuing the work of Project Pigasus, a yearly statewide screenwriting competition for high school students, and the BPP's Mini Play Youth Writing Competition, further empowering young voices. The new organization will also maintain Cardinal Stage's tradition of offering subsidized student matinee performances for its Theater for Young Audiences (TYA) and youth-appropriate programming.

The three founding organizations began collaborating extensively in 2019 with the formation of the Bloomington Academy of Film & Theatre (BAFT). With the success of that effort, the founding organizations began discussing a grander vision for the future of the performing arts in Bloomington. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 when theaters shuttered across the community, internal work began to determine the viability and strengths of a three-way merger. With generous support from the Community Foundation of Bloomington & Monroe County (CFBMC), the boards of each organization began formal merger negotiations with independent local consultant Sara Peterson in early 2021. This process officially concluded on March 1, 2022 after each organization approved a formal plan of merger. The new merged organization will commence legal operations on July 1, 2022.

The company will be led by Co-Artistic Directors Kate Galvin and Chad Rabinovitz and Managing Director Gabe Gloden, with John Armstrong heading up the company's robust fundraising initiative. The organization will retain all of its existing full-time staff and has already begun adding to its team with new employees in administration, theatrical production, and filmmaking. The new organization's 22/23 theatrical season, along with its new name and identity, will be announced on Saturday, April 23rd at The Big Bang, a celebratory fundraiser, at One World at the Woolery Mill. Tickets for The Big Bang can be purchased through Cardinal Stage's website (cardinalstage.org). Season Subscriptions will be available starting a few weeks after the announcement. Other details, including class schedules, film projects, and writing contests will be announced later this year.

PRESS CONTACT:

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ABOUT THE NEW ORGANIZATION:

Mission: The mission of the company is to produce world-class theater and film that impacts the national performing arts industry through new work development. Our productions, community events, and education programs serve as a leading contributor to the cultural and economic vibrancy of Bloomington, Indiana.

Vision: The company is an arts and culture leader rooted in the Midwest, redefining the development and creation of theater and film, while cultivating and sharing the creativity of our community.

Values: At the company, our shared values serve as guideposts as we work daily in service of our audience, our craft, our community, and our organization. The array of values we share can be characterized by three core beliefs. First, we believe in the power of theater and film to simultaneously entertain and engage audiences. Second, we believe that the arts are vital to the quality of life for every individual and essential to the overall health of our community. Third, we believe these values should be lived internally by providing a welcoming and supportive workplace that nurtures our staff, artists, and board.

ABOUT THE EXISTING COMPANIES:

The Bloomington Playwrights Project:

The Bloomington Playwrights Project (BPP) is the only professional theatre in the entire state of Indiana focused solely on new plays. The company strives to be a leading artistic force in the production and encouragement of new plays, providing opportunities for development, education, and production for promising and established writers and theater artists in a professional environment. The BPP was founded in 1979 by Tom Moseman and Jim Leonard. Currently led by Artistic Director Chad Rabinovitz and Managing Director Brad Schiesser, the BPP is producing its 41st season in 2022.

Cardinal Stage:

Cardinal Stage Company is celebrating its 15th Anniversary season. As a regional theatre, Cardinal Stage programs a range of material to compliment the diverse interests of Bloomington, Indiana and the surrounding region. Cardinal Stage shows are critically praised and popular with audiences throughout South-Central Indiana. Since its founding in 2006 under former Artistic Director Randy White, Cardinal Stage has grown into the largest arts organization in Bloomington. Cardinal Stage is currently led by Artistic Director Kate Galvin and Managing Director Gabe Gloden, employing five full-time staff members and dozens of actors, designers, and technical crew members each season.

Pigasus Institute:

The Pigasus Institute is a non-profit organization that houses the Bloomington Academy of Film & Theatre, Project Pigasus, and the "New Pages" Festival. Pigasus Institute's mission is to engage, educate, and elevate Indiana communities through the vehicles of film and theatre. Through festivals, academy-style training, and collaborative projects, the Pigasus Institute brings together diverse groups of people around common themes and issues, provides tools for self-expression through storytelling on stage and screen, and builds bridges of thought, dialogue, and humanity between its community and the world.