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**THE GUTHRIE THEATER PRESENTS INTERACT THEATER'S PRODUCTION OF
HOT FUNKY BUTT JAZZ IN THE DOWLING STUDIO**

**Featuring a Storied Trio of New Orleans Musicians and an Ensemble Cast of 50 Actors
Playing November 2–18, 2018**

(Minneapolis/St. Paul) — The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, artistic director) announces the presentation of Interact Theater's *Hot Funky Butt Jazz*. As part of the Guthrie Theater's Level Nine Initiative to present theater that is brave, immediate and deeply engaging, all seats are general admission, every ticket is \$9

and each performance includes an audience engagement component. Tickets are on sale now through the Box Office at 612.377.2224 or 1.877.44.STAGE (toll-free) and online at guthrietheater.org.

New Orleans in the early 1900s was mysterious, steamy, black-and-white, restless and bursting open with a hot new sound that would change music forever: Jazz! This new sound was an explosion of creative independence and a way to overcome the deadening weight of the Jim Crow South for outsiders with no formal education, no place in society and no rights.

Three celebrated New Orleans' Jazz musicians with deep Louisiana roots will join the 50+ full-time actors with and without disabilities from Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts in the Guthrie Theater's Dowling Studio November 2–18, 2018, to present *Hot Funky Butt Jazz* — an inspired new musical that ignites the stage with a brilliant look at the politics and passions that birthed the original American musical form. Just as Jazz was born from a place of prejudice and adversity more than a century ago, people with disabilities face a similar kind of marginalization, even in the 21st century. Yet out of struggle comes transformation, inclusion and empowerment.

Interact Theater, the world's first visual and performing arts company that has performed worldwide since it was founded in 1996 by Artistic Director Jeanne Calvit, has succeeded on the liberating idea of radical inclusion. Like the pioneering New Orleans' Jazz artists of long ago, Interact Theater's diverse ensemble of actors know all about being creative outsiders. They have dissolved the general perceptions of who "can" and who "cannot" by blending the talents of artists with and without disabilities with other artists in the mainstream and the margins.

In *Hot Funky Butt Jazz*, Interact Theater's performance company collaborates with the incomparable New Orleans' musicians Zena Moses, Jeremy Phipps and Eugene Harding — musical descendants of the earliest Jazz greats — who channel their own experiences of tragedy and discrimination into the power of their music. Their storied connections to the past and present New Orleans world of music is telling: Legendary R&B singer Irma Thomas is the godmother of Zena Moses; trombonist Jeremy Phipps has toured with Beyoncé's sister Solange and is a well-known member of Saint Bell, New Wave Brass Band, Young Fellaz Brass Band, Da Truth Brass Band and others; and drummer Eugene Harding has played with such greats as Walter "Wolfman" Washington, Glen David Andrews, Sharon Martin and The Revelers. Twin Cities-based powerhouse performers Ivory Doublette, singer, actress and teaching artist; Sheridan Zuther, singer, actress and producer; and Abebi Stafford, pianist, are also part of the ensemble.

About Funky Butt and *Hot Funky Butt Jazz*

The phrase "Funky Butt" comes from the name of a historic place named Union Sons Hall — a community center/church by day that became the Funky Butt Jazz Hall at the stroke of midnight. It was named in homage to a room packed with ripe, sweating bodies dancing to a provocative new groove created by musical innovators like cornet player Buddy Bolden.

The production of *Hot Funky Butt Jazz* explores stories of this intoxicating brew of Afro/Caribbean, Latin, Native and European influences. The exotic cultural mix is the very essence of New Orleans, even today. This lively new musical reenacts a moment in history when blacks and whites danced together in forbidden and hidden haunts, the spirits of voodoo seasoned the atmosphere and the good citizens of the town closed their ears to what they referred to as "the devil's music" because it was so radical.

A Louisiana native herself, Artistic Director Jeanne Calvit has always been pulled toward the outsiders who flavor New Orleans' rich cultural history. With music and lyrics by Ivey Award-winning composer Aaron Gabriel, *Hot Funky Butt Jazz* tells stories of creativity, race, resilience and survival. These are

stories as relevant today as they were in the early 1900s — stories with a power so huge, it set the Jazz Age in motion and changed American culture forever.

About Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts

Founded by Artistic Director Jeanne Calvit in 1996, Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts has transformed lives through its mission to create art that challenges perceptions of disability. Calvit has studied and performed throughout Europe and the United States and is notably a graduate of the Jacques Lecoq School for Theatre, Mime and Movement in Paris. She has been recognized with a McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship, The Arc Minnesota's Legacy Award as a change-maker in the arts, a LIN Award for pioneering work in arts and diversity and MPR's Art Heroes Award for using her talent to make the world a better place.

In all of its work, Interact Center:

- Creates art in a spirit of radical inclusion
- Inspires artists and audiences to explore the full spectrum of human potential
- Transforms lives by expanding ideas of what is possible

A professional theater and studio for artists with disabilities, Interact Center's overriding vision is to lift all voices through the stories it tells — through original devised theater, original visual artwork in outsider/visionary traditions and the collaborative stories generated when artists with disabilities connect with their peers in a wide diversity of communities and situations.

Interact Center's vision of radical inclusion blurs ideas of who "can" and who "cannot," engaging artists with and without disabilities and artists from mainstream and marginalized communities. Its 40+ theater artists and 60+ visual artists come from African-, Asian-, Native-, Pacific Island- and Caucasian-American backgrounds with an intergenerational mix of ages from 18 to 74. They have toured England, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Australia, and they are helping develop Interact-model theaters in Thailand, Australia and New Orleans.

Interact Theater has won two Ivey Awards, multiple National Endowment for the Arts Awards and been presented by the Guthrie Theater (Dowling Studio), The Lab Theater, Pantages Theatre, The Southern Theater, Theater Latté Da and The Cowles Center. Interact Visual Arts Studio shows in venues throughout the Twin Cities and beyond, including Soo Visual Arts Center Gallery, Rochester Contemporary Art Center, Northeast Minneapolis' Art-A-Whirl, Highpoint Center and its own Interact Gallery.

About the Guthrie Theater

The Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, artistic director) was founded by Sir Tyrone Guthrie in 1963 and is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training, dedicated to producing the great works of dramatic literature and cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Under Haj's leadership, the Guthrie is guided by four core values: Artistic Excellence; Community; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Fiscal Responsibility. The Guthrie produces a mix of classic and contemporary plays on three stages and continues to set a national standard for excellence in theatrical production and performance, serving nearly 400,000 patrons annually. In 2006, the Guthrie opened a new home, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Open to the public year-round, it houses three state-of-the-art stages, production facilities, classrooms, full-service restaurants and dramatic public lobbies. guthrietheater.org

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