



THE UMBRELLASM
STAGE COMPANY

**THE UMBRELLA ARTS CENTER ANNOUNCES A 2024/25 SEASON
MARKED BY THEMES OF COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION**

**Playwright Madeline Sayet joins The Umbrella for The New England Premiere of
*Where We Belong***

Annual Concert Series Expands to Feature Up-and-Coming Artists

SEASON
2024/25

NETWORK
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY LEE HALL · BASED ON THE PADDY CHAYEFSKY FILM

NOW. HERE. THIS.
BOOK BY HUNTER BELL & SUSAN BLACKWELL · MUSIC & LYRICS BY JEFF BOWEN

WHERE WE BELONG
NEW ENGLAND PREMIERE · BY MADELINE SAYET

THE SPITFIRE GRILL
MUSIC & BOOK BY JAMES VALCQ · LYRICS & BOOK BY FRED ALLEY
BASED ON THE FILM BY LEE DAVID ZLOTOFF

CONCORD — May 17, 2024— The Umbrella Arts Center is thrilled to announce its 2024/25 theater season featuring an eclectic lineup of thought-provoking and emotionally resonant productions. From the riveting to the heartwarming, each show promises to captivate audiences with compelling storytelling and poses timely questions to consider.

Kicking off the season September 20 - November 3 in the Main Stage Theater 144 is the acclaimed stage adaptation of "Network," Paddy Chayefsky's iconic exploration of media madness and the blurring lines between truth and entertainment. Set in the fast-paced world of television journalism, "Network" remains hauntingly relevant today -- nearly 50 years following its original release, a parable about power and the perils of the modern media landscape.

Alternating throughout the fall in The Umbrella's Black Box, October 4 - November 10, is the energetic "Now. Here. This." The intimate musical from the creative minds behind "[title of

show]" celebrates the beauty of life's simple moments and the power of human connection. With toe-tapping tunes and poignant storytelling, audiences are invited to embrace the present moment in a cabaret-style production and find joy in the everyday.

Continuing the season February 28 - March 23 in the Black Box is "Where We Belong" by Madeline Sayet. Following its acclaimed tour, developed in partnership with Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in association with The Folger Shakespeare Library, with performances at Seattle Rep, Chicago's Goodman Theatre, New York's Public Theater, and more, The Umbrella is proud to present the play's New England Premiere in a new production. A groundbreaking play that explores themes of identity and importance of honoring our roots, *Where We Belong* amplifies one indigenous woman's story and challenges audiences to confront their own preconceptions and biases.

Rounding out the season April 25 - May 18 in the Main Stage Theater 144 is the heartwarming musical *The Spitfire Grill*, based on the beloved film that took the Audience Award at The Sundance Film Festival and newly revised for 2024. The musical's rich score is marked by Americana folk rhythms, soaring melodies, and irresistible charm. It reminds us all about the resilience of the human spirit, the magic of new beginnings, and the power of community.

Director of Performing Arts Brian Boruta observes, "Against the backdrop of a year in which Concord will be marking the semiquincentennial of the American Revolution, themes of identity, community, and the search for meaning in a chaotic world resonate deeply. Each show explores the human condition with unflinching honesty, inviting audiences to reflect on their own lives and values and how we connect to one another."

In addition to its Stage Company productions, The Umbrella will be expanding its concert series in 2024/25 with the addition of two events, fall and spring dates TBA, featuring up and coming popular music artists; four performances of the popular Holiday Pops concert in partnership with Firebird Pops Orchestra December 13-15; and the third installment of its exciting Broadway Concert series, date TBA.

Shows run Thursdays at 7:30pm, Friday-Saturday at 8PM and Sundays at 3PM. The Umbrella is ADA accessible and a proud partner in the Massachusetts Cultural Council's EBT Card-to-Culture program. It offers free parking and free admission to its visual arts galleries. It is easily accessible by Route 2 and is roughly three blocks from a Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line stop.

NETWORK

Adapted for the Stage by Lee Hall

Based on the Paddy Chayefsky film

SEPTEMBER 20 - NOVEMBER 3

Main Stage Theater 144

A potent and provocative new stage adaptation of the cinematic masterpiece.

Veteran news anchor Howard Beale isn't pulling in the viewers. But when his on-air breakdown sparks a revolution, Howard suddenly becomes the biggest thing on TV. The 1976 film by Paddy Chayefsky dominated the Academy Awards and was a prophetic masterpiece. Nearly 50 years later, this new, acclaimed stage adaptation remains a potent and provocative work of art as the world grapples with truth, authenticity, and the search for meaning in a digital age.

"Network remains gripping..." — The Hollywood Reporter

"...takes on fresh fury in a sizzling stage production...that feels less satiric but more urgent..."

— Variety

NOW. HERE. THIS.

Book by Hunter Bell and Susan Blackwell

Music and Lyrics by Jeff Bowen

Based on the Collaboration by Hunter Bell, Michael Berresse, Susan Blackwell, Heidi

Blickenstaff, Jeff Bowen, and Larry Pressgrove

OCTOBER 4 - NOVEMBER 10

Black Box

A musical jaunt full of humor, heart, and self-discovery that reminds us of the importance of life's simple moments and the power of human connection.

Four friends embark on a - figuratively - cosmic adventure to their past and back again, sharing stories along the way about hiding/identity, laughing, living, dying ... and middle school, in an attempt to step directly into that elusive "present moment". From the creative minds behind "[title of show]," "Now. Here. This." is more than just a musical—it's a celebration of life, love, connection, and the boundless potential of the human spirit.

"A blend of good humor and good feeling with an audience-embracing brio that never flags." —

The New York Times

WHERE WE BELONG (New England Premiere)

By Madeline Sayet

FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 23

Black Box

An indigenous theatre-maker journeys across geographic borders, personal history, and Cultural legacies in search of a place to belong.

In 2015, Mohegan theatre-maker Madeline Sayet traveled to England to pursue a PhD in Shakespeare, echoing the path her ancestors took in the 1700's and leading to a remarkable journey of self-discovery. This ground-breaking, one-woman event weaves together humor, searing insight, and the timeless power of story-telling, to explore the importance of honoring our roots and the universal quest for belonging/where we belong. Following its acclaimed tour, developed in partnership with Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in association with The Folger Shakespeare Library, with performances at Seattle Rep, Chicago's Goodman Theatre, New York's Public Theater, and more, The Umbrella is proud to present the play's New England Premiere in a new production.

"...Sayet's script is heartfelt and insightful, and manages to do exactly what so many credit the Bard with: it captures a universality of the human experience." – *Broadway World*

THE SPITFIRE GRILL

Music and Book by James Valcq

Lyrics and Book by Fred Alley

Based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff

APRIL 25 - MAY 18

Main Stage Theater 144

A heartwarming musical that lifts up the beauty in second chances and the transformative nature of friendship.

Percy Talbott is a spirited young woman seeking redemption. But in the small town of Gilead, she finds so much more. Based on the beloved film that took the Audience Award at The Sundance Film Festival, the musical's rich score is marked by Americana folk rhythms, soaring melodies, and irresistible charm. It reminds us all about the resilience of the human spirit, the magic of new beginnings, and the power of community.

"...soul-satisfying...freeing...penetrated by honesty and it glows." – *The New York Times*

"Soulful...The amiable country-flavored tunes and lyrics are rendered with the kind of conviction and expertise that make them transcendent...sheer nourishment." – *New York Magazine*