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For Immediate Release

Governors State University Academic Theatre Returns with bobrauschenbergAMERICA Live Streaming May 6-8

University Park, IL (April 26, 2021) – Live theatre is back. At least, back online. With Governors State University's Spring 2021 drama "**bobrauschenbergAMERICA**", audiences can still experience the excitement and magic of live performance from the comfort and safety of their homes with a live steamed production.

"Originally, we hoped that live events would return by May 2021," says Director and Associate Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies (TAPS) Dr. Patrick Santoro, "Since that is not the case, everyone agreed it was important to give both the audience and the cast the experience of live performance while remaining safe."

"Early rehearsals were held online, via Zoom," Santoro shares, "This was new for me as a director. Zoom removes the embodied, on our feet work those of us in the theatre hold so dear. We all had to learn how to use Zoom in new ways to achieve similar results. While I have much respect for the Zoom theatre that has come out of the pandemic, there is truly no substitute (for me, at least) for the immediacy and liveness the theatre allows. The performers are masked and socially distant on stage. Moreover, because we are not staging theatre like we were before the pandemic, this production's emphasis on spectacle should translate well across screens in its live-streamed format. "

The TAPS program at GSU stages timely works that address social, cultural, and political issues. Santoro wanted to stage a piece that would inform understanding of America at this current moment, "So much has happened over the last year: the pandemic, civil unrest, economic instability, to name a few.

The show is a wild road trip through the American landscape as one of the country's greatest artists Robert Rauschenberg might have conceived it if he had been a playwright instead of a visual artist. Rauschenberg's work defied categorization and he often utilized found objects and collage. The play mirrors Rauschenberg's eclectic style and is itself a collage of people and places and music and dancing, of love stories and picnics and business schemes and shootings and chicken jokes and golfing, and of the sheer exhilaration of living in a country where people make up their lives as they go.

Playwright Charles L. Mee borrows from varied traditions and styles (much like Rauschenberg) to craft a story that does not follow a linear plot but instead offers snapshots of moments in Americans' lives. Themes include love, death, sex, capitalism, violence, innovation, division, and the myth of Americana. Cast member JaNina Simone says, "Like America, *bobrauschenbergAMERICA* is one big pot of gumbo with different types of people, states of being, and stages of life. Like Rauschenberg's art, it follows no specific rules and puts a bunch of broken pieces together as one beautiful work of art."

Cast member and GSU professor of Spanish Literature and Sociology Reynolds "Rey" Andújar describes the play as, "Challenging the audience to find meaning in stories that are linked without an obvious pattern. It is inspired by post-structuralist thinking, in which art is not seen as a whole but as a flash of a dream or a moment in reality."

Santoro describes the experience as, "An especially fulfilling project, and an opportunity to create for the first time in a long time due to the pandemic shutdown. I speak for all of us when I say that it has been a welcome opportunity to embody our craft once again, in real time and real space, in a room with other people. Personally, it's made me feel less alone, more connected to others, and that's what so many of us need right now."

Thanks to a grant from GSU's Intellectual Life, a Zoom pre-show talk featured playwright Charles Mee in conversation with Dr. Santoro, GSU professor and art historian Rebecca Siefert, and members of the cast. The talk can be viewed on the Center for Performing Arts YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/GSUCenter>.

The Cast of *bobrauschenbergAMERICA*:

Thea L. Anderson as Susan

Reynolds “Rey” Andújar as Allen

Michael DePriest Reed as Becker

Rachel A. Kim as Wilson

Ronald McDowell as Carl

Samantha Patti as Phil’s Girl

Chuck Salvatore as Phil, the Trucker

Faiz Siddique a Bob, the Pizza Boy

JaNina Simone a Bob’s Mom

Zowie Trudeau as Roller Girl

bobrauschenbergAMERICA streams May 6-8 at 7:30 p.m. on the Center for Performing Arts’ YouTube Channel.

Admission is pay what you can: \$6, \$17, or \$29.

To purchase tickets to this live-streamed performance, visit:

https://www.govst.edu/About/Center_for_Performing_Arts/All_Events_by_Date/bobrauschenbergAMERICA/

Ticket holders will be emailed a link to the live stream the day of the production.

For more information, visit CenterTickets.net

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