



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Kevin Kearney

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
Sarah Scott

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Contact: Sarah Scott, Director of Marketing and Communications
sscott@thehighwoodtheatre.org | 301-587-0697; 202-495-9524

The Highwood Theatre Explores the Effect of Social Media on Society's Perception of Truth and Blame in New Play

RIOT

a professional show in Highwood's 2015-2016 Season

Six Performances:

February 19th, 20th, 26th, & 27th at 7:30 pm and

February 21st, & 28th at 2:00 pm

at The Highwood Theatre in Downtown Silver Spring

Your Theatre, the professional division of The Highwood Theatre, is thrilled to present the world premiere of *RIOT*, a new, original play devised entirely by the cast and creative team. The production is part of Highwood's 3rd annual Open Source Theatre Project, which focuses on collaboration to explore non-traditional theatre experiences. This engaging, audience-immersive performance centers around an event which residents of the DC area are all too familiar with: a protest. Dealing with relevant issues such as race, discrimination and class inequality, *RIOT* gives the audience a chance to voice their opinions throughout the show to guide the choices characters make and steer the direction of the plot.

Set in Sam's Coffee Shop, an "everybody knows your name" kind of place on the campus of fictional Whitney University, a diverse group of characters from very different backgrounds get caught up in a nearby protest-turned-riot. Chris, the friendly barista and Whitney alum, shares all the gossip around campus with his customers, specifically complaining about the frequent protests held by local activist Nicole, whose passion for picketing sometimes borders on the absurd. False information, spread by a local news station on social media, fans the flames of dissension causing the coffee house patrons to turn against one another, and the heated debate becomes violent.

Through an innovative marriage of technology and art, *RIOT* examines the role of the media to obscure the truth, shift blame and sway public opinion. "The show is a study of how we use our surface-level judgments of character to make assumptions and how society is influenced by social media and the consequences associated with that rush to judgment." explains Director Sue Schaffel. Highwood's unique approach to this production allows the audience to make their own judgments as they become part of the story and help drive

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the plot. Using interactive social media, the play moves to a different thrilling climax in each performance. Schaffel further describes the experience, “The audience has the opportunity to decide what happens to these characters. They will be immersed in the show; not only figuring out plot lines, but actually sitting in the coffee shop - in the scene.”

RIOT features the talents of Jennifer Berry (Stacy), Smitty Chai (Ryan), Mollie Goff (Andrea), Nerissa Hart (Nicole), Christopher Holbert (Officer Frank), and Andrew Quilpa (Chris). It is directed by Sue Schaffel and Assistant Directed by Garrett Schaffel. Fight Choreographer: Claudia Rosales, Stage Manager: Kelsey Murphy, Set and Lighting Design: Toly Yarup and Kevin Kearney, Sound Design: Orion Stekoll.

RIOT is part of Highwood’s 2015-2016 Mainstage Season “Underground Expression” and is the season’s second production by its Your Theatre division, which is dedicated to producing high-quality professional theatre productions with teams of talented adult actors.

Directions to The Highwood Theatre in Silver Spring

The Highwood Theatre in Silver Spring is located at 914 Silver Spring Avenue, Suite 102, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Street parking is available near the venue, and there is a county garage less than one block away. Parking is free on weekends. Arriving by metro? From the Silver Spring metro station (Red Line), head Northeast on Colesville Road toward Wayne Avenue. Turn right onto Wayne Avenue, right onto Georgia Avenue, and left onto Silver Spring Avenue. The Highwood Theatre will be on your right. This route takes about ten minutes.

Contact Information

Tickets: <http://www.thehighwoodtheatre.org/tickets.html>

The Highwood Theatre Office: 301-587-0697

General Information: info@thehighwoodtheatre.org

Website: www.thehighwoodtheatre.org

Calendar Listing

RIOT is a Your Theatre production of The Highwood Theatre located in downtown Silver Spring. Performances are at 7:30 pm on Fridays, February 19th and 26th, and Saturdays, February 20th, and 27th. Matinee performances are at 2:00 pm on Sundays, February 21st and 28th. Tickets are \$25 for all performances. Visit <http://www.thehighwoodtheatre.org/riot.html> for more information.

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