



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Harlequin to reopen with the high-energy, ingenious musical comedy murder mystery *Murder for Two***

**Olympia, WA** – February 9, 2022 – Harlequin Productions presents *Murder for Two*, with book by Joe Kinosian and Kellen Blair, music by Joe Kinosian, and lyrics by Kellen Blair, March 11 – April 2, 2022 at the State Theater in downtown Olympia, WA. Corey McDaniel will direct.

*They put the laughter in manslaughter! In this hilarious 90-minute musical comedy, 2 performers play 13 roles—not to mention the piano—in a witty and winking homage to old-fashioned murder mysteries.*

*A small-town police officer dreams of making it to detective – and one fateful night, the opportunity arrives in the form of a dead Great American Novelist. One actor investigates, the other plays every suspect, and both play the piano. It's the perfect blend of music, mayhem and murder!*

Seattle-based Jon Lutyens and formerly Seattle, now London-based Katherine Strohmaier star in this fast-paced production filled with what Lutyens calls “piano acrobatics.” Both have the unique qualifications of being both musical theater actors and excellent pianists. The two have been friends for several years and were even housemates for a period. In a promotional interview hosted by Porcupine Media, both were asked how this close relationship will bolster the show. Strohmaier said, “No matter what happens, and things are going to happen – things that are planned and many things I’m sure that are not planned – I trust that we’ll be there to pick things up for each other.” Added Lutyens, “I mean, not to compare us to these people, but if you look at any of the acting partners like Bogie and Bacall or Hepburn and Tracy, or even Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, those people that work together all the time...I think that if you don’t get along then it’s so much harder. Especially with comedy, because in comedy you have to open up the lid on what you’re doing and tinker with it together...And I’m not comparing us to any of those really great comedic teams!”

While this is Lutyens’ first Harlequin production, Strohmaier may be familiar to Harlequin audiences as the star of another recent two-person musical, *The Last Five Years* (2016). In that production, she and Artistic Director Aaron Lamb also played the piano throughout. While Lamb was preparing the 2021-2022 season, Strohmaier texted Lamb that she and Lutyens had joked about pitching *Murder for Two*. (Lutyens had understudied the 2017 ACT production.) Lamb recalls, “I texted her back, ‘That will work. When are you available?’ She answered, ‘Oh God.’”

He continues, "It is unique to find people who have the ability to do [a show like] this. I happen to know those people. And now those people are learning not to joke with me."

In his Director's Notes regarding the production, Corey McDaniel writes, "Being in the rehearsal room with Katherine and Jon has been a true and unique gift. Witnessing these two very skilled actors and musicians dissect and execute the rapid-fire changes of thought, characters, physicality, and a multitude of key changes was thrilling." He adds, "Generally speaking, what I love most about theatre is our opportunity to gather as a community and reflect on what it means to be within the human experience." Or as Lutyens puts it, "It's going to be 90 minutes of high-energy, non-stop distraction from the world that we're in!"

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## Production Information

**Corey McDaniel** (*Director*) returns to Harlequin after choreographing *A Christmas Carol* this past December and directing *Tenderly*, *The Rosemary Clooney Musical* for the Fall Repertory Season. In previous seasons with Harlequin, McDaniel directed *Noises Off* (2020) and *I Ought to be in Pictures* (2019), and was seen on-stage in the one-man show *I Am My Own Wife* (2018). Corey is the founder and producing artistic director of Seattle's Theatre22. As an actor, he has worked throughout the US and internationally and his performance credits have placed him in such reputable arenas as the Fox Theatres, the Hollywood Bowl, Teatro Sistina in Rome, and the Metropolitan Opera House of NYC. McDaniel's most recent director credits include *White, Burn This*, *The Pride*, *Wizzer Pizzer*, and *The Hours of Life* for Theatre22, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* with Wooden O/Seattle Shakespeare Company, *Treasure Island* with Book-It Repertory Theatre, *Sister Act the Musical*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, and *Good Kids* at Cornish College of the Arts, *Julius Caesar* with Island Shakespeare Festival and *The Wild Party* for Sound Theatre Company (Gregory Award for Best Musical).

**Katherine Strohmaier\*** (*Marcus*) has previously worked with Harlequin as Music Director for *Man of La Mancha* (2019) and played Catherine in *The Last 5 Years* (2016). Local credits include 5th Avenue Theatre, Village Theatre, Showtunes, Seattle Children's Theatre, Mount Baker Theatre, and Centerstage. As a concert vocalist, she has performed with Seattle Symphony, Opéra de Rennes, Pasadena Symphony-Pops, and with pianist Peter Nero. Strohmaier currently lives in London, where she works as a singing instructor, session singer, and as a music director for Liberty Choir UK. She holds an MSc in Performance Science from Royal College of Music.

**Jon Lutyens\*** (*The Suspects*) is a theatre artist of many stripes around the Puget Sound region. Audiences have seen Jon onstage at ACT Theatre, Village Theatre, Strawberry Theater Workshop, Taproot Theatre, Book-It Repertory, and many others in the region. Lutyens also teaches regularly with educational arts programs through the area, working toward a future with greater acceptance and support for all students.

**WHAT:** Harlequin Productions presents *Murder for Two*, a musical comedy murder mystery with book by Joe Kinosian and Kellen Blair, music by Joe Kinosian, and lyrics by Kellen Blair, directed by Corey McDaniel.

**WHEN:** March 11 – April 2, 2022

**WHERE:** State Theater, 202 4<sup>th</sup> Ave East, Olympia, WA 98501

**TICKETS:** Tickets are available online at [harlequinproductions.org](http://harlequinproductions.org), by phone at **360-786-0151**, or in person **12-5:30 pm, Tuesday-Saturday at the Washington Center**, and **beginning 2 hours before performances at the State Theater.**

General admission tickets are \$42

Senior 60+/Military \$38

Student/Youths Under 25 \$25

Rush Tickets (half-hour prior to showtime) General \$21; Senior/Military \$19, Student/Under 25 \$12.50; Teens/Under 20 \$5

**SPECIAL DATES FOR THE AUDIENCE:**

**Preview:** Thursday, March 10 at 7:30 pm

*Tickets to the Preview are \$20 General Admission*

**Opening Night:** Friday, March 11 at 7:30 pm

**Pay-What-You-Can:** TBA prior to Opening

**CATEGORY:** Musical Comedy

**AGE RECOMMENDATION:** All ages with guidance

**CAST:**

Katherine Strohmaier\*

*Marcus*

Jon Lutyens

*The Suspects*

\* Indicates membership in the Actor's Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

*Harlequin Productions is a professional not-for-profit theater company in Olympia, WA. We seek to invigorate, educate, and empower our community and all people to feel more, think more, play more, and judge less through the mirror of real live theatre.*

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