

30 SEASON
2022-23
RESILIENT

renaissance

T H E A T E R W O R K S

Theater by Women For Everyone

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COST OF LIVING by Martyna Majok at Renaissance Theaterworks

*A Pulitzer Prize winning play which contains a truly honest portrayal of disability through the eyes and minds of a **disabled director**, two **disabled actors** and a **disabled theater marketer**.
A bold but important choice for a small local theater company.*

December 14, 2022 (MILWAUKEE, Wis.) - Renaissance Theaterworks (RTW) continues their 30th season with "Cost of Living" by Martyna Majok, Jan 20 - Feb 12, 2023, at the Theater at 255 S. Water St. in Milwaukee's Harbor District. The play will be directed by RTW newcomer Ben Raanan, and features actors Bryant Bentley, Regan Linton, Valentina Fittipaldi and Jamie Rizzo. Tickets are available at R-T-W.com 24 hours a day, or by calling the box office at 414-278-0765 or in person at the box office, 255 S. Water St., from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily and 2 hours before performances. Note: Box Office will be closed the weeks of Christmas and New Years, but voicemail will be checked and calls returned. (Full list of performance dates, times and special shows below.)

Play Synopsis

This achingly human and surprisingly funny play is about the forces that bring people together, the realities of facing the world with disabilities and how deeply we all need each other. "Cost of Living" is the story of four very different people, in four very different circumstances, each trying to get by. Eddie, an unemployed truck driver, reunites with his ex-wife Ani after she suffers a devastating accident leaving her quadriplegic. John, a brilliant and witty doctoral student who has been disabled since birth, hires over-worked Jess as a caregiver. As their lives intersect, Martyna Majok's play delves into the chasm between abundance and need and explores the space where bodies — abled and disabled — meet each other.

An Authentic Portrayal of Disability

In Martyna Majok's Pulitzer Prize (2018) winning script, she stipulates that the disabled characters in her play be portrayed by disabled actors, making this critically important story perceived to be difficult to cast. Enter Ben Raanan, Artistic Director of Phamaly Theatre Company in Denver CO, the nation's longest running disabled theater company, as RTW's choice to direct "Cost of Living."

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Ben, who himself lives with disabilities, said “I have been pitching this play to various theaters for years. I never thought I would find a company to say yes, until I got a call from Suzan Fete. The visionaries at Renaissance [Theaterworks] have taken a chance to put on a play which contains a truly honest portrayal of disability.” Suzan Fete said, “Disabled actors have difficulty finding work. Either the roles are not written, or theater companies are not willing to or can’t take on the additional risk related to venue accessibility, housing, and other accommodations it takes to hire them. RTW exists to tell everyone’s stories. If we can’t tell the story of living with a disability then we are leaving people out. “Cost of Living” is worth that risk.”

Authenticity Takes Guidance

Having never taken on a production involving disabled personnel, nor a play with disabled characters before, RTW has sought the guidance of experts to help them do it right. Hiring Ben and collaborating with Phamaly Theatre Company is just the beginning. They have also engaged the consultation of Milwaukee-based Pink Umbrella Theatre Company, whose mission is to promote and provide theater that is accessible and inclusive with people who identify with a physical, intellectual or emotional disability. Lastly and coincidentally, RTW just hired Sarah Kriger Hwang as their new (well...returning) Marketing Director. Sarah lives with Multiple Sclerosis, a progressive and disabling neurological disorder. All of these resources will help RTW fulfill the needs of its personnel, production and audience with the utmost care, sensitivity and accessibility it can. Suzan Fete said, “Majok’s script insists on the casting of diverse and disabled actors and this deepens the effect of her heartfelt and altogether human story. Renaissance would never have been able to produce COST OF LIVING without our collaboration partners: Phamaly Theatre and Pink Umbrella Theatre.”

How RTW Will Achieve Increased Accessibility

RTW will have a greater number of wheelchair accessible seats for “Cost of Living.” 6-10 wheelchair seats will be available for each performance (depending on sizes of chairs) and adjustments will be made to the front-of-house to make mobility easier for the disabled (chair users and non-users). We will also provide sensory friendly and ASL interpreted performances and all performances will be live captioned.

Production Team

DIRECTOR.....	Ben Raanan
PRODUCTION MANAGER & STAGE MANAGER....	Bailey Wegner
ASST. STAGE MANAGER.....	Sydney Smith
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR.....	Tony Lyons
LIGHTING DESIGN.....	Sarah Hamilton
SCENIC DESIGN.....	Sarah Ross**
SOUND DESIGN.....	Josh Schmidt**
COSTUME DESIGN.....	Jason Orlenko**
PROP MASTER.....	Olivia Bastien
WARDROBE SUPERVISOR.....	Shelby Kaishian
INTIMACY DIRECTOR.....	Christopher Elst
DECK CHIEF.....	Nat Goeller

*Member of Actors' Equity Association

** Member of the United Scenic Artists of America

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Playwright/Director/Cast Biographies

Martyna Majok PLAYWRIGHT was born in Bytom, Poland, and aged in Jersey and Chicago. Her plays have been performed and developed at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Manhattan Theatre Club, Marin Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, Women's Project Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Round House Theatre, LAByrinth Theatre Company, The John F. Kennedy Center, Dorset Theatre Festival, New York Stage & Film, Yale Cabaret, The Playwright and Director Center of Moscow, Satori Group, Red Tape Theatre, and The LIDA Project, among others. Awards include the Helen Hayes Award's Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding Original New Play or Musical, the inaugural Women's Invitational Prize at Ashland New Play Festival, The Kennedy Center's Jean Kennedy Smith Award, Marin Theatre's David Calicchio Emerging American Playwright Prize, New York Theatre Workshop's 2050 Fellowship, Aurora Theatre's Global Age Project Prize, National New Play Network's Smith Prize for Political Playwriting, Jane Chambers Student Feminist Playwriting Prize, and The Merage Fellowship for the American Dream. Commissions from The Geffen, South Coast Rep, Manhattan Theatre Club, Marin Theatre Company, "The New Yorker" website, Ensemble Studio Theatre, and The Foundry Theatre. Publications by Dramatists Play Service, Samuel French, TCG, and Smith & Kraus. Residencies at SPACE on Ryder Farm, Fuller Road, Marble House Project, and Ragdale. BA: University of Chicago; MFA: Yale School of Drama. Martyna is currently part of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwright Program at The Juilliard School. She has taught playwriting at Williams College, Wesleyan University, SUNY Purchase, and as an assistant to Paula Vogel at Yale. Alumna of EST's Youngblood. Member of Women's Project Lab, The Dramatist Guild, and New York Theatre Workshop's Usual Suspects. Martyna was the 2012-2013 NNPN playwright-in-residence. She is the 2015-2016 PoNY Fellow at the Lark Play Development Center.

Ben Raanan (he/him) DIRECTOR

is a disabled theatre maker and advocate originally hailing from Chicago, Illinois. His artistic focus is centralized around creating artistically rigorous theatre with, for, and about the disabled community. Currently, Ben is the Artistic Director at Phamaly Theatre Company, the longest running disability theatre company in the United States. Ben received his BFA from Drake University with a concentration in directing/musical theatre, and his MFA in directing from DePaul. Some of his favorite directing credits include: Spitfire Grill (Phamaly Theatre Company), Macbeth (Spectrum Shakespeare), Antigone: Born Against, Eleemosynary, Bob: A Life In Five Acts, Crumble: Lay Me Down Justin Timberlake (Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati) *Mockingbird* (Falcon Theatre). Next up, Ben will be directing *Spring Awakening* at Phamaly.

Bryant Bentley (he/him) EDDIE

was born and raised in the Midwest and has over 20 years of experience on stage, film and TV. Bryant played homeless man Cactus Ray, who led a sit-in protest at a public Library alongside the late great Michael K Williams in the Emilio Estevez film "The Public." TV: Recurring role "A League Of Their Own" Amazon Prime, "Sprung" Freevee TV, and "Mayor Of Kingstown"

Paramount Plus. Upcoming Films: "A Rose For Her Grave" on Lifetime, Lee Daniel's "The Deliverance" on Netflix, and a LeBron James film "Shooting Stars" on Peacock. Bryant is excited to debut in Milwaukee at Renaissance Theaterworks with this outstanding cast. Select Theater Credits: *A Soldiers Play*, *Master Harold And The Boys*, *Detroit 67*, *Pipeline*, *A Raisin In The Sun*, *5 Guys Named Moe*, *The Exonerated*, *The Piano Lesson*, *MA Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Jitney*, *Two Trains Running*, and *Fences*. Upcoming: *Seven Guitars* at the Milwaukee Rep directed by Ron OJ Parson.

Regan Linton (she/her) ANI

Broadway: *Cost of Living* (u/s, Manhattan Theatre Club). Regional credits include Arena Stage (DC), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mixed Blood Theatre (MN), Denver Center for the Performing Arts, La Jolla Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse, Boston Court (CA), and Phamaly, among others. Regan is also a director, producer, and disability advocate, and recently served as Accessibility Consultant on the immersive David Byrne project *Theatre of the Mind*. She is co-director of the award-winning documentary *imperfect* (2021) about disabled theatre actors, and spent 5 years as Artistic Director of the preeminent disability-affirmative Phamaly Theatre Company in Denver. Training: MFA, UC San Diego. Regan lives with a T-4 complete spinal cord injury. reganlinton.com

Valentina Fittipaldi (she/her) JESS

was born and raised in Miami, FL and is originally from Brazil. She is a recent graduate from the Theatre School at DePaul University. Valentina has completed a Midsummer in Oxford program with the British American Drama Academy (BADA) in association with Yale School of Drama. Her theater credits include Trudi in *Brooklyn Bridge*, Persephone in *Polaroid Stories*, Citrona in *Fur*, and Nora in *A Doll's House*. Valentina is very excited to be a part of this production. She wants to thank Ben Raanan for the opportunity and her family for the endless support.

Jamie Rizzo (he/him/his) JOHN

is super excited to be collaborating with Renaissance Theaterworks and Pink Umbrella Theatre Company on *Cost of Living*. As a member of Phamaly Theatre Company in Denver, Colorado, he has performed in (virtually due to COVID) the miniseries *Rewrite* and the company's original project *CoronaVox: Stories from the Front*, however this is his first time ever acting for an in house audience. Jamie would like to thank God, his parents, and his awesome girlfriend, Alexis, as well as everyone who has supported him (including friends and family who come see the show). He lives with Spina Bifida (<https://spinabifidaassociation.org>)

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Performance Schedule & Special Events

Friday, January 20	7:30 p.m.	Preview
Saturday, January 21	4:00 p.m.	Preview
Saturday, January 21	8:00 p.m.	Opening Night & Reception
Sunday, January 22	2:00 p.m.	
Wednesday, January 25	7:30 p.m.	Wine Wednesday
Thursday, January 26	7:30 p.m.	Community Networking Night
Friday, January 27	7:30 p.m.	Talkback
Saturday, January 28	4:00 p.m.	
Saturday, January 28	8:00 p.m.	
Sunday, January 29	2:00 p.m.	Playclub & Sensory Friendly Performance
Monday, January 30	7:30 p.m.	Pay-What-You-Choose
Wednesday, February 1	7:30 p.m.	Wine Wednesday
Thursday, February 2	7:30 p.m.	Women's Happy Hour
Friday, February 3	7:30 p.m.	Pre-show talk
Saturday, February 4	4:00 p.m.	PRIDE Show
Sunday, February 5	2:00 p.m.	ASL Interpreted & Post-show talk
Wednesday, February 8	1:00 p.m.	
Wednesday, February 8	7:30 p.m.	Wine Wednesday
Thursday, February 9	7:30 p.m.	
Friday, February 10	7:30 p.m.	
Saturday, February 11	4:00 p.m.	
Sunday, February 12	2:00 p.m.	

Season Sponsors: Laura & Mike Arnow, Jan Serr & John Shannon, Herzfeld Foundation, Shubert Foundation, Bert L. & Patricia S. Steigleder Charitable Trust, CAMPAC, City of Milwaukee Arts Board, UPAF, Wisconsin Arts Board, The Greater Milwaukee Foundation

Show Sponsors: Bader Philanthropies, Judges Jean & John DiMotto, The Drosner Phillips Ristau Group at Baird, National Endowment for the Arts, Stafford Rosenbaum, UPAF Kasey's Fund

About Renaissance Theaterworks

Celebrating their thirtieth anniversary in the 2022-23 season, RTW is Milwaukee's first professional theater company founded and led by women and the nation's second-oldest professional theater devoted to gender equality.

RTW is now a resident company at 255 South Water St. in Milwaukee's Harbor District, with increased capacity and improved accessibility.

The company's season continues with its season theme "Resilient" centering on women's stories of perseverance. Up next is the world premiere of "Tidy" by Kristin Idaszak (March 24-April 16, 2023), as part of the World Premiere Wisconsin Festival.

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