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Central Works 29th Season of New Work
The Victorian Ladies' Detective Collective

A Cheeky Thriller
written by Patricia Milton
directed by Gary Graves

EXTENDED FOR ONE WEEK ONLY THRU SUN JUNE 9!

Berkeley City Club
2315 Durant Avenue, Berkeley

Central Works “cheeky” thriller *The Victorian Ladies' Detective Collective* by award-winning playwright Patricia Milton has been extended through June 9 (originally scheduled to close June 2). Directed by Gary Graves, this show is the fifth writer/director comic collaboration between Central Works' resident playwright and its company co-director. Last season, Central Works' production of *Bamboozled* by Patricia Milton won 4 TBA awards, including both awards in the Outstanding Performer slots for Stacy Ross & Chelsea Bearce (also playing in this production), along with Entire Ensemble and Outstanding Production.

The Victorian Ladies' Detective Collective was described at its opening as “an exhilarating ride in Milton’s signature fast-paced, deeply-researched style...” recognised as “a brisk and bright crime procedural. At another level, it is a feminist cry..” The script was developed in the Central Works Writers Workshop, and noted as “understanding the horror and the humor threading through unrestrained homicide; greed; sexual exploitation; class, gender, or racial stereotypes... taking on the question of the treatment of women in society.”

In Victorian London it appears as though Jack the Ripper may be at it again in Battersea, the district where two sisters run a boarding house for Single Ladies. When a series of gruesome murders terrorizes their neighborhood, Loveday and Valeria appeal to the police for protection. But Scotland Yard is no help at all. And the bodies are piling up on their doorstep! So the sisters team up with a cheeky American actress to bring the killer to justice.

Written by Patricia Milton, *The Victorian Ladies' Detective Collective* is directed by Gary Graves with a cast featuring Chelsea Bearce, Alan Coyne, Stacy Ross (member AEA), and Jan Zvaifler; with costume design by Tammy Berlin, lighting design by Gary Graves, fan fighting choreography by Marcella Rodgers, prop design by Debbie Shelley and sound design by Gregory Scharpen.

“The detective genre typically calls for a strong, upright hero who steps in to restore an order that has been disturbed by a crime “ says playwright Milton. “But what happens when the crime upholds and reinforces a social order that devalues and dismisses women?”

Patricia Milton is a Resident Playwright for Central Works and a long-term member of the Central Works Writers Workshop. Plays written for Central Works include: *Bamboozled* (2018), *Hearts of Palm* (2016), *Enemies: Foreign and Domestic* (2015), and *Reduction in Force* (2011). She is a recipient of the 2015 Outstanding World Premiere Play by Theatre Bay Area for *Enemies: Foreign and Domestic*, and *Reduction in Force* was voted 2011 “Best Local Play” in Broadway World’s annual poll. Her comedy *Believers* has enjoyed productions in Monterey and San Francisco, and has played for the past two years in Istanbul, Turkey. Her drama about the death penalty, *Without Mercy*, was presented at the Newfoundland Women’s Work Festival and was produced in 2017 by Off Broadway West Theatre Company in San Francisco. Ms. Milton has had more than one hundred productions and readings of her plays both locally and internationally, including 3Girls Theatre, San Francisco Exploratorium, PlayGround SF, Woman’s Will, Women’s Theatre Project, Bay Area One Acts, and City Lights Theatre.

Gary Graves (director) has been a resident playwright and company co-director at Central Works since 1998. He has been a part of developing 57 world premiere productions with the company, many of which he has either written and/or directed. Some of the other productions he has directed for the company include *Bamboozled*, *King of Cuba*, *Chekhov’s WARD 6*, *Winter*, *Years in the Hundreds*, *Edward King*, *Into the Beautiful North*, *Hearts of Palm*, *Enemies: Foreign and Domestic*, *Machiavelli’s The Prince*, *Lola Montez*, *Enemy Combatant*, *The Mysterious Mr. Looney*, *Misanthrope*, *Mata Hari*, and *Pirate Story*. He directed the company’s first collaboratively developed script, *Roux*, at the City Club in 1997. He also leads the Central Works Playwriting Program, and he teaches playwriting regularly at the Berkeley Rep School of Theater.

Chelsea Bearce (Katie Smalls) made her Central Works debut last year playing Savannah in *Bamboozled*, for which she won a TBA award for “outstanding actor in a principal role” along with Stacy Ross. She is a Benicia native and some of her favorite roles include Risa in *Two Trains Running*, Ronnette in *Little Shop of Horrors* and Esther in *Intimate Apparel*. She is a two time “Lead Actress” Arty Award Winner, a stand-up comedian of almost 10 years and a writer and producer of sketch comedy and parodies, performing comedy all over the country.

Alan Coyne (Police Constable Henry Crane, Toddy, Jasper Warham-Wynn) is making his Central Works debut, though he has appeared at the Berkeley City Club before, most recently as Stephen Hawking in Indra’s Net Theater’s *A Time for Hawking*. He has previously worked with SF Shakes, BACT, We Players, Custom Made, Golden Thread, Lafayette Town Hall Theater, and a host of other Bay Area theater companies. This August, he and his co-conspirator Adrian Deane will be taking their show *2elfth Night* to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Stacy Ross (Loveday Fortescue) is very happy to be working again with Central Works. Recent work includes Rochelle in *Bamboozled* at Central Works (TBA award winner for “outstanding actor in a principal role”), Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* at CalShakes, Leni Riefenstahl in *Leni* at the Aurora and Elizabeth I in *Shakespeare in Love* at Marin Theatre Company. Stacy is a member of Actors Equity.

Jan Zvaifler (Valeria Hunter) is a founding member of the company and co-director of Central Works along with Gary Graves. Over the past 28 seasons she has participated as an actor, designer, director and/or producer. Most recently she directed *Wonderland* and acted in *Palace Wreckers*. She has also worked with many local theater companies including the Berkeley Rep, Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, Marin Theater Company, San Francisco Playwrights Foundation, and San Francisco Shakespeare Festival.

For over 28 years Central Works has filled a special niche for theater artists in the San Francisco Bay Area, producing more new plays by local playwrights than any other company in the region. “The New Play Theater” utilizes three basic strategies: some are developed in the Central Works Writers Workshop, some are products of the Central Works Method, and some come to the company fully developed.

The Central Works Writers Workshop is an ongoing commissioning program established in 2012. Twice a year, in 12-week sessions, 8 local playwrights are selected to develop projects through informal readings and carefully directed discussions. For more information, visit our website: www.centralworks.org

Central Works Method plays bring together writer, actors and director at the very outset of the playwriting process. In a supportive workshop environment, group research and collective brainstorming contribute to the entire development of the script.

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