



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Orlando Musical *From Here* to play Off-Broadway this Summer

The musical love letter to Orlando will play in New York City June 29–August 11, with an Orlando engagement March–May.

Orlando, FL (January 15, 2024) – Renaissance Theatre Company is proud to bring *From Here*, Donald Rupe's critically-acclaimed original musical, to New York City this summer for a 6-week Off-Broadway engagement at the Alice Griffin Jewel Box Theatre at The Pershing Square Signature Center. The show will also complete its first local run at the Ren from March 22–May 5; the previous run was cut short due to the Pandemic.

Set in 2016, *From Here* tells the story of Daniel, a 30-something gay man on his journey through life, love, and family when the horrific shooting at Pulse Nightclub changes his hometown, and him, forever. "*From Here* centers on the fictional character of Daniel (who is inspired by the show's writer and also other people in our friend group), and it weaves in the real-life experience of what it was like living in Orlando during the days surrounding the shooting," says Blake Aburn, the actor who will reprise the leading role in his Off-Broadway debut. He goes on: "*From Here* isn't *about* the shooting...rather, it's about our city's response to tragedy...it's about what senseless gun violence can do to a community...and it's about chosen family. Through Daniel, we show what Pulse meant to people like me and my friends, who spent our formative years at Pulse and nightclubs like Pulse. It changed us. It changed many of us."

From Here played a sold-out concert at the famed 54 Below in NYC last January, where Broadway producers and industry professionals in attendance encouraged the Orlando-based cast and crew to explore next steps. The show's writer, Donald Rupe, is passionate about bringing the show's message to a wider audience: "For me, Theatre is such an important part of healing, remembering, and learning. Art can play an important role in honoring and remembering even the worst parts of history; plays like "The Laramie Project" and "Come From Away" (which follows the weeks after 9/11) have a long-lasting function in remembering those moments and learning from them. Unfortunately, we live in a country where more and more communities are affected by senseless violence and tragedy, and this is one story about what it was like in Orlando in 2016."

The Ren plans to partner with organizations like Equality Florida, the state's largest LGBT+ advocacy organization, to raise funds and awareness for their on-going fight for equality.

Members from the LGBT+ community and the Pulse-affected community will be invited to give dedications before the show, and raise and collect funds and support for organizations that are dear to them. Pulse Survivor and Bestselling Author Brandon Wolf says this about the production: "In the aftermath of Pulse, when so many of us were grieving and the future seemed uncertain, the Orlando community got clear on what we wanted the legacy of our tragedy to be: inclusion in the face of division, compassion in the face of cruelty, and love in the face of hatred. *From Here* is a beautiful encapsulation of that legacy, a powerful journey through both the ripples of grief and pain and the power of friendship and community. Our joy is our resistance, our love is our defiance -- and *From Here* is our story."

Producing an Off-Broadway show isn't cheap; the run is expected to cost between \$500,000-\$700,000, and in such a short run, the team knows they are highly unlikely to recoup that investment. "We're telling this story because it's important to tell. Everyone knows you don't go into Theatre to make money. But this story is important to us, so we're willing to take that chance," Donald Rupe says. As an arts organization, Renaissance Theatre Company is a 501(c)(3) charity organization with a modest budget, and the team hopes that members of the community and corporate sponsors may jump on board to support the show's next steps. The Ren proudly spends about 80% of its income to pay local artists. "While we're prepared to fund the show ourselves," says Ren Co-Founder, *From Here* drummer, and angel-donor Chris Kampmeier, "we hope the community will support what we're doing. I hope donors and potential sponsors come to see the show, and then, if they feel moved, I hope they join me and our list of sponsors to help us make this all happen. This is something that should be a community effort."

From Here is written by Donald Rupe, with arrangements and orchestrations by Jason M. Bailey. The cast will be led by Blake Aburn and Becca Southworth, who originated the roles of Daniel and Becca, Daniel's mother. The rest of the cast and crew has yet to be announced, but the team plans to keep the cast and crew local, filled with Orlando talent. "This show is special in part because the story-telling is so authentic; the people onstage and backstage remember these stories and these moments because we were actually there," Rupe says.

Renaissance Theatre Company (or the Ren) was founded by Donald Rupe and Chris Kampmeier in February 2021. The Ren moved into its 15,468 square foot theatre space in Loch Haven Park in Summer 2021. The Ren is dedicated to bringing original theatre to Orlando and beyond. Through fair pay for artists, sustainability and diversity, the company hopes to grow a new audience for theatre in Orlando. In just the company's second full fiscal year, the Ren paid an impressive \$1.2 million to local artists. rentheatre.com

The Pershing Square Signature Center, the permanent home of Signature Theatre, is a three-theatre facility on West 42nd Street designed by Frank Gehry Architects to host Signature's three distinct playwrights' residencies and foster a cultural community. The Center is a major contribution to New York City's cultural landscape and provides a venue for cultural organizations that supports and encourages collaboration among artists throughout the space. In addition to its three intimate theatres, the Center features a studio theatre, rehearsal studio, a

bookstore, and the Signature Café + Bar. For more information on renting the Center, please visit www.signaturetheatre.org/rent-our-space.

Experience *From Here*, playing at the Ren in Orlando from March 22–May 5, 2024, and then at the Pershing Square Signature Center in New York City from June 29–August 11, 2024. Tickets for both will be on sale at fromhere.com.

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MEDIA CONTACT: Donald Rupe, (321) 443-2370, donald@rentheatre.com