

DCA *news*

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS & SPECIAL EVENTS

For Immediate Release

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VITALIST THEATRE PRESENTS U.S.A. PREMIERE OF KOBO ABE'S THE GHOST IS HERE, JANUARY 12 – FEBRUARY 19

***Rarely-Performed Kobo Abe Masterpiece Comes to the DCA Storefront Theater
in the Heart of Chicago's Downtown Theater District***

CHICAGO (December 13, 2011) – “Bring out your dead!” In a vision reminiscent of Monty Python, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka and Joseph Heller, Vitalist Theatre, in association with DCA Theater, presents the U.S.A. premiere of ***The Ghost is Here***, the story of an alarming and preposterous con-artist promoting a grim scam: selling the dead. Written in 1957 by one of Japan's most revered modern dramatists, **Nobel Prize nominee Kobo Abe**, *The Ghost is Here* runs at the DCA Storefront Theater, 66 E. Randolph St., in the heart of Chicago's downtown theater district, from January 12 through February 19, 2012. Press night is Friday, January 13 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are currently on sale.

With flair and panache, con-artist Oba – played by returning **Vitalist actor Jamie Vann** – develops an increasingly absurd scheme whereby war-weary and financially stressed villagers sell him pictures of their dead, only to be charged exorbitant prices when they seek to retrieve them. The wrinkle in the racket is the “agent” who represents the ghosts. Eventually, the prospect of sellers' remorse prompts a stampede on the market, thereby seeming to assure Oba's fortune in the best wheeler-dealer, robber-baron tradition.

The Ghost is Here is set in the ruins of occupied, post-WWII Japan when the war-ravaged empire was forced to grope its way toward national redefinition. Suffering a loss of tradition, a devastated economy and a realignment of global power brokers, the villagers teeter on the edge of a plunge into unregulated and rapacious capitalism.

Constructed in the manner of a Japanese graphic novel, the play has moments of stylized song and dance, gallows humor and surprising poignancy woven around stark themes that resonate in America today. With echoes of Brecht, ***The Ghost is Here*** is deadly serious while witnessing the ludicrous flim-flam man and the innocents caught in his web.

As Vitalist Artistic Director **Elizabeth Carlin Metz** suggests, “It's as if Kobo Abe, writing in the 50s, foresaw the American (and world) financial and cultural crisis of the past decade: Enron, WorldCom, unemployment, poverty, Wall Street, Bernie Madoff.... The list seems endless.”

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Rahm Emanuel, Mayor
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Vitalist Associate Artistic Director **Jaclynn Jutting** directs a multicultural ensemble of 11 actors, bringing Abe's cautionary tale to life with an award-winning design team: original music by **Kevin O'Donnell**, sound design by **Gregor Mortis**, set design by **Craig Choma**, lighting design by **Lee Fiskness**, costume design by **Rachel Sypniewski**, and musical direction by **Ethan Deppe**. Vitalist co-founders Elizabeth Carlin Metz and Robin Metz serve as Artistic Director and Executive Producer. *The Ghost is Here* is translated by **Donald Keene**.

Kobo Abe (1924-1993) was a critically acclaimed Japanese writer, playwright, photographer and inventor. Nominated multiple times for the Nobel Prize in Literature, Abe's novels and plays are characterized by calm observations and avant-garde techniques. Central themes in Abe's work are loss of identity, alienation, isolation of the individual in a bizarre world, and the difficulty people have in communicating with one another. In the West, Abe is best known for his novels, such as *The Woman in the Dunes* (1962), one of the premier Japanese novels of the 20th century that garnered Abe the Yomiuri Prize in 1962, and *The Face of Another* (1964). In the 1960s, Abe adapted several of his novels to film including *Woman in the Dunes* (Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film), *The Face of Another*, *The Pitfall* and *The Ruined Map*. He was elected a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1977.

Donald Keene is an award-winning scholar, teacher, writer, translator and interpreter of Japanese literature and culture. Keene was University Professor Emeritus and Shincho Professor Emeritus of Japanese Literature at Columbia University, where he taught for more than 50 years. He has published 25 books in English on Japanese topics, and more than 30 books in Japanese. Keene has received numerous accolades including the Yomiuri Prize in 1985 (Keene was the first non-Japanese to receive the honor). In 2008, Professor Keene received one of Japan's highest honors, the Order of Culture (Bunka Kunsho), presented by the Japanese Government, and became the first foreign national to receive such an award.

About Vitalist Theatre

Now in its 15th year of award-winning Chicago productions, Vitalist Theatre has a commitment to plays of international scope, compelling ideas, muscular language, visceral performances and lyrical design. For information, visit vitalisttheatre.org.

Schedule & Ticket Information

A preview performance for *The Ghost is Here* takes place Thursday, January 12 at 7:30 p.m.; Press opening is Friday, January 13 at 7:30 p.m. The show runs Thursdays through Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. through February 19. (No performance on February 10; an added performance will take place on February 11 at 3 p.m.) A post-show discussion will take place after the Thursday, January 19 performance.

Tickets are \$25 for general admission; \$20 for seniors; \$15 for students with a valid ID. Tickets are \$15 for preview on January 12. Military personnel tickets are \$20 and ADA accessible tickets are available for \$12.50.

All tickets are available by calling 312.742.TIXS (8497), visiting www.dcatheater.org, or stopping by the Chicago Cultural Center Ticket Office in the Chicago Cultural Center at 78 E. Washington St., open Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 6 p.m. and Sundays, noon to 4 p.m. When available, tickets go on sale one hour before each performance at the DCA Storefront Theater.

Additional discounts are available for theater industry affiliates and large groups. Discounted parking is once again available at Wabash Randolph Self Park (Interpark) at 20 E. Randolph. Patrons can receive the \$12 rate by validating their ticket at the Storefront Theater ticket office.

About DCA Theater

The DCA Storefront Theater and the Studio Theater, its companion theater located in the Chicago Cultural Center, comprise DCA Theater, an anchor of the downtown theater district. DCA Theater offers downtown audiences an unforgettable off-Loop theater experience with an exciting look at the vibrant theater companies that call Chicago home.

The **DCA Storefront Theater** features a state-of-the-art and easily accessible theater located at 66 E. Randolph St. where audiences enjoy high quality work from Chicago’s most dynamic theater companies at an affordable ticket price. In addition to fully staged productions, DCA Theater presents many other programs that showcase the diverse Chicago theater community. Special limited-run and one-night-only events include staged readings, radio plays, directing workshops and festivals.

The **DCA Studio Theater**, housed in the Chicago Cultural Center just across the street from the DCA Storefront Theater, hosts the **DCA Theater’s Incubator Series**, a program designed to support the creation of new work by emerging Chicago theater companies. Utilizing the generous offering of free rehearsal space and resources, participants explore new projects, develop and refine styles during a three-week period that ends with a public showcase performance and post-show discussion.

Each season, DCA Theater accepts proposals from the city’s emerging and developing theater companies who wish to bring their innovative productions downtown. Presenting companies receive free performance space and resources, while theater-goers get an exciting glimpse into Chicago’s world-renowned theater scene. For more information and to apply to either space, visit <http://www.dcatheater.org/yourshow/>.

Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) is dedicated to promoting an ongoing celebration of the arts; supporting the people who create and sustain them; and marketing the city’s abundant cultural resources to a worldwide audience. DCASE, in partnership with the Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture, programs and promotes thousands of high-quality free festivals, exhibitions, performances and holiday celebrations presented each year at Millennium Park, Grant Park, the Chicago Cultural Center and other venues throughout the city.

Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture

The Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture (COTC) is dedicated to promoting Chicago as a premier cultural destination to domestic and international leisure travelers, providing innovative visitor programs and services, and presenting free world-class public programs. COTC supports local artists through grants and other resources and creates vital opportunities for artists of all levels. For more information please visit www.ExploreChicago.org.

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