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Washington Ensemble Theatre presents *The Doll Pit*, a New Dance Film from Stranger Genius Award winner Cherdonna Shinatra

May 21 - June 13, 2021

Created by Jody Kuehner, Maggie L. Rogers, and Washington Ensemble Theatre

(**March 16, 2021**—SEATTLE) This spring **Washington Ensemble Theatre** (WET) will once again premiere a new work created in collaboration with Cherdonna Shinatra (aka Jody Kuehner), the 2015 Stranger Genius Award winner for Performance. In 2017, WET and Cherdonna teamed up to present *Cherdonna's Doll's House*, a topsy-turvy, brightly colored exploration of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which was both a critical and box office success. *The Doll Pit*, influenced by the existential crisis brought on by quarantine, is an anthem for all who were confined to their own mind and devices during 2020. Are you yourself if you're unable to rely on what you know to be true? Is your identity based solely on your productivity? Jody and Cherdonna will tackle these questions in a larger-than-life dance film. **Maggie L. Rogers**, Artistic Director of WET, directs her second production after 2018's *Everything You Touch*.

The Doll Pit streams online **May 21 - June 13, 2021**. Tickets are on sale now www.washingtonensemble.org and start at just \$5.

Stranger Genius Award winner Cherdonna Shinatra rejoins forces with WET and this time she's creating a solo piece featuring herself and...herself. For the first time EVER, you'll see Cherdonna alongside her creator, Jody Kuehner, in this hour-long feature film presentation. Inspired by Joni Mitchell, The Kardashians, and featuring an actual ball pit, their symbiotic relationship will be tested as they discover they are perhaps one in the same, lost in a parallel universe of their making.

"When *The Strange Case of Dr. Cher & Mr. Donna* was cancelled due to the COVID pandemic, we were looking for ways in which WET and Jody could continue creating with one another," said Director **Maggie L. Rogers**. "Jody and I were on the phone a lot and we talked about how we could move forward with a digital production in a way that made sense for us. In a moment of frustration, Jody admitted that she didn't want to do a Zoom performance at all because, 'I do not want Cherdonna living in my bedroom.' And that joke became the backbone of the piece. The idea of Jody and Cherdonna living together in a cramped attic studio apartment became the perfect way to explain what it means to be alone with yourself when you are

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an artist and living with a voice and passion inside of you that cannot be heard or fulfilled. This piece pretty much sums up quarantine: it's the realization of mortality, the longing for human connection, and the ways in which you begin to create a new life when no one else is watching."

Rogers continues, "This process is not just new to us in terms of presenting in a digital format, but we've also had to make changes to our rehearsal process as well. As the director, most days I am not in the rehearsal room and we have to make collective decisions over email or Facetime. e're finding out that it's pushing us to elevate our art-making and think outside of the box. I am proud of the way we can celebrate these challenges and flex our creative muscles."

About The Team

Jody Kuehner is the Seattle-based dance artist, choreographer and director also known as Cherdonna Shinatra. Over the last 15 years, Kuehner has created and performed over a dozen evening-length works and performance installations described as "uncategorizable spectacles" (The Stranger) for institutions such as On the Boards (WA), Velocity Dance Center (WA), Seattle Theater Group (WA), The Momentary (AR), Henry Art Museum (WA); and for countless clubs and cabarets. In 2015-2016, Kuehner toured her solo dance work with support from NEFA's National Dance Project to venues such as The American Dance Festival (NC), FringeArts Philadelphia, and The Yard (MA), Most recently, Kuehner premiered "DITCH" at Seattle's Frye Art Museum, a three-month exhibition that included eighty daily performances drawing over 3500 people. Kuehner's many honors include a 2017 Artist Trust Fellowship, 2017 CityArts Artist of the Year, and a 2015 Seattle Stranger Genius Award for Dance Performance.

Maggie L. Rogers is the Artistic Director of Washington Ensemble Theatre, Resident Director at The Horse in Motion, and Cherdonna Shinatra's dramaturg. www.rogersmaggie.com

About Washington Ensemble Theatre

Through collaborative artistic leadership, Washington Ensemble Theatre fearlessly creates audacious stories for adventurous Seattle audiences. A resident company at 12th Avenue Arts in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, WET is committed to maintaining an environment wherein its members, as well as artists from the community, are challenged to grow through its work as an ensemble. For more information about Washington Ensemble Theatre, please visit www.washingtonensemble.org.

The 2020/21 Ensemble is Maggie L. Rogers, Erin Bednarz, Maria Manness, Joceline Hitchcox-Lain, Tristan Roberson, Jenn Oaster, Ryan Dunn, Sophie Franco, Rachel Guyer-Mafune, Kiki Abba, Minna Lee, Sien Mendez, Ben Swenson-Klatt, and Brian Dang.

Thanks to our 2020/21 season sponsors 4Culture, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, The Raynier Foundation, and media sponsor *The Stranger*.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHEN May 21 until June 13, 2021

SHOW TIMES Available on-demand.

WHERE Streaming online at www.washingtonensemble.org.

TICKETS Please visit www.washingtonensemble.org to purchase tickets starting March 16th. Tickets range from \$5 - \$50. A ticket bank for complimentary tickets will also be available.

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