

HOUSE / DIVIDED PREMIERES AT OHIO STATE OCTOBER 6–8

WEXNER CENTER AND OHIO STATE FOSTERED CROSS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT OF MULTIMEDIA THEATER WORK ABOUT MORTGAGE CRISIS

CREATIVE CAMPUS GRANT SUPPORTED PROJECT BY NYC'S BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

"The Bank – or the Company – needs – wants – insists – must have – as though the Bank or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling... But the monster is sick. Something's happened to the monster."—From John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

June 27, 2011 (updated September 12, 2011)—New York theater company **The Builders Association** will premiere its new multimedia theater work **HOUSE / DIVIDED (inspired by *The Grapes of Wrath*)** at Ohio State **October 6–8, 2011** as part of the Wexner Center's fall season. *HOUSE / DIVIDED* is an incisive and insightful examination of the **current mortgage crisis** juxtaposed with passages from John Steinbeck's classic Depression-era novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. Performances are **October 6–8, 2011** at 8 pm in Drake Center's Thurber Theatre, 1849 Cannon Dr., as part of the Wexner Center's season. Each show will be followed by a Q&A with the Builders. **Tickets** are available at wexarts.org or at 614-292-3535.

Onstage, the Builders will interweave the Joads's struggles as they make their way west from the Dust Bowl, with stories from our contemporary foreclosure crisis unfolding in an accelerated, media-saturated era. These stories of today will focus on houses themselves, which serve as a lens through which to view their various inhabitants, evictees, and squatters. The Builders will also shed light on the global financial webs surrounding American houses—networks that provided easy credit, created debt, speculated on and then sold that debt, triggering a runaway downward spiral of national economic and social collapse. The show will illuminate the impact on American character and our collective sense of identity.

Throughout *HOUSE / DIVIDED*, the Builders will employ their **trademark digital media and video wizardry**, integrated into and supplementing the live action onstage. The Builders Association is also incorporating a **smartphone application featuring augmented reality**



Work-in-progress image of *HOUSE / DIVIDED* (photo by dbox)

HOUSE / DIVIDED inspired by *The Grapes of Wrath*

October 6–8 at 8 pm, 2011: Builders Association will perform the world premiere of *HOUSE / DIVIDED* at Ohio State's Thurber Theatre (1849 Canon Dr.) in performances presented by the Wexner Center for the Arts. Each show will be followed by a discussion with the Builders.

Tickets \$18 general public, \$15 members, \$10 students. wexarts.org or 614-292-3535.

Videos, images, blog postings, more:
<http://creativecampusosu.org/>

RELATED EVENTS:

October 4: Screening of John Ford's 1940 film *The Grapes of Wrath* at Wex, 7 pm.

October 5, 2011: Preview performance for Wexner Center's Pages literacy program for teens. Evening: Screening/debut of WOSU.TV's University District documentary, 7 & 9 pm.

into the performance, which the audience can access during the performances and which will expand audience members' experience of the show's digitally enhanced stage effects.

The production's set was constructed in part from recycled sections of an abandoned house deemed beyond rehabilitation from the Weinland Park neighborhood of the University District of Columbus.

The research and development process for this production on Ohio State's campus has benefited greatly from a **\$140,000 Creative Campus Innovations Grant**, awarded last year to the Wexner Center to support Builders' engagement with classes across several departments and schools at Ohio State—which led to the Weinland Park story connection. From an application field of 140, this project was one of six chosen last year. These grants, awarded by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters and funded with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, reward the best practices of campus-based performing arts organizations to be catalysts for academic impact in both arts and non-arts sectors of universities and colleges across the country. This project is also supported by a Wexner Center Residency Award.

The research phase and creative process for *HOUSE / DIVIDED* has been ongoing since the fall of 2010, and has involved students, faculty, and staff from Ohio State, including the **Department of Theatre, Knowlton School of Architecture, Fisher College of Business, Department of History, Humanities Institute, Living Culture Initiative in the Department of Art, and the Department of Entomology at Ohio State's Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster.** Using this theater project as a platform for



Pictured above, left: Builders at an arson house in Columbus in January 2011. Pictured above, right: Builders Associations' Marianne Weems, left, and Moe Angelos, speaking to Ohio State theater students in October 2010.



critical thinking and a catalyst for cross-campus collaboration, students and faculty are assisting in the research that will shape the underpinning ideas of the work.

They've addressed issues related to the mortgage crisis and other related trends that inform the theater work's narrative, such as the banking industry, business ethics, and urban planning, with a special emphasis, where appropriate, on the impact the crisis has had in Ohio. Sessions have included discussions and research

integrated into academic curricula, feedback sessions with the theater company, visits to community and urban farms around Columbus and Ohio, and investigation and exploration of "arson houses"—foreclosed-upon homes in Columbus—for set design and narrative research.

The project is being tracked and documented at <http://creativecampusosu.org/>.

The world premiere of *HOUSE / DIVIDED* will be presented by the Wexner Center in the Drake Center's Thurber Theatre October 6–8, 2011 at 8 pm. The opening night performance will be attended by Ohio State students who have participated as campus partners in its development process, as well as by a large group of incoming students who are participating through support from the **First Year Experience** program. In addition, high school students in the Wexner Center's **Pages** writing program will enjoy a special preview of the show October 6, a day before the public performances. The Wexner Center will be screening **John Ford's 1940**

screen version of *The Grapes of Wrath* in a newly restored print on October 4; in addition, on October 5, the Wex debuts the latest of WOSU.TV's documentaries from its series on Columbus neighborhoods, this one focusing on the University District (including Weinland Park, which served as an important reference point for the Builders).

After its Columbus run, ***HOUSE / DIVIDED* will go on tour**, including to New York in October 2012.

Notes Ohio State University President E. Gordon Gee, "This Creative Campus project, led by the Wexner Center, is tangible demonstration of the enormous creative, intellectual, social, and academic value that comes from cross-discipline learning. I am excited to continue to watch the progress of the research, the development of the production, and of course to be there for the premiere in the fall."

Wexner Center Director Sherri Geldin says, "The Wexner Center is proud to serve as a catalyst for bringing accomplished artists together with university colleagues spanning several academic, professional, and creative disciplines. Providing pioneering creative artists with university resources and expertise while offering Ohio State faculty and students unique opportunities for substantive and sustained engagement with leading contemporary theater companies makes this an exemplary collaboration. We are pleased to work again with the Builders Association, whose multimedia stage productions are always astutely topical and bracing for a wide spectrum of audiences."

Notes Charles Helm, the Wexner Center's Director of Performing Arts, who heads this Creative Campus project, "It's been terrific working with the Builders Association and my academic colleagues across campus to design *HOUSE / DIVIDED*, and even more fascinating to watch it unfold here. The recognition we've received from the prestigious Creative Campus program as one of the leading campus-based performing arts programs in the nation is validation for the work we all do at the Wexner Center to keep Ohio State at the forefront in the arts, while sparking creative exchange in our classrooms."

Marianne Weems, Artistic Director of The Builders Association, says, "Our work embodies the multidisciplinary approach that is at the heart of the Creative Campus program. The development process for *HOUSE / DIVIDED* is being informed by examination of the project's themes from many perspectives with the students and faculty at Ohio State. In fact, feedback from Ohio State classes introduced us to the situation in Weinland Park, and influenced a shift in focus for the story of contemporary experiences with foreclosure."

Sandra Gibson, immediate past president and CEO of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, noted in the fall of 2010, "Arts Presenters is pleased support the outstanding work of the performing arts program at the Wexner Center with a Creative Campus grant and is excited about this collaboration with the Builders Association developed through a wide-ranging set of campus partners. We look forward to witnessing the development of this new piece as the project unfolds, and to sharing the progress with the field."

PRODUCTION AND SUPPORT

The Builders Association's *HOUSE / DIVIDED* is coproduced by the Wexner Center for the Arts in association with the Department of Theatre at The Ohio State University with support provided from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Creative Campus Innovations Grant Program. Valuable research and input for its creative development at Ohio State was generously provided by students and faculty at the Department of Theatre, Knowlton School of Architecture, Fisher College of Business, College of Humanities, Department of History, Living Culture Initiative in the Department of Art, and the Department of Entomology at Ohio State's Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster.

This project is made possible in part by a grant from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Creative Campus Innovations Grant Program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Additional support provided by National Endowment for the Arts.

Creative development of *HOUSE / DIVIDED* is also supported through the Wexner Center Residency Award program.

HOUSE / DIVIDED was made possible with funding by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Pilot, with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The Builders Association has received additional support for *HOUSE / DIVIDED* from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Emma A. Sheaffer Charitable Trust, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, The MAP Fund, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and the New York State Council on the Arts. Additional residency support was provided by the Baryshnikov Arts Center and The Performing Garage.

The Grapes of Wrath (c)1939 by John Steinbeck

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SEASON SUPPORT

Major support for the Wexner Center's 2011–12 performing arts season is generously provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

All performing arts programs and events also receive support from the Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation and Wexner Center members, as well as from the Greater Columbus Arts Council, The Columbus Foundation, Nationwide Foundation, and the Ohio Arts Council.

Accommodations are provided by The Blackwell Inn.

Media contacts: Karen Simonian, ksimonian@wexarts.org or 614-292-9923; Tim Fulton, tfulton@wexarts.org or 614-688-3261