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**MEDIA RELEASE**

Please include in calendar listings and announcements

*Contact Scott to arrange interviews with cast or creative team members or to schedule personal appearances*

**Media Contact:** Scott Evan Guggenheim  
(408) 621-1817; scott@guggyent.com

*Please confirm when you would like to attend to review the production. Two Tickets will be held at Will Call for you.*

**At Long Last, 'Jerry Springer: The Opera' Comes to Silicon Valley**

*The Award-Winning Musical Opens Feb 24 at  
3Below Theaters in Downtown San Jose*

**(SAN JOSE, CA)** – Way back in the spring of 2003 (W was in his first term; Bob Hope and Johnny Cash were still alive; Brad and Angelina hadn't even met), an unusual show took London by storm. A ridiculously profane, relentlessly irreverent new musical based on American daytime television at its most egregious, **JERRY SPRINGER: THE OPERA** has everything you'd want in a musical about adulterers, fetishists, pole dancers. There are soaring arias that stretch out the naughtiest of words over a dozen notes, rousing and rollicking pop and rock numbers with titles NSFW, daytime trash characters named Peaches and Baby Jane (not to mention Satan, Jesus and a couple of boldface-name angels), true-to-time-period commercial break advertisements, and even a lively musical number with tap-dancing featuring shocking guests to the Jerry Springer Show.

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The production at 3Below Theaters produced by Guggenheim Entertainment stars **Ric Iverson\*** as Jerry Springer. Iverson, whose one-man musical, "Ric Iverson is Alive and Well and Living in Milpitas" was awarded with honors at the Hollywood Fringe Festival, played Cornelius Hackl in Hello Dolly starring Leslie Uggams, The Balladeer in the West Coast Premiere of Assassins, Peter Jones Jr. in Cumberland Blues (World Premiere), Father Virgil Manly Trott in Nunsense Jamboree (West Coast Premiere), and Will in The Will Rogers Follies.

Springer's foil is his warm-up man, Jonathan Weirus, and Satan, who is devilishly played by **Stephen Guggenheim\***: Tito in LA CLEMENZA DI TITO and Edgardo in LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR with the San Francisco Opera, Don Jose in CARMEN with L'Opera de Lyon and Rodolfo in LA BOHÉME with the San Francisco Opera in Japan.

Bringing all of the chaos to Jerry's world are **Lynda DiVito\*** (*Andrew Lloyd Webber's "CATS" in Hamburg; "Sheba The Musical" Off-Broadway*), **Nina Edwards** (*Aida in "Aida" at Rome Opera*), **Fred Isozaki** (*"Pacific Overtures" at Studio 54 NYC, "The King and I" at the London Palladium*), **Jared Lee\*** (*"Starlight Express" National Tour*), **Jesse Merlin\*** (*Dr. Hill in Re-Animator The Musical, LA, NYC, Edinburgh and Las Vegas*), **Joseph Meyers** (*Piangi in "The Phantom of the Opera" First National Tour, The Opera Singer in the film "Milk"*), **Mark Robinson** (*Bruce in "Fun Home" and Harry Wormwood in "Matilda the Musical" at Berkeley Playhouse*), **B Noel Thomas\*** (*American Idol Season 3, Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award Winner for "The Toxic Avenger"*), **Lori Schulman** (*Cunegonde*

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*in Candide at Cabrillo Stage, Musetta in La Bohème at Santa Cruz Opera Project), and **Krista Wigle\*** (Carlotta in the San Francisco and Las Vegas productions of "The Phantom of the Opera").*

The production is directed by Scott Guggenheim and stage managed by Jackson Davis\* with musical direction by Stephen Guggenheim, choreography by Shannon Guggenheim, orchestrations by Thomas Tomasello, and production design by Jon Gourdine.

*\*Appearing courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the union of stage artists and stage manager in America.*

WHAT WAS "THE JERRY SPRINGER SHOW"?

The series, a syndicated tabloid talkfest, went on the air in 1991, turned sensational over the first few seasons, and hit its rating peak in the late '90s. It was best known for the amount of physical violence among its guests and the Romans-in-the-Colosseum vicious audience. The show left the airwaves in 2018 after 27 years and 5,000 episodes on the air.

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#### WAS SPRINGER A REAL PERSON?

The real Jerry Springer was a dignified guy. He was a former mayor of Cincinnati, had a law degree from Northwestern and had reportedly once been a campaign aide to Bobby Kennedy. Were it not for the prostitute he paid for with a check, Springer may well have stayed the course toward political ambitions but instead he went down a different path, one that led to hosting his own infamous talkshow.

#### IS THIS A TRUE OPERA?

The two-hour musical is sung through with only two exceptions: Steve Wilkos, Springer's longtime bodyguard, makes a short speech. And Jerry, the host, asks his questions non-musically.

#### WHO WROTE IT?

Richard Thomas and Stewart Lee. Not Richard Thomas, the American actor. This Richard Thomas is a British-born composer and lyricist with a comedy background. His secret method for writing a musical as told to the London newspaper *The Independent* in 2014: "I start with a song about love. The musical needs to deal with this at some point. All musicals deal with love at some point. May as well jump in." Lee, who wrote the book and additional lyrics, is also a comedy type. When asked why he loved working with the National Theater in London, he praised the group's interdepartmental communications and added, "It also has a really good bar."

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SO WHAT'S THE PLOT? JUST A TYPICAL EPISODE OF THE TALK SHOW?

Act I is, but it ends with an act of on-air violence that's shocking even by Springer standards. And that sets up Act II, which takes place in or somewhere near hell.

SO WHAT WAS WITH ALL OF THE PROTESTS AND CONTROVERSY?

Although JERRY SPRINGER: THE OPERA is a hugely successful piece that played to rave reviews in London and enjoyed a UK tour, protestors regularly picketed performances over the material. The musical contains extensive profanity: The Christian Voice accused the show of including "8,000 obscenities" — it is not known where this count originated, but the 8,000 figure is popularly quoted. 8,000 obscenities over the show's 120-minute runtime would imply that there were 66 obscenities a minute, and thus more than 1 per second. Several publications, including the Daily Mail and The Sun, claimed a figure of "3,168 mentions of the word fuck and 297 of the word cunt". According to the BBC investigation, there were 96 uses of "fuck" and nine uses of "cunt". According to writer Stewart Lee, there are 174 swear words in all.

DID JERRY SPRINGER EVER SEE THE SHOW?

Jerry Springer saw the production in Edinburgh and "pronounced it 'wonderful'", adding that he didn't "object to anything in it", and that he "only wished he'd thought of it first".

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ABOUT THE 2024 BAY AREA PRODUCTION

**JERRY SPRINGER: THE OPERA**

- Produced by Guggenheim Entertainment, Inc. at 3Below Theaters and Café
- 288 South 2nd Street at San Carlos

**Location**

- 3Below Theaters & Cafe
- 288 South 2nd Street, San Jose

**Showtimes**

- Previews: Thu Feb 22 & Fri Feb 23
- Performances: Sat Feb 24 through Sun Mar 17, 2024
- Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays at 7:30pm
- Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30pm
- Note: no Saturday matinee on Feb 24; no performance on Fri Mar 8)

**Ticket Information**

- Previews: all seats \$25
- Regular Admission: \$36-\$65
- Discount for 3Below Members and Subscribers, Students, Seniors, Military, Educators
- No one age 16 and under allowed
- Discounts available for groups of 10 or more
- All ticket prices include all box office fees; no additional fees
- 3belowtheaters.com
- 408-404-7711

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