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**The House Theatre of Chicago
presents the world premiere of a magical clown show,
*The Magnificents***

Chicago, IL—**The House Theatre of Chicago** opens its 5th season with *The Magnificents*, an original show by Company Member and magician **Dennis Watkins**. The world premiere production, directed by **Molly Brennan**, runs **September 13-November 3, 2007**, at **The Viaduct Theatre, 3111 N. Western Avenue**. **The press opening is Saturday, September 15, 2007, at 8:00 p.m.**

The Magnificents is a magical clown show written by and starring Dennis Watkins, an award-winning magician who learned the art form from his grandfather, the one and only Ed Watkins. This emotionally charged story is a tribute to the late Ed Watkins and tells the provocative story about an ancient magician, his wife and their quest to build a family.

Molly Brennan makes her directorial debut for **The House** with *The Magnificents*, bringing her expertise in clowning and her unique theatrical voice to The House's 5th season of original productions. The heart-wrenching production features a magician, a cast of clowns, and an original score by **Kevin O'Donnell**.

"There is so much of Ed in this play. Everything I remember about loving him is here—the ballroom dancing he and my grandmother loved so much, the magic, the lectures about card tricks and his beloved performance of Sam the Bellhop. The dancing hanky and the vanishing birdcage, as well as the orange, lemon, egg canary are classics that he always loved to watch. Despite knowing how they worked, he always thought they were magical," says **Watkins**. "This play is certainly about a non-traditional family that grows and changes throughout the course of the play and is an honest response to the family I grew up with, as well as the other family [The House] in my life."

The design team includes **Collette Pollard** (set), **Ana Kuzmanic** (costumes), **Ben Wilhelm** (lights), **Kevin O'Donnell** (composer) and **Dennis Watkins** (magic). The production is choreographed by **Tommy Rapley**.

Dennis Watkins (playwright, *The Old Man*) After graduating from Southern Methodist University in 2001, Dennis moved to Chicago as a founding member of The House Theatre of Chicago where he performed in both runs of *Death and Harry Houdini*, *The Terrible Tragedy of Peter Pan*, *A Midsummer Night's Dreame*, *Cave with Man*, *Dave DaVinci Saves the Universe*, *The Great and Terrible Wizard of Oz*, *The Boy Detective Fails*, *Hatfield & McCoy*, and *The Sparrow*. Dennis also directed all three parts of *The Valentine Trilogy* for The House. Other Chicago theater credits include *Theatrical Essays* at Steppenwolf, *Death on a Pink Carpet* for Live Bait and *Orange*
(more)

Lemon Egg Canary for Uma Productions. Dennis has provided consultation on magic and illusions for many Chicago theatre companies including The House, Steppenwolf, Uma Productions, American Theater Company, The Vittum and Next. As a magician, Dennis has received awards or honors from the Texas Association of Magicians, the Society of American Magicians, the International Brotherhood of Magicians and the Desert Magic Seminar.

Molly Brennan (Director) most recently appeared in *500 Clown Frankenstein* and *500 Clown MacBeth* at the Steppenwolf Garage Theatre. Other recent credits include *Go, Dog. Go!* with Chicago Children's Theatre, *Fatty Arbuckle's Spectacular Musical Review* with Second City Theatricals, Tina Landau's *Theatrical Essays* at Steppenwolf and *That's Weird, Grandma* with Barrel of Monkeys. Molly is also a company member of **The House Theatre of Chicago**, where she assistant directed *The Sparrow* and appeared in *Curse of the Crying Heart*, for which she received a Joseph Jefferson Citation. She also played the Wicked Witch of the West in The House's *The Great and Terrible Wizard of Oz*. Molly is a Clown for the Big Apple Circus Clown Care program. She also co-created and performs in *500 Clown Christmas*.

Previews are **September 13 and 14, 2007**. **The opening press performance is on Saturday, September 15, 2007, at 8:00 p.m.** The production runs through **November 3, 2007**. Curtain times are Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 p.m. and Sundays at 7:00 p.m.

Ticket prices are \$17-\$22. Student and theater industry tickets are \$10 and are available for Thursday and Sunday performances. Tickets are available at www.thehousetheatre.com, 773-251-2195, or at The Viaduct Theatre box office, 3111 N. Western Ave.

The House Theatre of Chicago is currently offering memberships to **The Secret Order of the Magic Pearl**, The House's community of patrons, donors, friends and fans. Each membership cost \$65 and comes with a ticket to each of the three world premieres of The House's 5th season; invitations to special members-only events, including open rehearsals and discussions; a number of discounts; and a \$15 voucher to SWAG. Memberships are available by phone and online.

The 2007/08 House season includes the world premieres of ***The Magnificents***, September 13-November 3, ***The Nutcracker***, November 17-December 29, and ***The Attempters***, March 14-May 3.

It is the mission of **The House** to unite Chicago in the spirit of Community through amazing feats of Storytelling.

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Fact Sheet / *The Magnificents*

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Title: ***The Magnificents***
Playwright: **Dennis Watkins**
Directed by: **Molly Brennan**
Featuring: **Company Members Dennis Watkins, Marika Mashburn, Tommy Rapley, Carolyn Defrin, Michael E. Smith and Stephen Taylor**
Dates: **Previews:** September 13 and 14, 2007
Press opening: September 15, 2007, at 8:00 p.m.
Regular run: September 16 - November 3, 2007
Schedule: **Thursdays-Saturdays:** 8:00 p.m.
Sundays: 7:00 p.m.
Location: **The Viaduct Theatre, 3111 N. Western Avenue**
Price: **\$17 (Thurs),
\$19 (Fri and Sun)
\$22 (Sat)
\$10 Student and Industry tickets available Thursdays and Sundays**
Box Office: **Buy at www.thehousetheatre.com
or 773-251-2195**

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Notes of Interest:

- Dennis Watkins is an award-winning magician who grew up learning the art of magic from his grandfather. Shortly after his grandfather passed away in November of 2005, Dennis began work on a show inspired by the life of his late teacher and friend. ***The Magnificents*** is a heart-felt tribute to the one and only Ed Watkins.
- Dennis has provided consultation on magic and illusions for many Chicago theatre companies including The House, Steppenwolf, Uma Productions, American Theater Company, The Vittum and Next. As a magician, Dennis has received awards and honors from the Texas Association of Magicians, the Society of American Magicians, the International Brotherhood of Magicians and the Desert Magic Seminar.
- Molly Brennan has built an impeccable reputation in the clown world with her work with Chicago's *500 Clown*.
- Some of Dennis Watkins' influences include: magician Harry Blackstone; Cirque Du Soleil; Bill Irwin; Slava's Snow Show; and the productions of *500 Clown*.