

Contact: Sarah Mills Bacha  
614.486.3819  
smbacha@earthlink.net

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CATCO Presents *Blackbird* by David Harrower June 3-21**

***2007 Laurence Olivier Award winner, Off-Broadway sensation a central Ohio premiere***

Fifteen years ago Una and Ray had a relationship – an *illegal* relationship. They haven't set eyes on each other since. Now, after great effort, she has found him again. Without warning, Una arrives late one day at Ray's workplace. But why? What does she want?

*Blackbird*, winner of the prestigious Laurence Oliver Award for Best New Play of 2007 in London and last season's most-acclaimed new Off-Broadway drama, has been produced all over the world. Playwright David Harrower's provocative play, which is recommended for mature audiences because of adult language and content, was described by *The New York Times* as "Masterly, mesmerizing ... extraordinary."

"*Blackbird* is a lot like *Doubt*," said director Geoffrey Nelson, referring to John Patrick Shanley's award-winning drama that CATCO successfully produced last spring. "It's about a dramatic confrontation between two people who are fighting for everything they believe in and who will go to any lengths to win. The question is, 'Whose version of what happened is the true one?'"

CATCO's production of *Blackbird* begins previews on June 3, with the opening night Friday, June 5. *Blackbird* plays through June 21, 2009, in the Studio Two Theatre at the Vern Riffe Center, 77. S. High St.

Jonathan Putnam plays the role of "Ray" in *Blackbird*. Putnam, CATCO's Associate Artistic Director, has played major roles in *The Pillowman*, *Seascape*, *You're My Boy* (in which he created the role of Richard Nixon), *Uncle Vanya*, *A Tuna Christmas* and *The Complete History of America (abridged)*. He is also the solo star of CATCO's annual holiday production of *The Santaland Diaries* by David Sedaris.

Anna Paniccia, making her CATCO debut, plays "Una." Paniccia, who grew up in Columbus, earned a BFA from Webster University Conservatory of Performing Arts in St. Louis and now lives in New York. She has performed with theatres all over Columbus, including 10 productions at Columbus Children's Theatre. At Actors Theatre she appeared as Cordelia in *King Lear* and Isabelle in *Measure for Measure*. In St. Louis, she has performed as Hannah in

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*Angels in America*, Luciana in *Comedy of Errors*, Hannah in *Spitfire Grill*, and as the Girl in *The Pillowman* at St. Louis Rep.

Geoffrey Nelson, CATCO's founder and artistic director, will direct *Blackbird*. Nelson's previous directing credits include *Almost, Maine*; *A Christmas Memory* and *The Thanksgiving Visitor*; *Doubt*; *The Santaland Diaries*; *Seascape*; *The Exonerated*; *The Grapes of Wrath*; *The Homecoming* and *Taking Sides*.

Robin and Peter Hersha are the sponsors for *Blackbird*.

CATCO'S 2008-09, 25th anniversary season is being sponsored by support from the Fred B. and Mabel Dean Hill and Eileen M. and Josiah Brooks Heckert Funds of the Columbus Foundation, Greater Columbus Arts Council, Nationwide Foundation, Limited Brands Foundation and the Ohio Arts Council, which funds CATCO with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The season's media sponsor is Time Warner Cable.

### **Preview (Discounted Tickets)/Opening Night Performances**

There are two previews for *Blackbird*, Wednesday, June 3, at 11 a.m. and Thursday, June 4, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$11.50 for the 11 a.m. performance, and \$32.50 for the 7:30 p.m. show. The opening performance is Friday, June 5, at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$40 and include admission to a post-performance party in the theatre lobby. Opening night parties are sponsored by National City.

### **Half-Price Happy Hour**

CATCO offers Half-Price Happy Hour specials, where tickets and drinks are half price, at least one Thursday performance per show run. For *Blackbird*, the Half-Price Happy Hour is Thursday, June 18, at 8 p.m.

### **\$11@11 Matinees**

For *Blackbird*, there will be three \$11@11 performances: the first preview Wednesday, June 3, June 10 and June 17. CATCO's \$11 @ 11 is an offering for theatre-goers who want to see a play mid-week (Wednesday) and mid-day (11 a.m.) at a great price (\$11 plus a 50-cent restoration fee). For ticket information, please call 614.469.0939 or visit [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com). CATCO's sponsor for \$11@11 performances is Chase Bank.

### **Dramaturge/Actor Talkbacks**

For a deeper understanding of each play, audiences are invited to attend special discussions (or "Talkbacks") following certain matinee performances. For *Blackbird*, the Dramaturge Talkback will follow the Sunday, June 7, matinee and the Actor Talkback will follow the Sunday, June 21, matinee.

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### **Audio Description**

On one Sunday of each production, CATCO provides an audio-described performance for the visually impaired along with free headset rental. The audio description for *Blackbird* will be offered on Sunday, June 21, at 2 p.m.

### **Ticket/Parking Information**

Tickets for regular performances are \$40. Students and senior may purchase half-price tickets on Sunday and Thursday performances based on availability and valid I.D. All tickets can be purchased at the box office at 41 E. State St., next to the Ohio Theatre, by calling 614.469.0939 or by visiting ticketmaster.com or by calling or visiting any central Ohio Ticketmaster location. Performances are in the Studio Two Theatre at the Vern Riffe Center, located at 77 S. High St. in downtown Columbus at the corner of State and High streets. Attached parking is available in the Riffe Center garage, which is entered from Front Street.

### **About CATCO**

CATCO is central Ohio's professional Equity theatre company. For more information, visit [catco.org](http://catco.org).

Subscriptions for CATCO's 2009-10 are currently on sale by contacting the box office at 614.469.0939. The season includes a world premiere, three central Ohio premieres and a revival of a CATCO favorite from 1990:

### **Murderers**

By Jeffrey Hatcher  
Sept. 30-Oct. 18, 2009

### **The Seafarer**

By Conor McPherson  
Nov. 24-Dec. 13, 2009

### **Evie's Waltz**

By Carter Lewis  
Feb. 17-March 7, 2010

### **Pierce to the Soul**

By Chiquita Mullins Lee  
April 7-25, 2010

### **The Mystery of Irma Vep: A Penny Dreadful**

By Charles Ludlam  
June 2-27, 2010

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