



For immediate release:

The Putnam Theatre Alliance—a new collaboration among a trio of theaters across Putnam County—announces a series of performances focused on civil rights, freedom, and democracy launching in May.

Known as the Freedom Project, the series links radio plays written in 1940 by Orson Welles, Maxwell Anderson, and other members of the Free Company, with companion pieces written during the pandemic by award-winning playwrights **John Leonard Pielmeier**, **Christine Toy Johnson**, and **Craig Lucas**.

“Amazingly, 80 years later, the issues in these radio plays haven’t changed. Not one iota,” Director Alice Jankell said. “But plays and audiences have, so we’re reviving some of the original Free Company plays and pairing them with brand new plays they have just inspired.”

The series will open with *His Honor, the Mayor*, by Orson Welles and *The Secret Secrets of Wonderland County*, by Garrison resident John Leonard Pielmeier (*Agnes of God*). Performances of the two plays will stream online May 13 through 16. Subsequent play pairings will stream in June.

“It has long been a goal to work closely with our colleagues across the county,” Philipstown Depot Theatre Executive Director Amy Dul said. “The Freedom Project, full of great material and brought to life by amazingly talented people, is the perfect way to start.”

The **Putnam Theatre Alliance** brings together **Arts on the Lake**, in Kent; the **Philipstown Depot Theatre**, in Garrison; and **Tompkins Corners Cultural Center**, in Putnam Valley. The three theaters will share resources, talent, and, when COVID restrictions allow, stages to provide the Hudson Valley with relevant, vibrant and original plays, musical performances, and events. The collaboration positions Putnam County as the region’s hub for the development and presentation of top-notch theatre.

“We all want to expand our reach, both locally and further afield, and this collaboration allows us to do that,” Tompkins Corners Cultural Center Theatre Director Judy Allen said. “Putnam County is home to so many creative artists, by working together we can spotlight their work.”

Founded prior to the United States’ entry to World War II, the Free Company convened many of the era’s top writers, directors and actors, including William Saroyan, Maxwell Anderson, and Burgess Meredith, to produce a series of 10 radio plays centered on the meaning of freedom and liberty. The plays were broadcast in 1940 by CBS.

“Voices from the past are often lessons in humility,” Arts on the Lake's founding Executive Director James Shearwood said. “Hearing what The Free Company created in 1940 resonate clearly in our current situation can be both sobering and inspiring.”

The plays will be followed by Zoom-based Q&A sessions with directors, playwrights, and cast members.

For more information, contact Ned P. Rauch of the Philipstown Depot Theatre at npr.rauch@gmail.com or visit:

www.artsonthelake.org

www.philipstowndepottheatre.org

www.tompkinscorners.org