



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## THE LINES OF LUST, LOVE AND TRUST IN THE DIGITAL AGE BLUR IN *SEX WITH STRANGERS*

The Human Race continues its 31<sup>st</sup> Season with Laura Eason's *Sex with Strangers*,  
February 1 – 18, 2018 at the Loft Theatre.

*"Who are you?" These are the first words spoken in **Sex with Strangers**, and pretty much summarize the play. In this digitally-dominated age, knowing a person's true identity can be tricky. When I first saw this show in New York, I was intrigued by the cat-and-mouse, sexually charged relationship, and believed it would speak to our modern audience. Warning: it will get a bit steamy on stage, but what a way to warm up in the cold Miami Valley winter!"*  
Kevin Moore, President & Artistic Director

(Dayton, OH) —This February, The Human Race Theatre Company (HRTC) is heating up the Loft Theatre with the hottest play in the country, ***Sex with Strangers***. Failed novelist Olivia meets Ethan, a celebrated (and much younger) writer made famous by his sexcapade tell-all blog, at a snowbound bed and breakfast, and their mutual attraction quickly gets hot and heavy. As a weekend tryst develops into a long-term romance, their personal and professional lives collide. Ethan seeks legitimacy, dismissing his bad boy reputation as nothing more than an invented character. Olivia has her doubts, but craves the literary fame Ethan can offer her. Ambition, identity and trust are in play when online personals clash with real world expectations in this smart, steamy take on modern love.

**WARNING: *Sex with Strangers* contains partial nudity, strong language and adult themes.**

The roles of Olivia and Ethan are being portrayed by Jennifer Johansen and Ben Palacios. They were last seen in The Human Race production of *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* - performed at the Victoria Theatre. "Besides both being exceptional actors," said Kevin Moore, "they already had experienced a degree of intimacy on stage, since their characters, the self-absorbed Masha and her hunky boy-toy Spike, were continually pawing at each other."

**Greg Hellems** (HRTC's *The Glass Menagerie*, *Band Geeks!*, and *Best of Broadway*), returns to The Race to direct ***Sex with Strangers***.

**Laura Eason** (Playwright) is the author of 20 plays, original works and adaptations, a musical-book writer and screenwriter. Selected productions include *Sex with Strangers* (Second Stage,

NYC; Signature Theatre, DC; Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago; Sydney Theatre, AU; published by Overlook Press), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Hartford Stage, CT; New Victory, NYC) and many more. As a screenwriter, Laura wrote on seasons two and three of the Emmy-winning Netflix show *House of Cards*.

The preview performance of *Sex with Strangers* is Thursday, February 1. Opening night is Friday, February 2.

## CAST AND DESIGN TEAM

Our cast of two are veteran Human Race Theatre actors.

**Jennifer Johansen** (HRTC's *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *A Christmas Carol* and *God of Carnage*.) is "Olivia." This will be Jennifer's fourth show with The Human Race Theatre. **Ben Palacios** (HRTC's *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, National tour of *Fifty Shades of Grey* parody, *Spank!*, starring as America's favorite BDSM billionaire. TV credits include *Martha & Snoop's Potluck Dinner Party* and *Tosh.0.*) is "Ethan." This is Ben's second production at The Human Race Theatre.

**Eric Moore** (scenic designer), Head Carpenter, designs his fourth show at The Human Race. Costume designer **Stormie Mac** is delighted to be joining HRTC for the first time. Resident Artists **John Rensel** (lighting designer) and **Jay Brunner** (sound designer) round out the design team. **Lexi Muller** is the production stage manager.

Biographies on the cast and creative team can be found on The Human Race Theatre Company's website.

The Human Race Theatre Company's production of *Sex with Strangers* is sponsored by Barbara N. O'Hara, Dr. Robert L. Brandt, Jr., MD, Rob and Lessa Comparin, and John and Tamara Clough.

\*\* Attached Publicity Photo credits for *Sex with Strangers* \*\*

HRTC-SWS-Publicity-1.jpg: [Ben Palacios and Jennifer Johansen](#)  
HRTC-SWS-Publicity-2.jpg: [Jennifer Johansen and Ben Palacios](#)

*Publicity photos courtesy of Heather N. Powell*

## PERFORMANCE AND SPECIAL EVENT INFORMATION

Tickets for the preview performance of *Sex with Strangers* on February 1 start at \$35 for adults, \$32 for seniors and \$17.50 for students. For all performances February 2 – 18, single ticket prices start at \$40 for adults, \$37 for seniors and \$20 for students. Prices vary depending on the day of the week and seating location. Group discounts are available for parties of 10 or more. The Human Race is offering a pair of discount ticket opportunities during the run of the show. A limited number of \$12 and \$25 side-area seats are available in advance for all performances. The Sunday, February 4 7:00 p.m. performance is "Sawbuck Sunday," when any available seat can be

purchased in person for just \$10 at the Loft Theatre box office two hours prior to the show. Prior to the Friday, February 9 8:00 p.m. performance is “Ladies Night,” which will begin at 6:30 p.m. Additional information and details for “Ladies Night” can be found on our website and Facebook Events page. Discounts are subject to availability and some restrictions apply.

All performances are at the Metropolitan Art Center’s Loft Theatre, located at 126 North Main Street in downtown Dayton, Ohio. Show times for ***Sex with Strangers*** are 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Performances on Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings begin at 7:00 p.m., and at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday matinees.

**Tickets and performance information for *Sex with Strangers* are available at [www.humanracetheatre.org](http://www.humanracetheatre.org) or by calling Ticket Center Stage at (937) 228-3630, and at the Schuster Center box office.**

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*2017-2018 marks the 31st season for The Human Race Theatre Company, “Dayton’s Official Professional Theatre Company.” Founded in 1986, The Human Race moved into the Metropolitan Arts Center in 1991, taking up residence in its current home, the 212-seat Loft Theatre. In addition to the Eichelberger Loft Season, The Human Race produces new works development and special event programming. Under the direction of President and Artistic Director Kevin Moore, the company also maintains education and outreach programs for children, teens and adults, as well as artist residencies in area schools and a summer youth program. Human Race organizational support is provided by the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District, Culture Works, the Shubert Foundation, the Erma R. Catterton Trust Fund, the Jesse & Caryl Philips Foundation, the Virginia W. Kettering Foundation and the Ohio Arts Council, which helped fund this organization with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The 2017-2018 Sustainability Sponsors are the ELM Foundation, Anne F. Johnson, Steve and Lou Mason, and Morris Home. The 2017-2018 Loft season sponsor is the Jack W. and Sally D. Eichelberger Foundation of the Dayton Foundation, with additional support from Premier Health.*

**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

The Human Race Theatre Company presents

***Sex with Strangers***

by Laura Eason

directed Greg Hellems

February 1 – 18, 2018

Performed at the Loft Theatre

Metropolitan Arts Center

126 North Main Street (between First and Second streets)

Dayton, Ohio 45402

Failed novelist Olivia meets Ethan, a celebrated (and much younger) writer made famous by his sexcapade tell-all blog, at a snowbound bed and breakfast, and their mutual attraction quickly gets hot and heavy. As a weekend tryst develops into a long-term romance, their personal and professional lives collide. Ethan seeks legitimacy, dismissing his bad boy reputation as nothing more than an invented character. Olivia has her doubts, but craves the literary fame Ethan can offer her. Ambition, identity and trust are in play when online personals clash with real world expectations in this smart, steamy take on modern love.

**For tickets:**

Ticket Center Stage box office phone: (937) 228-3630

Box office hours: Mondays – Fridays, 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.; Saturdays, 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.; and two hours prior to each performance

Online: [www.humanracetheatre.org](http://www.humanracetheatre.org) or [www.ticketcenterstage.com](http://www.ticketcenterstage.com)

**Ticket prices start at:** \$35 – \$50 for adults, \$32 – \$46 for seniors and \$17.50 – \$25.00 for students. Prices vary depending on performance date.

**Discounts:** Select side-area seats available for \$12 and \$25 at all performances; “Sawbuck Sunday” November 5 at 7:00 p.m. – \$10 seats available for walk up sales only

**Group sales:** contact Betty Gould at (937) 461-8295 or [Betty.Gould@victoriatheatre.com](mailto:Betty.Gould@victoriatheatre.com)

***Sex With Strangers* performance dates:**

Wednesday, January 31 8:00 p.m. Pay-What-You-CAN open rehearsal

Thursday, February 1 8:00 p.m. “Inside Track” pre-show discussion/Preview performance

Friday, February 2 8:00 p.m. Opening night with post-show lobby party

Saturday, February 3 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 4 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 4 7:00 p.m. “Sawbuck Sunday” – \$10 tickets at the door

Tuesday, February 6 7:00 p.m. Lite Fare at the Loft pre-show lobby dining

Wednesday, February 7 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 8 8:00 p.m.

Friday, February 9 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 10 8:00 p.m. Audio Described/Sign Interpreted performance (reserve by

January 27)

Sunday, February 11 2:00 p.m. “While We’re on the Subject” post-show talk-back

Tuesday, February 13 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, February 14 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 15 8:00 p.m.

Friday, February 16 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 17 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 18 2:00 p.m. Closing performance