



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ERIC ULLOA'S *26 PEBBLES* EXAMINES HOW A COMMUNITY ENDURES IN THE WAKE OF TRAGEDY

**Bio-play about the residents of Newtown, Connecticut makes its professional premiere
February 2 – 19, 2017 with The Human Race Theatre Company.**

(Dayton, OH) — The Human Race Theatre Company gives voice to an entire town of people who first witnessed unimaginable heartbreak, then suffered through emotional pain and unanswered questions before learning how to move forward with **Eric Ulloa**'s new play, *26 Pebbles*. On December 14, 2012, an act of unbelievable madness took the lives of 20 innocent children and 6 adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. These 26 deaths—described by one local resident as “pebbles thrown into a pond”—created ripples that captured the attention of the entire nation. Now, through a series of interviews with the people of this small New England town, true stories—in their own words—of that tragic day and its aftermath come to light in this powerful drama that asks, “How does a community endure the ultimate test, and what comes after the cameras and noise leave?” The preview performance of *26 Pebbles* is Thursday, February 2. Opening night is Friday, February 3.

Playwright **Eric Ulloa**, perhaps better known as a Broadway performer last seen onstage in the Gloria and Emilio Estefan musical *On Your Feet!*, brought *26 Pebbles* to The Human Race's attention not long after the theatre's 2014 workshop of *Molly Sweeney: A Musical*, his collaboration with Caleb Damschroder. Moved by its compelling story and true testimonials, Human Race President & Artistic Director **Kevin Moore** took the company's mission of “exploring the human experience and promoting inclusion and understanding” to heart when he selected **Ulloa**'s new script for its professional premiere on the 2016-2017 season.

“*26 Pebbles* is not a play about the death of 20 young children and 6 adults. Those are just the circumstances,” says **Ulloa**. “It is the story of hope and of family and of community. It is the story of the human condition.”

“IT NEEDS TO BE TOLD”

As to his motivation to write such a play, **Ulloa** recalls the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary and how President Obama called it the worst day of his presidency. “For me, it was something that shook me at my core and a feeling that wouldn't leave for months after,” he recalls. “I was

angry at what we had just endured, and was tired of finding myself once again not able to do anything about it.” Feeling then gave way to action. “Finally, at around six months after the tragedy, I set off to Newtown with a handful of questions that I was hoping to have answered by the members of this community. The only plan was to be open and to listen. I was just interested in the real stories of how human beings deal and process an unimaginable moment like this.”

The process started slowly as **Ulloa** first found potential interviewees were willing to help, but apprehensive to actually talk about their feelings. “It all began with only one scheduled interview, which soon after became three...and then six...and then ten. By the end of it all, I ended up spending a few weeks in Newtown and held over 60 interviews with people from all walks of life.” That outpouring of support went beyond conversation. He continues, “I was given free housing—someone literally gave me their home to stay in—multiple meals, families who took care of my dog during the day and gave me access to parts of this story that no one else had. I had become a member of their community and they had become instant lifelong friends.”

Upon leaving Newtown with dozens of personal accounts in hand, **Eric** was committed to give them their due attention by the last words from many of his new friends. “They were quite simple and direct,” he explains. “They said, ‘Go tell our story. It needs to be told.’”

In telling that story, the playwright enlisted the aid of director and frequent collaborator **Igor Goldin** (who directed the earlier *Molly Sweeney: A Musical* workshop production) to helm this production. “**Igor** is one of the finest directors in the country,” praises **Ulloa**. “He has been working with me on *26 Pebbles* since very early in development. When I knew *The Human Race* would be premiering my play, I knew the next call I had to make was to Igor.” In addition to his prolific directing work around the country, **Goldin** is well known for developing new musicals, primarily Off-Broadway, where his efforts have earned him three New York Musical Theatre Festival Awards of Excellence.

CAST AND DESIGN TEAM

The six-member cast performs multiple roles through the play, portraying real life residents of Newtown. The ensemble includes Human Race Resident Artists **Christine Brunner** (*Steel Magnolias, Play It by Heart* and *Permanent Collection*), **Scott Hunt** (*The Glass Menagerie, Big River, Ordinary Days*) and **Jennifer Joplin** (*The Glass Menagerie, Other Desert Cities, God of Carnage*), as well as **Gina Handy** (*The Full Monty* and *Sweeney Todd*, Short North Stage’s *Sunset Boulevard*), **Caitlin McWethy** (*The Diary of Anne Frank, Henry VI* and *Cyrano de Bergerac* at Cincinnati Shakespeare Company) and **Jason Podplesky** (*Becky’s New Car*, Classical Theatre of Harlem’s *Emancipation*, Know Theatre of Cincinnati’s *Abraham Lincoln’s Big Gay Dance Party*).

Human Race Technical Director **Scott J. Kimmins** is the scenic designer on his eighteenth production in the Loft Theatre, creating a minimalist, yet versatile, set that is complimented by projected multimedia throughout the play. **Dave Cantrell** serves as the video programmer. Costume designer **Jessica Pitcairn** makes her Human Race premiere. 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 *26 Pebbles* is sponsored by Barbara N. O'Hara, Rob and Leesa Comparin, Jack and Maryann Bernstein, Moore Family Fund, Barbara E. Blauman and The George B. Quatman Foundation—Fifth Third Bank, Trustee.

PERFORMANCE AND SPECIAL EVENT INFORMATION

Tickets for the preview performance of *26 Pebbles* on February 2 start at \$35 for adults, \$32 for seniors and \$17.50 for students. For all performances February 3 – 19, 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 5 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. 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 *26 Pebbles* 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.

WRITERS SEMINAR WITH ERIC ULLOA

On Saturday, February 4, The Human Race and the Ohio Playwrights Circle present "**Telling Their Story**," a seminar with **Eric Ulloa** for creative writers of all experience levels. **Ulloa** will talk about conducting interviews with Newtown residents and discuss his process—and responsibility—of turning their stories into a powerful evening of theatre as a guide for writers who seek to develop literary works from actual events. The seminar is from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Loft Theatre and is open to the general public. The fee is \$50 and includes a ticket voucher to *26 Pebbles*.

Tickets and performance information on *26 Pebbles* and registration for Ulloa's "Telling Their Story" seminar are available at www.humanracetheatre.org or by calling Ticket Center Stage at (937) 228-3630, and at the Schuster Center box office.

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Now celebrating its 30th anniversary, The Human Race Theatre Company was founded in 1986 and moved into the Metropolitan Arts Center in 1991, taking up residence at 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, an In-School Tour, and a summer youth program. Human Race organizational support is provided by Culture Works, the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District, 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 2016-2017 Sustainability Sponsors are the ELM Foundation, Anne F. Johnson, Steve and Lou Mason, and Morris Home Furnishings. The 2016-2017 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

26 Pebbles

by Eric Ulloa

directed Igor Goldin

February 2 – 19, 2017

Performed at the Loft Theatre

Metropolitan Arts Center

126 North Main Street (between First and Second streets)

Dayton, Ohio 45402

On December 14, 2012, an act of unbelievable madness took the lives of 20 innocent children and 6 adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. These 26 deaths—described by one local resident as “pebbles thrown into a pond”—created ripples that captured the attention of the entire nation. Now, through a series of interviews with the people of this small New England town, the true stories of that tragic day and its aftermath come to light in this powerful drama that asks, “How does a community endure the ultimate test, and what comes after the cameras and noise leave?”

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 or 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” February 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

***26 Pebbles* performance dates:**

Wednesday, February 1 8:00 p.m. Pay-What-You-CAN open rehearsal

Thursday, February 2 8:00 p.m. “Inside Track” pre-show discussion/Preview performance

Friday, February 3 8:00 p.m. Opening night with post-show lobby party

Saturday, February 4 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 5 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 5 7:00 p.m. “Sawbuck Sunday” – \$10 tickets at the door

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

Wednesday, February 8 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 9 8:00 p.m.

Friday, February 10 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 11 8:00 p.m. Audio Described/Sign Interpreted performance (reserve by January 27)

Sunday, February 12 2:00 p.m. “While We’re on the Subject” post-show talk-back

Tuesday, February 14 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, February 15 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 16 8:00 p.m.

Friday, February 17 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 18 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 19 2:00 p.m. Closing performance