

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

For Immediate Release: Sept. 28, 2011

Media Contact: Communications Director Bill D'Agostino, at 215-654-1011 or bill@act2.org

Act II Playhouse presents *The Mystery of Irma Vep* by Charles Ludlam, Oct. 25 – Nov. 20

AMBLER, PA – Act II Playhouse is proud to present **Charles Ludlam**'s comic masterpiece *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, directed by Associate Artistic Director **Harriet Power**. Performances run Oct. 25 – Nov. 20.

This madcap quick-change comedy spoofs classic horror movies, “penny dreadful” Victorian stories, Shakespearean tragedies, *Wuthering Heights* and Hitchcock's *Rebecca* in a wild tour de force production. Two actors – Pig Iron Theatre Company Co-Artistic Director **Dito van Reigersberg** and Philadelphia actor **Luigi Sottile** – perform eight roles, rapidly changing costumes, genders and physicalities in a zany backstage ballet.

“*The Mystery of Irma Vep* manages somehow to be hilarious, outrageous, campy, inventive, continually surprising – yet somehow, poetic and affecting,” Power says. “I'm attracted to its intricate structure, freewheeling humor, and capacity to bring the audience squarely into the mayhem and the fun.”

Three preview performances of *The Mystery of Irma Vep* will be held Oct. 25-27 at 8 p.m., with tickets discounted to \$22. Opening night (press opening) is Friday, Oct. 28 at 8 p.m., and the show runs through Sunday, Nov. 19. Tickets are \$27 for all regular Wednesday-Thursday performances, \$33 for Friday evenings, Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees, and \$36 for opening night, which includes a post-show reception with free food and wine. Discounts are available for students, seniors 65 and older, and groups of 10 or more. For more information, visit www.act2.org or call the Act II Box Office at (215) 654-0200.

56 E. Butler Ave. • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (box office) • 215.654.1011 (admin) • 215.654.9050 (fax) •
www.act2.org

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

In addition, there is a special added Halloween performance on Monday, Oct. 31 at 7 p.m. Patrons are encouraged to come in costume that evening – and prizes will be awarded by the cast after the show for the best costumes. Tickets for this performance are \$27.

The Mystery of Irma Vep's plot is an outrageous blend of genres and mysteries. On a “dark and stormy night,” Lady Enid, newly married to Lord Edgar, arrives at the Hillcrest mansion and learns that Edgar’s late wife Irma Vep was murdered there. Meanwhile, the estate is being haunted by something prowling the moors. Werewolves, vampires and mummies (oh my!) come into play, and the new mistress soon realizes she must quickly crack the “mystery of Irma Vep.”

“To love this play,” Power says, “you simply have to love originality, theatre, make-believe, and above all, great actors and their capacity to pull off the impossible and make it look easy.”

When *The Mystery of Irma Vep* first premiered in 1984, playwright Ludlam and his longtime partner Everett Quinton portrayed all of the characters. In his book, *Ridiculous Theatre: Scourge of Human Folly*, Ludlam asserted that he wanted to incorporate “the old vaudeville trick of the quick-change as the basis of the whole play.” *Irma Vep* won an Obie Award for Ensemble Performances and a Drama Desk Award, and remains one of the most popular plays in the country.

Pig Iron company member **James Sugg** will compose music and design sound for the production. Rounding out the design team are scenic designer **Dirk Durossette**, costume designer **Alisa Sickora Kleckner**, and lighting designer **James Leitner**.

SPECIAL DRESS REHEARSAL FUNDRAISER

56 E. Butler Ave. • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (box office) • 215.654.1011 (admin) • 215.654.9050 (fax) •
www.act2.org

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

The final dress rehearsal of *The Mystery of Irma Vep* will be open to the public on Sunday, Oct.23, at 7 p.m. Suggested donation is \$10, and all contributions go towards a disaster relief fund for Ambler residents and businesses affected by the recent flooding and storms.

ABOUT ACT II PLAYHOUSE

Act II Playhouse, now in its 13th season of professional theatre in the Philadelphia suburb of Ambler, PA, is committed to creating world-class theatre in a venue whose intimacy draws audiences and actors into dynamic interaction. Act II produces new, classic, and contemporary plays and musicals under the direction of Bud Martin (Producing Artistic Director) and Harriet Power (Associate Artistic Director). In July 2010, Howard Shapiro of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* declared that “Act II Playhouse is arguably the most up-and-coming of the region's small professional theaters outside Center City.”

ABOUT THE CAST

Dito van Reigersberg is a co-founder and co-artistic director of Pig Iron Theatre Company, a physical theatre company that has created 27 original pieces in its 16-year history. He has performed in almost all of Pig Iron’s productions since 1995, including the OBIE-winning original pieces *Hell Meets Henry Halfway*, and *Chekhov Lizardbrain*. A graduate of Swarthmore College, he trained at the Neighborhood Playhouse and the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. His most recent role for Pig Iron was Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night* during the 2011 Live Arts Festival. He has also created and performed for Headlong Dance Theatre, Nichole Canuso Dance Company, Azuka Theatre Company, and Mauckingbird Theatre Company. He is a Barrymore recipient for Best Ensemble for *Mission to Mercury* (Pig Iron) and a nominee for Best Actor in a Musical for *Hedwig* (Azuka). His alter-ego Martha Graham-Cracker is famously ‘the tallest drag queen in the world’ -- her monthly cabaret series at L’Etage in Philadelphia has been running for over 6 years.

56 E. Butler Ave. • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (box office) • 215.654.1011 (admin) • 215.654.9050 (fax) •
www.act2.org

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

Luigi Sottile is thrilled to be making his Act II debut with such an amazing piece of theatre. He can be seen this season at People's Light and Theatre in *The Return of Don Quixote* (where he was also seen in *Nathan the Wise*, *Snow White Panto*, *King Lear*, *Kidnapped!*). Other local theatres include the Wilma Theater (*Leaving*, *Macbeth*, *In the Next Room or the Vibrator Play* - Barrymore Nomination) and Lantern Theatre (*The Lonesome West*, *The School for Wives*, *Othello*, *The Hothouse*, *The Government Inspector*). Next up: *Cyrano* - Arden Theatre and *Angels in America: Parts I and II* - Wilma Theater.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Charles Ludlam (1943—1987) was best known for founding The Ridiculous Theatrical Company in 1967, working as a writer, director, performer and designer. The company was legendary for mixing theatrical tradition with the avant-garde. Ludlam received six Obie Awards, one of which was for Ensemble Performance in *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, and the Rosamund Gilder Award. Some of his most noted works include *Camille* (1973), *Der Ring Gott Farblonjet* (an adaptation of *The Ring Cycle*) and *Artificial Jungle* (1986). He was also acclaimed for his portrayal of the title role in the 1984 American Ibsen Theater Production of *Hedda Gabler*. Ludlam died in 1987 at the age of 44 from pneumonia as a complication of AIDS. In his obituary, *The New York Times* wrote that he was “one of the most prolific and flamboyant artists in the theatre avant-garde, who seemed to be on the verge of breaking into the mainstream of American culture.”

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Harriet Power is Associate Artistic Director at Act II and also a Professor of Theatre at Villanova University, where she teaches directing and acting. She has divided her professional directing and dramaturgy career between classics (Shakespeare and Chekhov being her favorites) and new plays, working with playwrights at New Dramatists (New York), Philadelphia's PlayPenn, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, West Coast Playwrights, Iowa Playwrights Festival, and the International Women Playwrights Festival. Recently, she directed Act II's sellout season-opening *Sylvia*, her seven-actor adaptation of *The Tempest*,

56 E. Butler Ave. • Ambler, PA 19002
215.654.0200 (box office) • 215.654.1011 (admin) • 215.654.9050 (fax) •
www.act2.org

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

the first American production of Sebastian Barry's *The Pride of Parnell Street*, the smash hit *Boeing-Boeing*, and the best new play she's ever directed, Bruce Graham's *Any Given Monday* (Barrymore Award, Outstanding New Play). At Act II, she has also directed James Still's *Iron Kisses*, the world premiere of Jeff Baron's *Brothers-in-Law*, and the Barrymore-nominated *Syncopation*. Among her many directing credits, favorites include *Why I'm Scared of Dance* by Jen Childs for 1812 Productions, headed for Pittsburgh's City Theatre in February 2012; Donald Margulies' *Dinner With Friends* in Rome, Italy, at Teatro L'Arciliuto, co-produced by The English Theatre of Rome and the American Embassy (winner of "Best of Rome" citation in *Trova Roma*), *A Moon for the Misbegotten* and *Mad Forest* (Venture Theatre), and two world premieres at InterAct Theatre, both by Seth Rozin—*Reinventing Eden* and *Missing Link* (Barrymore nomination, Outstanding New Play). A three-time Barrymore Outstanding Direction of a Play nominee, she received the 1997 Barrymore Award with James J. Christy for *Angels in America: Perestroika*. She has been honored to serve on the selection committee for the F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist.

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

The Mystery of Irma Vep Fact Sheet

Theater:

Act II Playhouse
56 E. Butler Ave.
Ambler, PA 19002

Prices:

Adults: \$22-\$36
Special discounts are available for students, seniors 65+ and groups of 10 or more.

Tickets:

Phone: (215) 654-0200
Online: www.act2.org

Performances:

Tues 10/25 at 8 p.m. (Talkback)	Wed 10/26 at 8 p.m. (Talkback)	Thurs 10/27 at 8 p.m.
Fri 10/28 at 8 p.m. (Opening Night)	Sat 10/29 at 8 p.m.	Sunday, 10/30 at 2 p.m.
Mon 10/31 at 7 p.m. (Newly Added Halloween Performance!)		
Wed 11/2 at 2 p.m.	Wed 11/2 at 8 p.m.	Thurs 11/3 at 8 p.m. (Talkback)
Fri 11/4 at 8 p.m.	Sat 11/5 at 8 p.m.	Sunday, 11/6 at 2 p.m.
Wed 11/9 at 2 p.m.	Wed 11/9 at 8 p.m.	Thurs 11/10 at 8 p.m.
Fri 11/11 at 8 p.m.	Sat 11/12 at 8 p.m.	Sunday, 11/13 at 2 p.m. (Talkback)
Wed 11/16 at 2 p.m.	Wed 11/16 at 8 p.m.	Thurs 11/17 at 8 p.m.
Fri 11/18 at 8 p.m.	Sat 11/19 at 8 p.m.	Sunday, 11/20 at 2 p.m.

The Mystery of Irma Vep

By **Charles Ludlam**

Directed by **Harriet Power**

Cast

Dito van Reigersberg
Luigi Sottile

Production Team

Dirk Durossette, Scenic Designer
Alisa Sickora Kleckner, Costume Designer
James Leitner, Lighting Designer
James Sugg, Sound Designer