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CONTACT: Brianna Taylor / 215-568-2525 / btaylor@devineandpartners.com

Carrie Gorn / 484-831-5561 / cgornpr@comcast.net

**NEW PARTNERSHIP POISED TO CHANGE THE LANDSCAPE**

**OF THEATER EDUCATION**

***Pig Iron Theatre Company and UArts’ Brind School of Theater Join to Create***

***MFA in Devised Performance for Fall 2015***

**PHILADELPHIA (March 12, 2015) –** On Broad Street in the heart of Philadelphia, nationally known as a center for experimental performance, a new partnership between Pig Iron Theatre Company and the University of the Arts is poised to change the landscape of theater education. This new partnership includes an MFA in Devised Performance as well as a Certificate in Devised Performance. The program, under the direction of Gabriel Quinn Bauriedel, who is co-founder of Pig Iron Theatre Company, will be part of UArts’ Ira Brind School of Theater Arts, which is led by Director Joanna Settle.

“The program is carefully designed to train students to become practitioners and to become the next great theatrical innovators. We believe in artists who test boundaries and use all of themselves – their bodies, their voices – to create great works in a collaborative environment,” said Bauriedel. “This new partnership allows for that kind of pioneering study within the supportive structure of a university that not only understands, but deeply believes in fostering the next generation of artistic mavericks and leaders."

Among the first of its kind, this partnership between an arts university focused on artistic development and cross-disciplinary exploration with an inventive theater company recognized for its ability to redefine the field will create a program for students unlike any other. Students will train alongside award-winning faculty who are artistic practitioners and educators and receive a degree from an accredited, forward-thinking institution.

“This partnership breaks down the traditional boundaries of a theater education to create a program that is adept at serving the current landscape of performance,” said Joanna Settle, director of the Ira Brind School of Theater Arts. “The articulation of the American narrative is in a transitional moment—the way information is processed is changing, and the medium is changing along with it. This collaboration with Pig Iron creates the opportunity for theater artists to become whatever kind of art-maker they want to be. Devised performance is breathing fresh life into our medium, and with great momentum, this new degree, in partnership with Pig Iron, begins to set what we think will become the new center for the field of theater education.”

Devised performance has been gaining momentum across the globe from Argentina to Brooklyn to Philadelphia. This form of theater is derived from the collective inspiration of the group, not from a script written by a singular playwright, and performances are not confined by the boundaries of the stage, but often occur in found or public spaces. A degree in devised performance that combines the groundbreaking programming created by Pig Iron, with the collaboration of the Brind School at UArts, will enable graduates not only to become practitioners in the world of theater today, but to define and lead the theater of tomorrow.

**An innovative school of thought:** Lauded across the world for their inventive performances and described by The New York Times as “one of the few groups successfully taking theater in new directions,” Pig Iron Theatre Company is an interdisciplinary ensemble dedicated to the creation of new and exuberant performances that defy easy categorization. In 2011, the ensemble created a diploma program, Pig Iron School for Advanced Performance Training (APT). The program trained passionate artists, their bodies and their imaginations, in physical theater rooted in Lecoq pedagogy and ensemble theater practice. “Built upon the teachings of Lecoq and 20 years of ensemble practice, we aimed to train artistic entrepreneurs, able to generate and produce original work that responds to the world around,” said Bauriedel. The new academic partnership with UArts replaces the APT diploma program, although APT will continue to offer other programming such as summer workshops and master classes.

**Brind on the move:** For the Brind School, this marks another step in an exciting year of transformation. In January 2014, noted director Joanna Settle was brought in to lead the Brind School, and the program has been on the move ever since. Recognizing the desire for a new kind of theater education among her undergraduate students, this year Settle commissioned four local companies and performers to make new work to be developed with her students. She challenged them to bring forward ideas that are unlikely to be funded but for which they were passionate. “Our job is to offer the next generation an education that creates courageous, exciting new theater makers who create new works of performance that will be the future of the medium,” said Settle. With the theater landscape changing and as a school that is working to transform it, a collaboration with Pig Iron to create this new program is the next step in the evolution of the Brind School.

***About the University of the Arts:***

Established in 1876, the University of the Arts is one of the nation’s only universities dedicated solely to educating students in the visual and performing arts, design and writing. UArts is a leader in educating creative individuals through an innovative and flexible, yet rigorous and well-rounded, curriculum that prepares students to be the creative leaders of tomorrow, whether in a specific artistic discipline or by applying their arts education to virtually any career. The alumni of the University are leading some of the Philadelphia region’s most important cultural institutions and positively impacting the creative economy nationally. With nearly 1,900 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs on its campus in the heart of Philadelphia’s Avenue of the Arts, UArts students collaborate across disciplines and benefit from being in one of the nation’s most culturally vibrant cities.

***About Pig Iron Theatre Company:***

Founded in 1995 as an interdisciplinary ensemble, Pig Iron Theatre Company is dedicated to the creation of new and exuberant performance works that defy easy categorization. The Pig Iron School for Advanced Performance Training was founded in 2011 and its graduates have proved to be independent and entrepreneurial theater makers locally, nationally and internationally.

Over the course of its nearly two-decade lifespan, Pig Iron has created over 30 original works and has toured to festivals and theaters in 14 countries on 4 continents, including England, Scotland, Poland, Lithuania, Brazil, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Romania and Germany. The body of Pig Iron's work is eclectic and daring. Individual works have been inspired by history and biography (*Poet In New York*, 1997 and *Anodyne*, 2001), rock music (*Mission to Mercury*, 2000 and *James Joyce is Dead and so is Paris: The Lucia Joyce Cabaret*, 2003), American kitsch culture (*Cafeteria*, 1997 and *Welcome to Yuba City*, 2009), serendipity (*Dig or Fly*, 1996 and *The Snow Queen*, 1999), and scientific research (*Pay Up*, 2005/2013 and *Chekhov Lizardbrain*, 2007). In 2001, Pig Iron collaborated with legendary theater director Joseph Chaikin (1935-2003) to create an exploration of sleep, dreams and consciousness (*Shut Eye*).

In 2005, Pig Iron received an OBIE Award for *Hell Meets Henry Halfway*, an adaptation of Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz's novel *Possessed*; in 2008, Pig Iron was awarded a second OBIE for James Sugg's performance in *Chekhov Lizardbrain*. Pig Iron's staging of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* was nominated for ten Barrymore Awards for Excellence in Theater, winning four. The company made Philadelphia its permanent home in 1997; though individual pieces are often developed in residency at other theaters or at universities, all premieres happen in the company’s hometown.

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