

# NightwoodTheatre

For Immediate Release: Friday, October 27, 2017

**\*\*Please update your listings/announcements\*\***

## UNHOLY

**\*\*\*\*\*BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND\*\*\*\*\***

**Celebrated playwright/performer Diane Flacks takes on misogyny in religion**

Directed by Kelly Thornton

**November 23 – December 10, 2017**

(Toronto) Nightwood Theatre is thrilled to announce that, due to popular demand and **sold-out performances in its 2016-17 season**, Diane Flacks' **Dora Award-nominated hit *Unholy*** will be remounted in an exclusive return engagement this season. *Unholy* will run onstage at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander Street, from November 23 – December 10, 2017.

Inspired by the YouTube debates of Christopher Hitchens, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and other pundits, *Unholy* sets up a similar conceit, where four female panellists face off in a wild, whip-smart public debate about religion and misogyny, posing the loaded question "Should women abandon religion?" With opinions flying from a progressive Muslim lawyer, an Orthodox Jewish spiritual leader, an excommunicated Catholic nun and a lesbian atheist pundit, *Unholy* delivers a hilarious, no-holds-barred look at contemporary women in organized religion.

*Unholy's* success is no surprise given the political climate on the world stage. With the play opening last January during the inauguration of a new U.S. president, the world saw a radical shift within a number of days. From the global Women's March to the shocking Muslim Ban, the play captured a zeitgeist akin to Nightwood's current Consent Event series: *Asking for It* and *Lo (or Dear Mr. Wells)*, happening during the Weinstein scandal and the viral #metoo campaign. Flacks added dialogue around the Muslim Ban and the rise in xenophobia during last year's run of *Unholy*, and the show drew people of many faiths grappling with a world descending into heightened racism, division and hatred. Christopher Hoile of Stage Door wrote, "Diane Flacks has written exactly the right play to see right now." Indeed, *Unholy* is a panacea, confronting a world divided by beliefs, anxiously seeking a path towards reconnection.

Kelly Thornton, Artistic Director of Nightwood Theatre, says, "It was thrilling to see Diane's rapid response last year during the run, finessing scenes and adding new text to confront the immediate events. Sadly, *Unholy* is even more relevant today than a year ago." The climate of fear, ignorance and mistrust, stoked by the careless administration to the south, has emboldened extremist actions of hate and intolerance on both sides of the border, with mosques, Jewish cemeteries and temples being targeted. And, with Quebec's recent passing of its controversial neutrality bill, banning the wearing of niqabs for women in public services, the debate onstage again spills into the real world. Thornton continues, "We are hungry to return this passionate and visceral argument to the stage."

**Nominated for a Dora Award for Outstanding New Play**, *Unholy* is ultimately about love and asks its audience to envision a world beyond differences. Peering into the private lives of the characters in scenes outside the debate, Flacks exposes the tension between our private and public lives. With a brilliant ensemble led by Diane Flacks and joined by Bahareh Yaraghi, Niki Landau, Barbara Gordon, and Blair Williams, *Unholy* is "Brilliantly acted...at times moving and, at others, surprisingly steamy." – **Kelly Nestruck, *The Globe & Mail***

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To expand the conversation about women in religion beyond the stage, Nightwood is programming **compelling conversations with leaders in progressive religious thought**, as well as audience talkbacks with the cast and creative team. Speaker information will be announced soon!

**Tuesday, November 28** – Post-show Q & A with the cast/creative team of *Unholy*

**Thursday, November 30** – Post-show Q & A with the cast/creative team of *Unholy*

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Diane Flacks is an Emmy, Gemini and Dora Award nominated writer/performer, known for her theatre work, TV writing (*Working the Engles* for NBC, *Baroness Von Sketch*, *Workin' Moms* and *Kids in the Hall* for CBC), her featured columns in the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*, as well as her regular national CBC radio column on parenting. Diane has a long history of play development and performance with Nightwood Theatre, and *Unholy* marks her third production with the company (along with *Random Acts* and *Bear with Me*). Other noteworthy playwriting and performing credits include *Waiting Room* (Tarragon Theatre), and the award-winning *Sibs* and *Care*, co-written with Richard Greenblatt (Tarragon Theatre). Flacks' work is celebrated for confronting difficult issues with her unique brand of honesty, edge and humour.

*Unholy* stars Diane Flacks, Barbara Gordon, Niki Landau, Blair Williams and Bahareh Yaraghi. Please note Kevin Bundy will be appearing in the role of Richard from November 23-26.

Designers for *Unholy* include Lighting Design by Bonnie Beecher, Music and Sound Design by Richard Feren, Set and Costume Design by Lindsay C. Walker, and Projection Design by Laura Warren.

Tickets range from \$25 to \$35 and are available in person at the Buddies in Bad Times Box Office, 12 Alexander Street, 416-975-8555 or at [nightwoodtheatre.net](http://nightwoodtheatre.net) or [buddiesinbadtimes.com](http://buddiesinbadtimes.com)

**PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE:** Performing onstage November 23-December 10, Tuesday-Saturday, 8pm; matinees Saturday and Sunday, 2:30pm.

**Opening Night: Saturday, November 25, 2017 at 8pm**

For more information on *Unholy* or Nightwood Theatre visit [nightwoodtheatre.net](http://nightwoodtheatre.net)

Nightwood gratefully acknowledges the support of an anonymous donor for this presentation of *Unholy*.

## ABOUT NIGHTWOOD

As Canada's foremost feminist theatre, Nightwood provides an essential home for the creation of extraordinary theatre by women. Founded in 1979, Nightwood Theatre has created and produced award-winning plays that have garnered Dora Mavor Moore, Chalmers, Trillium and Governor General's awards. The company is helmed by Artistic Director Kelly Thornton and Managing Director Beth Brown, whose leadership has received public acclaim for artistic excellence, the successful training and development of emerging female talent, and its ongoing activism around gender equity.

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