



Theo UbiqUe Cabaret Theatre
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www.theoubique.org or www.theo-u.org

FEATURE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHESS, A COLD WAR ROCK MUSICAL, HARKENS TO TRADITION OF CHESS COFFEE HOUSES

Chicago, March 3, 2010 -- Theo UbiqUe Cabaret Theatre's production of "Chess," opening this weekend at the No Exit Café, harkens to a rich tradition of chess coffee houses started in the Rogers Park neighborhood many years ago.

In fact, No Exit Café was a chess coffee house in the 1970s. "Chess players remember No Exit being quite a chess hang out at one time, so there's a certain amount of nostalgia in wanting to see No Exit Café open as a chess coffee house again," said Tom Sprandel, President of the Illinois Chess Association (ICA) and member of the Evanston Chess Club. He has provided counsel and loaned the type of chess set used at international competition and other props to Theo UbiqUe for its production of "Chess."

"Chess" opens at 7 p.m. this Sunday with preview nights at 8 p.m., this Friday and Saturday. It runs through April 25 on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at the No Exit Café. Theo UbiqUe is producing "Chess" in association with Michael James, who owns the intimate No Exit Cafe. Tickets for the show with dinner optional are available online at www.theoubique.org or www.theo-u.org or calling 800-595-4849. Theo UbiqUe's ticket information line is 773-347-1109, where updated theatre and show information are available. Dinner is served an hour before curtain by cast members in costume.

Since "Chess" hasn't been produced in Chicago for 20 years, Sprandel anticipates many chess aficionados coming to the show. "Chess players love anything to do with chess," said Sprandel.

"Chess" is a rock musical that uses the game of chess and the background of Cold War intrigue as metaphors to the struggles of life. The story is a love triangle between an American Grand Master and a Russian Grand Master with the woman in the middle. It takes place in the 1980s when American and Soviet Union Grand Masters were the top players in the world, such as Bobby Fischer and Anatoly Karpov, and garnered much media attention. Today, neither the United States nor Russia has players ranked at the top. "Instead, it's Bulgaria, India and a 20-year-old from Norway who consistently rank in the top three," said Sprandel.

Tim Rice wrote the lyrics and former ABBA members, Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson, composed the music. It is co-directed by Fred Anzevino and Brenda Didier, also choreographer, with music direction by Ryan Brewster. All were Jeff Award recipients for last year's production of "Evita" (lyrics also by Tim Rice with composer Andrew Lloyd Webber) by Theo Ubiq.

Pre-show and post-show activities are being held during the run of "Chess." Andi Rosen of the ICA is organizing members to participate in post-show Thursday night talk-back sessions and pre-show chess blitzes during the dinner hour. Sprandel will be the ICA representative for the first talk-back session on Thursday, March 11. The first Saturday evening chess blitz is March 13, starting at 7 p.m.

Sprandel points to the Touch Move Chess Center near the Rogers Park neighborhood as an example of a popular current-day chess coffee house. It is owned by Angelo Young, an International Master and leading Chicago chess teacher. "Top notch chess players hang out at the Touch Move. A mid-level player like me wouldn't stand a chance against the Grand Masters and International Masters that play there, although lots of chess groupies go to see them play," Sprandel said.

Chess' roots are from Europe, but today Chicago is among the top chess cities in the United States, according to Sprandel. Chicago has an active national, state and local tournament schedule. "Big organizations like to come to Chicago to run chess tournaments, and national tournaments draw well here. There are lots of strong chess players in Chicago. As an international city, we draw a lot of Europeans and Pilipinos who have a strong chess tradition," he added.

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Co-Founded in 1997 by Fred Anzevino, Artistic Director, Theo Ubiq Cabaret Theatre is a Rogers Park-based cabaret theatre company. It initially began performing at the Heartland Studio, producing an array of straight drama, comedy and musicals, and in 2004 started the cabaret theatre trend in the Chicago area when it began producing musicals and revues at Michael James' No Exit Café—its home since then. During its 13-year history, Theo Ubiq produced 31 productions (including Chess) and received 18 Jeff Awards Non-Equity and 3 After Dark Awards. The name Theo Ubiq (pronounced thee-oh oo-bah-kway) is a combination of Greek and Latin words reflecting the company's mission to engage actors and audiences in an intimate and honest conversation with great theatrical works. Visit the web site at www.theoubique.org or www.theo-u.org.