

September 20, 2019

For Immediate Release

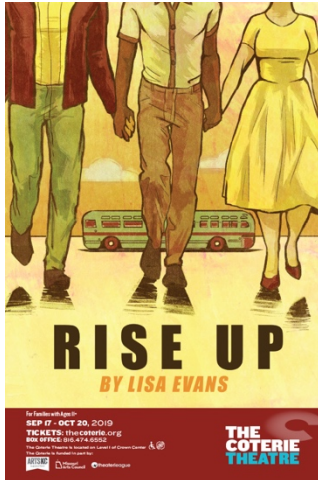
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**The Coterie Opens 41st Season
with Award-Winning Play with
Unique Perspective on Civil Rights**

Rise Up
by Lisa Evans

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OVERVIEW:

WHAT: *Rise Up: The Struggle of the Freedom Riders*

by Lisa Evans

Directed by Jeff Church

WHEN: **September 17 – October 20, 2019**

Press / Opening Night: Friday, September 20, at 7:00 p.m.

WHERE: The Coterie, Level one of Crown Center, 2450 Grand Blvd., Kansas City, MO

PRICE: \$12.00 for youth under 18, full-time students, and seniors age 60 and older;
\$15.00 for adults

INFO / RESERVATIONS: The Coterie Box Office

Phone: (816) 474-6552 Online: www.thecoterie.org

Kansas City, MO – The Coterie Theatre opens its 2019/2020 season with *Rise Up: The Struggle of the Freedom Riders*. A story of everyday people coming together, *Rise Up* chronicles the true accounts of the Freedom Riders who rode interstate buses across Alabama and Mississippi in 1961 to peacefully protest illegal segregation. Opening The Coterie's 41st Season, *Rise Up*, directed by Jeff Church, will be performed live, September 17 – October 20, 2019.

THE PLAY

In 1946, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed segregation on interstate buses, but into the early 1960's some cities and towns in America kept actively discriminating against people of color. A group of activists known as the Freedom Riders felt it was time to draw attention to illegal discrimination, so men and women of all races began riding interstate buses throughout the South in mixed racial groups in order to peacefully protest local laws or customs that enforced segregated seating. Even though it meant facing the possibility of terrifying violence with peaceful resistance, they were determined to challenge the status quo of racial discrimination.

From a modern-day perspective, ***Rise Up*** tells the story of four students in 2019 who make a class project about 1961's Freedom Riders and the ordinary citizens who rode buses to stand up against segregation. The story of the Freedom Riders is one of regular people coming together to take on the establishment and change the world. The play offers fresh take on Civil Rights by depicting students who are so moved by historical events, they begin to create their own spoken word poetry. An inventive and captivating introduction to an important moment in Civil Rights history for middle and high school ages, ***Rise Up*** is a dramatic story that inspires the question, "What would I stand up for?"

Rise Up was commissioned and first produced by Theatre Centre, London, directed by Natalie Wilson. In its review of the world premiere production, *The Morning Star* raved, "***Rise Up*** cuts like a knife... [Lisa] Evans' inspired script... moves at a breakneck speed... rides the full gamut of emotions, while managing to connect the past and the present... piercingly poetic... Five Stars." The play went on to be named the winner of the 2017 Writers Guild Best Play for Young Audiences.

As part of The Coterie's ongoing Civil Rights series, ***Rise Up*** continues the company's history of producing plays that address issues of social justice, including last season's critically-acclaimed production of Academy Award winner Kevin Willmott's *Becoming Martin*; as well as *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Student Sit-Ins of 1960*; *The Nine Who Dared: Courage in Little Rock*; *The Freedom Trial of Anthony Burns 1858*; and *Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott*. In conjunction with ***Rise Up***, The Coterie will once again offer educators pre-show, in-school workshops that will introduce students to the events in the play and help put the story into historical context. Over the past four years, The Coterie's pre-show, in-school workshops have served over 10,000 area students in more than 500 workshops at over 150 schools.

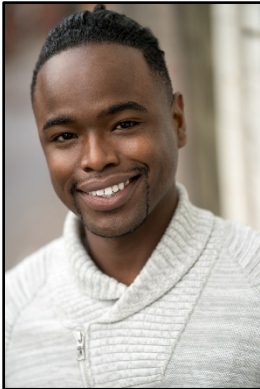
The Coterie's production of ***Rise Up: The Struggle of the Freedom Riders*** will run approximately 70 minutes with no intermission and will be best appreciated by families with ages eleven and older. The Coterie is funded in part by the ArtsKC Fund, Missouri Arts Council, Theater League, the Neighborhood Tourist Development Fund, and the Shubert Foundation.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Lisa Evans is an award-winning playwright, who also writes for television and radio. Recently Lisa has been a Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Brunel University and at St. Mary's University. In addition, she writes stage plays for adults and for young audiences, television and radio scripts, and runs workshops for writers. Her numerous original stage plays include *Stamping, Shouting and Singing Home* (Watford); *Keep Smiling Through* (Theatre by the Lake); *Glory Glory* (Duke's Lancaster); and *The Day the Waters Came* (Theatre Centre).

THE ARTISTS

Directed by The Coterie's producing artistic director, Jeff Church, the cast of ***Rise Up*** will feature:



Jay Love (as Ty) made his Coterie debut in *The Secret of Courage* and then returned in *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical*. He has also been seen locally in *Letters from Freedom Summer* (Kansas City Repertory Theatre) and *Measure for Measure* (Confluence Theatre Company). Jay has a MFA in Acting and Directing from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.



Catera Combs (as Em) made her Coterie debut in *Beat Bugs: A Musical Adventure* last season and then returned in *Elephant & Piggie's "We are in a Play!"* Other recent credits include *Into the Woods*, *When We Were Young and Unafraid*, and *Anything Goes* with the Macklanburg Playhouse. Catera recently graduated from Stephens College with a BFA in Musical Theatre.



Jordan Luty (as CJ) makes his debut with The Coterie after having been seen in *Carrie: The Musical* at Millikin University, along with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Peter and the Starcatcher* at Festival 56. He recently graduated from Millikin University with a degree in Musical Theatre and plans to continue in a graduate school program for Musical Theatre writing.



Khrystal L. Coppage (as Dayz) made her Coterie debut in *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Student Sit-Ins of 1960* and has participated in The Coterie's Dramatic STD/HIV Project. Other stage credits include Comedy City Improv, as well as *The Greenbook Wine Club Train Trip* and *Funnyhouse of a Negro* with KC MeltingPot Theatre.

The artistic and production company includes Danielle Renee (production stage manager), Scott Hobart (technical director), Rafael Toribio (set designer), Jarrett Bertocin (lighting designer), Georgianna Londré Buchanan (costume designer), David Kiehl (sound designer), Scott Stackhouse (dialect coach), Rex Hobart (guitar composition), Jordan Luty (keyboard composition), and Chloé Robbins (production assistant).

TICKET INFORMATION




Tickets, Spotlight Passes, and Group Reservations for The Coterie's 2019/2020 mainstage season are on sale now through The Coterie's box office at **816.474.6552** or www.thecoterie.org.

Performance Calendar

RISE UP

SEPTEMBER 17 - OCTOBER 20, 2019						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		17 9:45 am	18 9:45 am	19 9:45 am 11:45 am	20 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	21 2 pm
22 2 pm	23	24 9:45 am 11:45 am	25 9:45 am 11:45 am	26 9:45 am 11:45 am	27 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	28 2 pm
29 2 pm	30	1 9:45 am 11:45 am	2 9:45 am 11:45 am	3 9:45 am 11:45 am	4 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	5 2 pm
6 2 pm	7	8 9:45 am 11:45 am	9 9:45 am 11:45 am	10 9:45 am 11:45 am	11 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	12 2 pm
13 2 pm	14	15 9:45 am 11:45 am	16 9:45 am 11:45 am	17 9:45 am 11:45 am	18 9:45 am 11:45 am 7 pm	19 2 pm
20 2 pm						

CALENDAR LEGEND

-  **Opening Night**
-  Post-performance **Question and Answer session** with the company
-  **Interpreted performance** in American Sign Language

- **Subscriptions:** In lieu of season subscriptions, The Coterie offers passes which work like season tickets without committing to a set schedule. Passes range from \$110.00-\$150.00 and include a variety of benefits including 10 flexible tickets that can be used on a combination of shows in the 2019/2020 Season, priority seating, ticket exchanges, and other privileges.

- **Individual Tickets:** Tickets for *Rise Up* are \$12.00 for youth under 18, students, and seniors age 60 and older, and \$15.00 for adults.

- **Group Pricing:** The Coterie offers groups of 20 or more a special preview rate of \$5.00 per person the first week of each production. After preview week, groups for *Rise Up* pay only \$5.50 - \$8.00 per person depending on performance date.

NOTABLE PERFORMANCE EXTRAS

During the run of *Rise Up*, The Coterie invites audiences to take advantage of these special, free performance extras (with paid admission):

- **Friday, September 20, 7:00 p.m.: Opening Night Celebration.** A free post-performance reception with the director, company, staff, and board of directors.
- **Saturday, September 21, and Sunday, September 22, 2:00 p.m.: Question & Answer session.** A free Q&A with members of The Coterie's staff and artistic company will immediately follow the performance.
- **Saturday, October 5, 2:00 p.m.: Interpreted performance** in American Sign Language.

When available, production photos will be posted online at:

www.thecoterie.org/press-room

THE REMAINING 2019/2020 SEASON

Following *Rise Up*, The Coterie's 2019/2020 Season continues with the return of the holiday classic, ***A Charlie Brown Christmas***; the true story of Sophie Scholl, a German college student who led an important act of resistance during WWII, ***The White Rose: We Defied Hitler***, January 21 – February 9, 2020; a new perspective for all Potterheads, ***PUFFS or Seven Increasingly Eventful Years at a Certain School of Magic and Magic***, February 25 – March 22, 2020; a rock-and-roll musical about groovy, guitar-slinging ***Pete the Cat***, April 7 – May 17, 2020; and the beloved musical about the mermaid princess, Disney's ***The Little Mermaid***, June 16 – August 2, 2020.

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Due to the nature of live theatre, play selection, performance schedule and casting are subject to change.
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