

**News Release
First Grace Arts
11/10/2009**

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**'Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens',
benefit for Community AIDS Network,
to be presented by First Grace Arts
December 14th.**

*Cast of 40 to feature Summit County Executive
Russ Pry and other community leaders.*

(November 10, 2009. FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE) First Grace Arts will present *'Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens'* for one night only on Monday, December 14th at 7:30 PM. All money from ticket sales will go directly to benefit Akron's Community AIDS Network.

Written by Bill Russell with a beautiful pop score by Janet Hood, 'Elegies' is comprised of 34 monologues and 11 songs inspired by panels on the famed NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and Edgar Lee *Master's Spoon River Anthology*. The monologues range from humorous to highly dramatic, and the score features a mix of tear-jerking contemporary ballads and rollicking, gospel-flavored celebrations of life. The piece is written to reflect the diversity of people of have died of HIV/AIDS related causes.

Originally created in the late 1980s, this "song-cycle" has been seen in New York City several times over the last 20 years starring Mario Cantone, Christopher Durang and Joe Piscopo among many others. A production of *'Elegies...'* played London's West End in 1993.

First Grace Arts Director JT Buck is assembling a cast of over 40 readers and singers for this event. The cast will include local professional singers and actors alongside area community leaders, including Summit County Executive Russ Pry, First Grace Senior Pastor Bob Dreese and local residents representing the diversity of people living with HIV/AIDS in Akron.

'*Elegies...*' will be performed in the sanctuary of First Grace United Church of Christ, and will feature a live 4-piece band led by Deborah 'Ingy' Ingersoll, artwork by local painter Yulia Gray, actual panels from the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and ASL interpretation by Rev. Nan Morgan of South Arlington United Methodist Church.

"We want this to be a rich and accessible experience, to raise awareness and funding for the widest possible audience," says JT Buck, First Grace's Arts Director. "This is why we are casting such a large diversity of folks in the piece, presenting it in a space and manner that is welcoming to all regardless of personal background and physical ability, and keeping ticket prices affordable."

To enrich the experience even further '*Elegies..*' author Bill Russell will fly in from New York to attend and talk about the creation of the piece. Russell will lead a Broadway master class to be co-presented by First Grace Arts and Weathervane Community Playhouse. Details of the master class will be announced soon.

General Admission Tickets are \$15, and can be purchased at the door, online at www.firstgraceucc.org or by phone at 330-212-6709. An after-performance reception with the actors and author will be held at Square Bar in Highland Square. Tickets to the reception, which offers a light buffet and cash bar, are \$10 and must be purchased in advance.

First Grace Arts is located at 350 S. Portage Path (at W. Exchange St.), adjacent to Coach House Theatre and the Akron Woman's City Club. Please contact JT Buck at 330-212-6709 or email him at jtuck@hotmail.com for more info.

The Mission of the Community AIDS Network is to prevent the further transmission of HIV through education and risk reduction efforts and to provide housing assistance and other services to people already affected by HIV/AIDS. Community AIDS Network is located at 895 N. Main Street in Akron.
info@communityaidsnetwork.org
Phone: 330.252.1559

First Grace Arts is committed to building local community through the creative arts. FGA has produced several plays, concerts and film series over the last three years, and this past summer staged a major and highly successful production of the hit musical 'Godspell'.

Please visit us at www.firstgraceucc.org for more information.