

canadianstage

Matthew Jocelyn, Artistic & General Director

HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOGRAPHY: Available in the [Image Gallery](https://www.canadianstage.com/media) as of November 21
(<https://www.canadianstage.com/media>)

"Smart, exciting and scintillating" – The New Yorker

Tony Award-winning play *Red* marks Canadian premiere with cross-country tour Canadian Stage brings highly anticipated production to Toronto, November 19 to December 17, 2011

Toronto, November 4, 2011 – Canadian Stage, in co-production with the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company and The Citadel Theatre, present the Canadian premiere of the Tony Award-winning play, *Red*. This stark and passionate production explores the life and work of celebrated Abstract Expressionist painter Mark Rothko as he struggles to create a masterpiece in the face of fame, fortune and commercialism.

Red will be on stage in Toronto from November 19 to December 17, 2011 (**Opening Night:** November 24) at the Bluma Appel Theatre in the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts (27 Front St. E). Tickets from \$22 to \$99 are available online at www.canadianstage.com, by phone at 416.368.3110 or in person at the box office. After opening in Toronto, the production will travel to the [Vancouver Playhouse](#) from January 14 to February 4, 2012 and [The Citadel Theatre](#) in Edmonton from February 11 to March 4, 2012.

Written by Academy Award-nominated screenwriter and playwright **John Logan** (*Gladiator*, *The Aviator*) and directed by Siminovitch Prize-winning director **Kim Collier** (*Studies in Motion*), *Red* introduces audiences to the compelling artist Mark Rothko and his young assistant, Ken. Set in his studio in the late 1950s, the play is a fictionalized account of one of Rothko's historic artistic commissions: to create a series of murals for the new Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York City. As he paints, Rothko begins to question the project he's committed to and his role as an artist. When he sees that his great commission will reduce his paintings to being merely decorative rather than transformative, he confronts this new truth through a visceral and passionate debate of ideas, art and relevance.

"Red is a deeply moving, engaging and intelligent play," said Canadian Stage Artistic & General Director, Matthew Jocelyn. *"Director Kim Collier has assembled an awe-inspiring team of artists who give this poignant script new life in a contemporary and truly Canadian production that we are thrilled to premiere with our artistic partners across the country."*

One of Canada's leading stage actors and Shaw Festival veteran **Jim Mezon** (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Copenhagen*) plays the role of Mark Rothko with up-and-coming actor **David Coomber** (*Bullet for Adolf*, *Post Eden*) portraying his assistant (and aspiring painter) Ken. This pairing between an experienced actor and an emerging performer echoes the master-apprentice relationship between their respective characters and brings an added layer of depth to the performance.

Grounded in months of comprehensive research, the creative team has built a stage and set that theatrically mirrors Rothko's 1950s working conditions. Former *Barenaked Ladies* musician **Andy Creeggan** composes an original score inspired by the music Rothko listened to while painting. **David Boechler's** set and costume design evokes Rothko's historic New York studio space and **Alan Brodie's** lighting reflects the particular light in which Rothko worked and displayed his pieces. A series of accurate reproductions of Rothko's infamous "Seagram Murals" (the paintings he and Ken work on throughout the play) were painted by scenic artists at **Hamilton Scenic Speciality Inc.**, and actors Mezon and Coomber became familiar with Rothko's technique through painting rehearsals and information sessions with artists. Finally, video projections based on the artistic movements of the period by cinematographer **Brian Johnson** give a framework to the conversations happening on stage.

"I have been thoroughly intrigued by this period of art history and Rothko's role within it," says director and Canadian Stage Associate Artist **Kim Collier**. *"I love that, as a play, **Red** captures Rothko's ideas, struggles and debates in a smart, satisfying way we can all relate to."*

To build buzz and awareness about the production, Canadian Stage has partnered with **Zulu Alpha Kilo**, an award-winning advertising agency based in Toronto, to create an innovative and interactive experience promoting the Canadian premiere of **Red** called "**The Mark Rothko Experience**" at ExperienceRed.ca. The interactive website allows visitors to join Rothko in his studio, playing the role of his assistant through a webcam. Users will experience the intensity of working with the temperamental and talented artist firsthand through a series of video scenes and interactions performed by Jim Mezon as Rothko.

In early November, thousands of paintbrushes dipped in red paint and tagged with the **ExperienceRed.ca** URL will be dropped by a guerilla street team around Toronto. The paintbrushes will drive traffic to the online experience and the Canadian Stage website for more details about the production and to buy tickets. Watch a demo reel for **The Mark Rothko Experience** [here](http://youtu.be/g9Pqc7u1anM). (Direct link: <http://youtu.be/g9Pqc7u1anM>)

Today, Mark Rothko's pieces have sold for as much as \$72.8 million each and are featured in museums and personal collections around the world. Recently, his work was seen in Toronto as part of the Art Gallery of Ontario's popular [AbEx](#) exhibit and one of his paintings was featured on an episode of the popular television show [Mad Men](#).

About Red

Written by John Logan

Directed by Kim Collier

Starring Jim Mezon and David Coomber

A Canadian Stage, Vancouver Playhouse and Citadel Theatre co-production

November 19 – December 17, 2011

Opening and Media night November 24

Canadian Stage presents **Red** at the Bluma Appel Theatre in the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts (27 Front Street East). Performances run Monday through Saturday at 8 p.m. with matinees on Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

Tickets from \$22 to \$99 are available online, by phone at 416.368.3110 or in person at the box office. Discount tickets are available through the **Sun Life Financial Arts Accessibility Program**. For details visit www.canadianstage.com.

Canadian Stage **Production Sponsor: BMO Harris Private Banking**

Creative Team

Composer	Andy Creeggan
Assistant Director	Ker Wells
Set, Properties and Costume Designer	David Boechler
Assistant Designer	Jung Hye Kim
Lighting Designer	Alan Brodie
Associate Lighting Designer	Jason Hand
Projections Designer	Brian Johnson
Projections Coordinator	Cameron Davis
Sound Coordinator	Eric Meadows
Stage Manager	Andrea Schurman
Assistant Stage Manager	A.J. Laflamme
Stage Management Assistant	Andrea Harrington (Sheridan College Field Placement student)
Set & Rothko Murals	Hamilton Scenic Specialty Inc. www.hssi.ca

About Rothko and the “Seagram Murals”

A self-taught painter, Rothko is considered a pioneer of the Abstract Expressionist style of painting. Beginning in the early 1950s Rothko was heralded, along with Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline and others, as the standard bearers of the New American Painting, Abstract Expressionism, an art that was not simply a derivative of European styles.

At the peak of his fame (in the late 1950s) Mark Rothko had developed a signature style that featured two or three rectangles seemingly floating in fields of colour, called the “multiform colour field technique” by art historians and critics. His work was so popular that he received an incredible commission (for the largest sum of money offered to an artist at that time): to create a set of murals for the new Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York City. The commission of the infamous “Seagram Murals” marked a high point in Rothko’s career as well as a personal turning point for the eccentric artist. What could have been the highlight of his career was instead a source of inner turmoil as Rothko worried about the value of his artistic integrity. Not content with the idea of his art being used as mere decoration in a restaurant, Rothko ultimately rejected the Four Seasons as a suitable venue to hold his collection - a tribute to both his temperament and his artistic ideals. The Seagram Murals now hang at the Tate Museum in London. Rothko sought to create art that was timeless; paintings that expressed basic human concerns and emotions that remain constant not merely across decades but across generations and epochs. His aim was to communicate with his viewer at the most elemental level, and through his artwork, have a conversation that was intense, personal and, above all, honest. While creating a deeply expressive body of work and garnering critical acclaim, Rothko battled depression and his brilliant career ended in suicide in 1970.

About Canadian Stage:

Founded in 1987, Canadian Stage is one of the country’s leading not-for-profit contemporary theatre companies. Under the direction of Artistic & General Director, Matthew Jocelyn, the company presents multidisciplinary theatre with a focus on emerging performance styles that integrate theatre with other artistic mediums such as dance, film, visual arts and more. Sharing innovative and vibrant theatre from Canada and around the world, the company stages an annual season of work at three major venues (the Bluma Appel Theatre, the Berkeley Street Theatre and the High Park Amphitheatre) and runs a series of artist development and education initiatives, as well as youth and community outreach programs. For more information visit www.canadianstage.com

2011.2012 Canadian Stage season:

Subscription packages and single tickets for the 2011.2012 Canadian Stage season are now on sale. Highlights include contemporary dramas, Canadian premieres of Tony Award-and Pulitzer Prize-winning plays, a classic French comedy, innovative dance and some cutting-edge inter-disciplinary work. Details and show descriptions are available at www.canadianstage.com

- END -

For more information or interview requests, please contact:

Ashley Ballantyne, Associate Director of Communications, 416.367.8243 x 259, aballantyne@canadianstage.com

Connect with Canadian Stage on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)