

COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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One-Man Play Chronicling Struggle with Cystic Fibrosis, *Breathe*, Comes to the Phillips Center January 16-17

Gainesville, Fla., November 10, 2015 — *Breathe*, the story of one man's journey to live beyond the odds, comes to the University of Florida's (UF) Squitieri Studio Theatre, located in the West Wing of the Phillips Center in Gainesville, Florida, January 16-17, 2016. Brennen Reeves just wanted to be normal. The only problem: the fatal lung disease, cystic fibrosis. The only solution: a double lung transplant. Hilarious and heartbreaking, this solo show presented by UF's College of the Arts and College of Public Health and Health Professions will leave audiences moved and inspired.

Co-created with David Lee Nelson (*Elephant in My Closet, Status Update*), *Breathe* is written and performed by Reeves, a 2014 graduate of the College of Charleston. Performance times are 7:30 p.m. January 16 and 2 p.m. January 17. A reception with the artists will follow the Saturday evening performance, and a panel discussion will be held following Sunday's show. Jill Sonke, director of UF's Center for Arts in Medicine, will moderate the panel discussion featuring Reeves and Nelson along with



Dr. Mutasim Abu-Hasan of UF's Department of Pediatrics in the College of Medicine and Dr. David Fedele of UF's Department of Clinical and Health Psychology in the College of Public Health and Health Professions.

Breathe was created after Reeves took a solo performance class with Nelson his senior year of college. He says the work is "creative nonfiction/autobiographical," as the play looks at what it was like growing up with cystic fibrosis, Reeves' challenges and setbacks, and his transplant. *Breathe* was first previewed at Theatre 99 in Charleston, South Carolina, in November 2014. After its premiere, Reeves took the show to his hometown of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, for two performances at Main Street Theatre in December 2014. *Breathe* then had a 10-show run at Piccolo Spoleto Festival in 2015 where it was named one of the top five shows at the festival. Reeves has also keynoted the South Carolina Theatre Association (SCTA) with his performance of *Breathe* in Greenville, South Carolina, and has performed for the doctors, nurses and patients of the Medical University of South Carolina. Lucinda Lavelli, dean of UF's College of the Arts, believed the UF and Gainesville community would find the story compelling and approached Dr. Michael G. Perri, dean of the College of Public Health and Health Professions, about a co-sponsorship in order to bring the production to campus.

Creating *Breathe* and opening up about his personal story was not easy, according to Reeves, but the feedback he has received has celebrated the humanity behind the show.

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“Everyone has baggage; everyone has their *Breathe* show,” Reeves said. “I’ve found my voice in life, and I hope people can see that. I’ve not yet found the golden tagline to my show, but I want people to see me and listen to my story. My show is funny—don’t take life too seriously—and it’s sad—one step forward, two steps back. That’s what my life has been.”

Reeves said coming to UF is a dream. “I hope students, professors, anyone and everyone that can come comes,” said Reeves. “My wish is that everyone goes home after the show and relates their lives to *Breathe*.”

At the College of Charleston, Reeves majored in theatre performance: acting and directing. He lives in Charleston where he continues to perform both on stage and in film. In college and regionally, Reeves appeared in more than 10 shows, including Charleston’s comedy scene where he performs stand-up and sketch comedy. While traveling with his show, Reeves is currently working on a creative non-fiction novel about his life.

Nelson, director/co-creator of *Breathe*, is an award winning actor, playwright and solo performer. His film/TV credits include *Turn* (AMC), *The Inspectors* (CBS) and *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same* (Netflix, Moma). He has appeared in numerous original plays, including *Silence of Lucky* (78th Street Theatre Lab), *Status Update* (59E59, Edinburgh Fringe Festival), *The Elephant in My Closet* (Cincinnati Fringe Festival, Out of the Loop), *Folly Beach* (PURE Theatre, SPACE at Ryder Farm) and *Mary and Joseph at the Hampton Inn* (PURE Theatre). His New York City acting credits include *Stupid F*cking Bitch by Lucy Alibar* (Ensemble Studio Theatre), *Binge* by Thomas Ward (Slant Theatre Project) and *MFA: Alabama Shakespeare Festival*. Nelson is currently working on two commissions, a new play for PURE Theatre in Charleston, and a solo play for Slant Theatre Project in New York. He is the playwright-in-residence and at PURE Theatre and a proud member of Actors’ Equity.

Performance and Ticket Information

The Phillips Center for the Performing Arts is located at 3201 Hull Road in Gainesville, Florida. Tickets to *Breathe* are \$20 and \$30 for those who wish to attend the reception following the Saturday evening performance. Tickets may be purchased by phone at 352-392-2787 or online at www.performingarts.ufl.edu.

“endearing and unpretentious... funny even in its most sobering moments”
–Katherine LaDue, Charleston City Paper

This event has been funded in part by a Tourist Development Tax Grant from the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners in conjunction with the Alachua County Tourism Development Council.

About UF’s College of the Arts

The College of the Arts is one of the 16 colleges and more than 150 research centers and institutes at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. The College of the Arts offers baccalaureate, master’s and Ph.D. degree programs in its three institutionally-accredited schools — the School of Art + Art History, School of Music and School of Theatre + Dance. The college is home to the Center for Arts in Medicine, Center for Arts and Public Policy, Center for World Arts, Digital Worlds Institute, University Galleries and the New World School of the Arts in Miami. More than 100 faculty members and approximately than 1,200 students work together daily to engage, inspire and create. The college hosts more than 300 performances, exhibitions and events each year. Faculty and students also exhibit and perform at other local, national and international venues. To learn more, visit www.arts.ufl.edu.