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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***THE DEATH PENALTY - ONE OF THE MOST HOTLY DEBATED ISSUES OF OUR TIME!***

***The Chance Theater proudly presents the Orange County Premiere of Bruce Graham's intriguing, award-winning play "Coyote on a Fence" – Gala Opening on August 6<sup>th</sup>!***

**IN A NUTSHELL:**

WHAT: Orange County Premiere of "Coyote on a Fence," by Bruce Graham

Directed by Patricia Ansuini

WHEN: August 6 – September 10, 2006

Sat 4 p.m., Sun. 6 p.m.

HOW MUCH: \$25 General Admission

\$22 Seniors/Students with ID

WHERE: The Chance Theater, 5552 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92807

INFO/RESERVATIONS: Theater Info Line 714.777.3033

24/7 Ticket Line 800.838.3006

24/7 tickets online [www.chancetheater.com](http://www.chancetheater.com)

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Venture into the moral maze surrounding the death penalty when two opposites are brought together by the proximity of their cells and the fundamental need to make a connection. Protesting his innocence in appeals and the press, John, educated and arrogant, specializes in writing sanitized death row obituaries. Self-confessed racist mass murderer, Bobby, is naïve, simple-minded and psychotic. Side by side in their death row cells, John and Bobby's unfolding relationship allows us to confront our notions of justice, tolerance and media influence. Can one be "innocent" though proven guilty? Is killing a predator always morally justifiable?

The Orange County Premiere of Bruce Graham's award-winning play *Coyote on a Fence*, directed by Patricia Ansuini, making her Chance Theater directorial debut, will open on Sunday, August 6, 2006 and run for a total of 11 performances through September 10, 2006. Show times are Saturdays at 4:00 p.m., and Sundays at 6:00 p.m. There will be a Post-Performance "Talkback" Discussion with the cast after every Sunday performance. For all general performances, tickets are \$25 General Admission, and \$22 for Seniors and Students with I.D. A \$20 Preview Performance is scheduled for August 5, at 4:00 p.m. The Opening Gala on Sunday, August 6, at 6:00 p.m. will include a champagne reception after the performance. A Dinner and Show package with Yves' Bistro and Café Europe is also available.

Director Patricia Ansuini has worked in professional and educational theatre throughout the Midwest as a teacher,

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director, and stage manager for nearly 30 years. In discussing why this production is especially meaningful to her, Ansuini states that “whenever the issue of the death penalty emerges in our national discourse, it is often prompted by a sensational case, new legislation or a botched execution attempt. It is then that I struggle once again with the issues that inform and surround the death penalty in America. And, often I turn to art, and in this case theater, to help me understand and confront my own prejudices, fears and stereotyped thinking.”

Ansuini continued, “Bruce Graham’s *Coyote on a Fence* was inspired by James Beathard, a Texas State Penitentiary inmate who published a death-row newspaper. Over the course of a two-year correspondence with Beathard, playwright Graham developed the script, which is dedicated to Beathard, who was executed in 1999 and later exonerated. Passages from his letters are quoted throughout the play which poses many challenging questions: Is the death penalty always the correct moral choice? Why is a life sentence a less acceptable punishment for certain crimes than the death penalty? What role does doubt play, if any, when we proclaim our moral righteousness? Are we safer when a ‘predator’ is put to death and does that death forestall the further commitment of capital crimes? Can we be a truly civilized society and continue to justify execution and at what cost to individuals and society? And finally, what is daily life like for the condemned?”

“*Coyote* will be played on a very spare set in a foreshortened space,” explains Ansuini. “It is hoped that the audience will gain a real sense of what it is like to be confined in a cramped, perpetually observed cell. The actors will be virtually playing among the audience in an effort to bring them, in a much more participatory way, into the life and ideas of the play. We want to provoke them into examining and judging for themselves, as only theater can do, what and who is right or wrong and what and who is morally righteous or not.”

Bruce Graham rose to prominence in the 1990s as one of America’s top dramatists. Having spent eight years as Playwright-in-Residence at The Philadelphia Festival Theater for New Plays, Graham’s body of work has been presented at such renowned venues as the George Street Playhouse, the WPA, Urban Stages, the Hudson Guild, Capital Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse, Arden Theater, Northlight Theater and Long Wharf. He has received awards from the Pew Foundation, the Theater Association of Pennsylvania, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Graham was also the 1992 Princess Grace Foundation Statuette recipient.

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The Chance Theater is honored to be presenting the *Orange County Premiere* of *Coyote on a Fence* which premiered in 1998 at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, winning the Lois and Richard Rosenthal Award given annually to the “Best New American Play.” The provocative play’s off-Broadway run garnered two Drama Desk nominations, as well as an Obie Award nomination. It has been performed in regional theaters across the country and had its London West End opening in 2004.

Graham’s other well-produced plays include *Burkie*, *Early One Evening At The Rainbow Bar & Grille*, *Moon Over The Brewery*, *Minor Demons*, *Belmont Avenue Social Club*, *The Champagne Charlie Stakes*, *Desperate Affection*, *According to Goldman*, and *The Philly Fan*. An accomplished film and television writer, as well, Graham recently won the Greater Philadelphia Film Office's Set In Philadelphia Screenwriting Competition for his script *Middle Aged White Guys*. His varied credits include: feature films - *Dunston Checks In*, *Anastasia*, and *Steal This Movie*; and television movies - *Hunt For The Unicorn Killer*, *The Christmas Secret*, *Right On Track*, *A Ring Of Endless Light* (2003 Humanitas Award Winner - Best Children's Film), and *Tiger Cruise*.

The cast features the following Chance Theater Repertory Company Members: Casey Long, just seen in our *L.A. Times* Critic’s Choice staging of *with their eyes: September 11<sup>th</sup> – The View from a High School at Ground Zero*; Annie Mezzacappa, recently on stage at The Chance in *Never In My Lifetime* (*Back Stage West* Critic’s Pick); and Karen Webster, last seen in our critically-acclaimed presentation of *Hot ‘N’ Throbbing*. Joining them will be long-time Chance Theater actor, Richard Comeau, who last performed in both of our 2005 holiday hits, *A Christmas Story* and *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues* (*OC Weekly* Best Ensemble).

If you would like to arrange an interview with the director or cast, would like more information, reservations or complimentary press passes, please call 714-777-3033.

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