

## BRITISH INVASION RETURNS IN 2018



CENTRAL STANDARD THEATRE

Pip Utton will present his solo show, “Maggie,” depicting former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Feb. 1 – 4, as part of actor/director Bob Paisley’s 2018 “British Invasion” series of performances by artists visiting from England and Ireland.

The British are coming — again.

Since 2010, actor/director Bob Paisley has invited theater artists from across the pond to bring their remarkable gifts to Kansas City audiences. What began as an annual “British Invasion” gradually expanded to include artists from Ireland, Canada, Australia and even the U.S. Much of the impetus stemmed from personal relationships Paisley forged while attending the prestigious Edinburgh Fringe in Scotland.

After giving the Invasion a year off in 2017, Paisley late last year unveiled a 2018 roster of performances by artists visiting from England and Ireland — but with a difference. Previously he compressed the Invasion into two weeks. This year he plans to spread it out across the winter, spring, summer and fall.

“We’re reigniting this thing,” Paisley said. “And I think doing it this way is going to be more affordable for all of us.”

In other words, audiences are more likely to turn out for an individual artist performing a three- or four-day run than if they have to pick and choose from a complicated schedule of multiple performers over a week or two.

Part of the schedule is subject to change because one of the producer/artists, Rebecca Vaughan, was negotiating her first tour of China, which could force a change in dates.

But here’s the schedule as it stands:

**Pip Utton**, Feb. 1 – 4. Utton specializes in one-man shows portraying famous historical figures. KC audiences have seen his “Dickens” and “Churchill.” This year he will reprise his piece on Winston Churchill, but will bring three other solo shows: “Maggie” (depicting former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher), “Bacon” (about 20th-century painter Francis Bacon) and “Adolf” (about the German dictator with the last name of Hitler). One critic wrote of “Adolf” that “. . . all I can say is that it is some of the most powerful theatre I have ever seen and it was truly a privilege to watch, even if I was squirming in my seat throughout.”

**Owen O’Neill**, March 22 – 25. A veteran of the Edinburgh Fringe, O’Neill will perform his original piece, “Red Noise,” described as an evening of poetry and stand-up comedy.

**Stephen Cunningham**, Aug. 9 – 12. Cunningham will perform a one-man adaptation of H.G. Wells’ “The Time Machine,” written by Elton Townend Jones, another British Invasion veteran. A review of Cunningham’s Edinburgh performance praised the show: “Relying on a sparsely dressed stage and the talent of Stephen Cunningham (playing the unnamed time traveler), this production allows the imagination displayed by Wells to shine through.”

**Rebecca Vaughan**, Nov 15 – 18. Vaughan will perform “Jane Eyre, An Autobiography,” also written by Townend Jones. “Brilliantly performed by Rebecca Vaughan, Elton Townend Jones’ adaptation might be stripped back, but it doesn’t lose any of the atmosphere, warmth and sparkling chemistry of Jane’s tumultuous relationship with Mr. Rochester,” wrote one critic.

KC audiences will remember Vaughan from her previous Invasion performances as Queen Elizabeth, her ambitious “Austen’s Women” and her performance with Townend Jones of Mark Twain’s “The Diaries of Adam and Eve.”

Paisley said he felt it important to announce the season, even with dates subject to change.

“I wanted to get it all out there and pencil it in and have people at least thinking about it,” he said.

Paisley is a co-founder of the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre, but the Invasion is presented under the auspices of his own not-for-profit organization, Central Standard Theatre.

Utton and O’Neill are expected to perform at the MET, 3614 Main St. Audiences will likely see Cunningham and Vaughan at the Warwick Theatre, 3927 Main St. The MET bought the historic theater in 2015. Rehab work continues on the venue.

— **Robert Trussell**

For more information, visit Central Standard Theatre, [www.cstkc.com](http://www.cstkc.com)