



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MEDIA CONTACT: Jacqueline Leclerc, Manager, Marketing, Communications & Brand
jacqueline@mract.org or 604-476-2781**

***Tomatoes Tried To Kill Me But Banjos Saved My Life Performance Supports the
Healing Power of the Arts in Maple Ridge***

**Award-winning Off-Broadway and Edinburgh Festival Show Comes to The ACT Arts Centre in
a Co-Fundraiser Event with the Ridge Meadows Hospital Foundation**

MAPLE RIDGE, January 6, 2023 - The ACT Arts Centre and the Ridge Meadows Hospital Foundation will partner to bring the inspirational and humorous award-winning show [Tomatoes Tried to Kill Me But Banjos Saved My Life](#) to The ACT's Mainstage Theatre on January 27th, 2023.

Written and performed by self-labeled “recovering executive” Keith Alessi, the musical stage show recounts the story of how Alessi greeted a grim cancer diagnosis with a determination to pursue his passion — learning the banjo.

Over 200 performances and international tours later, including Off-Broadway and at the famed Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, Alessi brings this inspiring and humorous performance to Maple Ridge in support of the arts and healing.

The show in Maple Ridge will feature a special guest appearance by the Juno™ award-winning Roots/Folk artists [Pharis and Jason Romero](#). In addition to his musical artistry, Jason Romero is also a highly sought-after maker of handcrafted banjos, one of which Alessi plays.

The ACT Arts Centre and the Ridge Meadows Hospital Foundation have partnered in a previous co-fundraiser benefitting both institutions in the community, so the event was a new opportunity to work together again for the benefit of the community. “When I learned, this show was coming to BC, I immediately thought it could have a bigger impact for our community by partnering with the Hospital Foundation”, says Curtis Pendleton, artistic and executive director of The ACT Arts Centre .

Laura Butler, executive director of the Ridge Meadows Hospital Foundation, immediately agreed, commenting, “the concept of healing in the time of the pandemic has taken on a much more holistic meaning, and we are now learning how important participating in the arts can be to impacts on health and wellness.”

The event includes a pre-performance reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres catered by the popular Humble Roots café and wine. Tickets are \$50 (\$25 tax-deductible). The two organizations also received an anonymous match donation that will contribute \$25 for every ticket sold, up to \$10,000, further increasing the event's impact.

Alessi donates all of his performance fees and has raised over \$600,00 for cancer research and treatment.

Tickets to the event are available online at <https://theactmapleridge.org/tomatoes-tried-to-kill-me>; in-person at The ACT Arts Centre Box Office - Monday to Saturday, 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm - located at 11944 Haney Place, or by phone at 604-476-2787,

"Alessi's Italian-Canadian corporate-to-banjo story is thoroughly entertaining."

- Theatre is Easy – New York City

"Alessi's inspirational and compelling tale will pluck at your heartstrings, clawhammer style."

- Winnipeg Free Press

About The ACT Arts Centre

The ACT Arts Centre, opened in 2003, is operated by the Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Arts Council, and provides excellence in Arts Learning Programs, Gallery Exhibitions and Performing Arts Presentations, along with being home to many cultural and community events. Reaching over 70,000 patrons annually through 30-50 performances, the ACT Art Gallery, Arts Learning Programs, and community use groups, The ACT Arts Centre works, creates, learns, and connects on the traditional unceded territories of the Katzie First Nation and Kwantlen First Nation.

The ACT Arts Centre gratefully acknowledges the support of **Morningstar Homes** as the 2022/23 Season Title Sponsor, **Prospera Credit Union** as the 2022/23 Community Arts Programs Sponsor, The Department of Canadian Heritage, The BC Arts Council and the Province of BC and The City of Maple Ridge, along with support from the many generous individual contributors to the centre's Annual Fund.

Ridge Meadows Hospital Foundation

We are proud to partner with our community to raise funds to support the purchase of essential equipment and high priority health care needs at our hospital and in our community.