The Department of Theatre at Purdue University, West Lafayette IN, will open its 2015-2016 season with the premiere of *Betty’s Diner*, a new musical collaboration among singer-songwriter Carrie Newcomer, Purdue Theatre sound design professor Richard K. Thomas, and musical director Gary Walters, who performs with the Indianapolis Symphony and is on the music faculty at Butler University. Visiting artist, Robin McKee, will direct the play. The setting for *Betty’s Diner* is in a small college town in Southern Indiana and features a cast of characters who are a humorous and somewhat gritty collection of regular customers that create the fabric of a deep community.

The team of Newcomer, Thomas, and Walters state that the impetus for *Betty’s Diner* comes from a strong commitment, fascination, and need to explore the subjects of human spirituality in a world that feels increasingly fragmented, divided and often without purpose. In Betty’s Diner, the “wants and the wounds of the human race” all come together in an exploration of the nature of family and community, of finding the sacred in the ordinary, of the value and worth of every human being, and of the significance of the moment. Audience members will become patrons at this archetypal gathering place, and they will leave infused with the sense of hope, community and joy that have become hallmarks of the Carrie Newcomer experience.

Carrie Newcomer is a bright light in the American folk music community. She has been described as “a soaring songstress” by Billboard, a “prairie mystic,” by the Boston Globe and Rolling Stone wrote that she “asks all the right questions.” One of the definitive voices of the heartland and progressive spirituality, Newcomer has the ability for sharp observation of the world, attracting a devoted following with her warm voice, exquisite melodies, and an irreverent yet spiritual view of the world.

Michael McNamara, chair of the Department of Theatre at Purdue and producer of their performance season, said “We are proud to present this new work, to support this labor of love, and to provide a venue to give voice to the people and patrons of Betty’s Diner.”

*Betty’s Diner* will premiere September 25, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. and run through October 10. Performances will be in the Carole and Gordon Mallett Theatre, Yue-Kong Pao Hall of Visual and Performing Arts, Purdue University, 552 W. Wood St., West Lafayette, IN 47907-2002. Ticket are available at campus box offices, or by calling (765) 494-3933 or (800) 914-SHOW.