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THEATRE RHINOCEROS
2008 GLAAD MEDIA AWARD WINNER
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Eastenders Repertory Company and Theatre Rhinoceros, John Fisher, Executive Director, present

100 YEARS OF QUEER THEATRE

Seventh Annual Festival of Short Works
Theatre Rhinoceros' 2nd production in Season 2008-09
October 28-November 23, 2008,
Wednesdays – Sundays
Theatre Rhinoceros (2926 16th Street, San Francisco)

Full calendar listing on page 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

100 YEARS OF QUEER THEATRE

Seventh Annual Festival of Short Works

Previews October 28-30; Opens October 31, 2008

(San Francisco, CA – September 29, 2008) Eastenders Repertory Company presents its **Seventh Annual Festival of Short Works, a co-production of Theatre Rhinoceros.** The festival features eight short plays in repertory: The world premiere of *The Dangerous Precaution a Comedy in One Act with Songs* by Mikhail Kuzmin; *The Dove* by Djuna Barnes; *And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens ...* by Tennessee Williams; *Ruffian on the Stair* by Joe Orton; *T-Shirts* by Robert Patrick; *Giving up the Ghost* by Cherrie Moraga; *Bad Dream* by Craig Lucas; and *Terminating, or Lass Meine Schmerzen Nicht Verloren Sein, or Ambivalence* by Tony Kushner. Eight plays exploring the diversity and impact of gay and lesbian playwrights and queer-themed theatre during the past century. The Festival previews October 28, 29 and 30, opens on October 31 and runs through November 23 on the mainstage at Theatre Rhinoceros, 2926 16th Street in San Francisco. Tickets (\$15-25) may be purchased by calling **415-861-5079**.

Have the experiences of gays and lesbians been mainstreamed to such an extent that this kind of identity-based theatre is a thing of the past? Few would question the fact that Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* changed the theatrical landscape – and not just of queer theatre, but of American theatre as a whole – forever. Playwrights such as Jon

Robin Baitz, Craig Lucas, Jane Chambers, Lanford Wilson, and Terrence McNally enjoy broad appeal, and are today considered a part of the mainstream. In looking over the past 100 years, there has never been a shortage of gay and lesbian playwrights; what has changed radically is both the type of work mainstream society is ready to embrace, and the willingness of playwrights to write openly with queer themes and characters integrated into the story, and to create work that reflects on gay life within the context of society as a whole. *100 YEARS OF QUEER THEATRE* presents a gamut of queer representation on stage, but what truly unites all eight of the selected works is that they tell the story of being different, and depict the journey of forging new rules to live by.

ERC presents these eight plays in chronological sequence in rotating repertory, enabling audiences to enjoy skilled performers in a variety of roles. The festival features an ensemble of actors: Gene Mocsy, John Hutchinson, Carolyn Doyle, Amanda Krampf, Diana Gutierrez, Wylie Herman, Drew Todd, Aaron Martinsen, Dale Albright, Craig Souza, P.A. Cooley, Michael Vega, Aaron Tworek, Natalia Toscano, Maria Carolina Morales, Jessie Aquirre, Lula Chapman

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAYS, PLAYWRIGHTS & DIRECTORS:

SERIES A (1900-1959)

The Dangerous Precaution a Comedy in One Act with Songs by Mikhail Kuzmin (1907). In pre-Revolutionary Russia, Kuzmin, drama critic, poet (and quite the dandy) authored the homoerotic novella *Wings*, and even dabbled as a composer in Meyerhold's theatre. This curious little piece, *The Dangerous Precaution*, a guiltless "comedy in one act with songs" echoes Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and *Winter's Tale* in both its cross-dressing and fairy-tale like atmosphere.

Directed by Theatre Rhinoceros Artistic Director John Fisher

The Dove by Djuna Barnes.

First performed 1926 at Smith College. One of Barnes' most successful plays of her early period, *The Dove* is reminiscent of *Hedda Gabler* and is a bizarre mixture of symbolism, realism and Wildean sense of wit. In the play, two intense, sexually frustrated sisters play with their collection of knives and pistols; they also have in their collection a young girl called "the Dove," who represents another kind of voyeuristic danger.

Directed by Eastenders Artistic Director Susan E. Evans

And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens ... by Tennessee Williams.

Written probably in 1957 and first produced in 2004, the Queen of the title is Candy Delaney, a transvestite gay interior designer living in the Vieux Carré of New Orleans. Suffering "the spectre of loneliness" – and after being recently deserted by his much older lover – Candy picks up rough trade in the Quarter and the play recounts his ill-fated attempt at a relationship. A remarkably courageous play for the time period in which it was written, the fact that Williams may not have completed the script until 1970 but it was not published until 2002 and not produced until 2004 are further evidence of its power and importance. ERC produced this play in its Sixth Annual Festival, *100 Years of Sex-Acts*, and looks forward to introducing it to a new audience.

Directed by Eastenders Founding Artistic Director Charles E. Polly

SERIES B (1960-1979)

Ruffian on the Stair by Joe Orton.

First broadcast on BBC Radio in 1964 and first staged in 1966 at the Royal Court Theatre, it was later revised and presented in *Crimes of Passion*, a double bill of Orton plays also featuring *The Erpingham Camp* in 1967. Mike, a petty thief, and Joyce, a former prostitute, are visited by the young, attractive and mysterious Wilson, who forces himself into their home and terrifies Joyce while Mike is out "meeting a man in the toilet." This short one-act contains all three ingredients of Orton's future work: murder, homosexuality and incest.

Directed by ERC Company Member Gina Baleria

T-Shirts by Robert Patrick.

First performed at The Out-And-About Theatre Company in Minneapolis in 1978, *T-Shirts* is a serious critique of the cynical gay world of 1970s, a character study of three men exploring what is it to find love at a time when it was easier to find sex, and when youth and beauty were valued above all else. Robert Patrick is a highly prolific and influential pioneer of gay theatre who emerged out of off-off Broadway's Caffe Cino in the early to mid-60s.

Directed by ERC Company Member Jeff Thompson

SERIES C (1980-2000)

Giving up the Ghost by Cherríe Moraga.

An early version was first produced by Front Room Theatre in Seattle in 1987 and it was premiered in 1989 at the Theatre Rhinoceros Studio. A current artist-in-residence in playwrighting in the Department of Drama at Stanford University, Cherríe Moraga is a nationally recognized poet, essayist and playwright recently awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship for Literature. In the San Francisco Bay Area, her work has premiered at Theatre Artaud, Theatre Rhinoceros, the Eureka Theatre, and Brava Theater. Writing not only as a Chicana but also as a lesbian and a feminist, Moraga's work explores the issue of dealing with multiple identities. This play is a lyrical and powerful portrait of the intersection of the lives of two women, Marisa/Corky, a Chicana woman, at two stages of her life, and Amalia, an older Mexican-born painter.

Directed by Mary Guzmán

Bad Dream by Craig Lucas.

A brief and poignant two-hander on the subject of sex and intimacy in the age of AIDs, it was first performed on radio by the Atlantic Theater Company in 1992. Craig Lucas' *Prelude to a Kiss* was a huge Broadway success and he is now widely recognized as one of America's leading contemporary playwrights (recently receiving a Tony nomination for the book of *Light in the Piazza*), as well as a film and theatre director. With this success in the mainstream, Lucas has gained the freedom and visibility to bring attention to gay and lesbian issues, and the responsibilities of gay artists.

Directed by Jon Wai-keung Lowe

Terminating, or Lass Meine Schmerzen Nicht Verloren Sein, or Ambivalence by Tony Kushner.

Premiered at the Guthrie Theater Lab in 1998. Indisputably one of the most important dramatists of the 20th c., Kushner's *Angels in America* changed the dramatic landscape of queer theatre. This hilariously paranoid episode recounts a delightfully tortured session between the kvetching Hendryk and his shrink, and their respective lovers. Mike

Steele of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* writes "Here's a bad idea: Send one or two Shakespearean sonnets to oh, seven of the best playwrights in Americas and ask them to write a short play inspired by said sonnets, Ohboyohboy ... It turns out to be ... inspired." *Terminating ... Ambivalence* is a completely modern version of Sonnet 75. Linda Winer of *Newsday* wrote, "It's hard to feel bad about the possibilities of the human spirit when Kushner's around." ERC produced this play in its very First One-Act Festival, *One Hundred Years of One-Acts*, and looks forward to introducing it to a new audience.

Directed by Eastenders Artistic Director Susan E. Evans

ABOUT THE COMPANIES:

The mission of **Eastenders Repertory Company** is to provide a collaborative, mentoring environment for theatre artists to produce both original and established works in repertory and to develop educational programs in theatre arts. ERC is dedicated to providing a stimulating environment for theatre artists and high-quality, affordable and accessible theatre for the Bay Area community. Past Eastenders productions include 3 *VANĚK PLAYS: Audience, Unveiling, and Protest* by Václav Havel, *FEAR AND MISERY OF THE THIRD REICH* by Bertolt Brecht, *PINTERESQUE* (Harold Pinter's *The Lover* and original short pieces inspired by that one-act), our prior six annual one-act festivals (*100 YEARS OF SEX-ACTS, ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF POLITICAL THEATRE, EIGHT X TENN, 106 YEARS OF COMEDY, ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF EURO-ONE-ACTS* and *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF ONE-ACTS*), the spring 2005 world premieres of Charles E. Polly's *A Knight's Escape* and Scott Munson's *WWJD?, Three Hotels* by Jon Robin Baitz, the local premieres of *Wonder of the World* by David Lindsay-Abaire and *[sic]* by Melissa James Gibson, and *TENN in 2002!* (Williams' *The Long Goodbye* and new short works inspired by that one-act); the world premiere of Founding Artistic Director Charles E. Polly's *THE TWYLA TRILOGY* (*Twyla's Boy, Twyla's Story* and *June Bug Music*); Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*; and the Bay Area premiere of Tennessee Williams' *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*.

Theatre Rhinoceros develops and produces works of theatre that enlighten, enrich and explore both the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of our queer community. The world's oldest continuously producing professional queer theater, Theatre Rhinoceros was founded in San Francisco in August 1977 by the late Allan Estes, Jr. Its first play, *The West Street Gang* by Doric Wilson, was staged in a South of Market leather bar, The Black and Blue. Theatre Rhinoceros is now in its 31st year under the leadership of Artistic Director John Fisher, and remains committed to Allan Estes' original vision.

CALENDAR LISTINGS

WHO: Eastenders Repertory Company and Theatre Rhinoceros, John Fisher,
Executive Director

WHAT: "100 YEARS OF QUEER THEATRE"
Seventh Annual Festival of Short Works
Eight short plays performed in rotating repertory exploring the diversity and
impact of gay and lesbian playwrights and queer-themed theatre during
the past century.

DATES:

Series A *The Dangerous Precaution*
The Dove
And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens ...

Series B *Ruffian on the Stair*
T-Shirts

Series C *Giving Up the Ghost*
Bad Dream
Terminating, or Lass Meine Schmerzen Nicht Verloren Sein, or
Ambivalence

WHEN: Previews Tues. - Thurs., Oct. 28, Oct. 29, Oct. 30, 2008
Runs Fri. Oct. 31-Nov. 23
Series A: Oct. 28 (preview); Oct. 31; Nov. 5, 8, 13, 16, 21
Series B: Oct. 29 (preview), Nov. 1, Nov. 6, 9, 14, 19, 22,
Series C: Oct. 30 (preview); Nov. 2, Nov. 7, 12, 15, 20, 23

Closes: Sunday, November 23

SHOWTIMES: Tuesday, Oct. 28 & Wed.-Sat. Oct. 29- Nov. 22 at **8:00 p.m.**
Sunday evening Nov. 2 at **7:00 p.m.**
Sunday matinees, Nov. 9, Nov. 16 and Nov. 23 at **3:00 p.m.**

VENUE: Theatre Rhinoceros, Mainstage (2926 16th Street (at South Van Ness, BART),
San Francisco, CA 94103)

TICKETS: \$15 Wednesday evenings; \$20 Thursday, Fridays and Sundays; \$25 Saturday.
Discount tickets available for students/seniors and members of KQED, KTEH, and TBA.
Group rates available

10% off any two series; 20% off all three Series

BOX OFFICE: 415-861-5079; www.TheRhino.org

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