



### **Next Stop Amazingland**

**Welcome to Center Theatre Group's Target Young Audiences Program performance of *Next Stop Amazingland!***

**This is one of a handful of shows that make up Center Theatre Group's 2009-2010 DouglasPlus Series. Unlike most of our YAP performances, you and your students will have the unique opportunity to be a part of a Dramaturgical Audience. That means that your individual feedback will help the artists in further developing their show.**

**Part of the beauty of theatre is that it is a living artform that can change, transform and evolve from one performance to the next. So pay close attention, have fun, and don't forget to tell us what you really think! Here we go...**

### **DouglasPlus**

DouglasPlus, Center Theatre Group's new program that fosters new work, new theatrical forms and new audiences at the Kirk Douglas Theatre, begins its second season in late October and will include a series of readings and staged workshops, a special, one-night only event and a limited-run of a family-friendly theatre piece.

From October 30, 2009, through February 21, 2010, DouglasPlus will include works by playwrights Kate Fodor and Jessica Goldberg; modern vaudevillians Geoff Sobelle and Trey Lyford with world-class magician Steve Cuiffo; writer/lyricist Melissa James Gibson and composer Michael Friedman; and multi-disciplinary artist Lars Jan. In addition, the youth theatre piece featuring an electro-luminescent wire dinosaur, *Darwin*, returns to DouglasPlus.

DouglasPlus was introduced in the 2008-2009 Kirk Douglas Theatre season with the goals of broadening the spectrum of what Center Theatre Group can develop, produce and present at the Douglas. It provides an eclectic mix of theatre choices that utilize both traditional and non-traditional performance spaces. Each presentation has a very limited number of performances to be sold at a modest price.

## New Play Development

Center Theatre Group's Literary Department and office of New Play Production are committed to giving both emerging and established playwrights the opportunity to create new work for the American Theatre. New plays are developed through the process of staged readings, workshops and commissions with the aid of a New Play Development Dramaturg. Here are some terms commonly used during this process.

### Terms

#### **Dramaturg [dram-uh-turj, drah-muh-] - noun**

a theatre specialist who works as a researcher and/or scholar to provide actors and directors with specific definitions and translations for classical scripts. They may stand in for a deceased playwright in order to make sure that their vision is achieved. *A Dramaturg specializing in Elizabethan Literature was hired to work with the company of actors for the upcoming production of the Jew of Malta.*

#### **New Play Development Dramaturg**

a theatre expert who works with a contemporary playwright to help them develop a new play. He/she aids the writer in creating a more cohesive and/or complete story by identifying any missing steps and making sure that the playwright's ideas are being clearly articulated on the page. *The creators of Next Stop Amazingland developed the show with the help of a New Play Development Dramaturg from Center Theatre Group.*

#### **Development [di-vel-uh-p-muhnt] - noun**

the act or process of developing; growth; progress: *Ellen is developing her new play in a writers' workshop at Center Theatre Group.*

#### **Reading [ree-ding] - noun**

an instance or occasion in which a text or other matter is read or performed, usually without elaborate preparation and often as a means of testing its merits: *The playwright had a reading of his new play for prospective producers.*

#### **Workshop [wurk-shop] - noun**

a seminar, discussion group, or the like, that emphasizes exchange of ideas and the demonstration and application of techniques, skills, etc.: *a theater workshop; opera workshop. Next week Center Theatre Group will be hosting the third workshop of the play to prepare it for future production.*

#### **Production [pruh-duhk-shuhn] - noun**

A staging or presentation of a theatrical work: *a new Broadway production of a musical.*

**Premiere [pri-meer, -myair] - noun**

a first public performance or showing of a play, opera, film, etc. *The world premiere of Minsky's took place at the Ahmanson Theatre in January 2008.*

---

**The Commission Process**

**Commission [kuh-mish-uhn] - verb (used with object)**

to give a commission or order for: *Center Theatre Group recently commissioned Danai Gurira, writer of Eclipsed, to create a new play.*

1. The selected playwright is identified.
2. The writer is then assigned their first deadline. They are usually given approximately a year to complete their first draft.
3. A second deadline is then assigned. It is usually one year from when the first draft was completed.
4. A director and a cast of actors are brought in to do a staged reading of the completed draft. All of the production elements are minimal since the purpose of the presentation is for the playwright to hear what the play really sounds like. Or
5. A 1-2 week workshop facilitated by an assigned Dramaturg is held in order to help the playwright further develop the script. The finished draft is then presented as a staged reading when the workshop has ended.
6. At this point the Artistic Staff makes the difficult decision of whether or not the play will be produced.

Note: All playwrights that are commissioned are not guaranteed a production. Commissions are, however, always developed with an eye towards production.

---

**Next Stop Amazingland!**

**Amazingland. [uh-mey-zing-land] (n) place, zone or state.** Where your mind is blown clean through the back of your head by the sheer power, grace and unbelievability of a magical performance. Where your jaw drops helplessly to your knees, you shudder and lose control of all bodily functions, you are overwhelmed in a barrage of glitz, glam and shazam - and you wonder - where am I? Well, you're in Amazingland. And that's a pretty amazing place to be.

From the twisted minds of the dreamscape vaudeville *all wear bowlers* and the kinetic junk play *machines machines machines machines machines machines machines*, and

now teaming up the shaman-like powers of magician Steve Cuiffo (The Amazing Russello; Lenny Bruce); comes an experience you weren't even aware existed. Three magicians. Zero boring stuff. It's time to make it all add up. In *Amazingland*. *Next Stop Amazingland* satirizes and embraces the dazzling world of magic. Three semi-pro magicians are on the journey of a lifetime bringing wonder to the masses. A lost, divorced shaman from the desert, a mentalist with a penchant for moat-and-sword warlock acts and a ladies-man card master who hasn't been on a date in 15 years join together for the first (and last) time to bring astonishment to the needy and try to miraculously piece their lives together. This is their show. The more the characters posture, front and hide behind their "smoke/mirrors," the more they reveal their vulnerability.

This is the story of truth and deception. Self-deception. It is a portrait of our contemporary culture as a juvenile charlatan more concerned with slick outward appearance than depth, spirituality or adulthood; an evening of magic born from the lies that we tell ourselves in order to keep the show on the road. Here lies the grand illusion: that we can willingly suspend our disbelief with no strings attached.

## Artist Bios

### **Steve Cuiffo**

Steve Cuiffo is an actor and magician. Theater credits include Radiohole's *Fluke*; *Major Bang* (Foundry Theater), *Steve Cuiffo Is Lenny Bruce at Joe's Pub*; Rinne Groff's *Orange, Lemon, Egg, Canary* at P.S. 122; Lypinska's *The Passion of the Crawford*; *Patriot Act - A Public Meditation* (New York Theatre Workshop); *Ghostlight - work in progress* (NYTW Dartmouth Residency); *The Amazing Russello Magic Hour* (Joe's Pub/Public Theater); *The Roaring Girle* (Foundry Theatre); *Brace Up!, North Atlantic* (Wooster Group); *Byrdlesque* (Donald Byrd-New Victory Theater, Broadway); *The Filament Cycle* (Tea Alagic/Stateless); *Fever* (NY Fringe Festival); *The Man With The Flower In His Mouth* (Lo-Fi-Co); *The Marriage Of Bette And Boo, Street Scene* (NYU). Film: *On-line*; *Company K*; *Every Dog's Day*.

### **Trey Lyford**

Trey Lyford is a New York-based theatre artist and Co-Artistic Director of rainpan 43. Following a successful collaboration with *all wear bowlers* (2005 Drama Desk Nomination, Innovative Theatre Award), rainpan 43 premiered its new work *Amnesia Curiosa* at the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival in the summer 2006. In the spring of 2007 R43 produced and created *machines machines machines machines machines machines machines machines*. In the spring of 2008 the company will be presenting all three original works at DC's Studio Theatre in "The New Absurd – a performance series by rainpan 43". In 2003 Trey was an artist-in-residence at HERE Arts Center. Mr. Lyford has performed in venues both nationally and internationally including the Sydney Opera House, Genoa's Teatro Della Tosse, London's Barbican Centre, LA's Center Theatre Group, La Jolla Playhouse, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, HBO Aspen Comedy Fest, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Folger Shakespeare Theatre, BAM Café, SOHO Rep and London's Gate Theatre. Along with his work with rainpan 43, Mr. Lyford is an Associate Artist with the Obie-Award winning company The Civilians (*Gone Missing* (co-creator), *Nobody's Lunch*, *Paris Commune*) and has created original pieces with Philadelphia's Pig Iron and San Francisco's Joe Goode Performance Group. Mr. Lyford was the recipient of a Princess Grace Award as well as the Fabergé Theatre Excellence Award. He is a graduate of Vassar College and holds an MFA from UCSD.

### **Geoff Sobelle**

Geoff Sobelle is the Co-Artistic Director of **rainpan 43**, an artistic partnership with Trey Lyford bent on absurdist actor-created performance works. With **R43** he has co-created and performed in *all wear bowlers* (an existential clown play), *Amnesia Curiosa* (a surgical séance), and *machines machines machines machines machines machines machines machines machines machines*. (a rube-goldberg-kinetic junk-sculpture-catastrophe). Geoff was awarded an Independence Foundation Fellowship and a grant from the Philadelphia Theatre Initiative to create *all wear bowlers* (Innovative Theatre Award, Drama Desk

Award nomination) and received a second grant from PTI in 2006 to produce *machines machines machines machines machines machines machines*. He has been nominated for three Barrymore Awards, including the prestigious F. Otto Haas Award for an emerging Philadelphia Theatre Artist and was named “Best Theatre Artist 2004” in *Philadelphia Magazine*. Last year, Geoff received a 2006 Pew Fellowship in the Arts. Since 2001, Geoff has also been a company member of the Pig Iron Theatre Company, an Obie Award-winning ensemble-based physical theatre company dedicated to creating original work. In 2003, Geoff participated in the Princeton Atelier program with Pig Iron to create *James Joyce is Dead and so is Paris: the Lucia Joyce Cabaret*. He is a graduate of Stanford University, and trained at École with Jacques Lecoq in Paris, France. He is a card-carrying member of the Society of American Magicians and the Magic Castle in Hollywood.

## Aristotle's Elements of Drama

The great Greek philosopher Aristotle outlined what he believed to be the six most important elements of a play in his treatise, *The Poetics*. This outline became a guideline for many playwrights throughout history including William Shakespeare. The Six Elements of Drama are still used today by many writers as a foundation for structuring their stories and by scholars as a basis for play analysis.

"Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality- namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Song." – Aristotle

1. Plot – what happens in a play; the order of events, the story as opposed to the theme; what happens rather than what it means.
2. Theme/Ideas – what the play means as opposed to what happens (plot); the main idea within the play.
3. Character – the personality or the part an actor represents in a play; a role played by an actor in a play.
4. Language/Dialogue – the word choices made by the playwright and the enunciation of the actors delivering the lines.
5. Music/Song – by music Aristotle meant the sound, rhythm and melody of the speeches.
6. Spectacle – the visual elements of the production of a play; the scenery, costumes, and special effects in a production.

"A tragedy is a representation of an action that is whole and complete and of a certain magnitude. A whole is what has a beginning and middle and end."  
– Aristotle

## **CREATING A SCENE**

**Every great play begins with a great idea. Sometimes, these ideas are rooted in what the playwright knows and other times they are rooted in what he/she would like to imagine knowing. In order to bring a story to life a playwright must first identify the world that he/she is creating and the rules that define it. Below, you will find a writing exercise to help you create a scene from a personal experience.**

Begin by drawing a diagram of a place that you refer to as home. This can be the house you grew up in, the place where you live now, your grandparent's home, summer camp, your favorite classroom, etc.

Next, choose the safest part of your home, the scariest part of your home, and the heart of your home. You should mark these on your diagram.

Now, choose one of the three places marked on your diagram. Think of the three most vivid memories that you have in that place. Write all three of these down.

Choose one of the three memories you wrote down. Who shares this memory with you? Is it someone who is still in your life? Or someone who is no longer living? Is it a happy memory or a sad one? Write down a color, a smell, a sound, and a feeling that captures that memory.



Now, recreate that same memory but from the other person's perspective. Is the memory the same for both of you? What is the same? What is different?

Now create a conversation between you and the other person about that memory. What does this dialogue/conversation sound like?

## **FINDING STORY**

**Playwrights are always creating new characters. As a writer you have to get to know those characters as well as you know your family members or closest friends. You must know how they look, move, talk, act and feel. This will help you to determine what decisions they will make or not make and how your story will play out. Below you will find a writing exercise to help you create the main character/protagonist of your story.**

What is the story you want to tell? Is it real? Is it fiction?

Who is your main character? What is his/her name? Now create 12 things about your character (i.e. their birthday, favorite color, where they were born, etc.).

Describe a day in the life of your protagonist/main character? What is their everyday world like?

Describe an event that happens to your protagonist/main character that shakes him or her up so much that he or she feels changed. This is the trigger point – the point of disruption in your protagonist's everyday world (*This initiates the action of your story.*). Because of this event, what does your protagonist discover he/she needs? What does he/she discover about himself/herself?

On the basis of this need, what does your protagonist decide is his/her greatest want? What is his/her greatest fear? This is the dramatic objective of your protagonist (*It represents a desire that will drive the action of your play.*).

What is an action that your protagonist might take to achieve his/her objective?

What is at stake for your protagonist if he/she does not get what he/she wants?

Do you plan to utilize any spectacle in your play, such as magic realism or music? In what ways?

If you had to tell the story of your play in a single sentence, what would you say? “My play is about...?”