

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, July 18, 2014
Kill Date: Monday, September 22, 2014



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**Leave 'em laughing: Strawshop's
final play at the Erickson Theatre Off Broadway
is Peter Shaffer's BLACK COMEDY**

COMPANY MOVES TO 12TH AVE ARTS IN JANUARY

While most of the attention around Strawberry Theatre Workshop is focused on the versatile new community arts center now under construction on 12th Avenue, the company has a farewell gesture for its longtime home on Harvard Avenue. Strawshop returns to the Erickson Theatre Off Broadway for its fifteenth and final production there: **Sir Peter Shaffer's** brilliant one-act, ***Black Comedy***. Featuring an ensemble cast of Seattle's funniest actors, the farce opens August 21 for a five-week run concluding September 20.

Black Comedy is an exhilarating farce, which introduces impoverished artist Brindsley Miller as he tries to entertain his fiancée, her father, two eccentric neighbors, an ex-lover, and the richest man in England, on what promises to be the biggest night of his life. When his flat is plunged into darkness by a blown fuse, events take magnificently unexpected turns.

Peter Shaffer won both Tony Awards and Oscars for his scripts, *Equus* (1973) and *Amadeus* (1979). *Black Comedy* (1965) was one of his earliest and most durable creations, featuring a legendary original cast of Derek Jacobi, Maggie Smith, and Albert Finney. It was born in a golden age for British comedy writers and performers, who included Peter Sellers, Dudley Moore, Peter Cook, and the ensemble of Monty Python's Flying Circus.

Directing for Strawshop is **Kelly Kitchens**, Artistic Associate of Seattle Public Theater, and the director of some of the most exciting projects in Seattle's last two theatre seasons (*Arcadia*, *The Tempest*, *The Cryptogram*, and *Back Back Back*).

Brindsley is played by **Richard Nguyen Sloniker**, who recently demonstrated his gift for farce in *Boeing Boeing* at Seattle Repertory Theatre. He is supported by **MJ Sieber** and **Michael Patten**, cast members from Strawshop's original production of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, and **Rob Burgess**, who took comic turns in the Rep's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and ACT's *A Christmas Carol*. The women vying for Brindsley's attention (and the contents of his liquor cabinet) are **Brenda Joyner** and **Allison Strickland**, both recently seen in two different New Century Theatre projects, and **Emily Chisholm**, featured in *Sugar Daddies* and *Bethany* at ACT.

Designers are TPS Gregory Award winner **Andrew Smith**, along with **Ron Erickson**, **Evan Mosher**, and Strawshop Artistic Director **Greg Carter**. *Black Comedy* is stage-managed by **Anna Gustafson**.

About *Black Comedy*

In 1965, National Theatre dramaturg Kenneth Tynan commissioned Shaffer to write a one-act play to accompany a production of *Miss Julie* starring Maggie Smith and Albert Finney. He developed an idea of a party given in a London flat, played in Chinese darkness—full light—because of a power failure in the building. The audience would watch the guests behave in a situation of increasing chaos, but they would remain unable to see one another. Despite not having a plot, Tynan loved the theatrical idea. Laurence Olivier, the director of the National, said "It's all going to be thrilling!"

The original production was directed by John Dexter, who also directed Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, as well as *Equus*. The opening night of *Black Comedy* was a resounding success. Shaffer would describe the performance in his 1982 introduction as "a veritable detonation of human glee... It was possibly the nicest thing that ever happened to me as a playwright."

About Strawberry Theatre Workshop

Founded in 2004 by Greg Carter, Strawberry Theatre Workshop is a professional theatre company dedicated to socially engaged work of the highest caliber. Strawshop is a **Stranger Genius Award** winner, a four-time **Seattle Times Footlight Award** winner, and the only company to be nominated for a **TPS Gregory Award for Outstanding Production** four years in a row. Known for its critically acclaimed productions of *The Normal Heart*, *Breaking the Code*, *The Elephant Man*, and *The Laramie Project*, Strawshop is anchored in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood. Strawshop is one of three companies selected to operate the new 12th Avenue Arts, a center for theatre slated to open in January 2015.

Mission: Strawberry Theatre Workshop is committed to the idea that the theatre is the people's place of *aspiration*, and that any voice from the stage is translated exponentially into conversations at coffee shops, bus stops, classrooms, and play fields. Strawshop is dedicated to the idea of *ensemble*, in the broadest sense of the word. Our ensemble does not only mean a resident company of workers, but a collective that includes our work, our audience, and our neighborhood. This is an *activist* stance. To be a good neighbor is to be a relevant neighbor, a responsible neighbor, and a vocal neighbor.

LISTING INFORMATION:

Black Comedy

Opens: **Thursday, August 21, 2014**

Plays: **Thu-Fri-Sat, 8:00 pm**

Venue: **Erickson Theatre Off Broadway**

Address: **1524 Harvard Ave, Capitol Hill, Seattle**

Ticket Prices: **\$36 General, \$27 Seniors, \$18 Students**

Phone Sales: **1-800-838-3006**

Online Sales: **black.brownpapertickets.com**

READ MORE AT: **www.strawshop.org**