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**"9 CIRCLES" FORCES THE HUMAN COST OF
WAR BACK INTO THE SPOTLIGHT AT
STRAWBERRY THEATRE WORKSHOP**

**Award-winning play by Jesuit priest
Bill Cain runs June 2-25 at 12th Ave Arts**

At a time when drone strikes and economic sanctions have blurred the violence of war, *9 Circles* forces the jarring human toll back into the spotlight.

Opening **Thursday, June 2**, Strawberry Theatre Workshop presents **Bill Cain's** unnerving re-imagining of *Dante's Inferno*. *9 Circles* offers a furious journey through one wayward soldier's transgression, judgment, and penance amid the fallout of the Iraq War. **Conner Neddersen** (recently seen in the title role of NCTC's *My Name Is Asher Lev*) plays Pfc Daniel Edward Reeves, a discharged American soldier accused of heinous, unforgivable crimes against civilians in Iraq. He spirals downward through a limbo of military tribunals, therapy sessions, and jail cells.

Cast members **Sylvester Kamara** (featured in Book-It's *Emma*), **Norah Elges** (who directed the acclaimed *Horse Girls* at Annex), and **Sam Hagen** (recently in *The Flick* at NCTC) visit Reeves in the varied guises of army officer, lawyer, counselor, and pastor, offering a bewildering mix of sympathetic aid and harsh condemnation.

9 Circles, which won the 2011 Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award, is tightly written and tough-minded. It is also filled with grace. The audience is not asked to identify in any shallow or sentimental way with Reeves, only to recognize his humanity as he endures his descent into hell, resisting, jeering, grieving, sometimes even joking, and refusing to acknowledge the immensity of what he's done

Directed by Strawshop founder **Greg Carter** (*Our Town*, *The Laramie Project*), the cast is entirely new to the company who performs for the first time in the intimate Studio Theatre at **12th Ave Arts**. The production team includes **Reed Nakayama**—veteran of a dozen Strawshop lighting designs—and several newcomers, including **Pete Rush** (costumes), **Nicole Song** (stage management), and **Erin Bednarz** (sound).

9 Circles is based on the infamous case of former 101st Airborne Division Pfc Steven Dale Green, convicted in a federal court in 2009 of raping and killing an Iraqi fourteen-year-old girl and murdering her family. Green was discharged from the military in May 2006 after being found to have a personality disorder. He was sentenced to multiple life sentences in civilian court.

"I was made to pay for all the war crimes." Green said in an October 2013 interview. He hung himself in prison several years after *9 Circles* premiered.

Cain, who is a Jesuit priest, has remarked that no tears get shed for Goliath in the bible. "Heaven and hell are not so far apart," Cain says. "In the *Divine Comedy* they are adjoining territories. To get to one, you have to pass through the other. Although some of the people you meet in hell are undoubtedly evil, many are not. There are many good, beautiful, unlucky people in hell and a great many mediocrities on their way to heaven. One of the joys of the journey is Dante's surprise in finding that he has good friends in both places. There are sympathetic moments all along the way. And there is compassion for the damned. At the very center of hell there is a terrible violence, but the ones perpetrating the worst of it weep as they do it."

Cain is the founder and artistic director of the Boston Shakespeare Company, and his writing credits include several television movies, most notably *Thicker Than Blood*, and the 2009 play *Equivocation*.

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 six-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 (2009-12). Known for its critically acclaimed productions of *Our Town*, *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 resident companies in the new 12th Ave Arts building, which opened on Capitol Hill in 2015.

Mission Statement

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

Title: **9 Circles**

Opens: **Thursday, June 2, 2016**

Plays: **Thu-Fri-Sat and Mon, 7:30 pm**

NO PERFORMANCE MONDAY JUNE 6

Venue: **Studio Theatre at 12th Ave Arts**

Address: **1620 12th Ave, Capitol Hill, Seattle**

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

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

Online Sales: **strawshop.brownpapertickets.com**

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