

The farcical world of ***The Memorandum*** is a world we've all experienced in some ways: one in which bureaucracy is deliberately employed as an excuse for otherwise unjustifiable behavior.

Opening September 10 at 12th Ave Arts, Strawberry Theatre Workshop welcomes its audience to take an absurd look at the contemporary office, seen through the eyes of a playwright working more than 50 years ago. **Václav Havel's *The Memorandum*** is directed by award-winning actor **Paul Morgan Stetler**, and features Galen Joseph Osier, Sarah Harlett, Keiko Green, Trick Danneker, and five others. It runs on the Mainstage at 12th Ave Arts through October 10.

The play concerns the tribulations of Josef Gross, a humanist in a nameless organization encumbered by the introduction of an artificial language—Ptydepe—designed to streamline office communications.

In *The Memorandum*, language implodes into nonsense. Office bureaucracy provides the pressure for the implosion, and by implication, the calculated government bureaucracy that was the hallmark of Communism in Eastern Europe. Like in George Orwell's *1984*, the purpose of the new language is manipulation, but Havel adds a farcical twist: Ptydepe does not belong to a coolly powerful Big Brother. Instead, those in power are equally confused, equally caught in the machine they themselves created.

*The Memorandum's* satire is full of contemporary ironies: jobs created by bureaucracy to maintain bureaucracy, the importance of conformity to maintain an artificial office culture, and the relentless surveillance of workers by spies, both seen and unseen.

**Michael Billington** of *The Guardian* wrote, "The play may have grown out of experience of Czech communism; its application, however, is universal."

Director **Paul Stetler** is known for his accomplished acting career, including a TPS Gregory Award for *The Adding Machine* at New Century Theatre in 2008. The protagonist Gross is played by **Joe Osier**, a Strawshop regular, well-known for his lead role in *Crime & Punishment* at Intiman in 2009. The rest of the cast includes Seattle stage veterans and newcomers alike: **Sarah Harlett** (*Middleton* at ACT), **Keiko Green** (*The Comparables* at Seattle Rep), **Trick Danneker** (*Othello* at Seattle Shakes), and **Maya Sugarman** (*Mary's Wedding* at NCTC) debate the tyranny of language, while **Mark Fullerton**, **Noelle Wilcox**, **Katherine Grant-Suttie**, and **Ian Fraser** maintain the office lunacy.

The production team includes **Gabrielle Strong** (lights), **Ron Erickson** (costumes), **Brendan Patrick Hogan** (sound & projections), **Katie McKellar** (stage management), and Strawshop Artistic Director **Greg Carter** (scenery).

*The Memorandum* plays TH-FR-SA only. All performances are 7:30pm.