



*Local. Award-Winning. Thought-Provoking. Original.*

## **Albee's "*The Play About the Baby*" Opens Custom Made Theatre's 2012- 13 Season, Runs Sept 7-Oct 7**

"We are proud to bring to San Francisco this lesser known, but exceptionally masterful work, from one of our greatest living dramatists." – Brian Katz, Custom Made Theatre Artistic Director

**San Francisco. August 24, 2012.** If you have no wounds, how can you know if you're alive? In *The Play About the Baby*, a young couple who are madly in love with each other, have a child – the perfect family – that is, until an older couple steal the baby. Through a series of mind games and manipulations, they call into question both couples' sense of reality and fiction, joy and sorrow in this devastating black comedy, which many say is Albee's own absurdist take on *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

*The Play About the Baby* previews September 7-9 and runs through October 7 at Gough Street Playhouse, 1622 Gough Street (at Bush) in San Francisco. The play is directed by Custom Made Theatre's artistic director Brian Katz and features Richard Aiello, Linda Ayres-Frederick\*, Anya Kazimierski, and Shane Rhoades.

\*member, Actors Equity Association



### The Director's Take on the Play

Director Brian Katz says, "I fell instantly in love with *The Play About the Baby* when I saw the premiere New York production, but our *Baby* is not a replica or a recreation of that excellent show. This is Albee at his most absurd so it is, in many ways, a white canvas to delve into his favorite themes.

"Like *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?* there are two couples: one younger, one older. The younger couple has the world ahead of them, but unlike Nick and Honey in *Wolf?* they begin the play in an Eden-like bliss. The older couple, unlike George and Martha, is more bent on teaching their younger selves, rather than destroying them as occurs in *Wolf?*. So with *The Play About the Baby* we see echoes of a younger Albee, but with the experience and perspective of a wiser man.

"The themes of reality versus illusion, and youth versus experience are tackled, as they are in most of his plays, but this time with a serious wink and a nod. *The Play About the Baby* is a vaudevillian dance that descends into a terrifying comedic nightmare."

### The Cast



**Richard Aiello (Man)** This is Richard's first chance to work with Custom Made Theatre Company. He may be new to CMTC but not to Edward Albee, having appeared as Tobias in *A Delicate Balance* with Actors' Ensemble in Berkeley several years ago. Richard has worked with

a variety of other theater companies in San Francisco and the East Bay, including Center Rep, Willows Theatre, Town Hall Theater, California Conservatory, Last Planet Theater and DiabloActors Ensemble.



**Linda Ayres-Frederick\* (Woman)**, Phoenix Theatre's Artistic Director since 1985, Linda has enjoyed a diverse career as an actor, producer, director, critic and playwright in Bay Area Theatres with additional performances in NYC, Edinburgh, and France. She is twice a Shubert Playwriting Fellow with numerous productions, publications and awards in Bay Area Festivals including Best of SF Fringe 2011 (for her play *Afield*) and Best of SF Fringe 2010 (for Best Short Plays, *Zero to Ninety in 90 Minutes*). Favorite roles include Edna in *The Oldest Profession* (nominated by SFBATCC for Best Ensemble) and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at Sea Theatre. Most recently, she performed her solo piece *Cantata #40* at Marin Fringe—receiving a First Place Award for Best Script. She will repeat *Cantata #40* at the San Francisco Fringe Festival in September. \* Member, Actors' Equity Association



**Anya Kazimierski (Girl)** is a performer, painter, and scenic designer new to the Bay Area. With roots in New York and a degree in studio art & French literature from Oberlin College, she came out west to work as the Scenic Art Fellow at Berkeley Rep, 2011-12 season. While at Oberlin, Anya was an actor and designer in the collaborative Petits-Fours Theatre Company including a new translation of Ionesco's *The Chairs*. Since arriving in the Bay, Anya has worked with Stagebridge's City Green and at Berkeley Rep.



**Shane Rhoades (Boy)** notes previous acting credits in *Down to This* (Sleepwalkers Theatre), *Merry Forking Christmas* (Pianofight), *Shoot O'Malley Twice* (Virago Theatre), *The Dresser* (San Jose Repertory), *12<sup>th</sup> Night* (Atmos Theatre), *Equus* (City Lights Theatre), *Angels in America Part 1* (Busbarn), *The First Day of School* (City Lights Theatre), and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (Shady Shakespeare). Shane graduated from San Jose State University with his B.A. in theatre.

**Brian Katz (Director, Custom Made Artistic Director)** is the co-founder of the Custom Made Theatre Company. For Custom Made he has directed over 25 productions including *A Bright Room Called Day*, *Spalding Gray: Stories Left to Tell*, *The Devil and Billy Markham*, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *Red Light Winter*, and *The Heidi Chronicles*. Brian has a B.A. in theatre literature and criticism from Clark University and interned in dramaturgy at the Goodman Theatre. He has worked at Cal Shakes, Killing My Lobster, Berkeley Rep, CenterREP, SFPC, La Vache Engree and other cool places. Almost a dozen shows he has directed, or produced, have been nominated for BATCC awards, and a few have made top 10 lists for various Bay Area publications.

Scenic Design by **Sarah Phykitt**; Costumes by **Maxx Kurzunski**; Lighting Design by **Dena Burd**; Stage Manager: **Colin Johnson**.

## **Some Notes on Edward Albee and the Adopted/Phantom Child**

Edward Albee was born Edward Harvey in Washington, D.C. in 1928. At the age of two weeks, he was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Reed Albee of Larchmont, New York, and renamed Edward Franklin Albee III. From an early age, Edward Albee knew that he was adopted, but he has never attempted to locate his birth parents.

At age 30, he completed his first major work, *The Zoo Story*. The play received its world premiere in Berlin, Germany in 1959, and opened Off-Broadway the following year. This startling one-act, in which a loquacious drifter meets a conventional family man on a park bench and provokes him to violence, won Albee an international reputation as a fearless observer of human alienation. Albee brought absurdism to the American stage with his one-act plays *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream*

In only a few years, Albee emerged as the leading light of the burgeoning Off-Broadway movement. His first Broadway production, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, (1962), with its mysterious phantom child, was a runaway success and a critical sensation. The play received a Tony Award, and Albee was enshrined in the pantheon of American dramatists alongside Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

Flash forward three decades. Edward Albee triumphed with *Three Tall Women* in 1994. Praised by many critics as his best play in 30 years, it struck many students of Albee's work as a final coming to terms with the memory of his vital but domineering adoptive mother. The play won every award in sight and earned Albee his third Pulitzer Prize. In 1996, Albee was one of the recipients of the Kennedy Center Honors and was awarded the National Medal of Arts.

Albee enjoyed a resurgence of creativity at century's end. *The Play About the Baby* (1998), with its alternative use of "adoption," premiered off-Broadway in 2001 and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Drama. In the review of a subsequent Chicago production by Chicago Theatre Beat, the play was called "deliciously absurd."

**Nudity and Language Alert!** *The Play About the Baby* contains nudity and hilariously nasty language. It is intended for adult audiences; no one under 16 will be admitted without a parent or guardian.

### **Show Times and Tickets**

Opens: Sept 11 at 8:00pm  
Previews: Sept 7-8 at 8:00pm, Sept 9 at 7:00pm  
Runs: Thru Oct 7, Thurs-Sat 8:00pm; Sun 7:00pm

General Admission \$30  
Students/Seniors/TBA members \$25  
Previews \$15-\$20

Learn more & buy tickets at (415) 798-CMTC, <http://www.custommade.org/the-baby>

### **For Calendar Editors**

***The Play About the Baby.*** San Francisco premiere of Edward Albee's comic absurdist take on his own "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" A young man and wife experience the menace of a mysterious older couple. Custom Made Theatre's production directed by Brian Katz. Gough Street Playhouse, 1622 Gough Street, San Francisco. Previews: Sept. 7-8 Thurs-Sat at 8:00 p.m.; Sept 9 Sun at 7:00 p.m. Press Opening Sept 11, 8:00 p.m. Runs Thurs-Sat, 8:00 p.m.; Sun 7:00 p.m. through Oct. 7. Tickets \$25-30. (415) 798-CMTC, [www.custommade.org/the-baby](http://www.custommade.org/the-baby)

**Press Contact: Gary Carr, Rising Moon Marketing & Public Relations (925) 672-8717, [carrpool@pacbell.net](mailto:carrpool@pacbell.net)**