

For Immediate Release

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Stage Left Theatre presents the World Premiere of
Here Where It's Safe
by MEH Lewis
February 23 – April 3, 2010

Chicago, November 19, 2009 – Stage Left Theatre announces the upcoming World Premiere of ***Here Where It's Safe*** written by ensemble playwright M.E.H. Lewis and directed by ensemble member Scott Bishop. ***Here Where It's Safe*** opens Tuesday, February 23rd at 7:30 PM, and runs through April 3rd.

THE PLAY

Zach and Abbie are an American couple desperate to have a child. Beena is a 19 year old Indian woman struggling to escape an abusive marriage and provide for her son. When financial concerns convince Abbie to hire a surrogate in India, the two women's lives become tangled with surprising and dangerous consequences. *Here Where it's Safe* is a new play by award-winning playwright and Stage Left ensemble member M.E.H. Lewis (*Burying the Bones, Fellow Travellers*) that asks what comes of the choices we make, and what happens when we run out of choices.

THE DEBATE

In keeping with Stage Left's mission of raising social and political debate, *Here Where It's Safe* will spark discussion about a number of topics, including questions of exploitation and outsourcing, as well as the Catholic Church's position on surrogacy and other reproductive issues. Immediately following each Sunday performance we will host a panel discussion on these issues with a variety of community representatives to be announced. We will also use online social networking and our website to extend the debate beyond the confines of the theatre and the performance.

THE END OF AN ERA

Here Where It's Safe will be Stage Left's final production in its current space at 3408 N. Sheffield. Beginning with LeapFest 7, in June, Stage Left will be one of the resident companies at the new Theater Wit space at 1229 W. Belmont.

In February of 1995, Stage Left moved into a 49 seat theatre at 3408 N. Sheffield after one and a half years as an itinerant company. For the first time, Stage Left not only had a performance home (the company was previously housed at 3244 N. Clark) but also ample office and rehearsal space, plus movable seating risers. This space offered the company more flexibility and professionalism, which ultimately allowed Stage Left to develop a national reputation for new-play development. Over the past fifteen years, the Sheffield space was home to over 40 mainstage productions (16 of which were world premieres), 6

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festivals of new work (LeapFest) and dozens of readings and developmental workshops. Recently tapped Artistic Director Vance Smith says, "I can think of no more fitting goodbye to this space that has given so much to this company than a production by M.E.H. Lewis, whose *Burying Bones* and *Fellow Travellers* were two of this company's biggest hits of the last decade. This is truly the end of an era."

TICKETS, DATES & INFORMATION

Here Where It's Safe runs Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 PM, Sundays at 3:00 PM from 2/25/10 through 4/3/10. Tickets are \$22 on Fridays and Sundays, \$25 on Saturdays, and Pay-What-You-Can (with a suggested amount of \$20) on Thursdays. Opening Night is Tuesday, February 23rd at 7:30 PM and tickets are \$25. Previews are 2/13, 2/18, 2/19, 2/20 and 2/22 at 8:00 PM; and 2/14 at 3 PM. Preview tickets are \$10. Student Rush tickets are 50% off any remaining tickets ten minutes before show (if available), and senior and group discounts are also available. Tickets may be purchased by calling the box office at 773.883.8830 or online at www.stagelefttheatre.com. Stage Left Theatre is located at 3408 N. Sheffield Ave. in Chicago. Street, metered and paid lot parking is available. The theatre is handicapped and CTA accessible via the Belmont El (Red & Brown) & Addison El (Red) stops.

Media comps, photos, videos and interviews are available by contacting Laura Blegen at 773.883.8830 (office), 312.371.6471 (cell) or laura@stagelefttheatre.com. Hi-res photos, this release and archived releases and photos will be available at www.stagelefttheatre.com/press.html.

THE PEOPLE

M.E.H. Lewis (Playwright) is the internationally produced author of the award-winning plays *Burying the Bones* (Stage Left, 2004, Jeff Nominee), *Fellow Travellers* (Stage Left, 2006, Jeff Award winner for Best New Work) and *Creole* (InFu-sion Theatre, 2007). Ms. Lewis is a two-time Illinois Arts Council Fellow, and winner of the Julie Harris Competition, the Dayton Playhouse Competition, the Tremain Fellowship, and the PEN Trans-Atlantic Award. In addition to *Here Where It's Safe*, her most recent work includes *Musica Mundana*, workshopped with InFusion Theatre, *Small World*, commissioned by Solano Theatre, and *A House in Haifa*, commissioned by Next Theatre. She is a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists, a founding member of the Stone Soup Collective, and a member of the Dramatists Guild.

Scott Bishop (director) is a Chicago-based theatre teacher and director. His recent directing credits include *Safe* in LeapFest 6, *The Deer And The Antelope Play* at Riverfront Theatre in Rockford, IL, *Arsenic And Old Lace* at SummerPlace Theatre, *How Gertrude Stormed The Philosophers Club* at Bailiwick Theatre, *Everything In 150 Pages* for the n.u.f.a.n. Ensemble, and a staged reading of *Why'd You Make Me Wear That Joe?* for the International Festival of Women Playwrights. He has served as Theatre Director at three high schools, where he has directed productions of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, *A Raisin In The Sun*, and *The Odd Couple* among many others. With the aid of a Target Community Giving Grant, in 2004 Scott established an outreach program through which under-served youth were able to participate in creative drama workshops. He has also worked as assistant director on productions at the Griffin Theatre Company and Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago, as well as South Coast Repertory Theatre, in Costa Mesa, CA. Scott

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holds an M.A. in Theatre from Northwestern University.

The **cast** includes SLT ensemble members Cat Dean (Abbie), Cory Krebsbach (Zach), and Kate Black (Jem), as well as Mouzam Makkar (Beena), and Anita Chandwaney (Uma).

The **staff** includes SLT ensemble members Adam Kohn (sound design), Mark Pracht (assistant direction) and Zev Valancy (dramaturgy), with guest artists Jazzma Pryor (stage management), Elizabeth Flauto (costume design), William Anderson (scenic design), Jessica Harpenau (lighting design), Heather Ho (properties design), and Alex Braatz (technical direction). Artistic Director Vance Smith will produce.

ABOUT STAGE LEFT

Founded in 1982, Stage Left Theatre is committed to nurturing voices for the American theatre by developing and producing plays that raise debate and challenge perspectives on political and social issues. Through a full subscription season and Downstage Left, one of Chicago's most prolific new play development programs, Stage Left strives to bring high-quality new work and world premieres to the Chicago stage. Over the last seven years, the Joseph Jefferson Committee has honored Stage Left world premieres with six nominations and three awards for Best New Work.

UPCOMING

- ◆ **LeapFest 7** – See what's next in Chicago theatre
Join us for the seventh smash year and see what's next in Chicago Theatre. Five new politically minded plays will "take the leap" towards production in the three week event. Each play will be presented in rotating repertory, and performances are followed by a discussion with the playwright and director.

Runs: June 10 – June 26, 2010

First Night: Tuesday, June 8 at 7:30 PM

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