

For Immediate Release

Stage Left Theatre Company • 3408 N. Sheffield, Chicago, IL 60657
773.883.8830 phone • 773.472.1336 fax • www.stagelefttheatre.com
Press Contact: Laura Blegen, 312.371.6471, laura@stagelefttheatre.com



**Stage Left Theatre Announces the Addition of Eight New Members
to its Artistic Ensemble**

Chicago, January 21, 2009 – Stage Left Theatre is pleased to announce the addition of eight new members to its artistic ensemble. The newest members of the company are Usman Ally, Scott Bishop, Kate Black, Melanie Derleth, Ian Maxwell, Erin Myers, Ashley Nelson and Zev Valancy.

The group includes names familiar to many in the Chicago theater scene, as well as several relative newcomers to the city. A number of the new ensemble members are already working with Stage Left on current projects or have contributed to recent Stage Left productions. For example, Erin Myers, who has worked with local companies such as The Hypocrites, Redmoon, Lifeline, Signal Ensemble Theatre and Live Bait, will be appearing in Stage Left's upcoming World Premiere of ensemble playwright David Alan Moore's ***The Day of Knowledge***. Zev Valancy is serving as dramaturg for the production, which is being directed by ensemble member Drew Martin and opens on Tuesday, February 24th at 7:30 p.m., running through March 28th.

Similarly, Kate Black and Ian Maxwell were both featured in Stage Left's acclaimed, Jeff-Recommended opening production of the current season, *After Ashley* by Gina Gionfriddo. Ashley Nelson served as stage manager for *After Ashley* — named one of the "Top 5 Guilty Pleasures" in "Newcity's Top 5 of Everything 2008" — as well as for a number of other recent productions at Stage Left, including *Omniscience*, *Skin In Flames* and LeapFest 5.

Said Stage Left's Interim Co-Artistic Director, Drew Martin, "We are incredibly pleased to welcome these fantastic theater artists to the Stage Left family. This year marks Stage Left's 27th season, and while we are immensely proud of our history and contribution to Chicago theater over the years, and our work and endurance come directly from the level of talent and vitality of our members. This group includes incredibly talented people, many of whom have experience in multiple theatrical disciplines and all of whom bring fresh ideas and perspective to the company. We look forward to showcasing them in upcoming projects, including ***The Day of Knowledge*** and in LeapFest 6."

NEW-ENSEMBLE BIOGRAPHIES

Usman Ally was born in Swaziland, raised in 3 more African countries, and is a Pakistani national who received his MFA in Acting from the University of Florida. He has also lived in Portland, Oregon, and has been an actor and teacher in Chicago since late 2006. Chicago credits include *Tranquillity Woods* at Steppenwolf, *Around the World in 80 Days* at Lookingglass, *Relatively Close* at Victory Gardens, *Weapon of Mass Impact* at Red Orchid, his one-man show *Public Enemy* at Remy Bumpo and *Celebrity Row* at

3408 North Sheffield • Chicago, IL 60657 • 773.883.8830

laura@stagelefttheatre.com

www.stagelefttheatre.com

American Theatre Company, for which he delivered one of the "Top 5 Male Performances" according to "Newcity's Top 5 of Everything 2008: Stage." He has also been a SLAM Poet for 8 years working primarily in Oregon and Florida, and this March will be co-writing and starring in the hip-hop theatre piece *American Ethnic* as part of Remy Bumppo's thinkTank. Usman lives in Albany Park with his lovely new bride Malena.

Scott Bishop is a Chicago-based theatre teacher and director. His recent directing credits include *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 holds an M.A. in Theatre from Northwestern University.

Kate Black made her Chicago debut with Stage Left Theatre's production of *After Ashley*. Kate recently graduated from Ball State University with a BA in Theatre, and is pleased to find the theatre community in Chicago to be as welcoming and supportive as the theatre family who adopted her in Muncie, Indiana. Previous roles for Kate include: Maria (*Love's Labour's Lost*), Dr. Wagner (*Human Faustus Project*), Skinhead Girl (*Polaroid Stories*) and Dinah (*Philadelphia Story*).

Melanie Derleth is a recent graduate of Indiana University. She was most recently seen in the Chicago Premiere of *My Name is Rachel Corrie* with Purple Bench Productions at The Artistic Home. At Indiana, some of her favorite roles include Lydia in *Big Love*, Aphrodite in *Metamorphoses*, Thomasina in *Arcadia*, Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, and Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*. Melanie is from Deerfield, IL.

Ian Maxwell is a graduate of the Theatre Conservatory of the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University. He was most recently seen as Alden in Stage Left's *After Ashley*. Other favorite roles include Wayne in *Inspecting Carol*, Angelo in *Measure For Measure*, Harold Akers in *The Wild Duck*, Pinchwife in *The Country Wife*, and Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*.

Erin Myers has been acting in Chicago for just over 7 years. From northeast Ohio, she studied vocal performance at the University of Cincinnati and worked as an actor and singer in the Cleveland area for two years, where she appeared with Cleveland Shakespeare Festival, Ensemble Theatre and Lyric Opera Cleveland. Erin went to graduate school at Kent State, where she earned her MFA in acting. Here in town, Erin has been privileged to work with the Hypocrites, Lifeline, Redmoon, Live Bait, Irish Repertory Theatre, City Lit and Signal Ensemble Theatre, among others. Favorite roles played include Patient Griselda in *Top Girls*, Katherine in *Henry V*, Triona in *Love in the Title* and The Singer in *The Hypocrites' Camille/La Traviata*.

Ashley Nelson is a recent graduate of Auburn University in Alabama. Stage Left credits include stage managing for LeapFest 5, *Omniscience*, *Skin In Flames*, *The Play about the Squirrel* in Rhino Fest, and

3408 North Sheffield • Chicago, IL 60657 • 773.883.8830

laura@stagelefttheatre.com

www.stagelefttheatre.com

fill-in stage manager for *Spare Change*. Other Chicago credits include stage managing Nicole Hollander's reading of her book, *Tales of Aging Gracefully*, from *Planet Denial* and Fillet of Solo for Live Bait Theater.

Zev Valancy is currently dramaturging David Alan Moore's *The Day of Knowledge* at Stage Left, where he also assistant directed the LeapFest 5 workshop production of *The Fisherman*. He has also dramaturged *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* and *The Prisoner's Dilemma* for Theatre Mir, and recently finished a literary/dramaturgy internship for Northlight Theatre, which included assembling the preliminary research packet for their upcoming *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*. You can read his theatre writing in various venues: his blog at onchicagotheatre.blogspot.com, his reviews at centerstagechicago.com, and occasional features for chicago.decider.com.

STAGE LEFT'S UPCOMING PRODUCTION:

***THE DAY OF KNOWLEDGE* by David Alan Moore**

Forty days after an unimaginable trauma, survivors and families are still haunted by volatile memories of the three-day standoff. As they struggle to mourn the loved ones they've lost and to rebuild their shattered lives, their paths collide in a single night. An act of charity threatens to divide a husband and wife; a single mother searches obsessively for her lost daughter; and a woman from the provinces claims an as-yet unidentified child who hasn't spoken since the explosive end of the hostage crisis. Above and around them all, something is... watching. ***The Day of Knowledge*** explores the human spirit's capacity for healing and hope in the face of overwhelming tragedy.

An exciting new voice in Chicago theatre, playwright David Alan Moore received a Jeff Award for Outstanding New Work for Stage Left's 2006 production of *In Times of War*. Director Drew Martin has also received numerous Jeff nominations and awards, including one for Director - Play for *Leander Stillwell* at Stage Left.

TICKETS, DATES & INFORMATION

The Day of Knowledge runs Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 PM, Sundays at 3:00 PM from 2/26/09 through 3/28/09. Tickets are \$20 on Thursdays, \$22 on Fridays and Sundays, and \$25 on Saturdays. Opening Night is Tuesday, February 24th at 7:30 PM and tickets are \$25. Previews are 2/14, 2/19, 2/20, 2/21 and 2/23 at 8:00 PM; and 2/15 at 3 PM. Preview tickets are \$10. Running time is approximately two hours including one intermission. Student Rush tickets are 50% off any remaining tickets ten minutes before show (if available), and senior and group discounts are also available. \$5 tickets for industry professionals are available on the first two Thursdays of the run, 2/26 & 3/5. 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.

3408 North Sheffield • Chicago, IL 60657 • 773.883.8830

laura@stagelefttheatre.com

www.stagelefttheatre.com

Media comps, photos, videos and interviews are available by contacting Laura Blegen at 773.883.8830 ext. 2 (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.

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.

THIS SPRING AT STAGE LEFT

◆ **LeapFest 6** – See what's next in Chicago theatre!

LeapFest's first five years have so far graduated ten plays to world premiere productions in Chicago and beyond, with three of these receiving the Jeff Award for Best New Work. Join us for the sixth 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. Each play will be presented in rotating repertory, and performances are followed by a discussion with the playwright and director.

Runs: May 12 – May 30, 2009

First Night: Tuesday, May 12 at 7:30 PM

#####

3408 North Sheffield • Chicago, IL 60657 • 773.883.8830

laura@stagelefttheatre.com

www.stagelefttheatre.com