



Press Release

***Equivocation* by Bill Cain Looks at the Risks of Standing Up For One's Beliefs**

Set in 1606 England, King James's righthand man Robert Cecil commissions William Shagspeare to write the "true historie" of Guy Fawkes' infamous Gunpowder Plot. As Shag investigates the story, he discovers that the government's version might be less than truthful. Should he take the money and write a propaganda piece – or risk losing the theatre and perhaps even his head? An entertaining tribute to art, politics, and the perils of negotiating both, *Equivocation* is a high-stakes political comedy with contemporary resonances.

Equivocation by Bill Cain is the second show of Dragon Productions Theatre Company's 2018 2nd Stages series. The 2nd Stages Series is Dragon's mentoring track. Local artists apply with a passion project and a desire to learn how to become a theatrical producer. Once selected, Dragon grants the producer seed money and leverages the Dragon staff to mentor the producer through the entire process of producing a play from the initial vision and budget to striking the set and getting the final laundry receipts booked. Fully half of Dragon's plays are now 2nd Stages productions.

When asked why she chose this production for the 2nd Stages Series, Executive Artistic Director Meredith Hagedorn said "Jenny Hollingworth is seasoned veteran when it comes to our 2nd Stages Series and she wanted to take another huge leap when telling this challenging play about telling the truth to power and standing by one's convictions. The script elicited fear and excitement from all of us at Dragon and we thought that was a great reason to partner with Jenny to make it happen. England's Gunpowder Plot – the failed assassination attempt of King James in 1605 is the impetus of the story. We have Shakespeare being asked to write this story into a play, and with Shakespeare being one of the characters, you know there will be lovely rhythmic language, period settings, a fabulous ensemble of actors who play of a dozen roles, and hilarious and sometimes horrifying circumstances. We are thrilled to present this clever and witty contemporary play that will appeal to those of you who like a little Shakespeare mixed in."

The 2018 season is *The Season of Everything*. Theatre teaches compassion and empathy and by combining theatre with science we aim to show in 2018 that as humans, we are all connected, that science and art are intertwined, and that our words and actions make ripples both in the present and in the future. This season also marks the final season of founding Artistic Director Meredith Hagedorn and is a nice button to the end of an astonishing career in the theatre on the Peninsula.

Of the play *Equivocation*, director Jenny Hollingworth says that our story begins "London, November 5th, 1605, midnight. The King's guards, acting on a mysterious tip-off, have just discovered Guy Fawkes skulking in a chamber below the Houses of Parliament. Next to him

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stand thirty-six barrels of gunpowder. In a few hours' time, King James I of England (formerly James VI of Scotland), his Queen, their oldest son, the cream of the English nobility and the leaders of the Anglican Church are due to gather there for the annual Opening of Parliament.

When the story breaks and the enormous implications of the miraculously-avoided catastrophe become apparent, the whole of London is feverish with speculation about who's behind it. For a wily politician like Robert Cecil, still struggling to find something to unite the country behind a King he put on the throne, this could be an ideal opportunity to bring people together. But he needs the right narrative.

As the thirteen Catholic plotters are hastily rounded up, among their possessions Cecil's men find a book by Jesuit priest Henry Garnet, titled *A Treatise of Equivocation*. It explains how a devout Catholic may lie when questioned under oath and still keep a clear conscience. For Cecil, its promotion of deception can easily be interpreted as threatening the nation's entire social contract. And if the plotters can be framed as pawns in a game played by the Catholic Church, Cecil has the story he's been looking for. Now he just needs to convince England's most popular playwright to tell it.

Over at the Globe Theatre, Master Shagspeare is busy wrestling with his new 'experimental drama' *King Lear*. Much to the consternation of his theatre company, he's trying to write the truth of what it *really* means to be human. Can he put that aside and write a blatant piece of propaganda about what happens to those who plot and deceive to kill a king - especially when it becomes clear that the government story includes some decidedly 'alternate' facts?

As fiction, truth and other people's perceptions of it increasingly blur together, *Equivocation* explores the personal cost of perpetuating what we know to be a lie - and our deep moral investment in telling the *real* truth, especially in difficult times."

Mr. Cain was visiting the Tower of London, when he saw a sign placed over a medieval torture rack that said that nobody was ever tortured on the rack due to their religious beliefs. Just behind the rack, scratched into the wall, were the 400 year old words of an imprisoned Jesuit priest. Mr. Cain is a New Yorker, and this visit was several months after 9/11. The similarities between that and the government's claims about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq gave Mr. Cain the germ of the idea for *Equivocation*.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: A native New Yorker, Father Bill Cain is a Jesuit priest and writes for the stage and screen. Mr. Cain grew up in Queens during the civil rights era, attended Jesuit schools, and tutored in Bedford-Stuyvesant as a young man. He graduated with a bachelor's degree from Boston College. After graduation, Mr. Cain founded the Boston Shakespeare Company where he directed most of Shakespeare's canon from 1975-1982. Mr. Cain then moved to Lower East Manhattan to teach and write. He landed a contract to be the writer and producer of the ABC series "Nothing Sacred" about a Catholic priest who begins to question his faith. It won the Peabody Award in 1998 and was also boycotted by the Catholic League as blasphemous. *Equivocation* is Mr. Cain's second play – it workshopped in Palo Alto at

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Theatreworks and premiered at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and then opened in New York at the Manhattan Theatre Club. His third play, *9 Circles*, premiered at the Marin Theatre Company, and his latest play, *How to Write a New Book for the Bible* premiered at Berkeley Rep in their 2011-2012 season. For the small screen, Mr. Cain has written an adaptation of “Clover” for the Hallmark channel and HBO, “Nightjohn,” which was named best American film of the year by *The New Yorker*. He also wrote “Thicker Than Blood” (TNT), which was an adaptation of *Stand-up Tragedy*, his first play, then “Everything That Rises” (starring Mandy Patinkin), “Papa’s Angels” (starring Scott Bakula, Cynthia Nixon, and Eva Marie Saint), and “Sounder.” Awards include: Steinberg New Play Award (first ever recipient two years in a row), multiple Edgerton grants, Helen Hayes Awards, the Joe A. Callaway Award, a Peabody, the WGA Award for Episodic Drama and a Christopher Award, among others.

Featuring the talents of: Max Tachis as Shag, Paul Stout as Richard/Father Henry Garnet, Brad Satterwhite as Nate/Sir Robert Cecil, Paul K. Rosenfield as Sharpe/Thomas Wintour/King James I, Michael Weiland as Armin/Robert Catesby/Sir Edward Coke, Alika U. Spencer-Koknar as Judith Shagspeare

Designers & Production Team: Jenny Hollingworth (Producer/Director), Rachel Nin (Stage Manager), Karl Haller (Technical Director), Seafus Smith (Scenic Designer), Sean Kramer (Lighting Designer), Kathleen Qiu (Costume Designer), Candice Liao (Assistant Costume Designer), Jonathan Covey (Sound Designer), Beth Covey-Snedegar (Properties Design), Lance Huntley (Photographer), Tasi Alabastro (Graphic Design)

WHEN: July 27 – August 19, 2018

Thursdays – Saturdays, 8pm, Sundays, 2pm. Doors open 30 minutes before the show.
Pay what you will preview on Thurs., July 26th at 8p
Opening night performance on Fri., July 27th at 8p
Post-show discussion with the cast on Sunday, August 5th
This show is rated R for adult language, graphic violence, and brief male nudity. The run time is approximately 3 hours with one 15-minute intermission.

WHERE: The Dragon Theatre in downtown Redwood City
2120 Broadway Street at the intersection of Broadway and Theatre Way

HOW MUCH:

\$35 for general admission seats; \$27 for student/senior tickets.
\$15 rush tickets on Thursdays and Fridays starting 2nd week. Limited availability and cash only at the door.
Pay what you will preview on Thursday, July 26th – no reservation necessary, just walk up and pay cash at the door. Doors open at 7:30p; show starts at 8p.
\$175 for the VIP box (seats 4 people and includes champagne and chocolates.)

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CONTACTING THE BOX OFFICE: Leave a voicemail at 650-493-2006 x 2 and your call will be returned within 2 business days. If you'd rather email, contact Nancy at tickets@dragonproductions.net. The Dragon Box Office is not staffed 7 days a week so there might be a delay in response. Buying tickets online at <http://www.dragonproductions.net> is the very best way to reserve a ticket in advance, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

TIX & MORE INFO: <http://dragonproductions.net/>

PHOTOS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/dragonproductionstheatre/albums/72157697631540161>

For Photos, interviews, videos, press tickets, etc. contact:

Kimberly Wadycki, Managing Director, 650.493.2006 x 5, or kim@dragonproductions.net (preferred)

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