

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
Vance Smith
as new Artistic Director
Five new ensemble members also welcomed**

Chicago, September 17, 2009 – Stage Left Theatre (SLT) announced new artistic leadership and 5 additional ensemble members as it heads into its 28th season. **Vance Smith** will be taking the reigns as Artistic Director, just as five new artists join the artistic ensemble, as well. This follows the addition of new ensemble in December of 2008 as part of the venerable institution's plans for rejuvenation and growth. Interim co-Artistic Director Drew Martin says of the change, "I couldn't be more thrilled with the appointment of Vance to lead Stage Left. He has tremendous energy and a strong vision for our future, as well as a good knowledge of our company from work together in the past, all critical to leading us at a time of great change and growth. We've added many talented new artists to our well-established ensemble in the last year, and between their energy and Vance's leadership, I am very excited about the dynamic growth in our future."

Smith will succeed Martin and David Alan Moore, who stepped in as interim leaders one year ago to allow the board and ensemble sufficient time for the search for a visionary leader. After an extensive search process, Smith was selected by the Stage Left ensemble and board because of his commitment to Stage Left's mission and his ideas and vision for the future of the company. The new ensemble members represent a mix of talents that perfectly complement the existing ensemble.

ABOUT VANCE

Vance Smith has been working in Chicago as an actor, director and producer since 1997. In 2007, he founded Black Sheep Productions, where he served as Artistic Director and directed Steve Spencer's *Another Day in the Empire* and *Camp Freedom!*, Andy Gershenzon's *The End* and produced Will Eno's *The Flu Season*. He has also directed workshops, one-acts and readings at Stage Left, Chicago Dramatists and the side project. As an actor Vance appeared at Stage Left in M.E.H. Lewis's *Fellow Travellers* and worked with Lifeline, Timeline, Hypocrites, Remy Bumppo, Northlight, Victory Gardens, Collaboration, Factory, and many others. Vance attended the School at Steppenwolf in 2005 and graduated from Tulane University.

Vance says, "I am honored the ensemble has chosen me to lead the company during this period of transition and renewal, and am excited to work with this extremely talented group of artists to advance the noble mission of political and social debate that guides Stage Left."

3408 North Sheffield • Chicago, IL 60657 • 773.883.8830

laura@stagelefttheatre.com

www.stagelefttheatre.com

ABOUT THE NEW ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

Jason A. Fleece has directed over thirty-five productions in the past ten years, all over the country. At Stage Left he has directed *Anna is Saved* by Jessica Cluess, as part of LeapFest 6. Elsewhere in Chicago, his recent work has included *The Story of Francis and Wild Gil (A Francis and Wild Gil Story)* for Wooden Rocket Productions, and *Jesus Hopped the A Train* for Village Players Performing Arts Center. Jason has worked with Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, Second City, n.u.f.a.n. ensemble, and PEOPLE*S Theatre of Chicago. He holds an MFA in Directing from the Theatre School at DePaul University.

Mark Pracht received a BA from the University of Nebraska, Kearney. He worked on 7 world premieres with the Sheleterbelt Theatre in Omaha, including his own play, *Neon*. He toured nationally as the ghost of Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol* for The Nebraska Theatre Caravan. He has worked in Chicago since 2001, at theatres including Trap Door, Lifeline, and The Side Project. He served as the Artistic Director of Brown Couch Theatre Company. Past productions include Stage Left's *The Day of Knowledge*, *Dashiell Hamlet* at City Lit Theatre, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* with Open Eye Productions.

Adam Smith has designed sound at Stage Left on LeapFest 6 and *The Day of Knowledge*. His other recent credits include sound design for *The Giver* and *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* (T.Y.A. Series), *Haywire!* (Hell in a Handbag), *2006-2008 Ten Minutes*, *The Gathering Note*, and *Madwoman of Chailot* (A/I Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville); and assistant sound design for *The Autumn Garden* (Eclipse Theatre Co.). Adam is a founding member of LBK Productions and Off Target Productions.

Chris Thompson is a junior Loyola University Chicago. He is triple-majoring in Theatre, English and Psychology (Human Services), double-minoring in Political Science and Women's Studies, and focusing on Pre-Law. He is very active in his campus life, holding the position of Vice-President in the Pre-Law Society, Historian in the Golden Key International Honour Society, and Publicity Coordinator for Psi Chi. He stage managed LeapFest 6 in May of 2009, and is spending the fall semester in London.

Greg Werstler's Stage Left directing credits include *After Ashley* and *Ruby Vector* in LeapFest 6. Greg has worked as a theater administrator and director in Chicago for more than 10 years. He is the Managing Director of ComedySportz Theatre and recently completed a build-out of their beautiful new theater in Lakeview. Other directing credits include *Rumors* and *Loveliest Afternoon* for Eclipse Theatre Company, *Voice of the Prairie* and *The Eight* for Dolphinback Theatre (of which he was a founding member), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Equity Library Theatre and *Angels in America* at Lake Forest College.

The new members join the existing Stage Left ensemble, which includes **Usman Ally, Scott Bishop, Kate Black, Cat Dean, Melanie Derleth, Christine Heckman, Kevin Heckman, John Kohn, Cory Krebsbach, MEH Lewis, Ian Maxwell, Drew Martin, David Alan Moore, Brian Plocharczyk, David Rush, David M. Schmitz, Zev Valancy, and Chelsey Wagemaker.**

ABOUT THE COMPANY

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. With this transition, both Smith and the ensemble have re-committed to that mission.

3408 North Sheffield • Chicago, IL 60657 • 773.883.8830

laura@stagelefttheatre.com

www.stagelefttheatre.com