

THE RECOMMENDATION



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THEATER REVIEW

GLOBE'S 'THE RECOMMENDATION' GETS THUMBS UP FOR TONE SHIFTS

JAMES HEBERT • U-T

At the risk of slapping a pat line on an admirably complex play, "The Recommendation" has a whole lot to recommend it.

The mastery of shifting tones that Jonathan Caren exhibits in this <u>Old Globe</u> world premiere would be a feat for any playwright, but it's all the more impressive considering the piece is Caren's first properly produced work.

His story of friendship, power dynamics and the perils of mutual back-scratching comes off at first blush like a sharp comedy, as we meet the two college roommates at the center of the action.

But once a third character enters the picture, "The Recommendation" becomes a provocative and at times brutally honest examination of how we calculate (or fail to) our social debt to others.

The narrator of this deftly acted memory play is Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill), a middle-class striver whose Ethiopianborn father has sent him off to college with (proudly) a Jansport backpack and an admonition to listen to his heart.

Iskinder is a bit of a nerd, although still savvy enough to set up his own bit of illicit commerce in the dorms. His roommate, Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd), on the other hand, is the resident rock star — a personification of white privilege, with a family well-connected enough to wangle a birthday greeting for their son from the hockey great Wayne Gretzky. Iskinder is both fascinated and repelled by the ease with which things come to Aaron and admits a part of him hates this pampered party boy for it. Yet Iskinder ultimately can't help tapping into Aaron's world of affluence and influence as well.

There's a memorable, telling moment in director Jonathan Munby's turn-on-a-dime staging where Iskinder asks with amazement whether patronage and nepotism are really how the world works. Aaron replies impishly: "Well, it's not *not* how it works."

And yet Aaron is about to find out that even for him, there are limits. A chance traffic stop lands him in a jail holding cell (for reasons Caren doesn't reveal right away), where he's at the mercy of someone else who has the power to pull a few strings: A repeat offender named Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole).

What follows is a delicate, volatile interplay with consequences that end up echoing over a period of years, leading to a climax that has no less visceral impact for feeling slightly contrived.

Cole brings a mesmerizing mix of agitation and fabulization to Dwight, who claims to have endless famous friends but turns out to be a kind of judicial-system celebrity himself.

Gill nails Iskinder's deep ambivalence about his bonds with Aaron — really the



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Brandon Gill (left) is Iskinder and Evan Todd is Aaron in "The Recommendation." HENRY DIROCCO

'The Recommendation'

Old Globe Theatre

When: 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays (no matinee Feb. 18); 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays; plus 2 p.m. Feb. 15. Through Feb. 26.

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29 and up Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: theoldglobe.org

soul of the play — and makes the character likable but certainly no saint.

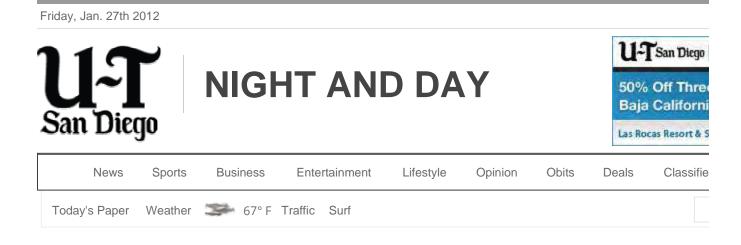
And Todd earns laughs without ever pushing too hard for them — not easy, given that his character occasionally borders on cartoonish.

There's still a rough spot or two in Caren's script, including a job dismissal that isn't quite adequately explained. Iskinder also seems to drop out of his own story for an extended period in the first act.

Munby's propulsive production lends a tense energy, boosted by Tony Caligagan's stylized choreography for set changes, and simpatico work by designers Alexander Dodge (sets), Linda Cho (costumes), Philip S. Rosenberg (lighting) and Lindsay Jones (original music and sound).

Taken together, this is one show about connections that really does connect.

jim.hebert@utsandiego.com • (619) 293-2040 • Twitter @jimhebert





Jimonn Cole as Dwight and Evan Todd as Aaron in the Old Globe's world-premiere production of Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation." — Henry DiRocco

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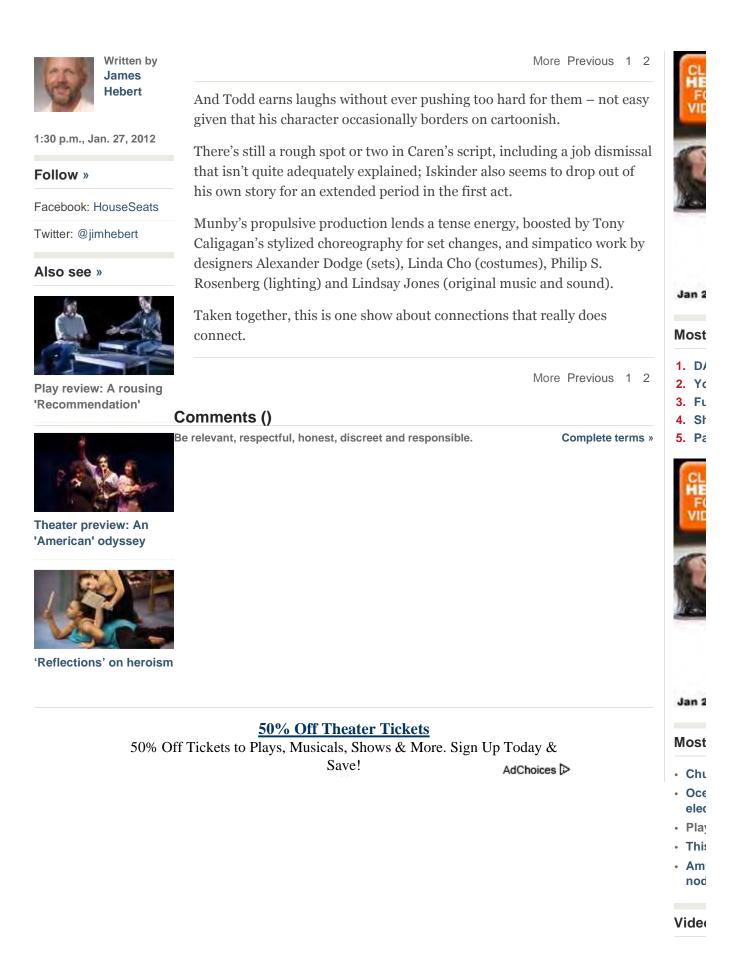
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Jimonn Cole as Dwight and Evan Todd as Aaron in the Old Globe's world-premiere production of Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation." — Henry DiRocco

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Old Globe Theatre **NC Times-Preview Section** February 02, 2012 71,847 25,29 47 sq inch \$871.20

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THEATER REVIEW **Globe's 'Recommendation' is** smart, sassy and surprising

By PAM KRAGEN

pkragen@nctimes.com

Here's a recommendation for you: Don't miss Jonathan Caren's whip-smart, shapeshifting "The Recommenda-tion." It's one of the best new plays I've seen in years.

The three-character comedy-drama, now in its world premiere at the Old Globe, takes a thoughtful, modern look at the razorthin line between love and hate when money, class and privilege are at stake.

Born and raised in L.A., Caren's got a sharp ear for the language, lifestyles and status symbols of his native city's rich and famous from Kabbala bracelets to Corona beers and movie scripts by the pool.

Into this hyper-artificial world comes Iskinder Iudoku, the affable, idealistic narrator of this fastpaced story about his troubled 15-year friendship with roommates at Brown



Brandon Gill as Iskinder, Evan Todd as Aaron and Jimonn Cole as Dwight in the world premiere of Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation" at The Old Globe.

Photo courtesy

Aaron Feldman, the entitled son of a wealthy L.A. lawyer. Brought together as

"The Recommendation" CRITIC'S CHOICE

WHEN: 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through Feb. 26

WHERE: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, The Old Globe, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS: \$29 and up; play has strong language

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University, "Izzy" is initially dazzled by Aaron's confidence, wealth and ease at opening doors that would otherwise be closed to the Virginia-born son of a middle-class Ethiopian immigrant.

Aaron's father's recommendation gets Izzy into law school, and a ticket to the life he's always dreamed of. But that power cuts both ways when Aaron demands a morally reprehensible price for the many favors he's rendered, and that's where reality begins to shift under the audience's feet.

Iskinder (Ethiopian for "man's defender") is an outsider whose love for Aaron is deeply pocked with envy. He is - as Caren's script and Alexander Dodge's wire mesh set suggest - a man filled with holes, lacking that solid foundation of knowing who he is and where he fits in this glamorous but cold world. And when a string of

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Caren's script is solidly studded with laughs, surprises and deeper issues, but it could still use some fine-tuning. An overlong prison scene in the first act takes the show off course for 10-15 minutes, and some plot twists throughout stretch credulity. Still, it's in remarkably strong shape for a premiere and is sure to have a life beyond the Globe.

Director Jonathan Munby brings a lot to the table with his brisk, stylish, in-theround production. There's a lightness and tongue-incheek sassiness to his storytelling and characters, with humorous audience interaction and musicalized scene changes choreographed with dancelike precision by Tony Caligagan.

The three-man cast is excellent, particularly Jimonn Cole, as the colorful inner-city convict Dwight Barnes, whose fleeting brushes with the two men change all of their lives. To say too much about Dwight would spoil the surprise, but Cole's a remarkably versatile actor who's believably a jail cell comedian, a broken and redeemed man and a violent instrument of revenge.

Evan Todd is marvelously self-absorbed as the spoiled and playful Aaron, a shallow and cowardly screenwriter hiding secrets from his past. And Brandon Gill meticulously crafts Izzy's noble exterior (and his well-disguised, flawed soul).

The play could be tightened from its two hours (plus intermission), but it doesn't drag, thanks in part to Munby's lively direction, Lindsay Jones' peppy music and sound and Philip S. Rosenberg's cool industrial lighting.

Caren's writing is sharp and authentic, so the language — particularly in one scene set in a jail — is raw by <u>Old Globe</u> standards. Still, "The Recommendation" is likable in its unconventionality, and Caren's refreshing young voice is a welcome change for the usually conservative theater. Home / Entertainment / Arts-and-theatre / Theatre / THEATER REVIEW: Globe's 'Recommendation' is smart, sassy and surprising

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THEATER REVIEW: Globe's 'Recommendation' is smart, sassy and surprising

By PAM KRAGEN pkragen@nctimes.com North County Times | Posted: Saturday, January 28, 2012 12:09 pm | No Comments Posted

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Brandon Gill as Iskinder, Evan Todd as Aaron and Jimonn Cole as Dwight in the world premiere of Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation" at The Old Globe. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco

"The Recommendation"

Critic's Choice

When: 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through Feb. 26

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Brought together as roommates at Brown University, "Izzy" is initially dazzled by Aaron's confidence, wealth and ease at opening doors that would otherwise be closed to the Virginia-born son of a middle-class Ethiopian immigrant.

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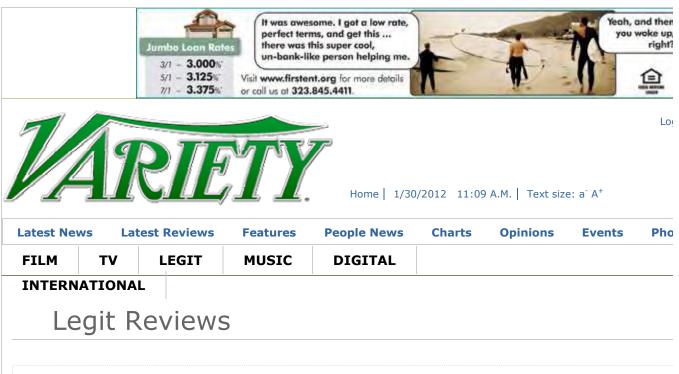
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Posted: Sun., Jan. 29, 2012, 2:04pm PT

Regional

The Recommendation

(Old Globe, San Diego; 285 seats; \$67 top)

By BOB VERINI

An Old Globe presentation of a play in two acts by Jonathan Caren. Directed by Jonathan Munby. Sets, Alexander Dodge; costumes, Linda Cho; lighting, Philip S. Rosenberg; original music and sound, Lindsay Jones; movement, Tony Caligagan. Opened Jan. 26, 2012. Reviewed Jan. 28. Runs through Feb. 26. Running time: 2 HOURS.

Iskinder ludoku , Brandon Gill, Aaron Feldman, Evan Todd, Dwight Barnes , Jimonn Cole

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Nobody reads "The Great Gatsby" to learn all about Nick Carraway. While an outsider may offer perspective, only the main guy in the

arena truly commands our attention. Jonathan Caren's world preem "The Recommendation" brings two contrasting, equally charismatic Gatsby-esque strivers onto the Old Globe's arena stage. Yet every time they're on a collision course, a passive, boring narrator sashays in to steal focus and reduce the heat. An otherwise handsome, absorbing production ends up meriting only a qualified recommendation.

Sucking up all the air from every room is golden boy Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd), scion of L.A. wealth who becomes Brown U.'s BMOC. No great scholarly shakes, the dude is all basketball hands and hip-hop argot as he wows the ladies and nurtures his bros, certain his social skills and connections will continue to pave his road with yellow brick en route to a filmmaking career. (Todd is almost too good at this act for comfort.)

Then comes the post-bac bummer, as a random L.A. traffic stop lands him in a holding cell with his cracked-mirror image. Career criminal Dwight Barnes (a mesmerizing Jimonn Cole) ricochets from camaraderie to menace in detailing filmmaking dreams no less grandiose than Aaron's. "I'm chilling up in my Hollywood bungalow kickin' it me and Steven...," he faux-reminisces as a practiced eye takes the terrified kid's measure.

The 'rents deny their son bail to teach him a lesson, which he receives in the manic Barnes' detailed portrait of serious jail time. A bargain is exacted by which pretty-boy's back will be watched for the duration, and once the cell doors open, a grateful Aaron will open doors to the film industry -- details tantalizingly unspecified for the moment.

The alert reader will note the absence of mention, until now, of the dramatic tripod's third prong. That's Aaron's college roomie and acolyte, later accepted to UCLA Law upon the intercession of Feldman Senior. Iskinder (Brandon Gill) is the classic Fitzgeraldian poor kid rendered starry-eyed by privilege, with an insatiable tendency to spell out themes and exposition and his Ethiopian-born father's gnomic words to live by -- "Do not spy with avaricious eyes" -- which, of course, he fails to live by at all.

Helmer Jonathan Munby guides Cole and Todd through a series of cat-and-mouse games you enjoy while they're happening even as they whet your appetite for the next one. Alexander Dodge's metal-gridded set serves up poolside, lockup and locker room with equal ease, complemented by Philip S. Rosenberg's supple lighting.

Yet lskinder is a total drag on the proceedings. Gill lacks any governing attitude toward his narration -- he might as well be reciting someone else's story -- and in interactions with the others, he rides one note of earnest confusion. The script specifies he's a "habitual stoner" with "a mounting anger waiting to be released," but Munby guides Gill to no hint of either in the entire two hours.

Caren's press notes identify Iskinder as the main character, his ambivalence about needing and accepting Aaron's helping hand supposedly the story's engine. But the guy is remote from the most exciting events en route, windily reflective but only engaged in passing. Eventually he's dragged unconvincingly into the denouement, almost as an afterthought. It's actually easy to imagine him cut completely, the better to craft a sizzling two-hander.

Any author is entitled to spell out his themes as he sees fit, but somebody at the Old Globe never got the memo.

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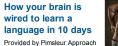
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Theater review: 'The Recommendation' at the Old Globe January 31, 2012 | 6:00 pm

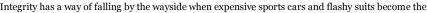


Brentwood, Harvard-Westlake, Brown University, Hollywood apprenticeships - Aaron Feldman has had a golden start to life, and there's every indication that the future will be just as gloriously posh for this would-be filmmaker.

When Aaron (played by Evan Todd with a curious mix of cockiness and whimper) makes his grand entrance in Jonathan Caren's fidgety drama "The Recommendation," now having its world premiere at the Old Globe, he is bathed in light and strutting around without his shirt. Yes, he even has 6-pack abs. What a lucky guy, you find yourself thinking. Sure hope this is an old-fashioned tragedy!

Actually, it's a tale of friendship between two young men of vastly different backgrounds. Iskinder (Brandon Gill), known as Izzy, is the son of an Ethiopian immigrant. A pre-law student who doesn't want to let his sacrificing father down, he hits the jackpot when Aaron is assigned his roommate at Brown and instantly the world of privilege (courtside Lakers seats included) opens up to him.

Izzy serves as narrator, whisking us through his undergraduate years with Aaron and then focusing on their time together on the West Coast after Aaron's father helps him get into UCLA's law school and Aaron lands a deluxe assistant job with a film executive. This is one of those fantasy positions that require much house-sitting by the pool with a script in one hand and a beer in the other. Of course, Aaron is unfailingly generous to Izzy. But in sharing the good life with his best friend, is he also exposing him to the corrupting influence of wealth?



Integrity has a way of falling by the wayside when expensive sports cars and flashy suits become the priority. But after losing a fancy job out of law school, Izzy is determined to give back. He offers his legal services to Dwight (Jimonn Cole), a smooth-talking African American con man with a hair-trigger temper whom Aaron met when he was briefly sent to prison after a routine traffic stop. (Rich kids apparently don't feel the need to register their cars.)

Aaron, however, doesn't want Izzy to have anything to do with Dwight, having confessed to him a crime that wasn't the reason he was put in jail. How this complicated saga plays out is a lesson not just in class warfare but also in the furtive resentment that's born from personal favors. No one likes to be in anyone's debt, but can generosity lead indirectly to violence?

The plot of Caren's play has more twists than an episode of "Downton Abbey," and they're not always as credibly pulled off, which is saying something. A graduate of Juilliard's playwriting program, Caren commits the novice's mistake of letting his big themes dictate the course of dramatic events, regardless of plausibility. On the positive side, he seems alert to the contradictions of character that can make ethical dilemmas so psychologically compelling.

The production, directed by the fast-rising British director Jonathan Munby on a spare industrial set designed by Alexander Dodge and dynamically lighted by Philip S. Rosenberg, is sleek and vigorous but not always especially convincing. For the staging to be fully effective, the script would have to be tightened and revised.

The three cast members, who are also Juilliard grads, are certainly committed to realizing the characters as written. But this is an instance in which a more independent interpretation might have been preferable.

Todd's Aaron knows only two modes - blustering and whining. His charisma is touted, but the audience must accept this as an article of faith. More often than not, he's just insufferable.

Izzy appears to be the play's protagonist, but Gill has trouble sorting out the role's many wrinkles and his character ends up seeming almost as sketchy as Cole's Dwight. The most that can be said is that racial clichés are strenuously avoided.

Let's consider "The Recommendation" a promise of future talent. The groundwork, however, is just being laid.

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-- Charles McNulty, reporting from San Diego

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"The Recommendation, "The Old Globe, Balboa Park, San Diego. 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 8 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays Ends. Feb. 26. Tickets start at \$29 (619) 234-5623 or www.TheOldGlobe.org Running time: 2 hours

Photos: Upper: Evan Todd, Brandon Gill and Jimonn Cole. Lower: Todd and Gill. Credit: Henry DiRocco





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THE RECOMMENDATION at the Old Globe Theatre When all or nothing both are possible

By Welton Jones (http://www.sandiego.com/writers/welton-jones) • Fri, Jan 27th, 2012

THE RECCOMENDATION is a young man's play, frantic with jagged urgency over choosing the right next step from the options tumbling past so swiftly. But it is we old men, who understand too well how tiny decisions – a traffic violation, a white lie, a casual favor – can change a life permanently, who may feel the impact of this sturdy play most poignantly.

How can author Jonathan Caren, who just graduated from Juilliard, have gotten this all so right? He senses life's labyrinths before he can have experienced them and he offer wise observations, if not cautionary guidance, on how best to survive and perhaps flourish.

The Old Globe Theatre has splendidly mounted THE RECCOMENDATION for its world premiere at the White Theatre, an occasion that brings honor to everybody involved.

This is the story of three young men, a privileged prince of power from Beverly Hills, a born loser sinking into the depth of the criminal class and a bright outsider. All are ambitious but only one finds that doors open automatically along his path.

Aaron the golden boy and Iskinder the outsider are accidental Ivy League roommates who find an easy comradery based on sharing Aaron's wealth. That's what friends are for says Aaron, whose code is keeping himself clean and having fun. And the arrangement doesn't stop with graduation. Back in L.A., Aaron's influential father helps Izzy (with his 4.0 grades) get a law scholarship and a desk at aprestigiousfirm. Meanwhile Aaron, gets boosted onto rung one of the film industry ladder as the personal assistant to a player there.

The third guy in this trio is there waiting for Aaron when he's tossed into a holding cell after being stopped for a tail-light violation. (Don't examine the story details too closely, just take them as Caren comments on random confusions.) Transferred to a crowded cell at county jail, Aaron, without his cell phone and near panic at this fellow prisoner's musings on his fate, begs for help, promising to return the favor when he's outside. And Dwight delivers, though his methods traumatize Aaron.

That Aaron is white and Dwight is black will come as no surprise. Izzy walks the line, son of a Ethiopian father and a white American mother. His ambiguous musings enrich the play and lift it above easy stereotyping.

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(http://static.sandiego.com/articlefiles/e1b32e6eaf26-4b7f-92b1-53811e555055 /Recommendation_main.jpg) Evan Todd, Brandon Gill and Jimmonn Cole (left to right) Henry Dirocco

So life continues in all its haphazardry but the curves begin to flatten out as results trump prospects and promises are unkept. Inevitably, the question is asked: "How many times have I helped you?" And soon thereafter the curves sag into something like their final versions, not really disasters but tarnished beyond the power of polish.

The play gains immeasurably by the robust, sure-footed direction of Jonathan Munby, who even choreographs scene changes as

intervals of aggressive ambition. Caren's sure touch with this vernacular mix of slang, brand names and attitudes gives Munby abundant opportunity for definitive character licks and he can't have missed many. For a play that heaves and splatters like a low-pressure leak, Munby has found a relaxed but purposeful path.

And what are they feeding back there at Juilliard? Not only the playwright is a grad but also the three excellent actors. Evan Todd is Teflon as Aaron in his element, but pitiful, nasty and hysterical to equal effect as required. Brendon Gill is controlled and appealing as Iskinder and Jimmon Cole ranges impressively from strutting rage to desolate impotence as Dwight.

The scenery they sling around so precisely are the metal benches, tables, chairs and such from Alexander Dodge's streamlined minimalist set, lit with similar fluorescent cool by Philip S. Rosenberg. Lindsey Jones' dabs of music and Linda Cho's young-guy costumes also pick up on the self-assured stride of this brilliant production.

I hope Caren will cherish this exemplary world premiere of his first professionally-produced play. His should be a career that's fun to watch. But probably they won't always be done this well.

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It is this promise, a simple favor unreturned, that ends up changing the lives of these three men forever.

Caren successfully navigates the muddy waters of race, class, friendship and our own misunderstandings. His dialogue is fast-paced, well timed, and carefully percolated inside the tight, pressure cooker-like environments his characters find themselves in.

As the sometime-spoiled, silverspooned Aaron, Evan Todd...radiates with charisma and self-confidence. What drew me in to his performance was his grasp of the nuances of his character.

His attention to detail, like Issy's vocabulary growing in size and eloguence as he progresses through and out of law school, shows that this script was carefully crafted. Humor and drama was a line crossed and re-crossed but not once tread on too heavily.

Though a few potholes do find their way into the storyline they do not detract from an otherwise

smooth ride. He aptly ties the loose ends that need binding but still leaves a few questions for the audience to discuss over a cup of coffee afterwards.

Gill provides Iskinder a sense of innocence that could easily be lost in this role. His smile and personality set the audience at ease, even after Issy openly admits to selling marijuana to help him pay his way through college. He exudes a sense of morality that would have had me fearing no problems in trusting him with my wallet.

As the sometime-spoiled, silver-spooned Aaron, Evan Todd provided an entrance to the play that had the audience still talking during intermission. Easy-going and the guy that everyone likes, and "kind of hates a little bit," Todd radiates with charisma and self-confidence. What drew me in to his performance was his grasp of the nuances of his character.

Over the course of the 15 years the play spans, Aaron grows and matures. That growth is seen in Todd's performance, but even deeper is a trace of the teenager you first meet in college. It is in that continuity that the performance becomes more believable.

Believing at first that every word leaving Dwight's mouth is full of mistruth, it is soon realized that with Dwight, that is not always the case. The complexity of this character is handled beautifully by Jimonn Cole. His unpredictability creates a sense of unease in the audience and in Aaron.

Even before his formal introduction, his presence is felt, quite chillingly, in the well-choreographed scene transitions. Like the characters, the audience could be seen drawn back in their chairs waiting for his next move.

The production was left in the very capable hands of Jonathan Munby, who guided it skillfully. The scenic design by Alexander Dodge brought a minimalist, industrial feel that transitions from pool-side to prison cell in seconds and worked well with the tones of the show.

Linda Cho (costume design) managed to take two men back to adolescence and through to adulthood convincingly, changing Dwight from dignitary to despondent.

"The Recommendation" runs through February 26 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre at The Old Globe, Balboa Park in San Diego, For info or tickets call 619-23-GLOBE or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org

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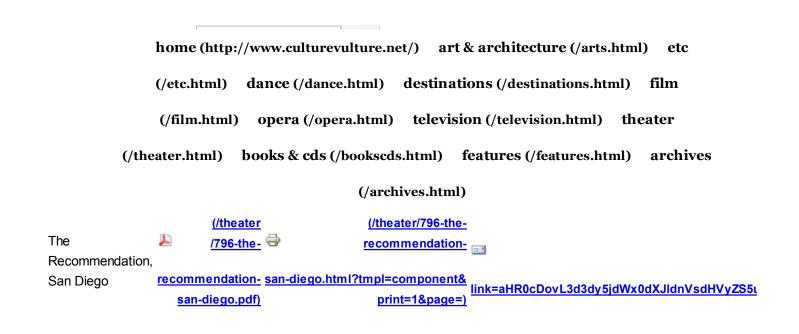






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Jimonn Cole (left) and Evan Todd in "The Recommendation" at the Old Globe *Photo by Henry DiRocco*

'The Recommendation'

By Jonathan Caren Directed by Jonathan Munby The Old Globe Theatre (http://www.oldglobe.org /tickets

<u>/production.aspx?performanceNumber=9146</u>), San Diego Jan. 21 – Feb. 26, 2012

What does it take to be successful in America? What does it mean to be a friend? The Recommendation, Jonathan Caren's stirring new play, asks these and other questions but doesn't necessarily provide answers. You have to fill in the blanks.

The story begins with college roommates meeting for the first time in their dorm room. Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd) is

an aggressively affable child of privilege. Life is like a vending machine to him: pull the right levers and candy comes out.

Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill) is the son of a Somali immigrant father and an American mother. He has been taught to work hard but is already falling away from his father's values. Feldman teaches him an old standard: who you know is indeed as important as what you know. But Iskinder (aka Issy) has only one lever to pull to get the goodies—Feldman.

Their friendship continues through college and afterward. Feldman's father helps Issy into law school and both friends settle in LA. Things are moving forward according to plan when Feldman is forced to spend a night in jail with Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole). For Dwight, every lever he's ever pulled has given him garbage. But then he meets Feldman and gets a glimpse of a world where people use their influence to help you out. In a great cast, Cole stands out, milking every ounce of his character's ambiguity. Is Dwight a base opportunist or does he simply see an opportunity for fair treatment?

They are all archetypal characters: the gregarious rich kid; the shy, studious immigrant's son; the sly, misunderstood thug. But cut through the veneer and you find unforeseen complexity. Some of that outward character is for show, a protective shell.

Todd's Feldman cycles between humorous party boy, petulant brat and frightened child. Gill's Issy, who narrates, is upright and intense. He is searching for the moral vocabulary to simultaneously take care of himself and do the right thing. Cole's Dwight has a restrained Samuel L. Jacksonian menace. But is it really menace or does he raise his voice because he just wants to be heard?

Munby's direction is equally comfortable with the comedic early scenes and the intense latter ones. The tension builds and builds. The minimalist metallic set perfectly underscores the action—in the dorm, by the pool, in jail.

"The Recommendation"—you're not going to shrug this one off in the parking lot afterwards. It's going to stay with you a while.

Josh Baxt

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Man's Defender

"Baby, I ain't chained to a radiator in a room full of chopped-off hands."

aron Feldman's so connected that when he sits by the pool and the beer runs out, he whines: "No one has texted me in, like, AN HOUR!"

He lives in Brentwood, his father's a big-time

lawyer. As his college roommate Iskinder says, Aaron's "smart, privileged, and white as the sky when you die." He's so entitled, he's exempt. He'll never have to

worry about anything, ever, world without end.

Iskinder will. He's every bit as smart as Aaron (and more cagy, funding his education at Brown University by dealing ganja). But his father's an immigrant from Ethiopia who married a white woman. And Iskinder finds himself caught between his father's sturdy ethics and the slippery economic ladder he longs to climb. His name means "man's defender," but the doors to his future won't open without help — without, as the title of Jonathan Caren's play suggests, a *Recommendation*.

So, where could Aaron go that he wouldn't be connected? As in David Mamet's *Edmund*, the playwright flips Aaron. He winds up in a holding cell. Cut off from all lifelines, including his father, who refuses to bail him out, Aaron has no social network. He shares the cell with Dwight Barnes, an African-American as hooked-up behind bars as Aaron is outside.

Aaron got a birthday call from hockey hallof-famer Wayne Gretzky. Dwight claims to know basketball star Dwayne Wade.

> When moved to county jail, they make a pact. Dwight will protect Aaron from harm. In turn, Aaron will work to have Dwight released. Once outside, however,

Aaron forgets the entire affair. Or tries to.

The Recommendation has a schematic feel. Convenient things have to happen to sharpen the dilemmas (Aaron's incarceration for a modest traffic violation, Iskinder's choosing Barnes for pro bono defense, the trio meeting up in a sports club, naked to the waist). But while the seams in the plot still show, Caren has a terrific comic touch, and his ear for accurate, blistering dialogue is undeniable. His characters have an extra gear: when connection devolves into confrontation, they kick into overdrive.

The <u>Old Globe</u> has given *The Recommendation* the kind of tight, jazzy production often used to conceal a bad script. Director Jonathan Munby's stage is in near-constant motion (even the scene changes are an athletic dance). Munby uses film techniques — blackouts, jump cuts — but





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Page 2 of 2

with a difference: the actors are live and, at the intimate White Theatre, just a few feet away from the audience. The overall effect is in-the-round, theatrical immersion.

The design work is so unified, it's as if the designers were members of a band: on sets (the floor like a metallic trampoline the size of a boxing ring), give it up for Alexander Dodge; on lights (including a flickering wave around the house), Philip S. Rosenberg; on costumes (college grunge to natty business wear), Linda Cho; and on original music and sound (including the repeated slam of a prison door), Lindsay Jones.

The performances are of a piece as well. Evan Todd's Aaron moves from carefree-glib to dark night of the soul in inexorable stages. Jimonn Cole's so on the mark as Dwight, he almost convinces you he knows D. Wade and that he didn't shatter that convenience-store window.

Brandon Gill has the most difficult task. Iskinder narrates the story and is the least welldrawn character (often defined more by what he is not). Gill relates well to the audience and makes Iskinder believable anyway.

DTOGRAPH BY HENRY DIROCCO

Evan Todd as Aaron and Brandon Gill as Iskinder in the Old Globe's Recommendation

The Recommendation, by Jonathan Caren Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park Directed by Jonathan Munby: cast: Brandon Gill, Evan Todd, Jimonn Cole; scenic design, Alexander Dodge costumes, Linda Cho, lighting, Philip S. Rosenberg, sound, Lindsay Jones Playing through February 26; Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday at 7:00 p.m. Thursday through Saturday at 8:00 p.m. Matinee Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. 619-234-5623

STORIES BALBOA PARK | THEATER REVIEWS

The Old Globe's *Recommendation; A Behanding in Spokane* at the Cygnet

"Baby, I ain't chained to a radiator in a room full of choppedoff hands."

By Jeff Smith | Published Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2012



Evan Todd as Aaron and Brandon Gill as Iskinder in the Old Globe's Recommendation

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The design work is so unified, it's as if the designers were members of a band: on sets (the floor like a metallic trampoline the size of a boxing ring), give it up for Alexander Dodge; on lights (including a flickering wave around the house),

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Philip S. Rosenberg; on costumes (college grunge to natty business wear), Linda Cho; and on original music and sound (including the repeated slam of a prison door), Lindsay Jones.

The performances are of a piece as well. Evan Todd's Aaron moves from carefree -glib to dark night of the soul in inexorable stages. Jimonn Cole's so on the mark as Dwight, he almost convinces you he knows D. Wade and that he didn't shatter that convenience-store window.

Brandon Gill has the most difficult task. Iskinder narrates the story and is the least well-drawn character (often defined more by what he is not). Gill relates well to the audience and makes Iskinder believable anyway.

Martin McDonagh's A Behanding in Spokane bullies the audience as much as the characters. Don't like gunfire, the N-word, homophobia, cigarette smoke, an F-bomb in almost every sentence? McDonagh gives you 90 minutes of same. It's as if the play craves extreme reactions. Whether they're revulsion or laughter doesn't matter. At some point — or quite often — Behanding will jolt you.

Problem is: McDonagh has written a very funny script. He sets up a bizarre situation and then plays "Can I top this?" And does, then does again.

Carmichael lost his left hand 27 years ago. He's been on a quest ever since: to find it and do grave bodily harm to the six idiots who lopped it off. The hand should be easy to spot: it has "H.A.T.E." tattooed across the knuckles.

Flash forward: when Marilyn tells Mervin, receptionist at a fleabag hotel, there's something funny about him wearing boxer shorts, he replies, "About me? Baby, I ain't chained to a radiator in a room full of chopped-off hands with a gas can about to explode in it, insulting a guy's boxer shorts."

Toby, an African-American male also chained to the radiator, has a brief moment of admiration for his abuser. If Carmichael turned his fierce determination to cleaning up the environment, "m-f-ing environment's gonna end up clean."

Cygnet Theatre's advertising, signs in the lobby, and preshow announcement warn patrons about what's to come. If frontal, funhouse-warped theater imagine Sam Shepard on 55-Hour Energy — is not your cup of tea, stay away! You will miss Jeffrey Jones's riveting performance as Carmichael, Kelly Iverson and Vimel, as Marilyn and Toby (though both could speak a hair slower), and Mike Sears's gem as quirky Mervyn, who has the adventure of his dreams.

Stay away if you don't like being jolted. And, maybe the biggest one of all: this is McDonagh's first play set in America. Audiences have squirmed and laughed at his Irish plays — The Beauty Queen of Leenane, The Cripple of Inishmaan. So, this is what he thinks of us? ■

The Recommendation, by Jonathan Caren

Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park

Directed by Jonathan Munby: cast: Brandon Gill, Evan Todd, Jimonn Cole; scenic design, Alexander Dodge, costumes, Linda Cho, lighting, Philip S. Rosenberg, sound, Lindsay Jones

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SAN DIEGO

Regional Reviews by Bill Eadie

The Recommendation

Old Globe

Also see Bill's review of *Dividing the Estate*

Playwright Jonathan Caren told a program interviewer that *The Recommendation* started as a writing exercise where he wanted to "see what happened when two characters from opposing backgrounds were put into a confined space and forced to get to know each other." The resulting play, which is making its world premiere at The Old Globe through February 26, goes in the direction of interrogating the influence of class differences and upward aspirations on relationships. The interrogation finds moments of insight hidden amongst a bunch of missed opportunities.

Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd) and Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill) meet as roommates at Brown University, an Ivy League institution that caters more to creativity than to elites. Aaron is from Los Angeles and epitomizes "dude" culture. He wants to become a filmmaker. "Izzy" is from Charlottesville, Virginia, home of the University of Virginia and politically a blue haven in a mostly red area. At the



Evan Todd, Brandon Gill and Jimonn Cole

urging of his wise but demanding Ethiopian father, Izzy vows to become a lawyer so he can help people in need.

Aaron and Izzy become friends, and both move to Los Angeles after college. Izzy, whose academic record is top-rate, enrolls at UCLA Law School. Aaron's father, a prominent Los Angeles lawyer, writes Izzy a letter of recommendation. Izzy passes the difficult California bar exam on the first try and starts work at a white shoe law firm. Aaron's charm and good looks allow him to get a foot in the door in Hollywood, and he works his way up to being a producer's assistant. Now, if he could only get a script he'd written in front of someone who had connections to get it produced ...

Crisis hits when Aaron is stopped for a minor traffic violation and then arrested because there is an outstanding warrant on his record. Taken to a holding cell, Aaron encounters Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole), a young man with a big story and a knack for getting people like Aaron to open up and reveal incriminating information. Aaron promises to help Dwight in the heat of the moment, but then reneges on that promise once he is released. It is Izzy who follows through with the assistance, and when Dwight is released, Izzy writes him a fateful letter of recommendation that allows Dwight to confront Aaron.

Though Mr. Caren is young, he is far from inexperienced as a writer. He has a knack for reproducing how people in their twenties talk, and a good deal of the first act is funny, bordering on hilarious. But, he doesn't seem to know quite what he wants this play to be. His idea of trying to understand friendships among dissimilar people is a good one, but that's not how the play develops. The title of the play implies that favors people do for one another somehow conspire to designate who is worthy of upward mobility, as well as to keep downwardly mobile individuals in their place. A program essay that focuses on difficulties people of color have in obtaining good jobs reinforces this point.

There are too many holes in the play's relentless second act march toward dismantling

societal hegemony to make such a plot through-line hold. Many recommendations have little to no influence on the hiring process, and even when a recommendation can open a door, the upwardly mobile individual usually must perform at or above expectations to keep the door from closing again. And, the play's climax seems to rely on Izzy's underlying resentments of white privilege, while the script's connections to those resentments are set up tenuously at best.

The Globe has hired Jonathan Munby, a quickly rising young British director, to stage *The Recommendation*. He does so with great precision and verve on a set (by Alexander Dodge) that looks a bit like a boxing ring. Philip S. Rosenberg's stark but effective lighting, Linda Cho's costumes, and Lindsay Jones' original music and sound design all register as positives.

The three cast members plus Mr. Caren are Julliard alumni (and I wonder if any among them wrote a recommendation for any of the others). As Izzy, Mr. Gill wins the audience's hearts, if not their minds, with a low key but likeable characterization of a mixed-culture young man who, at heart, feels he doesn't fit in anywhere. Mr. Cole gets the most underwritten role and chooses to play Dwight as a sociopath, a choice that works, except when it's undermined by the script. Mr. Todd's character is essentially a coward masquerading as a confident, if self-absorbed, twenty-something. Mr. Todd has the masquerade down perfectly; his cowardice leaves something to be desired.

I hope that Mr. Caren will not consider *The Recommendation* to be complete. There are a lot of good ideas here, but conceptual and writing work remains if the play is to become the kind of layered commentary that I think its writer intends.

Through February 26, 2012 at The Old Globe, which is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. Tickets (\$29 - \$69) are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting www.oldglobe.org.

The Recommendation, by Jonathan Caren. Directed by Jonathan Munby, with Alexander Dodge (Scenic Design), Linda Cho (Costume Design), Erick Sundquist (Associate Costume Design), Philip S. Rosenberg (Lighting Design), Lindsay Jones (Original Music and Sound Design), Calleri Casting (Casting) and Diana Moser (Stage Manager).

The cast includes Jimonn Cole (Dwight Barnes), Brandon Gill (Iskinder Iudoku) and Evan Todd (Aaron Feldman).

Photo: Henry DiRocco

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Photo credit: Henry DiRocco

From left, Evan Todd as Aaron, Brandon Gill as Iskinder and Jimonn Cole as Dwight in "The Recommendation."

Dwight feels out the obvious misfit for, shall we say, possibilities, while regaling Felly with tales of prison life that terrify him. When Dwight assures Felly that things will not go well for him without "protection," Felly agrees to a pact: Dwight will protect him in jail, Felly will ask his father to intervene on Dwight's behalf when his case comes up.

Feldman is free with the perks of privilege and soon Izzy (who acts as both narrator and character) finds himself both enjoying and fighting the seduction of money and influence. But he doesn't turn down Felly's offer to ask his father (and a high-powered Brentwood lawyer) to put it a word for him at

The play opens with snappy, often funny dialogue, and seems to be settling

into a college-age "Odd Couple" - until a chance traffic stop puts Felly into

(Jimonn Cole) in a local holding cell (aka drunk tank). Dwight is a rock star in

the close proximity of a third character, second-striker Dwight Barnes

his own right, but the kind no one hopes to meet.

Five years later, the past will come back to haunt them all, in a series of events that will test everything, including friendship, morality and integrity.

UCLA's law school.

This is a spectacularly fine production; Jonathan Munby's solid direction is the best I've seen in many a moon, and the show is further enhanced by magnificent production values. The movement of furniture and characters on the White's in-the-round stage is almost a show in itself (kudos to Munby and movement director Tony Caligagan); lighting by Philip S. Rosenberg, Lindsay Jones' original music and sound, and Linda Cho's costumes make their own contributions.

But it's the performances that make this play sing. Gill's Iskinder is calm and appealing, but effectively communicates his ambivalence about his friend Feldman. Cole's demeanor as Dwight turns on a dime – strutting, fuming and fretting – and Todd's Feldman runs a gamut as well, from serene confidence to fear and near hysteria.

This isn't a perfect play – there's an unexplained job loss, and a transition or two that are less than seamless – but it is a fine one, and you're not likely to see better direction or production values anywhere.

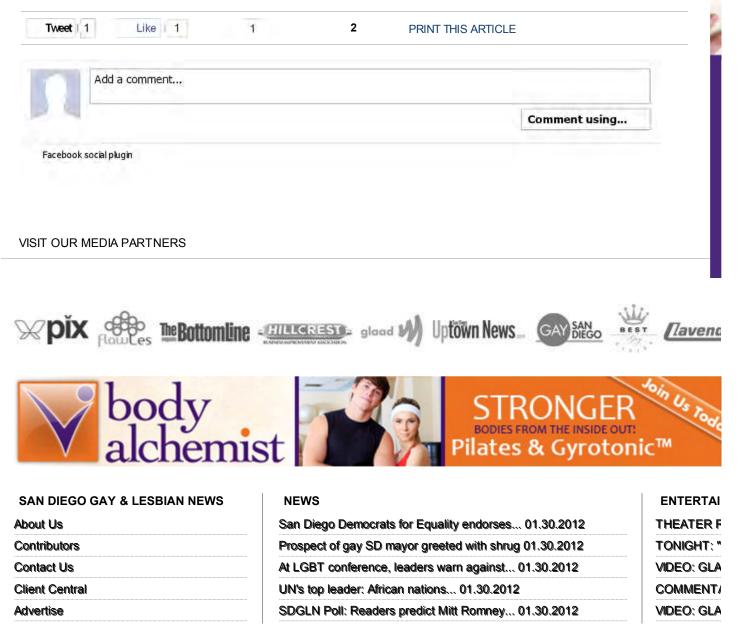
The details

"The Recommendation" plays through Feb. 26 at The Old Globe's Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 pm; Thursday through Saturday at 8 pm; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 pm.

For tickets call (619) 234-5623 or visit HERE.

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THE RECOMMENDATION

STAGESCENELA WOW!

What starts out as an Odd Couple-like comedy about a pair of mismatched Brown University roommates soon develops into something considerably more edgy (and edge-ofyour-seat) in Jonathan Caren's The Recommendation, a terrific World Premiere drama at San Diego's Old Globe that will keep you guessing from its exhilarating start to its suspenseful finish.



Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd) and Iskinder "Izzy" ludoku (Brandon Gill) could hardly be two more different dormmates when the pair arrive as freshmen at the lvy League college. Aaron, with his boy-next-door good looks and gym-perfected musculature is the proverbial Golden Boy, a son of privilege with all the accompanying perks, and a popularity with co-eds that his new roomie can only marvel at. Mixed-race Izzy represents the Obama-era immigrant dream as the son of an Ethiopian father and a white American mother, arriving not quite virginal but something thereabouts at Evan's dorm room door. (To his credit, Izzy does bring along several peanut butter jarfuls of pot, enough to seal any friendship deal, along with providing its seller ample pocket change.)

Not unexpectedly, Aaron's popularity soon rubs off on Izzy, along with a debt of gratitude made even greater when Aaron's dad writes him a letter of recommendation that gets the pre-law student into UCLA grad school, and from there into a cushy law firm. Meanwhile,



Since 2007, Steve spotlighted the be reviews, interview:

To search for an exac and end.



Burbank/Glendal Cabaret/Concert Comedy Comedy-Drama Downey/La Mira(film major Aaron uses charm, smarts, and those same family connections to set off on a more than promising writing-directing career in La La Land.



Then, in circumstances that will not even be hinted at here, a third character enters our two heroes' lives, a young African American second-striker named Dwight Barnes (Jimmon Cole), whose arrival will change the course of Aaron's and Izzy's lives in the most unpredictable of ways.

Much of this reviewer's enjoyment came from not knowing all that much about The Recommendation when I went in, more than enough reason to keep the above summarizing to the bare minimum. Don't let friends or other reviews give anything more away. The less you know, the more you'll delight in Caren's roller-coaster ride of a play, particularly as brought to energetic life by its three sensational stars.



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As editor of Stage: Los Angeles' most author of *Morocca* English Language Los Angeles since

photo credit: Eric Sch

If Todd doesn't seduce you with his looks and charm and physique (we first see Aaron in towel and nothing else), then his acting chops (both comedic and dramatic) will seal the deal. Gill too is thoroughly convincing (and equally likeable) as Izzy, a role which plays against stereotypes and allows Todd's fellow Julliard Drama School alumnus to develop a richly multi-faceted character. As for the third side of The Recommendation's triangle, Cole is so scarily real as Dwight that it's only his cameo as Izzy's Ethiopian father that reminds us that we are seeing a performance. Cole makes Dwight quite possibly the most complex

character of the three, allowing the convicted felon to charm us even as we recoil from his threatening demeanor. (Both Todd and Gill get to play cameo roles too, and do so quite niftily.)

The Recommendation's fourth star is its director Jonathan Mumby, who has not only elicited pitch-perfect performances from his three stars, but created as striking a production as you're likely to see all year, aided and abetted by a top-notch trio of scenic, lighting, and sound designers.

Alexander Dodge sets The Recommendation's action on a bare raised metallic square stage (think boxing ring without the ropes), onto which the three actors move metallic benches and chairs in precision moves choreographed dance-like by Tony Caligagan to sound designer Lindsay Jones' pulsating original music. (How often is it that scene changes end up almost as exciting as the scenes they connect?) Philip S. Rosenberg's lighting design is equally striking, with a swimming pool effect that will have you oohing and aahing. Linda Cho has designed costumes (and some skimpy towels) that suit each character to perfection. Diana Moser is stage manager.

If there's anything to quibble about, it's that The Recommendation still seems a play in search of the right ending. I'm not all that fond of the one Caren has chosen, and wonder if it may end up reinforcing negative racial stereotypes and the fear they engender, particularly among a mostly white, mostly financially comfortable audience.

Despite this caveat, there is so much to recommend in The Recommendation that rave reviews and glowing word-of-mouth are pretty much guaranteed, as are numerous regional stagings yet to come. I went in not knowing what to expect and came out exhilarated by Jonathan Caren's excitement-packed ride.

Old Globe Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego. Through February 25. Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7:00, Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00, Saturdays at 2:00 and 8:00, Sundays at 2:00 and 7:00. Wednesday matinee on February 25 at 2:00. No matinee on Saturday February 18. Reservations: 619 234-5623 www.oldglobe.org

–Steven Stanley January 29, 2012 Photos: Henry DiRocco

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Friends, enemies and missing limbs

In *this* corner, we have Aaron, a privileged college kid from Brentwood who expects that directing a Hollywood movie will come to him as easily as the next day's mail. And in *this* corner, we have Aaron's assigned dorm roommate, Iskinder (aka Izzy), a middle-class immigrant, part Ethiopian, with a sincere dream of becoming a lawyer and just as sincerely fighting for something meaningful. (Never mind that he deals weed, stashed in peanut-butter jars, on the side.) Aaron and Izzy's friendship, during and beyond college, is the foundation of Jonathan Caren's new play, **The Recommendation**, now at the <u>Old Globe</u>'s theater-in-the-round.

With its wit and sass and class differences, that friendship is intriguing on its own. But throw in a third party–Dwight, a street survivor / repeat offender whom Aaron meets when he's arrested and

tossed into jail—and questions of conscience, loyalty and betrayal elevate this drama to compelling heights.

Caren's pungent dialogue; graphic characterizations from Evan Todd (as Aaron), Brandon Gill (as Iskinder) and Jimonn Cole (as Dwight); and an inescapable tension that closes in on the sparse stage make *The Recommendation* worthy of its title.

It runs through Feb. 26 at the Old Globe Theatre. \$29 and up. oldglobe.org





FROM LEFT: BRANDON GILL, EVAN TODD AND JIMONN COLE

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Wednesday, Feb 01, 2012

Reviews of 'The Recommendation' and 'A Behanding in Spokane'

Stagings by the Old Globe and Cygnet Theatre lead our coverage of plays in local production By David L. Coddon



From left: Brandon Gill, Evan Todd and Jimonn Cole - Photo by henry DiRocco

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Imagine David Mamet meeting Quentin Tarantino and Steely Dan in The Twilight Zone. That's one way to look at Martin McDonagh's comically lurid A Behanding in Spokane, Cygnet Theatre's 2012 opener in Old Town. It's a one-act story of an armed but one-handed man named Carmichael (Jeffrey Jones, in a role played on Broadway by Christopher Walken, which should tell you something about the character right there) seeking his lost forelimb is a wild ride. The plot is complicated by two hapless double-crossers (Kelly Iversen and Vimel) and a wacked-out hotel receptionist (Mike Sears) and unfolds with profanities spewed at Gatling-gun speed, faux-gory sight gags and trademark McDonagh (The Beauty Queen of



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High energy and high anxiety steer 'The Recommendation'



Let's Review BY DIANA SAENGER

ow many times have we said something to a friend that would come back to bite us?

That's what happens to three young men in Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation," which is premiering at The <u>Old</u> <u>Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre</u> through Feb. 26.

"The Recommendation," contains a brief fight scene and lots of profanity. However, Caren's imaginative plot and astute dialogue create funny, tense, conventional and yet unexpected moments that travel a winding road and remind the men of a father's quote, delivered as he patted his heart, "Everything you need (in life) is right here."

The curtain rises on bright, charismatic and quick-on-his-toes Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd) who has, not only attending Harvard to his credit, but also the Ivy League Brown

If you go

What: "The Recommendation" Where: The Old Globe Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park When: Matinees, evenings through Feb. 26 Tickets: start at \$29, (619) 23-GLOBE or www.TheOldGlobe.org

University. He's anxious to make his mark as a filmmaker, and somehow after all the schooling isn't quite sure how to go about that. He befriends Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill), the son of an Ethiopian, who warns him when setting off for his career, "be wary of a man who offers you the world."

Aaron and Iskinder become roommates in college, but while Iskinder wants to buckle down and study hard to become an attorney, Aaron sets his sights on planning lots of parties. One night, as Aaron is making a store run, he gets pulled over for a traffic infraction and thrown in jail where he meets Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole).

Dwight is a chameleon; one minute playing nice to Aaron as he sizes him up and learns more about him, the next minute switching personalities to scare Aaron to tears with fear of what could happen to him if he gets moved into county prison.

Transition to a few years later after Iskinder has a successful law career and even ends up defending felon Dwight in an effort to lessen his jail time.

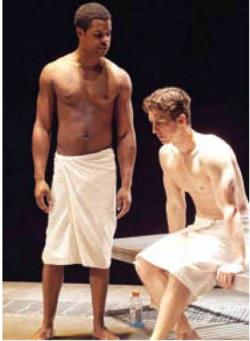


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HENRY DIROCCO PHOTOS

Aaron finds his golden sunset in Hollywood. All three lives are turned upside down when Iskinder and Aaron visit a gym and discover Dwight is a janitor there. Old wounds flare as accusations reach a fever pitch.



Iskinder (Brandon Gill) finds himself involved in a difficult situation between his acquaintances (Todd and Cole). The drama is having its world premiere in San Diego.

All three actors do a wonderful job in cementing their characters, difficult with a simple set design by Alexander Dodge of just a square box stage and two benches that easily "transform" through several different scenarios.



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High energy and high anxiety steer The **Recommendation at The Old Globe**

High energy and high anxiety steer The Recommendation at The Old Globe... http://www.lajollalight.com/2012/01/31/high-energy-and-high-anxiety-ste...

By Diana Saenger

Let's Review!

How many times have we said something to a friend that would come back to bite us? That's what happens to three young men in Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation," which is premiering at The Old Globe's Shervl and Harvey White Theatre through Feb. 26.



: Dwight (Jimonn Cole) and Aaron (Evan Todd) have tense moments 'The Recommendation' directed by Jonathan Munby at The Old Globe. Photo Henry DiRocco

"The Recommendation," contains a brief fight scene and lots of profanity. However, Caren's imaginative plot and astute dialogue create funny, tense, conventional and yet unexpected moments that travel a winding road and remind the men of a father's quote, delivered as he patted his heart, "Everything you need (in life) is right here."

The curtain rises on bright, charismatic and quick-on-his-toes Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd) who has, not only attending Harvard to his credit, but also the Ivy League Brown University. He's anxious to make his mark as a filmmaker, and somehow after all the schooling isn't quite sure how to go about that. He befriends Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill), the son of an Ethiopian, who warns him when setting off for his career, "be wary of a man who offers you the world."

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If you go

What: "The Recommendation"

Where: The Old Globe Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

When: Matinees, evenings through Feb. 26

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Vol. II, No. 26 - February 2, 2012

THESE SHOWS ARE UP FOR REVIEW

ON STAGE

Sense of direction

No good deed goes unacknowledged or unpunished in The Old Globe's terrific *The Recommendation*

BY MARTIN JONES WESTLIN



Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill, left) sets the stage as Aaron (Evan Todd) and Dwight (Jimonn Cole) jockey for position in the background. (Photos by Henry DiRocco)

Some of the best scenes in The Old Globe Theatre's *The Recommendation* aren't really designed as scenes at all. They involve the set-piece switches between the intervals, their heady sound beds cranked up in approval and their blocking almost symphonic in its exuberance. You can tell a lot about a show's prospects from the way these changes are handled—and in the case of this play, they're spot-on reflections of writer Jonathan Caren's lusty character work and director Jonathan Munby's hearty take on this equally robust storyline.

Even better: *The Recommendation* is a poor man's *Doubt: A Parable*, with its disquieting look at society's conditional relationships and the suspicion they fuel. The latter, John Patrick Shanley's Tony winner about a Catholic school principal's angry misgivings and the consequent shift in a popular young priest's fortunes, has very little on Caren's powers of observation—both pieces have survival of the fittest top of mind, and both beautifully exploit the imperfections of the survivors.

The stage is set here in the person of three young men—Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd), a breezy Beverly Hills

elitist gadabout; the guarded Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole), a likely small-time career crook; and Ethiopia-born Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill), the *wunderkind* who'll eventually referee their battle. Izzy and Aaron meet at Brown University as roomies; eventually, Aaron's dad will help land Izzy a job at a big-time law firm. The other end of the spectrum involves the sketchy Barnes, who runs into young Aaron in a holding tank when the latter is picked up for a defective taillight. Aaron will wind up in a county jail cell and, amid Dwight's savvy with the system, begs for and gets Dwight's help on the lay of the land, promising to return the favor.

But the fulfillment isn't forthcoming over a period of years, and Aaron has no use for Dwight amid the latter's past. From there, a furious Dwight takes in a vital object lesson on unkept promises.

It's all marked with boundless enthusiasm, from Caren's peppery streetisms to Munby's depth of comprehension. He knows that these guys are neither sinners nor saints, and his direction lets on. Watch Aaron suck up to Dwight as the county jail walls close in; listen to Izzy as he matter-of-factly dishes on Dwight's whereabouts (a clear violation of attorney-client privilege). And Dwight may take it hard when Aaron disappoints him, but Munby knows that's only because the character has a clear sense of right and wrong.

The script can stand some fine-tuning, as Caren tends to water down the language when he's in a rush to make a point; he neglects to elaborate on Izzy's clear disregard for lawyerclient confidentiality (his firm eventually fires him; is that the reason?); and there's overkill in consigning Aaron to a holding cell for a funky taillight. But these characters pick themselves up and dust themselves off at the slightest inkling of fault, enjoying the rich subtext Caren provides (Izzy's clearly irked at Aaron's luck of the draw in the privileged birth department; Dwight is an armchair Steven Spielberg expert as he tries to draw Aaron out). The characters are as fulfilling to watch as they are filled out.



Dwight (Jimonn Cole, right) has the detention system downpat, and Aaron (Evan Todd) feels like an idiot.

And maybe there's something to this strength in numbers thing after all: Caren and the three actors are grads of The Juilliard School, New York's famed conservatory of dance, theater and music. With all that chemistry and ensemble culture going on, that doesn't come as a huge surprise.

Just as the set pieces are spare, so too are Alexander Dodge's scene design and Philip S. Rosenberg's lights—both technicians know that this dialogue-heavy piece works best in a minimalist climate. Ditto for Linda Cho's costumes, which both underscore and recall the guys' initial meetings. Lindsey Jones' original music and Tony Caligagan's movement coaching seem almost interchangeable, and that's a true compliment.

Life experience has a way of weeding out the truly altruistic from the fair-weather loyalists, and sadly, there are far more of the latter. With *The Recommendation*, three characters share that unfortunate lesson in personal loyalty, portrayed with wonderful flair and conviction.

This review is based on the matine performance of Jan. 29. The Recommendation runs through Feb. 26 at The Old Globe Theatre's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. \$29 and up. 619-23-GLOBE, <u>oldglobe.org</u>



None and out

A Behanding in Spokane would be funnier except that it doesn't have any characters



What Toby and Marilyn (Vimel and Kelly Iversen) don't go through for a lousy 500

The historians are fond of the phrase "five and out" in describing the number of generations in which the great empires thrived on their road to obsoleteness. Remarkably, the American epoch is now nearing its *ninth* generation, although the country shows unmistakable signs of its rapidly escalating decay.

Playwright Martin McDonagh acknowledges our festering in *A Behanding in Spokane*, his first work set in the United States. Justice with decency is a relic over here, the Irish author seems to say, their enactments reduced to backdrops featuring sketchy neighborhoods, seedy hotels and degenerate characters. He's right about all of it, of course—the problem with *Behanding* is that the characters are *already* as degenerate as they're going to get. With nowhere to go, they're left with a lot of potential for laughs but little or no purpose to their creation.

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A positive recommendation for 'The **Recommendation'**

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By Carol Davis



Carol Davis

SAN DIEGO—The next time you ask someone for a recommendation, you'd better ask the right person; one whose connected, is dependable and knows <u>almost</u> everything about you. Asking one who is connected can open doors. Asking one who is dependable will assure you get the recommendation. Asking one who knows almost everything about you means they don't have to lie about any of your past indiscretions, if any. But more importantly, see that they follow through.

Such was the case with Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole) a seasoned prisoner who found himself in a holding cell (the drunk tank) at the Hollywood Community Station with first time offender Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd). When Aaron heard that the two were being transferred to another location, possibly to County, he fell apart and begged Dwight to cover his back. In return, Aaron would make sure that his big time operator Dad, a high class Beverly Hills attorney, would put in a good recommendation for him to serve little or no time. ("I'll do anything if you'll help me. My Dad's a big time lawyer. He can help you with whatever you need to be helped with.")

In Jonathan Caren's new three-people play (read world premiere of *The Recommendation*) race, class and friendship; loyalty and trust are at the center of this modern day character study. Caren's plays have been featured at Manhattan Theatre Club, The Ensemble Studio Theatre and several other small venues and his original Catch a Fish won Most Outstanding Play in the 2007 Fringe Festival. In this his newest play, he poses some very interesting scenarios about who we are under pressure as opposed to the public face we like to show off to our peers. In other words, 'it's never about who you know...but who really knows you'.

Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill), Izzy is a first generation middle class American of mixed race, with an Ethiopian father and white American mother and no ties or pull to further his career. Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd) is upper class, privileged from a wealthy, white family with lots of connections. Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole) is a hustler who can be charming and menacing at the same time. He will be in need of an influential connection later on in the play. As you can see Caren's three young men from different backgrounds, race and social class are as different as night is from day.

By chance, Aaron and Izzy were roommates at major Ivy League college. Just know that they both received an excellent education and Izzy, with a recommendation from Aaron's father was an easy candidate for entrance into UCLA law school after graduating from Brown, Magna Cum Laude. Aaron, on the other hand is destined to work in the film industry with the hope of becoming rich and successful one day, like his father before him. Both have promising careers. But as fate will have it, a minor DMV violation changes the course of events they had all so carefully planned out. This is where Dwight, our small time criminal, enters into the picture described above.

Crisply directed by Jonathan Munby and narrated by Izzy, *The Recommendation* follows the careers and vicissitudes of Izzy and Aaron as they make their way through college and past grad school, becoming the best of friends, attending sporting events, buying the right cars, sitting in the best box seats and meeting all the right people to further their careers. Both become successful. Both continue their friendship but things go awry when Izzy loses his job at his high power law firm.

At this time he decides to take a break from his regular routine, and give back to the community by taking on a pro bono case. As fate would have it, he decides to re examine Dwight's minor conviction (five years later

he's still sitting it out in prison because Aaron never did intervene for him as he had promised) because he thinks mistakes were made.

Aaron goes ballistic because he had confessed a crime to Dwight all those years ago when they were in jail for that very short time and Izzy's bringing up the past will only stir the pot and anger Dwight even more about that unfulfilled promise. He thinks he convinces Izzy to agree not to follow through. But it was not meant to be and, well, the next time we meet up with the three of them, Dwight is a maintenance man in the sports club of which Izzy and Aaron are members.

Funny thing about friendships, relationships and or unspoken promises, they can turn on a dime and even without knowing it, all the favors we do, the expectations we have, the recommendations we give or not and the special treatment we allow to enhance our friendships just because we can, can be the very cause of the moral dilemmas and turmoil we often find ourselves confronted with.

Caren's play under the deft direction of Munby moves along at a steady and snappy pace. With the help of set designer Alexander Dodge's industrial looking and mobile props, furniture and fixtures move in and out, off and on the stage in what might be considered a play within a play, the look is as modern as the young men themselves. Linda Cho's costume design is fitting for the personalities; Philip S. Rosenberg's industrial looking lighting design is a mixed bag and Lindsay Jones original music and sound design is right on target.

All three men move about the theatre in the round as if it was their private playground. The terrific and dynamically pulsated acting by all three young men gives the play, which at times gets bogged down with too many ideas all at once, an urgency only seen in the younger generation anxious to drive and strive to the top as soon as their little legs and ideas can take them.

The most explosive of the three, Jimonn Cole's Dwight is also the most menacing and has the most profound effect on the other two. He does it with ease and confidence. Evan Todd's Aaron is just about right as the spoiled kid from a privileged family and Brandon Gill is mesmerizing as Izzy, the young man torn between two worlds hoping to bring honor to his immigrant father. "Son, his father warned, "before I left Ethiopia, a wise man told me: Be wary of the man who promises you the world. For if you accept his offer, then you must carry the weight of the world on your shoulders."

My recommendation is that you see this show sooner rather than later.

See you at the theatre.

Dates: through Feb. 26th

Organization: The Old Globe

Phone: 619-234-5623

Production Type: Drama

Where: 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Ticket Prices: start at \$29.00

Web: theoldglobe.org

Venue: White Theatre

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT | FEBRUARY 1, 2012

Globe's "The Recommendation" comes with high grades



Carol Davis

San Diego Theater Examiner



(http://www.examiner.com/theater-insan-diego/evan-todd-brandon-gill-andjimonn-cole-jonathan-caren-s-therecommendation-at-the-old-globetheatre-photo) Evan Todd, Brandon Gill and Jimonn Cole in Jonathan Caren's The

Recommendation at The Old Globe Theatre

Credits: Henry DiRocco



(http://www.examiner.com/theater-insan-diego/the-recommendation-picture)

San Diego, CA---The next time you ask someone for a recommendation, you'd better ask the right person; one whose connected, is dependable and knows <u>almost</u> everything about you. Asking one who is connected can open doors. Asking one who is dependable will assure you get the recommendation. Asking one who knows almost everything about you means they don't have to lie about any of your past indiscretions, if any. But more importantly, see that they follow through.

Such was the case with Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole) a seasoned prisoner who found himself in a holding cell (the drunk tank) at the Hollywood Community Station with first time offender Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd). When Aaron heard that the two were being transferred to another location, possibly to County, he fell apart and begged Dwight to cover his back. In return, Aaron would make sure that his big time operator Dad, a high class Beverly Hills attorney, would put in a good recommendation for him to serve little or no time. ("I'll do anything if you'll help me. My Dad's a big time lawyer. He can help you with whatever you need to be helped with."

In Jonathan Caren's new three person play (read world premiere of *The Recommendation*) race, class and friendship; loyalty and trust are at the center of this modern day character study. Caren's plays have been featured at Manhattan Theatre Club, The Ensemble Studio Theatre and several other small venues and his original "Catch a Fish" won Most Outstanding Play in the 2007 Fringe Festival. In this his newest play, he poses some very interesting Slideshow: <u>The Recommendation</u> (http://www.examiner.com/theater-insan-diego/the-recommendation-picture)

Rating for The Recommendation:



By Carol Davis San Diego Theater Examiner

Carol Davis is a regular contributor to sdjewishworld.com. Before that she wrote for The San Diego Jewish Times for more than 20 years. Carol has... scenarios about who we are under pressure as opposed to the public face we like to show off to our peers. In other words, 'it's never about who you know...but who really knows you'.

Iskinder ludoku (Brandon Gill), Izzy is a first generation middle class American of mixed race, with an Ethiopian father and white American mother and no ties or pull to further his career. Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd) is upper class, privileged from a wealthy, white family with lots of connections. Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole) is a hustler who can be charming and menacing at the same time. He will be in need of an influential connection later on in the play. As you can see Caren's three young men from different backgrounds, race and social class are as different as night is from day.

By chance, Aaron and Izzy were roommates at major Ivy League college. Just know that they both received an excellent education and Izzy, with a recommendation from Aaron's father was an easy candidate for entrance into UCLA law school after graduating from Brown, Magna Cum Laude. Aaron, on the other hand is destined to work in the film industry with the hope of becoming rich and successful one day, like his father before him. Both have promising careers. But as fate will have it, a minor DMV violation changes the course of events they had all so carefully planned out. This is where Dwight, our small time criminal, enters into the picture described above.

Crisply directed by Jonathan Munby and narrated by Izzy, *The Recommendation* follows the careers and vicissitudes of Izzy and Aaron as they make their way through college and past grad school, becoming the best of friends, attending sporting events, buying the right cars, sitting in the best box seats and meeting all the right people to further their careers. Both become successful. Both continue their friendship but things go awry when Izzy loses his job at his high power law firm.

At this time he decides to take a break from his regular routine, and give back to the community by taking on a pro bono case. As fate would have it, he decides to re examining Dwight's minor conviction (five years later he's still sitting it out in prison because Aaron never did intervene for him as he had promised) because he thinks mistakes were made.

Aaron goes ballistic since he had confessed a crime to Dwight all those years ago when they were in jail for that very short time. Izzy's bringing up the past combined with his friendship with Aaron will only stir the pot and anger Dwight even more argues Aaron. Furthermore, that unfulfilled promise made by him doesn't bode well for his character.

He thinks he convinces Izzy to agree not to follow through. But it was not meant to be and, well, the next time we meet up with the three of them, Dwight is a maintenance man in the sports club of which Izzy and Aaron are members.

Funny thing about friendships, relationships and or unspoken promises, they can turn on a dime and even without knowing it, all the favors we do, the expectations we have, the recommendations we give or not and the special treatment we allow to enhance our friendships just because we can, can be the very cause of the moral dilemmas and turmoil we often find ourselves confronted with.

Caren's play under the deft direction of Munby moves along at a steady and snappy pace. With the help of set designer Alexander Dodge's industrial looking and mobile props, furniture and fixtures move in and out, off and on the stage in what might be considered a play within a play, the look is as modern as the young men themselves. Linda Cho's costume design is fitting for the personalities; Philip S. Rosenberg's industrial looking lighting design is a mixed bag and Lindsay Jones original music and sound design is right on target.

All three men move about the theatre in the round as if it was their private playground. The terrific and dynamically pulsated acting by all three young men gives the play, which at times gets bogged down with too many ideas at once, an urgency only seen in the younger generation anxious to drive and strive to the top as soon as their little legs and ideas can take them.

The most explosive of the three, Jimonn Cole's Dwight is also the most menacing and has the most profound effect on the other two. He does it with ease and confidence. Evan Todd's Aaron is just about right as the spoiled kid from a privileged family and Brandon Gill is mesmerizing as Izzy, the young man torn between two worlds hoping to bring honor to his immigrant father. "Son, his father warned, "before I left Ethiopia, a wise man told me: Be wary of the man who promises you the world. For if you accept his offer, then you must carry the weight of the world on your shoulders."

My recommendation is that you see this show sooner rather than later.

See you at the theatre.

Dates: through Feb. 26th

Organization: The Old Globe

Phone: 619-234-5623

Production Type: Drama

Where: 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Ticket Prices: start at \$29.00

Web: theoldglobe.org

Venue: White Theatre



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Old Globe Theatre The Californian-Preview February 02, 2012 93,265 12 44 sq inch \$822.32

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THEATER REVIEW | SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Globe's 'Recommendation' is smart, sassy and surprising

By PAM KRAGEN

pkragen@californian.com

Here's a recommendation for you: Don't miss Jonathan Caren's whip-smart, shape-shifting "The Rec-ommendation." It's one of the best new plays I've seen in years.

The three-character comedy-drama, now in its world premiere at the Old Globe, takes a thoughtful, modern look at the razorthin line between love and hate when money, class and privilege are at stake.

Born and raised in L.A., Caren's got a sharp ear for the language, lifestyles and status symbols of his native city's rich and famous from Kaballah bracelets to Corona beers and movie scripts by the pool.

Into this hyper-artificial world comes Iskinder Iudoku, the affable, idealistic narrator of this fastpaced story about his trou-

"The **Recommendation**"

Critic's Choice

■ When: 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through Feb. 26

■ Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, The Old Globe, Balboa Park, San Diego

■ Tickets: \$29 and up; play has strong language

■ Info: 619-234-5623

■ Web: theoldglobe.org

Aaron Feldman, the entitled son of a wealthy L.A. lawyer.

Brought together as roommates at Brown University, "Izzy" is initially dazzled by Aaron's confidence, wealth and ease at opening doors that would otherwise be closed to bled 15-year friendship with the Virginia-born son of



Brandon Gill as Iskinder, Evan Todd as Aaron and Jimonn Cole as Dwight in the world premiere of Jonathan Caren's "The **Recommendation**" at The Old Globe. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco

a middle-class Ethiopian immigrant.

Aaron's father's

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Izzy into law school, and a ticket to the life he's always dreamed of. But that power cuts both ways when Aaron demands a morally reprehensible price for the many favors he's rendered, and that's where reality begins to shift under the audience's feet.

Iskinder (Ethiopian for "man's defender") is an out sider whose love for Aaron is deeply pocked with envy. He is – as Caren's script and Alexander Dodge's wire mesh set suggest – a man filled with holes, lacking that solid foundation of knowing who he is and where he fits in this glamorous but cold world. And when a string of seeming coincidences collide in a shocking episode of violence, Izzy's likable, dogooder veneer quickly loses its luster.

Caren's script is solidly studded with laughs, surprises and deeper issues, but it could still use some

recommendation gets fine-tuning. An overlong prison scene in the first act takes the show off course for 10-15 minutes and some plot twists throughout stretch credulity. Still, it's in remarkably strong shape for a premiere and is sure to have a life beyond the Globe.

> Director Jonathan Munby brings a lot to the table with his brisk, stylish, in-theround production. There's a lightness and tongue-incheek sassiness to his storytelling and characters, with humorous audience interaction and musicalized scene changes choreographed with dancelike precision by Tony Caligagan.

The three-man cast is excellent, particularly Jimonn Cole, as the colorful inner-city convict Dwight Barnes, whose fleeting brushes with the two men change all of their lives. To say too much about Dwight would spoil the surprise, but Cole's a remarkably versatile actor who's believably a jail

cell comedian, a broken and redeemed man and a violent instrument of revenge.

Evan Todd's marvelously self-absorbed as the spoiled and playful Aaron, a shallow and cowardly screenwriter hiding secrets from his past. And Brandon Gill meticulously crafts Izzy's noble exterior (and his well-disguised flawed soul).

The play could be tightened from its 2 hours (plus intermission), but it doesn't drag, thanks in part to Munby's lively direction, Lindsay Jones' peppy music and sound and Philip S. Rosenberg's cool industrial lighting.

Caren's writing is sharp and authentic, so the language - particularly in one scene set in a jail - - is raw by Old Globe standards. Still, "The Recommendation" is likable in its unconventionality and Caren's refreshing young voice is a welcome change for the usually conservative theater.



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Old Globe Theatre Rancho Santa Fe Review February 02, 2012 6,253 9 31 sq inch \$512.18

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High energy and high anxiety steer 'The Recommendation'

BY DIANA SAENGER LET'S REVIEW

How many times have we said something to a friend that would come back to bite us?

That's what happens to three young men in Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation," which is premiering at The Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre through Feb. 26.

"The Recommendation," contains a brief fight scene and lots of profanity. However, Caren's imaginative plot and astute dialogue create funny, tense, conventional and yet unexpected moments that travel a winding road and remind the men of a father's quote, delivered as he patted his heart, "Everything you need (in life) is right here."

The curtain rises on bright, charismatic and quick-on-his-toes Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd) who has, not only attending Harvard to his credit, but also the Ivy League Brown University. He's anxious to make his mark as a filmmaker, and somehow after all



Iskinder (Brandon Gill) finds himself in a difficult situation between his acquaintances (Evan Todd and Jimonn) in the World Premiere of Jonathan Caren's 'The **Recommendation' directed** running in the Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre.

Photo/Henry DiRocco.

the schooling isn't quite sure how to go about that. He befriends Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill), the son of an Ethiopian, who warns him when setting off for his career, "be wary of a man who offers you the world."

Aaron and Iskinder become roommates in college, but while Iskinder wants to buckle down and study hard to become an attorney, Aaron sets his sights on planning lots of parties. One night, as Aaron is making a store run, he gets pulled over for a traffic infraction and thrown in jail where he meets Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole).

Dwight is a chameleon; one minute playing nice to Aaron as he sizes him up and learns more about him, the next minute switching personalities to scare Aaron to tears with fear of what could happen to him if he gets moved into county prison.

Transition to a few years

later after Iskinder has a successful law career and even ends up defending felon Dwight in an effort to lessen his jail time.

If you go:

What: "The Recommendation" Where: The Old Globe Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, **Balboa** Park When: Matinees, evenings through Feb. 26

Tickets: start at \$29, (619) 23-GLOBE or www.The-OldGlobe.org

KSDS Jazz 88

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Pat Launer's Center Stage

Funding for "Pat Launer, Center Stage", is provided by the Elaine Lipinsky Family Foundation.



<u>The Recommendation" – The Old Globe, "A Behanding in</u> <u>Spokane" – Cygnet Theatre & "How to Succeed...- Welk</u> <u>Resort Theatre</u>

Getting ahead – and getting a hand. Going for what you want – and appreciating what you've got one you've gotten it. Three different takes on a theme – musical, macabre and starkly dramatic.

The drama is a world premiere at the Old Globe: "The Recommendation," by up-and-comer Jonathan Caren, and I'd give him my 5-star recommendation any day.

The intense, three-character story begins comically, with two disparate roommates at Brown University: a cocky, well-connected white kid, and a first-generation black student, whose father is from Ethiopia. Aaron Feldman is happy to use his expansive influence to help his friend rise, which both amazes and enrages Iskinder.

Recommendations get him into law school, and a job, but then he starts chafing at the strictures of loyalty and obligation. Meanwhile, Aaron has landed himself in jail, where the only person with power and connections is a criminal conman. Tables turn, promises are made, and the entanglements become ever-more compelling and unpredictable.

"The Recommendation" is about class and race, money and power, cultural ladder-climbing and limitations. But mostly, it's about the tensile bonds of friendship. Tautly written, imaginatively directed and exquisitely acted, it's a chilling, often thrilling piece of theater.

Bone-chilling might describe the work of Martin McDonagh. "A Behanding in Spokane," the first play the Irish Brit set in the U.S., is as grisly as his previous creations. McDonagh finds comedy in morbidity.

In a stunning production at Cygnet Theatre, guns are drawn, gasoline is poured, racial epithets are spewed, and a pony-tailed nutcase confronts a one-handed mono-maniac. And we laugh. Did I mention the suitcase filled with severed hands?



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The Old Globe's 'Recommendation'



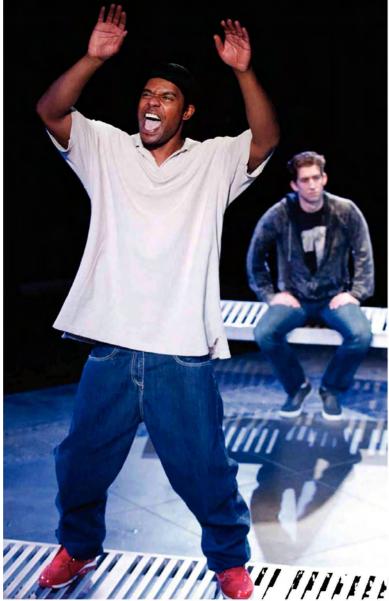
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"The Recommendation"



(from left) Jimonn Cole as Dwight and Evan Todd as Aaron (Photo by Henry DiRocco)

By Charlene Baldridge

SDUN Theater Critic

Since the Greek and Roman times theater has been used to edify onlookers, to cause them to examine themselves and possibly, through introspection, to change their ways or at least to question contemporary practices and mores. Frequently this is accomplished by creation of characters to illuminate the issues.

Few succeed so well as Jonathan Caren in the world premiere of his three-man work titled "The Recommendation," playing through Feb. 26 at The Old Globe.

The play concerns the friendship of two men, Iskinder (Brandon Gill) and Aaron (Evan Todd) who meet as freshmen roommates at Brown University. Iskinder is the son of an Ethiopian immigrant and aspires to study law. Aaron is the son of privilege and wealth and aspires to become a Hollywood film director.

Aaron teaches the naïve Iskinder the meaning of the word "recommendation," showing him the ropes and helping him, upon graduation, to enter the law school of his choice, even though, as Iskinder points out, his own 4.0 GPA was part of the equation.

Enter the have not - not wealth, not privilege, not hope - a petty criminal named Dwight (Jimonn Cole). Even though Dwight is apparently on his way to bigger crimes, this audience member was sympathetic and hoped for Dwight's redemption through a leg up, first offered by Aaron, whom Dwight saved from violence, and then by Iskinder.



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(from left) Brandon Gill as Iskinder, Evan Todd as Aaron and Jimonn Cole as Dwight (Photo by Henry DiRocco)

Playwright Caren's issues, which he addresses through juxtaposition of these three men and their interactions over 15 years, have to do with race, privilege, recommendations, education, loyalty, success, friendship and gamesmanship. Dwight is not the only "player" in the game of getting what you want.

Where most fall down – creation of believable characters to represent issues – Caren succeeds, partly through his writing and partly through wonderful acting, casting and directing. We care inordinately for all three of these men.

Todd is charming as the guy used to finagling what he wants. He imbues Aaron with vulnerability in the clinches, and beautifully and subtly conveys Aaron's insecurities. Gill is totally convincing as the do-gooder convinced of his own sincerity, both in friendship and profession. Cole creates a complex character of many dimensions.

Though there are moments of humor and wit, make no mistake, this is not frivolous entertainment; it is brave and terrifying and sadly true. It is us.

The playwright never flinches from the realities of confrontation, cowardice, violence and possible mayhem, playing hopes against fears, ours and theirs, as he moves his characters toward the play's hair-raising conclusion. Iskinder utters the last line, the lights go out, and meaning hangs in the air.

Caren receives brilliant assistance from director Jonathan Munby and the <u>Old Globe</u>'s artistic team: scenic designer Alexander Dodge, costume designer Linda Cho (love the suits and towels), lighting designer Philip S. Rosenberg, composer/sound designer Lindsay Jones, movement designer Tony Caligagan, and fight director George Yé.◆



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"The Recommendation"

Posted by admin on 2/17/12 • Categorized as Arts & Entertainment, Theater

By Charlene Baldridge | SDUN Theater Critic



(from left) Brandon Gill as Iskinder, Evan Todd as Aaron and Jimonn Cole as Dwight in the World Premiere of Jonathan Caren's The Recommendation directed by Jonathan Munby, Jan. 21 -Feb. 26 at The Old Globe (Photo by Henry DiRocco)

Since the Greek and Roman times theater has been used to edify onlookers, to cause them to examine themselves and possibly, through introspection, to change their ways or at least to question contemporary practices and mores. Frequently this is accomplished by creation of characters to illuminate the issues.

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Todd is charming as the guy used to finagling what he wants. He imbues Aaron with vulnerability in the clinches, and beautifully and subtly conveys Aaron's insecurities. Gill is totally convincing as the do-gooder convinced of his own sincerity,

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Caren receives brilliant assistance from director Jonathan Munby and the Old Globe's artistic team: scenic designer Alexander Dodge, costume designer Linda Cho (love the suits and towels), lighting designer Philip S. Rosenberg, composer/sound designer Lindsay Jones, movement designer Tony Caligagan, and fight director George Yé.

"The Recommendation" continues Tuesdays-Sundays at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Conrad Prebys Theatre Center through February 26. Tickets are \$29 and up, www.theoldglobe.org or (619) 23-GLOBE.

Tool Box:

Leave a Response

Recommending The Recommendation

Highly recommended, but not for the feint of heart, is the Old Globes exceptionally well-produced and riveting world premiere production of Jonathan Caren s *The Recommendation*, which rates five Burgoos. My review will be seen in the February 10 issue of *San Diego Uptown News*. The play recounts the relationship of three diverse men over a period of 15 years. Though the playwright never staggers, his truth, a bleak view of humanity, is staggering.

The original Spring Awakening

Friday night we attended the opening of **UC San Diego Department of Theatre and Dance s** production of Frank Wedekind s 1892 German drama, *Spring Awakening (Frülings Erwachen)*. The drama is performed in **Jonathan Franzen s** translation, published in 2007.

At the time, Franzen called **Steven Sater** and **Duncan Shiek** s 2006 hit Broadway musical, which was based on Wedekind s play, insipid^w and instantly overpraised.^w The musical has been performed frequently in San Diego, professionally and in various student productions.



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►► THEATER P. 22



"The Recommendation" takes major steps

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Old Globe Theatre San Diego Downtown News February 01, 2012 22,000 22 58 sq inch \$1,297.89

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The Recommendation" gets high marks Playwright Jonathan Caren takes a major step in his Old Globe premiere

By Cuauhtémoc Kish Downtown News

The character Aaron, played by Evan Todd, in The Old Globe Theatre's current production of Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation," makes his initial entrance wearing nothing but a white towel. It is shock-value but not shocking, and although Caren knows how to grab our attention in the first scene of this well-crafted memory play, he gives audience members much more than simple, youthful flesh.

Caren has a firm grip on a story about friendship, social debt and privilege, and delivers it up with a pulse that keeps our attention throughout.

Iskinder (Izzy), played by Brandon Gill, narrates the story of three young men in different social strata from his middleclass point of view. Izzy is an unconnected son of an Ethiopianborn father who has sent him off to an Ivy League college where his roommate, Aaron, schools him in non-credited classes like back scratching, privilege and fortune.

Their friendship continues post-graduation as Izzy secures a job at a prestigious law firm with help from Aaron's father, while Aaron begins his career in the Los Angeles film industry as a personal assistant. Aaron does this, as Izzy did, with a little help from his father.

The third man in this dramatic triangle is Dwight, played by Jimonn Cole, who has no connections, no collegiate education and even less money. By coincidence, Dwight and Aaron find themselves together in a holding cell. When they are transferred to a county jail and

Aaron's father fails to bail him out-to teach his son a lesson-Aaron realizes he must barter protection by promising Dwight favors when released.

To no one's surprise, Aaron fails to follow through on his promise to Dwight. This failure manages to haunt Aaron, especially when Dwight is released from prison as a result of an assist from Izzy, who pens a successful appeal for his pro-bono client.

Jonathan Munby's capable direction underscores the energy of the play. Munby even goes so far as to choreograph the scene changes, highlighting the exuberance of his three youthful players and the tension that hangs between them. He balances the easy humor with audience interaction and finds a proper place for Dwight's peppered slang, Aaron's easy braggadocio and Izzy's overriding moral concern.

All three actors, as well as the playwright, hail from Julliard; the school should be proud of its alumni package of exceedingly bright talent. Todd handles the challenges of his privileged character with youthful vigor while Gill narrates and interacts with a commanding, self-absorbed presence. Cole plays bravado, agitation and impotence with equal measure.

Alexander Dodge designed a minimalist metal set that serves the play well. Lighting designer Philip Rosenberg coolly lit the set, focusing attention directly on the actors.

As many learn, there is more to most individuals than mere muscle power. Caren brings us the exterior of three individuals and then digs deep to

THE RECOMMENDATION

Through February 26 The Old Globe Theatre (The White Theatre) Tues & Wed 7 p.m. Fri 8 p.m. Sat 2 & 8 p.m. Sun 2 & 7 p.m. Info: (619) 234-5623 Web: TheOldGlobe.org

display what is bubbling inside. He has a good handle on the subject-friendship, patronage and nepotism-and displays both the beautiful as well as the ugly in his first major step as a playwright.

This fresh, new work is highly recommended.*



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(L-R) Brandon Gill as Iskinder and Evan Todd as Aaron in the "The Recommendation," directed by Jonathan Munby, Jan. 21 - Feb. 26 at The <u>Old Globe</u>. (*Photo by Henry DiRocco*)

Reviews: Film/Theater - NYC, LA, SF, Chicago - Stage and Cinema

Film New York Los Angeles Chicago SF/Bay Area Las Vegas Regional Tours

Regional Theater Review: THE RECOMMENDATION (The Old Globe in San Diego)

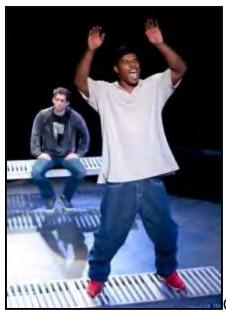
by Tony Frankel on February 8, 2012

in Theater-Regional



WHEN RECOMMENDATIONS DON'T TURN OUT AS HOPED FOR

Aaron Feldman, the charismatic, bright, and privileged protagonist of Jonathan Caren's promising but highly unwieldy new play *The Recommendation*, reminds me of an old college chum. My friend wasn't just privileged, he was over-privileged. While I worked three jobs to support myself through college, his parents kept him well-supplied with cash and connections. My envy was tempered by the magnetism of my pal, who made you feel as if there were no other friend on the planet but you. Even though he could be incredibly lavish with his parent's booty, he was often out of integrity, making promises he never intended to keep.



Caren tackles some grandiose themes in his world premiere at the

Old Globe (class, status, parental wealth, and connections) that perfectly elucidate the contradictory feelings I had about my friend – the same paradoxes that make for great drama. It is Caren's unflinching examination of these themes that makes his play compelling. Unfortunately, none of them truly resonate by play's end because the nascent playwright's agenda got in the way of telling his tale.

The play is narrated by Aaron's college roommate Iskinder, known as Izzy, who guides us through his friendship with Aaron – from undergraduate exploits at Brown University to Los Angeles, where most of the play takes place over a fifteen year period. We assume from the beginning that Izzy is the protagonist – he explains to us how he is torn between accepting favors and recommendations from Aaron (which will hasten Izzy's career) and sticking to the moral advice of his Nigerian father (who occasionally manifests himself like the ghost in *Hamlet* to offer some character-building words of wisdom). Once the boys take up residence in L.A. after college, Izzy (with the help of Aaron's dad) attends UCLA's law school and Aaron gets a cushy job as a privileged assistant to a movie mogul.



The dialogue, up to this point, could be very funny, with Caren employing an ear for the twenty-something patois. Izzy is shaping up to be a most sympathetic character when, jarringly, the play suddenly becomes about Aaron.

How? A routine traffic stop puts Aaron in jail, where he encounters Dwight, a big-talking, street-smart and volatile young black man. Aaron's parents (as Izzy explains directly to the audience) decide to teach Aaron to respect the law by not putting up bail. Aaron believes he has been detained for a hit-and-run crime he committed in the past and confesses said crime to Dwight. When the two inmates are transferred to County Jail, the whiny and overwrought Aaron (at least, as played by Evan Todd) promises to help out Dwight in the future if the repeat offender protects him in jail. Dwight does indeed keep the gorgeous Aaron out of danger for the night, and Aaron is set free, his crime turning out to be an unregistered car.



the aegis of a poor, connected criminal in the lock-up where Aaron makes a pact that will haunt him and alter his bond with Izzy. The problem is that Caren believes his protagonist to be Izzy, who turns out to be a superfluous character, even as he winds up defending Dwight pro bono, an act which terrifies Aaron, who demands that Izzy drop the case.

A series of staccato scenes prior to Aaron's arrest suddenly becomes an insanely long jail scene with little to no exposition or character development. After that point, when Izzy narrates, it feels like Caren is commenting on the story, instead of allowing his characters to do that for him. This is when the playwright's agenda essentially feeds his tale, when it should be the story which nourishes the agenda.



As Izzy, Brandon Gill is mostly unassuming, largely due to the fact that he is torn between being a full-bodied character and the narrator of a memory play. Jimonn Cole powerfully assumes the dichotomy of Dwight, who wants to do the right thing in life, but becomes victim to his anger-ridden, knee-jerk reactions. Evan Todd nails Aaron as the friendly, jocular jock, but doesn't have a handle on the terrified side of Aaron – when he acts like a petulant 8 year-old in the overly-long jail scene, it is almost unendurable to watch. All three actors and the playwright are graduates of the Juilliard School – did someone make a recommendation?

Up-and-coming British director Jonathan Munby stages with a youthful dynamism, made all the more energetic with Lindsay Jones' pumped-up original music and Alexander Dodge's metal set, which has the look of a boxing ring inside a techno dance bar (the White Theatre at the Globe is in-the-round). The meticulous scene changes can be attributed to Munby and Tony Caligagan (movement), but watching the actors move the steely furniture around with precision detracted from the story. Philip S. Rosenberg does some neat tricks with his lighting, from the shimmering water of a pool to a mellow sunset.



By the way, my friend became a leading actor on

Broadway while I continue to remain, shall we say, career-challenged. Yet my poor friend, as charming as ever, has had nothing but horror stories about the theater world. He has discovered that connections and recommendations may get you somewhere, but once you arrive at your dream, you still have to pay the price for broken promises and continue to deal with unscrupulous people (in his case, producers). I still question why I became friends with this hypnotically irresistible person. If Jonathan Caren can fix up *The Recommendation*, his play will better explicate for me the murky territory about whom we befriend and why.

photos by Henry DiRocco

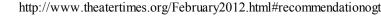
The Recommendation Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre at the Old Globe in San Diego scheduled to end on February 26 for tickets, visit http://www.theoldglobe.org

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Michaela is clearly a sleek, high-performance model whom Lenk endows with both society glamour and the hard edge of a troubled past. We also gain some second-act sympathy after learning of a personal tragedy. It all adds up to her being high-maintenance even on her best day. Before she discovers that Peter has destroyed the documents that might have earned her a fair settlement, she expects – and needs – to keep the personal assistant she counts on as a friend.

And so begins the battle for the heart and mind of Simone. Devon's case gets moral support from the compound's all-purpose handyman-gardener, José (Jonathan Nichols), who adds to Michaela's woes by going rogue: drinking from the champagne bottle with his feet on the coffee table; telling her how much he has always hated her. The gauge-indicator on whether Michaela's or Devon's lifestyle has the greater value will be the direction Simone takes. But Simone plays it close to the vest until a dénouement in which she unfurls her true colors, to the dismay of both of the competing women.

There are many interesting sidetracks that could turn this divertissement into a substantial work, but they zip by like so many IRT platforms. The show is well-cast, with Beck keeping Devon's complications partially obscured by self-denial, Lora keeping us guessing, and Lenk playing the toppled trophy wife with surprising dignity amid the humiliations. The men do their part, bringing poise to roles designed for fun and plot twists.

This is fine light comedy for the recession-weary. A block from the county's citadel of conspicuous consumption, Devon's pot-shots at the aristocracy will fall on deaf ears. It would take an idealistic character on the order of Macaulay Connor to win the hearts of these well-heeled. But for those non-profits investing in Metzler futures, it's a good indicator of things to come.

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Evan Todd and Brandon Gill in the World Premiere of Jonathan Caren's The Recommendation at The Old Globe / Henry DiRocco

In the pocket

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According to veteran stage actors, such bewilderment is rare and indicates a problem. It could be an ill-timed delivery, a rushed blackout, or a script with a missing button. Someone at a subsequent show reported that the same thing happened at that performance.

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They become best friends and help each other score women, drugs, and, for Izzy, a recommendation from Feldman's lawyer father that gets him into UCLA Law School. He will go on to join a prestigious Westside firm while Feldman goes where he believes his easy charm will bring easy money – Hollywood.



Jimonn Cole / DiRocco

PRODUCTION Alexander Dodge, set; Linda Cho, costumes; Philip S. Rosenberg, lights; Lindsay Jones, music/sound; Tony Caligagan, movement; George Yé, fights; Diana Moser, stage management

HISTORY World premiere

But, without talent or discipline, he gets stuck as a film producer's personal assistant. Arrested for drunk driving, he spends a night in a holding cell with Dwight Barnes (Cole), an articulate, highly intelligent manipulator being held on an assault charge he denies. His questionable claims to celebrity contacts and university degrees go unchallenged by the terrified Feldman, who Barnes asks about hot spots for meeting Hollywood's power brokers. They go to a particular sports club, Feldman offers, and gets Barnes to insure his safety once they are moved to county jail. In return, he promises to have his father help Barnes get ouf of jail.

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Barnes' conviction is overturned, and he gets a job at the club Feldman recommended. Soon, Izzy and Feldman are in the club's sauna when Barnes, after a shift as janitor, takes advantage of the facilities. He recognizes Izzy and thanks him again, then sees Feldman, remembers him. and appears forgiving. He offers Feldman a chance to alleviate his guilt by giving him a job, but Feldman compounds his mistake by instantly refusing to do anything. After Izzy steps outside, Barnes' fury finally gets the best of him and he easts Feldman until Izzy returns to stop the assault. Barnes begins to leave as Izzy kneels down to comfort Feldman, who begs him not to leave, pleading that he be his friend, which Izzy says he will.

Lights out.

It's not surprising that these fine actors find their audiences wanting more. They gave their characters energized first interpretations, birthing them at the border between documenting reality and creating art. The problem lies in character clarity of Barnes and Feldman. They are men who have commanding charm in their separate worlds, and yet their interaction isn't explosive, compelling, or even interesting.

Meanwhile, Jonathan Munby makes a big splash, integrating an exciting physical production that includes Alexander Dodge's abstract metallic set, Linda Cho's authentic costumes, Philip S. Rosenberg's varied lighting design; Lindsay Jones' great music and sound, and movement and fight choreography from Tony Caligagan and George Yé, respectively.

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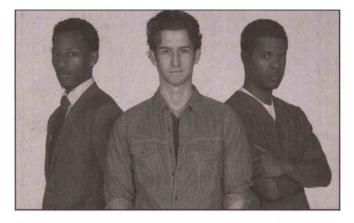
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THE RECOMMENDATION



By Barbara Smith Contributing Writer

A great joy for theatre lovers is discovering a fresh new voice. Jonathan Caren, whose play "The Recommendation" is now showing at the <u>Old Globe</u> Theatre, is just such a voice, issuing a clarion call to examine some of the complex dilemmas



that define modern living. The dark comedy, which is enjoying its world premiere in San Diego, crackles with meaty dialog, provocative characterization and the intensity of a fastmoving locomotive in its examination of race, class and the benefits and burdens of friendship.

Iskinder Iudoku, Aaron Feldman, and Dwight Barnes could not be more different in their backgrounds and stations in life. And yet, as their paths intersect in settings as diverse as a college dorm room and a jail cell, their lives and futures be-

come inextricably intertwined.

Iskinder is the son of an Ethiopian immigrant father and white mother, articulate, ambitious, yet without the connections needed to propel him forward to his chosen field of law. Aaron, Iskinder's college roommate, is bright, privileged, glib (he brags that his father managed to get Wayne Gretsky to leave him a voice mail for his birthday) and generous in offering Iskinder the influences he needs. Dwight, an accused felon from the other side of the tracks, encounters Aaron in a chance circumstance of fate, setting off a chain of events that changes all three of their lives forever.

At the heart of the play is an exploration of what playwright Caren calls "the generally veiled hypocrisy of the middle class: we are quick to



condemn the rich, yet many of us are willing to do anything to See RECOMMENDATION page C?



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RECOMMENDATION

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become them at the same time." To what lengths would we go to get that "recommendation" that can seal our success in life? How is success defined? And further, what are the consequences of making this veiled deal with the devil? These are some of the tough questions Caren tosses to the audience to ponder as each of his richly defined characters unravels their multi-layered dreams, fears and motivations.

Brandon Gill is charismatic as Iskinder, or Izzy as he prefers to be called. As the play's narrator, we learn the philosophy of his father, and how he is guided by the elder's telling proverbs: "Be wary of the man who offers you the world..." and "Do not continue on page C?

RECOMMENDATION continued from page A9

spy with avaricious eyes." He forms his own life view in pursuit of the American Dream. as he tells the audience, "The recommendation right can change your life," a truth that takes on ironic significance as the story unfolds. We see the arc of his character rise as he and Aaron's friendship is sealed their undergraduate during years and continues through law school and starting a family. It is not accidental that Iskinder translated means "man's defender."

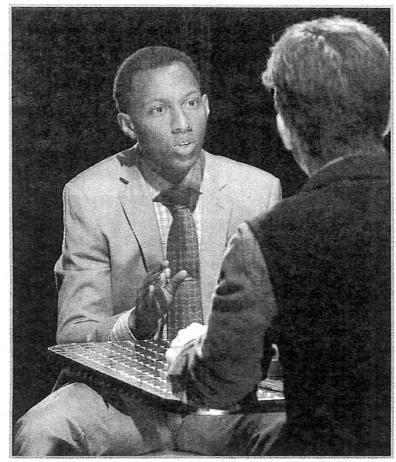
Evan Todd's Aaron is likewise spot on. His spoiled rich kid cockiness provides plenty of laughs: "Rules are like lanes in a highway," he tells Izzy when the subject of morality crops up. "They suggest which way to go." But the easy road he thinks is his as he pursues his dream to become a filmmaker later becomes muddled with unexpected obstacles, forcing him to re-examine his paradigm for success. Aaron's sense of entitlement and position in society does not exempt him from playing the same game that Izzy plays--trading favors and sacrificing integrity to solve a problem--as we learn when he finds himself sharing a jail cell with Dwight.

Performed with laser beam intensity by Jimonn Cole. Dwight is the lightning rod whose encounter with Aaron in the drunk tank of the jail occurs after a minor traffic incident and inevitably peels back the layers of both Aaron's and Izzy's psyches, forcing both to face some of their own demons and make some not-so-easy choices as they pursue their life's paths. Clever staging adds to the impact of this entertaining and thought-provoking play. The minimalistic set-metal benches which the actors deftly maneuver between scenescombined with the intimacy of the 250-seat Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre (which, by the way, was packed at the Tuesday performance), in a theatrein-the-round configuration suggestive of a boxing ring, draws the audience in and underscores the premise that for each of the characters, there is nowhere to run or hide.

Hard work and upward mobility on one end of the spectrum vs. wealth and entitlement on the other get a good hard look in this thoroughly engaging, freshly written and executed production. There is nothing cliché about the characters nor the gripping denouement that will certainly provide fodder for conversation and reflection long after you leave the theatre. If you are looking for a recommendation for a great piece of theatre, this is it. "The Recommendation" runs through February 25. For ticket information, visit www. TheOldGlobe.org.

DAILY AZTEC Wednesday. February 1, 2012

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE Globe's 'Recommendation' builds tension



David Dixon staff writer

The theme of loyalty in question has been present in recent big screen films such as "The Ides of March" and "Tinker Tailor Solder Spy." "The Recommendation," a new play at the Old Globe Theatre, also deals with this message, as a strong friendship is suddenly tested.

Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill) is a nerdy, but not completely antisocial, college student who quickly befriends his roommate, Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd). The wealthy Feldman is spoiled with a capital "S," yet he is well meaning and helps Issy climb up the social and business ladders of success.

Years after meeting, Aaron tells Issy he is going to embark on a beer run. Moments later, Aaron is arrested for reasons even he does not completely understand. Revealing more about the plot would spoil too much, but what follows is a tense morality tale in which the relationship of the two buddies goes to some dark and ugly places.

While young playwright Jonathan Caren has written some shows in the past, "The Recommendation," his first major production, affirms he is a strong new voice in theater. The dialogue is reminiscent of the great Aaron Sorkin: incredibly smart without losing sight of his characters.

ENTERTAINMENT

Director Jonathan Munby is excellent in his pacing of "The Recommendation," which at times feels similar to watching a modern big-screen drama. His storytelling is so engrossing; it is hard to believe he makes the intimate Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre at The Old Globe feel so grand.

The acting from the entire cast is spectacular. Gill plays the transformation from a somewhat naïve boy to an emotionally conflicted man wonderfully. Gill's performance is natural and feels more like a real person than an actor giving a theatrical characterization.

While Todd could have made Aaron into a pompous pain in the butt, he instead makes him an empathetic, witty and likable individual. As funny as he is, the best scenes are the ones when he reveals his vulnerability in dire situations. These moments, which Todd handles with aplomb, reveal how pathetic Aaron has become.

The most complex role belongs to Jimonn Cole, who plays Aaron's prison roommate, Dwight Barnes. Because the audience does not get to know him quite as well as Issy and Aaron, it becomes tough to figure out what his motivations are. Cole produces a sense of menace whenever he is on stage.

Betrayal is a reoccurring motif in "The Recommendation." This is true with all three central characters. They break promises made to each other in order to satisfy their own personal interests. The backstabbing transmutes the funny drama into a chilling story full of disturbing dread.

"The Recommendation" is as tense as it is hilarious. Act I has plenty of laugh-out-loud scenes with some terrific allusions, including a priceless reference to the rap song, "Combination Pizza Hut and Taco Bell." Even when things take a serious turn in Act II, there are still some hysterical jokes, credited in no short part to the three leads' interactions with each other.

The target audience might be young adults, but "The Recommendation" is a creatively compelling drama that should appeal to all. In ways it is a hidden gem, a technically "small" show that surprises with originality and artistry.

Tickets and information about "The Recommendation" can be found at theoldglobe.org.

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By <u>David Dixon</u>, Posted on 31 January 2012.



Courtesy of Henry Dirocco

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"The Recommendation" engages young adults

By Anna von Bertrab

Published: Wednesday, February 15, 2012 **Updated:** Thursday, February 16, 2012 14:02

Upon entering the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, a sign warns that "strong use of language" sets the tone for the play. Staged in a 360 degree theatre, the actors are almost an arm's length away from the audience. The intimate atmosphere of the production, "The Recommendation", showing at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre next to The Old Globe Theatre in Balboa Park is an innovative contemporary play about two college roommates dealing with the themes of class, race and success. The play centers on how the right recommendation can change your life.

Playwright Jonathan Caren creates three characters: white, upper class Aaron Feldman, played by Evan Tood; first generation American Iskinder Iudoku, played by Brandon Gill; and crass street criminal Dwight Barnes, played by Jimonn Cole. These characters embark on a bold exploration of money, education and connections. The modern friendship between Feldman and Iudoku spans across 15 years in



Photos Courtesy of Henry DiRocco

the production and is played out in a series of events crossing paths with accused felon, Barnes.

Feldman, a cocky and whimpering guy from Los Angeles, gets placed with the son of an Ethiopian immigrant, Iudoku called Izzy, at Brown University. Izzy is a pre-law student and wants to achieve the American Dream. He hits the jackpot with his newfound friend and roommate, Feldman. Feldman is the golden, outspoken boy with all the right connections. He generously takes Izzy under his wing. Upon graduation, Feldman has a close connection place a call that ultimately helps Izzy get into UCLA. Feldman follows Izzy's trail and also heads back to the West Coast to pursue his dreams of Hollywood filmmaking.

Minding his business and enjoying the good life, Feldman is unexpectedly pulled over by the Los Angeles police because of an apparently burnt out tail light. Feldman is sent to jail without much of an explanation. He meets Dwight Barnes in prison, the king of the coop. Barnes scratches Feldman's back and protects him in jail in hopes that one day down the line Feldman will pull through and get him out of the slammer. The controversial saga culminates in a visceral and violently climactic scene that is gripping. With Feldman's toned abdomen exploding, Barnes' moving monologue and Iudoku's twisted intentions, Caren stages a far from predictable plot and moving conclusion.

The lost tradition of going to the theatre is brought back with "The Recommendation." Geared towards the college student, the exciting two hour theatrical production is fast paced with a high energy driven dialogue. "The Recommendation" will play until Feb. 26. The Old Globe along with the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre now offer \$20 tickets for those under the age of 30. Seize the opportunity to witness Julliard graduates acting out this hard-hitting world premiere drama.

Play REVIEW Commentary (as Seen 1/24/12) SD Old Globe Theatre:

The Recomendation



Jimonn Cole, with Director Jonathan Moby, Playwright Jonathan Caren Brandon Gill and Evan Todd (photos by Henry DIRocco)



Per Robert Hampton

"The Recommendation" - the newly premiered play at The Old Globe's Cheryl White Theatre – in Balboa Park - is a story of friendship, helping one another along - with keeping your word and how these concepts reflect current morality. The story setting is Los Angeles time ... over the last fifteen years. It was written by Jonathan Caren ... directed by Jonathan Munby - and, it will run

through February 26, 2012.



<u>ZERO IN ON:</u> THE RECOMENDATION SD Old Globe Theatre <u>Where: Cheryl White Stage</u> <u>Performances</u>: thru...2/26 <u>www.sdoldglobe.org</u>

AARON Feldman, portrayed by Evan Todd - a



privileged, well-connected young man - with all the components of a successful life ... has just entered college - and met his new roommate - ISKINDER Iudoku - played by **Brandon Gill**. To clear the decks - they level with one another, tell their respective truths, and become best friends. ISKINDER feels dependent upon AARON - since AARON has taken him under his wing ... with AARON's connections and his respective recommendations - now open to ISKINDER as well ... by association.

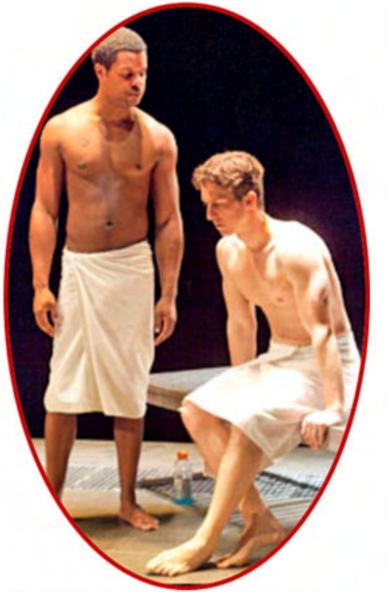


One afternoon, poolside - AARON and ISKINDER are discussing career goals as ISKINDER wants to be an attorney while AARON's desire - is to be a film maker. The beer at poolside is running short - and AARON decides to make a 'run' for more brewskies ... only, he does not come back! He has been arrested for a driving infraction - and finds himself in a holding tank in city jail ... a big twist in life is in store for AARON - and he is terrified by the prospect of what could happen in jail.

His mind is racing ... and, he asks for help/protection from another detainee – a thug type named DWIGHT BARNES ... played by *Jimonn Cole*.

AARON holds a secret that could make his incarceration turn into a lengthy stay. He reveals his bad deed to BARNES. This will alter things of both confessor and listener. A deal is struck between the two ... they will scratch each other's back (so to speak) ... to help one another out. One of these principals however - breaks the agreement - and does not keep his word ... inevitably adding to his problems. (Best to do what you say you will do.)

The Harvey & Cheryl White Theatre stage setting (*it is in the round*) - looks like a trampoline ... but does not bounce. That's



The three young players are something to behold - AARON while in the tank - is completely

language and

expressions are a study in terror as he is in a different world from

anything he has ever known.

BARNES - though intense, is brutal - yet humorous at times -

with his zany ideas. (These guys might make you think of actor studio types.) The same goes for

... his

facial

intimidated by BARNES

body

a good thing - because '*Feldy*' is in for some bouncing in his life. Dramatic lighting ... a few props ... a couple of pool lounge benches ... several benches in the sauna at a sport club ... and a few other items - are all that is needed to give an effective although stark feeling to the whole thing.

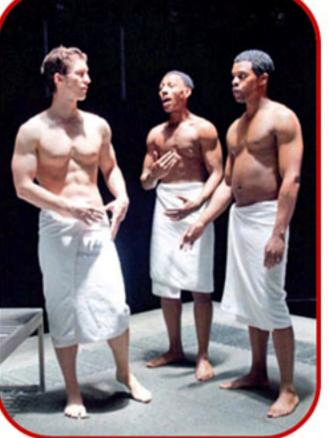
Scenic design is by *Alexander Dodge* and lighting is by *Phillip S.Rosenberg* ... with costumes by *Linda Cho*.



ISKINDER - is a fine person who is guided (mostly) - in his head - by words of wisdom from his father. As time goes by - and ISKINDER becomes a high level attorney - all the while, trying to make a name for himself. As fate has it - he winds up defending BARNES!

When AARON (*now a film maker*) hears of this he requests ISKINDER to give up the case ... but, this is not to be ... ISKINDER gets BARNES freed - and then the birds come to roost with AARON. At a chance meeting between the three - in a sports club sauna - things come to a head. Did AARON create this scene out of his own consciousness? Was he seeking for *justice* to be served ... even to himself?

The play is multi-layered, and very well done. This thought-provoking piece - demonstrates the injustices of our legal system ... how money speaks ... and how laws are sometimes interpreted differently - when high powered legal counsel is involved. The ways of the world are exposed in many different ways.



The acting is superb ... <u>double, double thumbs up</u>! This is the first major production for playwright *Jonathan Caren* ... a first rate piece!





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THE RECOMMENDATION (OLD GLOBE): 66% – BITTERSWEET

Colin Mitchell | Feb 01, 2012 | Comments 0 |



Evan Todd and Brandon Gill in "The Recommendation" at the Old Globe in San Diego Credit: Henry DiRocco

BITTERSWEET

An otherwise handsome, absorbing production ends up meriting only a qualified recommendation. Bob Verini – Variety

BITTER

Let's consider "The Recommendation" a promise of future talent. The groundwork, however, is just being laid. Charles McNulty – LA Times

SWEET

What starts out as an Odd Couple-like comedy about a pair of mismatched Brown University roommates soon develops into something considerably more edgy (and edge-of-your-seat) in Jonathan Caren's The Recommendation, a terrific World Premiere drama at San Diego's Old Globe that will keep you guessing from its exhilarating start to its suspenseful finish. Steven Stanley – StageSceneLA

SWEET

"The Recommendation"—you're not going to shrug this one off in the parking lot afterwards. It's going to stay with you a while. <u>Josh Baxt – Culture Vulture</u>

SWEET

Here's a recommendation for you: Don't miss Jonathan Caren's whip-smart, shape-shifting "The Recommendation." It's one of the best new plays I've seen in years. Pam Kragen – North County Times

SWEET

Taken together, this is one show about connections that really does connect. James Hebert – San Diego Union-Tribune

BITTERSWEET

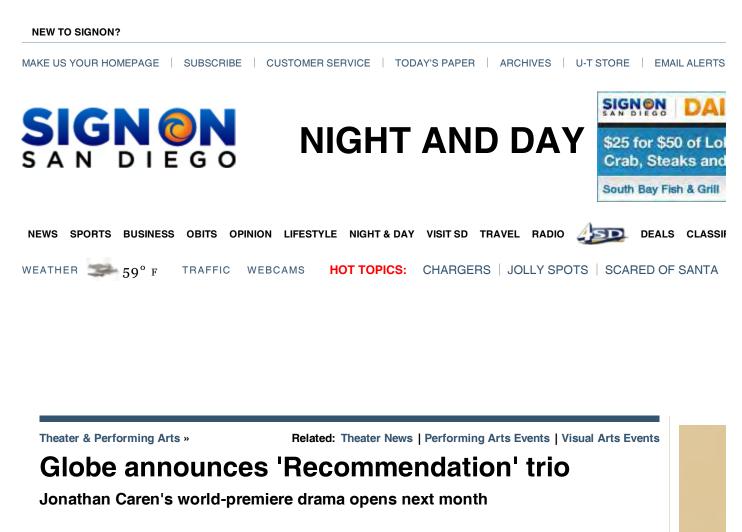
I hope that Mr. Caren will not consider The Recommendation to be complete. There are a lot of good ideas here, but conceptual and writing work remains if the play is to become the kind of layered commentary that I think its writer intends. Bill Eadie – Talkin' Broadway

THE RECOMMENDATION

The Old Globe



FEATURES





Playwright Jonathan Caren's new work "The Recommendation" opens at the Globe in January. — Elisabeth Caren



4 p.m., Dec. 21, 2011

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Globe announces 'Recommendation' trio



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Comments (0)

Three actors will make their Old Globe debuts when Jonathan Caren's world-premiere play "The Recommendation" hits the Balboa Park theater next month.

The Globe has announced that Jimonn Cole, Brandon Gill and Evan Todd will make up the cast of Caren's work, which focuses on the close but (eventually) volatile friendship between an overprivileged college student and his new roommate, who comes from a middle-class immigrant family.





Cole (Dwight Barnes) appeared in former Globe resident artistic director Darko Tresnjak's production of "Twelfth Night" at the 2010 Oregon Shakespeare Festival, as well as in that festival's staging of "Ruined," directed by Liesl Tommy (who went on to stage the Pulitzer Prize-winning drama at La Jolla Playhouse).

Credits for Gill (Iskinder Iudoko) include such off-Broadway and touring productions as "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter," "Pudd'nhead Wilson" and "The Exonerated." Todd (Aaron Feldman) has appeared in productions of "The Seagull" and "A Raisin in the Sun," as well as in film and TV projects.

Caren is a rising young playwright whose work has been featured at companies including Manhattan Theatre Club, Ars Nova and Ensemble Studio Theatre.

"The Recommendation" runs at the Globe Jan. 21 through Feb. 26 in the arena-style Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. Info and tickets: (619) 234-5623 or theoldglobe.org.

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Old Globe Theatre SDUT-Night & Day January 26, 2012 408,825 20 66 sq inch \$10,314.72

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The perils of friendship

Loyalty has its drawbacks in the Old Globe's world premiere of 'The Recommendation'

JAMES HEBERT . U-T

Jonathan Caren was inspired to write "The Recommendation" through the stories of a friend — a corporate lawyer-turnedpublic defender whose work opened a window into the lives of the underprivileged and underconnected.

But the play, which has its world premiere this week at the Old Globe Theatre, is also itself about friendship - in ways both heartening and unsettling.

"I tend to write about friendship," says Caren, a fast-rising young writer and 2011 Juilliard School grad whose Globe debut is also his first major professional production. "(But) I think friendship today is different than what it used to be. I think we rely on friends like family. And it sometimes gets muddled with our needs and desires for favors and (the benefits of) nepotism."

It's just that kind of conflict that propels "The Recommendation," which centers on a pair of college roommates. Iskinder Iudoku (Brandon Gill), the play's narrator, is middleclass and mixed-race. Aaron Feldman (Evan Todd), who is white, grew up in an environment of wealth and power.

Iskinder gets taken under Aaron's wing, and "in order to justify his position in the world, he elects to help someone less privileged — almost the same way Aaron helps him," Caren explains.

That someone is Dwight Barnes (Jimonn Cole), a

young African-American from a difficult background. He becomes the catalyst for crisis in the play, part of which is set in a jail holding cell.

Although Caren hesitates to give away too much, the L.A. native - who was brought up amid a cross-section of class and race — notes that Iskinder's motivations aren't necessarily selfless.

And the play "is also asking the question, do you align yourself with someone who can help you even if you don't agree with their principles and morals?"

Jonathan Munby, the production's high-profile British director, says that while the play "covers some really important issues in terms of class in this country, and also the injustice of the legal system," what really grabbed him on first read was "this intensely human story about friendship."

Writing about those complex bonds, admits Caren, led to his own soulsearching about "the feeling of wanting to ascend a ladder to a higher class, but then also disliking what that class stands for. And the hypocrisy in myself, to be heading in that direction but then hating myself for wanting that.

"I think for a writer there's nothing more exciting than discovering something in yourself," he adds. "Something you didn't necessarily know you were writing."

"The **Recommendation**" **Old Globe Theatre**

When: 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays (no matinee Feb. 18); 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays; plus 2 p.m. February 15. Through Feb. 26.

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29 and up

Phone: (619) 234-5623 **Online:** theoldglobe.org

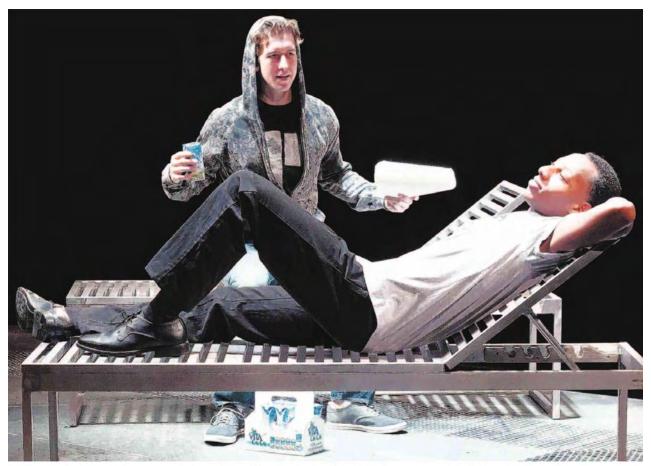


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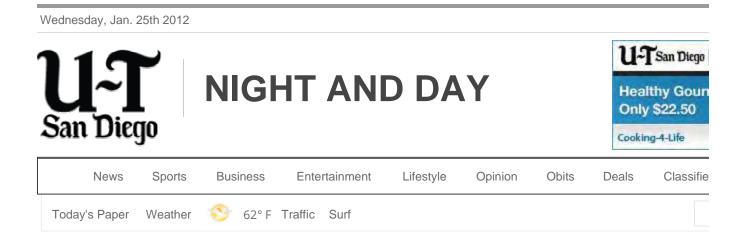


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Evan Todd (left) as Aaron and Brandon Gill as Iskinder in the "The Recommendation." HENRY DIROCCO





Evan Todd (left) as Aaron and Brandon Gill as Iskinder in Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation," a world-premiere play at the Old Globe Theatre. — Henry DiRocco

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Written by James Hebert

10 a.m., Jan. 25, 2012

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DETAILS

"The Recommendation"

Old Globe Theatre

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Evan Todd (left) as Aaron and Brandon Gill as Iskinder in the "The Recommendation." HENRY DIROCCO





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GLOBE'S 'RECOMMENDATION' EXAMINES RACE, PRIVILEGE

By PAM KRAGEN pkragen@nctimes.com

Playwright Jonathan Caren will be immensely gratified if his play "The Recommendation" is wellreceived by critics and audiences when it makes its world premiere Thursday at the <u>Old Globe</u>. But it's the opinion of someone else who will be in the audience Friday night that really matters.

Caren dedicated the play to his friend Amdie Mengistu, a native of Ethiopia who works as a public defender at a Staten Island prison. Caren and Mengistu met at a dinner party a few years ago, and Mengistu's stories about some of the people he defended over the years became the inspiration for Caren's new play.

"He sees every draft and he's my secret weapon," Caren said. "I started "The Recommendation' with a question. 'How do you get ahead in this world if you don't have any connections?' From that question with my friend Amdie, the play started coming together. This play is about friendship, and the fact that a friendship was born out of this play is why I dedicated it to him."

"The Recommendation" is the story of two men from very different worlds whose lives intersect when they're paired as dormmates in college. Aaron is white, smart and overprivileged and Iskinder is an Ethiopian immigrant from a middle class family who dreams of becoming a public defender. Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing and shares his wealth and connections. But when Aaron's life is later threatened in a chance encounter with an accused felon, their years-long friendship is threatened.



Actor Jimonn Cole, director Jonathan Munby, playwright Jonathan Caren and actors Brandon Gill and Evan Todd, the team behind the world premiere of Caren's play "The Recommendation" at the Old Globe. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco

"The Recommendation"

WHEN: Opens Thursday and runs through Feb. 26; showtimes, 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays

WHERE: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, The Old Globe, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS: \$29 and up

INFO: 619-234-5623 theoldglobe.org

Caren said Mengistu has offered invaluable insight on race, immigration and the prison system, but it's his own experiences growing up on the fringes of great wealth in his native Los Angeles that have informed much of his playwriting. Caren's middle-class family (his father's a doctor, his mother an artist) lived on the edge of an upscale L.A. suburb, where he attended a public high school with a lot of rich kids. As a teen, he found himself both atttracted to and repulsed by the Hollywood lifestyle.

"I grew up in L.A. in a world where I didn't understand that the moral compass was off. But at the same time, there was this desire to be in that world," he said.

He mined that experience in his first produced play "Catch the Fish," winner of Most Outstanding Play at the 2007 New York International Fringe Festival. It was inspired by the real-life experience of a Vanity Fair magazine writer who went to L.A. to report on the excesses of the rich and famous and got willingly caught up in their world. He returns to that theme again with "The Recommendation."

"It explores that lovehate relationship we may have with people," Caren said. "I have started to see these recurring stories about people in moral conflict. When people are exposed to this elite society, it's easy for them to get caught in the middle and seduced by it."

Before focusing his energies on playwriting, Caren studied mythology and religion at Vassar College, then earned a master's in writing from the University of Southern California. He worked as an assistant to Winnie Holzman (bookwriter for the musical "Wicked" and creator of

See Globe, 30

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Globe

Continued from Page 27

the TV show "My So-Called Life") and he wrote a television series pilot "Homeboys" (which did not get picked up). When he was 27, he submitted "Catch the Fish" to the Fringe and when it was a surprise success, he moved to New York to study at Juilliard.

Although film and television pay much better than theater, Caren said theater is where his heart is.

"TV is about character and theater is about ideas," he said. "You can really explore a concept and penetrate a question with a play. And playwriting offers such a singular voice."

Caren's singular voice has earned much praise from theater critics and directors over the years. He describes his plays as dark comedies with a heightened sense of reality. "The Recommendation" is highly stylized and jumps in and out of time and place over 17 years. He warns that the play has raw, strong language, but it's also quite funny.

"I try to take situations that feel very true and difficult and find the humor in them," he said. "The characters are in situations that are absolutely difficult and painful, but I'm trying to mine it for humor. Humor is how I cope with life."

Caren said he's thrilled that the Old Globe has taken a chance on such a young, unproven playwright.

"This process has been so exciting," he said. "To get a new play on its feet is so hard, and I have so many friends who are unbelievably talented who haven't had this opportunity. For a theater to take a risk on someone without the credits is almost unsurmountable." Home / Entertainment / Arts-and-theatre / Theatre / Globe's 'Recommendation' premiere examines race, privilege, connections

Globe's 'Recommendation' premiere examines race, privilege, connections

- Story
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Globe's 'Recommendation' premiere examines race, privilege, connections

By PAM KRAGEN pkragen@nctimes.com North County Times | Posted: Sunday, January 22, 2012 9:48 am | No Comments Posted

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Actor Jimonn Cole, director Jonathan Munby, playwright Jonathan Caren and actors Brandon Gill and Evan Todd, the team behind the world premiere of Caren's play "The Recommendation," which opens Jan. 26 at the Old Globe Theatre. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco



"The Recommendation"

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Web: theoldglobe.org

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"I grew up in L.A. in a world where I didn't understand that the moral compass was off. But at the same time, there was this desire to be in that world," he said.

He mined that experience in his first produced play "Catch the Fish," winner of Most Outstanding Play at the 2007 New York International Fringe Festival. It was inspired by the real-life experience of a Vanity Fair magazine writer who went to L.A. to report on the excesses of the rich and famous and got willingly caught up in their world. He returns to that theme again with "The Recommendation."

"It explores that love-hate relationship we may have with people," Caren said. "I have started to see these recurring stories about people in moral conflict. When people are exposed to this elite society, it's easy for them to get caught in the middle and seduced by it."

Before focusing his energies on playwriting, Caren studied mythology and religion at Vassar College, then earned a master's in writing from USC. He worked as an assistant to Winnie Holzman (bookwriter for the musical "Wicked" and creator of the TV show "My So-Called Life") and wrote for television, including creating the series pilot "Homeboys" (which did not get picked up). When he was 27, he submitted "Catch the Fish" to the Fringe and when it was a surprise success, he moved to New York to study at Juilliard.

Although film and television pay much better than theater, Caren said theater is where his heart is.

"TV is about character and theater is about ideas," he said. "You can really explore a concept and penetrate a question with a play. And playwriting offers such a singular voice."

Caren's singular voice has earned much praise from theater critics and directors over the years. He describes his plays as dark comedies with a heightened sense of reality. "The Recommendation" is highly stylized and jumps in and out of time and place over 17 years. He warns that the play has raw, strong language but it's also quite funny.

"I try to take situations that feel very true and difficult and find the humor in them," he said. "The characters are in situations that are absolutely difficult and painful, but I'm trying to mine it for humor. Humor is how I cope with life."

Caren said he's thrilled that the Old Globe has taken a chance on such a young, unproven playwright.

"This process has been so exciting," he said. "To get a new play on its feet is so hard, and I have so many friends who are unbelievably talented who haven't had this opportunity. For a theater to take a risk on someone without the credits is almost unsurmountable."

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Posted in Theatre on *Sunday, January 22, 2012 9:48 am* Updated: 7:00 pm. | Tags: Share This Story

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Old Globe Theatre The Californian-Preview January 26, 2012 93,265 15,17 69 sq inch \$1,276.61

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THEATER | SAN DIEGO COUNTY **Globe's 'Recommendation'** premiere examines race, privilege, connections

By PAM KRAGEN

pkragen@californian.com

Playwright Jonathan Caren will be immensely gratified if his play "The Recommendation" is wellreceived by critics and audiences when it makes its world premiere Thursday at the Old Globe. But it's the opinion of someone else, who will be in the audience Friday night, that really matters.

Caren dedicated the play to his friend Amdie Mengistu, a native of Ethiopia who works as a public defender at a Staten Island prison. Caren and Mengistu met at a dinner party a few years ago and Mengistu's stories about some of the people he defended over the years became the inspiration for Caren's new play.

"He sees every draft and he's my secret weapon," Caren said. " started 'The Recommendation' with a

question. 'How do you get ahead in this world if you don't have any connections?' From that question with my friend Amdie, the play started coming together. This play is about friendship and the fact that a friendship was born out of this play is why I dedicated it to him."

The Recommendation" is the story of two men from very different worlds whose lives intersect when they're paired as dormmates in college. Aaron is white, smart and overprivileged and Iskinder is an Ethiopian immigrant from a middle class family who dreams of becoming a public defender. Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing and shares his wealth and connections. But when Aaron's life is later threatened in a chance encounter with an accused felon, their yearslong friendship is threatened.

"The **Recommendation**"

■ When: Opens Thursday and runs through Feb. 26; showtimes, 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through Feb. 26

■ Where: Shervl and Harvev White Theatre, The Old Globe, Balboa Park, San Diego

Tickets: \$29 and up

■ Info: 619-234-5623

Web: theoldglobe.org

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Actor Jimonn Cole, director Jonathan Munby, playwright Jonathan Caren and actors Brandon Gill and Evan Todd, the team behind the world premiere of Caren's play "The Recommendation," which opens tonight at the Old Globe Theatre. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco

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See Premiere. 17

Page 2 of 2

Premiere

Continued from Page 15

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Old Globe Theatre La Jolla Light January 19, 2012 14,822 16 55 sq inch \$1,317.98

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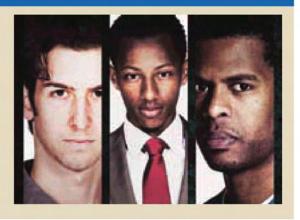
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Brandon Gill (Iskinder), Evan Todd (Aaron) and Jimonn Cole (Dwight) mix up the drama in 'The Recommendation,' directed by Jonathan Munby, through Feb. 26 in The Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. PHOTOS BY HENRY DIROCCO

If you go

- What: 'The Recommendation'
- When: Matinees, evenings, Jan. 21-Feb. 26
- Where: 1363 Old Globe Way, **Balboa Park**
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- Box Office: (619) 23-GLOBE
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Friendships take an unexpected turn in 'The

Recommendation'



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Brandon Gill (Iskinder), Evan Todd (Aaron) and Jimonn Cole (Dwight) mix up the drama in 'The Recommendation.' Photo/Henry DiRocco.

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RECOMMENDING THE RECOMMENDATION AT THE OLD GLOBE

by sylvia rodemeyer

"Amdie has offered invaluable insight on race, immigration and the prison system, his knowledge has made the characters real." **Jonathan Caren**'s new play *The Recommendation* is, at its core, a play about friendship. Coincidentally, it grew out of the real life friendship and creative relationship of Caren and Amdie Mengistu, who met at a dinner party in 2009.

The Recommendation is a bold and candid look at modern friendship from an exciting new theatrical voice. Aaron is smart, charming and over-privileged. Iskinder, his new college roommate, comes from a middle-class immigrant family and is under-connected.

Brought together as roommates at Brown University, Iskinder is initially dazzled by Aaron's confidence, wealth and ease at opening doors that would otherwise be closed to the Virginia-born son of a middle-class Ethiopian immigrant.

Soon the best of friends, Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long. After a chance encounter with an accused felon sets off a chain of events that puts Aaron's life at risk, the two men are forced to rethink the meaning of friendship.

The cast of *The Recommendation* features Jimonn Cole (Dwight Barnes), Brandon Gill (Iskinder Iudoku) and Evan Todd (Aaron Feldman).

Caren said Mengistu's experience as a pro bono public defender in Staten Island has greatly inspired this work.

"Amdie has offered invaluable insight on race, immigration and the prison system, his knowledge has made the characters real," Caren said of Mengistu's extensive advice and fact checking. "By no means are we the characters, but it reflects certain experiences we've shared and is an exciting process to write a play that pulls from those experiences," Caren said.

"I think there's a reason why there's an appetite for legal drama. The legal world offers the most poignant and acute moments in life and people find themselves facing their most dramatic experiences at the hands of a judge," Mengistu says, "But this play is more about the human drama that just so happens to be in a legal setting."

Caren says his own experiences growing up in Los Angeles have informed much of his playwriting. As a teen, he found himself both attracted to and repulsed by the Hollywood lifestyle, the insatiable desire to climb to the top of the social and professional ladder, even if you're stepping on others and that characters battling with the moral and ethical compass often are found within his plays.

"I grew up in L.A. in a world where I didn't understand that the moral compass was off. But at the same time, there was this desire to be in that world," he said on his blog.

The Old Globe Theater is unique in its layout, as it stems from the historical Shakespeare-era round-staged theaters. Performing "in the round" is a creative challenge for playwrights and directors. Caren credits his creative team with making this play a success in this non-traditional setting.

"I never intended to do this in the round, but the structure of the play lends itself to the stage, something about it enhances it by giving it many different perspectives. Each transition and new location feels like going on a ride and they're never expected," Caren said of the work of set designer Alexander Dodge and lighting director Phillip Rosenberg.

Caren is a recent graduate of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at The Juilliard School. His plays have been featured at Manhattan Theatre Club, The Ensemble Studio Theatre, Ars Nova, as well as the Lark Play Development Center, The Flea Theater, Berkshire Playwrights Lab, Elephant Theatre Company and The Old Vic in London.

The Recommendation runs through **Sunday, February 26**, in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, part of the Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center. The Old Globe offers a once a month **"Out At The Globe"** LGBT mixer, on **Thursday, February 9**, the evening will feature a hosted wine and martini bar, appetizers and desserts. Admission is \$20 per person in addition to the theatre ticket and can be purchased online at **theoldglobe.org**, by phone at 619.234.5623 or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

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Men In Towels At The Old Globe



Credit: Photo by Henry DiRocco.

Above: (from left) Evan Todd as Aaron and Brandon Gill as Iskinder in Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation" now playing at The Old Globe.

Thursday, February 16, 2012

By Angela Carone

I could tell you, <u>as I did last week</u>, that "The Recommendation" explores issues of race, class, and privilege in crackling dialogue and terrific performances. Or, I could tell you that the totally buff, all male cast spends half the play bare chested wrapped only in towels. Which would get you to the The Old Globe faster? I won't judge if it's the towel business. Seriously, I won't.

If it is all the pecs that have piqued your interest, check out this Old Globe produced slide show. It doesn't capture the ambition of this world premiere play by an <u>up-and-coming playwright</u>, but it certainly sells the sizzle.

"The Recommendation" runs now through February 26 at The Old Globe. For more information, visit <u>www.theoldglobe.org</u>.

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Jimonn Cole, Brandon Gill and Evan Todd Picked for Old Globe World Premiere of *Recommendation*

By Kenneth Jones 20 Dec 2011

The Recommendation, Jonathan Caren's provocative play about friendship, will feature Jimonn Cole, Brandon Gill and Evan Todd in its world-premiere run at The Old Globe's intimate Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego.



Directed by Jonathan Munby for a Jan. 21-Feb. 26, 2012, run, the play is billed this way: "*The Recommendation* is a bold and candid look at modern friendship from an exciting new theatrical voice. Aaron [played by Todd] is smart, charming and over-privileged. Iskinder, his new college roommate [played by Gill], comes from a middle-class immigrant family and is under-connected. Soon the best of friends, Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long. After a chance encounter with an accused felon [played by Cole] sets off a chain of events that puts Aaron's life at risk, the two men are forced to rethink the meaning of friendship."

The creative team includes Alexander Dodge (scenic

design), Linda Cho (costume design), Erick Sundquist (associate costume design), Philip S. Rosenberg (lighting design), Lindsay Jones (original music and sound design) and Diana Moser (stage manager).

Playwright Jonathan Caren is a recent graduate of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at The Juilliard School. His plays have been featured at Manhattan Theatre Club (Ernst C. Stiefel 7@7 Reading Series), The Ensemble Studio Theatre (Octoberfest), Ars Nova (OUT LOUD, ANT Fest) as well as the Lark Play Development Center, The Flea Theater, Berkshire Playbill Clu Of

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Jimonn Cole, Brandon Gill, Evan Todd to Star in Old Globe's THE RECOMENDATION

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The Old Globe today announced the cast and creative team for the World Premiere of Jonathan Caren's hard-hitting drama, The Recommendation. Directed by Jonathan Munby, The Recommendation will run Jan. 21 – Feb. 26, 2012 in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, part of the Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center. Preview performances run Jan. 21 – Jan. 25. Opening night is Thursday, Jan. 26 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

The Recommendation is a bold and candid look at modern friendship from an exciting new theatrical voice. Aaron is smart, charming and over-privileged. Iskinder, his new college roommate, comes from a middle-class immigrant family and is under-connected. Soon the best of friends, Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long. After a chance encounter with an accused felon sets off a chain of

events that puts Aaron's life at risk, the two men are forced to rethink the meaning of friendship.

The cast of The Recommendation features <u>Jimonn Cole</u> (Dwight Barnes), Brandon Gill (Iskinder Iudoku) and Evan Todd (Aaron Feldman).

The creative team includes <u>Alexander Dodge</u> (Scenic Design), <u>Linda Cho</u> (Costume Design), Erick Sundquist (Associate Costume Design), <u>Philip S. Rosenberg</u> (Lighting Design), <u>Lindsay Jones</u> (Original Music and Sound Design) and Diana Moser (Stage Manager).

Playwright Jonathan Caren is a recent graduate of the Lila Acheson Wallace <u>American</u> <u>Playwrights</u> Program at The Juilliard School. His plays have been featured at Manhattan Theatre Club (Ernst C. Stiefel 7@7 Reading Series), The <u>Ensemble Studio Theatre</u> (Octoberfest), <u>Ars Nova</u> (OUT LOUD, ANT Fest) as well as the Lark Play Development Center, <u>The Flea Theater</u>, Berkshire Playwrights Lab, Elephant Theatre Company and The Old Vic in London. Friends in Transient Places, directed by <u>Evan Cabnet</u>, premiered during The Juilliard School's 2010 Playwrights Festival, and his original drama Catch the Fish, directed by <u>Kristin Hanggi</u>, won Most Outstanding Play in the 2007 New York International Fringe Festival. He is a 2011-12 Dramatist Guild Fellow, the 2011 New York Stage and Film Founder's Award recipient, a participant in the 2011 TS Eliot US/UK Exchange, a member of Partial Comfort Productions, a prime member of <u>Ensemble</u> <u>Studio Theatre</u>, a 2010/11 LeComte du Nouy Prize winner, a Kennedy Center finalist and winner of the Theater Publicus Prize for Dramatic Literature.

Jonathan Munby (Director) recently directed Company (Crucible Theatre), A Number (The Fugard Theatre, Cape Town), 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (<u>West Yorkshire Playhouse</u>), The Winter's Tale (Guthrie Theater), White Devil (<u>Menier Chocolate Factory</u>), The Prince

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of Homburg and Life is a Dream (Donmar Warehouse), The Dog in the Manger (The Shakespeare Theatre Company, 2010 Helen Hayes Award nomination for Outstanding Director), 24-Hour Plays (The Old Vic), A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare's Globe), Henry V and Mirandolina (Royal Exchange Theatre), The Canterbury Tales (Royal Shakespeare Company: Stratford, West End and International Tour, including The Kennedy Center), Madness In Valencia (RSC: The Other Place), A Number, The Comedy of Errors and Bird Calls (Crucible Theatre), Nakamitsu (Gate Theatre), Noises Off (Arena Stage), Journeys Among the Dead (Young Vic), Bed Show (Bristol Old Vic), The Anniversary (Garrick Theatre), John Bull's Other Island (Lyric Theatre, Belfast), Tartuffe (also National Tour), The Gentleman from Olmedo, The Venetian Twins, The Triumph of Love and Dancing at Lughnasa (Watermill Theatre), Troilus and Cressida, Love for Love, Festen and The Way of the World (Guildhall School of Music & Drama) and Numb (C venues, Edinburgh Festival Fringe). His recent opera credits include Carmen (Opera Holland Park), Don Giovanni (English Touring Opera) and Sweetness and Badness (Welsh National Opera). He will also direct the forthcoming production of Romeo and Juliet (Akasaka Act Theater, Tokyo).

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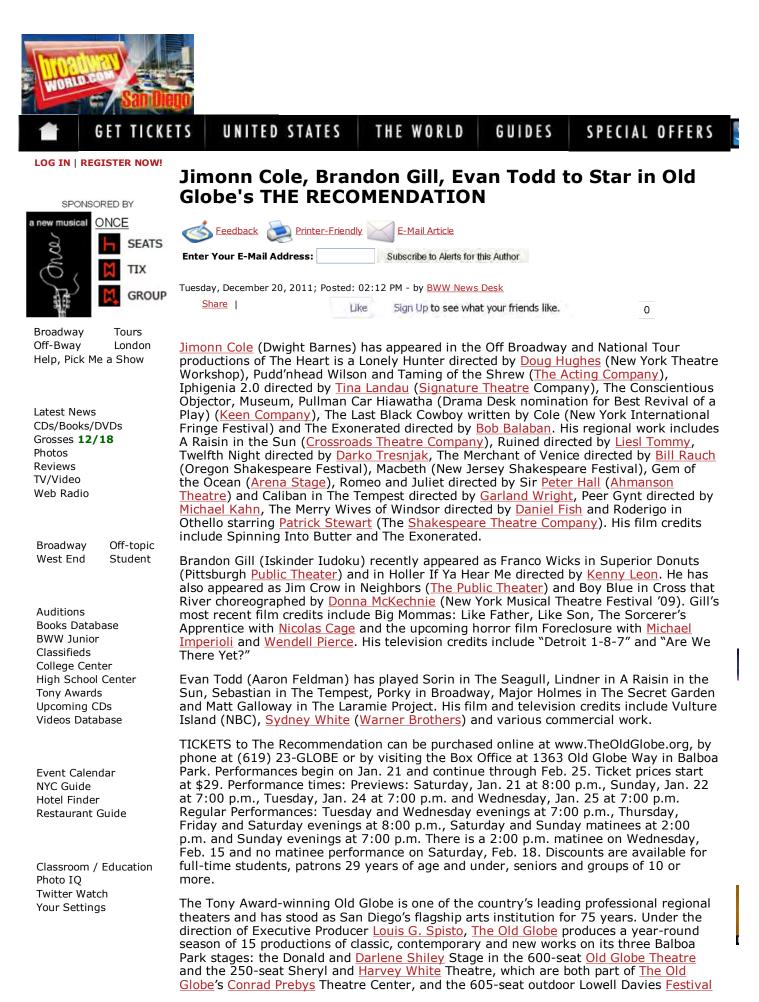
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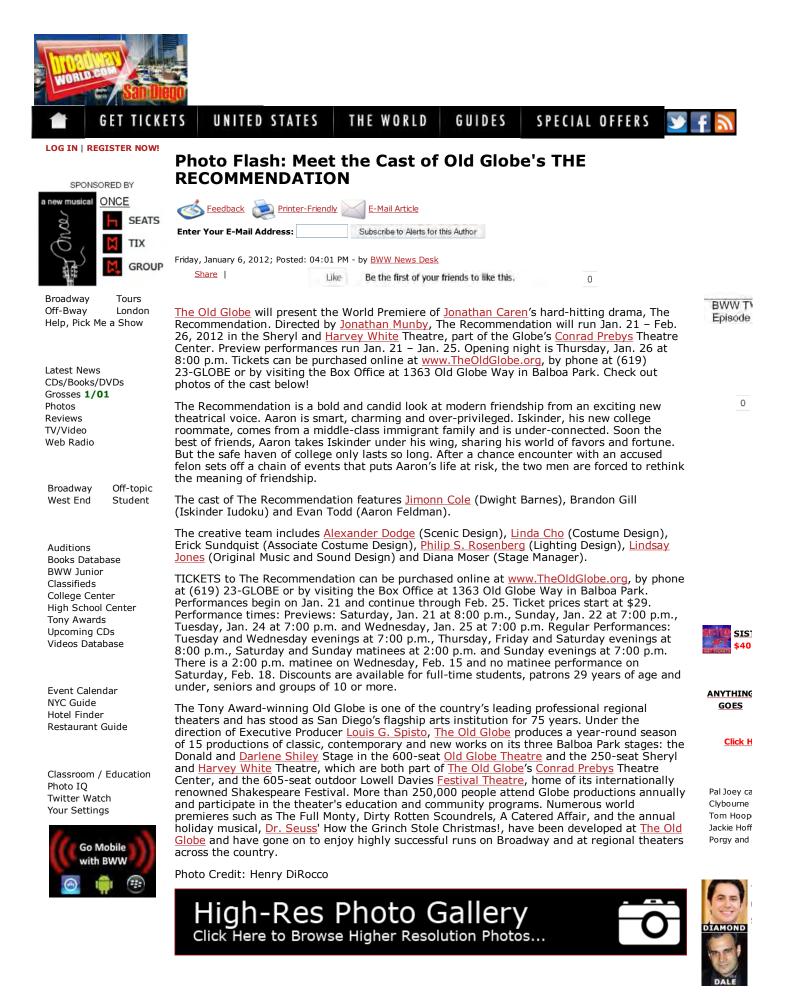
Old Globe Announces Cast for Jonathan Caren's The Recommendation By Bethany Rickwald • Dec 20, 2011 • San Diego 0 Comments



Poster art for The Recommendation

The Old Globe has announced casting for the world premiere production of Jonathan Caren's The Recommendation, to play January 21-February 26 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. In the play, two very different college roommates become fast friends. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long, and the two men are soon forced to rethink the meaning of friendship. The cast will feature Jimonn Cole (Dwight Barnes), Brandon Gill (Iskinder Iudoku), and Evan Todd (Aaron

Feldman). The creative team will include Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Linda Cho (costume Rosenberg (lighting design), and Lindsay Jones (original music and sound design). Click here for more information and <i>The Recommendation</i> tickets.	e design), Philip S.
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Brandon Gill, Evan Todd, and Jimonn Cole



Brandon Gill, Evan Todd, and Jimonn Cole

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Jimonn Cole, director Jonathan Munby, playwright Jonathan Caren and Brandon Gill and Evan Todd



Playwright Jonathan Caren and director Jonathan Munby









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featured at Manhattan Theatre Club (Ernst C. Stiefel 7@7 Reading Series), The Ensemble Studio Theatre (Octoberfest), Ars Nova (OUT LOUD, ANT Fest) as well as the Lark Play Development Center, The Flea Theater, Berkshire Playwrights Lab, Elephant Theatre Company and The Old Vic in London. *Friends in Transient Places*, directed by Evan Cabnet, premiered during The Juilliard School's 2010 Playwrights Festival, and his original drama *Catch the Fish*, directed by Kristin Hanggi, won Most Outstanding Play in the 2007 New York International Fringe Festival. He is a 2011-12 Dramatist Guild Fellow, the 2011 New York Stage and Film Founder's Award recipient, a participant in the 2011 TS Eliot U.S./U.K. Exchange, a member of Partial Comfort Productions, a prime member of Ensemble Studio Theatre, a 2010-11 LeComte du Nouy Prize winner, a Kennedy Center finalist and winner of the Theater Publicus Prize for Dramatic Literature.

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Opening night is Jan. 26. Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.



Jimonn Cole, director Jonathan Munby, playwright Jonathan Caren, Brandon Gill and Evan Todd photo by Henry DiRocco



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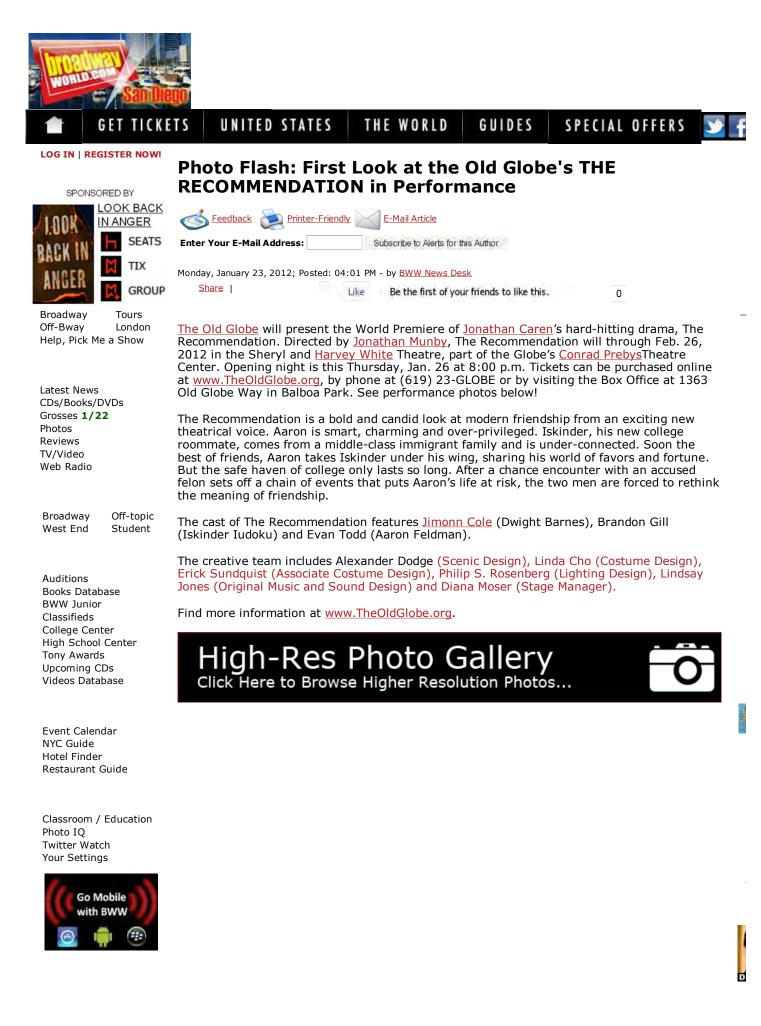
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Evan Todd as Aaron and Brandon Gill as Iskinder



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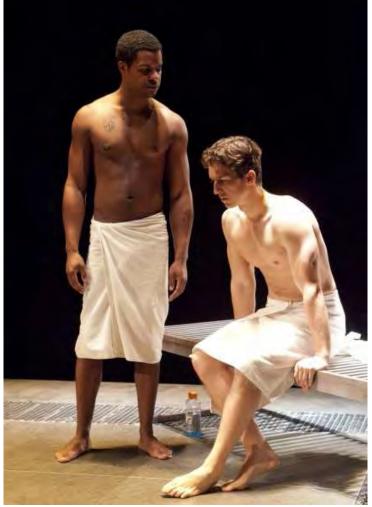
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Jimonn Cole as Dwight and Evan Todd as Aaron



Evan Todd as Aaron and Brandon Gill as Iskinder



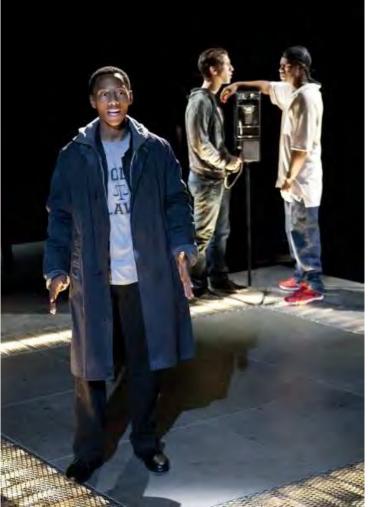
Evan Todd as Aaron and Jimonn Cole as Dwight



Brandon Gill as Iskinder and Evan Todd as Aaron



Evan Todd as Aaron



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Evan Todd as Aaron, Brandon Gill as Iskinder and Jimonn Cole as Dwight



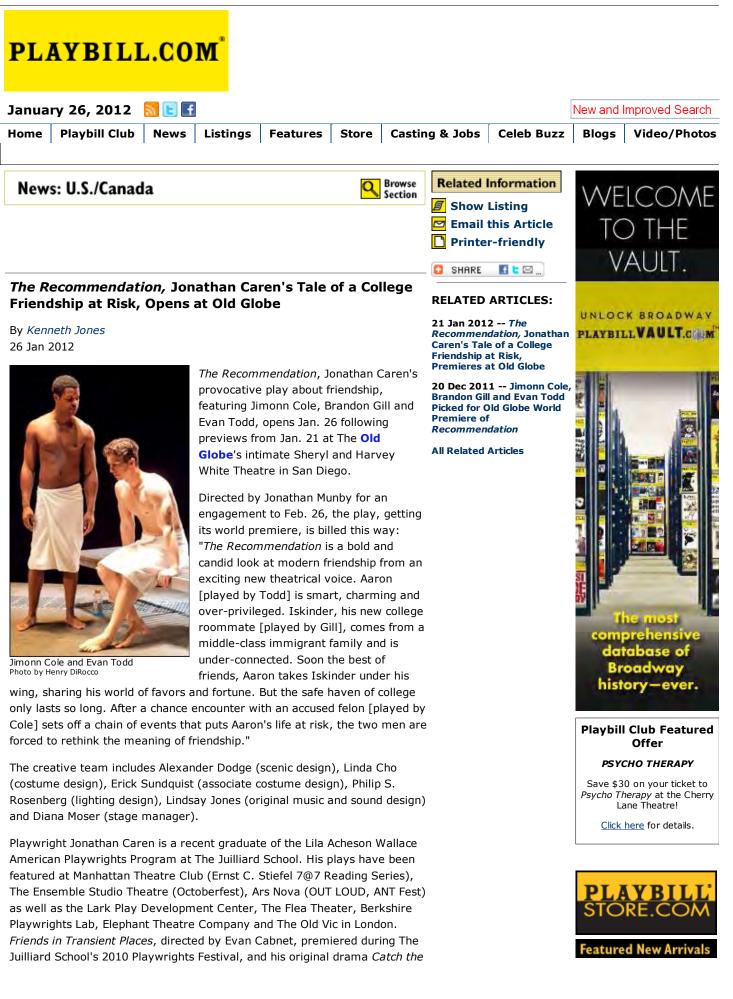
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Aaron is smart, privileged and liked by everyone. Iskinder, his college roommate, is modest, unconnected and comes from a middle-class immigrant family. Soon the best of friends, Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune.

But the safe haven of college only lasts so long, and once in the real world, Aaron is thrust into a terrifying situation without his familiar safety net. As the tables turn and he is forced to rely on an accused felon's connections to keep him safe, both Aaron and Iskinder have to rethink the meaning of friendship and where loyalty has its limits.

Contains strong language.

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Old Globe Theatre East County Gazette February 02, 2012 15,000 11 16 sq inch \$94.55

Page 1 of 1

Spotlight on Community Theatre

Preview by Diana Saenger

New Year has filled local theatre stages with wonderful plays and terrific performers. From classic tales, to Tony award -winning productions there's something for everyone. Watching a movie is fun; watching a play unfold its story with live actors is thrilling. Make those reservations soon.

Old Globe Theatre

THE RECOMMENDATION is a World Premiere play from one of America's exciting new theatrical voices. Aaron is smart, privileged and liked by everyone. Iskinder, his college roommate, is modest, unconnected and comes from a middle-class immigrant family. Soon the best of friends, Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long, and once in the real world, Aaron is thrust into a terrifying situation without his familiar safety net. As the tables turn and he is forced to rely on an accused felon's connections to keep him safe, both Aaron and Iskinder have to rethink the meaning of friendship and where loyalty has its limits. Contains strong language. The play runs in the Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre now - February 26. For more information; (619) 23-GLOBE, www.TheOldGlobe.org



SenDiegoClipping the future of news management Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre LGBT Weekly January 19, 2012 50,000 15 15 sq inch \$138.56

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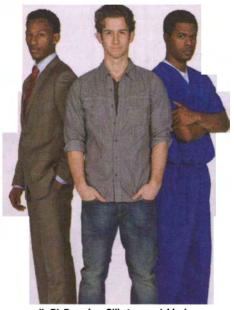
the city | top to bottom

tuesday, jan. 24

The Recommendation

A world premiere play from one of America's exciting new theatrical voices. Aaron is smart, privileged and liked by everyone. Iskinder, his college roommate, is modest, unconnected and comes from a middle-class immigrant family. Soon the best of friends, Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long, and once in the real world, Aaron is thrust into a terrifying situation without his familiar safety net. Contains strong language.

Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, Conrad Prebys Theatre Center, 1362 <u>Old Globe</u> Way in Balboa Park, 7 p.m., tickets from \$29, 619-234-5623, theoldglobe.org.



(L-R) Brandon Gill stars as Iskinder, Evan Todd as Aaron and Jimonn Cole as Dwight in *The Recommendation*.



SanDiegoClippi

Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value:

Old Globe Theatre Fine Magazine February 01, 2012 25,000 22 36 sq inch \$1,102.43

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EVENT SCENE SAN DIEGO | February 2012



HORTON FOOTE JR. AND TONY NOMINEE HALLIE FOOTE COSTAR IN "DIVIDING THE ESTATE" When: Through February 12 Where: The Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center

Nominated for a 2009 Tony Award for Best Play, "Dividing the Estate" is Pulitzer Prize winner Horton Foote's knowing comedy about family, money and greed. Living in Texas in the late 1980s, octogenarian matriarch Stella rules a family that must confront its past as it prepares for an uncertain future when the family fortune begins to diminish. Stella's children debate whether or not they should divide the estate while their mother is still alive in order to ensure themselves financial independence. Director Michael Wilson, considered the foremost interpreter of Foote's work, reunites with members of "Dividing the Estate's" Broadway creative team and cast to remount this modern classic.

Web: oldglobe.org



'Pina,' 'The Recommendation' And Other Stuff I Like Right Now



Above: One of Seth Casteel's photographs of dogs underwater. Genius!

Friday, February 10, 2012

By Angela Carone

Sharing what's on my radar with readers is one of the best parts of my job - but one I don't get to indulge in often enough. This morning, I thumbed my nose at my endless to-do list and decided to gather some recommendations for you. The list begins appropriately with....

"The Recommendation" at The Old Globe

This drama isn't perfect by any means, but it's bold. It attempts to address race and class through a friendship between two men: one black and the son of an immigrant, the other white and privileged. It's very funny, and there's some pretty graphic language, especially for <u>The Old Globe</u>. Only three actors in this one, and Jimonn Cole, who plays a felon, gives a knock-out performance.



Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre San Diego Union-Tribune February 19, 2012 408,825 1 170 sq inch \$26,423.96

Page 1 of 3

THE FRONT ROW

JAMES HEBERT . U-T

n a Saturday night, San Diego County lights up with live theater — a rich and ever-shifting mix of comedies, dramas, classics and world-premiere plays.

To help us capture the variety and vibrancy of that fertile stage scene, we asked members of U-T San Diego's new Front Row theater panel to fan out to productions large and small last weekend.

Their simple mission: to record exactly what was happening onstage at 8:30 p.m. that Saturday. And by so doing, to help us create a visual and verbal mosaic of the matchless San Diego theater experience.

Here, a freeze-frame of playgoing in our town — on one given night, at one given moment.

Jessica Padilla Bowen

Play: "A Behanding in Spokane" by Martin McDonagh

Theater: Cygnet Theatre, Old Town



The stage is quiet, except for the sound of the panicked breathing from Toby (Vimel) and his girlfriend, Marilyn (Kelly

Iversen), as their handcuffs clink against the hotel radiator. Their captor, Carmichael (Jeffrey Jones), has a satisfied grin and licks his lips as he lights a match for a candle balanced on a can of gasoline, in preparation for blowing up the hotel room.



Jennifer Brawn Gittings

Play: "The Recommendation" by Jonathan Caren

Theater: Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park



A drunk tank in Los Angeles. A crackhead (Brandon Gill) mutters in the corner of the cell. In the opposite corner, Aaron (Evan Todd) uses a pay phone to call his mother for a bailout. Dwight (Jimonn Cole), the other detainee

in the drunk tank, watches Aaron and listens to every word of his phone conversation: "Two. They're really big. I think one of them is on drugs. (A beat.) Of course I'm gonna be here — where else am I gonna go?"

Elise Kim Prosser

Play: "Golden Child" by David Henry Hwang, Chinese Pirate Productions

Theater: Tenth Avenue Theatre, downtown San Diego



In this Chinese "Big Love," Tieng-Bin (Albert Park) has returned to his three wives in 1918 after years abroad with "white devils." Offering "a bit of the modern world for you each," he presents a cuckoo clock, waffle iron and opera record. His traditional wives (Kimberly Miller,

Jyl Kaneshiro and Karen Li) snidely bicker over the gifts and protest when he removes the foot-binding of his daughter, the "Golden Child" (Janny Li).

Robin Sanford Roberts

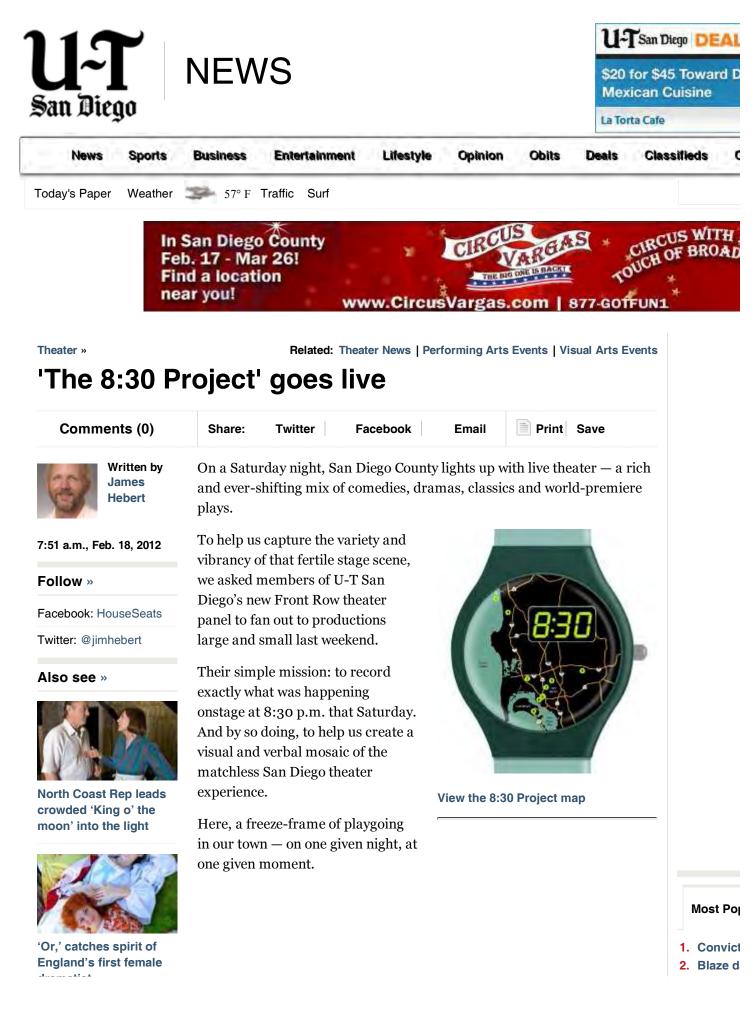
Play: "American Night: The Ballad of Juan José" by Richard Montoya and Culture Clash

Theater: La Jolla Playhouse, UC San Diego campus



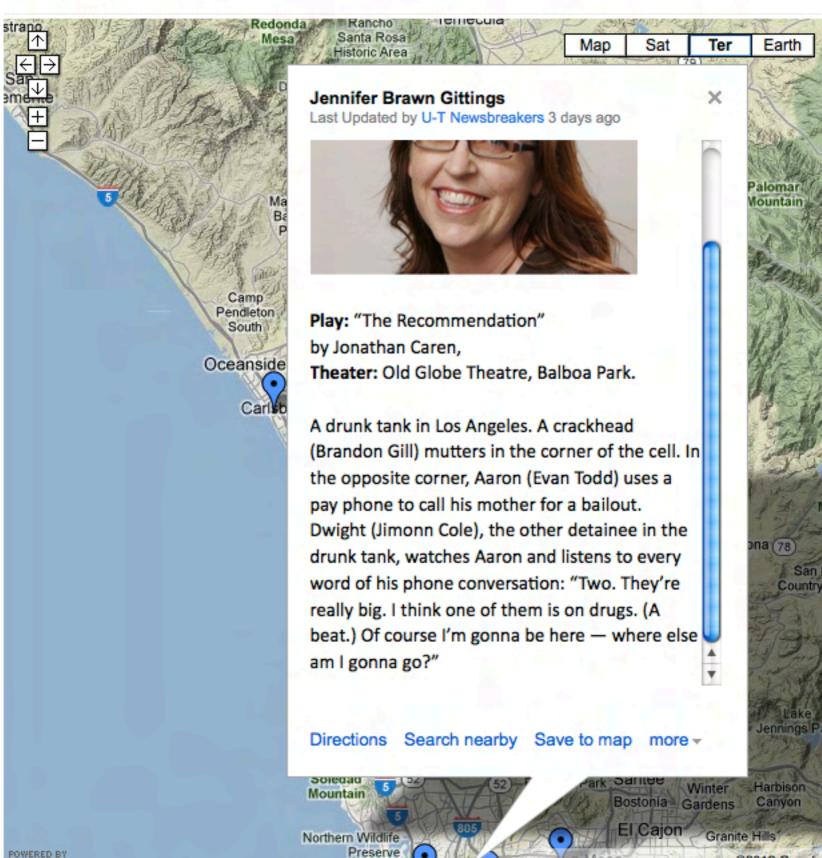
Juan José (René Millán) finds himself in the midst of the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe. The historical character Nicholas Trist (David Kelly) asks him, "What part of surrender does the simple Mexican not understand?" A chorus of actors indignantly shouts, "Simple?" and

Mexican officer Bernardo Cuoto (played by writer Richard Montoya himself) breaks into the (slightly tweaked) famous speech from Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice": "Hath not a Mexican eyes? Hath not a Mexican hands, organs, dimensions ... subject to the same diseases as the Americano?"



The 8:30 Project map

Google



On a Saturday night, San Diego County lights up with live theater — a rich and ever-shifting mix of comedies, dramas, classics and world-premiere plays.

To help us capture the variety and vibrancy of that fertile stage scene, we asked members of U-T San Diego's new Front Row theater panel to fan out to productions large and small last weekend.

Their simple mission: to record exactly what was happening onstage at 8:30 p.m. that Saturday. And by so doing, to help us create a visual and verbal mosaic of the matchless San Diego theater experience.

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Here, a freeze-frame of playgoing in our town - on one given night, at one given moment.

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ABOUT ME



kendall k. With years of

experience, savings and the support of my loving husband, family and friends, I am finally realizing my dream of starting up and creatively running my own clothing line- kendall k. I would love to share this process with you and the inspirations that keep me going in both business and life. Please feel free to contact me. I would love to hear from you.

kendallkstyle@gmail.com

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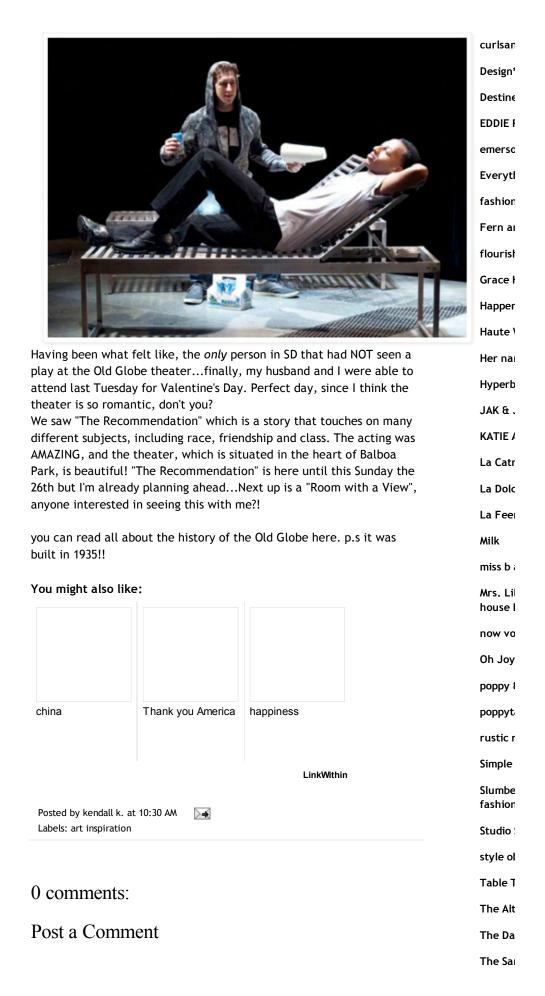
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2012





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downtown San Diego, is written and directed by Todd Salovey, associate artistic director, San Diego REPertory Theatre. Previews begin Jan. 7, 2012. Opening night is Fri., Jan. 13 and the production runs through Jan. 29, 2012.

From the 1950s to today, Seeger's unforgettable music has been a part of a lifelong quest for reverence, understanding and hope. And, as we enter the sure-to-be-contentious political season of 2012, who better to listen to than one of the founding fathers of American protest music? Seeger's legendary songs paint an inviting portrait of a more inclusive America and call out his vision for a freer world.

Seeger's first big hit was in the 1950s with The Weavers singing "Irene Goodnight." He also stood up heroically against the House Un-American Activities Committee and was blacklisted for not naming names. He gained worldwide fame in the 1960s as his music became a soulful call for change and justice.



Seeger once said, "If this world survives, I believe that modern industrialized people will learn to sing again." This production is a chance to hear a trio of first class musicians sing and play some of Seeger's best loved

sonds: "Where Have all the Flowers Gone?," "Turn, Turn, Turn, "We Shall Overcome," "Little Boxes,"

anamera," and "If I Had a Hammer." But Seeger didn't just sing about freedom, justice and love for by men; he marched alongside Woody Guthrie, Lead Belly, Bob Dylan and Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr. Like

Today, Seeger is more than 90 years old and still stands up and invites his fellow Americans to sing together in and for harmony. San Diego REP's fully-staged workshop production will celebrate his unforgettable music and his lifelong quest for reverence, understanding, and hope.

Tweet urs of free parking at Horton Plaza is available for patrons who validate at the Lyceum Theatre. For more information, please visit <u>www.sdrep.org</u>.

The Old Globe

"The Recommendation," directed by Jonathan Munby, will run Jan. 21 – Feb. 26, 2012 in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, part of the Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center. Preview performances run Jan. 21 – Jan. 25. Opening night is Thursday, Jan. 26 at 8:00 p.m.



"The Recommendation" is a bold and candid look at modern friendship

from an exciting new theatrical voice. Aaron is smart, charming and over-privileged. Iskinder, his new

college roommate, comes from a middle-class immigrant family and is under-connected. Soon the best of friends, Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long. After a chance encounter with an accused felon sets off a chain of events that puts Aaron's life at risk, the two men are forced to rethink the meaning of friendship.

The cast of *The Recommendation* features Jimonn Cole (Dwight Barnes), Brandon Gill (Iskinder Iudoku) and Evan Todd (Aaron Feldman).

Tickets can be purchased online at <u>www.TheOldGlobe.org</u>, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

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Old Globe Theatre **Presidio Sentinel** January 01, 2012 15,500 15 29 sq inch \$221.37

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Old Globe

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"The Recommendation" is a bold and candid look at modern friendship from an exciting new theatrical voice. Aaron is smart, charming and over-privileged. Iskinder, his new college roommate, comes from a middleclass immigrant family and is underconnected. Soon the best of friends,

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The cast of The Recommendation features Jimonn Cole (Dwight Barnes), Brandon Gill (Iskinder Iudoku) and Evan Todd (Aaron Feldman).

Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.



Playwright Jonathan Caren. Caren's The Recommendation will run Jan. 14 - Feb. 19, 2012 at The Old Globe. Photo by Elisabeth Caren.



Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre San Diego Downtown News January 01, 2012 22,000 18 11 sq inch \$241.38

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The Old Globe, 1363 Old Globe Way



"Dividing the Estate" plays at The Old Globe Jan. 14 through Feb. 12. Photo courtesy of The Old Globe

• Jan. 14 through Feb. 12, The Old Globe presents Horton Foote's comedy, "Dividing the Estate," in which the children of a Texas matriarch debate whether to divide their mother's estate in advance of her death.

• Jan. 21 through Feb. 26, The Old Globe presents the world premiere of Jonathan Caren's **"The Recommendation**," in which the friendship of two young men is severely tested. Plays Tuesdays through Sundays in the Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, suggested for mature audiences.

Old Globe Theatre and Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, Conrad Prebys Center for the Performing Arts, www.theoldglobe.org or (619) 23-GLOBE.





Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre Gay San Diego December 30, 2011 22,000 10 8 sq inch \$134.12

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CUAUHTÉMOC KISH THEATER SCENE

The Old Globe Theatre

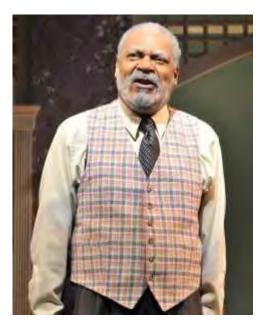
will offer two shows in January. The first up will be Pulitzer Prize winner Horton Foote's "Dividing the Estate" (Jan 19 - Feb 12), while the second to be launched will be Jonathan Caren's "The

Recommendation" (Jan 26 - Feb 26). Foote's comedy was Tony nominated and will be directed by Michael Wilson, considered the foremost interpreter of the playwright's work. The play is about family, money, power and greed. Caren's play, staged at the White Theatre, has Aaron and Iskinder exploring life, and their unique differences, in a dorm. It's privilege against the middle-class, where both discover the meaning of friendship and where loyalty has its limits. Tickets can be ordered via the website at TheOldGlobe.org or by calling 619-23.GLOBE.

calling the box office at 619-600-5020 or by visiting them at iontheatre.com.

New Village Arts (NVA) will honor its commitment to bringing new works of art to the San Diego community with two weeks of premiere plays. The New Play Festival 2012 features work from NVA's celebrated Ensemble. The first weekend (Jan 13-13) will feature Carly Dellinger and Amanda Morrow in Rob Novak's "L.A." (Lost Apollonia) and the second weekend (Jan 20-22) will feature Dana Fares and Durwood Murray in Karen Li's "M." For more information visit them at newvillagearts.org or order your tickets at 760-433-3245.

Cygnet Theatre Company will present Martin McDonagh's "A Behanding In Spokane" (Jan 19 – Feb 19). This one is a hilarious black comedy and marks this play as a southern California premiere. It's McDonagh's first American-set play, and he has a man searching for his missing hand with the usual con artists decorating the play. Visit them at cygnettheatre.com or ring them up for tickets at 619-337-1525.



Roger Robinson as Doug in Horton Foote's Dividing the Estate, directed by Michael Wilson, at The Old Globe Jan. 14 - Feb. 19, 2012 (Photo by Jann Whaley)

La Jolla Playhouse will begin the newest year with Richard Montoya's "American Night: The Ballad of Juan José" (January 27 – Feb 26). This one was written especially for Culture Clash. As Juan José feverishly studies for his U. S. citizenship exam, he becomes ensnared in a tumultuous journey through pivotal moments of American history. This play is an irreverent comedy about our shared

past set against our trans-border landscape. Tickets can be purchased on line at lajollaplayhouse.org or at 858-550-1010.

Moxie Theatre will bring back Candye Kane for a two-week reprise of her autobiographical show, "The Toughest Girl Alive" (Jan 5-15). Following this production, fresh from a visit to the New York Fringe Festival, Moxie will produce the classic "A Raisin In The Sun" (Jan 27 – March 4). Lorraine Hansberry's play is a drama about the power of dreams and tells the story of a family living and struggling in Chicago in the 1950s. Get your tickets online at moxietheatre.com or by dialing them up at 858-598-7620.

Broadway San Diego will deliver Jerry Seinfeld for a one-night only performance on January 7. After Jerry makes us laugh, they'll offer "Cats" (Jan 10-15). In 1997 this show became the longest running musical on Broadway, ending its 18-year-run on Sept. 10, 2000, with 7,485 performances. The show is based on T. S. Eliot's Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, and with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, "Cats" won seven Tony Awards in 1983. If you want to be included amongst the eight-plus million audience members who have seen this show, call them for tickets at 619-570-1100 or visit them at sandiegotheatres.org.

The Old Globe Theatre will offer two shows in January. The first up will be Pulitzer Prize winner Horton Foote's "Dividing the Estate" (Jan 19 – Feb 12), while the second to be launched will be Jonathan Caren's "The Recommendation" (Jan 26 – Feb 26). Foote's comedy was Tony nominated and will be directed by Michael Wilson, considered the foremost interpreter of the playwright's work. The play is about family, money, power and greed. Caren's play, staged at the White Theatre, has Aaron and Iskinder exploring life, and their unique differences, in a dorm. It's privilege against the middle-class, where both discover the meaning of friendship and where loyalty has its limits. Tickets can be ordered via the website at TheOldGlobe.org or by calling 619-23.GLOBE.





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January 3, 2012

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Jimonn Cole, Brandon Gill and Evan Todd Picked for Old Globe World Premiere of Recommendation

By Wire News Sources on December 20, 2011

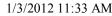
The Recommendation, Jonathan Caren's provocative play about friendship, will feature Jimonn Cole, Brandon Gill and Evan Todd in its world-premiere run at The Old Globe's intimate Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego.

No comments yet.

Sorry, the comment form is closed at this time.



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Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre San Diego Union-Tribune January 22, 2012 408,825 6 66 sq inch \$10,218.55

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THE FRONT ROW

THEATER PANELISTS ARE HARD AT WORK

We check in to see what stage shows or other projects they're involved in

JAMES HEBERT • U-T

While we usually like to have our Front Row panelists chime in on a hot stage-related topic, these are busy people on the local theater scene. Here's what some of them are up to right now:



I'm working as fight director on "The Recommendation" at the <u>Old</u> <u>Globe</u> The-

atre, (and doing) sound design for "How I Got That Story" at Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company.

GEORGE YÉ

Award-winning theatrical sound designer, as well as a fight choreographer and an associate artistic director of Cygnet Theatre; teaches at the University of San Diego and Mesa College.



I am currently privileged to be working on Lorraine Hansberry's American classic "A

Raisin in the Sun" with the always forward-thinking Moxie Theatre.

Hansberry was such an incredible and visionary playwright. Hers was a voice that was lost far too soon. I often think what she would be writing about now in this time of tumultuousness.

Of course, that the play is set in my birthplace on the South Side of Chicago has meaning that none could know. It is eerie that some would think this play is of the past — there is so much about it that is quite current.

Economics, classism, international stereotypes, loss; the desperate desire not to be on the bottom. And yet ... laughter, pride, the future and unwavering faith in the human spirit.

SYLVIA M'LAFI THOMPSON Award-winning actor and

former member of the San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture; proprietor of the arts consultancy Thompson Company.



On Feb. 6, Carlsbad Playreaders is presenting August Wilson's

"Radio Golf," directed by our Front Row colleague Antonio "T.J." Johnson. I'm looking forward to this compelling play, the last by Wilson before his death in 2005.

JESSICA PADILLA BOWEN Savvy PR pro (formerly with La Jolla Playhouse and the Geffen Playhouse); board member of Carlsbad Playreaders and a community relations manager for the city of Carlsbad.



act in a reading of August Wilson's "Radio Golf" by the Carlsbad Playreaders, a very timely political drama. And I am in Intrepid Shakespeare Company's "An Enemy of the People," opening Feb 3. ANTONIO "T.J." JOHNSON



completed working on "Sweeney Todd" at the Francis Parker School. I

Ijust

am currently designing the scenery for "Bill W and Dr. Bob" at San Jose Rep, and also designing the scenery (again) for "It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues" at Portland Center Stage.

ROBIN SANFORD ROBERTS Set designer for the Old Globe, San Diego Rep and other companies here and around the country (with a Broadway credit for "It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues").



I'm producing and participating in a Sampler Program of the Shakespeare

Society's Student Festival, Sonnets, Reading Group and Musicale on Jan. 28 at 12:30 p.m. at the Mission Valley Library.

And April 29 is the seventh annual Student Shakespeare Festival, in Balboa Park (details at sandiegoshakespearesociety.org). Both events are free and open to the public.

ALEX SANDIE

Founding and current president of the San Diego Shakespeare Society, which runs public and educational events around the county; also a seasoned Shakespearean actor.



I'm looking forward to seeing "Golden Child," written by David





Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre San Diego Union-Tribune January 22, 2012 408,825 6 66 sq inch \$10,218.55

Page 2 of 2

Henry Hwang, directed by Andy Lowe and produced by Chinese Pirate Productions, Feb. 4-25. (I'm involved only as a patron.) ELISE KIM PROSSER San Diego Asian American Repertory Theatre board member, actor, playwright ("Hip-Hop Kim-Bop") and marketing professor/ consultant.



My (sort of) theater project is unofficially promoting NBC's "Smash" (a new series

that stars Megan Hilty). They send me official content for our site and gave us codes for passes to the recent screenings.

JULIE TABER Social-media-savvy local theater fan and aficionado; director of community relations for the official website of Broadway star Megan Hilty; message-board moderator on Tony winner Idina Menzel's official site.



Actorwise, I'll be doing some rehearsals and meetings with Suzanne Bachner this

month — she's writing the original play for New Village Arts' "Ensemble Project." She's here from New York to conduct the second round of the process. All I know so far is my character and the other ensemble members' characters. So I'm excited about the next phase. It will premiere in June. Photo-wise, I'm very busy this month with theater preshoots and live rehearsal shoots for San

Diego Rep, Cygnet, Moxie and NVA. DAREN SCOTT Actor, director and photographer for several local companies and a member of the ensemble at New Village Arts



I'll be in "Blasted" at Ion Theatre (official dates have not yet been announced).

Theatre.

RON CHOULARTON Wide-ranging, veteran actor (<u>Old Globe</u>, La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego Rep, many others) who also publishes the Union Jack, a national newspaper for British expatriates.

Monday, Jan. 23rd							นา	San Diego
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http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2012/jan/22/tp-theater-panelists-are-hard-at-work/

The Front Row: Their latest projects | UTSanDiego.com



Written by James Hebert

12:01 a.m., Jan. 22, 2012 Updated 1:01 p.m.

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While we usually like to have our Front Row panelists chime in on a hot stage-related topic, these are busy people on the local theater scene. Here's what some of them are up to right now:

George Yé

Award-winning theatrical sound designer, as well as a fight choreographer and an associate artistic director of Cygnet Theatre; teaches at the University of San Diego and Mesa College.

I'm working as fight director on "The Recommendation" at the Old Globe Theatre, (and doing) sound design for "How I Got



George Yé

That Story" at Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company.

Sylvia M'Lafi Thompson

Esteemed, award-winning actor and former member of the San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture; proprietor of the arts consultancy Thompson Company.

I am currently privileged to be working on Lorraine Hansberry's American classic "A Raisin in the Sun" with the always forwardthinking Moxie Theatre.



Sylvia M'Lafi Thompson

Hansberry was such an incredible and visionary playwright. Hers was a voice that was lost far too soon. I often think what she would be writing about now in this time of tumultuousness.

Of course, that the play is set in my birthplace on the South Side of Chicago has meaning that none could know. It is eerie that some would think this play is of the past - there is so much about it that is quite current.

Economics, classism, international stereotypes, loss; the desperate desire not to be on the bottom. And yet ... laughter, pride, the future and unwavering faith in the human spirit.

Jessica Padilla Bowen



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What's Going On: Entertainment,

Short and Sweet

by Eileen Sondak | February 2012, Popular Stories from SDJJ | Post your comment »





By Eileen Sondak

February is the shortest month of the year, but thanks to the local arts community, it's not short on entertainment. The eclectic mix includes music, opera, theater, dance and a cornucopia of museum exhibitions and hands-on activities. The return of the Jewish Film Festival, a recital by Itzhak Perlman and a theatrically rich opera based on "Moby-Dick" are among the highlights of the busy February slate.

The San Diego Opera's tantalizing production of "Salome" will complete its run Feb. 5. If you can still snare a

seat for this blood-thirsty and eerily erotic opera, don't miss it. The world premiere co-production of the literary masterpiece "Moby-Dick" will follow "Salome" at the Civic Theatre Feb. 18-26, with Ben Heppner as Ahab and Morgan Smith as Starbuck.

"Moby-Dick" has already been performed to standing ovations, and the opera seems destined to carve a strong niche in the operatic world, thanks to its highly theatrical effects and achingly beautiful score. Maestro Karen Keltner will preside over the pit, and Robert Brill designed the stunning nautical sets for this emotionally charged tale of obsession.

The Old Globe's production of Horton Foote's "Dividing the Estate" will complete its stay in San Diego Feb. 19. This black comedy about family, money and greed takes place in present day Texas, when a family reunites to consider whether to divide their estate. Michael Wilson directed this West Coast premiere.

"The Recommendation" plays on at the Globe's White Theatre through Feb. 26. The story revolves around a chance encounter with an accused felon that puts the longtime friendship of two college roommates at risk. This world premiere was written by Jonathan Caren and directed by Jonathan Munby.

The San Diego Symphony has a very special offering set for Feb. 18. Itzhak Perlman will be on stage for one thrilling recital. Music aficionados will want to catch this performance by the world-famous violin virtuoso. The Symphony's Chamber Music Series will bring Johannes Moser and Orion Weiss together to perform "Dvorak and More" Feb. 28. They will perform (with members of the orchestra) a program that features Dvorak's Piano Trio No. 4 (Dumky).

Valentine's Day weekend will bring Maestro Marvin Hamlisch to the podium at Symphony Hall for "A Valentine's Romance with Broadway's Best" (Feb. 10-11). Jennifer Holliday and Hugh Panaro will sing your favorite Valentine's Day songs.

Moscow Festival Ballet will bring its romantic ballets to Symphony Hall as well. "Sleeping Beauty" will be danced Feb. 14, followed Feb. 15 by "Swan Lake." If you like the power and spectacle of ancient Japanese drumming, "Tao — Taiko Drummers of Japan" is coming this way with its throbbing percussions Feb. 17.

Orchestra Nova will deliver "Favorite Opera Moments" at Jacobs Qualcomm (Feb. 11) and Sherwood Auditorium (Feb. 13).

North Coast Repertory Theatre will unveil "Visiting Mister Green" Feb. 15. Starring Robert Grossman, this bittersweet play about family loneliness and friendship is laced with humor and has already snared numerous awards throughout the world. The company will showcase this highly acclaimed play until March 11.

San Diego Repertory Theatre will present "In the Wake," a politically charged tale set in the early years of the 21st century. Penned by the award-winning playwright Lisa Kron, the play will open Feb. 11, under the direction of Delicia Turner Sonnenberg. You can see "In the Wake," with its opinionated characters and clever dialogue, through March 4 at the Rep's Lyceum Space.

Cygnet Theatre's "A Behanding in Spokane" remains on the boards in the troupe's Old Town Theatre through Feb. 19. This play, directed by Lisa Berger, takes audiences on a hilarious roller coaster ride of emotions. But it also comes with a warning for violence and strong language.

The Lamb's Players Theatre will revive an American classic Feb. 3. The musical comedy gem "Guys and Dolls" will dominate the Lamb's Coronado home until March 18.

"Mix-Tape," the Lamb's long-running musical, is keeping its '80s-style music alive at the Horton Grand Theatre through Feb. 26.

• Starting tomorrow you can pick up passes at Macy's to get half-price admission to 40 local museums for the month of February.

• San Diego Opera's season opened Friday night with "Salome," and the singers weren't the only ones whose voices we heard. U-T San Diego published <u>opera-goers' glowing reactions</u> along with critic James Chute's <u>more mixed take</u>, though he extolled the performance of <u>soprano Lise Lindstrom</u>. KPBS's television segment included this rousing appraisal from an audience member: "<u>I thought the beheading</u> was done tastefully."

I enjoyed flouting the cell-phone-extinguishing rules at the final dress rehearsal Thursday to <u>live-tweet the performance</u>. Here are some tweets and photographs from the night in a <u>timeline</u>. My favorite was high-schooler Austin Balke's answer to Salome's rhetorical question:

Why don't you look at me with your eyes open? BECAUSE YOU JUST CHOPPED HIS HEAD OFF GURL.

Here's Lindstrom as Salome in a photograph by Ken Howard:



More "Salome:" Watch UCSD-TV's 30-minute <u>behind-the-scenes look</u> at the production and learn about the <u>severed head Salome kisses</u>. (North County Times)

• Theater critic <u>Welton Jones marvels</u> that a young playwright, just graduated from Juilliard, could grasp nuances that it seems you must live many decades to understand. In his review, Jones calls the world premiere of "The Recommendation" onstage now at The Old Globe "exemplary." Playwright Jonathan Caren "senses life's labyrinths before he can have experienced them, and he offers wise observations, if not cautionary guidance, on how best to survive and perhaps flourish," he writes. (SanDiego.com)

Wheels Turning

• Dizzy's, a beloved all-ages local jazz venue, is looking for a place to land after <u>suddenly packing up its grand plano</u> and leaving its home of five years in the San Diego Wine and Culinary Event Center downtown. (U-T San Diego)

• A musical about Charlie Chaplin that <u>began here at the La Jolla Playhouse</u> as "Limelight" in 2010 will open on Broadway next season as "Becoming Chaplin." (Playbill.com)

• Emily Moberly aims to <u>stock bookshelves in countries far away</u> at the same time her team reads to kids in a story tent at the City Heights farmers market. Her Santee-based nonprofit, Traveling Stories, has started libraries in South Sudan, El Salvador and Nicaragua. (U-T)

• An anthropologist-turned-lawyer, Micah Parzen's at the helm of the San Diego Museum of Man. In our Q&A, he says he sees the institution in a transition: "We will certainly trend away from purely artifact-based exhibits and toward the story of the artifacts and how they relate to how we make meaning out of the world as human beings."

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THEATER

The **Poway Unified School District** presents **"Hairspray,"** Friday, Jan. 6 – Sunday, Jan. 8 at the Poway Center for the Performing Arts. Directed by Westview High School senior Meagan Pitcher, the show includes students from many of the middle and high schools in the Poway School District as both cast and crew. Showtimes are 7 p.m. Friday, 2 and 7 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. For ticket information call the box office at 858-748-0505.

The **California Youth Conservatory Theatre** presents the Broadway hit musical **"Spring Awakening,"** running Saturday, Jan. 7 – Sunday, Jan. 15 at the Welk Resort Theater, 8860 Lawrence Welk Drive, Escondido. Showtimes are 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12 – Friday, Jan. 13, 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 7 and Sunday, Jan. 8 and 1 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 15. Tickets are \$30.50 or \$45.50 to include the pre-show buffet. "Spring Awakening" contains mature themes, sexual situations and strong language. For more information and tickets, call 760-749-3000 or visit www.welktheatersandiego.com or www.cyctheatre.com.

The Welk Theater presents **"How to Succeed In Business Without Really Trying,"** opening Thursday, Jan. 19 – Sunday, Feb. 26 at the Welk Resort Theater, 8860 Lawrence Welk Drive, Escondido. Showtimes are 1 p.m. Wednesdays, 1 and 6 p.m. Thursdays, 1 p.m. Saturdays and 6:30 p.m. Sundays. Ticket prices available online at www.welktheatersandiego.com or by calling 760-749-3000.

The Old Globe presents **"Dividing the Estate,"** running Saturday, Jan. 14 – Sunday, Feb. 12 at the Old Globe Theatre and **"The Recommendation,"** running Saturday, Jan. 21 – Thursday, Feb. 26 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. Ticket prices start at \$29. For tickets and more information, 619-234-5623.

Actors' Conservatory Theatre (ACT- San Diego) presents "Once Upon a Mattress," a hilarious musical story of romance in a fantasy kingdom, Friday, Jan. 27 – Saturday, Feb. 4 at the Joan B. Kroc Theatre, 6611 University Avenue, San Diego. For showtimes and to purchase tickets, call 858-777-9899 or visit www.actsandiego.org.

San Diego REPertory Theatre (San Diego REP) presents **"A Hammer, a Bell and a Song to Sing,"** opening Saturday, Jan. 14 and running through Sunday, Jan. 29 at the Lyceum Stage. Based on the values embodied by Pete Seeger, the show features spoken word and scenes inspired by the words from past U.S. Presidents and founding fathers, poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Henry David Thoreau, activists like Cesar Chavez and Dr. Martin Luther King, and many more Americans who have marched and fought for justice, freedom, and change in American history. Previews begin Saturday, Jan. 7. Tickets range from \$32 to \$51 (student discount \$18). Discounts for groups, seniors and military also available. For tickets and more information, call 619-544-1000 or visit www.sdrep.org.

The Scripps Ranch Theatre presents "Brooklyn Boy," an inspirational comedy-drama about going home again, back to family and friends and one's old neighborhood, opening Saturday, Jan. 21 and running through Sunday, Feb. 19. Tickets are \$25 general admission, \$22 students, seniors and active military. For reservations please call the theater box office at 858-578-7728.

Scripps Ranch Theatre is located on the campus of Alliant International University, Avenue of Nations, off Pomerado Rd.

Broadway San Diego presents **"CATS"** Tuesday, Jan. 10 – Sunday, Jan. 15 at the San Diego Civic Theatre, San Diego Civic Theatre, 3rd and B Street, Downtown San Diego. Showtimes are 7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. ASL matinee Saturday, and 1 and 6 p.m. Sunday. Tickets start at \$20. For more information, call 619-570-1100 or 800-982-ARTS, or visit www.broadwaysd.com.

Tickets are also on sale for Broadway San Diego's upcoming productions of **"Rock of Ages,"** running March 27 – April 1, **"The Addams Family,"** running May 29 – June 3, and **"Memphis,"** running July 24 – 29. Visit www.broadwaysd.com for more details.

The **San Diego Center for Jewish Culture** presents comedienne **Judy Gold** live 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 14 at the David and Dorothea Garfield Theatre, 4126 Executive Drive, La Jolla. Tickets range from \$23 – \$27 and can be purchased by calling the JCC Box Office at 858-362-1348 or visiting the website at tickets.lfjcc.org.

Tickets for the 2011-2012 season at the **Poway Center for the Performing Arts** are on sale on the center's website, www.powayarts.org, by calling 858-748-0505 or at the box office, 15498 Espola Road, noon to 5 p.m. Fridays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays.

PowPAC, Poway's Community Theatre, is offering a number of varied **volunteer opportunities** for its award-winning theater. For more information, contact Maxine Brunton at 858-679-0640, or call the theater box office and leave your name and telephone number at 858-679-8085.

ART

The North County Society of Fine Arts is a local nonprofit group devoted to bringing the visual arts to public attention and fostering art education.

Members' artwork currently displayed includes Lori Chase and Margaret North at the Poway library, 13137 Poway Road, Sharon Ford at the Bernardo Heights Community Center, 16051 Bernardo Heights Parkway and Pat Dispenziere at Luc's Bistro, 12642 Poway Road.

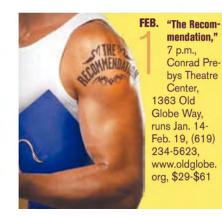




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Monday | 30

COMEDY/CREATIVITY WORKOUT

Unwind from your workday, meet playful people, and laugh your way through lively interactive exercises from the world of improvisation with instructor Jacquie Lowell (creator of improv comedy troupes Planet Mirth, Out on a Whim, and Creative Urges).

WHEN: 7 to 9:30 p.m.

WHERE: LiveWell San Diego,

4425 Bannock Avenue, Clairemont. 858-581-0050.

Tuesday | 31

THE RECOMMENDATION

The Old Globe Theatre stages this world premiere of Jonathan Caren's drama about college roommates (a privileged, well-liked American and a modest guy from a middle-class immigrant family) who are forced to "rethink the meaning of friendship." Directed by Jonathan Munby.

WHEN: 7 p.m., and every day through Sunday (check for times).

WHERE: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. 619-234-5623; **theoldglobe.org**

Wednesday | 1

BUSINESS OF BEING AN ARTIST

The owner and founder of the Bravo School of Art, Lauren Becker Downey, offers "valuable ideas about the business side of being a professional artist." Learn how to become a legitimate business (organizing income, expense deduction, tax paperwork), how to create portfolios, handle marketing, and more.

WHEN: 6 to 9 p.m.

WHERE: Bravo School of Art at

NTC Promenade, 2690 Decatur Road, Liberty Station. 619-223-0058; bravoschoolofart.com

MORE BARBARELLA SEND LETTER TO THE EDITOR SEND TO A FRIEND SUBSCRIBE TO THIS COLUMN PRINTER FRIENDLY

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3

COMMENTS

No Comments

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18

DINNER-DANCE

The Widow or Widowers Club (WOW) of San Diego hosts a dinner/dance at the El Cajon Elks Lodge on Washington Ave., El Cajon. 1st and 3rd Wednesdays. \$13. (619) 461-7652 wowsd.org.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

The hilarious Broadway musical about a young ambitious man trying to break in and get ahead in the business world. This stage and movie musical has wonderful, wacky characters and toe tapping music. Welk Resorts Theatre, 8860 Lawrence Welk Dr., Escondido. Wed.-Sun. through Feb. 26. \$44-\$73. (888) 802-7469. welktheatre.com.

DOUBT: A PARABLE

This gripping story of suspicion cast on a priest's behavior is less about scandal than about fascinatingly nuanced questions of moral certainty. Riverside Community Players, 4026 14th St., Riverside. Thurs.-Sun. through Feb.5. \$15-\$18. (951) 369-1200. riversidecommunityplayers.com.

JAZZ AT THE MERC

Featuring the Cathy Segal Garcia. Old Town Temecula Community Theater, The Merc, 42051 Main St., Temecula. \$15. (866) 653-8696. temeculatheater.org.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21

THE RECOMMENDATION

Aaron is smart, charming and over-privileged. Iskinder, his new college roommate, comes from a middle-class immigrant family and is under-connected. Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long. After a chance encounter with an accused felon sets off a chain of events that puts Aaron's life at risk, the two men are forced to rethink the meaning of friendship. The Old Globe, Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego. Through Feb. 26. \$29-plus. (619) 234-5623. theoldglobe.org.

BEAUSOLIEL AVEC MICHAEL DOUCET

Celebrate Mardi Gras with one of the longest standing and most beloved cajun bands in the world. Poway Center for the Performing Arts Foundation, 15498 Espola Rd., Poway. \$37-\$42. (858) 748-0505. powayarts.org.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25

ROB KAPILOW'S WHAT MAKES IT GREAT?

The celebrated composer dissects Ludwig van Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata, unraveling its beauty and helping listeners appreciate the work in new ways. A lively Q&A concludes the evening. Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 12700 Center Court Drive, Cerritos. \$40. (562) 467-8818. cerritoscenter.com.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27

SOUTH PACIFIC

Set on a tropical island during World War II, this musical tells the sweeping romantic story of two couples and how their happiness is threatened by the realities of war and their own prejudices. The beloved score's songs include "Some Enchanted Evening," "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair," "This Nearly Was Mine" and "There is Nothin' Like a Dame." McCallum Theatre, 73000 Fred Waring Dr., Palm Desert. \$35-\$85. Through Jan. 29. (760) 340-2787. mccallumtheatre.com.

AMERICAN NIGHT: THE BALLAD OF JUAN JOSE.

As Juan José feverishly studies for his U.S. citizenship exam, he becomes ensnared in a tumultuous, whirlwind journey through pivotal moments in American history. La Jolla Playhouse, UCSD Campus, Potiker Theatre, 2910 La Jolla Village Dr., La Jolla. Tues.-Sun. through Feb. 26. \$46-plus. (858) 550-1010. lajollaplayhouse.org.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

SALOME

Based on Oscar Wilde's dramatic adaptation of the biblical story, this chillingly erotic tale still has the power to shock. San Diego Opera, Civic Theatre, Third Ave. & B St., downtown San Diego. Also Jan 31, Feb. 3, 5. \$50-plus. (619) 533-7000. sdopera.com.

FEBRUARY

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2



JUDY COLLINS

During a remarkable career that has endured for more than 50 years, Collins's unique blend of interpretive folksongs and contemporary themes have thrilled audiences. McCallum Theatre, 73000 Fred Waring Dr., Palm Desert. \$25-\$45. Through Jan. 29. (760) 340-2787. mccallumtheatre.com.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4

JOHN TARTAGLIA'S IMAGINE OCEAN

In a one-of-a-kind live black-light puppet show, Tank, Bubbles, Dorsel are three best friends who set out on a remarkable journey of discovery. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Samueli Theater, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa. Also Feb. 5. \$20. (714) 556-2787. scfta.org.



THE FLYING KARAMAZOV BROTHERS IN 4 PLAY

In this vaudevillian juggling-and-comedy act, everything flies – swords, apples, torches, fish, theatrics, and jokes. Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 12700 Center Court Drive, Cerritos. \$39-\$59. (562) 467-8818. cerritoscenter.com.

GUY & RALNA

Enjoy a trip down memory lane with the fantastic singing duo of Guy & Ralna of "The Lawrence Welk Show." Be prepared to relive fond memories, delightful singing and meet the artists after the show. Welk Resorts Theatre, 8860 Lawrence Welk Dr., Escondido. Dates vary through Feb. 11. \$65-\$80. (888) 802-7469. welktheatre.com.

SUNDAY, FEBUARY 5

CLASSICS AT THE MERC

Old Town Temecula Community Theater, The Merc, 42051 Main St., Temecula. \$11. (866) 653-8696. temeculatheater.org.





ROBERTA FLACK

Songstress Roberta Flack brings her intoxicating romantic ballads including "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," "Killing Me Softly With His Song," "Feel Like Making Love" and "Tonight I Celebrate My Love." Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa. Through Feb. 11. \$25-\$185. (714) 556-2787. scfta.org.

JAZZ AT THE MERC

Featuring the Keith Droste Trio. Old Town Temecula Community Theater, The Merc, 42051 Main St., Temecula. \$15. (866) 653-8696. temeculatheater.org.



FRIDAY, JANUARY 27 **MY FAIR LADY**

Based on George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion," with book, music and lyrics by Lerner and Loewe. With "Wouldn't it be Loverly," "I Could Have Danced All Night," "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," and "Get Me to the Church on Time," it's no wonder Henry Higgins falls in love with Eliza Doolittle. Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 12700 Center Court Drive, Cerritos. Through Jan. 29. \$40-\$60. (562) 467-8818. cerritoscenter.com





Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value:

Old Globe Theatre San Diego Reader January 26, 2012 175,000 53 31 sq inch \$1,601.88

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Tuesday | 31

THE RECOMMENDATION

The Old Globe Theatre stages this world premiere of Jonathan Caren's drama about college roommates (a privileged, well-liked American and a modest guy from a middle-class immigrant family) who are forced to "rethink the meaning of friendship." Directed by Jonathan Munby.

WHEN:

7 p.m., and every day through Sunday (check for times).

WHERE: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. 619-234-5623 theoldglobe.org





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Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre SDUT-Street N&D February 02, 2012 164,339 19 15 sq inch \$1,402.07

Page 1 of 1



Critic's Choice

"Dividing the Estate": The late Horton Foote's final work is a closely observed, gently witty chronicle of a Texas family's slow implosion over a dwindling inheritance. Director Michael Wilson's strong cast includes the matchless Broadway icon Elizabeth Ashley as the put-upon matriarch, joined by two of Foote's own children: Hallie and Horton Jr. (James Hebert) Old Globe Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. Through Feb. 19. (619) 234-5623, theoldglobe.org. Starting at \$29.

"The Recommendation": Newcomer Jonathan Caren's rousing worldpremiere play is a provocative and at times brutally honest examination of how we calculate (or fail to) our social debt to others. Director Jonathan Munby's sharp staging (and cast) brings out the zip and wit in Caren's tale of friendship, racial and class divides, nepotism and the unpredictable consequences of paying it forward. (Hebert) Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, 1362 Old Globe Way, Balboa Par. Through Feb. 29. (619) 234-5623, theoldglobe.org. Starting at \$29.



From left: Horton Foote Jr., Hallie Foote, Penny Fuller and Elizabeth Ashley in Horton Foote's "Dividing the Estate" at the <u>Old Globe</u>. HENRY DIROCCO





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Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value:

Old Globe Theatre La Jolla Light February 02, 2012 14,822 10 25 sq inch \$603.14

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The Recommendation

The tale of friendship between two young men of different backgrounds becomes complicated when a third person becomes involved in the world premiere of Jonathan Caren's drama. Weekend matinees and evening performances through Feb. 26 at The Old Globe Theatre's Sheryl & Harvey White Theater, Balboa Park. Tickets from \$29. (619) 234-5623. theoldglobe.org



gsdba.org

AMERICAN NIGHT

THE BRASS RAIL PRESENTS: THE GOLDEN CHICKS Every Wednesday at 9:30 p.m.

brassrailsd.com

FILM OUT SAN DIEGO PRESENTS:

ESTELLE

Anthology

7 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.

anthologysd.com

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S

7 p.m. at Birch North Park Theatre filmoutsandiego.com

GSDBA'S MEMBERSHIP DRIVE KICKOFF

CELEBRATION MIXER

6p.m. to 8p.m. at Top of the Park

LAUGHOUTPROUD **COMEDYSHOW**

8 p.m. at Martinis Above Fourth martinisabovefourth.com



OUTATTHEGLOBE

theoldglob

6:30 p.m. at The Old Globe Theatre

THEFRAY

sandiegosymphony.org LA JOLLA MUSIC SOCIETY PRESENTS:

AMERICAN PIANIST JONATHON BISS 8 p.m. at MCASD Sherwood Auditorium

ljms.org

THE CAR PLAYS: SAN DIEGO

Every Saturday at Eden San Diego edensandlego.com



DIRAYKURAY





DINNER AND A SHOW FEATURING

THE DREAMGIRLS

Every Saturday at Bourbon Street bourbonstreetsd.com

[FU]BAR FRIDAYS

SAN DIEGO AMERICAN FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE PLAYER CLINICS

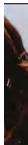
February 4 & 11 at 8:30 a.m. sdffl.org

Copley Symphony Hall

sandiegosymphony.org

1

A VALENTINE ROMANCE WITH **BROADWAY'S BEST** FEATURING JENNIFER HOLLIDAY February 10 & 11



BABY BRUNCH

AT BABYCAKES

babycakessandiego.com

8 p.m. at Copley Symphony Hall

sandiegosymphony.org

Every Saturday & Sunday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

ITZHAK PERLMAN RECITAL

NEIL BERG'S

7 a.m. to 9 a.m. The Cosmopolitan Restaurant & Hotel gsdba.org

BREAKFAST MIXER

GSDBA'S MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

102 YEARS OF BROADWAY

7:30 p.m. at The Balboa Theatre sandiegotheatres.org

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THERECOMMENDATION

CORONADO PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS:

42ND STREET

February 9 thru 19

sdcjc.org

February 2 thru March 4

coronadoplayhouse.com

THE 22ND ANNUAL SAN DIEGO

JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

TAO-TAIKO DRUMMERS OF JAPAN:

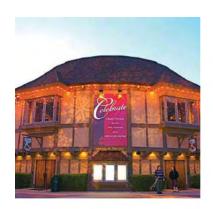
THEART OF THE DRUM

8 p.m. at Copley Symphony Hall



Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre Fine Magazine February 01, 2012 25,000 8 6 sq inch \$171.80

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THEATRE, BROADWAY & DANCE

The Old Globe

Dividing the Estate, through February 12 The Recommendation, through February 26 oldglobe.org





Client Name: Publication Name: Publishing Date: Circulation: Page Number: Article Size: Ad Value: Old Globe Theatre San Diego Union-Tribune February 12, 2012 408,825 2 17 sq inch \$2,692.88

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SPOTLIGHT



"The Recommendation"

7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays (no matinee Feb. 18); 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays; plus 2 p.m. Feb. 15. Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. \$29 and up. (619) 234-5623 or theoldglobe.org

Jonathan Caren's bold, funny new play digs into friendship, patronage and the perils of mutual back-scratching.

JAMES HEBERT . U-T

Friends," for five performances only, running Wednesday, Feb. 29 – Sunday, March 4 at the Welk Theatre Resort, 8860 Lawrence Welk Drive, Escondido. Ticket prices and showtimes are available at www.welktheatersandiego.com.

The La Jolla Playhouse presents Sandra Bernhard in her latest show, "I Love Being Me, Don't You?" 8 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and 7:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Saturday Wednesday, March 14 – Saturday, March 17 at the Playhouse, 2910 La Jolla Village Drive La Jolla. Tickets range from \$35 - \$60. For tickets and more information, visit www.LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

The Old Globe presents "The Recommendation," running through Thursday, Feb. 26 at the Shervl and Harvey White Theatre. Ticket prices start at \$29. For tickets and more information, 619-234-5623.

STAR Repertory Theatre presents the hit dance musical "Footloose," opening Thursday, Feb. 16 and running though Monday, Feb. 20 at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido, Ticket prices and performance times are available on the website at www.starrepertory theatre.com.

Coronado Playhouse presents "42nd Street," running through Sunday, March 4 at the Coronado Playhouse, 1835 Strand Way, Coronado. Showtimes are 8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$20 on Thursday and Sunday; \$25 on Friday and Saturday, with student, senior, military and group discounts available. For tickets and more information, call the box office at 619-435-4856 or visit www.coronadoplavhouse.com.

The Broadway Theater begins its 8th season with the comedy/drama "Grace and Glorie," running through Sunday, March 4, at the Broadway Theater, 340 East Broadway, Vista. Performance times are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 4 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$17.50. For tickets or more information, call the box office at 760-806-7905 or visit www.broadwayvista.com.

J*Company Youth Theatre presents "Thoroughly Modern Millie," running Saturdays and Sundays March 3 – March 18 as well as Thursday, March 15 at the David & Dorothea Garfield Theatre, Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center, Jacobs Family Campus, 4126 Executive Drive, La Jolla. For tickets and more information call the JCC Box Office at 858-362-1348 or visit www.sdcjc.org/jcompany.

The Welk Theater presents, by popular demand, the return of "Late Night Catechism," 8 p.m. selected Saturdays Feb. 18 – May 19. Tickets are \$35 and can be purchased by calling 888-802-SHOW or visiting www.welktheatersandiego.com.

La Jolla Playhouse presents the second production in its innovative, site-based Without Walls (WoW) series: Moving Arts' "The Car Plays: San Diego," running Thursdays through Sundays Feb. 23 - March 4 at an outdoor location in La Jolla to be announced shortly. Performance times are 5:30 p.m., 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays; 3 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Tickets are \$25. For more information, call the Playhouse Box Office at 858-550-1010 or visit www.LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

The Ensemble at New Village Arts presents Shakespeare's broadest farce "The Comedy of Errors," running through Sunday, March 4 at New Village Arts Theatre, 2787 State Street, Carlsbad Village, Showtimes are 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$29 general admission/\$26 senior, student, military/\$25 groups of 10 or more (opening night tickets \$36). For more information or to purchase tickets, call 760-433-3245 or visit www.NewVillageArts.org.

Cygnet Theatre presents "A Beheading in Spokane," running through Sunday, Feb. 19 at 4040 Twiggs St. in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. Showtimes are Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Contains strong language and violence. Tickets range from \$29-\$54 and can be purchased at www.cygnettheatre.com or by calling the box office at 619-337-1525.

The San Diego REPertory Theater presents "In the Wake," opening Friday, Feb. 17 and running through Sunday, March 4 in the Lyceum Space, San Diego REP, 79 Horton Plaza, San Diego. Previews begin Saturday, Feb. 11. Tickets range from \$32 to \$51, student tickets \$18. Discounts for groups, seniors and military also available. Tickets available for purchase online at www.sdrep.org.

Tickets for the 2011-2012 season at the **Poway Center for the Performing Arts** are on sale on the center's website, www.powayarts.org, by calling 858-748-0505 or at the box office, 15498 Espola Road, noon to 5 p.m. Fridays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays.

CALENDAR

Orange County/San Diego/Inland Empire FEBRUARY 2012



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10 **ART & ARTIFACTS**

This exhibit features original works of art from the San Bernardino County Museum's collection along with artifacts from the history division's collections. Works by John Edward Svenson, Ben Rabe, Jeff Owens, Terry Thornsley, John W. Hilton, Brad Diddams, Boris Deustch, John Moyer and Ramón G. Contreras are included in the exhibit. Artifacts relate to regional culture: water, school, fashion, ranching, farming, missions and exploring the natural world. San Bernardino County Museum, Fisk Gallery, 2024 Orange Tree Lane, Redlands. Through March 15. \$6-\$8. (909) 307-2669. sbcountymuseum.org.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

The hilarious Broadway musical about a young ambitious man trying to break in and get ahead in the business world. This stage and movie musical has wonderful, wacky characters and toe tapping music. Welk Resorts Theatre, 8860 Lawrence Welk Dr., Escondido. Wed.-Sun. through Feb. 26. \$44-\$73. (888) 802-7469. welktheatre.com.



THE RECOMMENDATION

Aaron is smart, charming and over-privileged. Iskinder, his new college roommate, comes from a middle-class immigrant family and is under-connected. Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long. After a chance encounter with an accused felon sets off a chain of events that puts Aaron's life at risk, the two men are forced to rethink the meaning of friendship. The Old Globe, Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego. Through Feb. 26. \$29-plus. (619) 234-5623. theoldglobe.org.

AMERICAN NIGHT: THE BALLAD OF JUAN JOSE.

As Juan José feverishly studies for his U.S. citizenship exam, he becomes ensnared in a tumultuous, whirlwind journey through pivotal moments in American history. La Jolla Playhouse, UCSD Campus, Potiker Theatre, 2910 La Jolla Village Dr., La Jolla. Tues.-Sun. through Feb. 26. \$46-plus. (858) 550-1010. lajollaplayhouse.org.

IN THE WAKE

It's Thanksgiving of 2000 and the presidential election still has not been decided. Ellen, a hyper-intelligent and politically obsessed freelance writer, insists that her friends don't realize how bad the situation really is. Ellen, on the other hand, is 100 percent sure about everything—herself, her politics, her friends and lovers. The Lyceum Theatre Lyceum Space, 79 Horton Plaza, San Diego. Through March 4. \$45-\$51. (619) 544-1000. sdrep.org.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12

PUPPY LOVE RUN/WALK

The three-point-one mile course is fun for people and pets alike. The event also features a "Furry Valentine Costume Contest" and the Wagging Wellness Village with vendors, food and entertainment. \$35. (858) 756-4117 x339. animalcenter.org.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

AN INTIMATE EVENING WITH CRYSTAL GAYLE

Gayle has been a favorite with audiences since attaining national prominence in the '70s. Known for her signature song "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue," she has released more than 20 number one hits and has been honored by the Grammy Awards, the Country Music Association, the Academy of Country Music and the American Music Awards. Poway Center for the Performing Arts Foundation, 15498 Espola Rd., Poway. \$55-\$65. (858) 748-0505. powayarts.org.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15

DINNER-DANCE

The Widow or Widowers Club (WOW) of San Diego hosts a dinner/dance at the El Cajon Elks Lodge on Washington Ave., El Cajon. First and third Wednesdays. \$13. (619) 461-7652 wowsd.org.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16

WHALE WATCHING CRUISES

Sail with aquarium naturalists to locate gray whales on their roundtrip migration from the Bering Sea to Baja's breeding grounds. Get an up-close look at these amazing animals and learn about gray whale baleen, barnacles and prey from aquarium naturalists Tours leave daily from San Diego Bay. \$30-\$40. Through April 15. Birch Aquarium at Scripps (858) 534-7336. aquarium.ucsd.edu. Flagship Cruises & Events at (619) 234-4111. flagshipsd.com.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

The final collaboration between Rogers and Hammerstein is the true story of the Von Trapp Family. Plummer Auditorium, 201 E. Chapman Ave., Fullerton. Thurs.-Sun. through Feb. 26. \$22-\$56. (714) 589-2770. 3dtshows.com.

ANDREA MARTIN

Andrea Martin offers an evening of outrageous comedy and song. Broadway tunes are rounded out with Martin's famous SCTV characters and tales of her life, career and Hollywood friends. Featuring musical accompanist Seth Rudetsky. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Samueli Theater, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa. Through Feb. 19. \$72. (714) 556-2787. scfta.org.

JAZZ AT THE MERC

Eric Reed with Mary Stallings. Old Town Temecula Community Theater, The Merc, 42051 Main St., Temecula. \$15. (866) 653-8696. temeculatheater.org.

ENTERTAINMENT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10

ROBERTA FLACK

Songstress Roberta Flack brings her intoxicating romantic ballads including "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," "Killing Me Softly With His Song," "Feel Like Making Love" and "Tonight I Celebrate My Love." Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa. Also Feb. 11. \$25-\$185. (714) 556-2787. scfta.org.

PALM SPRINGS FOLLIES: HOT! HOT! HOT!

Singer Maureen McGovern known for "The Morning After," theme song from "The Poseidon Adventure" joins the cast. Palm Springs' yearround sunshine provides a backdrop for an endless summer. This year's theme, "Hot! Hot! Hot!," is a celebration of the never-ending summer vacation. The Follies are famous for performing the music and dance of the '40s, '50s and '60s with a cast ranging in age from 56 to 81. Plaza Theatre, 128 South Palm Canyon Dr., Palm Springs. McGovern performs through March 10. Follies run through May 20. \$50-\$93. (760) 327-0225. psfollies.com.

DIVIDING THE ESTATE

Living in present day Texas and ruled by octogenarian matriarch Stella, a family must confront their past as they prepare for an uncertain future when their family fortune begins to diminish. The Old Globe Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego. Through Feb. 12. \$29-plus. (619) 234-5623. theoldglobe.org.

A LITTLE PRINCESS

When young Sara Crewe attends a boarding school in America, she soon clashes with the heartless headmistress. Despite efforts to stifle her creativity and sense of self-worth, Sara believes that every girl's a princess. But that belief is soon put to the test when she receives dreadful news about her father. Now she must learn the lesson that no one is ever truly alone. Lifehouse Theater, 1135 N. Church St., Redlands. \$15-\$19. Weekends through Feb. 12. (909) 335-3037 ext. 21. lifehousetheater.com.

GUY & RALNA

Enjoy a trip down memory lane with the fantastic singing duo of Guy & Ralna of "The Lawrence Welk Show." Be prepared to relive fond memories, delightful singing and meet the artists after the show. Welk Resorts Theatre, 8860 Lawrence Welk Dr., Escondido. Dates vary through Feb. 11. \$65-\$80. (888) 802-7469. welktheatre.com.