

Theater for the New City's Dream Up Festival Presents
"Autumn Stage"
A Nostalgic Homage to Modernist Playwriting

WHERE AND WHEN:

September 4 at 2:00 PM, September 5 at 9:00 PM, September 6 at 6:30 PM, September 7 at 6:30 PM, September 8 at 9:00 PM, September 10 at 8:00 PM, September 11 at 5:00 PM.

Community Theater, Theater for the New City, 155 First Ave. (at East 10th Street)

Presented by Theater for the New City (Crystal Field, Artistic Director) as part of the Dream Up Festival 2016.

Ticket Price: \$18.00

Box office: (212) 254-1109, www.dreamupfestival.org

Runs for 1:20 Mins. Reviewers are invited

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Is contemporary theater a form of escapism, or is it a complex way to confront the problems in our lives? This is but one of the philosophical questions that underscore "Autumn Stage," written by Peter Welch, a play about three spiritually disconnected people. Taking place on an abandoned summer stage in the early months of autumn, the play explores how theater can serve as either a palace or a prison. The play draws influence from modernist playwrights like Samuel Beckett and from Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist play "No Exit." Jonathan Weber directs.

Set at the conclusion of an Actors Equity Union strike, "Autumn Stage" revolves around the final days of a makeshift stage that had been used for summer performances. In the waning months of summer, the mysterious character Groundhog finds his way onto a condemned outdoor stage with hopes of performing a scene from "The Old Man and the Sea," only to be stopped by a security guard, MacArthur. MacArthur has been tasked with keeping people away from the stage during the evening, but finds himself dragged along by Groundhog into putting on one final show. When an audience member begins questioning MacArthur and Groundhog's dedication to the theater, they are all forced to confront the problems in their own lives while waiting and hoping for better times to arrive.

One could call "Autumn Stage" an existentialist comedy. The play occupies a modernist mindset, focusing on themes of meaninglessness and the seemingly eternal wait for better times to come. The scenes do not leave the aforementioned summer stage and the characters are trapped in its gravity, unable to leave. This setting enables the characters to reveal more about their own lives and personal struggles, expressing themselves, often unwillingly, through the theater and arousing tensions between one another. All of these subplots converge and pose questions about the misfortunes and consequences brought about by a life dedicated to the theater.

The actors are Peter Welch as Groundhog, Larry Fleischman as MacArthur and Mary Tierney as Audience Member. Jonathan Weber will direct.

Peter Welch (Groundhog) is a multidisciplinary artist working out of New York City. Educated at SUNY Plattsburgh and later New York University, Welch explored a variety of artistic mediums, ranging from dramatic writing, acting, and film production to history and literature. He has directed the feature film "Three Long Years" and starred in Bernard Attal's award winning short film "A Bike Ride" (2009). He has acted, produced, and directed many plays in New York City and has been working to produce "Autumn Stage" since 2015.

Larry Fleischman (MacArthur) has appeared in Broadway's "Beau Gest" and many Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway productions. He was a regular in the soap opera "All My Children" and the television series "Search for Tomorrow." He also appeared in the film "Maid in Manhattan."

Mary Tierney (Audience Member) is a New York actress and a veteran of Theater for the New City, where she has performed in productions for thirty years and served as a board member for twenty-one years. She runs a free acting class three times per week.

Jonathan Weber (Director) is the managing director at The Actor's Theater Company (TACT) and a former administrator of Theater for the New City. While with TNC, Weber served in administrative and marketing positions and was Assistant Director of the annual Summer Street Theatre. He helps to plan several theatre festivals in the East Village and has directed several of his own plays at TNC. One of his more recent productions there was the lauded "Great Kills" by Tom Diriwatcher in 2015, which starred Emmy Winner Joe Pantoliano. Weber is also the author of the popular Mets fan blog, "The Ballclub."

The seventh annual Dream Up Festival (www.dreamupfestival.org) is dedicated to new works. Presented by Theater for the New City, the Festival will run from August 28 to September 18, 2016 and will feature a variety of original dramas, comedies, musicals, adaptations and experimental plays. The Festival is traditionally a celebration of the arts in a time when cultural and arts funding is in sharp decline due to a number of social and market forces. Now an East Village tradition, it challenges the audience to reflect on the innovative and imaginative ways that they interact with the theater.

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