

TAPROOT THEATRE



C O M P A N Y

Scott L. Nolte
Producing Artistic Director

Mailing Address
P.O. Box 30946
Seattle, Washington 98113

Administrative Office
312 North 85th St., Suite 103
Seattle, Washington 98103
206.781.9705
(Fax) 206.297.6882

Box Office
204 North 85th St.
Seattle, Washington 98103
206.781.9707
(Fax) 206.706.1502

E-mail
info@taproottheatre.org

www.taproottheatre.org

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CONTACT:
Daytona Strong
Communications Manager
206-529-3676
daytona@taproottheatre.org

TAPROOT THEATRE ANNOUNCES 2009 SEASON, WITH THREE REGIONAL PREMIERES

**Featuring the regional premiere of the critically acclaimed *Gee's Bend*,
a theatrical adaptation of a literary classic and a magical escape
to an Italian villa in the 1920s**

SEATTLE – August 4, 2008 – Taproot Theatre Company announces its 33rd season, which runs from January through October 2009. The re-subscription period is on now, with subscriptions opening to the general public on October 1. Opening the Mainstage season in late January and coinciding with Black History Month is Elyzabeth Wilder's critically acclaimed *Gee's Bend*, a story steeped in the spirituals and the quilt-making traditions of the African American women of Gee's Bend, Alabama. Then, Mitch Albom's bestselling book *Tuesdays With Morrie* comes to life on stage in a play by Jeffrey Hatcher and Mitch Albom. The Mainstage season continues in the spring with the comedy *Around the World in 80 Days*, a highly-theatrical, fast-paced trip around the world, expertly crafted by Mark Brown (*The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge*) who adapted Jules Verne's classic to fit the stage with five energetic cast members enacting 30-some characters. Then next summer, Taproot Theatre mounts the latest installment in the Sanders family series, *Smoke on the Mountain Homecoming*. The musical, written by Connie Ray and conceived by Alan Bailey with musical arrangements by Mike Craver, transforms the theatre into a post-World War Two North Carolina Baptist Church on the night of a gospel sing ushering in Dennis Sanders as the new pastor. Finally, Taproot Theatre chases off the haze of a Seattle autumn with an escape to sunny Italy in *Enchanted April*, Matthew Barber's adaptation of Elizabeth von Arnim's 1922 novel.

Taproot Theatre offers audiences a variety of opportunities to engage with the cast and crew, get a taste of what happens behind the scenes, explore the themes and issues present in its productions and connect with other patrons. The 2009 Mainstage

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season continues the tradition of **Post-Play Discussion Wednesdays**, when the actors and artistic staff return to the stage to interact with the audience. In addition, Taproot plans a selection of **guest speakers** throughout the season to talk about the plays. And Taproot will continue a partnership with the Seattle Public Library in 2009 for a series of **behind-the-scenes looks** at its plays. New for the 2009 Season are **Special Thursdays** for College Age and Young Professionals, a special night during the run of each play in the regular season, when subscribers in this category can enjoy a social time with pizza and cold beverages before the show.

GEE'S BEND – Regional premiere

By Elyzabeth Wilder

Directed by Karen Lund

January 30-February 28, previews January 28 & 29

This critically acclaimed play captures the rich story of the women of Gee's Bend, Alabama, where discarded rags, scraps and bits of thread are pieced into works of beauty. Their compelling stories, like the spirituals they sing and the quilts they create, form a striking patchwork of the African-American journey of the past century.

Gee's Bend premiered at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in January 2007, winning the playwright the 2008 M. Elizabeth Osborn New Play Award from the American Theatre Critics Association.

Mitch Albom's TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE

By Jeffrey Hatcher

and Mitch Albom

Based on the book by Mitch Albom

Directed by Karen Lund

March 27-April 25, previews March 25 & 26

Based on the bestselling autobiographical book by Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays With Morrie* invites you to pull up a chair and join Mitch and his beloved, terminally-ill professor, Morrie, for some of the greatest lessons life can offer. When you lose your way sometimes you find it again in the most unexpected places.

Albom's books—including *Tuesdays With Morrie* and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*—have captivated millions of people. *Tuesdays With Morrie* earned a place on The New York Times bestsellers list, where it remained for more than four years.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS – Regional premiere

By Mark Brown

Adapted from the novel by Jules Verne

Directed by Scott Nolte

May 22-June 20, previews May 20 & 21

Jules Verne's novel springs vividly to life in this wildly theatrical adaptation that takes you on a madcap adventure that's sure to please. A bet to travel around the world in 80 days is a fool's venture in 1872, unless you happen to be named Phileas Fogg. Villainy, a damsel in distress and an array of transportation disasters are met with Victorian virtue and a precision pocket watch in Brown's comic play that's part James Bond, part Lord Peter Wimsey and pure fun.

SMOKE ON THE MOUNTAIN HOMECOMING – Regional premiere

Written by Connie Ray, Conceived by Alan Bailey

Musical arrangements by Mike Craver

Directed by Scott Nolte

July 10-August 15, previews July 8 & 9

Hallelujah, the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church is lifting its voice in song again. This time it's 1945. The war is over and the Sanders Family has returned to "sing Dennis Sanders in" as the new pastor of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. All the favorite characters are back, singin', testifyin' and filling the air with bluegrass, folk and gospel tunes to set your hands clappin' and your feet tappin'.

Smoke on the Mountain Homecoming is the third and final installment in the Sanders family series, which has captivated audiences with the joy and song of this musical family created by Connie Ray and Alan Bailey. Taproot Theatre staged *Smoke on the Mountain* in 1992 to such crowds that it ran over a span of four months. TTC brought it back in 1996 for the first Mainstage season in its new permanent facility in

Greenwood, and again in 2006 for its 30th anniversary season. The second installment, *Sanders Family Christmas*, delighted patrons at Taproot for two consecutive holiday seasons in 1999 and 2000.

ENCHANTED APRIL

By Matthew Barber

From the novel by Elizabeth von Arnim

Director is TBD

September 25-October 24, previews September 23 & 24

The enticement of an enchanting Italian holiday captivates the hearts of two British housewives on a drizzly London afternoon in 1922, and fills their imaginations with wisteria and sunshine. By the time they arrive at their Mediterranean villa, an aging matron and a young socialite have joined their quest for something more. The gardens, sea, cinnamon and macaroni are just the beginning of the transformation they discover.

TICKET AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Performances are Wednesday through Saturday evenings, with matinees on Saturday afternoons. All plays are subject to change. Single tickets range in price from \$20 to \$33, with a Pay-What-You-Can performance for each production, a \$10 ticket available for ages 25 and under, discounts for students and seniors, and group rates for parties of eight or more.

Subscribers save up to 20% over single ticket prices, plus enjoy great benefits like priority seating, free ticket exchanges, a subscriber rewards card and more! A season subscription is a great way to enjoy a regular night out with loved ones and friends. Taproot offers three- and five-play season subscriptions, as well as a **Flex Pass option** for those who like to keep their dates open. The Flex Pass allows people great subscriber benefits, with maximum flexibility.

Taproot is currently in a re-subscription period; subscriptions go on sale to the general public on October 1.

More information about tickets and subscriptions is available at www.taproottheatre.org or by contacting the box office at 206.781.9707 or box@taproottheatre.org. The box office is open Tuesday through Saturday from noon to 5:00 p.m., and until show time on performance nights.

All performances are held at Taproot Theatre, located at 204 N. 85th St. in Seattle's Greenwood neighborhood. The 226-seat theatre is wheelchair accessible and is equipped with assisted listening devices.

Support for Taproot Theatre's 2009 Mainstage season is generously provided by 4Culture; ArtsFund; The Boeing Company; The Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences; Ellis, Li & McKinstry PLLC; Hagen, Kurth, Perman & Co., CPA's; PONCHO; The Seattle Foundation; Viking Bank; and Washington State Arts Commission.

ABOUT TAPROOT THEATRE COMPANY

Taproot Theatre Company is a professional, non-profit theatre company with a multi-faceted production program. Founded in 1976, Taproot Theatre serves the Pacific Northwest with Mainstage Productions, Touring Productions and Acting Studio. Taproot exists to create theatre that explores the beauty and questions of life while bringing hope to our search for meaning. Taproot Theatre Company is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), Theatre Puget Sound (TPS), and the Greenwood-Phinney Chamber of Commerce.

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