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Agnes Smedley: Our American Friend

By Doris Baizley
Directed by Steven E. Alter

September II – October 10, 1993

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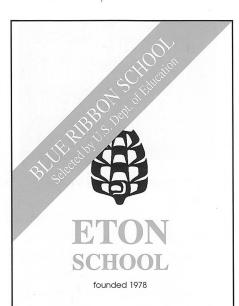
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General Information

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ACT offers **sign-interpreted performances** on the following dates (all Fridays) at 8 p.m.:

Agnes Smedley: Our American Friend -October 1

Dreams from a Summer House -November 5

Audio-described performances are provided by AVIA (Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences), funded in part by The Norcliffe Fund, the Seattle Arts Commission, the King County Arts Commission, and the Washington State Arts Commission.

They are scheduled for the following Sundays at 7 p.m.:

Agnes Smedley: Our American Friend -October 3

Dreams from a Summer House -November 7

Assistive listening devices are available at no charge for all performances (except those which are audiodescribed). They are provided by Ackerley Communications, Inc. Please see the House Manager for them.

Tickets, Please

"Tickets, Please" is a program developed by ACT and Leadership Tomorrow that offers complimentary tickets to community groups and social service agencies. To become a private or corporate sponsor of this program, please contact the Development Office at 285-3220.

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The Birth of a New Order by Deborah Frockt

The People's Republic of China may have been the culmination of the Chinese Revolution that was born in 1911. After centuries of dynastic rule and foreign exploitation of Chinese economic resources, the last Oing emperor was driven from the

throne. Installed as president was Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Chinese Republican movement. Although universally admired and respected among the Chinese people, Sun's tenure as president was short-lived. The new Republic had no money and was, therefore, reliant upon the loans of

foreign banks. The cash-flow was severely hampered, however, as banks refused to lend the Republic money as long as it was led by a "dangerous radical." Under these circumstances, Sun's power base quickly eroded. He was then succeeded by army strongman Yuan Shikai as president. After Yuan's death, the already weakened Republic disintegrated, and China came to be chaotically and violently ruled

by autonomous military governors and feudal warlords.

During World War I, Japan's imperialist ambitions toward China became increasingly pronounced, and domination by their eastern neighbors was to afflict the Chinese until the end of World War II. In response to the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, the May



Smedley and friends, c. 1937.

Larnessing

the power of

the peasants

was the

definitive.

winning

weapon.

Fourth Movement was born as Chinese students protested the ceding of German interests in China to Japan. It was on the heels of this upheaval that Mao Zedong and Chen Duxiu organized the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. The Communists quickly became

known as the most radical and anti-Western of China's revolutionary movements, and thus grew rapidly.

When Sun Yat-sen died in 1924, the broad coalition that was the Nationalist Party (of which the Communists were a part) was shattered as the military leader Chiang Kai-shek began his ascent. At

> first, Chiang relied on the Communists as allies, but in 1927 he turned on his former partners. The Communists, upon Russian advice, organized a series of urban uprisings which were bloodily defeated by Chiang. At this point, Mao broke with the Russian Communists, declaring that urban revolution was bound to fail in China. Instead, he argued that victory in the

China must be won with the full support and cooperation of the peasants, who were not only the vast majority but also the most oppressed.

After invading Manchuria in 1931 and facing no resistance from Chiang's army, the Japanese installed a puppet state with their eyes set on further conquest. Despite the humiliating defeat of foreign invasion, Chiang was convinced that nothing was more dangerous than the spread of Communism. As a result, he began a brutal liquidation policy against the Communists. In 1934, to escape extermination camps, 100,000 Communists began the 6000-mile trek northwards that became known as the Long March. Fewer than 10,000 people survived a year later when the Red Army arrived in Yen'an. It was during this period that the nucleus of Communist leadership solidified with Mao as supreme leader flanked by Chu Teh (Zhu De) as his military chief of staff and Chou

In 1936, Chiang was finally forced to

En-lai as his administrator.



join forces with the Communists to fight Japanese aggression. Despite a united Chinese front, 1937 saw the continuation of Iapanese expansion throughout China. Yen'an, however, remained under Communist control throughout World War II. There, Mao was able to put his theories of peasant communism to work, taking land from the landlords and distributing it to the workers. The Red Army, in addition to waging guerrilla warfare against the Japanese, worked alongside the common people, building roads, schools and hospitals.

After Japan's defeat and withdrawal from China in 1945, American diplomats tried to negotiate a Nationalist-Communist coalition which would unite China. The armies of Chiang and Mao were never to fight together again, however, and in 1946, civil war erupted. Despite the superior arms the Nationalists

received from the United States, the Communists were ultimately victorious. As Mao had predicted, harnessing the power of the peasants was the definitive, winning weapon. In the climactic battle at Huaihai in early 1949, whole divisions of Nationalist troops turned their guns on their officers and deserted to the Communist side. Nationalist tanks were futile dinosaurs, unable to cross miles of defensive ditches dug by peasants under Communist direction.

As Mao Zedong stood on the Gate of Heavenly Peace in front of Beijing's Forbidden City on October 1, 1949 proclaiming the founding of the People's Republic of China, a new order was born. A hierarchical and repressive way of life, twenty-five centuries old, resting on a foundation of feudalism, was cast aside forever.

A Remarkable Life

1892 Agnes Smedley is born in Osgood, Missouri.

1904-10 Her family begins an itinerant lifestyle as her father seeks mining work in the West.

1911 Smedley enrolls at the Tempe Normal School. Here, she begins her career as a journalist, writing editorials that champion the needs of the underprivileged.

1912 She marries Ernest Brundin, a Socialist, in San Francisco.

1916 She joins the Socialist Party, even though she is already separated from Ernest.

1917-19 After arriving in New York, Smedley begins writing for The Call, a Socialist paper. She works with Margaret Sanger and the birth control movement. As a result of the Espionage Age, she is jailed for 6 months because of her association with the Indian Freedom Movement. 1920

With espionage charges still pending, Smedley sails for Berlin without a passport. There she continues her work for the Indian Revolutionary Committee and she lives with Viren Chattopadhyaya, an Indian

leader, in common-law marriage.

1929 Daughter of Earth, Smedley's autobiographical novel, is published. She arrives in China.

Smedley and Harold Issacs found the radical Shanghai periodical China Forum. 1931

1932 Smedley and Issacs complete Five Years of Guomindang Reaction, a bitter indictment of Chiang's government. She is subject to surveillance and harassment by Guomindang and foreign police. With Madame Sun Yat-sen and others, she forms the League of Civil Rights to help publicize the Chinese predicament abroad. She tries unsuccessfully to establish a birth control clinic in Shanghai.

1933 Chinese Destinies, a collection of Smedley's writings about China, is published. 1934

She gathers material for her work on the Jiangxi Soviet, China's Red Army Marches.

1937 Smedley arrives in Communist controlled Yen'an and begins work on Chu Teh's biography. She applies for membership to the Chinese Communist Party, but her application is rejected.

1938 She reports from the front with the Communist-led New Fourth Army. Her account of this time is published in 1943 as Battle Hymn of China.

Ill health forces Smedley to leave China for the United States.

1941-48 There is a relatively calm period for her, as she continues her work on China. She writes for The New Republic and spends time at the writers' colony Yaddo.

1949 The United States government releases a report accusing Smedley of having been a Soviet spy since the early 1930s. Even though she goes to court to deny these allegations, the virulent anticommunist mania of the period robs her of enough work to support herself. She goes to England to await a visa for her return to China and continues work on Chu's biography.

1950 Smedley dies of complications resulting from abdominal surgery. The Great Road, her account of

Chu's life, is published posthumously.

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Susan Trapnell Moritz
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presents the World Premiere of

Agnes Smedley: Our American Friend

by Doris Baizley

Director

Steven E. Alter

Set Designer

Shelley Henze Schermer

Costume Designer

Jeanne Arnold

Lighting Designer

Michael Wellborn

Sound Designer

Steven M. Klein

Choreographer

Mayme Paul-Thompson

Chinese Movement
Dramaturg

Ernest Abuba Deborah Frockt

Stage Manager

Mary H. Corrales-Diaz

The Cast

Agnes Smedley

Susan Barnes

Chu Teh (Zhu De)

Ernest Abuba

Lily Wu (Wu Guangwei)

Jeanne Sakata

The Guard

David Mong

The time is 1937.

The action takes place in Yen'an, China, and in Agnes's memory.

This performance runs without an intermission.

Los Angeles casting by Lisa Zarowin

This production is co-sponsored by the Seattle Arts Commission.

Agnes Smedley: Our American Friend was first developed at The Gathering at Bigfork, Montana.

A Contemporary Theatre is a member of the League of Resident Theatres, the American Arts Alliance, the Washington State Arts Alliance, and is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group.

This theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Directors and choreographers at ACT are members of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, an independent national labor union.

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The Actors



Susan Barnes Agnes Smedley

began as a dancer, then earned an MFA in directing before starting her acting career. Her extensive theatre credits

include: La Bete, The Ice Fishing Play and Stanton's Garage with Actors Theatre of Louisville; Remembrance with the Old Globe in San Diego; Alfred Steiglitz Loves O'Keeffe with the New Mexico Repertory; Stepping Out with the Pasadena Playhouse; The Five of Us and On The Verge with the Mark Taper Forum; Women Behind Bars with the Roxy Theatre in Los Angeles and Alcazar Theatre in San Francisco, where she earned the Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Supporting Actress; Goodbye Freddie with the South Coast Repertory; and Kilo with the Ensemble Studio Theatre in New York. Across the Atlantic, she appeared in Still Life in Edinburgh as well as in London's West End at the Royal Court and at the Riverside Studios. From 1984 to 1991 she was an acting member of Robert Redford's Sundance Institute, developing such plays as The Kentucky Cycle and Angels in America. She was also one of four actors chosen to represent the U.S.A. in Reykjavik, Iceland, for a theatrical event involving all the Scandinavian countries. Madefor-TV movies include In the Best Interest of the Children, Don't Touch My Child, Mischief, A Deadly Silence, She's in the Army Now and Angel on My Shoulder. TV series include L.A. Law, Growing Pains, A Year in the Life, Hooperman, Cagney & Lacey and The Young and the Restless. Films include Two Moon Junction, The Vanishing, Meet the Applegates, Frances, Extremities, They Live (directed by John Carpenter), PeeWee's Big Adventure (directed by Tim Burton), Repo Man (directed by Alex Cox), Swingshift (directed by Jonathan Demme) and The Enforcer (directed by Clint Eastwood).



Ernest Abuba Chu Teh

Ernest has performed on Broadway in Shimada, Zoya's Apartment, Loose Ends and Pacific Overtures. Off-

Broadway, his credits include the lead in Shogun Macbeth, The Reciter in the revival of Pacific Overtures, Chebutykin in Three Sisters, Singer in Caucasian Chalk Circle at La Mama Annex as well as Yellow Fever at Pan Asian Repertory and workshops at Actors Studio. Around the country, Ernest has played Oberon in A Midsummer Night's Dream at New Stage in Mississippi, Autolycus in A Winter's Tale at the Huntington Theatre in Massachusetts, King Arthur in Pendragon at George St. Playhouse in New Jersey and Steve in F.O.B. at the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference. He has also worked at Missouri Repertory, Indiana Reper-

tory, Arena Stage, Buffalo Studio Arena, Dallas Shakespeare Festival, Merrimack Repertory and the Old Globe. In addition to appearing in a number of films, such as Article 99, King of New York, Call Me, Intimate Strangers, Vestige of Honor and Forever Lulu, Ernest has appeared on The Bill Cosby Show, Kung Fu: The Legend Continues, Counterstrike and Adderly. The recipient of an Obie Best Actor Award and a Rockefeller Fellowship, he earned a Best Actor award from the Focus Press for his work at Buffalo Studio Arena and a nomination for Best Supporting Actor for his work at the Old Globe in California.



Jeanne Sakata Lily Wu

Jeanne just finished performing the roles of Suzuki and Comrade Chin in the Arizona Theatre Company's

production of David Henry Hwang's M. Butterfly. She has performed at the Mark Taper Forum as The Gardener in Richard II, as Dr. Libushe Lorencova in Vaclav Havel's Temptation, and in the Taper Forum workshop production of Orestes. She was also featured in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's production of M. Butterfly, at the New York Shakespeare Festival as a witch opposite Raul Julia in Macbeth, and at Syracuse Stage as Himiko Hamilton in Tea. A veteran of over two dozen L.A. plays at such theatres as Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum, the Odyssey Theatre, the Back Alley Theatre, and the East West Players, she especially cherished playing Ellida in Ibsen's The Lady from the Sea at the Fountain Theatre. Jeanne's TV credits include L.A. Law, Knots Landing, The New Adam 12, and the TV movies Fine Things and Hiroshima: Out of the Ashes. She recently costarred in the feature film Poison Ivy. She thanks her husband Tim Patterson, Meg Kruszewska and Lenore Zerman for their faith and support.



David Mong The Guard

David was last seen at ACT in *Red Noses*. Before that he appeared here in a number of plays, including *The*

Downside, Quartermaine's Terms, On the Razzle, End of the World (with Symposium to Follow), King Lear and, of course, A Christmas Carol. He has appeared in theatres throughout the Northwest including the Seattle Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Empty Space, Seattle Group, Portland Repertory and Tacoma Actors Guild. Nationally, theatres include Virginia Stage Company, Westbeth Theatre in New York City, New Mexico Repertory in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, Salt Lake Acting Company and the Gathering at Bigfork, Montana.

Directors and Production Staff

Steven E. Alter Director

is in his fifth year as ACT's Artistic Associate/LiteraryManager after coming to Seattle to work on the world premiere of Steven Dietz's God's Country in 1988. He has directed the Young ACT touring productions of The Falcon and Face 2 Face, and recently directed John Olive's The Voice of the Prairie for Tacoma Actors Guild. He originally directed a reading of Agnes Smedley at The Gathering at Bigfork, where he most recently directed a reading of a new play by Erik Brogger. Steven has served as Production Dramaturg on over twenty new plays, and is particularly proud of his ongoing relationships with playwrights Doris Baizley, Erik Brogger, Steven Dietz, Jon Klein and Kevin Kling. He was a Literary Intern at Actors Theatre of Louisville during the 1985/86 season, where he dramaturged plays in three festivals: Shorts '85, Classics in Context and the Humana Festival of New American Plays. In Minneapolis, he was Marketing Director at Illusion Theatre, and assistant to the Executive Director at the Playwrights' Center.

Jeanne Arnold Costume Designer

is pleased to return to ACT, where she last designed The Revengers' Comedies. Previously her work has been seen locally in Rumors at Tacoma Actors Guild, Three Men on a Horse at the Bathhouse, Peter Pan and Into the Woods at Civic Light Opera, A Midsummer Night's Dream at The Village Theatre, and La Serva Padrona for the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. Other work includes The Homecoming and The Norman Conquests for New Rose Theatre in Portland, Just Between Ourselves for Portland Repertory Theatre and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Painting Churches and Driving Miss Daisy at New Harmony Theatre in Indiana. Jeanne received her MFA from the University of Washington, has been an assistant designer for two seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, and currently teaches costume design at the University of Puget Sound. She is also working on projects for Hansel and Gretel at Seattle Opera this fall.

Doris Baizley Playwright

lives in Los Angeles where she is a founding member of LA Theatreworks and leads their Writer's Dialogue workshop for women playwrights. For seven years she was resident playwright for the Mark Taper Forum's Improvisational Theatre Project. Her plays Tears of Rage, Mrs. California, Catholic Girls, Daniel in Babylon and A Christmas Carol have been performed at many regional theatres including ACT,

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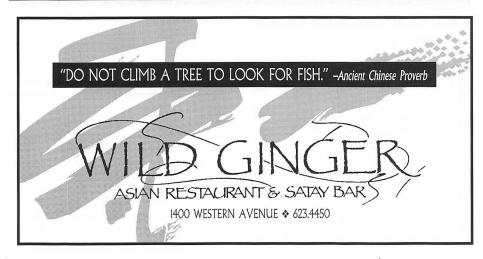
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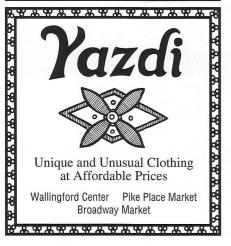


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Directors and Production Staff (cont.)

Capital Rep, the Cleveland Playhouse, the Mark Taper Forum and the National Theatre of the Deaf. Her adaptation of A Christmas Carol is now being performed annually at the Semafor Theatre in Prague and Daniel in Babylon opened the new Icon Theatre at the National Theatre of Taiwan in April. With Victoria Ann Lewis, she is coadaptor of Ph*reaks, writing from the Disablility History Project, performed at the Taper's 1993 New Play Festival. Two of her screenplays have been presented on American Playhouse, Until She Talks (1984) and Land of Little Rain (1987). She began working with Steve Alter on Agnes Smedley: Our American Friend, her third production at ACT, at the 1992 Gathering at Bigfork.

Mary H. Corrales-Diaz Stage Manager was stage manager last winter for A Christmas Carol. For the past three years, she has stage managed the Young ACT touring shows throughout Washington State. Locally she has stage managed for Spectrum Dance Theatre. Mary has also worked for Intiman Theatre, Empty Space Theatre, Pioneer Square Theatre and the Village Theatre as well as Bumbershoot. Previously, she stage managed at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, where some of her favorite shows were Titus Andronicus, Taming of the Shrew and Henry IV, Part I. Mary also was the stage manager and road manager for Cinders. A graduate of the U.W., she is certified as an actor/combatant by the Society of American Fight Directors.

Deborah Frockt Production Dramaturg is the researcher and dramaturg for The Rememberer and Just So and Other Stories, two new plays to premiere at the Seattle Children's Theatre in the 1993-94 season. She has worked at The Empty Space as dramaturg for Mad Forest. As the Associate Literary Manager at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Deborah was the dramaturg for numerous world premieres, including plays by David Hwang and John Conklin. She is also the author of four one-act plays that were produced at Actors Theatre of Louisville: A One-Night Stand One Morning, Gynodymanics, No Proof and Hard-Boiled.

Steven M. Klein Sound Designer designed Life During Wartime and three shows for ACT last season, Shadowlands, The Revengers' Comedies and A Christmas Carol. His previous ACT designs include Tears of Rage, My Children! My Africal, Halcyon Days, Four Our Fathers, A Normal Life, The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs, The Downside, Breaking the Silence and Mrs. California. Other local credits include over 50 productions at the

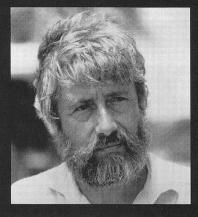
Seattle Repertory Theatre as well as many productions at the Empty Space Theatre, Alice B. Theater, Seattle Children's Theatre and others in the Seattle area. Nationally, his work has been heard at The Kennedy Center, Arizona Theatre Company, Philadelphia Drama Guild, The Arena Stage, The Circle Repertory and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. Upcoming projects include Harvey for the Seattle Repertory, Master Harold and the Boys at Intiman, Shadowlands for Arizona Theatre Company and La Bete for the Group Theatre.

Shelley Henze Schermer Scene Designer has been associated with ACT for 20 years, designing properties, masks, costumes and scenery for ACT's Mainstage, Songworks and Young ACT Company. Shelley's Mainstage designs include Lloyd's Prayer, God's Country, Custer, Amadeus, Fool for Love, On the Razzle, Little Shop of Horrors, My Children! My Africa! and, most recently, The Revengers' Comedies. Her numerous set designs for The Bathhouse Theatre include Wild Oats, Twelfth Night, Threepenny Opera, all versions of The Big Broadcast including those seen in Vancouver, B.C., and Cincinnati, and Black Stage Views. Recently she designed Dr. Doolittle at Seattle Children's Theatre. Her work has also been seen at most of the other theatres in town, as well as at the Honolulu Theatre for Youth and the Seattle Children's Museum.

Mayme Paul-Thompson Choreographer has choreographed over 40 productions in the Seattle area. In the past year, her credits include What to Say at the Seattle Repertory, Sweet Charity and Me and My Girl at Civic Light Opera, Grease at Alice B. Theatre and four episodes of Northern Exposure. She has also staged Opening Day ceremonies and other special events for the Seattle Mariners for the past four years. As a performer, Mayme danced on Broadway in The Tap Dance Kid, Little Johnny Jones, A Chorus Line and at the 1984 Tony Awards. She has worked with such stars as Michael Jackson, Juliet Prowse, Tom Hulce, Gwen Verdon and Woody Allen. Mayme also acts and can be seen in local and national commercials, and will soon be playing Cassie in the Tacoma Actors Guild production of A Chorus Line.

Michael Wellborn Lighting Designer
has designed lighting for many organizations in the Northwest, including the Seattle
Repertory Theatre, Intiman, Tacoma Actors
Guild, Empty Space, Seattle Children's
Theatre, Spectrum Dance Theatre and the
(continued on page 14)

Cousteau



SLA presents

Science, Technology and Society Lectures

Ocean Explorer
Jean-Michel Cousteau,
September 27th, in a <u>live</u>
personal presentation with
<u>dramatic new</u> film footage.

Also:

MIT's Dr. Philip Morrison (Oct. 25th) on the cosmic dark matter issue "Radiance without Shadows", Howard Rheingold (Nov. 15th) on "Virtual Reality" Harvard's Dr. Stephen Jay Gould (Nov. 30th) "Rethinking Evolution", Dr. Linda Schele (Jan. 31st) on "Maya Cosmos: 3000 Years on Shaman's Path", anthropologist Dr. Don Johanson (Apr. 16th) author of LUCY, "Searching for Our Oldest Ancestors", Dr. Frank Tipler (May 10th) "Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology and God".

All presentations are at Seattle's Paramount Theatre.
Start at 7:30pm.

For Info/Tickets Call Ticketmaster 628-0888

Produced by the Institute for Science, Engineering and Public Policy. Co-sponsored by KCTS/9, Seattle University, CH2M Hill, Waggener Edstrom, KUOW, and The Boeing Company. Special thanks to the Alexis Hotel.

Alaska Contemporary Dance Company. Nationally he has completed four seasons at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and has toured the U.S. and Southeast Asia with the Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company. Michael is also the Technical Director/Lighting Designer for the University of Washington Dance Program.

Acknowledgments

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Intiman Theatre Company
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ACT also thanks the following for their generous donations to the Opening Night parties during 1993:

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A very special *thank* you to **R.O. Ruppin Florist**.

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Next at ACT

An American Premiere Dreams From a Summer House

A magical, musical comedy by Alan Ayckbourn with music by John Pattison

Previews October 16 – 20
Oct. 21 through Nov. 14

From the pen of England's greatest comic playwright comes a magical, musical confection that puts a fanciful new spin on the age-old battle of the sexes. Robert, a disenchanted artist, is illustrating a new edition of "Beauty and the Beast." To his surprise and delight, the beauty he has been painting appears in the flesh! Creator and creation find themselves falling in love — until Robert's ex-wife conjures up the Beast, whose time is running out. Witty lyrics and charming music combine in this irresistible cliffhanger that raises hilarious new questions about "happily ever after."

"Enchanting, ingenious...
uproariously funny!"
—Daily Telegraph, London

Alan Ayckbourn, the popular and prolific English playwright, is the author of *The Revengers' Comedies*, Woman in Mind, How the Other Half Loves, The Norman Conquest and Absurd Person Singular. This U.S. premiere of his latest work will be directed by Jeff Steitzer. Suzanne Bouchard and R. Hamilton Wright, who last appeared at ACT in *The Revengers' Comedies*, and Liz McCarthy, who played Tood in *The Cover of Life* this season, are among the cast of *Dreams from a Summer House*.

Sign-Interpreted performance: Friday, Nov. 5 at 8 pm — reserve in advance.

Audio-described performance: Sunday, Nov. 7 at 7 pm – reserve in advance.

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