



For Immediate Release

June 22, 2016

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American Stage presents THE PITMEN PAINTERS

The 2015/16 Season of Awakenings closes with the dramatic comedy by Lee Hall which is based on a true story dealing with life and the power art has on our human existence.

St. Petersburg, FL – American Stage concludes its 2015/16 “Season of Awakenings” with the moving true story, *THE PITMEN PAINTERS* by Lee Hall and inspired by William Feaver’s book. Lee Hall is an English playwright and screenwriter. He is best known for the stage and film iterations of *Billy Elliot* (Oscar-nominated for Best Original Screenplay) and the film, *War Horse* (directed by Steven Spielberg). He later won the Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical for *Billy Elliot the Musical*. This production will be directed by Brendon Fox.

"Pitmen Painters is the moving, funny and true story about a group of miners in 1930s Britain who learn a great deal about each other and themselves when they begin to paint for the first time in their lives," says Director, Brendon Fox.

Producing Artistic Director, Stephanie Gularte adds, "We are so proud to be closing our season with *THE PITMEN PAINTERS*, a beautiful, surprising and thoroughly engaging story about life and art."

THE PITMEN PAINTERS runs from July 20 – August 14, 2016. **Opening night is Friday, July 22, 2016.**

Lecture with Guest Speaker: TBD

Sunday, July 10, 2016 at 1:00pm

PRIDE Night

Wednesday, July 27, 2016 (Happy Hour: 7pm, Performance: 8pm)

Young American Night

Thursday July 28, 2016 (Happy Hour: 7pm, Performance: 8pm)

Talk-back with the Cast of The Pitmen Painters

Sundays, July 31 & August 7, 2016 after the 3pm matinees

THE PLAY

Based on the triumphant true story about a group of British miners who discover a new way to express themselves and unexpectedly become art-world sensations. An arresting and witty salute to the power of individual expression and the collective spirit, *THE PITMEN PAINTERS* takes you on an unforgettable journey from the depths of the mine to the heights of fame. *Contains brief partial nudity...Blink and you might miss it.*

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"a feel-good — make that a feel-great – hit...inspirational...heartbreakingly funny" –*Variety*

"...heartfelt, moving and deeply politicized...endlessly fascinating to anyone with an interest in the role of the arts in education, or the intersection between folk art and establishment art...created with love."

–*Chicago Tribune*.

"Written partly in response to cuts in arts endowments and education, [the play] belongs to a fine old British tradition of establishment-challenging theater. And there's no denying that Mr. Hall makes a valiant case for art as a fruitful stimulant to sleepy minds...excitingly ambiguous, in-the-moment theater, as rich and intriguing as Art (as we are told here) is meant to be." –*NY Times*

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Playwright **Lee Hall** has enjoyed success writing for film, television, stage and radio. His screenwriting credits include *Billy Elliot* (Oscar-nominated for Best Original Screenplay) and *War Horse*, (directed by Steven Spielberg). For stage: *Billy Elliot the Musical* (with Elton John, winning 10 of 15 Tony nominations); Olivier-nominated *Cooking with Elvis*; *Spoonface Steinberg*, and adaptations for stage including *The Barber of Seville*, *The Good Hope*, *Pinocchio*, *Mother Courage*, and *Servant to Two Masters*. For television: *The Wind in the Willows*, *Spoonface Steinberg* and *The Student Prince*. His radio play *I Love You, Jimmy Spud* won the Sony Award for Best Writing on the Radio. He is currently working on a play about composer Messiaen.

When asked to write a play to mark the reopening of the Live Theatre in Newcastle, England, Lee Hall came across a second-hand book, *Pitmen Painters: The Ashington Group* by William Feavers. Before he was halfway through the book, he knew he had found the inspiration for a new play. Hall writes, "Quite clearly, the working classes of the early part of last century were aspirational about high art. They not only felt entitled, but felt a duty to take part in the best that life has to offer in terms of art and culture." These miners made art a part of their lives rather than leaving it to the upper classes. Art was not a commodity for commercial benefit but an integral part of daily living. Painting was not a commercial enterprise for the Ashington Group, but was simply about painting life as they knew it. A compelling, hilarious salute to the power of individual expression and the collective spirit, *The Pitmen Painters* is a deeply moving and timely look at art, class and politics.

CAST

Denise Cormier* (Helen Sutherland)

Ally Farzetta (Susan Parks)

Steven Sean Garland* (George Brown)

Britt Michael Gordon (Young Lad/Ben Nicholson)

Gavin Hawk* (Robert Lyon)

VC Heidenreich* (Harry Wilson)

Derrick Phillips (Jimmy Floyd)

Gregg Weiner* (Oliver Kilburn)

CREATIVE

Brendon Fox+ (Director)

Scott Cooper+ (Scenic Design)

Phillip Franck (Lighting Design)

Adrin Puente (Costume Design)

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Rachel Harrison* (Sound Design/Production Stage Manager)

Jerid Fox (Projection Design/Production Manager)

Shelby Smotherman (Scenic Artist)

*Member of Actors' Equity Association †Member of the Society of Stage Directors & Choreographers

For Cast Bios please visit www.AmericanStage.org/the-pitmen-painters/

DIRECT LINK to publicity photos: www.AmericanStage.org/in-the-media/

**Please note that publicity photos are not typically available until 2 weeks prior to opening. Please contact Roman Black for immediate needs.*

WHAT: American Stage presents THE PITMEN PAINTERS by Lee Hall and inspired by William Feaver's book.

WHERE: Raymond James Theatre, 163 3rd Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

WHEN: July 20 – August 14, 2016

Preview Wednesday, July 20 | 8pm | "Pay What You Can"

Preview Thursday, July 21 | 8pm | \$29 tickets

Opening Night: Friday, July 22 | 8pm | \$59 tickets (includes opening night reception at 7pm)

Continues: Wednesdays-Sundays through August 14, 2016 | \$39-\$49

TIMES & PRICES:

Wednesdays & Thursdays 8pm \$39 tickets

Fridays & Saturdays 8pm \$49 tickets

Saturdays & Sundays 3pm \$39 tickets

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES:

Lecture with Guest Speaker: Sunday, July 10, 2016 at 1:00pm

PRIDE Night: Wednesday, July 27, 2016 (Happy Hour: 7pm, Performance: 8pm)

Young American Night: Thursday, July 28, 2016 (Happy Hour: 7pm, Performance: 8pm)

Talkback with Cast: Sundays: July 31 & August 7, 2016 after the 3pm matinees

TICKET PURCHASES:

Box Office: (727) 823-PLAY (7529)

Online: www.americanstage.org

Walk-up: 163 3rd Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Group Ticket Pricing Packages are also available.

SERVICE & FACILITIES

Physical Accessibility: The theatre features accessible parking, entrances, restrooms, and seating.

Benefits of a Valid Disabled Parking Permit: Displaying your valid disabled parking permit will allow you to park at City metered spaces for FREE, for as long as your event requires, including those posted with time limit signs (green signs). This does not apply to loading zones or otherwise restricted parking signage (red signs).

Listening System: Theatregoers may enjoy the free infrared listening system from any seat.



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AMERICAN STAGE

Since 1978 American Stage has been dedicated to telling meaningful, compelling stories with integrity and professionalism. As the Tampa Bay area's longest-running, most critically-acclaimed professional theatre company, we seek to bring the power of quality live theatre to each generation in our community.

American Stage invites you to lean forward and experience the most captivating stories of the moment and the most relevant stories of the past. All told with passion and a commitment to excellence.

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