

STRAWD OG

THEATRE COMPANY

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PRESS RELEASE

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Media passes, photographs, videos, interviews and additional materials available.

STRAWD OG THEATRE COMPANY **ANNOUNCES 21st ANNIVERSARY SEASON:** **COPING WITH DISASTER**

- Note Second Slot Change to Columbus' *"The Cherry Orchard"* -
- Alex Goodman Moves from Part- to Full-time Managing Director -

Strawdog Theatre Company of Chicago announces their 21st anniversary season of presenting *"the whole wide world in a little black box,"* with the three mainstage plays, including Karel Čapek's *"R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots),"* Curt Columbus' translation of Anton Chekhov's *"The Cherry Orchard,"* and Peter Barnes' *"Red Noses."* These productions, plus on-going late night offerings, will be held at Strawdog's space in the heart of Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood at 3829 N. Broadway St. (Red Line Sheridan stop; 36-Broadway and 80-Irving Park buses; \$6 honor parking at Horace Greeley School, 832 W. Sheridan, weekends after 5 p.m.). Season flex-passes are \$50 for all three season shows (attend any night during run except gala), and \$100 for all three gala benefit performances (galas include post-show reception with refreshments). Adult single ticket prices are \$20 (single gala night tickets are \$40 each); preview, student and senior tickets are \$10 (with ID); and \$15 tickets are available for groups of ten or more. Mainstage tickets also offer FREE entrance to Strawdog Late Night shows following each regular Friday or Saturday performance. Tickets are available at 773-528-9696 and www.strawdog.org

Strawdog Artistic Director Nic Dimond said, *"These Season 21 selections all center on a catastrophic event. There is the robot rebellion and inevitable obsolescence of humanity in 'R.U.R.;" the foreclosure of a long held estate which heralds the total dissolution of an aristocratic family in 'The Cherry Orchard;' and the horrors of the Black Plague in 'Red Noses.'* Other than providing instant dramatic appeal, this concentration reflects the growing idea that the numbers of natural and man-made disasters we are exposed to every day are becoming numbing, and these explorations are meant to rip the scab off our coping skills. With our signature blend of brains and brawn, Strawdog continues to emphasize a true ensemble-based acting attack, as well as a design approach that immerses our audiences into the worlds where each of these stories live." Strawdog also announced that part-time managing director Alex J. Goodman has moved to full-time status. Starting work with the ensemble in 2007, he is originally from Detroit, and holds a B.A. in theatre from Western Michigan University. Since 2004, he has worked in Chicago with several theatres including Victory Gardens, Royal George, MOB Productions (which he co-founded in 2004), and as an apprentice at Steppenwolf.

The 2008-2009 Strawdog schedule is as follows (descriptions following – each show runs Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., and Sundays at 7 p.m., for about two hours with one intermission):

- *"R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots),"* by Karel Čapek, directed by Shade Murray, runs September 18–October 25, 2008 (previews September 18 and 19, 8 p.m., gala benefit on September 20, 7 p.m., opens September 21, 7 p.m.)
- **UPDATED:** *"The Cherry Orchard"* by Anton Chekhov, translated by Curt Columbus, directed by Kimberly Senior, runs February 19–March 28, 2009 (previews February 19 and 20, 8 p.m., gala benefit on February 21, 7 p.m., opens February 22, 7 p.m.)
- *"Red Noses"* by Peter Barnes, directed by Matthew Hawkins, runs April 16–May 23, 2009 (previews April 16 and 17, 8 p.m., gala benefit on April 18, 7 p.m., opens April 19, 7 p.m.)

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Strawdog Late Night features a variety of programming (“*The Game Show Show and Stuff*,” live music, comedy, improv, roasts) in the newly-renovated Hugen Hall Cabaret space within the theatre, following each Friday and Saturday night mainstage performance at 11 p.m. Admission for Late Night is free with paid mainstage ticket (or \$5 for just the Late Night), and there is a cash bar available. Visit the Web site at www.strawdog.org for performance schedule.

Strawdog will open their 21st anniversary season with Karel Čapek’s classic “**R.U.R. (Rossum’s Universal Robots)**.” Originally debuted in 1921, Czech playwright Čapek dramatizes the rise of robots over the human race. Strawdog welcomes back company member Shade Murray, director of Strawdog’s “*Detective Story*” (Jeff Award-winning Best Production, Director and Ensemble in 2003) and “*Marathon ’33*” (Best Ensemble 2006). Murray was recently assistant director for Steppenwolf’s smash production “*August: Osage County*.” He also won a 2006 Jeff Award for “*The Chosen*” at Writer’s Theatre.

The second production of Strawdog’s 2008-2009 season is Curt Columbus’ translation of Anton Chekhov’s “**The Cherry Orchard**,” directed by Strawdog company member Kimberly Senior. This version of Chekhov’s classic story follows Madame Lovey Ranevskaya’s sentimental return to her ancestral orchard estate, desperate to save it from repossession. Senior works with Strawdog and Columbus again, after directing the critically-acclaimed “*Three Sisters*” (2005), which the Chicago Tribune called “*intensely appealing ... smoldering sexual energy ... marvel anew at how this city — and, it seems, only this city — can come up with shows like this.*”

The season will close with British playwright Peter Barnes’ “**Red Noses**,” directed by House Theatre’s Matthew Hawkins in his Strawdog directing debut. It’s the 1300s, and a quarter of Europe is dead from the plague, pestilence is everywhere, and humanity is convinced this is Armageddon. A priest receives a command from God to gather a group of believers, teach them and send them off into the world to be clowns among men. A frequent Strawdog collaborator, Hawkins’ directing credits include House’s “*Hatfield and McCoy*,” and “*On My Parent’s One Hundredth Wedding Anniversary*” for The Side Project.

Strawdog Theatre Company is supported in part by the **Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Alphawood Foundation, the Illinois Arts Council (a state agency), Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation**, and the annual support of businesses and individuals. Strawdog has received numerous Non-Equity Jeff Awards, including awards for “*Hurlyburly*” (1999) - Outstanding Ensemble, Outstanding Actor Michael Dobbs, Outstanding Supporting Actress Stephanie Manglaras, Outstanding Supporting Actor Bart Petty; “*Detective Story*” (2003) - Outstanding Production, Outstanding Director Shade Murray, Outstanding Ensemble, Outstanding Set Design Ray Vlcek; “*Three Sisters*” (2005) - Outstanding Set Design Brian Sidney Bembridge; and “*Marathon 33*” (2007) - Outstanding Ensemble.

The current Strawdog ensemble includes **Jennifer Avery, Hank Boland, Abigail Boucher, Don Cardiff, Erin Carlson, Michael Dailey, Anita Deely, John Ferrick, Mikhail Fiksel, Aly Renne Greaves, Carmine Grisolia, Christopher Hainsworth, Kyle Hamman, Erik Hellman, Tom Hickey, Shannon Hoag, Anderson Lawfer, Sean Mallary, Kat McDonnell, Gregor Mortis, Stacy Parker Hirsch, Michaela Petro, John Henry Roberts, Jamie Vann and James Anthony Zoccoli**. Strawdog Artistic Director is **Nic Dimond** and Managing Director is **Alex J. Goodman**. Notable Strawdog alums include **Elizabeth Auman** (TimeLine), **Alexandra Billings** (actress, cabaret star), **Nancy Bishop** (casting director), **Chrisanne Blankenship** (director), **Becca Cardo** (voice-over artist), **Kristin Caskey** (Fox Theatricals), **Scott Cummins** (actor, director), and **James Denton** (“*Desperate Housewives*”). Strawdog supports Mookie Jam, a Chicago-based, not-for-profit organization created to assist artists living with multiple sclerosis - www.mookiejam.org

Strawdog Theatre Company was formed in 1988 by a group of actors who had performed together in a production of Euripides’s “*Helen*” at a (now defunct) theatre on the west side. The group took their name from Sam Peckinpah’s movie “*Straw Dogs*” (*Theatresaurus Rex* was, thankfully, the runner-up), and they produced their first show, Len Jenkin’s “*Five of Us*” at a (now defunct) space in Bucktown. At the time, the Chicago Reader said “Strawdog Theatre Company’s inaugural production brings ... truth home with a vengeance,” and Skyline Chicago added “The Strawdog troupe shows us what an ensemble can do.” Twenty-one years later, Strawdog Theatre Company has survived the ups and downs of Chicago theatre, and is still dedicated to bringing the truth to audiences through the committed work of an award-winning ensemble of actors and designers.

Strawdog Theatre Company is committed to ensemble acting and an immersive design approach, offering Chicago the premiere storefront theatre experience. We develop new work, reimagine classic plays, explore new fusions of music and theatre, ask provocative questions and deliver our audience the unexpected. We provide a home for our celebrated ensemble to work and play with the most sought after artists in Chicago theatre along with the best new talents in the city. Founded in 1988, the Strawdog ensemble has consistently produced shows built on authentic human connections, and our comfortable 70-seat home in Lakeview is perfect for offering our audience a quintessential Chicago storefront theatre experience. “*The whole wide world in a little black box.*” Strawdog is a proud member of the NorthHalsted Area Merchant Association, The Chicago Storefront Theatre District and the League of Chicago Theatres.

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