

Press Release  
For immediate release  
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VENUE: 450 Post Street, @ Powell  
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## Happy Holidays San Francisco! **BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE**

By John Van Druten  
Directed by Bill English

December 4, 2012 to January 19, 2013  
**PRESS OPENING: December 8<sup>th</sup>, 8pm**

San Francisco, CA (October 2012) –**San Francisco Playhouse** Bill English, Artistic Director and Susi Damilano, Producing Director usher in the holiday spirit for the company's **Tenth Season**, now in their **new venue at 450 Post Street** with the romantic comedy, ***Bell, Book and Candle***. **Opening December 8th, Bill English** will direct.

Bewitched, bothered and bewildered. That's what happens when you fall in love with a witch. But is it worth it? Our good witch (well, fairly good) Gillian risks everything - if she falls for him she could lose her magical powers forever—that's the tale that unfolds in this romantic, Christmas Eve comedy from the 50's.

Set in Greenwich Village this tender amusing love story features witch Gillian Holroyd (Lauren English), a free spirit with a penchant for going barefoot who has been unlucky in love and restless in life. From afar, she admires her neighbor, publisher Shep Henderson, who one day stumbles into her gallery to use the telephone. When she learns he is about to marry an old college enemy of hers, she impulsively takes revenge by casting a love spell on him that backfires when she ends up falling for him herself. She must eventually make a stark choice—give up her supernatural powers or lose her chance at love.

The play opened on Broadway in 1950 and played for 233 performances, closing in 1951. It starred Lili Palmer and Rex Harrison as the bewitcher and the bewitched. The movie version, which starred Kim Novak, James Stewart, Ernie Kovacs, Jack Lemmon and Elsa Lanchester opened in 1958 and went on to win, among other awards, a Golden Globe in 1959. The popular TV Show "Bewitched," was inspired by the play.

**Lauren English\***, daughter of director, Bill English, will star in the role made famous by Kim Novak in the film. Lauren is the director of Rising Star Education at San Francisco Playhouse and most recently

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*Continued:*

directed the Rising Stars in their world premiere of *Young Love* created from the pilot program of the Teen Play Project. She is a founding member at The San Francisco Playhouse where favorite roles include Becky in *Becky Shaw*, Kelly in *Reborn*, Sally in *Cabaret*, Emily in *Our Town* and Lisa in *The Glory of Living*. Recently she was seen at The Magic Theatre in *Why We Have a Body*. Lauren's New York Theater credits include: Celia in TACT's Off Broadway Production of *The Cocktail Party*, Ophelia in *Hamlet* at The NJ Shakespeare, and Sally in *The Idealist*, The New York Times Theatre. Here in the Bay Area, she has worked at The California Shakespeare Festival, Word For Word, Marin Shakespeare, She is a two-time BACC award winner and three-time Dean Goodman Award Recipient. Lauren holds a MFA From NYU's Graduate Acting Program.

**The full cast includes: Zehra Berkman, William Connell\*, Scott Cox, Lauren English\* and Louis Parnell\*.**

**Bill English** will design the set, **Kurt Landisman** lights, **Brendan Aanes** sound, and **Abra Berman** costumes and **Damon Kelley** will design properties.

**John Van Druten** (Playwright) was primarily known as a witty, urbane observer of modern society. He was born in London in 1901 and originally planned a career in law, which he practiced and taught for a time, before pursuing a career as a writer. He first came to prominence in London in 1925 with *Young Woodley* and enjoyed tremendous success in the 1930s with star-studded West End productions of his work including *Diversion* (1928), *After All* (1929), *London Wall* (1931), *There's Always Juliet* (1931), *Somebody Knows* (1932), *Behold, We Live* (1932), *The Distaff Side* (1933) and *Flowers of the Forest* (1934). Van Druten later emigrated to America where he became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1944. His best-received American works were *The Voice of the Turtle* (1943), which ran for three seasons in New York and was later filmed starring Ronald Reagan; *I Remember Mama* (1944), later filmed with Irene Dunne and Barbara Bel Geddes; *Bell, Book and Candle* (1950), later filmed with Kim Novak and James Stewart; and *I Am a Camera* (1951) which together with Christopher Isherwood's short stories "Goodbye to Berlin" formed the basis of Joe Masteroff's book for the Kander and Ebb musical *Cabaret* in 1966. In addition to playwriting, Van Druten directed the last nine productions of his own plays, and in 1951, he directed the first production of *The King and I*, which ran for 1,246 performances on Broadway. He published two novels: a version of *Young Woodley* (1928) and *The Vicarious Years* (1955), along with two autobiographies: *The Way to the Present* (1938) and *The Widening Circle: Personal Search* (1957). Van Druten died in Indio, California, in 1957.

**Bill English** (Director, Artistic Director) has spent his life producing works of art. Bill is an accomplished singer, pianist and composer. He has acted in films, television and professional theater and is a member of all the performing unions. Bill's work in the theater has been recognized with

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numerous awards for acting, directing, sound and set design. Under Bill's leadership The San Francisco Playhouse, has earned multiple nominations and awards

Founded by **Bill English and Susi Damilano** in 2003, **The San Francisco Playhouse** is the fastest growing and most awarded theater Company in San Francisco. It has been hailed as a "small delicacy" by SF Weekly, "eclectic" by the San Francisco Bay Guardian, and "local theater's best kept secret" by San Francisco Magazine. Located in Union Square, The San Francisco Playhouse offers intimate, professional theater with top notch actors and world class design. It has received multiple awards for overall productions, acting, and design including the SF Weekly Best Theatre Award, Bay Guardian's Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award. The San Francisco Chronicle raved, "**One of the most meteoric rises [of the decade] has been that of San Francisco Playhouse, Bill English and Susi Damilano's 7-year-old-start-up that has been attracting more top-notch actors, directors, and scripts every year.**" The San Francisco Playhouse has become the intimate theatre alternative to the traditional Union Square theatre fare, providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theater lovers converge to create works that celebrate the human spirit.

### FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

**WHAT:** Bewitched, bothered and bewildered. That's what happens when you fall in love with a witch. But is it worth it? Our good witch (well, fairly good) Gillian risks everything - if she falls for him she could lose her magical powers forever—that's the tale that unfolds in this romantic, Christmas Eve comedy from the 50's.

**SHOWS:** **Previews** 12/4 to 12/7 at 8pm, **Opens** 12/8 8pm through January 19th.  
Tues/Wed/Thurs. 7 p.m., Friday & Saturday 8 p.m., plus Saturdays 3 p.m.  
**No show: 12/25 or 1/1. Added** Sunday Matinees: 2pm 12/30, 1/6 & 1/13  
**Rising Star Talk Backs: 1/9, 1/10, 1/13, 1/15, 1/16, 1/17**

**WHERE:** **The San Francisco Playhouse**  
450 Post Street (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Kensington Park Hotel, b/n Powell & Mason)

**TICKETS:** For tickets (\$30-\$70) or more information, the public may contact The San Francisco Playhouse box office at **415-677-9596**, or [www.sfplayhouse.org](http://www.sfplayhouse.org).