



Press Release
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588 Sutter Street #318
San Francisco, CA 94102
415.677.9596 fax 415.677.9597
www.sfplayhouse.org
Publicist: Anne Abrams
goanne@comcast.net

2013 Sandbox Series presents
**Debut Production for the
National New Play Network "Rolling World Premiere"**

GROUND

By George Brant

Directed by Susannah Martin

August 15th to September 7th, **Opens Saturday, August 17th at 8pm.**
Thurs, Fri, Sat 8pm

San Francisco, CA (May 2013) – The **San Francisco Playhouse** (Bill English, Artistic Director; Susi Damilano, Producing Director) concludes its fourth season of the Sandbox Series of new plays in alliance with the **National New Play Network** (NNPN) to present the "Rolling World Premiere" of ***Grounded*** by **George Brant**. The one-woman play will be directed by **Susannah Martin** and feature **Lauren English***. **The San Francisco Playhouse is proud to host the first production for this year's "Rolling World Premiere."**

Seamlessly blending the personal and the political, ***Grounded*** tells the story of a hot-rod F16 fighter pilot whose unexpected pregnancy ends her career in the sky. Repurposed to flying remote-controlled drones in Afghanistan from an air-conditioned trailer near Vegas, the Pilot struggles through surreal twelve-hour shifts far from the battlefield, hunting terrorists by day and being a wife and mother by night. A tour de force play for one actress ***Grounded*** flies from the heights of lyricism to the shallows of workaday existence, targeting our assumptions about war, family, through the power of storytelling.

Winner of the 2012 Smith Prize for a new play on American political themes, *Grounded* will begin its "Rolling World Premiere" at the San Francisco Playhouse, followed by performances at Borderlands Theater and Unicorn Theatre. These productions are made possible by **the NNPN's Continued Life of New Plays Fund in the 2013/14 season.**

George Brant's plays include *Elephant's Graveyard*, *The Mourners' Bench*, *Any Other Name*, *Grizzly Mama*, *Salvage*, *Three Voyages of the Lobotomobile*, *Defiant*, *Good on Paper* and *Dark Room*. His work has been produced and developed by such companies as Trinity Repertory Company, the Kennedy Center, Cleveland Play House, Asolo Rep, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, The Playwrights' Center, WordBRIDGE Playwright's Lab, the Hangar Theatre, Equity Library Theatre, Premiere Stages, Florida Studio Theatre, Trustus Theatre, Elemental Theatre Collective, Balagan Theatre, the Drama

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League, the Disney Channel, Factory Theatre, Debutantes and Vagabonds, StreetSigns Theatre Company, and zeppo theater company, among others. His scripts have been awarded the David Mark Cohen National Playwriting Award from the Kennedy Center, the Keene Prize for Literature, and an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award for 2012. He has received writing fellowships from the James A. Michener Center for Writers, the MacDowell Colony, the Djerassi Resident Artists Program and the Blue Mountain Center as well as commissions from Dobama Theatre and Theatre 4. George received his MFA in Writing from the University of Texas at Austin and is a member of the Dramatists Guild. His scripts are published by Samuel French and Smith & Kraus.

Susannah Martin (Director) An award-winning director, theatre maker, and theatre educator, Susannah has directed for Shotgun Players (where she is also a company member), A.C.T., Aurora Theatre Company, Boxcar Theatre, Mugwumpin, Playwright's Foundation, Porchlight Theatre Company, San Francisco Playhouse, Sonoma County Rep, TheatreFIRST, TheatreWorks, and Town Hall Theatre Company, among others. She has taught for the California Shakespeare Theater for the past eleven years and directed several Shakespeare productions for their 5-week summer conservatory. Susannah has also taught for St. Mary's College, UC Davis, Los Medanos College, Marin Theatre Company, and a variety of high schools throughout San Francisco and the East Bay. Susannah received her BFA from NYU and her MFA from UC Davis.

Lauren English* (Actor) is a founding member of the San Francisco Playhouse where she acts, directs, teaches and serves as Casting Director. Her favorite Playhouse roles include: Gillian in *Bell, Book & Candle*, Becky in *Becky Shaw*, Kelly in *Reborn*, Sally in *Cabaret*, Emily in *Our Town* and Lisa in *The Glory of Living*. New York Theater: Celia in TACT's Off Broadway Production of *The Cocktail Party*, Ophelia in *Hamlet* at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, and Sally in *The Idealist* at The New York Times Theatre. She has also worked at the Public Theater, Ensemble Studio Theater, Lark Theatre and Playwrights Realm among others. Locally, she has worked at the California Shakespeare Theater, Word for Word, Marin Shakespeare Company, and Magic Theatre and is a PlayGround company member. She is a two-time BATCC award winner and three-time Dean Goodman award recipient. She holds an MFA from NYU's Tisch Graduate Acting Program.

The National New Play Network (NNPN) is the country's alliance of non-profit professional theaters that champions the development, production, and continued life of new plays. Since its founding in 1998, NNPN has commissioned almost two dozen playwrights, provided nineteen MFA graduates with paid residencies, and supported nearly 150 productions nationwide through its innovative Continued Life of New Plays Fund, which creates "Rolling World Premieres" of new plays. Hundreds of artists have gained employment through these efforts in the dozens of regions of the country where NNPN member theaters are located. NNPN receives substantial support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the

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Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, the Shubert Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Network is comprised of a relatively small group of Core Members, who pioneer and implement collaborative new play strategies, and a growing group of Associate Members, who disseminate the Network's programs and strategies nationwide. **The Continued Life of New Plays Fund NNPN's flagship program supports three or more theaters, which choose to mount the same new play within a twelve-month period. The result is a "Rolling World Premiere," through which the playwright develops a new work with multiple creative teams, for multiple communities of patrons, ensuring the resulting play is of the highest possible quality. And with a minimum of three productions in a single year, the play attains the momentum it needs to join the repertoire of frequently produced new American works. NNPN provides grants of \$7,000 to the first three participating theaters in each "Rolling World Premiere;" to date, NNPN has championed the continued life of 35 new plays in over 100 productions, with over a quarter-million dollars in grants.**

The mission of the **San Francisco Playhouse *Sandbox Series*** is to establish a creative environment for new and established playwrights to take their works to the next level from the page. In keeping with San Francisco Playhouse's overall vision, *the Sandbox Series* is the component which promotes new works utilizing top-notch directors and actors. With limited design elements and nominal advertising, the costs and risk of each production is minimal. With this reduced risk, the San Francisco Playhouse strives to bridge the gap between "readings" and "main stage" productions providing increased exposure to the new voices in American Theater.

Founded by Bill English and Susi Damilano in 2003, **San Francisco Playhouse** has been described in the New York Times as "a company that stages some of the most consistently high-quality work around." Located right in the heart of the Union Square Theater District, **San Francisco Playhouse** is the city's Off-Broadway company, an intimate alternative to the larger more traditional Union Square theater fare. The **San Francisco Playhouse** provides audiences the opportunity to experience professional theater with top-notch actors and world-class design in a setting where they are close to the action. The company has received multiple awards for overall productions, acting, and design including the SF Weekly Best Theatre Award and the Bay Guardian's Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award. Presenting a diverse range of plays and musicals, The **San Francisco Playhouse** produces new works as well as re-imagining classics, "making the edgy accessible and the traditional edgy." As the company marks its 10th anniversary in a new venue, The San Francisco Chronicle recently raved: "On the verge of opening its 10th season, the company that lived a hand-to-mouth existence for its first few years has become the little playhouse that could. It quickly established a reputation for attracting some of the Bay Area's best acting and directing talent, as well as for its exciting play choices. And with its bold *Sandbox Series*, it's become a player in developing new works as well." The **San Francisco Playhouse** is

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committed to 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: San Francisco Playhouse & **National New Play Network** *present the “Rolling World Premiere” of **Grounded*** by George Brandt.

Seamlessly blending the personal and the political, *Grounded* tells the story of a hot-rod F16 fighter pilot whose unexpected pregnancy ends her career in the sky. Repurposed to flying remote-controlled drones in Afghanistan from an air-conditioned trailer near Vegas, the Pilot struggles through surreal twelve-hour shifts far from the battlefield, hunting terrorists by day and being a wife and mother by night. A tour de force play for one actress, *Grounded* flies from the heights of lyricism to the shallows of workaday existence, targeting our assumptions about war, family, through the power of storytelling.

SHOWS: **Previews** 8/15-8/16 at 8pm, **Opens** August 17 at 8pm through September 7. Thursday, Friday & Saturday 8pm.

WHERE: A.C.T. Costume Shop on 1119 Market Street (at Seventh Street) S.F. CA 94102

TICKETS: For tickets (\$20) or more information, the public may contact The San Francisco Playhouse box office at 415-677-9596, or www.sfplayhouse.org.