

## PRESS RELEASE

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### SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION

By John Guare

Directed by Bill English

**Opens (Press Night) September 22 through November 17, 2007**

The POWER of CONNECTIONS

**San Francisco, CA** (August, 2007) – **SF Playhouse** (Bill English, Artistic Director; Susi Damilano, Producing Director) are pleased to announce casting for the opening show of its fifth season, *Six Degrees of Separation* by **John Guare**. The cast includes **Susi Damilano, Chad Deverman, Daveed Diggs\*, Daniel Krueger, Christopher Maikish, Julia McNeal\*, John Mercer, Robert Parsons\*, Jennifer Siebel and Ken Sonkin\***. (\*appear courtesy of Actors Equity). **Bill English** will direct the show. **Designers** include: **Betsy Ayala (properties), Bill English (set), Bree Hylkema (costumes), Chris Houston (sound), Selena Young (lights)**.

*Six Degrees of Separation* launched the term “six degrees of separation” into everyday lexicon when it first opened off-Broadway in 1990 and was adapted to the screen in 1993. Its original ten-week run was extended almost immediately. Audiences lined up in hopes of ticket cancellations to see this play that explores late twentieth-century society as deftly as it does universal human relationships.

Called a tragicomedy by some critics, *Six Degrees of Separation* is a witty, biting, yet ultimately sincere commentary on what drives people: the desire for money, fame, social standing, comfort, and, for the lucky, a desire for meaningful human connection.

**Guare** based the premise of his play on an actual incident—a young African-American man gained access to the homes of upper-class New Yorkers by pretending to be the son of actor Sidney Poitier—but the creation of the play is an imaginative tour de force. Guare uses the props of the late twentieth century, such as social issues and art, to create a comprehensive picture of a fragmented society, one in which those simple six degrees that bind people together are overlooked, blatantly ignored, and, very occasionally, celebrated.

## SF PLAYHOUSE

### Six Degrees of Separation by John Guare

*Continued:*

For tickets (\$65 **Opening Night September 22, 2007**, \$38 regular, and \$20 preview performances) or more information, the public may contact the SF Playhouse box office at **415-677-9596**, or visit **www.sfplayhouse.org**, **TicketWeb.com**, or the **TIX** box office on Union Square.

**John Guare** was born in New York, NY on February 5, 1938. He wrote his first play at the age of eleven and very early became dissatisfied with traditional kitchen-sink dramas in which everything was "real" right down to the kitchen-sink. He yearned for a theatre that would proclaim inner truth rather than surface reality. "The theater," Guare argued, "is a place of dreams where you lay out the unconscious and make it visible."

After studying at Yale University, Guare set out to develop his own unique style of theatrical comedy, and he was soon rewarded with an Obie Award for his one-act play, *Muzeeka* (1968), but it was not until 1970 that he burst onto the national scene with *House of Blue Leaves*, a darkly comic attack on American values that disrupted the conventions of realistic theatre by including the kitchen sink, but cramming it with "lots of songs and talking to the audience." In 1971 he wrote the libretto for *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, a pop-rock musical adaptation of Shakespeare's play which he created with composer Galt Macdermot (*Hair*) and Mel Shapiro. The musical was designed to play in the back of a truck from which it would tour the parks of New York, but the show was so successful that it soon moved to Broadway where it went on to win the Tony Award for "Best Musical."

Perhaps Guare himself best describes his personal struggle with realistic drama when he asks, "Does the playwright elect to keep that kitchen sink to soothe the audience? Does the playwright dismantle the kitchen sink and take the audience into dangerous terrain? How the playwright resolves this tension between surface reality and inner reality, how the playwright restores the theater to its true nature as a place of poetry, song, joy, a place of darkness where the bright truth is told, that war against the kitchen sink is ultimately the history of our theater."

His best known works include *House of Blue Leaves* (which won both an Obie and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for the Best American Play of 1970-71 and received four Tony Awards during its 1986 revival), *Four Baboons Adoring the Sun* (which was produced at the Lincoln Center Theater in 1992 and was nominated for four Tony Awards), and *Six Degrees*

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*Continued:*

*of Separation* (which received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1990 and an Olivier Best Play Award in 1993.) Other works by Guare include *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1971), *Rich and Famous* (1974), *The Landscape of the Body* (1977), and *Bosoms and Neglect* (1979).

**Bill English** (Director, Artistic Director and Designer) spent his life producing works of art. Bill is an accomplished singer, pianist and composer (he's written many songs, a musical, and a score for a film). He has acted in films, television and professional theatre and is a member of all the performing unions. Bill's work in the theatre has been recognized with numerous awards for acting, directing, sound and set design. In 2005, he earned a Bay Area Theatre Critic Circle Awards (BATCC) award for his directing work on *The Crucible* and in 2004, under Bill's leadership, SF Playhouse productions earned a record of twenty nominations from BATCC (Five were won) and received three Dean Goodman Choice Awards.

Founded by **Bill English and Susi Damilano** in 2003, **SF Playhouse** is Union Square's intimate, professional theatre. Using professional actors and world class design, the SF Playhouse, which won the Bay Guardian's 2006 Best Off Broadway Theatre Award and about which the *San Francisco Chronicle* raved, "San Francisco's newest theatre isn't just another tiny stage carved out of a storefront . . . its an enticing introduction to a new company," has become an intimate theatre alternative to the traditional Union Square theatre fare, garnering 20 Bay Area Theatre Critic nominations in its first year. Providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theatre lovers converge, SF Playhouse, hailed as a "small delicacy" by *SF Weekly* and "eclectic" by the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, strives to create works that celebrate the human spirit.

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*Continued:*

#### FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

**WHAT:** Opening the fifth “Power of Connections” season will be *Six Degrees of Separation* by John Guare. Bill English will direct.

The originator of the phrase “Six Degrees of Separation” is a play **inspired** by an actual incident—a young African-American man gained access to the homes of upper class New Yorkers by pretending to be the son of actor Sidney Poitier. *Six Degrees of Separation* is a witty, biting, yet ultimately sincere commentary on what drives people: the desire for money, fame, social standing, comfort, and, for the lucky, a desire for meaningful human connection.

**DATES:** Previews: **September 19, 20 and 21**  
Open: **September 22, 2007**  
Close: **November 17, 2007**

**SHOWS:** Wednesday through Saturday at 8 p.m., plus Saturdays 3p.m. (except June 30<sup>th</sup>, when there will only be an 8pm performance)

**WHERE:** **The SF Playhouse**  
533 Sutter Street (one block off Union Square, b/n Powell & Mason)  
San Francisco, CA

**TICKETS:** For tickets (\$65 opening night, \$38 regular, \$20 previews) or more information, the public may contact the SF Playhouse box office at **415-677-9596**, **TicketWeb.com**, or **TIX bay area**.