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# San Francisco Playhouse and Yiddish Theatre Ensemble announce casting for *Indecent*

By Paula Vogel

Directed by Susi Damilano

Music Direction by Dmitri Gaskin

Choreography by Nicole Helfer

Co-Produced by San Francisco Playhouse and Yiddish Theatre Ensemble

On stage September 22 – November 5, 2022  
Press Opening Wednesday, September 28 at 7:00 P.M.

SAN FRANCISCO (August 26, 2022) – San Francisco Playhouse (Artistic Director **Bill English**; Producing Director **Susi Damilano**) announced casting for *Indecent* by **Paula Vogel**, the first production in the Playhouse's 20th Anniversary Season. The play will run on the San Francisco Playhouse Mainstage from September 22 through November 5, 2022. **Susi Damilano** will direct, with music direction by **Dmitri Gaskin** and choreography by **Nicole Helfer**. The production marks the Bay Area Premiere of the critically acclaimed work, which was nominated for three Tony Awards including Best Play in 2017.

*Indecent* is based on the real-life events surrounding the scandalous Broadway debut of Sholem Asch's 'The God of Vengeance,' considered to be a seminal work of Yiddish theatre by some, and a piece of traitorous libel by others. With a klezmer-infused score and filled with joyous songs and dances, this play charts the history of that incendiary work, the artists who risked their careers and lives to perform it, and the evolving identity of the culturally rich community that inspired its creation.

"There are few voices in American theatre like Paula Vogel's," said Bill English, San Francisco Playhouse's Artistic Director. "Her *Indecent* is not only a true story about a time when art, freedom, and truth were on trial, but also an exuberant love letter to the theatre. We are honored to be presenting this play's Bay Area premiere along with our great friends at Yiddish Theatre Ensemble."

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The cast features Rivka Borek\*, Rachel Botchan\*, Billy Cohen\*, Dean Linnard\*, Victor Talmadge\*, Malka Wallick\*, and Ted Zoldan.

### **About the Playwright**

**Paula Vogel** is a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright whose plays include *Indecent* (Tony Award for Best Play), *How I Learned to Drive* (Broadway production set for spring 2020; Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Lortel Prize, OBIE Award, Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Circle and New York Drama Critics Awards for Best Play), *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, *The Mineola Twins*, *The Baltimore Waltz*, *Hot 'N' Throbbing*, *Desdemona*, *And Baby Makes Seven*, *The Oldest Profession* and *A Civil War Christmas*. Her plays have been produced by Second Stage, New York Theatre Workshop, the Vineyard Theatre, Roundabout, and Circle Repertory Company, Center Stage, Intiman, Trinity Repertory, Woolly Mammoth, Huntington Theatre, Magic Theatre, The Goodman Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theatre Berkeley Repertory, and Alley Theatres to name a few. Harrogate Theatre and the Donmar Theatre have produced her work in England. Internationally, her plays have been produced in English in Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand and in translation in Italy, Germany, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, Romania, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland Slovenia, Canada, Portugal, France, Greece, Japanese, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Brazil and many other countries. John Simon once remarked that Paula Vogel had more awards than a "black sofa collects lint." Honors include induction in the American Theatre Hall of Fame, the Dramatists Guild Lifetime Achievement Award, the Lily Award, the Thornton Wilder Prize, the Obie Award for Lifetime Achievement, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the William Inge Award, the Elliott Norton Award, a Susan Smith Blackburn Award, the PEN/Laura Pels Award, a TCG Residency Award, a Guggenheim, a Pew Charitable Trust Award, and fellowships and residencies at Sundance Theatre Lab, Hedgebrook, The Rockefeller Center's Bellagio Center, Yaddo, MacDowell Colony, and the Bunting. She is particularly proud of her Thirtini Award from 13P, and honored by three Awards in her name: the Paula Vogel Award for playwrights given by The Vineyard Theatre, the Paula Vogel Award from the American College Theatre Festival, and the Paula Vogel mentorship program, curated by Quiara Hudes and Young Playwrights of Philadelphia. Paula was playwright in residence at The Signature Theatre (2004-05 season), and Theatre Communications Group publishes six volumes of her work. Paula continues her playwriting

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intensives with community organizations, students, theater companies, subscribers and writers across the globe. She is the 2019 inaugural UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television Hearst Theater Lab Initiative Distinguished Playwright-in-Residence and has recently taught at Sewanee, Shanghai Theatre Academy and Nanjing University, University of Texas at Austin, and the Playwrights Center in Minneapolis. From 1984 to 2008, Paula Vogel founded and ran the playwriting program at Brown University; during that time she started a theatre workshop for women in Maximum Security at the Adults Correction Institute in Cranston, Rhode Island. It continues to this day, sponsored by the Pembroke Center for Women at Brown University. From 2008-2012, she was the O'Neill Chair at Yale School of Drama.

### **About San Francisco Playhouse**

Founded by Bill English and Susi Damilano in 2003, **San Francisco Playhouse** has been described by the New York Times as "a company that stages some of the most consistently high-quality work around" and deemed "ever adventurous" by the Bay Area News Group. Located in the heart of the Union Square Theater District, **San Francisco Playhouse** is the city's premier Off-Broadway company, an intimate alternative to the larger more traditional Union Square theater fare. 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, as well as three consecutive Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for Best Entire Production in the Bay Area (2016-2018). KQED/NPR recently described the company: "San Francisco Playhouse is one of the few theaters in the Bay Area that has a mission that actually shows up on stage. Artistic director Bill English's commitment to empathy as a guiding philosophical and aesthetic force is admirable and by living that mission, fascinating things happen onstage." **San Francisco Playhouse** is committed to providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theater lovers converge to create and experience dramatic works that celebrate the human spirit.

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#### **About Yiddish Theatre Ensemble**

Yiddish Theatre Ensemble (YTE), based in Berkeley, California was founded by co-artistic directors Laura Sheppard and Bruce Bierman. YTE is dedicated to producing the rich, rarely performed Yiddish theatre repertory of dramas, musicals and comedies from the past 150 years. YTE also develops new and original works by living artists through performances, readings, lectures, and workshops. YTE strives to bring a contemporary approach and relevance to make the joy of Yiddish theater accessible to all audiences. Bi-lingual productions are in English and Yiddish with subtitles. Past productions include: the acclaimed 2021 online video production of *God of Vengeance* which received the 2020-2021 San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award, the Yiddish musical *Di Megileh of Itzik Manger* (2014, 2015) a feature of the Jewish Music Festival, and *Cabaret by the Bay* (2017) co-produced with KlezCalifornia. Yiddish Theatre Ensemble is thrilled to co-produce *Indecent* with San Francisco Playhouse.

\*Actors appear courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the U.S.

#### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS**

##### **THE PLAY:**

***Indecent***

By **Paula Vogel**

Directed by **Susi Damilano**

Music Direction by **Dmitri Gaskin**

Choreography by **Nicole Helfer**

*Indecent* is based on the real-life events surrounding the scandalous Broadway debut of Sholem Asch's 'The God of Vengeance,' considered to be a seminal work of Yiddish theatre by some, and a piece of traitorous libel by others. With a klezmer-infused score and filled with joyous songs and dances, this play charts the history of that incendiary work, the artists who risked their careers and lives to perform it, and the evolving identity of the culturally rich community that inspired its creation.

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**THE CAST:** Rivka Borek\* as Halina, the Middle  
Rachel Botchan\* as Vera, the Elder  
Billy Cohen\* as Avram, the Ingénue  
Dean Linnard\* as Lemml, the Stage Manager  
Victor Talmadge\* as Otto, the Elder  
Malka Wallick\* as Chana, the Ingénue  
Ted Zoldan as Mendel, the Middle

**WHEN:** In-person performances: September 22 – November 5, 2022  
Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:00 P.M., Fridays at 8:00 P.M.,  
Saturdays at 3:00 and 8:00 P.M., Sundays at 2:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M.

**WHERE:** San Francisco Playhouse  
450 Post St., San Francisco CA 94102

**TICKETS:** Tickets (\$15 - \$100) are now available. For tickets or more information, the public may contact the San Francisco Playhouse box office at 415-677-9596, or online at <https://www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/2022-2023-season/indecent/>