

## JOE SPANO AND HARRY GROENER LEAD CAST OF BILL CAIN'S *EQUIVOCATION* AT THE GEFFEN

*Director David Esbjornson's Cast Also Features  
Patrick J. Adams, Troian Bellisario, Brian Henderson and Connor Trinneer*

*Opening Night - Wednesday November 18*

LOS ANGELES, October 20, 2009 — After playing some of theater's most famous roles, actor **Joe Spano** takes on the role of theater's most famous scribe: William Shakespeare. Spano, best known for his roles on television's *NCIS* and *Hill Street Blues*, portrays Shakespeare (fondly called 'Shag' after playwright Bill Cain's favorite contemporary spelling of the Bard's name: 'Shagspeare' or 'Shagespeare') in the Los Angeles premiere of *Equivocation*. Spano is joined by two-time Tony Award nominee **Harry Groener** as Richard, the second in command of Shag's winsome acting troupe, as well as **Patrick J. Adams**, **Brian Henderson** and **Connor Trinneer**, who comprise the rest of Shag's theater company – Sharpe, Armin and Nate, respectively. That said, as *Equivocation's* tale unwinds onstage, the actors ultimately play about two dozen roles ranging from conspirators and priests to Lady Macbeth and King Lear. The cast also features **Troian Bellisario** as Judith, Shakespeare's omnipresent daughter.

*Equivocation*, helmed by **David Esbjornson**, tells the story of how King James commissions Shakespeare to write the "true history" of England's infamous Gunpowder Plot. Yet, as Shag and his troupe begin researching the King's project, they find far more fiction than fact. With the weight of history on their shoulders, the actors struggle to dramatize the King's absurd account without losing their integrity – or their heads.

As playwright Bill Cain says in the introduction to his work:

*Equivocation* is based on an historical event.

It is, in fact, the founding event of modern England. The 5<sup>th</sup> of November is celebrated with national fireworks and is roughly equivalent to America's 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

The story has been told for over 400 years and the government's version of the story has become a national myth. The only thing we know with certainty about the event itself is that it could not possibly have occurred in the way the government claimed. What follows offers a plausible alternative.

With unmistakable contemporary parallels, *Equivocation* is a complex play that is both relevant and classic, thrilling and funny, realistic and theatrical.

*Equivocation* was a recipient of the 2008 Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award for its world premiere production, and in addition, was awarded a special grant from the Edgerton Foundation for two extra weeks of rehearsal for the Geffen Playhouse run. The play, which had its world premiere at the 2009 Oregon Shakespeare Festival, was originally developed at the Ojai Playwrights Conference and was part of the New Works Festival at TheatreWorks in Palo Alto, California.

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**EQUIVOCATION**

Written by Bill Cain

Directed by David Esbjornson

Previews: November 10 – November 17

Opening Night: Wednesday, November 18

Closing Night: Sunday, December 20

**Cast**

Patrick J. Adams	Sharpe
Troian Bellasario	Judith
Harry Groener	Richard
Brian Henderson	Armin
Joe Spano	Shag
Connor Trinneer	Nate

**Production Credits**

Director / Set Designer	David Esbjornson
Costume Designer	Frances Kenny
Lighting Designer	Scott Zielinski
Sound Designer	Jon Gottlieb

**Performance Schedule**

Monday	No performances
Tuesday – Friday	8:00pm
Saturday	3:00pm; 8:00pm
Sunday	2:00pm; 7:00pm

**Ticket Info**

Tickets (\$35 to \$75) are on sale now at the Geffen Playhouse box office, online at [GeffenPlayhouse.com](http://GeffenPlayhouse.com), via credit card phone order at (310) 208-5454, at all Ticketmaster outlets, or by calling Ticketmaster at (800) 745-3000. Student rush tickets are available one hour prior to curtain for \$15.

**PATRICK J. ADAMS** (*Sharpe*)

Canadian native Patrick Adams has lived and worked in Los Angeles since he came here to pursue his BFA in Acting at USC, where he was honored with several awards including the Jack Nicholson Award for performance in his senior year. Days after graduating Patrick moved into the rehearsal room at the Centre Theatre Group for the Mark Taper Forum's Ovation Award Winning production of Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* Other theatre credits include: Paul Grellong's *Manuscript* (Tall Blondes, Elephant Theatre), Eva Anderson's *The Epic of Gil* (Calamity Theatre), Jessica Goldberg's *Good Thing* and Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding* (USC School of Theatre). He is a yearly participant at the Ojai Playwright's Conference where he has had the honor of workshopping a number of Bill Cain's plays, including *Equivocation*. He also produced and directed a production Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* with the Blue House Theatre Company, which was awarded LA Weekly's Best Production of the Year award for 2007. Film credits include: *Old School*, Sally Potter's *RAGE*, *Weather Girl*, and *The Waterhole*. Television credits include recurring roles on ABC's *Flash Forward* and *Commander in Chief* as well as roles on *Lost*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Without a Trace*, *Ghost Whisperer*, *Cold Case*, *NCIS*, *Lie to Me* and *Raising the Bar*.

**TROIAN BELLISARIO** (*Judith*)

Theatre Credits include *Farragut North* (u/s Geffen Playhouse). *A Sam Shepard Double Feature: Fool for Love & True West* and an exclusive engagement of Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* both of which she performed with The Casitas Group; a fledgling theatre company of which she is also a founding member. Troian recently graduated from USC School of Theatre with her B.F.A in Acting. Film: *Consent* and *Peepworld*. Television Credits: *NCIS*, *JAG* and *Quantum Leap*.

**BILL CAIN** (Playwright)

Bill Cain's widely-produced play *Stand-Up Tragedy* earned six LA Critics Awards in its premiere at the Mark Taper Forum. *Stand Up* later garnered four Helen Hayes Awards at Arena Stage in Washington, DC before its 1990

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Broadway engagement, where it received the Joe A. Callaway Playwriting Award. He wrote the television adaptation of the play for TNT, under the title "Thicker Than Blood" (Writers' Guild nomination). He is the recipient of a George Foster Peabody Award for Outstanding Achievement in Television for the series "Nothing Sacred," which he co-created, wrote and produced for ABC. He wrote the critically acclaimed screen adaptation of *Nightjohn* for Hallmark/Touchstone, which was named best American film of the year by *The New Yorker* and given a special citation for excellence by the National Society of Film Critics. His work for television has won Writers Guild, Humanitas, Christopher and Alma awards, among others. He is the founder of the Boston Shakespeare Company, where he was Artistic Director for seven seasons.

**DAVID ESBJORNSON** (Director)

David is the former artistic director of Seattle Repertory where he directed premieres of Ariel Dorfman's *Purgatorio*, Kevin Kling's *How? How? Why? Why?* and the first major revival of Albee's *The Lady From Dubuque*. Other recent works include *Hamlet* for Theater For A New Audience; the premiere of Peter Parnell's *Trumpery*; *The Great Gatsby* at the Guthrie; the London Royal Haymarket production of *A Few Good Men* by Aaron Sorkin; *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Delacrote; Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*; Kathleen Tolan's *Memory House* at Playwrights Horizons; and the world premieres of *Tuesdays With Morrie* by Jeffrey Hatcher and Mitch Albom, *In the Blood* by Suzan-Lori Parks at The Public, *My Old Lady* by Israel Horowitz at the Promenade Theatre and Neil Simon's *Rose and Walsh* at the Geffen. Mr. Esbjornson worked with Arthur Miller on two premiere productions: *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* at The Public and on Broadway, and the world premiere of *Resurrection Blues* at the Guthrie Theater. He has also had a long-standing relationship with Edward Albee directing the Tony Award-winning play *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*; *The Play About the Baby* at the Century Theatre; and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

**HARRY GROENER** (Richard)

Broadway credits include: *Crazy For You* (Tony nomination), *Oklahoma!* (Theatre World Award, Tony and Drama Desk Award nominations), *Cats* (Tony Award nomination), *Harrigan and Hart* with Mark Hamill (Drama Desk Award nomination), *Oh Brother!*, *Is There Life After High School*, *Sleight Of Hand*, George in *Sunday In The Park With George*, *Imaginary Friends*, and, in 2006, Kind Arthur in *Spamalot*. Lincoln Center: *Twelve Dreams* by James Lapine. Off-Broadway: *Picasso At The Lapin Agile* by Steve Martin, and *If Love Were All* with Twiggy. Geffen Playhouse: *Equivocation*. South Coast Repertory: *Putting It Together*. Reprise Theatre Company: *The Fantasticks*. Over 60 TV credits include: The Mayor in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, Ralph in *Dear John*, and episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Voyager*, and *Enterprise*, *Medium*, *Bones*, *Las Vegas*, *CSI*, *Mad About You*, *Breaking Bad*, *The West Wing*. Film: *About Schmidt* with Jack Nicholson, *Road To Perdition* with Tom Hanks, *Amistad*, *Dance With Me* with Vanessa Williams, *Patch Adams* with Robin Williams, *Burbaker* with Robert Redford, *Manna From Heaven*, *Role Of A Lifetime* with Scott Bakula, and *The Day The World Ended*. He is an Associate Artist of the Globe Theatre in San Diego. He is also a proud member of The Antaeus Company in Los Angeles.

**BRIAN HENDERSON** (Armin)

Broadway: *The Little Dog Laughed* (Tony nomination. Best Play, dir. Scott Ellis) Off-Broadway: *Getting Home* (Second Stage), *Mistakes Madeline Made* (Naked Angels), *As You Like It* (Shakespeare in Central Park), *Election Day* (Second Stage), *In The Wings* (Promenade Theatre). Regional: *The Little Dog Laughed* (Kirk Douglas Theatre), *The Shape of Things* (Barrington Stage Co.), *The Winter's Tale* (Shakespeare On The Sound), *Benched* (Sacramento Theatre Co.). Film/TV: *Don't Look Up*, dir. Fruit Chan (2010), *Samantha*, dir. Lilian Greenfield-Saunders, *The Guiding Light*, CBS. Training: M.F.A. from NYU Graduate Acting Program, Clowning from Ronlin Foreman- Dell Arte' Intl School.

**JOE SPANO** (Shag)

Joe Spano is a founding member of three theater companies, including The Berkeley Repertory Theater. He has most recently made his theatrical home at the Rubicon Theater in Ventura, playing General Burgoyne in Shaw's *Devil's Disciple*, Greg in A. R. Gurney's *Sylvia*, Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, the title (and only) character in Doug Jacobs' *R. Buckminster Fuller: the History [and Mystery] of the Universe* (Ovation Award) and George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. An Emmy Award winner (for *Midnight Caller*.) Joe starred for 7 years as Lt. Henry Goldblume on the series *Hill Street Blues*. He also starred in the series *Mercy Point*, *Amazing Grace*, *Murder One* and *NYPD Blue*. He has starred in 20 films made for television and guest-starred on 38 television shows. For the last 6 years he has played FBI Agent Tobias Fornell on *NCIS*. He has appeared in 30 feature films, including *Hart's War*, *Primal Fear*, *Apollo 13*, *American Graffiti*, *Hollywoodland*, *Fracture* and, most recently, *Frost/Nixon*. A past director and current email coordinator of the Southern California chapter of Families with Children from China, he and Joan Zerrien are the parents of 14 year old Liana Clare Xiaohe Spano and 10 year old Meili Qing Spano.

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**CONNOR TRINNEER** (*Nate*)

Audiences may best remember Connor Trinneer as Trip on *Star Trek: Enterprise*; or Michael, on *StarGate: Atlantis*. Most recently and closer to earth, Connor has appeared in *24*, *NCIS*, *Lincoln Heights*, *Without a Trace* and many other guest spots on television. Theatrically he's been all over the map. His favorite roles include Bob in *Far East* at Lincoln Center, Septimus in *Arcadia* at the Huntington Theatre in Boston, and Laertes in *Hamlet* at Virginia Stage. Connor has been a company member with Circle X Theatre Company here in Los Angeles, performing in *Edward II* as Edward, Belville in *The Rover* and Philip Morrison in *The Louis Slotin Sonata*.

**ABOUT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE**

The Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and musicals, the Geffen Playhouse continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company is helmed by Producing Director and President of the Board Gilbert Cates, Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Ken Novice and Chairman of the Board Frank Mancuso. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen Playhouse welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains an extensive education and outreach program, designed to engage young people and the community at large in the arts. For more information, please visit [geffenplayhouse.com](http://geffenplayhouse.com).

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