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**CUTTING BALL THEATER OPENS 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON  
WITH IONESCO'S ABSURDIST MASTERPIECE  
"THE BALD SOPRANO"  
October 23 – November 22, 2009**

SAN FRANCISCO (August 30, 2009) – San Francisco's cutting-edge **Cutting Ball Theater** opens its 10<sup>th</sup> season with Eugène Ionesco's comic masterpiece **THE BALD SOPRANO**, in a **new translation by Cutting Ball Artistic Director Rob Melrose**. This hysterically funny play is the perfect follow up to last season's hit production of Ionesco's *Victims of Duty*, which garnered a Bay Area Critics Circle award for Best Production. Featuring **Paige Rogers, David Sinaiko, Caitlyn Louchard, Donell Hill, Derek Fischer, and Anjali Vashi** with direction by **Rob Melrose**, **THE BALD SOPRANO** plays **October 23 through November 22** (*Press opening: October 29*) at the Cutting Ball Theater in residence at Exit on Taylor (277 Taylor Street) in San Francisco. For tickets (\$15-30) and more information, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **800-838-3006**.

In **THE BALD SOPRANO**, Mr. and Mrs. Smith invite Mr. and Mrs. Martin over for a cheerful dinner. Plans for a sedate evening soon give way to hilarious chaos as polite conversation turns to confusion and the two couples engage in an escalating battle of linguistic acrobatics. Simultaneously comic and profound, **THE BALD SOPRANO**, about which *The New York Times* recently said, "The play has not aged. One might even suggest that we have caught up with [it]," is a play that breaks all the rules.

While trying to learn English, Ionesco noticed the absurdity of the dialogues between the husband and wife in the textbook he was studying - she would inform him that they live in London, that they have three children, that the ceiling is above them and the floor is below them, all things he already knew perfectly well. Ionesco took these strange seeds of dialogue and developed them into an entire play, or anti-play as he called it. While there was no traditional

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story or conflict, there was definitely something happening, as if language itself were a character; **THE BALD SOPRANO** premiered in Paris in 1950 and became Ionesco's first work for the theater.

"It's hard to imagine a better play to celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary than Eugène Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*," said Cutting Ball Artistic Director Rob Melrose. "It is a wonderful follow up to last season's *Victims of Duty* and is the earliest of the plays that critics group together as being part of 'the theater of the absurd.' In many ways, the past 10 years has been a walk through the history of the absurd. We've produced absurdist plays by Ionesco, Beckett, and Genet, and have followed their influence through productions of major American experimental playwrights such as Mac Wellman, Richard Foreman and, Suzan-Lori Parks. We have also helped to develop the next generation of playwrights touched by the absurdist spirit by staging plays by playwrights such as Marcus Gardley and Eugenie Chan. In staging *The Bald Soprano*, we also honor the EXIT Theatre's rich history of producing Ionesco works. After 10 years of being steeped in absurdist theater, Cutting Ball's challenge now is to create an Ionesco production that indeed catches up with his revolutionary text, and captures his delightful sense of humor - what a welcome challenge that is!"

The Cutting Ball Theater has assembled a gifted ensemble for **THE BALD SOPRANO**. Returning to the Cutting Ball stage is **Paige Rogers** (Mrs. Smith), Associate Artistic Director and co-founder of The Cutting Ball Theater. Rogers most recently appeared in the company's acclaimed production of Eugenie Chan's *Bone to Pick*, and was featured in productions of *My Head Was a Sledgehammer*, *As You Like It*, *The Vomit Talk of Ghosts*, *Macbeth*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. She has been seen locally with Berkeley Opera, Lamplighters, Sonoma County Repertory Theater, and on tour with California Shakespeare Theater. Additionally, Rogers has performed at The Kennedy Center, McCarter Theater, Trinity Repertory Company, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. At Cutting Ball, her directing credits include The Hidden Classics Reading Series, Suzan Lori-Parks' 365 Plays/365 Days, and Risk is This...The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival; she made her full-length directorial debut with last season's acclaimed production of *Mud*.

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**David Sinaiko** (Mr. Smith) has appeared in Cutting Ball's productions of *Victims of Duty*, *Endgame*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, *The Sandalwood Box*, *Ajax for Instance*, *Macbeth*, *365 Plays/365 Days*, *Woyzeck*, *Chain Reactions*, and as part of The Hidden Classics Reading Series and Risk is This...The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival. Other recent credits include Golden Thread's *Jihad Jones & the Kalashnikov Babes*, Crowded Fire's *Wreckage*, and SF Playhouse's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Additionally, Sinaiko has been seen at the Goodman Theatre, The Actor's Gang, and in the popular Bay Area one-man production of David Sedaris' *SantaLand Diaries*. He was a founding member of Chicago's New Crime Productions.

Making their Cutting Ball debuts in **THE BALD SOPRANO** are **Caitlyn Louchard** (Mrs. Martin) and **Donell Hill** (Mr. Martin). Louchard's Bay Area acting credits include *A View From the Bridge* with Actor's Theatre of San Francisco, *Measure for Measure* with Shady Shakespeare, and most recently *Tell It Slant* with the Pear Avenue Theatre/Bootstrap Foundation; as a teaching artist, she has worked with San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, TheatreWorks, and Peninsula Youth Theatre. Hill was last seen in Stanford Summer Theater's Electra Festival; he made his professional theater debut at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in Amy Freed's *You, Nero*. **Anjali Vashi** (The Maid) and **Derek Fischer** (The Fire Captain) round out the cast.

Artistic Director and co-founder of Cutting Ball Theater **Rob Melrose** has directed several productions for the company including *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Victims of Duty*, *Avant GardARAMA!*, *Endgame*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Macbeth*, *Hamletmachine*, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, *Mayakovsky: A Tragedy*, *Roberto Zucco*, *The Vomit Talk of Ghosts* (World Premiere), *The Sandalwood Box*, *Pickling*, *Ajax, for Instance*, *Helen of Troy* (World Premiere), and *Drowning Room* (World Premiere). Additionally, he has translated *No Exit*, *Woyzeck*, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, and *Ubu Roi*. Melrose's other directing credits include productions at the Guthrie Theater (*Happy Days*, *Pen*), California Shakespeare Theater (*Villains*, *Fools*, and *Lovers*), and Crowded Fire (*The Train Play*), among others. He has assistant directed productions at The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival (*Hamlet*, Oskar Eustis, director), Berkeley Repertory Theatre (*The Pillowman*, Les Waters, director), American Conservatory Theater (*Indian Ink*, Carey Perloff, director), Guthrie Theater (*Othello*, Joe

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Dowling, director), and Yale Repertory Theatre (*Twelfth Night*, Mark Rucker, director). He is currently a 2007 – 2009 recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors.

Romanian-born playwright **Eugene Ionesco** is considered the father of the Theatre of the Absurd. Rejecting the logical plot, character development, and thought of traditional drama, Ionesco created his own anarchic form of comedy to convey modern man’s existence in a universe ruled by chance. He is the author of more than 20 plays, including **THE BALD SOPRANO** (1950), *The Lesson* (1951), *The Chairs* (1952), *Victims of Duty* (1953), *Jack, or the Submission* (1954), *Rhinoceros* (1959), *Exit the King* (1962), *A Stroll in the Air* (1963), *Macbett* (1972), and *Journeys Among the Dead* (1980). Ionesco’s peers included Samuel Beckett and Arthur Adamov; his work in absurdism laid the foundation for contemporary playwrights including Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard.

Co-founded in 1999 by theater artists Rob Melrose and Paige Rogers, Cutting Ball Theater presents avant-garde works of the past, present, and future by re-envisioning classics, exploring seminal avant-garde texts, and developing new experimental plays. Cutting Ball Theater has partnered with Playwrights Foundation, Magic Theatre, and Z Space New Plays Initiative to commission new experimental works. The company has produced a number of World Premieres and West Coast Premieres, and re-imagined various classics. Recipient of the 2008 *San Francisco Bay Guardian* Goldie award for outstanding talent in the performing arts, Cutting Ball Theater earned the Best of SF award in 2006 from *SF Weekly*, and was selected by *San Francisco Magazine* as Best Classic Theater in 2007.

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**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:**

The **Cutting Ball Theater** opens its 10<sup>th</sup> season with Eugène Ionesco's comic masterpiece **THE BALD SOPRANO**, in a new translation by **Rob Melrose**. The Smiths are a couple from London who have invited another couple, the Martins, over for a visit. Mr. and Mrs. Smith mourn the loss of Bobby Watson, but can't quite decide which Bobby Watson they are mourning. Mr. and Mrs. Martin are pleased to have just met even though they have been married for many years and have a child together. This hysterically funny play, the perfect follow up to last season's hit production of Ionesco's *Victims of Duty*, which garnered a Bay Area Critics Circle award for Best Production, premiered in Paris in 1950 and was Ionesco's first work for the theater. Cutting Ball Artistic Director **Rob Melrose** helms **THE BALD SOPRANO**, about which *The New York Times* said, "The play has not aged. One might even suggest that we have caught up with [it]."

**WHEN:**

**Previews:** October 23, 24 at 8pm, October 25 at 5pm

**Opens:** October 29 at 8pm

*Press opening: Thursday, October 29 at 8pm*

**Closes:** November 22 at 5pm

**All performances Thursday-Saturday at 8pm and Sunday at 5pm**

**WHERE:**

The Cutting Ball Theater in residence at EXIT on Taylor  
277 Taylor St., San Francisco

**TICKETS:**

For tickets (\$15-30) and more information, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **800-838-3006**; discounts available for students and seniors

**PHOTOS:**

Art for **THE BALD SOPRANO** can be found at <http://www.cuttingball.com/press.php> or by emailing [brightbutterfly\[at\]hotmail.com](mailto:brightbutterfly[at]hotmail.com)