



**RICHARD KORNBERG
& ASSOCIATES**
PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
230 W. 41st STREET, SUITE 1305
NEW YORK, NY 10036 (212) 944-9444 FAX (212) 944-1799

For Immediate Release
Contact: Richard Kornberg & Associates (212) 944-9444
Richard Kornberg richard@kornbergpr.com
Don Summa don@kornbergpr.com
Tommy Wesely tommy@kornbergpr.com

WOODSHED COLLECTIVE PRESENTS
THE CONFIDENCE MAN
INSPIRED BY THE NOVEL BY HERMAN MELVILLE
TO BE PERFORMED FREE TO THE PUBLIC
ABOARD THE U.S COAST GUARD SHIP LILAC
AT PIER 40 ON THE HUDSON RIVER
PERFORMANCES BEGIN TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

MULTIPLE STORY LINES PRESENTED SIMULTANEOUSLY
WITH AUDIENCE CHOOSING WHAT TO SEE

WRITTEN BY PAUL COHEN
CREATED AND PRODUCED BY WOODSHED COLLECTIVE
DIRECTED BY STEPHEN BRACKETT, LAUREN KEATING, AND
MICHEAL SILVERSTONE

PLAY SCHEDULED TO OPEN WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

COMPANY PRESENTED ACCLAIMED *TWELVE OPHELIA* LAST
SUMMER IN BROOKLYN'S MCCARREN PARK POOL

Woodshed Collective will present the world premiere of *The Confidence Man*, conceived by Woodshed Collective, written by Paul Cohen (winner of the 2008 NYC Fringe best playwright award), and inspired by Herman Melville's 1857 novel about a riverboat con man, beginning Tuesday, September 1 and playing free to the public on the ship Lilac, a decommissioned U.S. Coast Guard vessel docked on the north side of Pier 40, at the intersection of West and Houston streets on the Hudson River. The supervising director is Teddy Bergman, with direction by Stephen Brackett (*Whore* at Summer Play Festival), Lauren Keating (*Al's Business Cards* at The Lion), and Michael Silverstone, and production design by Gabriel Hainer Evansohn. *The Confidence Man* is scheduled to open Wednesday, September 16.

Herman Melville's novel *The Confidence Man* is a colorful tale of a mid-19th century riverboat con man who charms and then cheats his fellow passengers.

Woodshed Collective's production of *The Confidence Man* will be composed of a series of interwoven and simultaneously performed vignettes throughout the ship, and will evoke the whirlwind of both a riverboat journey and the everyday urban chaos of New York City. The audience will have the freedom to explore different elements of the play by choosing what to see and which character's story to follow just as one selects which newspaper stories to read, which YouTube videos to screen, or which online links to click. By allowing audience members to immerse themselves in the experience, the production seeks to blur the line between performer and patron, reclaim confidence in the power of live theater, and leave the lingering impression that the audience members themselves may not be immune to the confidence man's charms or cons.

As disarmingly relevant today as it was in the 19th century, *The Confidence Man* begs the question: in whom may we safely place our confidence? In light of recent economic events surrounding Bernard Madoff, sub-prime lenders, and the deflating of the real estate bubble, confidence is a word on many minds these days. President Obama included the theme in his inaugural address, noting a profound "sapping of confidence across our land — a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights."

The cast of *The Confidence Man* includes Meng Ai, Ben Beckley, Kate Benson, Pepper Binkley, Juliette Cohen, Dan Cozzens, Todd D'Amour, Danny Deferrari, Matt Dickson, Nicholas Feitel, Emmitt George, Laurel Holland, Jocelyn Kuritsky, Malcolm Madera, Brendan McDonough, Michael R. Piazza, Mallory Portnoy, Jacob Grigolia Rosenbaum, and Lee Zarrett.

The production designer for *The Confidence Man* is Gabriel Hainer Evansohn; scenic design: Sara Walsh and Daniel Zimmerman, lighting design: Zack Brown, Sound Design: Daniel Kluger and Brandon Walcott, costume design: Jessica Pabst

Paul Cohen is a native New Yorker and a product of its public school system. His plays include *Cherubina*, *Mourn the Living Hector* (*Outstanding Playwrighting Award - FringeNYC '08*), and *The 385 Pound Smoker*. He is pleased to be working with Woodshed Collective on board the *Lilac*.

Woodshed Collective is devoted to creating an active installation theater in and through an experimental artistic process. Teddy Bergman, Carl Faber, Emily Fishbaine, Gabriel Hainer Evansohn, Jessica Pabst, Jocelyn Kuritsky, Stephen Squibb, members. Gabriel Hainer Evansohn and Teddy Bergman, co-artistic directors. Stephen Squibb, Producing Artistic Director.

Woodshed Collective is the most recent evolution of what began as a method of creating theater. Founded as the Woodshed Theater Ensemble in Spring of 2002 at Vassar

College, the company aimed to deemphasize the traditional model of theatrical production. This meant including all members of the ensemble in all aspects of production, from concept development to direction and design. When the founding members relocated to New York City, the decision was made to focus on creating a fully realized installation theater. Woodshed Collective thus aims to create a tangible, immersive world for our audience to explore. This new focus extends our inclusive effort to the audience themselves, allowing them to interact and influence the world of the performance itself. The precedent for this extends throughout the production history and has always found an echo in our collaborative cross-disciplinary process. This history includes staging *Macbeth* in a cramped basement full of dead leaves, Griselda Gambaro's *Antigona Furiosa* in a theater converted into a café serving hot coffee, and a *Hedda Gabler* that choked in an atmosphere saturated with cheap incense. In staging *Never the Sinner*, John Logan's award winning play about the Leopold and Loeb trial, Woodshed Collective converted the CSV Flamboyant into the courtroom world of 1920s Chicago. In this way, Woodshed Collective has evolved its method into an effective professional model, while continuing to create work in and through an experimental artistic process.

LILAC is a decommissioned U.S. Coast Guard vessel that served as a lighthouse tender for the U.S. Lighthouse Service from 1933 until 1939. In 1939, the Coast Guard took over LILAC, under the name WAGL-227, as a buoy tender until 1972. She is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is an excellent candidate for National Landmark status. She is the last surviving vessel in her class (Violet Class) and one of the few steam-powered government vessels in this country. LILAC is the oldest lighthouse tender left as well as the only steam-powered vessel from the Coast Guard.

Woodshed Collective's 2008 production of Caridad Svich's *Twelve Ophelias* was performed in Brooklyn's McCarren Park Pool and was hailed by critics:

"Director Teddy Bergman has given the play a spirited production." – *Village Voice*

"Svich has a lovely way with old stories—her looping, just-shy-of-purple poetry lets her remake the Greeks and Shakespeare with panache. And thematically, director Teddy Bergen's choice of the waterless, cracked McCarren Park Pool basin works: We're in a dry hole thirsty for language." – *TimeOut NY*

"Truly, genuinely, wonderfully theatrical." – nytheatre.com

"A deconstructed masterpiece." – *New York Press*

The Confidence Man performs the following schedule through Saturday, September 26: Wednesday at 8pm; Thursday through Saturday 7pm and 9:30pm; and Sunday at 8pm. There are special performances on Tuesday, September 1 and Monday, September 21 at 8pm, and there is no performance on Sunday, September 6. Admission is free and performances take place aboard the LILAC on the north side of Pier 40, at the intersection of West and Houston streets on the Hudson River. Tickets are free and may

be reserved at www.brownpapertickets.com. For more information about *The Confidence Man* and Woodshed Collective, visit www.woodshedcollective.com.

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