



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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University  
of Victoria

## WALKER'S SATIRE AS THOUGH TAKEN FROM TODAY'S RECESSION HEADLINES

Guest Director Michael Shamata mentors UVic students on Canadian classic

2009/2010 Season

### 3 PROBLEM CHILD

February 18 – 27, 2010

By George F. Walker  
Guest Director, Michael Shamata  
(Belfry Theatre)  
Set Design, Sarah Hillhouse  
Costume & Lighting Design, Amanda Gougeon  
Sound Design Chris Adams  
Stage Manager Chris Sibbald

*A fast-paced black comedy about a desperate and dysfunctional couple's attempts to put their troubled past behind them.*



### 4 WRECKAGE

March 18 – 27, 2010

By Sally Stubbs  
Directed by Fran Gebhard (Sessional Instructor)  
*Violet discovers her long lost mother's diary and through it, the truth about her family's past – including a 1920s drug cartel and a train wreck that changed the course of Violet's life.*

Stuck in a cramped cheap motel room and stuck in the rut of poverty and the government social system, George F. Walker's portrayal of one desperate and dysfunctional couple's struggle could be a scenario drawn from today's news headlines.

The Phoenix Theatre presents ***Problem Child***, Walker's hilarious and much-acclaimed black comedy from February 18 to 27, 2010 at the University of Victoria. Written in 1997 by one of Canada's most prolific playwrights, this political, black comedy was inspired by the effects of Ontario's economic recession, when the provincial government implemented extreme cuts to the social welfare system. Today, as British Columbia struggles with the current recession and enacts its own cuts, Walker's edgy and entertaining play about a couple who are fighting for custody of their child remains as poignant and relevant as ever.

Michael Shamata, Artistic Director of the Belfry Theatre guest directs ***Problem Child***, a four-person play which tells the personal and sometimes comedic struggle of Denise (Anne McGladdery), a mother with past drug-issues, fighting to regain custody of her child and RJ, her loveable down-on-his-luck partner (Cobi Dayan). In their efforts to right their wayward lives, the couple has to contend with their officious social worker, Helen (Natasha Salway) and the vacuuming, good-hearted alcoholic motel manager Philly (Shaan Rahman).

Shamata's choice to direct this George F. Walker's was influenced by the age and talent of UVic's student actors, which mirror those of the characters of the play. *"Walker creates fascinating and flawed young characters, that aren't too far away in age from the students at UVic. He's a brilliant writer and I knew the students would gain from the experience of studying this contemporary Canadian classic."* The award-winning director has directed in major theatres across Canada including the Stratford Festival, Canadian Stage Company, Soulpepper and the Manitoba Theatre Centre. He has worked with students at many institutions across Canada and the United States and is excited to be working with them again. *"I'm really enjoying the mentoring process of directing these talented UVic students. Everything is a learning opportunity for them. They challenge me and they force me to be a better director."*

***Problem Child*** is designed completely by students at the Department of Theatre. Fourth-year student Sarah Hillhouse's set design presents a realistic rendition of a confined, one-bed motel room, littered with old newspapers, unpacked clothes and peeling wallpaper. MFA Design candidate Amanda Gougeon maintains this gritty air of realism in the costume design and lighting. Fourth-year student Chris Adams is the sound designer and Chris Sibbald the stage manager.

This is one of six plays in George F. Walker's play cycle "Suburban Motel," three of which were made into the feature film "Niagara Motel." Walker has received nine Chalmers Awards, five Dora Awards, three Governor General awards for Drama and was named a member of the Order of Canada in 2006.

Everyone is welcome to join us for our **FREE Pre-Show Lecture**, Friday February 19 at 7:00pm with Dr. Sheila Rabillard from UVic's Department of English. Also, the Saturday matinee on February 27 at 2:00pm will offer **\*Sign language interpretation** of the play featuring Deaf interpreter Nigel Howard. The performance schedule for ***Problem Child*** at the Phoenix Theatre @ UVic is as follows:

**Public Previews @ 8pm:** February 16 & 17

**Evenings @ 8pm:** February 18 (Opening Night), 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 (NEW! Extra Monday night added)

**Matinee @ 2pm:** Saturday, February 27 \* With Sign Language Interpretation

**Single Tickets:** \$12 Student / \$17 Senior / \$22 Adult or all Weekends @ 8pm (Previews \$6.00, available after 5pm)  
Phoenix Box Office opens February 10 in person or by calling: **(250) 721-8000**.

#### Phoenix Theatre

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