

Allan McKeown and Sarah Gregson in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre presents

Trying

by Joanna McClelland Glass. Directed by Derek Bond. Designed by James Perkins. Lighting by Sally Ferguson.
Cast: Michael Craig. Meghan Popiel.

Michael Craig returns to the London stage in the UK premiere of the award-winning *Trying*, opening for a four week limited season on Tuesday, 17 March 2009 (Press Night: Thursday, 19 March) at London's Finborough Theatre.

A surprising yet touching play about a profound friendship between two strangers – at dramatically different points in their lives – who unexpectedly find they have more in common than they thought.

Internationally famous, cantankerous and in failing health, the 81 year old Judge Francis Biddle awaits the new secretary that his wife has forced upon him. Sarah is very young and inexperienced and, even worse, from Canada. Francis doesn't trust her. Francis doesn't trust anyone – his last assistant managed to burn half his books. Despite undergoing her own marital pressures and impending motherhood, Sarah is determined to get the Judge's life in order – without crying in the bathroom.

This rich story of life's most inevitable adventure – growing old – is inspired by the playwright's real-life experience as personal secretary to the real Judge Biddle, US Attorney General under President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Chief American Judge at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials.

Since its New York premiere in 2004, *Trying* has been presented in numerous theatres across the world including the USA, Canada and Australia, and now receives its UK premiere.

Michael Craig has had a distinguished career spanning more than half a century in film, television and on stage in the UK, Europe and Australia. His many credits include nearly thirty films under contract to both The Rank Organisation and Columbia Pictures including *Star* with Julie Andrews, *Doctor in Love*, *Sea of Sand* for which he was nominated for a BAFTA as Best British Actor, *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, *Mysterious Island*, *The Irishman*, *Brotherly Love* and *The Angry Silence*. He was given his first lead stage role in 1953 by Sir Peter Hall, and subsequent stage credits include *The Wars of the Roses* (Stratford and London for the Royal Shakespeare Company), Teddy in *The Homecoming* (New York for the Royal Shakespeare Company), The Inspector in Stephen Daldry's production of *An Inspector Calls* (National Tour), *84 Charing Cross Road* (West End), Prospero at the Sydney Opera House for the Sydney Theatre Company, and playing opposite Barbra Streisand in the original London production of *Funny Girl*. Television includes a Logie Award (the Australian television industry awards) for Most Outstanding Actor for his role in *G.P.*, *Triangle*, *The Foundation*, *The Emigrants*, *St Joan*, *Grass Roots*, *Doctor Who*, *Robin of Sherwood*, *Shoestring*, *The Professionals*, *Jackanory*, and was the subject of his own *This Is Your Life* episode in 1994. As a screenwriter, he co-wrote *The Angry Silence* for which he received an Oscar nomination in 1960, was nominated for the Australian Film Institute's AFI Award for Best Screenplay for *The Fourth Wish* and has written for and created several TV series. Following his appearance in the Australian production of *Trying*, Michael Craig now returns to the London stage to reprise his critically acclaimed performance in a new production. Opposite Michael is exciting young Canadian newcomer **Meghan Popiel**, making her UK stage debut.

Playwright and novelist **Joanna McClelland Glass**' plays have been produced all over North America, in the UK, Ireland, Australia and Germany. Canadian born, she is the author of *Canadian Gothic* (also adapted for radio by the CBC in 1974 and by the BBC in 1983); *To Grandmother's House We Go*, starring Eva Le Gallienne, played on Broadway in 1980; *Play Memory*, also seen on Broadway, was directed by Harold Prince and nominated for a Tony Award; *American Modern*, *Artichoke*, *Yesteryear*; *If We Are Women* and, most recently, *Palmer Park* which premiered at Canada's Stratford Festival in 2008. Glass has also written two novels – *Reflections on a Mountain Summer*, and *Woman Wanted* which was adapted into a film in 1998, starring and directed by Kiefer Sutherland, also starring Holly Hunter and Michael Moriarty. She has received a Rockefeller grant, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and was Playwright in Residence at Yale Repertory Theatre.

Continued

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e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

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Derek Bond has directed the *Time Out* Critics' Choice production of *Colourings* (Old Red Lion), *African Gothic* (White Bear Theatre), *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps A Secret* (White Bear Theatre and *Time Out* Critics' Choice season at the BAC), *The Maids* (Etcetera Theatre), *Transmissions* (Birmingham Rep), and *The Censor* (Union Theatre). As an Associate or Assistant Director, he has worked with John Caird, Nicholas Hytner, Rufus Norris and Angus Jackson at theatres including the Almeida, Chichester, the National Theatre, Paines Plough, Birmingham Rep, on tour and in the West End with credits including *The Alchemist* and *The History Boys* (National Theatre), *Cabaret* (Lyric Theatre) and *Desperately Seeking Susan* (Novello Theatre).

Allan McKeown is a prolific television producer both in the UK and the US and has been responsible for many of the UK's most popular television programmes including *Shine on Harvey Moon*, *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*, *Birds of a Feather*, *Love Hurts*, *Goodnight Sweetheart* and *Lovejoy*. He has produced many TV shows in the USA including the Emmy Award winning *Tracey Takes On*, produced with his wife Tracey Ullmann. His theatre productions include *Anyone for Denis* (West End), *The Big Love* (Broadway), *Jerry Springer the Opera* (West End and Broadway) and *Lennon* (Broadway).

The Press on *Trying* including Michael Craig's performance in Australia

"Michael Craig is ideally cast in this witty and perceptive two-hander...His performance is little short of masterful. In lesser hands the formidable figure would merely emerge as broad-brushed and brusque, but Craig's timing, pitch and subtle command makes for an unsentimental and convincingly detailed portrait." Bryce Hallett, *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia)

"Craig is superb as cranky octogenarian operating, as Biddle has it, 'somewhere between lucidity and senility.' It's a masterful piece of character acting" Jason Blake, *The Sun Herald* (Australia)

"Michael Craig's delicious portrayal of Biddle is a triumph." Deborah Johnston, *Mosman Daily* (Australia)

"One of the finest pieces of theatre I have seen in many years...A glittering, diamond-hard script that is all but flawless...Magnificently eloquent...A masterpiece of theatrical portraiture." *Chicago Sun Times* (USA)

"Like sunrise, *Trying* infuses a subtle glow into thoughts of human mortality. Don't miss it." *Show Business* (USA)

"This show is a must-see, whether you are in your twenties, your eighties, somewhere in between or on either side." *Scene Magazine* (USA)

PRESS NIGHT: THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2009 AT 7.30PM

PHOTOCALL: TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2009 AT 1.00PM-1.30PM

Finborough Theatre, The Finborough, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Box Office 0844 847 1652 Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Tuesday, 17 March – Saturday, 11 April 2009

Tuesday to Saturday Evenings at 7.30pm. Sunday Matinees at 3.00pm. Saturday Matinees at 3.00pm (from 28 March).

Tickets £13, £9 concessions, except Tuesday Evenings £9 all seats, and Saturday evenings £13 all seats.

Previews (17 March and 18 March April) £9 all seats.

Performance Length: Approximately 2 hours.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Neil McPherson on e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **07977 173135**

Press releases and images are available to download from **www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk**

(Go to 'Contact' in the top right hand corner of the home page and follow the links)

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