



PRESS RELEASE
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The Santaland Diaries

David Sedaris' Witty Gem of a Lump of Coal



By David Sedaris
Adapted for the stage by Joe Mantello
Directed by Wendy Knox

STORCH THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE
Previews: December 2-4 **Open:** December 5 **Close:** January 4

(SYRACUSE, NY)—Based on essays by David Sedaris, this scathingly humorous story recounts Sedaris' brief employment as Crumpet, an out-of-work-actor-turned-elf working in Macy's Santaland. In an act of desperation, an unemployed writer finds himself trading in his dignity for red and white striped tights and a paycheck, while wittily revealing the true nature of the beast formerly known as Christmas. *For mature elves only* (mature middle school and up). Tickets are available at the Syracuse Stage Box Office at 820 East Genesee Street, by telephone at 315-443-3275 or SyracuseStage.org.

Running December 2 to January 4, the exclusive sponsor for *The Santaland Diaries* is Phoebe's Restaurant & Coffee Lounge. Media sponsors are the Syracuse New Times and WAER 88.3. Syracuse Stage season sponsors are The Post-Standard and Time Warner Cable.

"This production is a great alternative holiday offering that breaks from tradition," said Director Wendy Knox, Artistic Director and Founder of Frank Theatre. A huge Sedaris fan herself, Knox continued: "Sedaris' wry and offbeat sense of humor will delight the audience and keep them captivated from beginning to end."

"Our approach will focus on the darker side of retail and consumerism," said Scenic and Costume Designer Jessica Ford. "While the set will incorporate a beautiful fakeness, Crumpet's clothing will serve as a blend of famous elves from your Christmas past."

Left with twenty dollars and a step away from walking dogs, we find our unemployed writer with no other alternative than to put away his integrity and take on the role of Crumpet, an elf in Macy's Santaland. After a rigorous elfin training session, Crumpet begins his employment in the store's Christmas spectacular, subjecting himself to the ridicule of the holiday drones and the oppressive nature of the demanding Santas. For Crumpet these situations not only reveal the underbelly of the Christmas season, but serve as an outlet for his true nature as a sardonic wit with a knack for clever observations. This mischievous elf could go from explaining how Santa steals TVs from naughty children to telling people if they looked through the Magic Window they would see Cher. Throughout the rest of the holiday crunch, situations arise throwing a multitude of bad Santas, bitter elves, cranky kids, and rowdy parents into Crumpet's path, only to be bowled over by his colorful quips and hilarious mental commentary.

CREATORS

David Sedaris (Writer) has become one of America's pre-eminent humor writers. The great skill with which he slices through cultural euphemisms and political correctness proves that Sedaris is a master of satire and one of the most observant writers addressing the human condition today. David Sedaris is the author of the bestselling books *Barrel Fever* and *Holidays on Ice*, as well as other personal essay collections, entitled *Naked*, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, and *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim*, each of which became immediate bestsellers; he edited the anthology of stories, *Children Playing Before a Statue of Hercules*. Seven million copies of his books are in print, translated into 25 languages. His essays also appear regularly in *Esquire* and *The New Yorker*. Sedaris and his sister, Amy Sedaris, have collaborated on several plays under the name "The Talent Family" which have been produced at La Mama, Lincoln Center, and The Drama Department in New York City. They include *Stump the Host*, *Stitches*, *One Woman Shoe* (which received an Obie Award), *Incident at Cobbler's Knob* and *The Book of Liz* (published by Dramatist's Play Service.) His most recent collection of essays, *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*, was published in June 2008. David Sedaris' original radio pieces can often be heard on *This American Life*, distributed nationally by Public Radio International. In 2001, David Sedaris became the third recipient of the Thurber Prize for American Humor, and was named *Time* magazine's Humorist of the Year. He was nominated for two Grammy Awards, for Best Spoken Word Album (*Dress Your Family in Corduroy & Denim*) and Best Comedy Album (*David Sedaris: Live at Carnegie Hall*).

Joe Mantello (Adapter) most recently directed *Wicked* at the Gershwin Theatre in New York City. Mantello's other directing credits include *November*, *The Receptionist*, *The Ritz*, *Three Days of Rain*, *The Odd Couple*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Laugh Whore*, *Assassins* (Tony Award), *Take Me Out* (Tony Award), *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, *A Man of No Importance*, *Design for Living*, *The Vagina Monologues*, *bash*, *Another American: Asking and Telling*, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, *Proposals*, *The Mineola Twins*, *Corpus Christi*, *Mizlansky/Zilinsky*, *Blue Window*, *God's Heart*, *The SantaLand Diaries*, *Snakebit*, *Three Hotels*, and *Imagining Brad*. Film: *Love! Valour! Compassion!* As an actor: *Angels in America* (Tony nomination) and *The Baltimore Waltz*, among others. Mantello is the recipient of Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, Helen Hayes, Clarence Derwent, Obie and Joe A. Callaway Awards. He is a member of Naked Angels and an Associate Artist at the Roundabout Theatre Company.

DIRECTOR

Wendy Knox (Director) is Artistic Director of Frank Theatre in Minneapolis, where she has directed 40 productions since founding the theatre in 1989. Among the works she has directed and produced are McDonagh's *The Pillowman* (presented by the Guthrie Theatre), Brecht's *Mother Courage*, Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus* and *The American Play*, the premiere of Carson Kreitzer's *The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, and Blitzstein's labor-opera *The Cradle Will Rock*. Other work at Frank includes the premiere of Ruth MacKenzie's music/theatre/dance extravaganza *Kalevala*, and Naomi Wallace's *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*. At the Guthrie, she directed the sold-out production of *Lysistrata*. In 2007, Minneapolis' *City Pages* named her Best Director of 2007; her work, and that of Frank Theatre, regularly appears on the Best Of lists in the Twin Cities. She will direct Frank Theatre's upcoming production of *By the Bog of Cats* by Marina Carr at the Guthrie's Dowling Studio in March 2009. In Minnesota Knox has worked at the Ordway Music Center, Guthrie Lab, the Cricket Theatre, the Playwrights' Center, Illusion Theatre, Northern Sign Theatre (performed in English and American Sign Language simultaneously), At the Foot of the Mountain, Children's Theatre Company, Red Eye Collaboration, and the Southern Theatres. Regional credits include the Annex Theatre (Seattle), Berkshire Theatre Festival, Vermont Ensemble Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Theatre L'Homme Dieu, and St. Croix Festival Theatre. In Finland, she directed an original work, *Hukka Viiva (Lost Line)* for the Theatre Academy of Finland. She has served on the faculty and as a guest director at Hamline University, Macalester College, the University of Minnesota, Grinnell College, Augsburg College, the University of Northern Iowa, The Theatre Academy of Finland, North Hennepin Community College, South High School and the Minnesota Center for Arts Education. Ms. Knox also directed the short film *Truth*. The recipient of two McKnight Theatre Artist Fellowships (recognizing outstanding work by professional theatre artists), she has also received three Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Fellowships, two Jerome Travel and Study Grants, two Diverse Visions grants from Intermedia Arts and a specialist research grant from the Finnish Ministry of Education to research new theatrical forms in that country, where she was a Fulbright Fellow. She holds an

M.F.A. in Directing from the University of Washington (Seattle), and a B.A. from Grinnell College.

CAST

Wade McCollum (Crumpet) was most recently seen as Nestor in *Irma la Deuce* at Musicals Tonight in NYC. Past theatrical productions include: the Chicago Company of *Jersey Boys* with Dodger Theatricals, Woody in *Toy Story the Musical* with Disney/Pixar Workshop, Charlotte/ 40 others in *I am my Own Wife* at Portland Center Stage, Emcee in *Cabaret* at Portland Center Stage/ GEVA, Bat Boy in *Bat Boy: The Musical* at Portland Center Stage, Mary in *On the Verge* at Insight Out Theatre, Hedwig/ Tommy in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* at Celebration Theatre- LA, Lancelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice* at Portland Center Stage, Phaeton/Ceyx in *Metamorphosis* at Artists Repertory Theatre, Balladeer/ Oswald in *Assassins* at Artists Repertory Theatre, Sid in *One: The Musical* at Insight Out Theatre, Dr. Frankenfurter in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* with Triangle Productions, The Mute in *The Fantasticks* at the Utah Shakespearean Festival, Puck/ Asst. Dir. in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Willamette Repertory, Cousin Kevin in *Tommy* with the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts (PCPA), Danny Zuko in *Grease* with PCPA, James Keller in *The Miracle Worker* with PCPA, Jamie Wellerstein in *The Last Five Years* with Oregon Cabaret Theatre, Hamlet, Romeo, etc. in *The Shakespeare Revue* with the Royal Shakespeare Company, Hamlet, in *Rosencrantz and G...are Dead* at the Willamette Repertory Theatre, Don Pedro in *Much Ado About Nothing* with the Idaho Repertory Theatre, Tom/Phyllis/Leslie in *Sylvia* at the Idaho Repertory Theatre, George Read in *1776* with PCPA, Mr. Sowerberry in *Oliver* with PCPA, and Zeus in *Prometheus the Musical* with Michael Allen Harrison. Wade's film credits include: *Delicate Instruments*, *Love in the Vertical Position*, *Drawn Home*, *Before the End*, *Winston's Light*, *Endeavor*, and *Take Me with You*. His is the recipient of an Ovation Award, LA Drama Critic's Circle Award, Backstage's Garland Award, and a Drammy Award, for his performances as Hedwig and Batboy. Wade's album *Beauty is a Streetlight* is available on itunes, more info: www.wadesong.com

TICKETS

The SantaLand Diaries runs December 2-January 4, 2008. Tickets are now on sale, ranging in price from \$30-\$45, with discounts for seniors, students and groups. Rush tickets range \$20-\$30 on the day of performance. Student rush tickets are \$9 on the day of performance, with student ID. Tickets can be purchased in person at the Syracuse Stage Box Office at 820 East Genesee Street, by telephone at 315-443-3275, or online at SyracuseStage.org. For Group Discounts (10 or more) call 315-443-9844.

SYRACUSE STAGE

Syracuse Stage is Central New York's premier professional theatre. Founded as a not-for-profit theatre in 1974 by Arthur Storch, Stage has produced more than 220 plays in 35 seasons including numerous world and American premieres. Each season upwards of 90,000 patrons enjoy an exciting mix of comedies, dramas and musicals featuring

the finest professional theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves over 30,000 students from 24 counties. Syracuse Stage is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, and a member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). In addition to ticket sales, Syracuse Stage performances are made possible by funds from Syracuse University, the Central New York Community Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, The Shubert Foundation, Onondaga County, and corporate, foundation and individual donors.

Fact Sheet:

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Previews: December 2-4 **Open:** December 5 **Close:** January 4

Exclusive Sponsor:

Phoebe's Restaurant & Coffee Lounge

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Syracuse New Times

WAER 88.3

Syracuse Stage Season Sponsors:

The Post-Standard

Time Warner Cable

Set and Costume Design: Jessica Ford

Lighting Design: Alex Koziara

Sound Design: Sarah Picket

Stage Manager: **Kerri J. Lynch**

Cast:

Wade McCollum (Crumpet)

The names in bold are actors and stage managers who are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Tickets range \$30-\$45

Previews: \$30

Sun-Thurs evenings: \$35

Wed, Sat & Sun matinees: \$40

Fri & Sat evenings: \$45

*Discounts available for seniors, students and Syracuse Stage subscribers

Rush tickets: \$20-\$30 available day of performance

Student rush tickets: \$9 available day of performance with student ID

Box Office: 315-443-3275

Online: www.SyracuseStage.org

Group Tickets: 315-443-9844

Show Calendar: December/January

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1	2 7:30 P	3 7:30 P	4 7:30 P	5 7:30 O	6 3:00 7:30
7 3:00	8	9	10 3:00 7:30	11 7:30	12 7:30	13 3:00 7:30
14 3:00	15	16 7:30	17 7:30	18 7:30	19 7:30	20 3:00 7:30
21 3:00	22 7:30	23 7:30	24	25	26 7:30	27 3:00 7:30
28 3:00 7:30	29	30 7:30	31 3:00 7:30	1	2 3:00 7:30	3 3:00 7:30
4 3:00	5	6	7	8	9	10

P=Preview O=Opening

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Syracuse Stage | Producing Artistic Director: Timothy Bond | Managing Director: Jeffrey Woodward
 820 E. Genesee St. | Main: 315-443-4008 | Box Office: 315-443-3275 | www.syracusestage.org