

Palindrome Theatre presents  
an Austin premiere of

Edward Albee's

# At Home *at the Zoo*

directed by  
Austin Sheffield

November 5th-21st

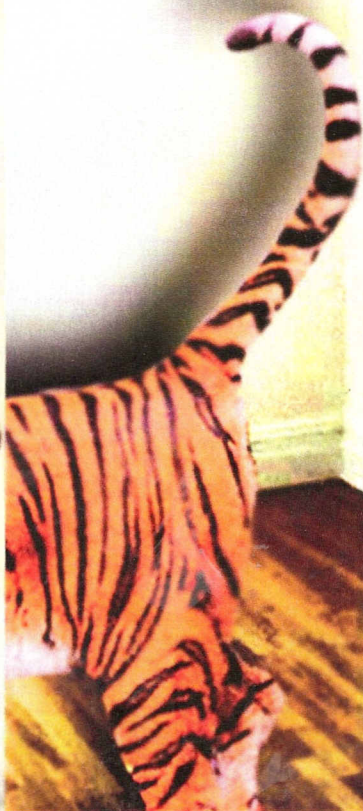
at The Off Center  
2211 Hidago St.

512.939.6829

for reservations

[www.palindrometheatre.com](http://www.palindrometheatre.com)

\*for mature  
audiences





# The Risk and The Need

One of Palindrome's primary commitments is raising the bar of production standards and artist compensation in the Austin community so that a living wage for a multitude of professional theatre artists can be a reality in Austin. In order to create transformative, community-changing art, one needs the time and resources necessary to financially compete with (or at the very least, mirror to scale) recognized, national arts organizations that set the standard of professionalism and quality of work. This standard is based primarily on artist compensation, i.e. The cities that produce work that changes how we understand our American life, our national identity, are the cities that provide the resources necessary to sustain a professional livelihood for the artists who create the work. Palindrome is not interested in producing plays for passion's sake. We are interested in using the shows we produce as vehicles to transform the lives of Austinites, both artists and non, while striving to create work that are human enough to be considered in the national conversation of standard-setting theatre.

Ambition is not bad. Nor is stupidity. As long as the stupidity is calculated, and the ambition's sole focus is the examination of the human heart; the connecting beat which is the mechanism of our collective understanding.

- Palindrome Theatre Company Members

# Production Bios

**Austin Sheffield (Director)** is the Producing Director and Resident Lighting Designer of Palindrome Theatre. He received his B.A. in Arts Administration from St. Edward's University and is currently working on his M.A. in Counseling. He has worked in a variety of different jobs with in theater including Associate Producer for Zilker Theater Productions, Master Electrician for St. Edward's University's Mary Moody Northen Theatre, Production Manager for the Angelo Civic Theater, Lighting Electrician for the Public Theater in New York, and Lighting Designer for Palindrome Theatre and various companies around Austin, Texas. Some of his favorite projects have included being Lighting Designer for Fuse Box Festival, Lighting Designer for Lucio's Park, and making his Directing debut for Palindrome Theatre's At Home At The Zoo.

**Nigel O'Hearn (Jerry, Producer)** is the Artistic Director and Resident Playwright of Palindrome theatre. He has had plays produced in New York as a part of the New York International Fringe Festival (Sad, Sad, Sad, 2008), and Austin (Sad, Sad, Sad, 2008, the Blue Theater & The Suitor, or, The Madness Inside Me Growing, 2008, St. Edward's University, finalist for the Public Theatre's SPFplay festival and Sundance Theatre Lab with director Kate Eminger) and as a part of the Austin Fringe Festival (Blue Note & Distance, 2007, Calm, 2009). As a teacher, he has taught playwriting and play analysis with Theatre Action Project, Texas Arts Project, and McCallum High School's performing arts academy where he spent 2009-2010 as the playwright in residence. As an actor, Nigel has appeared in Ar Rud's Long Day's Journey Into Night (Edmund, Austin Critics Table & B. Iden Payne nominations), and Breaking String's The Cherry Orchard (Trofimov, Austin Critics Table & B. Iden Payne nominations)

**Johnny Gonzalez (Stage Manager)** Since moving to Austin He's worked with Austin Shakespeare, Austin Cabaret, The Vortex, Script Works, Gilbert and Sullivan Society, Spank Dance Co., Ariel Dance, Shrew Productions, Capitol City Men's Chorus, Tutto Theatre Co., and Fusebox just to name a few. one of my Proudest accomplishments was being the Assistant Stage Manager for the first Regional Production of Titanic the Musical at Gateway Playhouse in beautiful Long Island, NY. He's very thankful to Palindrome Theatre, and all involved with At Home At The Zoo for giving me this opportunity, and allowing me to join this fantastic production.



# Palindrome Theatre Shadow Program

In attempt to further promote community outreach and education through the arts, Palindrome has started an educational shadow program to give high school age theatre artists a chance to take part in professional theatre first hand by working alongside Palindrome company members during the production process.

Our production of Hedda Gabler will offer one shadow position in each field of Directing, Playwriting, Light Design, Set Design, and Production Management.

If you are interested in applying, and are an area high school student, Please contact Palindrome through our website by January 2011 for an application. Palindrome Theatre exists to provide productions that advocate the individual's spiritual need for experiences which give breath to our national and international identity.

We would like to thank our  
Shadow Program participant  
Alyssa Muir, working directly  
under Austin Sheffied, as  
Assistant to the Director  
on this production.

## Notes on the play

Near the close of our first year as a working theatre company, I was told that it was now necessary to "define our style." I blinked some, then, the explanation continued, "To set an expectation, a remarkable signature, that no one else could claim," in order to build anticipation around the announcement of our first full, second season. "...Lame," I thought. I assumed, up to that point, that we had been fairly exacting in our selections: a (slightly) musical, contemporary farce by Sarah Ruhl and a canonical tragicomedy by Samuel Beckett...I'm confused as to how people missed our apparent trend. There were places in both where people laughed (or seemed to), places in both where people cried (or seemed to), and there was nothing in either show beyond human touch; passing life in shared spaces as almonds in trashcans, enjoying a moment where the impulse to burst into song describes you, and personal definition escapes you when you cannot, for even a glimpse, be near someone without being smothered by the struggle for "understanding." Clear enough, right?

It seemed I'd have to flog the dead horse, and pick a show exactly the same as the last two. I guess that's what first years are for. Albee's *At Home At The Zoo*, occurs to me as the perfect choice to clarify for those with any question exactly what sort of theatre Palindrome is after: both new and old (the second act was originally written in 1958 and was Albee's very first work as a playwright at the age of 29 and 50 weeks, the incarnation you see now was completed around 2004 when the writer was 76); a work by a writer who has helped shape contemporary western theatre (the original *Zoo Story* is largely responsible for helping kick-start the Off-Broadway theatre movement as well as the American school of the "Theatre of the Absurd"...whatever that is); and, ultimately concerned with the risk and the need of holding another human body—a theatre of dangerously joyous connection and the inkling of misunderstanding and fear that are given it. Imagine yourself as a dog. Then, while you're at it, imagine the others around you, right now, as some other sort of animal. Growl at them. See if they don't see what you're up to. Laugh at how silly it all is, then cry a little. I hope it's clear that that is just what we are after. Thank you so much for this first year.

—Nigel O'Hearn, Artistic Director.



**George Marsolek (Set Design)** is currently a senior at St. Edward's University, where he is getting his BA in Design for Theater. Recent credits include Assistant Scenic Design for Imaginary Invalid (MMNT), Scenic Design for Melancholy Play (Palindrome Theatre), Technical Direction for Annie (Zilker Theatre Productions), and Technical Direction for Sweet Charity and Cabaret (Summer Stock Austin). He is the resident Technical Director/Scenic Designer/Minnesotan of Palindrome Theatre and Transit Theatre Troupe, and works as the Student Assistant Technical Director at the Mary Moody Northern Theater. He would like to thank his family, friends, Little Miss, Joe, Erin, Tori and all the dreamers.

**Aaron Alexander (Fight Choreographer)** is extremely happy to be working with such gifted actors and close friends all in one. Having 8 years of fight choreography experience, Aaron just this year has decided to take it to the next level. With his own fight choreography company in the works, Aaron would like to thank Austin for giving him this opportunity to display something else he is as equally passionate about besides his acting. Faux Fighting...coming soon.

**Alyssa Muir (Assistant to the Director)** is excited to be the first student intern for Palindrome Theatre. Other credits include TexARTS Turn up the Spotlight, Zilker Theatre Productions Music Man (Ensemble), TexARTS Grease (Sandy), Zach Scott Seussical the Musical (Jojo) and Vandegriff High School's I Remember Mama (Aunt Trina).

**Monica Azcarate (Props Master)** has worked on productions at St. Edwards University including "Parade," "Death and The King's Horseman," "On the Town," and "Peer Gynt." She is in her last year as a general theater major and is excited being a part of this show. Thanks to Austin for giving me this opportunity.

**Bryan Schneider (Sound Design)** recently served as sound designer and stage manager for Shrewd Productions' MILKMILKL-EMONADE. He has done extensive sound design and stage management for numerous Austin groups including DAI Theatre Collective, Austin Script Works, MMNT, Naughty Austin/Arts on Real, and Refraction Arts Project. On stage, he has appeared in productions such as MISALLIANCE (Austin Playhouse), PAGEANT, PSYCHO BEACH PARTY, and BATBOY: THE MUSICAL (Arts on Real), as well as GREASE, LAUGHTER ON THE 23 RD FLOOR, and OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD (Mary Moody Northern Theater). Bryan is proud to be a company member of Shrewd Productions and a member of the advisory board for Austin Cabaret Theatre.

**Jude Hickey (Peter)** is grateful to be playing with palindrome for the second time. He was a part of the joyous production of "Melancholy Play" this past summer. Jude is a company member of DA Theatre collective, Salvage Vanguard Theatre, Hyde Park Theatre and Ariel Dance Theatre. He will be playing with SVT and Dustin Wills this January as a part of "Heddatron". When not in the theatre, you can find Jude at the YMCA Townlake where he is the Membership Director.

**Robin Grace Thompson (Ann)** holds a BA in Theater from St. Edwards University and was a member of the 2005-2006 Actor's Theatre of Louisville Acting Apprentice program. Last season she was performing with a broom and a newspaper in DAI Theater Collectives Direct Object and with a bunch of Chekhovians in Breaking String Theater's The Cherry Orchard. Robin also gave birth to 27 Rabbits in C. Denby Swanson's A Brief Narrative of an Extraordinary Birth of Rabbits at SVT. In May she had the honor of participating in the Out of Ink Festival with Austin Script Works. She is a founding member of DAI Theater Collective and the Associate Director and Counselor of Camp Shakespeare at Winedale.

**Shannon Bishop (Production Manager)** is senior at St. Edwards University earning her BA in Theatre Administration. Some previous credits include The Imaginary Invalid (Production Stage Manager-Mary Moody Northern Theater), Melancholy Play (Stage Manager-Palindrome Theatre), subUrbia (Director- Transit Theatre Troupe), Endgame (Stage Manager- Palindrome), and The Life of Galileo (PSM-MMNT). She is also the Mary Moody Northern Theater box office manager and the Managing Director of Transit Theatre Troupe.

**Kat Rodgers (Co-Lighting Design)** This is her first Palindrome production and she is honored to be working with such a devoted team and talented cast. She has been working with Austin Sheffield for the last three years and is excited to be working with him again on their first collaborative design together. Kat spends most of her time as a house lighting designer at The Parish. She has also been a designer for the company SynaesthesiAx for the last year. She would like to thank her family for their endless support and Palindrome Theatre for this opportunity.



# palindrome theatre

## Our Mission

Palindrome Theatre exists to provide productions that advocate the individual's spiritual need for experiences which give breath to our national and international identity.

Through productions of historically and socially significant modernist drama, with a limited but special interest placed on the productions of recently conceived plays and canonical works from prior theatrical eras, Palindrome will actively work to raise the level of professional artistry in Austin, Texas by gradually increasing the standard of monetary compensation while promoting accessibility and education to the general public by offering frequent opportunities to engage in cultural events at very low cost.

Palindrome promises: To be always earthbound, intimate, fallible, human, and above all, brave.

To view "new work" not only as recently written scripts, but also as anything that has not been reworked, tried, or given a fresh perspective - all plays, both established and recently conceived, are new works meant for new audiences.

To underscore the symmetry between our works and the state of the spiritual health of the individual in order to further enrich the dialogue between the performing arts and what is possible in and for our community.

To combat the commodification of the performing arts.

To challenge. To provoke. To teach. To fail. And to embrace our failure as a necessary component of successful transformation.

To be open, always, to the work of our contemporaries, with the knowledge that they will challenge, provoke, and teach us.

*Nigel O'Hearn, Artistic Director & Resident Playwright*

*Kate Eminger, Executive Director & Resident Director*

*Shannon Bishop, Stage Management & Administrative Director*

*Austin Sheffield, Producing Director & Technical Director*

*George Marsolek, Technical Director*

# Edward Albee's At Home at the Zoo

## Cast

In order of apperence

Peter.....	Jude Hickey
Ann.....	Robin Grace Thompson
Jerry.....	Nigel O'Hearn

## Production Team

Producer.....	Nigel O'Hearn
Director.....	Austin Sheffield
Assitant to the Director.....	Alyssa Muir
Stage Manager.....	Johnny Gonzalez
Set Design.....	George Marsolek
Costume Design.....	Ben Taylor Ridgeway
Sound Design.....	Bryan Schneider
Co-Lighting Design.....	Kat Rodgers
Fight Chreography.....	Aaron Alexander
Box Office Manager.....	Shannon Bishop
Props Master.....	Monica Azcarate

## ACT ONE - HOMELIFE

PLACE - *Their Living Room*

TIME - *Fall, Mid-afternoon Sunday*

## 10 minute Intermission

## ACT TWO - THE ZOO STORY

PLACE - *Central Park*

TIME - *Later that same Sunday*