

EUDORA WELTY NEW PLAYS SERIES PLAY READINGS



Jackson, Miss.—New Stage Theatre honors Mississippi native Topher Payne during the **Eudora Welty New Plays Series** on May 3 and 4, 2014. Payne will conduct a free comprehensive workshop for aspiring writers, storytellers, and actors on Saturday, May 3 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. On Sunday, May 4 at 2:00 p.m. a “Lighting Round Reading” of short scenes from selected past EWNPS winners will take place followed by the staged reading of Payne’s play *Tokens of Affection* at 2:30 p.m. The readings are open to the public and admission is free. No reservation is required. There will be a reception following Sunday’s readings.

Topher Payne moved to Atlanta from Mississippi at the age of nineteen and got a gig slinging coffee at a bookstore. The job nurtured his two great passions: literature, and eavesdropping on other people’s conversations. He is now the author of more than a dozen plays, which have been performed on stages across the United States. Payne has been named “Best Local Playwright” by readers of both *The GA Voice* and *Creative Loafing* for the last four years. He has written about his life with “humiliating candor” for nearly a decade- from 2005-2009 in his *David Magazine* column, *Necessary Luxuries*, which was compiled into a book of the same name. From 2010-2013, he chronicled suburban life in his *Domestically Disturbed* column in *The GA Voice*, which won the 2012 National Newspaper Association award for Best Humor Column.

Earlier this month, Payne was awarded the 2014 M. Elizabeth Osborn New Play Award for an emerging playwright from The American Theatre Critics Association. The Osborn Award recognizes Payne’s play, *Perfect Arrangement*, which premiered in June 2013 at The Source Festival in Washington D.C., directed by Linda Lombardi. The award is designed to recognize the work of an author who has not yet achieved national stature. The Osborn Award was established in 1993 to honor the memory of Theatre Communications Group and American Theatre play editor M. Elizabeth Osborn. The American Theatre Critics Association was founded in 1974 and works to raise critical standards and public awareness of critics’ functions and responsibilities. The only national association of professional theater critics, it has several hundred members who work for newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations and websites across the United States.

Payne has recently become a fixture in the greater Atlanta theater community as an actor and as a playwright of a dozen works, especially for smaller progressive companies. He is an artistic associate with Atlanta’s Process Theatre Company and the Flying Carpet Theatre and is the executive producer of the Atlanta 24-Hour Plays for Working Title Playwrights.

Eudora Welty New Play Series Events

Page One, a comprehensive workshop for aspiring writers, storytellers, and actors who just can't seem to get started, will take place on Saturday, May 3 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Workshop includes writing exercises, tools for cold readings and empowering choices both in writing and acting. Participation number is limited so interested people need to register for the workshop by emailing submissions@newstagetheatre.com or phoning 601.948.3533 ext. 224.

“Lightning Round Reading”, very short scenes from selected past Eudora Welty New Play Series winners, will take place on Sunday, May 4 at 2:00 p.m. New Stage Theatre has been in the progress of reviewing past winners with an eye towards producing one on the mainstage in an upcoming season. Topher Payne will briefly adjudicate the plays.

Tokens of Affection, written by Topher Payne, will be presented on Sunday, May 4 at 2:30 p.m. ***Tokens of Affection*** tells the story of Frank Garrett who is caught completely off-guard when Jackie, his wife of thirty-seven years, announces she's leaving. Her only explanation? “You don't send me flowers.” Frank seeks solace and answers at the New York apartment of his son Charlie, a video game designer. When Charlie calls his sister Claire in a panic, he discovers Jackie has found refuge at Claire's Connecticut home. Via a series of telephone conspiracies, the siblings join forces on a mission to get their parents back together- and more importantly, back in their own home. But complications arise when Frank is introduced to Rita, the lovely widow across the hall.

The Eudora Welty New Plays Series was established in 1984 for the discovery and development of new American plays. It was named in honor of **Eudora Welty**, who was an active member of New Stage Theatre's board of directors.

###