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PS/21 Presents World Premiere of Hilarious New Comedy “Mombo”

[CHATHAM, NY] - PS/21: Performance Spaces for the 21st Century presents Alan Gelb’s hilarious new comedy “Mombo” June 19 through June 21. Staged as a reading in 2007 to rave reviews, this production will be the first full staging anywhere in the world. Through a series of short plays, running the gamut from wildly farcical to tenderly poignant, “Mombo” explores the often extraordinary mother-child relationship.

“It’s a special thrill for me to have this done at PS/21, as I have been such a staunch fan,” said writer Alan Gelb, author of “Most Likely to Succeed,” the account of the Wyley Gates murder case. “I think it’s remarkable to have something like PS/21 in our town, and I’m glad to be a part of it.”

The genesis of “Mombo” came about with a play Gelb did for a 10-Minute Play Festival some years ago. “It was a smash with the audience and people said I should do a full-length play about it,” he said. “I decided to do an evening of shorts that were connected by the theme of the mother-child bond.”

“Mombo” has already won critical acclaim. It has been published by Dramatists Play Service and one of the plays was anthologized in Best Stage Scenes of 2008.

Some stories are from Gelb’s own life. “For instance, I spent years sitting and watching my son play soccer and I eavesdropped on enough conversations to get material for the first play, which is about two soccer moms,” he said. “But, in large part, the plays are pure invention.”

“Mombo” is directed by Bernie Kukoff, whose experience ranges from Yale Drama School to the Williamstown Theater Festival to Second City. For many years he worked as producer/writer/director in TV and film, with credits including creator of the situation comedy “Different Strokes” and head writer on “The Cosby Show.” His more recent experience is as theatre producer of “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change,” the longest running show in off-Broadway history.

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Both Gelb and Kukoff live in Chatham, their families are friends and their paths often cross. “But this is our first professional collaboration,” Gelb said. “It’s quite serendipitous that we should both be in this small town. But of course what a town it is!”

Gelb explained that one of the biggest challenges to having a play like this work is finding really funny people. “Fortunately, we’ve found them.” The cast for this full production is nearly identical to the one for the staged reading.

“I hope that after seeing “Mombo” that audience members will come to value to their mothers even more,” Gelb said. “As insane as the mothers can be in these plays, there’s no question that they love their children.”

“Mombo” will be presented Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 19, 20, 21 at 8:00 pm. Tickets for each performance are \$25 general admission and \$20 for PS/21 members. For information or to order tickets, please call 518.392.6121 or visit ps21chatham.org.

Gelb’s mother, who attended the original reading, will also be at the PS/21 performance. “She wouldn’t miss it for the world,” he said.

PS/21: Performance Spaces for the 21st Century is a not-for-profit organization located at 3560 Route 66 in Chatham, New York.

PS/21 is dedicated to the performing arts and serving a diverse community with concerts, programs and residencies by professional artists and ensembles, youth and children’s programming, and cultural education opportunities for all ages.

The tent at PS/21 is a Saddle Span concert tent, with approximate dimensions of 80-feet by 60-feet and a seating capacity of approximately 200. Its 24 foot height is screened from the road by the topography and the existing apple trees on the site.

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Photos available upon request