

TUNNA

Does Vegas



DAN TATE & BRANDON STAUFFER

FEB 28TH – MAR 15TH, 2024
CREATOR'S STAGE
OPPA!

OPENING THE CAN ON TUNA

THE TUNA PLAYS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A LOVE LETTER TO TEXAS WRITTEN WITH A POISONED PEN. IN THE 1980S, JASTON WILLIAMS, JOE SEARS, AND ED HOWARD WROTE THESE PLAYS IN REACTION TO THE RISE OF THE MORAL MAJORITY, A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN 1979 BY JERRY FALWELL, SR., ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY. THE TUNA PLAYS ARE FIERCE AND FUNNY SATIRES OF LIFE IN TEXAS AND ALL AROUND THIS COUNTRY. THEY ARE BRUTAL, AND SADLY, THE TARGETS THAT ARE MOCKED IN THESE PLAYS HAVE ONLY GOTTEN A STRONGER FOOHOLD IN BOTH TEXAS BEINGS AND THE UNITED STATES. THEY FEATURE FLAWED, SOMETIMES TRULY HORRIBLE, FUNNY HUMANS DOING THE BEST THEY CAN AND SOMETIMES STILL MISSING THE BIGGER PICTURE.

SATIRE IS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES IN OUR SOCIETY WHERE WE CAN SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER AND LAUGH. FROM MARK TWAIN TO SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, WE DELIGHT IN POKING FUN AT THE POWERFUL AND UNCOMFORTABLE FORCES IN OUR LIVES. A TUNA CHRISTMAS LIVES IN THIS LONG TRADITION, LAMPOONING THE LIVES OF THE SO-CALLED MORAL MAJORITY, BUT LEAVING US TO QUESTION: WAS THIS REALLY WRITTEN IN 1989, OR JUST LAST WEEK?

THESE CHARACTERS ARE UNHINGED, BUT WHY DO I FEEL LIKE I KNOW THEM?

SHOULD WE LET THIS KEEP ON HAPPENING?

IN THIS THIRD EDITION OF THE GREATER TUNA SERIES, AN IMPENDING HIGH SCHOOL REUNION BRINGS OUT THE BEST — AND MORE OFTEN THE WORST — IN THE CITIZENS OF TUNA. WHO WILL BE CROWNED THE REUNION QUEEN? NASTY SPITFIRE TALK AMONG THE COMPETITORS, WHOSE EXTRAVAGANT OPINIONS ARE BASED ON RUMOR AND SUSPICION, STIRS UP COMEDIC MOMENTS THAT GET YOU CHUCKLING BEFORE YOU REALIZE WHAT'S HAPPENED. LINES STEEPED IN SARDONIC SYRUP POUR OUT OF CHARACTERS' MOUTHS. THROUGH SUBTERRANEAN COMMENTS ON SIMPLEMINDED RELIGIOUS ORTHODOXY AND COMMUNITY PRESSURE, RED, WHITE AND TUNA EXPOSES THE INDISCERNIBLE SNARE OF INFECTIOUS SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS AND APPEARANCES.

DAN TATE AS DIDI



OPENING THE CAN ON THE CHARACTERS



DAN TATE AND BRANDON STAUFFER

SATIRE OUT OF THE CAN

AS LONG AS POLITICS HAS EXISTED, SO HAS ITS MOCKERY. GOING BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO 400 BCE, WHEN PLAYWRIGHT AND "FATHER OF COMEDY" ARISTOPHANES WROTE ABOUT RELIGION AND VARIOUS POLITICAL FIGURES IN ATHENS, ARTISTS AND WRITERS HAVE USED THEIR MEDIUMS TO HUMOROUSLY COMMENT ON THE STATE OF THEIR GOVERNMENT AND TOPICAL AFFAIRS. SATIRE USES HUMOR AND EXAGGERATION TO COMMENT ON AND RIDICULE CURRENT EVENTS OR PUBLIC FIGURES, OFTEN POINTING OUT HYPOCRISY, STUPIDITY, OR LOGICAL FALLACIES. OVER HUMAN HISTORY, THE MAKING, DISTRIBUTION, AND RECEPTION OF SATIRICAL WORKS HAVE REFLECTED THE STATE OF THE WORLD AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE PUBLIC.

IN AMERICA, SATIRE CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE EARLY 1700S, WHEN THE COLONIES WERE SEEKING INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITAIN. AT THIS TIME, MOST SATIRE TOOK THE FORM OF POLITICAL CARTOONS, WHICH COULD BE ENJOYED BY BOTH THE UPPER CLASS AND THE LARGER MAJORITY OF ILLITERATE WORKING-CLASS AMERICANS. THESE CARTOONS PERMEATED AMERICAN AND EVEN BRITISH CULTURE, THEIR WIDE CIRCULATION PLANTING THEM NOT ONLY IN NEWSPAPERS, BUT ON FLYERS AND EVEN CHINAWARE, PROVIDING REVOLUTIONISTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUBTLY SHOW THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO DINNER GUESTS. THE CIRCULATION OF POLITICAL OPINION AS ENTERTAINMENT BROUGHT ATTENTION TO THE STATE OF THE GOVERNMENT, EVENTUALLY RALLYING THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO WIN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. THE CARTOONS NOT ONLY IMPACTED THE MAJORITY OPINION ON GREAT BRITAIN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COLONIES, BUT INFLUENCED AMERICAN POLITICS INTO THE PRESENT DAY; CARTOONIST THOMAS NAST POPULARIZED THE DONKEY AND ELEPHANT ICONOGRAPHY OF THE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN PARTIES THANKS TO HIS CARTOONS IN HARPER'S WEEKLY. WITH COUNTLESS EXAMPLES OF SATIRE ENTERING MAINSTREAM CULTURE THROUGHOUT HISTORY, IT'S CLEAR THAT THE CONTROVERSIAL HUMOR STICKS WITH US. BUT HOW DO WE GAUGE IF SATIRE IS GOING TOO FAR?

TO AN EXTENT, SATIRE IS INHERENTLY INCENDIARY, AS IT SEEKS TO EXPLORE OFTEN DIVISIVE TOPICS & PUSHES THE BOUNDARIES OF ACCEPTABILITY IN ORDER TO MAKE A STATEMENT IN AN ATTENTION-GRABBING AND ENTERTAINING WAY. "ROBUST SATIRE IS OFTEN A

SIGN OF CRISIS AND THE ABILITY TO SHARE AND CONSUME IT IS A SIGN OF A FREE SOCIETY," SAYS SOPHIA MCCLENNEN, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AT PENN STATE. "WE SEE SATIRE EMERGE WHEN POLITICAL DISCOURSE IS IN CRISIS AND WHEN IT BECOMES IMPORTANT TO USE SATIRICAL COMEDY TO PUT POLITICAL PRESSURE ON MISINFORMATION, FOLLY, AND THE ABUSE OF POWER." THAT BEING SAID, THE PUBLIC RECEPTION TO SATIRICAL WORKS HAS VARIED WILDLY OVER TIME, DEPENDING ON THE LARGER CONTEXT OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD.

SATIRE PLAYS AN INTERESTING ROLE IN OUR CULTURE TODAY; WITH INCREASING CONVERSATIONS AROUND SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY AND WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO TELL WHICH STORIES (OR MAKE WHICH JOKES) AND POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DIVISIONS COMING TO A FEVER PITCH, THE FINE LINE BETWEEN EFFECTIVE SATIRE AND SATIRE THAT GOES TOO FAR IS GETTING THINNER AND HARDER TO ANTICIPATE.

SATIRE STAPLES OF MODERN AMERICAN CULTURE HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING TO STAY RELEVANT IN TODAY'S ENTERTAINMENT LANDSCAPE. LATE-NIGHT TELEVISION, MARKED BY ITS TOPICAL POLITICAL HUMOR, HAS BEEN SEEING LOWER AND LOWER RATINGS. THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF REASONS FOR THIS: THE GENRE'S FORMAT-INCOMPATIBILITY WITH STREAMING SERVICES, AN OVERSATURATION OF SIMILAR SHOWS COMMENTING ON THE SAME ISSUES, A HEIGHTENED FIXATION ON POLITICS RATHER THAN HUMAN INTEREST. ONE NOTABLE REASON FOR THE GENRE'S DECLINE THAT IS DISCUSSED LESS, HOWEVER, IS THE WRITER AND AUDIENCE'S ABILITY TO EVOLVE SATIRE TO WORK IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE.

SATIRE IS A POWERFUL FORM OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY, BUT ITS EFFICACY HEAVILY RELIES ON SATIRE WRITERS AND ARTISTS' ABILITIES TO ANTICIPATE HOW CURRENT EVENTS WILL INFORM THE AUDIENCE RECEPTION. SOME SATIRES OF THE PAST, LIKE A TUNA CHRISTMAS, PROVIDE COMMENTARY FOR ISSUES STILL RELEVANT TODAY, EVEN IF THE WAY WE'VE COME TO TALK ABOUT THOSE ISSUES HAS SHIFTED. THE QUESTION REMAINS THEN: CAN WE ADAPT SATIRICAL FORMATS OF THE PAST TO REFLECT TODAY'S CLIMATE, OR CAN SATIRE ONLY BELONG IN THE PRESENT?



BRANDON STAUFFER AS BERTIE

WHO TYPED THE TUNAS?



ED HOWARD

IS THE CO-AUTHOR OF THE PLAYS GREATER TUNA, A TUNA CHRISTMAS, RED, WHITE AND TUNA AND TUNA DOES VEGAS. HE ALSO CO-AUTHORED SPLENDORA BASED ON THE NOVEL BY EDWARD SWIFT, AND THE BOOK AND LYRICS OF THE MUSICALS THE BODY SNATCHERS AND BOY PROBLEMS. OTHER WORKS INCLUDE THE SUMMER OF DAISY FAY AND THE GLORY GETTER, BOTH BASED ON DAISY FAY AND THE MIRACLE MAN, THE FIRST NOVEL BY FANNY FLAGG; HAMLET, TEXAS, A MODERN DAY RETELLING OF SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET SET IN WEST TEXAS ON THE RANCH OF AN OIL TYCOON; AND BOOK AND LYRICS FOR THE TEMPEST TOSSED, A MUSICAL COMEDY SPOOF OF THE THE TEMPEST FEATURING SHAKESPEARE AND THE MUSES. THE TUNA TRILOGY PLAYS WERE AWARDED THE LOS ANGELES DRAMALOGUE AWARD, THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA CRITICS AWARD, AND RECEIVED HELEN HAYES AWARD NOMINATIONS. AFTER ITS CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED BROADWAY DÉBUT, A TUNA CHRISTMAS WAS PUBLISHED IN BEST PLAYS OF 1995 AND GARNERED FOR MR. SEARS A TONY NOMINATION.



JASTON WILLIAMS

IS CO-AUTHOR AND CO-STAR OF GREATER TUNA AND THE WILDLY SUCCESSFUL TUNA TRILOGY. MR. WILLIAMS HAS BEEN CREATING THE CITIZENS OF TUNA SINCE 1982. HE HAS RECEIVED WASHINGTON DC'S HELEN HAYES AWARD NOMINATIONS FOR A TUNA CHRISTMAS AND RED, WHITE AND TUNA AS WELL AS THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA CRITICS AWARD FOR GREATER TUNA. MR. WILLIAMS RECEIVED THE L.A. DRAMALOGUE AWARD FOR BOTH GREATER TUNA AND A TUNA CHRISTMAS AND THE TEXAS GOVERNOR'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE ARTS BY A NATIVE. IN HIS HOMETOWN OF AUSTIN, TEXAS, HIS ACTING CREDITS ARE EXTENSIVE, MOST RECENTLY APPEARING AT ZACHARY SCOTT THEATRE IN THE LARAMIE PROJECT. HE WORK-SHOPPED HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ONE-MAN SHOW I'M NOT LYING TO CRITICAL ACCLAIM AT AUSTIN'S STATE THEATRE OF TEXAS AND RETURNED IT THERE FOR A FULL PRODUCTION IN FEBRUARY OF 2004 AS WELL AS A BENEFIT PERFORMANCE AT WASHINGTON DC'S KENNEDY CENTER. HIS LATEST AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PLAY COWBOY NOISES PREMIERED IN AUSTIN IN FEBRUARY 2008 TO CRITICAL ACCLAIM.



JOE SEARS

IS CO-AUTHOR AND CO-STAR OF GREATER TUNA AND THE WILDLY SUCCESSFUL TUNA TRILOGY. MR. SEARS HAS TOURED EXTENSIVELY WITH TUNA TRILOGY PRODUCTIONS SINCE 1982. HIS SIXTH TOUR OF A TUNA CHRISTMAS INCLUDED HIS BROADWAY DEBUT FOR WHICH HE RECEIVED A 1995 TONY AWARD-NOMINATION FOR BEST ACTOR IN A PLAY. HE ORIGINATED GREATER TUNA OFF-BROADWAY WHEN THE SHOW PREMIERED IN 1982 AND HAS PERFORMED IN THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL TOURS AND STARRED IN THE NORMAN LEAR SPECIAL OF GREATER TUNA WHICH AIRED ON HBO. MR. SEARS HAS BEEN ACTING PROFESSIONALLY FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS. HE RECEIVED THE 1993 LOS ANGELES DRAMALOGUE AWARD FOR BEST ACTOR IN A TUNA CHRISTMAS. HE PERFORMED IN THE MUSICAL COMEDY THE FANTASTICKS AT FORD'S THEATRE IN WASHINGTON, DC AND AT CASA MAÑANA THEATRE IN FORT WORTH. HE MADE HIS MOVIE DEBUT WITH TOMMY LEE JONES AND MATT DAMON IN THE GOOD OLD BOYS. MR. SEARS ALSO OWNS AND OPERATES CODY STAGE, A SUMMER STOCK THEATRE COMPANY IN CODY, WY.