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**Sigourney Weaver to Host *Theater Close-Up***  
**A Weekly Series Showcasing**  
**The Best of Off-Broadway, Premiering**  
**Thursday, October 2 at 9 p.m. on THIRTEEN**

*Works by Richard Nelson, John Van Druten, Hamish Linklater, Steven Banks,  
Brian Richard Mori, Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson*  
*Topline the Inaugural Season*

Beyond the bright lights of Broadway – the electric signage that led to its moniker as “The Great White Way” -- exists another world: Off-Broadway, a varied and rich wellspring of creativity and innovation. It is the place where both the next generation of actors, playwrights, and directors are developing their voices and veteran talents return to explore their artistic passions.

While there is a multitude of Off- and Off-Off-Broadway theaters, producing hundreds of new works each season, most of these shows play just a few weeks and many are seen by only a small audience. The new series, ***Theater Close-Up***, a unique collaboration between THIRTEEN and that large community of non-profit Off-Broadway theaters, will finally bring a diverse cross-section of those provocative plays to primetime and online audiences.

The series – which will be hosted by acclaimed actress **Sigourney Weaver** -- premieres Thursday, October 2 at 9 p.m. on THIRTEEN with John Van Druten’s “**London Wall**” from the Mint Theater Company, dedicated to bringing worthy but neglected plays back to the stage, and continues on successive Thursdays at 10 p.m. with repeat broadcasts on Sunday evenings following *Masterpiece*. (WLIW21 will air the series on Monday evenings beginning October 6 at 10:30 p.m.)

THIRTEEN is using its unrivaled expertise in producing national PBS arts programming – starting with such classic series as *Theater in America*, part of the award-winning series *Great Performances* and special limited series such as *Stage on Screen* -- to provide New Yorkers with unparalleled access to one of the City’s greatest underexposed cultural assets.

The plays run the emotional and thematic gamut: from Richard Nelson's cycle "**The Apple Family Plays**," presented by The Public Theater; Hamish Linklater's "**The Vandal**," presented by The Flea Theater; Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson's "**An Iliad**," presented by New York Theatre Workshop; Brian Richard Mori's "**Hellman v. McCarthy**," presented by Abingdon Theatre Company; and an encore presentation of The Flea's "**Looking at Christmas**" by Steven Banks.

**October 2, 2014**  
**London Wall (Mint Theater Company)**

John Van Druten's play explores the tumultuous lives and love affairs of the women employed as shorthand typists in a busy solicitor's office in 1930's London. Pat Milligan, a naïve young typist, falls for the charms of a predatory junior lawyer. Watching with concern is the firm's senior secretary, her too-timid suitor and several others in the office. Presiding over all is Mr. Walker, gamely trying to navigate a new kind of office where men and women must work side by side. The 1931 play was acclaimed for its hyper-realistic depiction of office life as well as its soulful probing of the dreams and desires of its female characters.

Best known today for such Broadway hits as *I Remember Mama* and *I Am a Camera* (which inspired the musical *Cabaret*), John Van Druten wrote deftly observed, character-driven plays. Directed by Davis McCallum. With Matthew Gumley, Stephen Plunkett, Alex Trow, Julia Coffey, Elise Kibler, Laurie Kennedy, Christopher Sears, Katie Gibson, and Jonathan Hogan.

"This witty, glisteningly crafted tale of a quartet of working women and the benighted men for whom they work has a distinctly contemporary flavor, enough that you'll come away wondering whether Van Druten might deserve credit for inventing the workplace comedy decades before it found favor on TV." - Terry Teachout, *The Wall Street Journal*.

**October 9, 2014**  
**Hellman v. McCarthy (Abingdon Theatre Company)**

The greatest literary feud in modern American history began on January 25, 1980 when author Mary McCarthy appeared as a guest on "The Dick Cavett Show" and declared that "every word [playwright Lillian Hellman] writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the.'" Hellman went ballistic and sued McCarthy for libel, sparking a lawsuit that spanned more than four years. Brian Richard Mori's *Hellman v. McCarthy*, a roller coaster ride filled with comedy and pathos, features Emmy Award-winner Dick Cavett, as he recreates his role in the actual events. Directed by Jan Buttram. With Roberta Maxwell, and Marcia Rodd.

"Director Jan Buttram energetically blends the series of compact scenes in 90 fast-flying minutes. History and artistic license blur together with the real Dick Cavett...laughing along with the audience at his own hokey jokes." -Jennifer Farrar, *Associated Press*

**The Apple Family Plays: Scenes from Life in the Country (The Public Theater)**

Each year since 2010, Tony Award winner Richard Nelson premiered a new play about the fictional, liberal Apple family of Rhinebeck, New York. These plays about family, politics, change, and the way we live today burst with immediacy. Each of the four plays originally premiered on the night on which the action – a key national event in contemporary American history -- is set. Directed by Richard Nelson. With Maryann Plunkett, Jay O. Sanders, Laila Robins, Jon DeVries, Stephen Kunken, and Sally Murphy.

**October 16, 2014**  
**That Hopey Changey Thing**

The Apples reflect on the state of their family and discuss memory, manners and politics as polls close on midterm election night 2010 and a groundswell of conservative sentiment flips Congress on its head.

**October 23, 2014**

**Sweet and Sad**

A family brunch stirs up discussions of loss, remembrance and a decade of change on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11.

**October 30, 2014**

**Sorry**

The Apples sort through family anxieties and confusion on the day of the re-election of President Barack Obama in 2012.

**November 6, 2014**

**Regular Singing**

The final play in the cycle takes place on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination.

As Public Theater Artistic Director Oskar Eustis observes, "The election plays are filled with anxiety and uncertainty; the anniversary plays are suffused with mourning and loss. All four are leavened by the love and support the Apple Family give each other as they navigate family and country."

"A rare and radiant mirror on the way we live – a deeply intimate drama with a superb ensemble! To my knowledge, no previous works of theater have been topical in the resonant and specific ways of The Apple Family Plays."- Ben Brantley, *The New York Times*, 12/11/13

**November 13**

**The Vandal (The Flea Theater)**

The playwriting debut of actor Hamish Linklater ("Music in the Moonlight," "The New Adventures of Old Christine"). Set on a freezing night in Kingston, New York, a woman meets a boy at a bus stop. The play is about how we live and the stories we tell ourselves when we're haunted by the people we've loved and lost. Directed by Jim Simpson. With Deirdre O'Connell, Zach Grenier, and Noah Robbins.

"[Hamish] Linklater demonstrates a Conor McPherson–esque way with spinning stories and a remarkable, all-too-rare willingness to take risks." - *Entertainment Weekly*

**November 20**

**An Iliad (New York Theatre Workshop)**

Co-adapted by Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson, based on Homer's *Iliad* translated by Robert Fagles. A sprawling yarn based on the epic poem, *An Iliad* spins the familiar tale of gods and goddesses, undying love and endless battles told through an original and immediate voice. An account of humanity's unshakeable attraction to violence, destruction, and chaos. Has anything really changed since the Trojan War? Directed by Lisa Peterson. With Denis O'Hare ("Dallas Buyer's Club," "True Blood").

"PURE THEATRE. Shocking, glorious, primal and deeply satisfying. ...fills the eye with astounding sights – almost more than our hearts can bear." –David Cote, *Time Out New York*

**November 27**

**Looking at Christmas (The Flea Theater)**

From Steven Banks (head writer of "SpongeBob Squarepants"), the play takes place on Christmas Eve in New York City. A failed writer and a struggling actress meet while looking at the famous holiday windows and the windows come to life and look back at them, including a lecherous elf

with eyes for Mrs. Claus, and an alien Scrooge arguing with an android Tiny Tim about reinterpreting classic Christmas stories. The Flea's resident acting company, the Bats, star in this romantic comedy. Directed by Jim Simpson. With Michael Micalizzi and Allison Buck.

"Looking at Christmas" is a lovely, sweet, innocent, and most importantly, inspiring story about boy meets girl..." Kseniya Zaslavskaya, *NY City Buzz Examiner*

**Theater Close-Up** is a production of THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET. The plays were directed for television by David Horn. Mitch Owing is producer; Bill O'Donnell is series producer; and David Horn is executive producer. Executive-in-charge: Neal Shapiro.

Major funding for the premiere season of **Theater Close-Up** provided by Bernard and Irene Schwartz, Jack and Shirley Silver, Estate of Robert Brivic, Rosalind P. Walter, and the President's Innovation Fund.

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