Sister Mary Ignatius explains it all for you

by Christopher Durang
About The American Century Theater

The American Century Theater was founded in 1994. We are a professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to presenting great, important, and worthy American plays of the twentieth century—what Henry Luce called “the American Century.”

The company’s mission is one of rediscovery, enlightenment, and perspective, not nostalgia or preservation. Americans must not lose the extraordinary vision and wisdom of past playwrights, nor can we afford to surrender the moorings to our shared cultural heritage.

Our mission is also driven by a conviction that communities need theater, and theater needs audiences. To those ends, this company is committed to producing plays that challenge and move all Americans, of all ages, origins, and points of view. In particular, we strive to create theatrical experiences that entire families can watch, enjoy, and discuss long afterward.

Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You
by Christopher Durang

June 8–July 7, 2012

Gunston Theatre Two
2700 South Lang Street, Arlington

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This program is supported in part by Arlington County through the Arlington Commission for the Arts and Arlington Cultural Affairs, a division of Arlington Economic Development; the Virginia Commission for the Arts; the National Endowment for the Arts; and many generous donors.

Please—Silence and stow cell phones and other distracting devices. The use of recording equipment and taking of photographs during the performance are strictly prohibited.

Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service.
Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You
by Christopher Durang (1979)

Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You marks the first time The American Century Theater has ventured into the strange, acerbic, often hilarious but always troubling world of playwright Christopher Durang. The timing could not be better—from Durang’s point of view, and perhaps that of Sister Mary as well. For the main topic of Durang’s satire, the Catholic Church, has been much in the news recently, as has the role of religion in American life generally. Since the play was first performed in 1979, the issue of religion has become more polarizing in the United States than ever before, with adherents of Catholicism and Christianity often arguing, and clearly feeling, as if they were under attack by the culture, the media, and the government.

Catholicism is definitely under attack from Durang in Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You. The best comedy often surfaces from the depths of rage, and Durang allowed his long-simmering anger against the Sister Marys of his own upbringing to pour out in his portrayal of the dictatorial parochial school nun who uses guilt like a waterboard and dogma like a whip. The result was praise from theater critics and horror from the Catholic community, which launched efforts to ban the comedy in some communities. Religion, to the surprise of some, had become one of the last remaining taboos of the comic theater. Sex and race were well on their way to being able to support satirical treatment, but outside of some funny drunken clerics, hard-edged comedy that included criticism of any specific religion had never been attempted in a mainstream comedy.

The remarkable thing, TACT discovered, was that the wounds left by Durang’s play are so deep. During the run of the show, the company plans to hold regular post-show discussions about the specific and broader issues raised by the play, including Catholic education, the role of morality in America, and the limits of religious freedom. Responses to our inquiries to various Catholic Church resources for participation and assistance can only be described as hostile . . . polite, but hostile. The Church’s representatives and employees do not regard the play that made it a target as funny and wanted no part of a forum to consider its themes, critically or not.

We decided to depart from the usual practice in presenting this one-act play and allow it to be freestanding, rather than pairing it, as is often done, with Durang’s The Actor’s Nightmare. There were two reasons for this. The primary one is that Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You, the
more substantive of the two works, deserves your full attention. The play raises many matters worthy of discussion and thought, and discussion and thought take time as well as focus.

The other reason for letting Sister Mary have the stage to herself is my own theory, after seeing many two-play, one-act bills and having produced several of them, that two disparate and unrelated shows, even by the same playwright, lessen the impact of each other when they share a single evening of theater. The plays are inevitably compared—reviewers invariably like one play better—and this is distracting and unfair. As always, TACT is fascinated by the prospect of seeing how a work from a different period in American culture feels and plays today, and bringing Durang’s monstrous but provocative nun into the emotion-charged religious and political environment of 2012 promises to be especially enlightening . . . if a little frightening.

—Jack Marshall, Artistic Director

**Director’s Notes**

Having been a (frequently reluctant) product of Roman Catholic education, from first grade through college, I had my share of “Sister Marys” along the way. The worst was Sister Mary Laurentia, who terrorized us first-graders with threats of putting us through the “grinding machine” (actually the school’s boiler room) if we misbehaved and who punished students caught talking in class by Scotch-taping their mouths shut and sitting them in front of the classroom like so many pint-sized Hannibal Lecters. To me, Durang’s play feels more like a documentary exposé than a satire. (Honestly, it’s like some kid wore a wire during one of those classes I endured, and this play was the transcript.) But, of course, it’s also savagely funny—Durang’s ear for the sort of sociopathic, hypocritically “Catholic” screed coming out of nuns like Sister Mary is uncannily on-the-money and comes across as as absurd as something Ionesco might have concocted. And it all feels strikingly contemporary—witness this year’s presidential primary season—in its dealings with social issues like abortion, women’s rights, gay unions, and domestic violence, in the context of so-called “Christian” compassion.

So for those of us who (narrowly) survived a Catholic education and still bear the scars—as well as those who observe that wacky Church of Rome from the outside with understandable bewilderment—this is a theatre piece that, I feel, still delivers some potent laughs and chills a generation after it was written.

—Joe Banno, Director

**Cast**

**D. Grant Cloyd** (Gary) has worked with numerous DC area theaters including Rep Stage, Source Festival, Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, Venus Theatre, Faction of Fools, 1st Stage, Spooky Action Theater, Synetic Theater, and The Washington Rogues (where he is a company member). He currently performs a one-person show about the life of Saul Bernstein in conjunction with the Jewish Museum of Maryland. He has also been seen in television commercials, independent short films, and industrials. A graduate of St. Mary’s College of Maryland Theatre/Film program, he has additional training from Mamet’s Atlantic Acting School.

**Tiffany Garfinkle** (Diane) was last seen in *Hellspawn* (Active Cultures Theatre), Off-Broadway: Jodi in *Bernie’s Bar Mitzvah*. Regional: Zop, Art, and Ava in *Priscilla Dreams the Answer* and Guildenstern in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Nu Sass Productions); Miranda in *Not Such Stuff* (Venus Theatre); Adjutant Shalva in *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and Ass/Cat in *Story Theater* (Open Circle Theatre); Afghan Woman in *The Vagina Monologues* (DC Dollies & the Rocket Bitch Review); Mrs. Lescalzo in *Awesome Eighties Prom* (Hippodrome); Sous Chef in *Cooking with Elvis* (Woolly Mammoth); Wallace (u/s) in *Living Out* (Round House Theatre). Film: Dancer in *Hairspray* (original, directed by John Waters).

**Three Eras. Six Women. No Ladies.**

**THE CONFINES OF FLATTERY**

**July 12–29, 2012**

Redrum—Fort Fringe
612 L St. NW, Washington, DC, 20001
**Tickets:** capitalfringe.org or 866-814-4111
triptychproductions.woebly.com

This production is presented as part of the 7th Annual Capital Fringe Festival, July 12 to 29, 2012. A program of the Washington, DC non-profit Capital Fringe.
Cam Magee (Sister Mary Ignatius) has spent her professional life in Washington DC working as an actor, teaching artist, and dramaturge. She has appeared at Folger Theatre, Arena Stage, Shakespeare Theatre, Woolly Mammoth, WSC Avant Bard, Theater J, Catalyst Theater, Source, Rorschach Theatre, and the Washington Stage Guild, where she received a Helen Hayes nomination for Mrs. Cheveley in An Ideal Husband. She was recently seen as Mistress Quickly in Henry IV (V) and Juno in Juno and the Paycock (WSC Avant Bard). She is a teaching artist with the Folger Shakespeare Library (twenty-nine seasons) and was a teaching artist with Ford’s Theatre (seven seasons). This play marks her fifteenth collaboration with Joe Banno.

Anne Nottage (Philomena) is returning to The American Century Theater where she was seen in MacBird! and Machinal. Other DC area credits: Scena Theatre, WSC Avant Bard, Maryland Shakespeare Festival, Rep Stage, Capital Fringe Festival, Constellation Theatre Company, Molotov Theatre Group, Charter Theatre, Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, Studio Theatre Secondstage, and Olney Theatre Center. Anne holds a BA in Early Modern Theatre and Literature from Marlboro College and an MFA in Acting from The Catholic University of America.

Arturo Tolestino (Aloysius) is returning for his second production at The American Century Theater, where he first played in the 17th-season opener, The Country Girl. Other credits include African Roots/Latino Soul (Discovery Theater, an educational touring program of the Smithsonian Institute) and Holes (Adventure Theatre).

Colin Trinity (Thomas) has appeared in numerous school productions, including as Carnes in Oklahoma! and Chip in Beauty and the Beast. He graduated from Alice Deal Middle School in Washington DC and will be in the ninth grade at The Field School in Fall 2012.

Production Staff

Joe Banno (Director), a Helen Hayes Award–winning director, has staged over eighty theatrical productions around the country, including contemporary plays at LA’s Mutineer Theatre, NYC’s Blue Heron Theatre, and DC’s Source Theatre (where he was artistic director 1997–2006). His acclaimed updatings of Shakespeare have been seen at Folger Theatre, Washington Shakespeare Company, and American Shakespeare Center, among others. Banno has directed over forty opera productions, most recently for Opera Delaware, Wolf Trap Opera, and the Alba Music Festival in Italy. He directed his first independent feature film, Sleeping and Waking, in 2008 and is currently in development on a second. He reviews classical music for the Washington Post and TheClassicalReview.com.

Arthur Brill (Master Carpenter) has worked in the entertainment industry for twenty years. His forte is designing and building sets, props, and displays for theater, film, and theme parks, and producing independent interactive theatrical attractions. Virginia experience includes set design and tech direction for Ashland Stage Company, tech direction for the Ash Lawn Opera Festival, and prop shop manager for Contemporary American Theater Festival. This is his second production with The American Century Theater, where he designed props for Beyond the Horizon. He is founder of the Ashland Arts Alliance.

Casey Kaleba (Fight Coach) is a Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors. He has staged violence for nearly three hundred productions. Recent work includes Double Indemnity at Round House Theatre, The Taming of the Shrew at Folger Theatre, Sleuth at Olney Theatre Center, Really Really at Signature Theatre, and The Merry Wives of Windsor at Shakespeare Theatre Company. www.toothandclawcombat.com

Kevin Laughon (Properties Design) was Production Manager at MetroStage (2004–2011) as well as sound board operator, box office manager, and scenic artist. He currently works on technical teams at many DC area theaters. Favorite productions for properties design include: The Musical of Musicals (The Musical!), A Broadway Christmas Carol, and Crazy for You. He has worked at area theaters, schools, and dance studios for over twenty years as an actor/singer/dancer and choreographer/teacher. Last stage performance: The Producers (Toby’s). Film: J. Edgar, Breach, The Invasion. TV: Game Change and VEEP (HBO); The Firm (NBC pilot).

Ed Moser (Sound Design) is a regional audio-production veteran with thirty years’ experience. Recent designs include Master Harold and the Boys (Quotidian Theatre), Amelia (Kennedy Center’s Page-to-Stage reading), Paul Morella’s A Christmas Carol, and Little Murders, The Country Girl, and Visit to a Small Planet (The American Century Theater). Favorite musical credits include Señor Discretion Himself (Arena Stage), Urinetown (University of Maryland), David in Shadow and Light (Theater J), and Godspell (Olney Theatre Center).

Baron Pugh (Stage Manager) was Production Stage Manager for the Sixth Annual Ten-Minute Play Festival, Director for Medea, Costume Designer for Barefoot in the Park, Scenic Designer for The Elephant Man, Lighting Designer for tempOdyssey, and Stage Manager for Say
Goodnight, Gracie (all George Mason University, where he studied theater design and stage management). Other credits include Lighting Design for Steel Magnolias (The Keegan Theatre) and The Last Five Years (Kensington Arts Theatre).

Steven Royal (Scenic Design) most recently designed Suicide, Incorporated for No Rules Theatre Company. Prior credits include Goodspeed Opera House, North Shore Musical Theatre, Weston Playhouse, Annapolis Shakespeare Company, 1st Stage, Theater Alliance, American Ensemble Theater, and Active Cultures Theatre. Education: North Carolina School of the Arts.

Trena Weiss-Null (Lighting Co-design) is happy to be back at The American Century Theater after a hiatus and brings with her her talented former student, Nathan Wunderlich. Trena has been doing theatre in one form or another for almost her entire life: She has a degree in Acting-Directing as well as Master’s degrees in Theatre and Curriculum and Instruction and has been an actor, director, choreographer, set designer, costume designer, props designer, master builder, and theatre manager as well as teaching theatre for twenty-five years. She designed and built the sets for many TACT favorites—including Cops, The Titans, and An American Century Christmas. Other credits include set design and build for Steel Magnolias (The Keegan Theatre).

Cheryl Patton Wu (Costume Design) launched her freelance career this season after three years designing for 1st Stage (recipient of the 2009 John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre), where she was a founding artist and Costume Director. She designed over twenty productions at 1st Stage, including this season’s Side Man, Three Bears (a co-production with First Draft), Parfumerie, and Don’t Dress for Dinner. Other credits include The Last Five Years (Limelight Theatre) and Cabaret, La Voix Humaine, Suor Angelica, Trouble in Tahiti, and The Medium (The Catholic University of America).

Nathan Wunderlich (Lighting Co-design) is a Lighting Design BFA candidate at Virginia Commonwealth University. This is his first show with The American Century Theater, and he is glad to be taking this step into the professional theatre world with all of these wonderful people.
The Players ($100–$249) continued
Jean Handsberry
Chris and Adriana Hardy
Art Hauptman and Maureen McLaughlin
Alan Herman and Irene Szopo
Thomas W. Hoya
Norma Kaplan
Charles Lady
Winnie Macfarlan
Angus and Sharon MacInnes
Judith and David McGarvey
Richard and Dorothy Miller
Toni Muller
Suzy Platt
Bruce Rauscher
Andy Reynolds
William and Connie Scruggs
John Seal
Gene Smith
Jennifer Sosin and Adam Posen
Marcia Neuhaus Speck
Barbara Stearns
Virginia Tarris
Kathryn Tatko
Professor Heathcote W. Wales
Barbara Washburn
Marilynn Wilson

The Federal Theater Funders ($10–$99)
Anonymous
Martha E. Alliston
Elizabeth Anderson
Wallace Averill
Cheryl Bailey
and William M. McClanahan, Jr.
Debra Berry
J. Breck Blalock
Joseph and Andrea Broder
Pamela Brodie
Laura Burchard
Charles Butts
Patricia Chapla
Gerald L. Chapman
Boris and Earlene Cherney
Susan Wise Clay
Charlotte W. Cleary
Ronald E. Cogan
Ray Converse
Daniel and Nancy Cooper
Sally H. Cooper,
in memory of Patricia Zimmerman
Karen Danner
Mary Kay Davis
Judy Davis
Donna Denney
Kate Dorrell
Robert Draba
Tracey Eastman and Greg Renz
William Erdmann
Janet and Marty Fadden
Charles Feingersh
Donna Feirtag
Renee Fischman
Leigh Anna Fry
Cathy Garman
James and Maria Gentle
Madi R. Green
Beth and Marshall Green
Gerald Greenwald
Patricia Hagan
Rachel Hecht
Edward Herranz
Steve Hornstein
Laurence Jarvik
N.B. Jarvis
Eric Johnson
Howard and Myrna Kaplan

Reviews of professional, community, university, and children’s theatre productions in DC, MD, and VA theatres.


A dining guide for pre-and-post theater.

Columns: ‘Nibbles and Sips,’ ‘Joel Says,’
‘Capital Music,’ ‘Back to School,’
‘Stage Write,’ and ‘Cyle Raves.’

A list of local theaters in the DC Metro area

DCMetroTheaterArts.com
Complete coverage of the arts in the DC Metro area
The Federal Theater Funders ($10–$99) continued
Charles and Ellen Kennedy
Robert Kimmins
Vivian Kincheloe
Donald Konicoff
Shirley Kostik
Robert Kraft
Jo Ursini and Ken Krantz
Jay Krasnow
David A. Lamdin
Mary Ann Lawler and Neal Signom
Dianne Levine
Mark and Sarah Linton
Margaret Lorenz
Gudrun Luchsinger
Elaine Lynch
David and Carol MacLean
James Mangi
Capt. Lory F. Manning, USN Ret
David Marlin
Phebe K. Masson
Evelyn and Milan Matey
Henry C. Mayo
Alexandra McElwaine
Carren Medina
Margaret Miller
John Moran
Margaret Mulcahy
Betty Mullen
Geoffrey Nixon
David Ochroch
Tricia O’Reilly
Paul and Carol Parowski
Ricardo Parra
Ruth and Charles Perry
Gerda Picco
Katherine Powers
Jonathan Price
Thomas Ratliff
Kathryn Richmond
Rhoda Ritzenberg and Ken Heitner
Francis Roche
Michael and Loretta Rowe
Sigrid Schaeffer
John H. Schneider
Sharon Schoumacher
Carole Shifrin
Bertha Shostak
Bob and Deb Smith
Pat Spencer Smith
Diane Sollod
John M. and Alison L. Steadman
Paul and Linda Steinmetz
Joyce Suydam
Marjorie Townsend
Martha Trunk
William Turner
M. Tyszkiwicz
George and Kay Wagner
Andrea Walker
Doug and Evelyn Watson
Adrienne White
Ed Wilde
Bonnie Williams
Sandra and Bernard Wixon
Carol and Henry Wolinsky
Jeanette L. Wurster
Lee Zahnow and George Krumbhaar

Donors-in-kind Rebecca Christy, Brian Crane, Dennis Deloria, Ellen Dempsey, Kate Dorrell, Bill Gordon, Vivian Kallen, Loren Platzman

Download the podcast. Listen in as Artistic Director Jack Marshall discusses the TACT production of *Sister Mary Explains It All for You* with Director Joe Banno and Cam Magee, in the role of Sister Mary Ignatius. Podcast available for download from www.AmericanCentury.org.
Cassatt’s is a cozy, bistro-style restaurant serving tasty dishes featuring a New Zealand flair. Open seven days a week, we serve Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner and Weekend Brunch, with specialty coffees, wines and homemade desserts.

Try our Early and Late Kiwi Menu, served Monday–Friday from 4:00–6:00 pm and 8:00 pm to closing

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