

For Immediate Release

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IMPROBABLE THEATRE PERFORMS U.S. PREMIERE OF *THE HANGING MAN* AT THE WEXNER CENTER

***SHOW LAUNCHED DURING WEXNER CENTER RESIDENCY
LAST YEAR HAS RECEIVED RAVES IN EUROPE***

“Exemplary ensemble work and beautifully imaginative moments from a company that has not, thankfully, been dazzled by its own success.”—*The Times* (London) on *The Hanging Man*

England’s ever-inventive **Improbable Theatre** returns to the Wexner Center for the U.S. premiere of its darkly comic, artfully realized new production ***The Hanging Man***. Improbable Theatre has delighted Wexner Center audiences in past seasons with *Shockheaded Peter*, *Spirit*, and *70 Hill Lane*. The company will perform *The Hanging Man* **October 2–4 at 8 pm** in Thurber Theatre at Drake Center in a show co-commissioned by the Wexner Center as part of a Wexner Center Residency Award.

Both medieval and modern, *The Hanging Man* is an update on the Middle Ages mystery play with its chorus of clown-like punchinello characters. The show tells the bittersweet tale of Edward Braff, a brilliant architect who dreams of building a majestic cathedral but ends up frustrated, suicidal, and suspended in limbo by a noose of his own design. Among the beams, ropes, pillars, and tapestries is the peculiar troupe that tells the tale it always tells—of the hapless hanging man, his unrealized potential, and his hopeless and hilarious struggle to dictate his own terms to Death. The *Bradford Telegraph & Argus* (UK) wrote that the show is “at turns generously funny and inescapably moving...a startlingly original production performed by a company that is totally at the top of their game.” The *Yorkshire Evening Post* called it “improbable, unlikely, different, strange, unusual, mesmerizing, fascinating, hilarious and terrifying.”

Launched during a Wexner Center residency in the summer of 2002 by artistic directors Phelim McDermott, Lee Simpson, and Julian Crouch, as well as U.S.-based

sound designer Darron West of the SITI company, *The Hanging Man* is the physical scale of *Shockheaded Peter* while closer in dramatic intent to productions like *70 Hill Lane* and *Spirit*.

The Hanging Man debuted in London last spring, and has been performed in several cities in England and at a major festival in Vienna. Its performance at the Wexner Center kicks off its U.S. tour, which includes Brooklyn Academy of Music's prestigious Next Wave Festival 2003. The show is coproduced by the Wexner Center, The West Yorkshire Playhouse, Walker Art Center, The Lyric Hammersmith, and Weiner Festwochen.

Improbable Theatre has performed around the world, earning an OBIE award for Outstanding Achievement. This marks the group's fourth trip to the Wexner Center. More information on Improbable Theatre can be found at www.improbable.co.uk.

WEXNER CENTER RESIDENCY AWARD

Wexner Center Residency Awards offer significant financial resources and technical support to artists to develop and showcase new work and provide opportunities for interaction with the Ohio State community and our patrons. This program is an essential part of the Wexner Center's mission to serve as a creative research laboratory.

In July of 2002, Residency Award recipients Improbable Theatre came to the Wexner Center for intensive workshops to begin developing characters and material for *The Hanging Man*. Looking to expand the role of sound design in their work, they solicited suggestions from the Wexner Center for potential collaborators that might fulfill this role. Subsequently, they were joined here for this creative residency by Darron L West, a member of The SITI Company, whose award-winning soundscapes have enriched many productions. Together, they drafted a working outline of *The Hanging Man* that informed the way the show took shape as it evolved. At the residency's conclusion, they presented a popular public discussion about their creative process and the fresh material they developed here.

During their October visit, Lee Simpson and members of the Improbable design team will present a workshop for Ohio State theater students.

EVENT SUPPORT

Improbable Theatre's *The Hanging Man* is a coproduction with the **Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University** with support from the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**, **The West Yorkshire Playhouse**, the **Walker Art Center** through a grant from **The Rockefeller Foundation's Multi-Arts Production Fund** with additional support provided by the **National Endowment for the Arts**, **The Lyric Hammersmith**, and **Weiner Festwochen**.

These performances are supported by the **British Council**. They are also supported by **Heartland Arts Fund**, a program of **Arts Midwest** funded by the **National Endowment for the Arts**, with additional contributions from **General Mills Foundation**, **Land O'Lakes Foundation**, **Sprint Corporation**, and the **Ohio Arts Council**.

Major support for the Wexner Center's 2003–04 performing arts season is provided by the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**. Additional season support is provided by the **Ohio Arts Council** and the **Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation**.

CALENDAR INFORMATION FOR IMPROBABLE THEATRE:

Description: British theatre troupe Improbable Theatre performs the U.S. premiere of the critically acclaimed *The Hanging Man*.

Dates and times: Thursday–Saturday, October 2–4 at 8 pm

Location: Thurber Theatre at Drake Center, 1849 Cannon Drive (across from the Stadium).

Tickets: \$20 general public; \$16 Wexner Center members; \$10 OSU students; \$5 High 5 tickets available for middle and high school students at Ticketmaster outlets.

Ticket outlet: Wexner Center Ticket Office/Information Desk, 614 292-3535 and Ticketmaster outlets, 614 431-3600.

Public information: 614 292-3535 and www.wexarts.org; www.improbable.co.uk

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Digital images available upon request.

WEXNER CENTER

The Wexner Center for the Arts is The Ohio State University's multidisciplinary, international laboratory for the exploration and advancement of contemporary art. Through exhibitions, screenings, performances, artist residencies, and educational programs, the Wexner Center acts as a forum where established and emerging artists can test ideas and where diverse audiences can participate in cultural experiences that enhance understanding of the art of our time. In its programs, the Wexner Center balances a commitment to experimentation with a commitment to traditions of innovation and affirms the university's mission of education, research, and community service.

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