

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE EVENT

# THE PITMEN PAINTERS

by Lee Hall (Billy Elliot playwright)

Directed by Lesley Delmenico



**March 7–9, 2013**

7:30 p.m., Flanagan Theatre

**March 10, 2013**

2 p.m., Flanagan Theatre

GRINNELL COLLEGE



## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

**Lesley Delmenico** (Director) received her interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance Studies from Northwestern University. In addition to directing, she teaches acting, performance studies, community/political/intercultural performance, postcolonial and contemporary British theatre. She has recently adapted three Salman Rushdie stories for the stage, directed U.S. premieres of London productions on immigration, private security contractors in Iraq, and climate change, and has taught a course on London sites of performance for Grinnell-in-London. Her research continues on urban communities, particularly issues affecting women and children, and includes performances in the aftermath of genocide in East Timor. For the documentary, *Water Pressures*, she devised a play about water insecurity with a group of Mumbai women artisans. She is currently engaged in *Too Big*, a multi-institutional ethnographic collaboration about work and dreams following the financial crisis, for which she will stage a Grinnell-devised performance in spring 2014.

## PROGRAM NOTES

*Pitmen Painters* playwright Lee Hall also wrote the popular screenplay and musical, *Billy Elliot*, about a working class boy who is born to dance and earns the right to do so against the harsh economic realities of Thatcherite England. Hall considers *The Pitmen Painters*, set in the northeastern English mining town of Ashington in the 1930s, to be a kind of prequel to *Billy Elliot*. He has mused about the sustained popular acclaim for *Pitmen*, which won the *Evening Standard* Award for Best New Play and has been running in the U.K. and the U.S. since 2007, stating, “I’m still surprised how well *Pitmen Painters* was received. Nobody dies on stage, nobody gets married, there’s no sex or drugs.” Part of the appeal of this play is that it is grounded in historical facts (and in William Feaver’s book on the Ashington Group). It’s a play about ordinary lives and everyday heroism that explores often-ignored issues about who gets to make art and who labors--if indeed there is work to be had.

At a time of debate about the value of the humanities and the arts within both the British and American educational systems, and as President Obama calls for an ever-increasing focus on training for technological capabilities, this play asks questions about who can make a living in the arts, and for whom the arts can make life meaningful. For this group of miners, artistic creation provided understanding of their lives as well as the ability to share those meanings with others through their paintings. It is central that these men did not “escape” their working class lives, rather that they chose to continue them *and* to become artists. Hall makes this statement gently and with humor. *The Pitmen Painters* is about recognizing the importance of not only feeding only one’s stomach and brain, but also one’s soul.

# CAST

**Matthew Terry '15** (Jimmy Floyd), an intended Political Science major from Lake Forest, Illinois, is thrilled to be part of *The Pitmen Painters*. This is Matt's first production at the college outside of class. Matt performed in plays, musicals, and a Forensics team during high school. Matt's theatrical focus is long-form improvisation, and he founded and leads the on-campus improvisation ensemble *Infinite Coincidence*. Last summer Matt performed in *Improvised Masterpiece*, long-form improvisation in the style of PBS's *Masterpiece Theater* at the Second City in Chicago.

**Zach Scheffler '13** (George Brown) is a Political Science and Philosophy double major from Berkeley, California. This is his first full length production in the Grinnell College Theatre and Dance Department. Zach has performed in the One Act Festival as well as *Moving On*. Zach has had some theater experience in high school and took classes at the Berkeley Repertory theater. He is very excited to be in this production towards the end of his senior year and hopes to keep theater a part of his post-Grinnell life wherever that may be.

**Abbi Butterfield '13** (Susan Parks) is an English major from Edina, MN. This is her seventh production at Grinnell College. She wants to thank everyone who worked on this show for making her final semester with the Grinnell Theatre Department so wonderful!

**Aaron Lapkin '15** (Oliver Kilbourne) an intended Political Science major from Cheyenne, Wyoming. *The Pitmen Painters* is Aaron's first play, and he plans to continue pursuing his interest in theatre while at Grinnell. Over the summer, Aaron will be in NYC where he will be interning and taking classes at the prestigious comedy theatre sketch group, The United Citizens Brigade.

**Ismael "Alex" Garza '16** (Harry Wilson) is from San Antonio, Texas. He is very excited to be performing in his second role at Grinnell College as Harry in *Pitmen Painters*. He has also appeared as Klein in *Sticks and Stones*, a one act play directed by Zoe Rodriguez. Some of his other roles include Mortimer Brewster (*Arsenic and Old Lace*), Judas (*Godspell*), and Bob the Sheep (*The Revenge of the Space Pandas*).

**John Walther '16** (Young Lad/Ben Nicholson) feels extraordinarily lucky to be part of such a fantastic show. He would love to thank all his friends and family for their support, especially his purely platonic partner: Mr. Jack Blais. Finally, in the words of a silly, yet inspirational high school theatre director: "Break an Egg!" Enjoy the show!

**Joe Kloehn '14** (Robert Lyon) is a third year at Grinnell College, and this is his fourth Grinnell main stage performance. In his second year he played the role of Jules in *Sunday in the Park with George*, and in his first year he starred in both *The Rimers of Eldritch*, in the role of Robert Conklin, and *The Pillowman*, in the role of Michal. In addition to his Grinnell credits, he has performed in high school theatre at the Latin School of Chicago, where played a wide variety of roles ranging from Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, to Mr. Van Daan in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, to Mr. MacAfee in *Bye Bye Birdie*.

**Ann Marie Dalton '13** (Helen Sutherland) is studying Psychology and Sociology. This is her second main stage production at Grinnell.

## DESIGNERS

**Jeff Fightmaster** (Lighting Designer) is lighting his 8th show at Grinnell since 2007. Some of his previous designs at Grinnell include *Broken Mirrors*, *Testing the Echo*, *The Contingency Plan*, *Snow White Retracted*, and *Occupy Roberts*. He has also designed at The Public Theater, The La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego Repertory Theater, Portland Stage, City Theatre in Biddeford, Maine, Diversionary Theater in San Diego, CA, and Kentucky Classical Theater. He received his MFA from the University of California San Diego, in Lighting Design.

**Caleb Sponheim '15** (Sound Designer) is a second year Psychology major and Neuroscience concentrator from Minneapolis, MN. He has been involved in the Grinnell Theater department since he first arrived on campus in 2011 by designing, running, and managing theatrical productions. He does everything Benjamin Doehr does not.

**Ben Doehr '15** (Projections Designer) is a Chemistry & Economics double major and Policy Studies concentrator from San Diego, CA. He has been involved in the Grinnell Theater department since he first arrived on campus in 2011 by designing and running theatrical productions, including *Broken Mirrors*, *Small Elephant Stories*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *tRADitions and enCOUNTers*, among others. He does everything Caleb Sponheim does not.

**Melania Lancy** (Scenic Designer) is delighted to working with the amazing Theater department at Grinnell College for the second year. She is proud to have been the College Counselor at the Chicago Academy for the Arts for the past nine years. In addition to working in education, Melania is also an accomplished designer for various theaters and museums. She has been the resident scenic designer for her Chicago-based theater company, Signal Ensemble Theatre, since 2004 where she has designed almost every one of their sets. Over the years, Melania's work has been honored by: the 2007 Jeff Nomination for Best Scenic Design, the 2008 Jeff Award for Outstanding Musical Production, and the 2009 Equity Jeff Nomination for Best Scenic Design in a Mid-size Theatre. She has designed for numerous other schools and theaters throughout the Chicago area. In addition to designing for the stage, Melania has been commissioned to create commercial sculptures for the John G. Shedd Aquarium, the Brookfield Zoo, Sea World of Texas, and the Museum of Science and Industry. To learn more about Melania please visit: [www.melanielancy.com](http://www.melanielancy.com).

## PRODUCTION TEAM

**Rachael Andrew '16** (Stage Manager) is an intended physics and theater major from Platteville, Wisconsin. She is pleased to have had the opportunity to work as stage manager for the dance production *Small Elephant Stories* and assistant director on *Waiting for Godot* last semester. She has also worked with the Platteville Community Theater and the University of Wisconsin Platteville's Heartland Festival both on the stage and off. She hopes you enjoy the show!

**Jack Blais '16** (Assistant Stage Manager) is an intended political science major from Plano, Texas. He previously helped stage manage *Hand to Mouth* and also directed *One Acts* as a senior in high school. He is incredibly excited to be working on *Pitmen Painters* and is looking forward to continue being involved with the theatre program.

**Ian Saderholm '15** (Assistant Stage Manager) is a theatre major and no stranger to the stage. An avid actor during high school, he performed in over 20 productions before coming to Grinnell (favorite roles include the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*, Mortimer Brewster in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and Elwood P. Dowd in *Harvey*). At Grinnell, he has been seen in *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Broken Mirrors*, and most recently, *Waiting for Godot*. *Pitmen Painter* marks his stage-managerial debut.

**Anna Banker '15** (Assistant Director) is a second year GWSS major from the suburbs of Boston, MA. She has been involved in directing theatre productions for many years. Most recently at Grinnell, she directed the one act *I Dream Before I Take the Stand*. She's currently working on an ethnographic theatre project and plans to do more directing in the future. She loves using theatre for social change, and thinks that this particular play does a wonderful job raising important questions about the relationship between art and social class.