



by Samuel Shem & Janet Surrey

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER  
SPONSORS CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED PLAY, *BILL W. AND DR. BOB*,  
AS PART OF ITS INITIATIVE ON ALCOHOLISM AND ITS TREATMENT**

INTERNATIONALLY CELEBRATED PRODUCTION, PRESENTED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH, SEEKS TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC AND HEALTH-CARE COMMUNITY, TO CELEBRATE RECOVERY, TO REACH OUT TO THOSE WHO STILL SUFFER—AND TO SERVE ALL.

“The miraculous story, beautifully told, of the men who named the disease [of alcoholism] and created the cure.”  
—Martin Sheen

“An insightful new play. Captures the humor of the human experience.”  
—*The New York Times*

**(NEW YORK, NY) NOVEMBER 23, 2015** – In partnership with NYU Langone Medical Center and their Initiative on Alcoholism and its Treatment, and with special thanks to the Department of Psychiatry-Division of Substance Abuse, the SoHo Playhouse is pleased to present the international tour of Samuel Shem and Janet Surrey’s critically-acclaimed play, *Bill W. and Dr. Bob*, with a **press preview on Friday, January 8, 2015** and an **official English opening on Saturday, January 9** and **Spanish opening on Tuesday, January 12**.

*Bill W. and Dr. Bob* is the inspiring and often humorous story of the two men who pioneered Alcoholics Anonymous, and their supportive wives, who founded Al Anon. It returns to Off Broadway at the SoHo Playhouse after an eleven-month, 251 performance run in 2013-2014. (The first Off Broadway run was in 2007 at the New World Stages).

Directed by SoHo Playhouse’s Artistic Director, Darren Lee Cole, this particular revival of the internationally recognized show embarks on a few firsts in the theater community. Not only is this the first time a highly-revered educational and medical institution is using theater as a medium to educate the public and their students, but it’s also the first time the show will be presented in both English and Spanish with the hope of sparking dialogue about addiction to a wider audience. A talented cast of 3 Costa Ricans and 3 Americans will reprise the roles. Overall, the vision of this production is to celebrate the power of recovery, educate the public and health-care community about the disease of alcoholism by breaking down barriers and stigmas, and support outreach to all who still suffer and their friends and loved ones.

To accomplish this, 50% of all tickets will be given away to those in recovery as well as NYU Langone medical staff, faculty and students who are working tirelessly on diagnosis, treatment, and sobriety sustainability methods.

In 1929, famous New York stockbroker Bill Wilson crashes with the stock market and becomes a hopeless drunk. Dr. Bob Smith, a surgeon from Ohio, has also been an alcoholic for thirty years, often going into the operating room with a hangover. Through an astonishing series of events, the two men are brought together and, realizing that “the only thing that can keep a drunk sober is telling his story to another drunk,” forge a relationship. They help each other stay sober, and then pass on what they’ve learned to others. This drama that rides on humor, not only tells the extraordinary story of the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous—which many studies, often from the Division of Substance Abuse at NYU School of Medicine, have shown is the most effective long-term treatment of this disease because of its emphasis on connection and community—but it also goes to the heart of what the practice of medicine is all about: the risk of isolation, and the healing power of good connection. Nearly eight decades later, having never promoted itself, AA spans over 170 countries, with an estimated total of over 114,000 groups and more than two million members worldwide.

Further opportunities for learning and discussion will take place through talkbacks after each show led by playwrights, Samuel Shem and Janet Surrey (Shem is the pen-name for Dr. Steve Bergman, Professor of Medical Humanities at NYU School of Medicine), and other representatives from the school. Furthermore, NYU Langone will host seminars and a colloquium on alcoholism and its treatment, where members of the *Bill W. and Dr. Bob* cast will perform pieces of the show to complement the study and expand the pre-clinical and clinical focus of medical students greatly.

“Alcoholism is a great healthcare challenge and is deserving of attention in medical training and in the practice of medicine,” said **Robert I. Grossman, MD, Dean & CEO, NYU Langone Medical Center**. “We believe this play can be used as a tool to help increase the focus and training of our medical staff and students on the diagnosis and the treatment of this disease, and we are pleased to be part of an initiative which uses theatre as a medium to both inspire and educate the public at large about this important topic.”

“In 1986, as doctors treating alcoholics and addicts, we came across the great American success story of Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith--and felt The Muse tap us on our shoulders: ‘You have to write this, as live theatre, and start it with a guy on one side of the stage saying, “My name is Bill W. and I’m an alcoholic,’ and on the other, ‘Dr. Bob, alcoholic, good t’be here sober,’” said **playwrights Samuel Shem and Janet Surrey**. “We had several goals: to write a great, historically-accurate play that anyone (not just recovering drunks) would love, that would touch, amuse, inspire, educate, do service, and heal--a play that would do good in the world (what an old-fashioned idea!). Forty years later, with the creative and exclusive sponsorship of New York University Langone Medical Center, a great ‘service’ and ‘healing’ institution, our goals are met, our vision coming true.”

Having been presented around the world and in over 35 states in the U.S., *Bill W. and Dr. Bob* has been lauded by critics and audiences alike: (more reviews on website)

“A satisfying revival.” *The New York Times*

"An endearing portrait of friendship uplifted by warm humor. Inspiring!" *The New Yorker*

“Deeply human and audience-embracing.” *Variety*

“Inspiring” and “a textured, truthful telling of AA’s story.” *The Boston Globe*

“Surprisingly entertaining, engrossing, and touching.” *The San Francisco Chronicle*

“A strong theatrical vehicle; a reminder that there is power in community.” *The Huffington Post*

Tickets are \$35-\$55 for all shows and can be purchased at [www.sohoplayhouse.com](http://www.sohoplayhouse.com) and more information can be found at [www.billwanddrbob.com](http://www.billwanddrbob.com). \$25 group tickets are available for blocks of 10 or more.

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## **SCHEDULE IN ENGLISH**

Fri Jan 8, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Sat Jan 9, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Sun Jan 10, 2016 | 5:00PM  
Wed Jan 13, 2016 | 5:00PM  
Thu Jan 14, 2016 | 5:00PM  
Fri Jan 15, 2016 | 5:00PM  
Sun Jan 17, 2016 | 5:00PM  
Wed Jan 20, 2016 | 3:00PM  
Wed Jan 20, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Thu Jan 21, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Fri Jan 22, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Sat Jan 23, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Sun Jan 24, 2016 | 5:00PM

Wed Jan 27, 2016 | 3:00PM  
Wed Jan 27, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Thu Jan 28, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Fri Jan 29, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Sat Jan 30, 2016 | 7:30PM

## **SCHEDULE IN SPANISH**

Tue Jan 12, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Sat Jan 16, 2016 | 5:00PM  
Tue Jan 19, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Sat Jan 23, 2016 | 3:00PM  
Tue Jan 26, 2016 | 7:30PM  
Sat Jan 30, 2016 | 3:00PM

After the New York City run, Shem, Surrey and Cole are pleased to take this version of the production to theaters in Costa Rica, Mexico City and Austin.

*This production is not-for-profit, through donations to the SoHo Playhouse, a 501c3.*

*Disclaimer: This work does not imply affiliation with or endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.*

## **ABOUT NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER**

<http://www.nyulangone.org>

[NYU Langone Medical Center](#), a world-class, patient-centered, integrated academic medical center, is one of the nation's premier centers for excellence in clinical care, biomedical research, and medical education. Located in the heart of Manhattan, NYU Langone is composed of four hospitals—[Tisch Hospital](#), its flagship acute care facility; [Rusk Rehabilitation](#); the [Hospital for Joint Diseases](#), the Medical Center's dedicated inpatient orthopaedic hospital; and [Hassenfeld Children's Hospital](#), a comprehensive pediatric hospital supporting a full array of children's health services across the Medical Center. Also part of NYU Langone is [NYU School of Medicine](#), which since 1841 has trained thousands of physicians and scientists who have helped to shape the course of medical history, and the [Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Cancer Center](#), a National Cancer Institute–designated cancer center. The Medical Center's tri-fold mission to serve, teach, and discover is achieved 365 days a year through the seamless integration of a culture devoted to excellence in patient care, education, and research. For more information, go to [www.NYULangone.org](http://www.NYULangone.org), and interact with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), and [Google+](#).

## **ABOUT SOHO PLAYHOUSE**

[www.sohoplayhouse.com](http://www.sohoplayhouse.com)

SoHo Playhouse (Darren Lee Cole, Artistic Director and Director of Production) has been one of Off Broadway's primary venues for new plays for the past 70 years. Formerly "Vandam Playhouse" the theatre has been home to countless dreams and movements. Many actors, directors, choreographers, production designers, theatre managers, technicians, and producers all received their start at SoHo Playhouse. Several of America's leading writers have premiered their work at 15 Vandam Street including; Sam Shepard, Edward Albee, Tracy Letts, Charles Buch, Leroi Jones and Lanford Wilson. Award winning shows have included: "The Boys in the Band," "Killer Joe," "The Divine Sister," "Mindgame," "Krapp, 39," "Piaf," "Room Service," "Jamaica Farewell," "Belly of a Drunken Piano," "Bukowski From Beyond," "Simon Lovell's Strange & Unusual Hobbies," "The Emperor Jones," "Triassic Parq," "The Canterbury Tales Remixed," "The Other Josh Cohen," "Bill W. and Dr Bob," and "Rap Guide to Religion." Mr. Cole has served as Artistic Director since 2004.

## **ABOUT THE WRITERS/PRODUCERS**

## **Samuel Shem (Co-Writer and Co-Producer)**

[www.samuelshem.com](http://www.samuelshem.com)

Samuel Shem (nee Stephen Bergman) has been called “easily the finest and most important writer ever to focus on the lives of doctors and the world of medicine” (*The Bulletin of the Harvard Club of NYC*). His classic novel about medical internship, *The House of God* (1978), was recently named by the British medical journal *The Lancet* as one of the two most important American medical novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the other being Sinclair Lewis’ *Arrowsmith*). It has sold over two million copies in thirty languages. *The Boston Globe* called the sequel, *Mount Misery* (1996), about psychiatric residency at a mental hospital of that name, “outrageously funny, a sage and important novel by a healer and a Shakespearean.” These novels are bestsellers in America, Germany, Spain, Latvia, and the Czech Republic. Shem is also the author of *Fine* (1986), a novel about a psychoanalyst, which *The New York Times* described as “funny...full of dazzling, zany intelligence...energetic and exuberant.” *The Spirit of the Place* (2008, Penguin paperback 2012) was the winner of the national “Best Novel of 2008” award from USA Book News, and the national “IPPY—Independent Publishers Book Award for Best Literary Fiction 2009.” His new novel, *At the Heart of the Universe*, will be published in May 2016. He was a Rhodes Scholar at Balliol College, Oxford.

Two of Shem’s plays, *Room for One Woman* and *Napoleon’s Dinner*, have been published in *The Best Short Plays* anthologies.

Aside from *Bill W. and Dr. Bob*, Shem and Surrey are authors of a nonfiction book, *We Have to Talk: Healing Dialogues Between Women and Men* (1999, Basic Books), winner of the 1999 Paradigm Shift Award of the Boston Interfaith Counseling Service, a curriculum *Making Connections: Building Gender Dialogue and Community in Secondary School*

Shem/Bergman is a prolific speaker all over the world. He has given commencement addresses at over fifty medical schools including, in 2009 the Commencement Address at Harvard, and in 2014 at NYU Medical School. In 2008 he delivered the Gold Lecture in Medical Humanities at the American Association of Medical Colleges, and the 2008 keynote addresses at the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities, and the American Medical Student Association. For his work on alcoholism at Dartmouth College he received the C.Everett Koop Medal.

## **Janet Surrey (Co-Writer and Co-Producer)**

Janet Surrey is a clinical psychologist, author, Buddhist teacher, and founding scholar of the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at Wellesley College. She is co-author of *Women’s Growth in Connection* and *Mothering Against the Odds*, as well as other nonfiction books that deal with women’s relational psychology, addiction and spirituality. She was a faculty member of Harvard University for many years, and is now a member of the Institute of Meditation and Psychology in Boston. She is co-author, with Samuel Shem, of *We Have to Talk: Healing Dialogues Between Women and Men*, and also a curriculum, “Making Connections: Building Gender Dialogue and Community in Secondary Schools, 2006.” Known for her writing and speaking all over the world, she recently completed a training program to be a Community Dharma Leader. She is first author, with Shem, of the June 2015 novel- with-commentary, *The Buddha’s Wife: The Path of Awakening Together*. [www.thebuddhaswifebook.com](http://www.thebuddhaswifebook.com) Shem and Surrey were Visiting Scholars/Artists at the American Academy in Rome in 2012. They live in Boston and Costa Rica.