

# Buffalo Theatre Ensemble Presents:



**Sep. 5 – Oct. 6 | Thur. - Sat. 7:30p, Sun. 3p**

*Playhouse Theatre*  
*\$42 Senior | \$44 Adult*

**Thoroughly non-partisan laugh fest is just what you need.**

by Paul Slade Smith  
Directed by Kurt Naebig

- Join us for a pre-show discussion with the director and designers Thursday, Sep. 5 at 6:45p in MAC 140
- Join us for our post-show discussion with the director, cast and crew in the theater Friday, Sep. 13

A timely and hilarious mock-up of modern American politics. Ned Newley is the worst candidate to ever run for office...he has no political instincts and a fear of public speaking. While Ned seems destined to fail, his political consultant sees things differently. *The Outsider* is a timely and hilarious comedy that skewers politics and celebrates democracy.

“Funny, timely, and dare we say, entirely possible. *The Outsider* is a wonderfully crafted, superbly presented show...It is an insightful, witty satire about modern American politics that will appeal to a vast audience.” -Broadway World



ASL Performance on Thursday, Sep 26, 7:30p

# Time, Place and Characters

Time: The present.

Place: The office of the Governor of a small state.

## Cast of Characters

PAIGE CALDWELL, female, a professional pollster. A smart, confident woman with a professional's view of politics: she sees it as a series of contests to be won.

DAVE RILEY, male. The Chief of Staff to the new Governor. Very smart, but— despite years of experience in government — endearingly earnest and naive on the subject of politics.

LOUISE PEAKES, female. A temporary employee hired as the Governor's executive assistant. Personable, likable, impressively confident, and entirely inept. Without knowing it, she has the air of a politician about her. The friendliness of her smile, and the confident way she looks you in the eye, could make you think, "I'd vote for her."

NED NEWLEY, male. The new Governor. A person of impressive ability, but a complete lack of confidence. A man awaiting permission to enter a room in which he is already standing.

ARTHUR VANCE, male. One of the most experienced and successful political consultants in the country. His overbearing personality, and confidence in his own opinions over the opinions of others, should make him dislikable, but his ego is more than tempered by the joy— even glee— he brings into the room. He's a showman, but his excitement is 100% genuine, and it's contagious.

RACHEL PARSONS, female. A TV reporter. She has the looks to be an on-air correspondent— though, if television had never been invented, she still would have been a journalist. Straight-forward and honest, and inquisitive by nature. She's seen enough of life—and politics—to be cynical, but she's more apt to make a wry joke.

A. C. PETERSEN, male. A TV camera man. A working man, and—for most people—the guy you didn't notice was there. Which is fine with A. C.; he has a low tolerance for idiocy, and would rather not interact with anyone. His near-silence doesn't make him seem unfriendly, just a bit of a mystery.

## Director's Note:

We all need to laugh. That's what I've been thinking about lately. As the world gets more complicated, as we recognize that social media hasn't actually brought us any closer, as the looming election begins to worry us all... we need a break, a respite, a moment to take a breath. And a theater filled with laughter with a play called *The Outsider* by Paul Slade Smith is just that. ~KN

## Playwright



**Paul Slade Smith** is a writer and actor based in Brooklyn, N.Y. He is thrilled to return (at least on the page) to Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, where he appeared in the dual roles of Victor-Emanuel Chandebise and Poche both in the 1993 world premiere and the 1996 revival of “Hotel D’amour,” a musical based on Georges Feydeau’s “A Flea in Her Ear.”

Paul’s three plays have collectively had nearly 500 productions. His first play, *UNNECESSARY FARCE*, has been produced in Australia, Austria, Canada, Great Britain, Iceland, Japan, Singapore and Switzerland – and translated into French, German, Swiss German and Icelandic. As an actor, Paul was most recently seen as Reverend Crisparkle in Goodspeed’s hugely entertaining production of *THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD*. In New York, he has appeared in the original Broadway casts of *FINDING NEVERLAND*, *CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY*, and the Lincoln Center revival of *MY FAIR LADY*. Following its Broadway run, Paul starred as Willy Wonka in the Australian premiere of *CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY*. His TV credits include “The Blacklist,” “The Other Two” and “The Gilded Age.” Paul is the award-winning author of three plays: *UNNECESSARY FARCE*, *THE OUTSIDER* and his latest, *THEATRE PEOPLE, OR THE ANGEL NEXT DOOR*.

## Interview with the playwright

**Q:** Where did the idea for THE OUTSIDER spring from in your imagination?

**A:** In a book review I read about a political campaign, there was a passage about what I'll call an "oh no!" moment. (In my own mind, I used a less family-friendly phrase.) It was the moment the staff realized their candidate was irreparably bad. I immediately thought "that's a great catalyst for a play". But then, always liking to turn things on their head, I wondered: what if the candidate is bad not because he's incompetent – which was the story told in the book – but because, despite being extremely competent, he's just incapable of being a politician, of putting on the show?

**Q:** THE OUTSIDER is a sharp political satire, but it has a wonderful, heartfelt message about the value of public service. Given the current, divisive political landscape, what keeps you hopeful?

**A:** The secret I always honestly share is: I didn't set about to write a play about the value of government, of democracy. But once I was writing a plot in which, by necessity, these were the things my protagonists were frantically fighting for, I realized that I had to define these concepts – and then imagine how to explain them to someone, at a simple, elemental level. And what I've discovered is: the explanation Ned gives truly speaks to audiences everywhere, regardless of their political bent. That's proven true in productions in red counties, blue counties, everywhere it's played. And the fact that there is a storable, definable goal – a thing we all want government to be... that's what gives me hope.

**Q:** The Outsider is becoming a runaway hit at theatres across the country. How has the play taken off in recent years and do you often go to see productions of your work? What's that like?

**A:** I love being a part of productions, as I have been, and occasionally traveling to see them (if there's a personal connection for me to the production), but I also love knowing the play is out there on its own, speaking for itself. It's a joy to hear from theatre artists who reach out to me because they're having a blast with it and/or are really moved by its message. I love that the script is a little, unassuming book wending its way into people's lives.

**Q:** You are an accomplished actor as well as a playwright, having appeared on Broadway and many regional theatres including a recent production of DROOD at the Goodspeed. How does being an actor impact your work as a writer?

**A:** In countless ways, I suspect. I've probably learned dialogue from feeling its rhythm on stage. And suspense, and surprise, and building a joke, and extending a joke. I've learned the value of giving each character a first entrance that defines the character. And I definitely always set out to write no "lesser" roles. Some smaller, some larger, but I want every role to be a joy to play. I want every actor cast in my plays to say "oh this is going to be fun".

<https://www.westportplayhouse.org/the-outsiders-paul-slade-smith/>

# FARCE

*The Outsider* falls into the category of farce, which the Encyclopaedia Britannica describes as “a comic dramatic piece that uses highly improbable situations, stereotyped characterizations, extravagant exaggerations and violent horseplay.” Farces have been written by every generation going back to the Greeks and Romans, when playwrights like Aristophanes and Plautus would use stock characters and physical comedic devices to entertain the crowds of their day. Italian performers turned these elements into their own genre called Commedia dell’Arte. This was street performance where a troupe of actors would tour around Italy improvising comedic situations with standardized movements. The comedy was often very physical and acrobatic, which has become one of the hallmarks of today’s comedic farce.

France became the center of farcical performance in the 15th Century and for hundreds of years produced many of the most influential farces out there. Some of the most important playwrights who contributed to French farce include Moliere, Marivaux, Goldoni, Camoletti and Feydeau. Over the past century, farce has become a regular element in television, film and on stage. The British have created some of the most memorable farces that use witty language along with physicality to great effect. One of the recent developments in the style is the use of slamming doors, which has been used to hilarious effect in many farces, including the hit plays *Noises Off* and *Communicating Doors*. We see elements of farce in many of today’s most beloved comedic plays, musicals, tv shows and movies. Some examples over the past few decades include *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Home Alone*, *The Hangover*, *Arrested Development*, *Freaky Friday*, and *Looney Tunes* cartoons.

<https://papermill.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2018-THE-OUTSIDER-1.pdf>

# THE HISTORY OF GOVERNMENT

A government is the system or group of people governing an organized community, often a state. Government normally consists of legislature, administration, and judiciary. Government is a means by which state policies are enforced, as well as a mechanism for determining the policy. While all types of organizations have governance, the word government is often used more specifically to refer to the approximately 200 independent national governments on Earth. Historically, forms of government include aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny. About 5,000 years ago, the first small city-states appeared. By the third to second millenniums BC, some of these had developed into larger governed areas: Sumer, Ancient Egypt, the Indus Valley Civilization, and the Yellow River Civilization. The development of agriculture and water control projects were a catalyst for the development of governments. For many thousands of years when people were hunter-gatherers and small scale farmers, humans lived in small, non-hierarchical and self-sufficient communities. On occasion, rituals or tests of strength were used to elect a chief to govern his tribe, sometimes with a group of elder tribesmen as a council. Starting at the end of the 17th century, republican forms of government grew. The Glorious Revolution in England, the American revolution, and the French revolution contributed to the growth of representative forms of government. The Soviet Union was the first large country to have a Communist government. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, liberal democracy has become an even more prevalent form of government. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, there was a significant increase in the size and scale of government at the national level.

<https://www.westportplayhouse.org/the-outsiders-paul-slade-smith/>

## From Poindexter to Everyman: Can an Outsider Lead?

The upcoming production of Paul Slade Smith's *The Outsider* at the Buffalo Theatre Ensemble tackles a question that reverberates through our current political climate: can someone with no traditional political experience succeed as a leader? The play centers on Lieutenant Governor Ned Newley, a brilliant but awkward policy expert thrust into the spotlight when scandal engulfs the Governor's office.

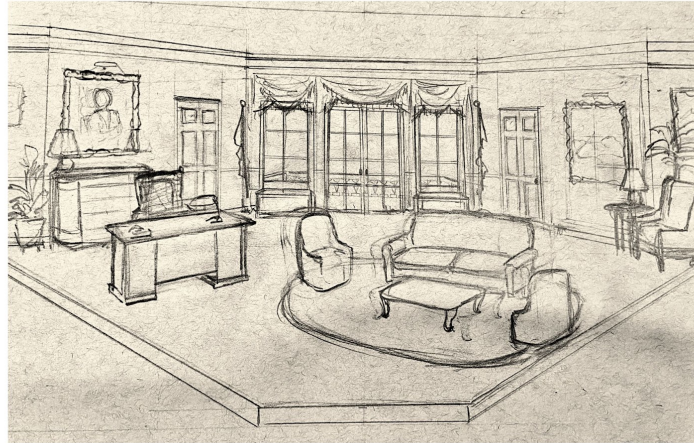
Ned is the quintessential outsider. Numbers dance in his head where soundbites should reside, and his introverted nature makes the constant socializing and superficial interactions of politics feel like his worst nightmare. Yet, a twist of fate propels him to the center of the political stage, where his lack of charisma and traditional political polish is a glaring disadvantage. *The Outsider* explores the central conflict between raw charisma and genuine competence in leadership. Ned's strength lies in his deep understanding of policy and his unwavering commitment to finding practical solutions. However, the play asks whether these qualities are enough to win over the electorate in a political system that often prioritizes style over substance.

The arrival of a flamboyant team of political consultants injects a whirlwind of activity into Ned's life. Their mission? To transform Ned from a policy expert into an "everyman" that voters can connect with. Their methods will likely be outrageous and comedic, but the question remains: can they successfully manufacture charisma and mold Ned into a palatable political product without sacrificing his core strengths?

*The Outsider* doesn't offer easy answers. The play will likely spark discussions amongst the audience about past elections where outsiders challenged the status quo, and whether their outsider status helped or hindered them. Consider the charismatic but inexperienced candidate who promised sweeping change or the seasoned political insider mired in the status quo. Voters have grappled with this choice time and time again.

Can voters see through carefully crafted images to identify genuine leadership qualities? History offers mixed results. Some outsiders have ridden a wave of anti-establishment sentiment to victory, only to struggle to translate their outsider status into effective governance. Others have leveraged their fresh perspectives to enact meaningful change. Ultimately, *The Outsider* is a thought-provoking exploration of the qualities we seek in our leaders. Is blind faith in charisma enough, or should we demand substantive knowledge and a commitment to public service? See *The Outsider* at the Buffalo Theatre Ensemble and join the conversation! Perhaps the laughter and contemplation sparked by the play will shed light on the kind of leaders we truly need.

## Buffalo Theatre Ensemble's *THE OUTSIDER* Rendering by Set Designer Liz Harden



### **The Outsider**

Scenic Design: Liz Hadden    Direction: Kurt Naebig

## Things to think about prior to the performance:

- What does a lieutenant Governor do?
- In what ways is a theatrical experience different from a real life experience? How is theater different from film?
- How did the design of the set make you feel before the show began?

## Things to watch for in performance:

- Design elements for a play include set, costumes, props, sound and lighting. What was most surprising and/or interesting about the designs for this production?
- Plays in a farcical style usually include very high stakes and an outcome that needs to be resolved in a short and finite amount of time. What are some of the things that the writer includes to keep the stakes very high?
- How did your feelings about the set change from your initial response when you entered?
- Why is this seemingly serious situation so funny? If the playwright wanted to make this show a drama...how would he need to change the script?

## Other Analysis Tools:

- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but, more importantly, the last thirty seconds? In that time, what happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is 'about?' In a nutshell, how does the playwright drive their point(s) home?
- And what is the significance of the title? Why did the playwright decide that this was the most quintessential title for his work, do you think?

The running time for this production is approximately 2:05 long, including a 15 minute intermission.

Please join us for a pre-show discussion Thursday, September 5th at 6:45p.m in MAC 140 preceding the preview performance. Note that pre-show discussions will include the director and designers, and will be a discussion of the approach to this production.

There will be a post-show discussion following the Friday, September 13th performance. The post-show will be with the director, cast and crew, and we will be fielding questions from the audience.

There will be an ASL interpreted performance on Thursday, September 26th at 7:30pm.

Please join us!