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NY Debut for "Professional Skepticism" by James Rasheed, directed by Kareem Fahmy, June 28 to July 15.

Comic drama about an accounting scandal will make you feel as smart as the Enron prosecutor.

June 28th - July 15th, 2007

Dorothy Strelsin Theatre at the Abingdon Theatre Arts Complex, 312 West 36th Street, NYC

Presented by Zootopia Theatre Company (Britney Burgess and Matthew J. Nichols, Co-Artistic Directors). This play is not a production of The Abingdon Theater Company, Inc.

Tickets \$15 in advance, \$18 at the door.

Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8:00 pm, Sundays at 3:00 pm; Saturday matinees July 7 and 14 at 2:00 pm.

Box office 212 868 4444 or www.smartix.com

Runs 1:30. Critics are invited on or after June 28.

NEW YORK, May 27 -- From June 28 to July 15, **Zootopia Theatre Company** (www.zootopiatheatre.org) will present the New York premiere of "**Professional Skepticism**," a dark comedy by **James Rasheed**, which has had very successful productions in Boston and South Carolina. The play centers on four auditors at a Big Five CPA firm in Charleston, SC and their daily struggle to survive while swimming with sharks. An audit scandal threatens to change these characters into headline-making personalities. Rasheed's tale of office intrigue is surprisingly funny, intense, and timely.

Written before scandals enveloped Enron, Worldcom and Arthur Andersen, the play has assumed new stature in light of these events. (Please see the review clippings at the bottom of this document.) Boston critics have applauded the play's sharp, funny dialogue and how it presents issues of corporate finance with such clarity that audience members can feel as smart as the sharpest pinstripe CPA.

"Professional Skepticism" dramatizes how a corporate audit can be corrupted through deadline angst, sexual intrigue and intense professional rivalry. Fraud is discovered in the statements of a major client. The audit team's senior accountants try to finesse the situation through sidestepping the issues and humiliating the junior staff. Rasheed artfully guides us through the imbroglio with his vivid use of language and sly characterizations. There are ethical questions of trust, betrayal and professional skepticism exposed, but the author hands down no judgments. Like Mamet, he presents us with an empty moral universe, leaving evaluation to the audience, while he delights us with exceptional insights and streams of wit.

The play is being presented here by Zootopia Theatre Company as its inaugural production.

"Professional Skepticism" was Brandeis University's Herbert and Beigel New Play Premiere and won the 2000-2001 Harold and Mimi Steinberg Prize for Best Original Play. It was published in "New Playwrights: The Best Plays Of 2002" (Smith and Krause).

Before earning a Master's degree in playwriting from Brandeis University in 1999, author **James Rasheed** established a successful career in accounting, first as an auditor for a Big Eight accounting firm and then as a controller of a medical corporation. His "August Flight," a symbolic, metaphoric dream play, received a full production at Clemson University and was its entry in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. His last play, "Mama Mamie's Departure," is a dark Southern comedy about the infighting among three elderly Southern sisters during their 100-year old mother's death. "Professional Skepticism" and "Mama Mamie's Departure" have had staged readings at Urban Stages in NYC. "Professional Skepticism" also had a staged reading at ART in Cambridge, MA.

"Professional Skepticism" received its first professional production as a world premiere at the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater on Cape Cod, MA. Its productions include a national tour in 2004 presented by South Carolina Repertory Company that included stops at Riverrun Theatre Co. of Madison, IN, Clemson University, South Carolina Repertory Company in Hilton Head Island, SC; and Actors' Workshop Proscenium Stage, Boston. It was presented again in 2006 by Centre Stage South Carolina. The play has been used in course work on business ethics in several colleges and has provoked speaking engagements on business ethics for its author, who just turned 40 and works as a bank auditor in his "day job."

Recently named a "talent to watch" by NYtheatre.com, director **Kareem Fahmy** hails from Sherbrooke, Quebec and has directed nearly twenty productions in the U.S. and Canada. His New York directing credits include the world premiere of "A First Class Man" at the 45th St. Theatre, "The Collected Works of Billy the Kid," "Lion in the Streets," "Curse of the Starving Class," "The Way to Begin," "On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco" and "Drums in the Night." Fahmy is a graduate of Columbia University's MFA Directing program, where he studied under Anne Bogart.

The actors are **Britney Burgess, Steve French, Matthew J. Nichols** and **Wesley Allen Thornton**. Production stage manager is **Nilou Safinya**. Set design is by **Andrew Lu**, lighting design is by **Scott Bolman**; costume design is by **Anne K. Wood**.

PRESS CUTTINGS:

"If you thought accountants lived lives as gray as their double-entry numbers, then James Rasheed's hilarious new play 'Professional Skepticism' ought to correct your (understandable) miscalculation.... The playwright speaks with rare authority and insight as well as mathematically precise shafts of wit.... Rasheed sets forth the basic issues of a corporate audit with such clarity and succinctness that even the mathematically challenged can understand them. His dialogue is sharp and funny and the dramatic situation he depicts has a universality that speaks to any viewer." --Boston Globe

"The story of backstabbing rivalry during an audit at an accounting firm demonstrated an uncanny prescience. Rasheed wrote and workshopped the play at Brandeis one year before the Enron and WorldCom scandals hit the newspapers. The timely show features four ambitious auditors in a Big Five accounting firm in Charleston, S.C., who bluff and bludgeon their way through a critical audit with an incredibly short deadline. The formula for deception and alliances, as they 'cook the books' is as fresh, funny, and frightening as today's headlines." -- New England Theater Mirror

"In the wake of revelations about Enron, WorldCom and the once prestigious accounting firm of Arthur Andersen, Rasheed's 'Professional Skepticism,' written before news of these financial debacles broke, seems prescient." -- Cape Cod Times.

"Obviously blessed with Cassandra-like powers of prophecy as well as with the secrets lost in the shredding machines!" -- The Boston Phoenix.

"If David Mamet had written a play about cutthroat accountants in Charleston, he might have written South Carolina Repertory Company's current production, "Professional Skepticism." It is at once a grand, even Shakespearean revenge tale, and a consistently funny look at the surprisingly compelling drama inherent in corporate accounting practices. At its heart, though, the play is less cynical than insightful as it meticulously examines the distressing state of our modern relationships with our contemporaries, our vocations, and ourselves." -- Beaufort Gazette, SC

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