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CONTACT: Mandy Khoshnevisan, Director
PHONE: 650-814-2980
EMAIL: Mandy@Un-Scripted.com

Un-Scripted Theater Company: Now With Scripts?!

Act One, Scene Two: Live Theater Can't Get Any More Live Than This.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA— Live theater can't get any more live than this. The Un-Scripted Theater Company presents the premiere of their new show—a collaborative project with Bay Area playwrights that merges scripted and un-scripted theater. *Act One, Scene Two*, performs July 7 - August 20 at the SF Playhouse, Stage 2.

Each night, the Un-Scripted Theater Company's *Act One, Scene Two* begins with a different featured guest playwright, who has pre-written the first scene of a yet-unfinished play. Following a brief interview with the playwright, the cast reads the scripts for the first time and performs a cold "staged" reading of that first scene. After act one, scene one, the actors continue the play seamlessly—now WITHOUT a script—starting from Act One, Scene Two.

During the interview process, the cast will query the playwright about their writing process: why they write, what they hope to achieve through their writing, and what inspires them. Armed with this knowledge, and after having read the first scene, their task is to honor the play's style, influences, and genre, as they improvise the remainder of the play. According to director Mandana Khoshnevisan, "The playwright's first scene is like a match that lights a fire: their creation sets off a chain reaction that carries through the rest of the night. Everything happening in the story after the first scene is ACTUALLY happening for the first time, making for a vivid theater experience."

The company has been rehearsing since late May, using the first scenes of finished plays to practice looking for a playwright's specific clues. "There's more to Mamet than just cynical, street-smart dialogue," says producer Clay Robeson. "Exploring the things that make Mamet 'Mamet' helps us to understand all the things that make playwrights like Emily Esner or Megan Cohen unique as well."

Despite the comedy inherent in improvisation, Un-Scripted is dedicated to honoring the style of each playwright's piece, whatever it may be: "We like to put as much truth in our work as possible, and our audiences have come to expect us to give them a full and rich theater experience," explained company member Christian Utzman. "Improv doesn't need to be dumbed down to be entertaining."

Literary manager Alan Goy is heading up the herculean task of choosing each night's playwright from the submissions received, and casting from among the nine-person ensemble. Says Goy, "It's exciting, bringing together playwrights from around the Bay Area and beyond, and having the opportunity to improvise in

playwriting styles that we would never otherwise get. I mean, no one ever shouts ‘Tim Bauer’ or ‘Lauren Yee’ at us when we get audience offers at a normal show. That’s cool.”

As the company often performs *fully*-improvised plays, the marriage of script with Un-Scripted is a natural and exciting pairing, according to cast member and playwright Steven Westdahl: “This show will stage a process which I have only ever explored in rehearsals: improvising as script writing.” For assistant director Trish Tillman, “[t]he challenge is sorting out the different paths both of these art forms take to achieve authentic, believable human interaction in an artificial setting like the stage.”

Director Khoshnevisan echoed that sentiment: “We’re trying to capture what’s so live, so present, and so magical, about live theater.”

Act One, Scene Two performs July 7 - August 20 (previews July 7 - 9): Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 8pm. All shows are at the SF Playhouse Stage 2, 533 Sutter St. in San Francisco, near Union Square and Powell St. BART. The show is directed by Mandy Khoshnevisan and assistant-directed by Trish Tillman. Performances feature a rotating cast of actors: Aaron Saenz, Christian Utzman, Clay Robeson, Greg Shilling, Joy Carletti, Mandy Khoshnevisan, Merrill Gruver, Stacy Mayer, and Steven Westdahl. Tickets are \$20 general, \$10 students & seniors. For more information, visit www.un-scripted.com.

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ABOUT US:

The Un-Scripted Theater Company creates smart, innovative, and entertaining improvised theater that delights audiences and advances the art and craft of improvisation. Founded in 2002, the company performs a full season of improvised theater each year. The 2011 season, the company’s ninth, will continue in October with *Fear*, an improvised horror play; and in November/December with a reprise of last year’s innovation, *A Tale of Two Genres*: a story in the genre of the audience’s choosing, performed as a musical that might have been written by Charles Dickens. In 2008, readers of the *SF Bay Guardian* voted Un-Scripted “Best Theater Company” in their Best of the Bay issue. The Un-Scripted Theater Company is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit corporation.