

Sam Shepard's  
CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS



APRIL 23 - MAY 22, 2010

**ACTORS ENSEMBLE OF BERKELEY** has been around the block (and just around the corner from you) since 1957, making us the longest running stage company in Berkeley. We began with seven UC Berkeley alumni from the World War II era. Their love of acting gave birth to a tradition that began with four plays in 1957, which were initially performed in a neighbor's basement. In 1965, AE began performing at the Live Oak Theatre — and has ever since.

Our mission is to enrich, entertain and improve our community through fascinating theatrical works. With social consciousness and an ensemble approach, we provide area residents with opportunities to attend, participate in and be helped through theatre. Our shows will be affordable, our opportunities enjoyable, and our community impact felt year-round.

As Berkeley's only true community theatre company, we depend on our volunteers to bring their energy and creative vision to each play we produce.

If you would like to volunteer in our theatre, give us a call or send us an email! We'd love for you to play a part in our next show!

**Contact us at:**

Email: [info@aeofberkeley.org](mailto:info@aeofberkeley.org)

Phone: 510-841-5580

[www.aeofberkeley.org](http://www.aeofberkeley.org)

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Alan Barkan, Eric Carlson, Jeremy Cole, Jose Garcia, Jonathan Gordon, Bob Gudmundsson, Maggie Gudmundsson, Martha Luehrman, Bill Martinelli, Jerome Solberg, Stanley Spenger, Kim Stewart

*Sam Shepard's*

# **CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS**

Directed by Robert Estes

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## **CAST**

Wesley ..... Thomas Arndt  
Ella ..... Holly Bradford  
Ellis ..... Dean Creighton  
Sgt. Malcolm ..... Stuart Hall  
Taylor ..... Brian McManus  
Weston ..... Andy Shapiro  
Emerson ..... Jerome Solberg  
Slater ..... Matthew Surrence  
Emma ..... Sionne Tollefsrud

## **CREW**

Producer ..... Jerome Solberg  
Costume Designer ..... Helen Slomowitz  
Stage Manager ..... Jose Garcia  
Set Designer ..... Bob Gudmundsson  
Lighting Designer ..... Alecks Rundell  
Backdrop Artist, Graphics Designer ..... Shu Ping Guan  
Light/Sound Producer ..... Nayla El-Haber, Morgan Brown  
Costumes and Props Assistant ..... Dalena Nguyen  
Stage Mistress ..... Juliann Halvorsen  
Painting Assistant ..... Norman De Veyra

**There will be two approximately 10-minute intermissions.**  
*The play is performed courtesy of Dramatists Play Service, Inc.*

## THE OTHER FAMILY

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In the late summer of 1980, I took a journey from suburban Walnut Creek to the then strange place of Ft. Mason in San Francisco. I can't understand this now, but it seemed like such a harrowing undertaking that I took my dad along for comfort. I was already 20 but just going to the city required my dad. I grew up slow—very slow.

The purpose of our expedition: to see the world premiere of a new play at the Magic Theatre called *True West*. How perfect that practically the only play I've ever seen with my dad is by the master of the father/son play: Sam Shepard.

Driving across the Bay Bridge that night, the thought came to me, hey, I have no idea what this play is about, what if it is really weird. My dad is pretty conservative. Well, he loved the desert rat played by Jim Haynie and the comedy of the play. We both could see my sibling Greg and me in the conflicted brother characters of Austin and Lee.

Now, looking back, I wonder how he would have responded if we had gone to *Curse of the Starving Class*. *Curse* is weird, period. Unlike *True West*, it is not about relationships in our family. It is about the other family; the dysfunctional family: the family that the neighbors feel sorry for.

In this other family, the brother is mean to his sister. The daughter dreams of escaping. The son can't quite measure up to the father. The mother is occasionally concerned for her daughter but just can't understand her.

Funny, I've never been mean to my brother. My brother never dreams of escaping. I've always measured up to my dad. And my mother always completely understood me. If you believe one shred of the above, I've got a great piece of desert land in Hot Springs to sell to you. If you wish to live in denial, just pretend that this play is not about your family in a very basic way.

Yes, the Tate family might be just a tad more dramatic than your family or mine, but they are just as tied together as close as yours or mine, they know each other as well as yours or mine know each other, they dream of escaping from their family as almost every family member does at one time or another, and, not to give away the ending, but you might say that they share a common fate. But they are not us, they are the other family.

For sale, desert land in Hot Springs!

Robert Estes

## CAST AND CREW

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**THOMAS ARNDT** (Wesley) When not caring for wayward lambs, Thomas plays drums and upright bass, practices acrobatics at the Circus Center, and occasionally flies his kite, Dr. Pusoctu, in the sun. He was last seen in *The Waldron Revue*, playing Frieda. He sends his love to his family and friends.

**HOLLY BRADFORD** (Ella) is pleased to be working with Actors Ensemble of Berkeley for the first time. She would like to thank her mother for all the lambs she nursed back to health while growing up, and for giving her insight into the character of Ella.

**DEAN CREIGHTON** (Ellis) This is Dean's first appearance with AE. In the past 20 years, he has appeared in 55 productions at numerous East Bay Theatre companies. As always, he would like to thank his loving family, wife Anne, daughters Heather and Shawn, son-in-law Glenn, and the newest addition to his family, grandson Ian.

**ROBERT ESTES** (Director) has directed new plays for Solano Rep, Marin Festival of One Acts, and other local theatres. Recently, he directed staged readings of *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest* and other great plays by the Bard for Subterranean Shakespeare. Robert has served as dramaturg for Town Hall Theatre and CalShakes (where he'll assistant direct *Mrs. Warren's Profession* in June). Later this year, he'll direct *Other People's Money* for Masquers in Point Richmond. Robert sees this as a something of a homecoming — once upon a time he graduated from UC Berkeley.

**JOSE GARCIA** (Stage Manager) has stage managed many of AE's productions including *Exit the King*, *Doctor Faustus*, *The Matchmaker*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Barefoot in the Park* and *LUV*. He also loves to perform on stage; his favorite roles have been the Ambassador in *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, and Haemon in *Antigone*.

**SHU PING GUAN** (Backdrop Artist, Graphics Designer) is delighted to work again with the lovely folks at Actors Ensemble. She has enjoyed painting the demented animals and thanks the not as demented cast and crew.

**STUART ELWYN HALL** (Sgt. Malcolm) makes his Actors Ensemble debut in a role that meshes his penchants for pithy, literate drama and opaque, intimidating law enforcement. Thanks to Robert Estes and Stan Spenger for the recommendation; thanks to Subterranean Shakespeare for creating the opportunity!

## Actors Ensemble Celebrates

**JULIANN HALVORSEN** (Stage Mistress) is excited to work with such a talented cast and wonderful production staff. This is her first show in the East Bay in three years. Before, she was moving a lot and working on both film and special effects makeup in Los Angeles and theaters in Mill Valley. She is grateful for the experience of working with the Actors Ensemble and looks forward to many more productions as the Poynting Vector.

**BRIAN MC MANUS** (Taylor) Irish-born and bred, Brian is returning to the stage after a 14-year hiatus. Previous roles (or the ones he can still remember) include Algernon in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and Dan in David Mamet's *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. He prays he won't have to wait as long for his next part.

**ALECKS RUNDELL** (Lighting Designer) has been working with the Actors Ensemble for several years, as both a lighting designer and an actor. He is very happy to be working with the jolly cast and crew of starving members. He would like to thank his parents, Richard and Jeanne Rundell, for their continued support into his old age. He also sends all his love to Priscilla.

**ANDY SHAPIRO** (Weston) has been acting for twelve years in theatres throughout the Bay Area in roles such as Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scrooge, Oscar in *The Odd Couple*, Asparagus in *Cats*, the father in *Equus*, and the Uncle in *How I Learned To Drive*.

**HELEN SLOMOWITZ** (Costume Designer) is so pleased to be working with Actors Ensemble again in such a great play with such wonderfully talent actors, crew and fabulous director. She thanks them all for their kindness and help. Helen has worked with AE for many years, as well as in TV and Film.

**JEROME SOLBERG** (Emerson, Producer) has been filling in on odds and ends around Actors Ensemble for quite some time now. This time he even gets to appear on stage a bit. He thanks his wonderful family, the cast, and especially the crew, without which none of this could happen.

**MATTHEW SURRENCE** (Slater) is pleased to debut at Actors Ensemble of Berkeley in a Sam Shepard classic with a great cast, crew, design team, and director. Recent performances include staged readings of *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Love's Labour's Lost* at Subterranean Shakespeare in Berkeley.

**SIONNE TOLLEFSRUD** (Emma) 14, is proud to be performing in *Curse of the Starving Class*. This is her first dramatic play in her career thus far. She was last seen in *Beauty and the Beast* as Lumiere. She will attend OSA in the fall. Sionne hopes to continue acting for many years to come.

## THANKS

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Jonathan Gordon

Teena Posas

St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
Confirmation Group, Pinole California

Lizette Greijbe

Robinmarie Rowen

Max Kahl

Yu Wu

**Illustration** by Ian Huebert

**Photography** by Tiffany Boswell



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**ANTIGONE** by Anouilh **January 22 through February 20**

**CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS** by Shepard **April 23 through May 22**

**SPECIAL EVENTS TBA Summer 2010**

**BLITHE SPIRIT** by Coward **July 23 through August 21**

**THE WINTER'S TALE** by Shakespeare **August 23 through September 20**

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What a deal! Make checks payable to: Actors Ensemble of Berkeley

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