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## PLAYWRIGHT AND DIRECTOR YOUNG JEAN LEE RETURNS TO WEX FOR RESIDENCY AND WORLD PREMIERE

*STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* MAKES ITS DEBUT WITH SUPPORT FROM WEXNER CENTER ARTIST RESIDENCY AWARD

*“Young Jean Lee is, hands down, the most adventurous downtown playwright of her generation.”*—New York Times

March 11, 2014—Columbus, OH—Acclaimed playwright/director **Young Jean Lee** returns to the Wexner Center for the Arts **April 10–13** for the **world premiere** of ***STRAIGHT WHITE MEN***, a provocative new work presented with an all-star cast (Austin Pendleton, Scott Shepherd, Pete Simpson, and James Stanley) and finalized through the support of the Wexner Center Residency Award program. Young Jean Lee’s Theater Company delighted audiences at the Wexner Center last October with the Obie Award-winning production *WE’RE GONNA DIE*. *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* will tour throughout North America and Europe after its debut. Her play *The Shipment*, which delved into issues of African-American identity with Lee’s unique touch, also was supported by the Wexner Center Artist Residency program and premiered at the Wexner Center October 30–November 2, 2008 and subsequently toured worldwide.

Charles Helm, director of performing arts at the Wexner Center, says, “We take a measure of pride in being one of the first US arts organizations outside of New York City to present Young Jean Lee’s Theater Company and furthering that early commitment by co-producing three of her plays: *Church*, then *The Shipment* and now *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN*. Seeing her artistic evolution take shape over the years and sharing this with her keen local audience here has been truly special as our audience responds as much to her unique take on the central ideas of her work as they do to her innovative formal concepts. And with her surprising theatrical approach for *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN*, we look forward to seeing her next production unfold on our stage with its wit and insight for the first time all the more.”



The cast of Young Jean Lee’s *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN*, left to right: Pete Simpson, Austin Pendleton, Scott Shepard and James Stanley  
Photo: Blaine Davis

**Young Jean Lee’s Theater Company**  
***STRAIGHT WHITE MEN***  
**World Premiere**

Thu, Apr 10–Sat, Apr 12 | 8 PM

Sun, Apr 13 | 2 PM

Audience Q&A with Young Jean Lee and cast after Apr 11 performance.

**Tickets:** \$22 for the general public, \$18 for members, and \$10 for students. Tickets available at [tickets.wexarts.org](http://tickets.wexarts.org).

**Location:** Performance Space, 1871 N. High St.

**Parking:** <http://wexarts.org/visit/parking>

**More information:**

<http://wexarts.org/performing-arts/straight-white-men>

Each of Lee's new projects include her embrace of significant self-determined artistic and formal challenges. Her twist this time: *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* is performed "straight," a play whose experiment is to not be experimental.

With a linear narrative, realistic set design, and traditional characterization, *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* uses the form of the conventional play as a jumping-off point to examine a group that, until recently, has enjoyed the privilege of being the default voice of Western society. Set in a suburban family room, a father and his three middle-aged sons are forced to confront a deceptively simple question: "What can a privileged straight white man do to fight the perpetuation of an unjust system?" Using straight white male identity as a starting point, the play shows its characters confronting a pivotal cultural moment where the desire to do the "right thing" and align with new standards for social justice rubs up against an obsessive sense of self-actualization and self-fulfillment.

The cast for this presentation of *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* includes acclaimed director and actor Austin Pendleton as the father and Scott Shepherd (The Wooster Group, Elevator Repair Service's *GATZ*), Pete Simpson (Blue Man Group, Richard Maxwell, Elevator Repair Service), and James Stanley (National Theater of the United States of America) as the sons.

## **RESIDENCY ACTIVITIES**

While at the Wexner Center, Young Jean Lee and the cast are taking part in a post-performance discussion with the audience after the April 11 performance (additional post-performance discussions may be added). Young Jean Lee's company will also offer an open rehearsal opportunity for OSU M.F.A. theater students in addition to a playwriting master class.

## **ABOUT YOUNG JEAN LEE**

Young Jean Lee is a writer and director who has been called "one of the best experimental playwrights in America" by *Time Out New York*. She has written and directed nine shows in New York with Young Jean Lee's Theater Company and toured her work to over thirty cities around the world. She is a resident filmmaker at the Wooster Group; her recent projects include the album *We're Gonna Die* with her band Future Wife, and she also directed the short film *Here Come the Girls* (Locarno International Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival). Lee's plays have been published by Theatre Communications Group (*Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven and Other Plays*, *The Shipment* and *Lear*) and by Samuel French (*Three Plays by Young Jean Lee*). She is currently under commission from Lincoln Center Theater, Playwrights Horizons, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and recently completed a screenplay commission for Plan B/Paramount Pictures. She has received grants from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Creative Capital, NYFA, NEA, NYSCA, the Jerome Foundation, the Greenwall Foundation, and the Rockefeller MAP Foundation. She is also the recipient of two OBIE awards, the Festival Prize of the Zuercher Theater Spektakel, a 2010 Prize in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a 2011 Guggenheim Fellowship, a 2012 Doris Duke Artist Award, and a 2013 Doris Duke Artist Residency. Lee is

currently working on her second short film, *A Meaning Full Life*, starring Paul Lazar, Wallace Shawn, and Kate Valk.

#### **EVENT SUPPORT**

*STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* is a production by Young Jean Lee's Theater Company. It was commissioned by the Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University; Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles; steirischer herbst festival, Graz; Les spectacles vivants—Centre Pompidou, Paris; Festival d'Automne à Paris; and The Public Theater, New York.

Funding support for the creative development of *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* provided by the Doris Duke Performing Artists Awards program; the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project, with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the MAP Fund, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; and the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency.

*STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* was developed at Brown University's Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies, Providence, RI. Residency support was provided by the Park Avenue Armory, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Columbia University, and Spaceworks NYC, a nonprofit real estate organization dedicated to expanding the supply of long-term, affordable rehearsal and studio space for NYC artists.

This presentation of Young Jean Lee's Theater Company's *STRAIGHT WHITE MEN* is made possible with funding by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project, with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Additional support provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

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