

## **Neo Ensemble Theatre welcomes the premiere of *Airport Encounters!***

*Under new Artistic Director Paul Elliott, the acclaimed theatre company opens a unique show featuring a diverse collection of original vignettes that take place in real time at the airport.*

**LOS ANGELES** – **Neo Ensemble Theatre** has been busy! When new **Artistic Director Paul Elliott** took over, he wanted to increase the talent pool of both writers and actors. Through a series of showcases, workshops, festivals and just general recruiting the highly revered company has done just that. And what better way to highlight all that new talent than with a new original show that features 24 actors, eight writers and two directors...all working together in one all-encompassing show.

*Airport Encounters* makes its World Premiere **Sept. 30-Oct. 16** at the **Lounge Theatre** in Los Angeles.

*Airport Encounters* is a comedic anthology of inter-connected vignettes centered around a central hub that take a hard and hysterical look at human behaviors and the problems we face, all in real time as both weary and excited passengers pass through an airport and onto their next adventure. Featuring individual stories of the eclectic but all too familiar passengers written by a team of top comedy writers, the stories comprise a bigger picture, a full show in itself, making for a truly unique theatrical experience.

“Neo has a renowned history in doing plays that examine the human condition through comedy,” Elliott said. “And nowhere are there more stories thrown into one space than an airport. This show is truly a laugh-out-loud comedy, with some drama, that also shows how a group of talented writers can develop individual stories that work together to create a whole.”

The play is made up of the following tales:

**CONNECTIONS** (written by Jessica Mathews): A neurotic accountant’s surprise encounter with the actress he idolizes is interrupted when a puzzling black duffle bag is left in their midst.

**HEDGEHOG AND MUSTARD** (Larry Gene Fortin): Mama and Shirl are flying to a funeral...if they can survive each other's company.

**BORDER TOWNS** (Starina Johnson): A woman struggling with a tough diagnosis meets a stranger who has surprising advice.

**THE STATISTICIAN** (Beth Polsky): An obsessive/compulsive mathematician must face his inner demons at the airport.

**THERAPY DOG** (Scott Mullen): When a nervous flyer meets the airport's therapy dog, it goes in a direction he doesn't expect.

**SIMPLE AIR** (Nancy Van Iderstine): As an Amish couple prepares to board an airplane for the first time, an outrageous secret is revealed that could turn their lives upside-down.

(cont.)

**STUCK** (Scott Mullen): A young waitress's life changes when she meets a peculiar stranger who has been living in the airport.

**'TIL FLIGHT DO US PART** (Laura Huntt Foti): A couple attempts to hold their strained marriage together after a very rocky second honeymoon.

**THE TEST** (Rom Watson): A college student's questions about his sexuality may be answered by taking "The Test."

**MEAD AND STU AT THE AIRPORT** (Rom Watson): Two airport janitor's friendship is challenged when one has an epiphany that he is genetically altered.

With so many pieces and such a broad scope, the play is also unique in that it features two directors.

"I'm excited to work with the great writers lifting this evening airborne, exploring our human foibles in that limbo lounge before we board or after we disembark," said director **Joe Ochman** who has directed a number of Neo productions (*Shakespeare in Hollywood*, *Epic Proportions*, *One West Wacker*). An accomplished TV actor and voice over artist, he has also directed the Ovation nominated *Who Lives?* at Pico Playhouse and *The Thing of It*, for which he won the Dramalogue Award for Best Director. "In addition, I always enjoy collaborating with co-director **Richard Pierce**. And for the first time, it's just the two of us. Wild ideas will fly!"

Co-director Pierce is just finishing a run of *Initial Velocity* as part of *The Park Plays Series: Love in Bloom/Love In Doom* at The Actors Workout Studio. He also directed the World Premiere comedies *Maria Conchita Alfonso Alfonso Alfonso* (a Fringe Festival favorite), *The Bells of West 87* at the Greenway Theatre and the L.A. Premiere of *Duck Hunter Shoots Angel* with Neo, among many others. He is also a multi-award winning executive producer for television as well as an accomplished stage, film and TV actor.

"What better setting is there to explore stories and relationships where the full spectrum of emotions is on display," Pierce said. "What I believe people will come away with from experiencing *Airport Encounters* are some big laughs, a tear or two welling up, and being inspired to take a trip in the not too distant future, because maybe it could change the direction of their lives."

*Airport Encounters* marks a bold first production for Elliott and his company, utilizing so many actors, writers, even with a dynamic duo of directors. But, he said, that was challenge he embraced.

"With all of Neo's growth and excitement, the Neo board and I chose *Airport Encounters* as our first production because we wanted to utilize the talents of the entire company. This show does that."

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# **Airport Encounters**

Written by: Scott Mullen, Rom Watson, Beth Polsky, Laura Hunt Foti, Nancy Van Iderstein, Larry Gene Fortin, Starina Johnson and Jessica Mathews

Directed by: Richard Pierce and Joe Ochman

Produced by: Jessica Mathews, Richard Pierce, Starina Johnson, Steve Oreste and Neo Ensemble Theatre

## **SYNOPSIS:**

*Airport Encounters* is a comedic anthology of inter-connected vignettes centered around a central hub that take a hard and hysterical look at human behaviors and the problems we face, all in real time as both weary and excited passengers pass through an airport and onto their next adventure. Featuring individual stories of the eclectic but all too familiar passengers written by a team of writers, the stories comprise a bigger picture, a full show in itself, making for a truly unique theatrical experience from Neo Ensemble Theatre.

## **DATES AND TIMES:**

September 30-October 16

Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.

Sundays at 2 p.m.

## **LOCATION:**

The Lounge Theatre  
6201 Santa Monica Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90038

## **TICKET PRICES:**

General Admission: \$15 (in advance), \$20 (at the door)

Senior Citizens: \$12

## **INFORMATION & RESERVATIONS:**

For further information and tickets:

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

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