ROBERT. Were you inspired to write RED by a visit to the Tate Modern or was the inspiration long-brewing?

JOHN LOGAN. The themes had been rattling around in my head for a while, but it was the paintings that made it a play dealing with art. I was in London working on the film version of Sweeney Todd when I happened to go to the Tate Modern and see the Seagram murals. The paintings struck me and wouldn't let go; something about their overt seriousness and intensity was uniquely powerful to me. They are, above all else, highly emotional works. I kept going back to the gallery and sitting with them, letting them work on me. And while the idea of a two-person play came to me very quickly, I knew little about Rothko or modern art, so a long period of research followed.

(Continued on page 2)
ROBERT. In the wonderful movie of Hugo, which you wrote, you look at the nature of man and creativity — also so moving in RED. Has art and creativity always been something you were drawn to as a subject?

JOHN LOGAN. My biggest attraction as a writer has always been to those sacred monsters: vexing characters who roar through life, sometimes creating, sometimes destroying. I suppose with characters like Howard Hughes in The Aviator, Leopold and Loeb in Never the Sinner, Bruno Richard Hauptmann, Sweeney Todd, Coriolanus, and Rothko, you could say I’m attracted to dark material. And while the play deals with the world of art, it’s never been about art to me, honestly. To me, the play is about fathers and sons, students and teachers, mentors and protégés. These two just happened to be painters.

ROBERT. The scene in the play where Ken and Rothko discuss the new guard is fascinating. That was an amazing time in the world of art, wasn’t it, with the beginning of Warhol?

JOHN LOGAN. Warhol and his comrades sent a shot over the bow of the Abstract Expressionists, no doubt — just as Rothko and his comrades did to the Cubists. To me, it’s dramatic to put a character in a shifting landscape: the seismic shifts are occurring — how will the character respond? There’s something poignant to me about Rothko’s resistance to the coming tide of Pop Art, like the aging prizefighter trying to stay in the ring for one more round.

ROBERT. You dedicated RED to Stephen Sondheim — for “reminding” you. Can you tell us about that?

JOHN LOGAN. Steve inspired me to get back to writing for the theatre after being too long away. I’m eternally thankful for that.

ROBERT. Speaking of Hugo, your film career has a life of its own, but you started in theatre in Chicago. And you will always return to the theatre?

JOHN LOGAN. I wake up every morning a playwright who fell into screenwriting. But the success I’ve had through the patient guidance of experienced professionals who took the time to teach me and scold me and inspire me. Theatre will always play an important part in my life, if only selfishly, because I am never so happy as when I’m in the rehearsal room for a new play.

ROBERT. Can’t talk about it; too soon.

ROBERT. We certainly look forward to another play from you — when might we see one?

JOHN LOGAN. In London, next year.
SNOWBALL EFFECT

Director of Nonprofessional Rights Craig Pospisil talks with John Cariani, author of ALMOST, MAINE

CRAIG. Let's get the obvious question out of the way. How excited are you by the tremendous success that ALMOST, MAINE has had?

JOHN CARIANI. When people ask me this, I always think of what Hamlet says to Horatio in the first act of HAMLET: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” ALMOST, MAINE premiered at Portland Stage Company in 2004, and the response was overwhelming. It sold out its run and became the most successful play in PSC’s history. Obviously, our hopes were high when it opened Off-Broadway in 2006. It was a beautiful production. And the response was … a little underwhelming. We only ran for a month. And I was pretty sad. I wanted nothing more than for it to be a huge hit. And so I just went back to pounding the pavement, had my Law & Order gig, and went to work on a new play I was writing … and very slowly, over the next few years, ALMOST, MAINE became this weird little phenomenon. Next thing I know, it was everywhere — at regional theatres, community theatres, college and high-school theatres. It was selling out at major regional theatres like Milwaukee Rep and Geva. And now in 2012, it’s being translated into Russian and Romanian and French and German and Flemish. I guess what I have learned from all of this is that you can dream. But sometimes you get way more than what you dream. All I seemed to be able to hope for was that ALMOST, MAINE would become a success in New York. I never imagined that it would become what it’s become. I know what works and what doesn’t work, dramaturgically. Plays are compilations of action, and actors know what action is. Those monologues became sketches that my friends and I performed whenever and wherever we could … and someone from NBC happened to see one of our shows and invited us to be a part of this cool thing the network was doing in the late nineties called P.S. NBC. NBC’s big comedies were aging, so the network was courting up-and-coming writers and comedians. NBC never moved on my material, but those early monologues and scenes became what is now ALMOST, MAINE.

CRAIG. Did you write any other scenes set in Almost that aren’t in the play anymore? And what happened to those?

JOHN CARIANI. I have a short play called OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE. It was part of ALMOST, MAINE at Portland Stage, but after I saw it in front of an audience, I knew it didn’t fit. But OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE isn’t lost! It’s a part of the newest play I’ve written that will premiere at Portland Stage next spring called LOVE/SICK. It’s the flip side of ALMOST, MAINE — it’s a bunch of slightly absurd love stories that are set in an alternative suburban reality on a Friday night in June. And they explore the more sour side of love.

CRAIG. So how did ALMOST, MAINE develop after those first monologues and sketches? Which was the first scene that you wrote for the play? And did you have the idea for the entire collection, or did that come later?

JOHN CARIANI. The first short play I ever wrote is called SHIVER AND SHAKE. It’s based on a Grimm fairy tale called “The Boy Who Went into the World in Search of Fear,” and it’s about a
young man who wants to learn what it is to be afraid. Eventually, SHIVER AND SHAKE became THIS HURTS. Then I wrote HER HEART ... and then the others just started kind of pouring out. Director Gabe Barre saw one of the P.S. NBC shows and approached me about working together because he liked my writing and thought I was on to something. One day, we took all the short plays I had written — about two dozen of them — and we read through them. And we realized that seven of the plays were love stories. And they were all a little magical and slightly surreal, and they all had a fable-like or fairytale-like quality to them. They were set in Northern Maine in winter in a made-up mysterious place that was — at the time — called Basketville, Maine. And we realized we had an anthology play on our hands: BASKETVILLE, MAINE ... AND THE THINGS THAT HAPPEN THERE AT NIGHT. We took the play to the Cape Cod Theatre Project in 2002 and began our journey. At CCTP, we came up with the Prologue/Interlogue/Epilogue. And the title! One day after rehearsal, Gabe asked me, “What's the name of your hometown, again?” I answered, “Presque Isle.” He said, “And that means...?” And I said, “Almost Island. In French.” And he said, “Almost, Maine.” And that was it!

CRAIG. I love that.

JOHN CARIANI. I wrote two new scenes in 2003 at Portland Stage, where we were workshopping. One was WHERE IT WENT — because I wanted to write about a relationship dissolving. The other was THEY FELL, which was originally written for a man and a woman. One of the most exciting changes to the play happened at the talkback after the workshop presentation. An audience member asked me why I wrote the play. And I said that I loved good love stories and that I wanted to look at love in a new way and kind of turn the romantic comedy on its ear. I also wanted to write stories that could be played by people who aren't hot. I wanted to see regular people get the girl or the guy. Not help the hot person get the girl or guy! That's what ALMOST, MAINE is, really — a bunch of stories that have complete arcs for character actors!

CRAIG. And that's probably a big part of why it's been so successful. There are a lot of character actors out there dying to take center stage and really act for a while.

JOHN CARIANI. And I wanted to look at all aspects of love — new love, old love, lost love. And then someone else asked why I hadn't explored homosexual love. And I had no answer. And at that moment, I realized that THEY FELL had to be about two men falling in love. And it really completed ALMOST, MAINE for me. And now … here we are.

CRAIG. ALMOST, MAINE has really been such a Cinderella story. Do you feel pressure to repeat that in your other writing? Has the breakaway success of the play inspired you, inhibited you, a little of both?

JOHN CARIANI. Honestly — it's inspired me and given me confidence that there's room for the stories I write. And — it's pushed me to kind of set the record straight. Many have dismissed ALMOST, MAINE as simplistic and sweet. Saccharine. And for those who think that — well, they haven't seen what I want it to be. ALMOST, MAINE is sad and bleak. And funny, yeah. But — it's about loneliness. And heartbreak. And heartache. And the sudden rush that accompanies finding love, that sudden joy. I think we don't respect joy as a valid component of drama. We love sadness. But joy is just as dramatic. And hard to act — truthfully, effectively.

CRAIG. So true. As any writer of comedies will tell you.
JOHN CARIANI. I think these misperceptions have driven me to continue to write more about Northern Maine and the people who live there — just so I can give them the respect they deserve. I grew up in Northern Maine, and while ALMOST, MAINE could be described as a love letter to Northern Mainer and Northern Mainers, my new play, LAST GAS, takes a more realistic look at the place I still refer to as “home.” Funny — I have been thinking a lot lately about why I write about Northern Maine and Northern Mainer. And I think finally have a good answer: I like to write about people who live in the middle. Lots of plays in New York are about urbane urbanites who live up top — and that’s great. And the theatre is in love with stories about struggling artists — people on the bottom. I would love to see more stories about people from the middle; about people who work hard for a living; about people who have real problems, and who don’t have the surplus of time, money and education that allows them to create problems for themselves. Because, although the middle is not where change begins, it’s where change takes hold. And once the minds of the people in the middle start to change, quiet, rapid revolutions occur, and the world changes. LAST GAS is about that kind of quiet, revolutionary change.

CRAIG. Tell me more about the development of LAST GAS and where it’s going next.

JOHN CARIANI. It was commissioned by the Cape Cod Theatre Project. Andy Polk (former artistic director there) directed the first workshop presentation of the play in 2008. In 2009, Portland Stage Company workshopped the play as a part of their new works series, the aptly named Little Festival of the Unexpected. Then, in late 2010, LAST GAS had a tremendously successful premiere production at Portland Stage Company, with an outstanding cast. I just did a workshop at Half Moon Theatre Company in Binghamton. And Geva is going to do a reading in April, so we’re working away. I am pretty sure New Yorkers will get to see LAST GAS in the 2013–2014 season! I’m excited — it’s a great big surprising love story. It makes people laugh and gasp and cry. And that’s pretty much what it’s all about, to me.
New on the Scene
by Emily Kadish, Publications Associate

Whether you’re planning your upcoming season, searching for a juicy monologue, or just looking for a good read, there are titles bound to spark your interest among our most recent publications. Be sure to check out the New Acquisitions and Now Published pages on our website to peruse all of our latest titles. In the meantime, here is a sampling of new titles for your consideration.

Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo by Rajiv Joseph 5 men, 2 women, flexible set
The lives of two American Marines and an Iraqi translator are forever changed by an encounter with a quick-witted tiger who haunts the streets of war-torn Baghdad attempting to find meaning, forgiveness and redemption amidst the city’s ruins. Rajiv Joseph’s groundbreaking play explores both the power and the perils of human nature.

The Dream of the Burning Boy by David West Read 4 men, 3 women, interiors
Since the sudden death of his favorite student, high-school teacher Larry Morrow has been falling asleep at his desk. As Larry’s dreams intensify, a shocking secret is exposed. Searing yet surprisingly funny, THE DREAM OF THE BURNING BOY is about finding the strength to move on and the courage to live without regret.

Ghost-Writer by Michael Hollinger 1 man, 2 women, interior
Novelist Franklin Woolsey dies mid-sentence, but his secretary Myra continues to take dictation. Attacked by skeptics, and Woolsey’s jealous widow, Myra sets out to prove she is more than just an artful forger. Is she trying to steal Woolsey’s legacy now that she cannot have his love, or might she truly possess a gift the world can’t understand?

In the Wake by Lisa Kron 1 man, 6 women, interior
It’s Thanksgiving of 2000 and the presidential election remains undecided. Ellen insists that the situation is worse than it seems, but no one — not even her loved ones — can make her see the blind spot at the center of her own political and emotional life. This funny, passionate, and ultimately searing play illuminates assumptions at the heart of the American character — and the blind spots that mask us from ourselves.

Mrs. Mannerly by Jeffrey Hatcher 1 man, 1 woman; or 2 women, flexible set
No student in the demanding Mrs. Mannerly’s etiquette class has ever achieved a perfect score. But when Young Jeffrey discovers his teacher’s secret past, he is determined to be the first to achieve this feat. Inspired by the playwright’s own memories, this unique comic tale reveals truths about the face we present and the real selves that lie inside.

The New York Idea adapted by David Auburn from the original by Langdon Mitchell 7 men, 5 women, interiors
A freewheeling divorcee in 1906 New York City society, Cynthia Karslake has decided to settle down again with a prominent judge. Little does she know, however, that her bombastic ex-husband and the judge’s blowzy ex-wife are making plans of their own. In this sharp-tongued comedy, David Auburn enlivens a little-known play and shines a surprisingly contemporary light on attitudes about status, sex and divorce in high society.

The Other Place by Sharr White 2 men, 2 women, interiors
Just as Juliana Smithson’s research leads to a potential breakthrough, her life takes a disorienting turn. During a lecture to colleagues at an exclusive beach resort, she glimpses an enigmatic young woman in a yellow bikini amidst the crowd of business suits. One step at a time, a mystery unravels as contradictory evidence, blurred truth and fragmented memories collide in a cottage on the windswept shores of Cape Cod.

Welcome to Arroyo’s by Kristoffer Diaz 4 men, 2 women, flexible set
Alejandro Arroyo takes painstaking care of his new lounge on New York City’s Lower East Side, and slightly less good care of his rebellious sister, Molly. But Alejandro must step it up when he learns that his late mother may have been one of the founders of hip-hop music. Two DJs/narrators/Greek chorus members spin the story in this hip-hop theater coming-of-age tale.

When I Come to Die by Nathan Louis Jackson 4 men, 1 woman, interiors
WHEN I COME TO DIE tells the story of Damon Robinson, a death-row inmate who struggles to find faith and hope and to understand why his life has been spared after he survives a lethal injection.
Back on Broadway!
by Lori Mannette, Publications Assistant

What the sequel is to Hollywood, the revival is to Broadway! Broadway fans are always excited to see their favorite titles revisited by new artists, who give us a fresh take on classic material. We’ve seen a number of compelling productions this year that people are still buzzing about, and we can’t wait for the rest to open.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE
by Tennessee Williams

A multi-ethnic cast leads this charged drama, in which a dis-tinguished Southern belle comes to live with her sister and brother-in-law in a New Orleans slum.
Opened April 22, 2012
Broadhurst Theater

HARVEY
by Mary Chase

In this family favorite, a grown man’s imaginary friend, who happens to be a six-and-a-half-foot rabbit, might not be imaginary after all.
Opening June 14, 2012
Studio 54

HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE
by Paula Vogel

A wildly funny, surprising and devastating tale of survival as seen through the lens of a troubling relationship between a young girl and an older man.
Opened February 13, 2012
Off-Broadway at Second Stage Theatre

DPS congratulates all four 2012 Tony Award® nominees for Best Revival of a Play

THE BEST MAN
by Gore Vidal

Two candidates, each with incriminating information about the other, vie for the presidency in this political drama staged just in time for Decision 2012!
Opened April 1, 2012
Gerald Schoenfeld Theater

DEATH OF A SALESMAN
by Arthur Miller

Willy Loman’s ill-fated quest for the “American Dream” blinds him to the love his family offers in this classic tragedy.
Opened March 15, 2012
Barrymore Theater

WIT
by Margaret Edson

The profoundly moving piece about a brilliant professor with terminal cancer who reevaluates her life and her work with depth and humor.
Opened January 26, 2012
Manhattan Theatre Club

MASTER CLASS
by Terrence McNally

Maria Callas is teaching a master class in front of an audience (us). She glories in her own career, dabbles in opera dish, and flat-out seduces the audience.
Opened July 7, 2011
Samuel J. Friedman Theatre

NEW PLAYS

Surf Report
by Annie Weisman
Drama
2 men, 3 women

Ten Chimneys
by Jeffrey Hatcher
Comedy/Drama
3 men, 4 women

The Theatre of Illusion
by Pierre Cornielle, translated by Richard Wilbur
Comedy/Drama
8 men, 3 women

Through a Glass Darkly
by Ingmar Bergman, adapted for the stage by Jenny Worton
Drama
3 men, 1 woman

Tigers Be Still
by Kim Rosenstock
Comedy
2 men, 2 women

T.I.C. (Trenchcoat In Common)
by Peter Sinn Nactrieb
Comedy
3 men, 3 women

Truth and Reconciliation
by Debbie Tucker Green
Drama
10 men, 12 women (doubling)

Two Wrongs
by Scott Caan
Comedy
2 men, 1 woman

Venus in Fur
by David Ives
Comedy/Drama
1 man, 1 woman

Walter Cronkite is Dead.
by Joe Calarco
Comedy
3 men, 3 women

We Live Here
by Zoe Kazan
Drama
3 men, 3 women

Welcome to Arroyo’s
by Kristoffer Diaz
Comedy/Drama
4 men, 2 women

When I Come to Die
by Nathan Louis Jackson
Drama
4 men, 1 woman

When the Rain Stops Falling
by Andrew Bovell
Drama
5 men, 4 women

When We Go Upon the Sea
by Lee Blessing
Drama
2 men, 1 woman

WTC View
by Brian Sloan
Drama
6 men, 1 woman
ePlays from Dramatists Play Service
by Michael Q. Fellmeth, VP Publications & IT

The Play Service is pleased to announce that, beginning in June, we’ll be offering ePlays of our titles for direct download from our website. ePlays will be available in the standard ePUB format and will be compatible with Windows and Macintosh desktop, notebook and tablet computers; dedicated eReaders like the B&N Nook, Sony Reader and Kobo eReader; and smart devices like the iPhone and Android phones, as well as other mobile devices, through the use of free eReader apps. While the ePUB format and direct download exclude the use of Amazon's Kindle eReaders, distributing ePlays in this way allows us to eliminate the middleman and provide a much greater share of the royalties to authors. We think that's important.

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For actors and theatres, Play Service titles will also be available for the iOS app Scene Partner from their soon-to-be-launched online store and from the App Store. Scene Partner, which can be found at www.scenepartnerapp.com, offers terrific tools to help you learn your lines. With just a few taps on your iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch, you can highlight all of your character's dialogue; and with natural-sounding text-to-speech and voice-recording capabilities, you can have your prompts spoken to you, deliver your lines in response, and replay the scene back to yourself when you're done.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the Play Service looks forward to evolving with it. We're excited to utilize the latest technology to continue bringing you the finest plays in the English language.