



**Birmingham
Festival
Theatre**

presents

Tuesdays with Morrie

**by Mitch Albom
and Jeffrey Hatcher**

directed by
John Batson

Performances are 8:00 p.m.
Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays
September 11 - 27, 2008

Sunday matinee is September 21 at 2:30 p.m.

for reservations, call **933-2383**
or go online at **www.BFTonline.org**

Founded in 1972, Birmingham Festival Theatre is the city's oldest theatre producing contemporary and classic fare for adults. It is managed by an all-volunteer, working board of directors. BFT has staged more than 200 productions — involving more than 50 directors, 1000 actors, and 500 crew people — attended by almost 10,000 audience members.

We Gratefully Acknowledge

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And, most importantly, we appreciate

all the wonderful actors and volunteers who, over the years, have donated time and talent to create this magical place called BFT!

2008-2009 BFT Board of Directors

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Tuesdays with Morrie

by Mitch Albom
and Jeffrey Hatcher

directed by John Batson

featuring

Mitch - Douglas O'Neil, Jr.
Morrie - Sam Chalker

there will be NO intermission

Stage Manager - Laurie Burch
Set Design - Jennifer Luck
Lighting Design - Jennifer Luck
Sound Design - Justin Wallace
Light Operator - David Roberts V
Sound Operator - Justin Wallace
Production coordinator - Jason Adams

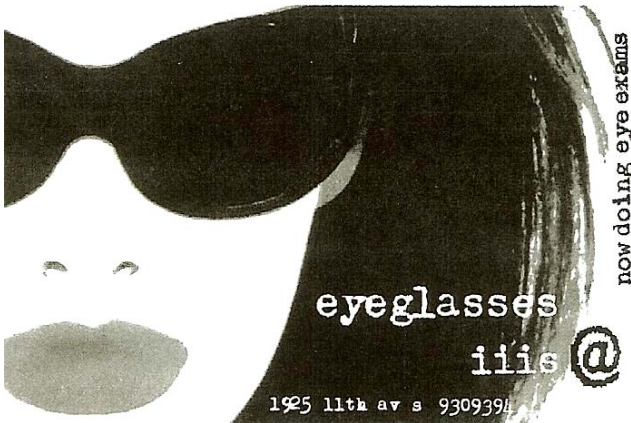
————— **Special thanks to** —————

Whitney Cummins
Chris Burch
Lee Green

PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

Sam Chalker (Morrie) has been active in community theatre in the Birmingham area for nearly sixty years appearing in major roles and scores of productions with Birmingham Festival Theatre, Town and Gown, Virginia Samford Theatre, Birmingham Children's Theatre and others. Sam began his community theatre career in 1951 with a walk-on role in *Dark Victory* with Bill Ozier's Actors Theatre, the forerunner of BFT. With Actors Theatre, Sam went on to appear in leading roles in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Private Lives*. After Bill Ozier's death, Actors Theatre evolved into BFT due to the heroic efforts of Randy Marsh, Vic Fichtner, and Carl Stewart who wanted to carry on Bill's legacy. With BFT, Sam will be remembered for a number of leading roles over the years, most notably Sir in *The Dresser*, King Henry II in *The Lion in Winter*, Nat Moyer in *I'm Not Rappaport*, and Col. Kinkade in *The Last Meeting of the Knights of the White Magnolia*. Once again, Sam is honored to appear in *Tuesdays with Morrie* as the opener for the BFT 2008-2009 season.

Douglas O'Neil, Jr. (Mitch) has been performing to the delight of Birmingham audiences for over a decade. While in college, he spent three years touring with the UAB Shakespeare Ensemble before graduating with a degree in Theatrical Performance. Recently, Douglas has appeared in a broad spectrum of roles and venues – from the irreverent Pistol in Muse of Fire's *Henry V* at Sloss Furnace to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in the Virginia Samford Theatre's *A Man for All Seasons*. Birmingham Festival Theatre audiences may remember him as screenwriter Ben Hecht in last year's comedy *Moonlight and Magnolias*, and as a dis-



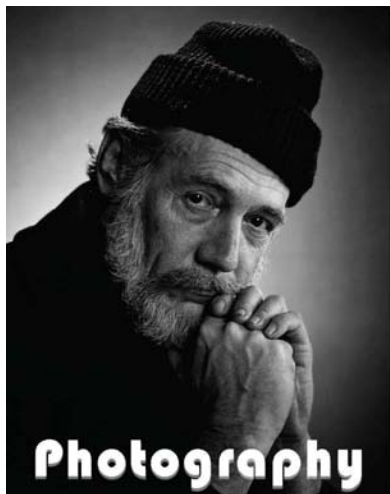
PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

gruntled Dasher in *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues*. This year, Douglas founded the Extemporaneous Theatre Company (www.extemporaneoustheatre.com), an improvisation troupe of actors and comedians, which debuted in August at BFT with two hilarious performances.

John Batson (Director) is a current board member of Birmingham Festival Theatre. Directing credits: *I'm Not Rappaport*, *The Lion in Winter*, *Touch of the Poet*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The Subject Was Roses* (BFT); *Oklahoma*, *Anything Goes*, *Li'l Abner*, *Once Upon A Mattress* (Leeds Arts Council); *Nunsense* (Carnegie Dinner Theatre); *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, *God's Trombones* (Wenonah High School). Most memorable acting credits at BFT include: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe*, *Landscape*, *Happy Birthday Wanda June*, *Cloud Nine*, and *Glengarry Glen Ross*.

Laurie Burch (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be back at BFT working with this dynamic cast and director. Laurie cut her teeth three years ago at South City Theatre in technical theatre and hasn't looked back since. Thanks to John Batson for the opportunity to help with the show and an extra special thanks to her husband, Chris, and new son, Chantz.

Jennifer Luck (Set/Lighting Design) is glad to be designing for the Birmingham Festival Theatre again. Recent productions at BFT have included: *Elegies for Angels*, *Punks and Raging Queens*, *Hiding Behind*



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PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

Comets and Quills. New York credits include: Theresa Buchheister's *Journey-Path(?)*: *An Experiment in Rightness*, *Q&Y: A Brief Comedy About Death* and Harrison David Rivers' *Burning*. More information on her work can be found at www.luckdesign.net.

Justin Wallace (Sound design/operation) is a music technology major at the UAB with a specialization in percussion. He is involved with the UAB Percussion Ensemble, Steel Band, Jazz Combo, and Jazz Ensemble and can be seen performing in Birmingham playing the vibraphone, as well as world percussion with John Scalici and his Get Rhythm! programs.

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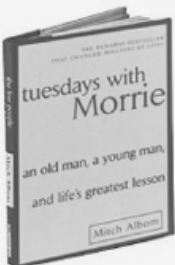
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If you'd like to read Mitch's memoir, you can purchase a copy in the lobby.

About Mitch and Morrie:

Mitch Albom was born in New Jersey in 1958, though he spent the greater part of his youth in Philadelphia. In 1979, he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, where met and studied under his beloved professor, Morrie Schwartz, the title character of *Tuesdays With Morrie*. In 1982, Albom was awarded a Masters degree from Columbia University in New York. After failed stints as an amateur boxer and nightclub musician, Albom began his career as a sports journalist, writing articles for newspapers such as the *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Detroit Free Press* where he was employed from 1985 until his reunion with Morrie in 1995. Albom also has his own nationally syndicated radio show, *Monday Sports Albom*. In 1995, Albom began gathering notes for his book, *Tuesdays With Morrie*, which documents his and Morrie's discussions on the meaning of life which they hold each Tuesday of every week in Morrie's home. Albom claims to have written the book to offset Morrie's severe medical expenses, and has said in interviews that the profits from the two-year bestseller are divided between himself and the Schwartz family.

Morrie Schwartz was born in 1916. He graduated from New York's City College, and went on to win a fellowship to the University of Chicago where he was awarded a Ph.D. in sociology. In 1959, he began teaching sociology at Brandeis, a nonsectarian Jewish-sponsored university, established in 1948. It was not until 1995, when he was dying from ALS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, that Morrie ended his career as a professor. A fatal neuromuscular disease, ALS is characterized by progressive muscle debilitation that ultimately results in paralysis. ALS is commonly known as Lou Gherig's disease, after the famous baseball player who died of the disease in 1941 at the age of forty.

If you don't know BFT, come get acquainted.



Birmingham Festival Theatre's first performance, *The Threepenny Opera*, was on the Munger Auditorium stage on the Birmingham Southern College campus in May of 1972. Soon thereafter, we began staging shows in the theatre's current space above the Golden Temple in Five Points South. Originally Fred Jones Bakery, this building remains the best and most intimate theatre space in the city. Founded by Carl Stewart, Randy Marsh, and Vic Fichtner, BFT offered local residents theater unlike any with which they were previously familiar.

Since that time, we have staged over 200 productions involving more than 50 directors, 1,000 actors, 500 crew members, and 100,000 audience members. We strive to bring you a wide variety of directors and performers each season, each adding their own artistic vision to the mix. Birmingham is blessed with a rich pool of theatre talent who deserve to be seen and heard.

The theatre is managed by an all-volunteer, working board of directors. We have no employees. If you see it happen, it's because of dedicated volunteer efforts.



ADVERTISE IN THIS PROGRAM!

Do you want to tell folks like those around you about your business?

Do you want to help support theatre like this in Birmingham?

Call the BFT office (933-2383) for information.



We hope you like our recently redecorated restrooms and lobby. Our public spaces are still a work in progress. Most of what you see was accomplished with minimal funding and a lot of sweat. If you'd like to help us continue to improve these spaces, please make a contribution of money or your own talents and sweat. Speak to the person in the box office or call us (933-2383) to get involved.

Be the first on your block to own a brand new 2008-2009 BFT season ticket!

As a member of the audience or a behind the scenes supporter, your role is vital. Your purchase of season tickets helps us meet our daily operating expenses. If you become a supporter through an additional financial contribution you help keep those great moments of theatre unfolding. And BFT's 501(c)3 status means that your generosity is tax deductible.

The monies collected from tickets sales are only a small part of the finances needed to run our organization. While ticket income covers our day-to-day operating expenses, other revenue sources are needed for maintenance and capital improvement projects.

As a BFT supporter, you recognize the inherent value of theatre as a means to learn about ourselves, engage in civic dialogue, contemplate the present, and envision a better future. Your commitment to our success — as both a theatre-goer and financial supporter — is essential.

SEASON TICKET ADVANTAGES

- Use any of your seven season coupons in any combination for any of the season's shows
- You will receive a director's letter and advance notice about each production
- You will receive preferred seating
- You will be invited to the annual party with casts and crews of the season's shows
- You will be supporting entertaining, innovative local theatre
- You will save yourself the expense of a ticket to New York or Chicago (and the hotels, cabs, etc. that go with it)
- Single tickets cost \$20
\$20 x 7 shows = **\$140**
- Season tickets cost **\$99** for 7 shows

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A Preview of the

Buy your season tickets NOW!



September 11 - 27, 2008

Tuesdays with Morrie

written by Mitch Albom with Jeffrey Hatcher

directed by John Batson

featuring Sam Chalker and Douglas O'Neil, Jr.

The driven sports journalist renews his mentoring relationship with his former sociology professor after the vivacious old man is diagnosed with ALS. Join Mitch in learning the important life lessons that can best be learned from someone who is dying. This affecting drama is based on the bestselling memoir.

October 23 - November 8, 2008

Rabbit Hole

written by David Lindsay-Abaire

directed by Janelle Cochran

The author of last season's quirky comedy, Fuddy Meers, takes on more serious matters: a devastating accident. The profound effects on the family and the stranger at whose hands the accident occurred will awaken powerful feelings in all of us. A Pulitzer Prize winner.

December 4 - 20, 2008

The Little Dog Laughed

written by Douglas Carter Beane

directed by Stephen French

The heart-throb actor is just about to get the role of a lifetime when rumors begin to circulate hinting at his homosexuality. His distraught agent, concerned about her percentage, begins damage control related to this "slight recurring case of homosexuality." And the laughs continue with the aid of the "rent boy" who's looking for love and the "girlfriend" who's looking for a home.

BFT wants you to be a part of our 38th season. Whether you have theatre experience (no matter how long ago) or have none, come share the joy of Birmingham's premier community theatre. Tell us how to get in touch with you and what areas of involvement interest you. Speak to us in the lobby, call us, or leave a message on our website. You may be an actor, a director, a designer, a technician, a publicist, a fund-raiser, a cheerleader, or lots of other things. There's bound to be something unique and valuable you can bring to BFT. Please join us.

2008-2009 Season

Enjoy and support local theatre.



January 29 - February 14, 2009

Kindertransport

written by Diane Samuels
directed by Sue Ellen Gerrells

In 1938 and 1939, nearly 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children escaped from Germany on trains headed for the freedom of Britain. Few ever saw their parents again. *Kindertransport* tells the story of Evelyn, a British woman in her fifties, and Eva, the nine year old German child she used to be. The nature of family is plumbed when Evelyn's daughter, Faith, discovers for the first time her German ancestry.

March 19 - April 4, 2009

Miss Witherspoon

written by Christopher Durang

Reincarnation just isn't Veronica's cup of tea. And she fights all efforts to send her back to earthly life. But, how're you gonna' beat cosmic (or is that karmic?) city hall? The ever prolific social satirist delivers again with a cast of familiars from the "other side."

April 30 - May 16, 2009

Sunset Limited

written by Cormac McCarthy
directed by Quinton Cockrell

Two men on a train platform. One stops the other from jumping in front of the train. But he's not saved yet. An enigmatic relationship develops as can only be envisioned and told by the author of *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road*.

June 11 - 27, 2009

Screwups

written by Justin Warner
directed by Ellise Mayor

Oops! Salome's much-milder-than-Herod's-interpretation request. Or the library book that appears to make things happen to those who read in it. Or the more persistent than can be imagined telemarketer. You'll encounter these and more in this collection of one-acts subtitled "little plays about big mistakes" which will tickle your off-the-beaten-path funny bone.

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