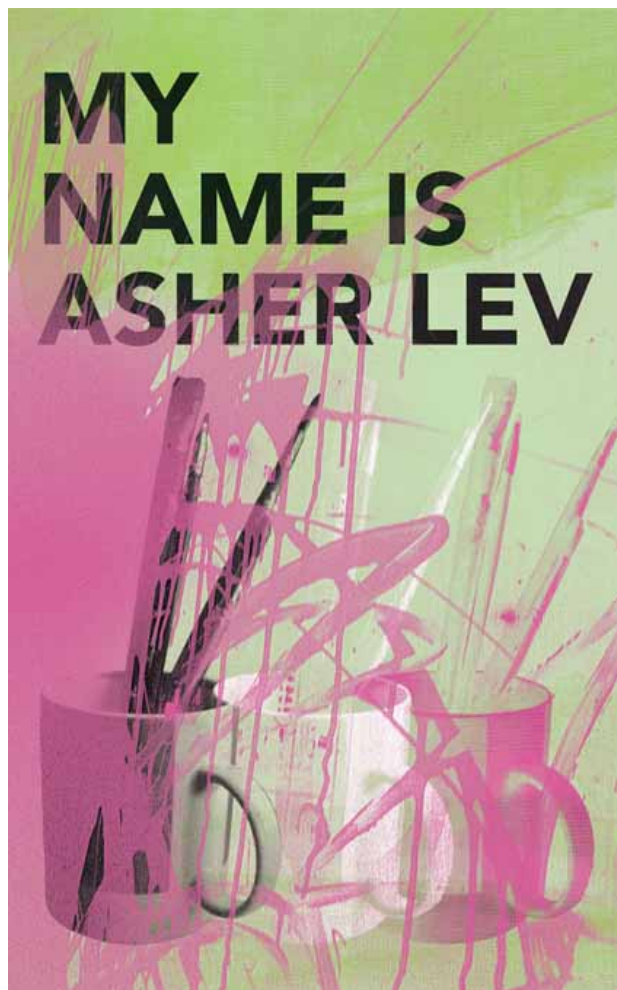


Pacific Theatre presents



**MY NAME IS ASHER LEV**

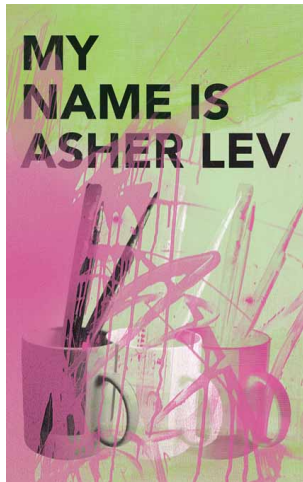
Adapted by Aaron Posner  
from the novel by Chaim Potok

January 28-February 26

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Please include in DECEMBER, JANUARY calendar listings and announcements

Media Contact: Andrea Loewen  
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Pacific Theatre presents  
**MY NAME IS ASHER LEV**

Adapted by Aaron Posner from the novel by Chaim Potock

January 28–February 26

*"It is absurd to apologize for a mystery."*

**IN SHORT:** Pacific Theatre presents Aaron Posner's adaptation of Chaim Potock's beloved novel *My Name is Asher Lev*. A poignant coming of age story where a young Hasidic Jewish prodigy must choose between his need to paint and his faith. **Playing Jan 28-Feb 26 Wednesday – Saturday at 8pm with 2pm matinee on Saturday at Pacific Theatre, 1440 W 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. Pay-what-you-can preview Jan 27. Artist talkback Friday, Feb 4. For tickets (\$16.50-29.50 HST not incl.) call 604.731.5518 or [pacifictheatre.org](http://pacifictheatre.org).**

**VANCOUVER, BC – How do you stay true to yourself when you're split in two?** Pacific Theatre presents *My Name is Asher Lev* adapted for the stage by Aaron Posner from Chaim Potock's beloved novel. Asher Lev is a young Hasidic Jew in New York with an astonishing talent for art and a deep connection to his religious faith and family. His two conflicting loyalties come to a head in this poignant coming of age story when young Asher is forced to make a terrible decision between family and vocation, between his love for God and his desperate need to make art.

**Swirling around the heart of *My Name is Asher Lev* are questions about the meaning and necessity of art that will strike close to home for any artist today.** Asher's father asks what he is trying to accomplish with his paintings, while his mother asks why he doesn't depict prettier, happier things like flowers. There's a ring of familiarity to the way artists now much justify, and sometimes change their work, to satisfy not only family and friends, but governments, funding bodies, and society as a whole.

*My Name is Asher Lev* features up-and-coming young actor **Giovanni Mocibob** (*Confessions of a Paper Boy*), taking on the challenge of playing Asher Lev from age 9 through adulthood. Playing his traditional father, Rebbe, and art mentour is **Nathan Schmidt**. **Katharine Venour** (*The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*) holds the heart of the Lev family, playing Asher's mother. At the helm is director **Morris Ertman** (*Espresso*).

**RAVE REVIEWS**

"A truly beautiful theatrical experience. Ninety fast-moving minutes that sparkle with life." – Talkin' Broadway

"A marvelous evening of theatre: intimate, sincere, magical." –Philadelphia City Paper

Details:	MY NAME IS ASHER LEV adapted by Aaron Posner from the novel by Chaim Potock
When:	January 28-February 26, 2010, Wednesdays-Saturdays at 8pm, 2pm matinees Saturdays
Where:	Pacific Theatre, 1420 West 12 <sup>th</sup> Ave (at Hemlock St), Vancouver, BC
Tickets:	\$16.50-29.50 (HST not incl.) to reserve call 604.731.5518, or visit <a href="http://pacifictheatre.org">pacifictheatre.org</a> .

## About the Playwright



Aaron is a co-founder and the Resident Director of Philadelphia's award-winning Arden Theatre Company, where he has directed more than 40 productions over the last 17 years. His adaptations of literature include *Who Am I This Time?* by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *What Ho, Jeeves* by P.G. Wodehouse, *Echoes of the Jazz Age* by authors from the '20s, *Ellen Foster* by Kaye Gibbons and *Third & Indiana* by Steve Lopez. His adaptation, with Chaim Potok, of *The Chosen* was originally presented by The Arden and Pittsburgh's City Theatre, and won the 1999 Barrymore Award for Best New Play. It has since been produced by more than 20 theatres all across the country to nearly unanimous acclaim and sold-out houses. His latest adaptations are *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men* by David Foster Wallace, *Sometimes a Great Notion* by Ken Kesey, and an as yet unnamed Mark Twain musical melodrama. Aaron is also a freelance director with such theatres as The Folger Shakespeare Library, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and many others. He teaches at the University of the Arts, is a philanthropic consultant, and even acts from time to time. He is also an Eisenhower Fellow. He graduated from Northwestern University, dropped out of Southern Methodist University, and is originally from Eugene, Oregon.

## **A Note from the Director**

This story has had a profound impact on many who have read it. Chaim Potok has created an intimate tale that crystalizes the difficulty of making one's way in the world when the vocation that calls to a young person differs from the expectations of one's parents and community. In one way or another, that struggle has been happening in homes for generations, and across cultural boundaries. The tone of the arguments is familiar, even if the details of the conflict are different. It would be easy to focus on the romantic notion of the leaving of family, liberating oneself to become all one can be. Potok doesn't let his characters off that easily. Anything or anyone that ever mattered in our lives will require more from us than we think we can actually give. In this story, Asher Lev's gift requires everything.

Asher is a part of a tradition that values family, and has seen the families of its people torn apart and destroyed by Hitler and Stalin with the kind of savagery that marks a people, drawing their tattered remnants together in its wake. It is a tradition that has a very pragmatic and tangible mission in the world - a mission of cultural, religious and familial restoration. Asher Lev's home is caught up in that mission.

It is a strange irony of life that the time when our children need us the most is also the time when our vocations demand the most from us. Generation after generation now live in that tension, creating weariness that clouds our ability to really see and hear the people who we care most deeply about. So, this story will have resonances familiar to all people who are passionate about their sense of purpose in the world, whatever side of the generation gap they find themselves on.

The brilliance of a great story, so specifically set in a given culture, is that we find ourselves inside it somehow. Chaim Potok is just such a storyteller. I encourage you to read the sequel to My Name is Asher Lev, titled The Gift of Asher Lev. Stories, like life, never really finish till life is finished.

-Morris Ertman, Director

## **A Note from the Artistic Director**

If you are an artist of faith – especially if you are “of a certain age” – you know *My Name Is Asher Lev*. In a time when many faith communities had no idea what to do with the arts, or with the artists in their midst, Chaim Potok’s novel was a lighthouse glimpsed from a stormy sea. The book brought hope to a lot of people who loved God but who also loved making art – it may not have been a happy story, but at least it was their story. Somebody got it. I have met people who feel they owe their life to this book.

Artists can be intense.

Because, of course, it takes intensity to create. To wrestle into being a particular thing that has never existed before. To see vividly, to be seized by an idea, to push aside every other thing to do the work of making something new. No wonder it’s become a cliché to say that creating is like giving birth. This work is as all-consuming as it is messy, painful and – for some – inescapable. Once the birth pangs start, once you start going into labour, your other plans are pretty well shot.

That sort of fierceness can be hard for the people nearby – parents, husbands and wives and children, communities, friends, co-workers. Hard to understand, hard to live with. That sort of devotion can be particularly hard for people of faith to understand: there’s a thin, maybe indistinguishable line between holy calling and soul-corroding idolatry.

It’s hard for the people around, and maybe harder for God-loving artists. Who no more want to be enslaved to idols than their friends and lovers and pastors and rabbis want them to be. But, as Asher says, “If You don’t want me to use the gift, why did You give it to me?” True, you can’t serve two masters: but what if your art is the way you’ve been given to serve your master? Perhaps your means of grace? You don’t dare cut yourself off from that. Quite apart from the certainty your soul could die of starvation, it just seems so tragic a waste. To set it aside, compromise it, bury it. “I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth” – not a viable solution. Not without weeping, gnashing of teeth, outer darkness, all that.

So how do these wild, all-consuming, sometimes divine obsessions fit into a family, a community, a life? In a religious community that values order, peace, humility, tradition, how does this wildness find a place? Can you really fulfill the calling, honour the gift, “in

moderation"? Michelangelo didn't paint the Sistine Chapel on Tuesday evenings and holidays.

There are times when it all works together – God and calling and family and community and all the practical demands of living a life on this planet. But there are also times when it does not. Even whole lifetimes when it does not. When those great, magnificent, terrible, maybe-holy passions collide, clash, do battle, do damage. When "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence," when it comes "not with peace, but with a sword."

Welcome to the world of Asher Lev.

-Ron Reed, Artistic Director

## **About Hasidic Judaism**

The Hasidic movement began in the 18th century in Eastern Europe by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (also known as Baal Shem Tov or "Master of the Good Name"). Beginning as an attempt to democratize Judaism, Hasidism represented a move away from the contemporary focus on strict execution of rituals to a focus on the experience of rituals. With an emphasis on the sacred of everyday life, the Divine presence in everything, and God's closeness to everyone, Hasidism made living a Jewish life more accessible to the masses and became incredibly popular.

There are many groups within the Hasidic movement, and all are united by a philosophy of joyful observance of God's commandments, heartfelt prayer, and boundless love for God and the world he created. All Hasidim are Torah-observing Jews, keeping the same Orthodox laws as other observing Jews. This includes keeping kosher, observing the Jewish Sabbath, saying daily prayers, and keeping Jewish holy days.

The Rebbe, or tzadikim, is the leader of a Hasidic group. He is not necessarily a rabbi (although he can be), but is a saintly mystic who is seen to be more enlightened and have a closer relationship with God. He advises his followers on all matters and is the spiritual master of the group. Because each group follows their own Rebbe, beliefs and practices, such as style of service, customs, and style of dress, can differ from group to group. Therefore, something that is accepted by one group may be rejected by another. For example, some Hasidim believe that creating any visual representation of a creature (ie: a painting of a person) is forbidden, whereas for others it would be considered alright so long as they are not being worshipped.

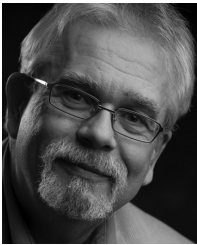
The modern Hasidic movement is sometimes referred to as Ultra-Orthodox, representing a shift in the practice back to the strict adherence to law and ritual that Hasidism originally rose against. Because of this there is now a "Neo-Hasidic" movement, stepping back from the formalities and returning to the basic principle of the closeness of God through his presence in everything around us. These differences demonstrate the simple fact that Hasidic groups include a wide variety of individuals with different beliefs and preferences, much like other religious groups.

## The Creative Team



### **LUKE ERTMAN | SOUND DESIGNER**

Luke Ertman: Bachelor Of Music, University Of Alberta. Selected theatre credits: Pacific Theater's productions of *The Hungry Season*, *The Quarrel*, *The Woodsman*, and *Holy Mo*; The Arts Club's production of *Paradise Garden*: Rosebud Theater's productions of *Talley's Folly*, *The Good Doctor*, *The Quarrel*, *Trying*, *Lettuce & Lovage*, *Confessions of a Paperboy*, *Mary's Wedding* and *The Road To Mecca*. Luke performs with Fools Tongue who released their first CD last year, toured western Canada, and are working on their upcoming Album.



### **MORRIS ERTMAN | DIRECTOR**

Highlights include the direction of Rosebud Theatre's *The Secret Garden*, *The Road to Mecca*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Mary's Wedding*, *Fiddler on the Roof*; Pacific Theatre's acclaimed productions of *Espresso*, "MASTER HAROLD"...and the Boys, *The Quarrel*, *St. Joan*, and *Shadowlands*. He has directed and/or designed for Vancouver Opera, Mirvish Productions, Chemainus Theatre, The Canadian Opera Company, Edmonton Opera, The Stratford Festival, The National Arts Centre, Manitoba Theatre Centre, The Citadel Theatre, and The Arts Club. He is also responsible for writing (with Ron Reed) and the direction of the musical *Tent Meeting* (four Dora nominations including Best New Musical and Best Production, Sterling Award nomination for Outstanding Musical). The show has been produced in numerous theatres in the US and Canada. Mr. Ertman is the recipient of nine Sterling Awards and a Dora Award for the Canadian Opera Company's *Beatrice et Benedict*. He is also named in Theatre 100, a publication of 100 Alberta artists who have made a noteworthy contribution to Alberta's theatre in the last century. Morris is the Artistic Director of Rosebud Theatre.



### **MATT FRANKISH | LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Matt has been in Vancouver for two years now and has had a great time designing lighting for Pacific Theatre, Eye Heart Productions and Vancouver Academy, as well as juggling all the events at the Roundhouse as Technical Director. Before moving to Vancouver, Matt used to be Technical Manager for DanceCity in Newcastle, UK. This will be Matt's fifth show for Pacific Theatre.



### **LAUCLIN JOHNSTON | SET DESIGNER**

Lauchlin is a Vancouver-based designer holding a BFA in theatrical design and production from UBC. Lauchlin's most recent work at Pacific Theatre was the lighting design for *Playland*. Previously at PT, Lauchlin did scenographic design for *Refuge of Lies* for which he received two Jessie Richardson award nominations. He designed the sets for *Jesus, My Boy* and *Mourning Dove*, and props for *Caribou Magi*, *Shadowlands* and *The Farndale...Christmas Carol*. Elsewhere, Lauchlin has designed set and lights for four seasons at Trinity Western University (most recently for *The Skin of Our Teeth* this fall), set and lighting for *Medea* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at UBC; and lighting for *Homecoming*, *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Drawer Boy* at the Station Arts Centre in Saskatchewan.



### **JIN KIM | ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Jin Kim came back to Vancouver after completing his degree in Theatre design at the University of Alberta. He has been involved in numerous productions in the past. His recent work includes him being an Assistant Set Designer for *Spine* University of Alberta/Real Wheel Co – Production at The Fei & Milton Wong Experimental Theatre at SFU, Costume Design for *The Little Dog Laughed* directed by Leigh Rivenbark, and Lighting Design *The Last 5 Years* directed by Heather Teeter and *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea* directly by Jason Goode at Pacific theatre. He feels fortunate to be working with cast and crew of production of *My Name is Asher Lev*.



### **LAURA MCLEAN | STAGE MANAGER**

Laura is thrilled to be back at Pacific Theatre after Stage Managing *Godspell* here last season. A graduate from UBC's BFA Theatre Production and Design program previous stage management credits include *The Laramie Project*, and *Unity 1918* with UBC Theatre, and *The Distance From Here* with FCP.



### **GIOVANNI MOCIBOB | ASHER LEV**

Giovanni Mocibob recently moved to and now resides in Vancouver where he married the love of his life Holly. He also moved here to pursue his career in film, t.v. and theatre. Giovanni is excited for his first professional stage production in Vancouver and looks forward to the many more opportunities.

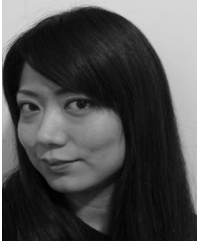
Favorite past credits include the one man show *Confessions of a Paperboy*, Sancho in *Man of La Mancha*, as well as many other roles in *We Won't Pay*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Village of Idiots*, *Joseph and the Amazing...*, *The Proposal*, *The Diviners*, *Godspell*, (Rosebud Theatre AB).



### **NATHAN SCHMIDT | THE MEN**

Nathan is excited to be back at Pacific Theatre he was last seen as Chaim Kovler in *The Quarrel* by David Brandes and Joseph Telushkin for Midnight Theatre Collective. Nathan is currently the Head of Acting for Rosebud School of the Arts as well as a resident acting company member with Rosebud

Theatre in Alberta.



### **YASUYO SHIMOSAKA | PROPERTIES MANAGER**

Yasuyo took the Technical Theatre program at Capilano University and has built her career as a props person. She has worked at Bard on the Beach, Theatre Under the Stars, and Gateway Theatre as a props apprentice. Yasuyo's most recent work was *Playland* at Pacific Theatre. *My Name is Asher Lev* is

the second show for her to work at Pacific Theatre. Yasuyo is grateful to be a part of *My Name is Asher Lev*.



### **NAOMI SIDER | COSTUME DESIGNER**

Naomi is set and costume designer, and theatre creator. Since graduating from Studio 58, she has designed over 25 shows and her work has toured as far as Prague, Czech Republic. Naomi has been nominated for three Jessie Richardson Awards, and won her first in 2010 for Outstanding Costume

Design for Pacific Theatre's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. But most thrilling was that night Pierce Brosnan saw her work in *Fat Pig*.



## **KATHARINE VENOUR | THE WOMEN**

Katharine is delighted to return to the Pacific Theatre stage in the production of *My Name is Asher Lev*. Past favorite theatre credits include, at Pacific Theatre: Folly in *Holy Mo*; Joy (Jessie nomination for Best Actress) in *Shadowlands*; Joan in *St. Joan* (Jessie nomination for Best Actress); Lindsay in *Sister Calling My Name*; Agnes in *Agnes of God*. At Touchstone Theatre: Donna in *How It Works*; Sara in *Demon Voice*; At Pound of Flesh Theatre: Cunningham in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. Before moving to Vancouver, Katharine performed at The Citadel Theatre, Theatre Calgary, Theatre Junction, and Persephone Theatre. This past summer, she enjoyed working with internationally-renowned Shakesporean coach, Patsy Rodenburg, at the Michael Howard Studios in New York City.