



BILL W. and Dr. BOB

by Samuel Shem & Janet Surrey

**Winner, 2007 National Performing Arts Award, National Council on Alcohol
Winner, 2010 Best Play Award, Regional British Columbia Drama Festival
Winner, “One of the best plays of the year”—San Diego Union Tribune
Winner, 1995 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Award to Dr. Samuel Shem for
Addiction Study, Harvard Medical School Division on Addictions**

AN INVITATION TO YOUR THEATRE TO

“PASS IT ON!”

**TO PRODUCE A CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED
COMMERCIALY-SUCCESSFUL**

OFF-BROADWAY PLAY

**WHICH WILL EXPAND AUDIENCES TO INCLUDE DIVERSE
RACIAL, CULTURAL, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS
AND
BUILD COMMUNITY**

THROUGH A LIVELY CREATIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN:

*** NON-PROFIT THEATRE**

*** LOCAL TREATMENT CENTER(S)**

*** DEDICATED FINANCIAL DONORS**

*** CIVIC INSTITUTIONS**

*** AND THE “RECOVERY” COMMUNITY**

LETTER FROM THE AUTHORS

Samuel Shem and Janet Surrey

Website: www.billwanddrbob.com

BILL W. AND DR. BOB, the story of the relationship between the two men that led to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, was a smash hit in Boston in 2006 last year, breaking the record for ticket sales in a three-week sold-out run at the 400-seat non-profit New Repertory Theatre. Directed by Rick Lombardo, it moved to Off Broadway in February 2007 and is in its third month of an open-ended run at the 355-seat New World Stages—"The sleeper hit of the season! Pick of the week!"—NYTheatre.com.

"An insightful new play"—The New York Times

"An endearing portrait of friendship uplifted by warm humor"—The New Yorker

"An earnest production with inspired performances"—Associated Press

"A textured and truthful telling of AA's story...inspiring"—Boston Globe

"Deeply humane, audience-embracing, intelligent writing, a leavening of humor and an innate power of biographical storytelling. A remarkable story!"—Variety (For other reviews, see press package enclosed).

For other reviews, see below.

It is written by the husband and wife team of Stephen Bergman (a doctor who, under the pen-name "Samuel Shem," is author of the classic medical novels THE HOUSE OF GOD and MOUNT MISERY, which have sold over three million copies) and Janet Surrey, a clinical psychologist widely published in the fields of substance abuse, relational psychotherapy, and Buddhist practice.

In Boston, New York, and in 25 of the fifty states all across America the play had broken box-office records, because it attracts two diverse audiences: regular theatre-goers; and also large and active community of people connected with Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step recovery programs, treatment centers, and civic groups (see NYTimes feature, 4/2/07, enclosed). It began life in New York with an advance sale of \$235,000—

considered exceptional in the current Off Broadway market. The “word-of-mouth” is remarkable, and through the AA network and the play’s website (billwanddrbob.com), it is now being talked about all over America. In talkbacks with audiences we have heard variations of the same comments over and over: “This isn’t just a great play, it’s a phenomenon!” And: “I didn’t know anything about AA—but I loved this play!”

Although the play focuses on the founding of AA, we have come to realize that at heart it is not simply about alcoholism, it is a great American success story—of healing. Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith were alone and about to die, and they discovered that “The only thing that can keep a drunk sober is telling his story to another drunk,” that is, the healing power of authentic connection. Audiences have shown us that this is a universal human story of the deadliness of isolation, and the healing power of connection.

We invite you to participate in using BILL W. AND DR. BOB not only as a powerful, humorous, inspiring and redemptive theatre event, but also to bring in a new diverse audience of theatre goers (some of whom may never have been in a theatre before), and to create links that will build community.

A MODEL

Through our experience in Boston and New York, Cleveland and San Antonio, Minneapolis and Mesa, Fort Myers Florida and British Columbia, we have come to see a MODEL for doing this.

It is simple, and not hard to create—people are attracted to this work. The elements that can be linked up are as follows:

1) Regional theatre production. Six characters, simple set, piano. Media coverage, because of the themes of the play, has always been substantial. There is opportunity to do outreach, education, community building around the play. April is National Alcohol and Addiction Month, and coordination with other community groups around this date might be helpful.

2) Local substance abuse treatment center. Most communities have private treatment centers that are interested in being part of the larger community and becoming more well known as resources. Funds to enhance the non-profit production, in return for recognition in the Playbill or display in lobby, are often easy to obtain. In Boston and New York, both local and

national treatment centers have “bought the house” at a discounted ticket price, and then held benefit/fund-raisers, selling tickets for whatever price they wish. Talkbacks with actors, director, and authors are a great attraction.

3) Dedicated financial donors. Every community has philanthropists with a special connection to AA—either personally or through family members. In Boston we easily raised \$108,000 non-profit enhancement money for the production; in New York most of our \$1,100,000 budget came from those who had some connection to treatment centers, or family members in 12-step programs—their investments, though for profit, were made because they believed in the project, not for monetary gain. Many of our investors have expressed interest in bringing the play to their cities—one of them may well live in your city, and want to get involved. We can help connect you.

4) Civic institutions. Public and private, state, federal and corporate involvement is easily arranged. Large medical and insurance companies bought blocks of tickets for people in treatment centers and halfway houses. In both Boston and New York there have been “special events”, talkbacks and fundraisers: local family therapy institutes, Gold Foundation buying tickets for medical students, Boston Housing Authority, AA affinity groups such as “Doctors Helping Doctors” and “Lawyers Helping Lawyers”. Grants, such as federal and state arts grants—many of which emphasize “community outreach” and “diversity of audience”—may be obtained.

5) The “recovery community”. This is a responsive, dedicated, closely-linked network that will support the play with passion and intelligence. Many attend the play with their “group,” and return with their mothers, fathers, children, friends to see the show again. They want to let people see what AA “is really about,” to dispel some of the myths of this anonymous fellowship. As several audience members said in talkbacks: “For the first time I felt that the last stigma of going to AA has vanished.” Another comment: “This is like going to the best meeting ever!”

As WBAI, Pacifica Radio in New York put it: “There is something rare and exciting happening at the New World Theatre... Theatre producers often aspire to find ‘new audiences,’ (and it’s happening here.)... Profoundly moving and highly dramatic. It is theatre for a new audience.”

Join us in this gratifying and creative endeavor. Contact information:

Authors: Samuel Shem and Janet Surrey

For information on the play: www.billwanddrbob.com

www.samuelshem.com

Note: presentation of the play does not imply affiliation with nor approval or endorsement from Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

A SAMPLER OF REVIEWS

“An insightful new play”—The New York Times

“An endearing portrait of friendship uplifted by warm humor”—The New Yorker

“Deeply human, audience-embracing, intelligent writing, a leavening of humor and an innate power of biographical storytelling. A remarkable story!”—Variety

“Something rare and exciting is happening at the Off Broadway New World Theatre. Producers often aspire to find ‘new audiences’—and its happening here. Profoundly moving and highly dramatic. It is theatre for a new audience”—WBAI, Pacifica Radio New York

“Holds the audience in the palm of its hand from the very start...The stakes are life-or-death throughout...Captures the wild exciting uncertainty of invention...An uplifting reminder of the power of the human spirit. The sleeper hit of the season”—nytheatre.com

“A wonderful uplifting new play...a joyous drama of the triumph and survival of the human spirit...filled with humor and grace”—Examiner

“The play humanizes the world of addiction so honestly that the production transcends that universe. To put it bluntly, you don’t have to be in AA to appreciate this show”—news-press, Ft. Myers Florida

“Superb drama. The fall theatre season’s first must-see piece. Spellbinding and truly gripping entertainment...Touches an emotional chord about faith and belief that’s hidden deep inside everyone who’s ever sought redemption of any kind”—Coastal Beat News, Florida

“An often funny, moving play...For all the seriousness of its theme, it is a comedy”—naplesnews.com, Florida

“A textured, truthful telling of AA’s story. Evocative portraits of two complex men, without portraying either as an untarnished hero. Inspiring!”—The Boston Globe

“A funny, poignant, compelling new play. A universal message”—The Boston Herald

“Sobering but not somber...The light of truth shining through the testimony of one drunk’s experience to another sparkles like fine champagne”—Cleveland Plain Dealer

“If you are a friend of Bill W. and Dr. Bob and are familiar with their stories, you will be bolstered and inspired. If you don’t know who Bill W. and Dr. Bob are, then it’s time you met them. You’ll be glad you did...An innovative theatrical shape that is faithful to the narrative history”—The Independent, Cleveland

“Funny and fast moving...Mesmerizing drama. This is what good theatre should be. You don’t have to be an alcoholic or a member of AA to enjoy this”—TalkinBroadway.com

“A night to remember and treasure”—Akron.com

“Entertaining, enlightening, riveting”—Ohio News Bureau

“An intoxicating play...Hilarious moments in a story that is solidly grounded in spirituality. Delivers the story with a memorable theatrical punch—Cleveland Scene.

“Bill W. and Dr. Bob was the Cleveland Playhouse’s biggest season finale in 20 years. It put the Playhouse over the top”—Cleveland Scene

“Breaking attendance records for a season-closing play in the 94-year history of The Cleveland Playhouse, Bill W and Dr. Bob is an inspirational, gripping, and often funny story”—broadwayword.com

“A profoundly moving drama. Go see this amazing bit of theatre...It shattered my normally unrockable composure (I would typically say, ‘It is *just* a play, after all.’)”—Lincoln in Cleveland.blogspot.com

“Whether you’ve been a spouse, sibling, parent, child, family, coworker, or friend of an alcoholic, Bill W. and Dr. Bob is one meeting you should not miss”—The Column, Dallas