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## ***New York Times* “Ethicist” Randy Cohen’s Provocative First Play *The Punishing Blow* to be Performed at the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust**

New York, NY – On **Wednesday, March 25 at 7:00 p.m.**, the **Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust** in association with **The York Shakespeare Company** will present *New York Times* columnist **Randy Cohen’s** (*The Ethicist*) first full-length play ***The Punishing Blow: An Illustrated Lecture Delivered by Order of the Orange County Criminal Court***, starring **Seth Duerr**. Duerr directs and plays Leslie, an anti-Semitic college professor whose court-ordered public lecture is this play. Dark, yet humorous, Leslie’s lecture transcends its purpose of discussing anti-Semitism and becomes a reflection on the nature of hate and of the professor himself. Following the performance, both Cohen and Duerr will hold a Q&A session on this provocative one-man show.

Tickets are \$15 adults, \$12 students/seniors, \$7 members and are available online at [www.mjhnyc.org](http://www.mjhnyc.org) or by calling the Museum box office at 646.437.4202.

*The Punishing Blow* premiered last year at the Woodstock Fringe Festival and was hailed as an “artful, aching comedy tinged with anger and sadness. Seth Duerr is nothing less than superb. His performance is a feast. *The Punishing Blow* is a magnificent assemblage of history and brilliant dysfunction, a tour de force for actor and playwright alike.”

After being arrested for drunk driving followed by an anti-Semitic rant, college professor Leslie (Duerr) can avoid jail time if he enters rehab, attends anger management classes, and gives a lecture on a figure from a list of 100 most influential Jews of all time. Rather than choose a more famous luminary, such as Einstein or Moses, he picks Number 82: Daniel Mendoza, the 18<sup>th</sup> century British boxing champion and father of “scientific boxing.”

In presenting the details of the life and times of Mendoza, Leslie allows details about his personal life to creep into his monologue. The audience discovers, through quick and sardonic asides, what led him to this point, gaining insight to the professor’s tumultuous marriage, arrest, sentencing, and character. *The Punishing Blow* is an exploration of anti-Semitism, boxing, marriage, and of a man’s own insecurity and bitterness.

The Production Stage Manager is Angie McCormack. Performer and PSM appear courtesy of Actors’ Equity Association.

### **Artist Bios**

**Randy Cohen** (Playwright) was born in Charleston, South Carolina and raised in Reading, Pennsylvania. He attended graduate school at the California Institute of the Arts as a music major studying composition. His first professional work was writing humor pieces, essays, and stories for newspapers and magazines (*The New Yorker*, *Harpers*, the *Atlantic*, *Young Love Comics*). His first television work was writing for “Late Night with David Letterman” for which he won three Emmy awards. His fourth Emmy was for his work on “TV Nation.” He received a fifth Emmy as a result of a clerical error, and he kept it. Currently he writes “The Ethicist,” a weekly column for the *New York Times Magazine* syndicated throughout the U.S. and Canada.

**Seth Duerr** (Actor/Director) has garnered massive acclaim for his portrayals of Iago, Claudius, Talbot, Margaret, Chorus, Leontes, Antonio, Estragon and Captain Ahab, as well as for his directing and playing the title role in *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Richard III*. He is the Founder/Artistic Director of The York Shakespeare Company and was the Assistant Artistic Director of the Jean Cocteau Repertory, playing Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*; The Cook in *Mother*; Lexy in *Candida*; and Cléante in *The Miser*. For The Public Theater he has twice appeared in Shakespeare in the Park: *Macbeth* directed by Moisés Kaufman and *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Michael Greif. Mr. Duerr wrote and directed the first author-approved adaptation of one of Ian McEwan's novels, *In Between the Sheets*. He recently reprised his performance as Captain Ahab in Orson Welles' *Moby Dick—Rehearsed*, touring the country with The Acting Company. He is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association and The Dramatists' Guild and serves on the Advisory Board of Wingspan Arts with Donna Murphy and Scott Schwartz.

**The York Shakespeare Company** was founded in 2001 by its current Artistic Director, Seth Duerr. Working under the classical actor-manager system, YSC produced the critically acclaimed repertory of *Richard of York*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Richard II* in 2001; *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear*, and *Henry V* in 2002; *Richard of York*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet* in 2003; *Henry IV Parts I & II*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Waiting for Godot* in 2004; the first author-approved adaptation of an Ian McEwan novel, *In Between the Sheets*, in 2006; and Nagle Jackson's *The Quick-Change Room* in 2007. *Richard of York*, a conflation of *Henry VI Part III* and *Richard III* was published in 2003. [www.yorkshakespeare.org](http://www.yorkshakespeare.org)

**Actors' Equity Association** was founded in 1913, and is the labor union that represents more than 45,000 Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions and provides a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans, for its members. Actors' Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions.

### **About the Museum**

The Museum's three-floor Core Exhibition educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century—before, during, and after the Holocaust. Special exhibitions include *Woman of Letters: Irène Némirovsky and Suite Française*, extended through August 30 and *The Shooting of Jews in Ukraine: Holocaust by Bullets*, on view through March 23. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall. It is also home to Andy Goldsworthy's memorial *Garden of Stones*, as well as James Carpenter's *Reflection Passage*, Gift of The Gruss Lipper Foundation. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and is a founding member of the *Museums of Lower Manhattan*.

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