

**SEX AND OTHER DISTURBANCES by Marisa Smith**  
**May 1-20, opening night, Friday May 4, 2018**  
**Promotional Photos Available Monday April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

**Join us for the world premiere of New England playwright Marisa Smith's latest play, *Sex and Other Disturbances* presented by Portland Stage May 1-20.**

When your husband Alan is too busy buying cabins in Newfoundland in preparation for the apocalypse, and your teenage daughter would rather be anywhere but home, what's the harm in having a little affair?

This delightful and insightful five -character comedy flips the script on a classical sexual romp. Instead of a strong male gaze aimed at a female ingénue, we see Sarah, a woman of a certain age, gazing (and more) at a younger man, Niko-- her scene partner in acting class. Naturally, she confides in her best friend, Ruth, whose husband has just left her for another woman.

*Sex and Other Disturbances* explores the lives of Sarah, Ruth and Alan as they attempt to navigate the treacherous shoals of middle age. At its core, the play is the journey of Sarah--derailed at mid-life and struggling to reinvent herself for the next chapter.

Playwright Marisa Smith takes a unique look at modern marriage, infidelity, and the enduring friendship between two women. As Executive and Artistic Director Anita Stewart states "One of my favorite things about this play is the great friendship that Marisa creates between Ruth and Sarah. They are two women who are willing to call each other out, but in the end are determined to support one another through thick and thin. It is a joy to watch them work as a team and discover what they need to do to move forward with their lives."

Interestingly, when researching the play, Smith found that "Despite the increased acceptance of divorce and sexual orientation in society, today infidelity remains a huge taboo in America. According to Ester Perel, psychoanalyst and writer, the rate of married women who report they've been unfaithful has increased by 40% since 1990, while the rate among married men has remained the same. Obviously, if these statistics are true, there are many, many reasons for this increase in female cheating. My play explores one woman's journey."

And from the Director Nadia Tass "By choosing to have an affair, a woman is once again exploring what she is capable of as she enters the world of the liberated modern woman. In *Sex and Other Disturbances*, our protagonist, Sarah, begins as a passive, needy woman. Would an affair be the catalyst for her enlightenment and empowerment to control the next chapter of her life? What lies beyond the kitchen, the children and her husband?"

**THE PLAY:**

*Sex and Other Disturbances* was workshopped as part of the Portland Stage 2017 Little Festival of the Unexpected.

**THE PLAYWRIGHT:**

**Marisa Smith** is an award-winning American playwright. Full-length plays include: *Saving Kitty* (Eliot Norton award for Jennifer Coolidge Best Actress), and *Mad Love* (Northern Stage, New Jersey Repertory) which is also an audio drama produced by Wondery called *The Defenestrator*. In January of 2019, Marisa's play, *Venus Rising*, will premiere at Northern Stage. Marisa's 10-Minute plays have been produced in the Boston Marathon of 10- Minute Plays, Barrington Stage and in many other theaters around the country. Screenplays: *Second Wind* and *Surprise Engagement* for producer/director Andrew Silver. A graduate of Wesleyan University, Marisa is also the co-Publisher and owner of Smith and Kraus Publishers.

**SHOW SPONSOR:**

Portland Stage is proud to welcome Verdante at Lincoln Park, a new project from NewHeight Group, as our sponsor for *Sex and Other Disturbances*. We have long valued the support of Principals Susan Morris and Chip Newell, and we are thrilled to partner with NewHeight Group as a first time show sponsor.

Located along Franklin and Federal Streets, Verdante at Lincoln Park offers contemporary urban living in Portland's East End. NewHeight Group is a Maine-based real estate development and services firm with decades of experience. More than a company, it's a group of people dedicated to elevating lifestyles, transforming communities, and, ultimately, making Maine an even better place to live. NewHeight Group takes a Fusionist approach to development, with projects that bring together life, work, and play.

For more information: [www.verdantecondos.com](http://www.verdantecondos.com)

**PRESSROOM:**

Color photographs and information available on our website: Production Photos on Monday April 30, 2018 via [www.portlandstage.org/pressroom](http://www.portlandstage.org/pressroom). Press Kit Folders w/ CD available upon request. Password: PortStage74