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VOTE FOR ED!

BY JON STEELY

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GROUP LOCATION MARK TAPER FORUM

As a heated presidential election storms our way, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright David Mamet's political farce *November* is set to deliver an explosion of laughter – the devilishly fun kind – to the fabulous Mark

Taper Forum. And the timing of this provocative and hilarious staged production could not be more apropos.

The Los Angeles run of *November* stars Hollywood veteran Ed Begley, Jr. as F-bomb-dropping U.S. President Charles Smith, a widely disliked head of state engaged in desperate measures and filthy politics as his second election imminently approaches. He wants to win, but his chances are slim and he'll stop at nothing – even threatening to endorse pork as a Thanksgiving entrée if the turkey industry doesn't cough up millions in campaign funds – to remain in office.

Ed Begley, Jr. – known for his stellar work in hundreds of TV shows and films ranging from *St. Elsewhere* to Woody Allen's *Whatever Works* and Judd Apatow's *Pineapple Express* – sizzles in this riotous lead role. And he's having a blast doing it. "I'm having so much fun playing him," says Begley, Jr. "He's one clown short of a circus. He's not the

sharpest tool in the shed, but what he lacks in intelligence he makes up for in bluster. I'd seen this play on Broadway (starring Nathan Lane) and thought it was very, very funny. I greatly admire David Mamet. I've worked with him several times and I love working with him. Anything that he is doing, I want to be a part of. When I heard 'November' was coming to LA and they wanted me to do it, I was instantly doing back flips for the opportunity."

Emmy Award-winner Felicity Huffman (*Desperate Housewives*) also stars as President Smith's Jewish lesbian speechwriter. Smith needs her services, but she won't add the finishing touches to his most vital speech until he agrees to endorse her marriage to her partner. Crises arise and comedy ensues as Archie Bunkeresque racism, sexism and homophobia – along with an endless string of expletives – pour out of President Smith while he plots his devious re-election.

David Mamet (*Glengarry Glen Ross*) is known for biting dialogue, fast-paced banter and an unmatched mastery in using words as weapons. In "November," Mr. Mamet adds funny one-liners to his arsenal, taking aim at the corruption and hypocrisy that's alive and well in today's political landscape. "What David (Mamet) does," declares Begley, Jr., "is bring a lot of laughs to a very troubling situation, which is the way that money invades politics. Whether your message is a good one or not, you must raise incredible amounts of money to become the president. And how do you get that money? You get it from people whose interests may not coincide with yours and whose interests certainly may not be what's best for the country. This is something that David investigates, in a comic sense, and quite effectively."

November will not mark the first time Begley, Jr. has spoken David Mamet's words on the Mark Taper stage. "I did another play of David's called *Romance* at the Taper in 2005," recalls the Emmy-nominated actor. "It's a great theater. I've seen many, many plays at the Taper over the years. I just saw *Red* (starring Alfred Molina) there, which was spectacular. It's an intimate experience. Michael Ritchie (CTG's Artistic Director) makes sure that great plays come in so Angelenos can see fine work. He brings the best kind of theater to L.A. from all around."

As we get ready to cast our votes this coming Election Day, why not also brace ourselves for a fun night of hilarity and political satire with *November* at The Mark Taper Forum? It's a good time to laugh at this sort of frolic. It just might be the only choice we have.

November runs through November 4 at The Mark Taper Forum. LAArtsOnline.com is proudly hosting the Opening Night party on October 7, at *The Palm* restaurant located at 1100 S. Flower Street, Los Angeles 90015.