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**THE PRESIDENT IS COMING TO LONDON…**

***AS WE ASK DOES THE ‘BEST MAN’ ALWAYS WIN THE WHITE HOUSE?***

**MARTIN SHAW**

**JEFF FAHEY, MAUREEN LIPMAN, JACK SHEPHERD**

**HONEYSUCKLE WEEKS AND GLYNIS BARBER**

**in**

***THE BEST MAN***

**THE WEST END PREMIERE OF GORE VIDAL’S AWARD-WINNING**

**POLITICAL DRAMA**

**Bill Kenwright** presents **Martin Shaw** in the West End premiere of **Gore Vidal**’s sharp political drama ***The Best Man***, at **The Playhouse Theatre** from Saturday 24February, with press night Monday 5 March at 7.00pm.

Written and produced on Broadway nearly 60 years ago, long before the battles of Trump vs Clinton and May vs Corbyn, ***The Best Man*** never achieved a West End transfer at the time because it was thought that American politics were of no real interest to London audiences.

**Martin Shaw** is William Russell, esteemed ex-Secretary of State and US presidential candidate, with something of a philandering reputation. **Jeff Fahey** is Joseph Cantwell, an ambitious populist newcomer, opposing Russell for the party nomination.

Running neck and neck, the only thing that might separate the candidates are endorsements from a respected Ex-President (**Jack Shepherd**) and party big-wig (**Maureen Lipman**). As the race heats up the campaign gets personal, involving Russell’s estranged wife Alice (**Glynis Barber**) and Cantwell’s wife Mabel (**Honeysuckle Weeks**)*.* But where does compromise end and corruption begin? How far will they each go to become the most powerful man in the world? And who in the end will be proven to be “the best man”?

The play mirrors the often surprising results of campaigning, and the all-too-often unscrupulous world of politics.

Leading the cast is **Martin Shaw.** Best known to TV audiences for the title-roles in *Judge John Deed, Inspector George Gently* and *The Professionals*, Shaw’s leading-man West End stage roles have included *Twelve Angry Men, A Man For All Seasons* and *The Country Girl* directed by Rufus Norris.

**Jeff Fahey** has starred in many indie movie classics, including the title role in cult sci-fi hit *The* *Lawnmower Man* opposite Pierce Brosnan and in Quentin Tarantino’s *Grindhouse.* He has rarely been off our TV screens, starring in US series *The Marshal* and more recently in *Lost*. He returns to the West End stage following his acclaimed performance in *Twelve Angry Men*alongside Martin Shaw*.*

One of Britain’s finest and best loved film, TV and theatre actresses **Maureen Lipman** (CBE), is known on the big screen for roles such as Trish in *Educating Rita* and in the Oscar winning film *The Pianist* as well as for her wide ranging TV appearances – from the landlady of The Rover's Return in *Coronation Street*, to the Princess of France in *Love's Labours Lost*. A prolific stage actress, Lipman is an Olivier Award winner (*See How They Run*) and has appeared in some 20 West End productions.

Star of TV’s *Wycliffe* and *Bill Brand*, **Jack Shepherd’s** extensive stage career includes his award-winning performance in *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *The Iceman Cometh* at the National Theatre. **Glynis Barber** is known for *Dempsey and Makepeace*and popular roles in *Night and Day* and *EastEnders.* Her stage credits include, the original London Cast of *Beautiful: The Carole King Story* at the Aldwych Theatre, and *The Graduate*. And **Honeysuckle Weeks** is best known for starring alongside Michael Kitchen as Samantha Stewart in hit TV drama *Foyle’s War.* Her theatre credits include *The Shining Lives* at the Park Theatre, *Pygmalion* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* at Chichester Festival Theatre and *A Daughter’s A Daughter* in the West End.

Born into a distinguished political family, **Gore Vidal** was a prolific writer known for the waspish wit, which peppered his essays, novels, screenplays and Broadway plays. Among his most famous works are *Myra Breckinridge* and *Lincoln*. *The Best Man* premiered on Broadway in 1960 and was nominated for six Tony Awards, including ‘Best Play’. Vidal adapted it into a film with the same title in 1964 starring Henry Fonda, Cliff Robertson and Lee Tracy, who was nominated for an Oscar for his portrayal of the crafty ex-President. The play received a major revival on Broadway in 2012 starring James Earl Jones and Angela Lansbury, and earned two Tony award nominations including ‘Best Revival of a Play’.

Director **Simon Evans**' credits include *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Silence of the Seas* (Donmar Warehouse), *The Dazzle*, *Bug*, *Fool for Love* (Found111), *Almost Maine* (Park Theatre), *Hannah* (Unicorn), *Speed Twins* (Riverside Studio), *Laura Marling*, *Shawshank Redemption* and *Ghostbusters* (Secret Cinema), *Rubber Room* (The Old Vic) and *Madness in Valencia* (Trafalgar Studios). Simon was Resident Assistant Director at the Donmar Warehouse, Staff Director at the National and Creative Associate at the Bush.

Further casting to be announced.

***The Best Man*** is produced by **Bill Kenwright** and directed by **Simon Evans**, with set and costume design by **Michael Taylor**, lighting design by **Chris Davey** and composition and sound design by **Ed Lewis**.

**LISTINGS**

**BILL KENWRIGHT PRESENTS**

***THE BEST MAN***

[www.Kenwright.com](http://www.Kenwright.com)

**Written By Gore Vidal**

**Directed By Simon Evans**

**Playhouse Theatre**

**24 February – 12 May 2018**

**Press Night:** Monday 5 March 2018– 7pm

**Performances:**

Monday – Saturday evening: 7.45pm

Thursday and Saturday matinee: 3pm

**Ticket Prices:** From £15

**Address:** The Playhouse Theatre, Northumberland Ave, London, WC2N 5DE

**Box Office:** 0844 871 7631

**ATG Tickets:** [www.atgtickets.com](http://www.atgtickets.com/)

**Facebook:** BKLProductions

**Twitter:** **@**BKL\_Productions

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