

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## ***Seminar* — The Royal Underground Theatre Company**

**Live Oak Theater, Berkeley — September 12–28, 2025**

The Royal Underground Theatre Company proudly presents Theresa Rebeck’s razor-sharp comedy *Seminar*, directed by Enrico Banson, at the historic Live Oak Theater in Berkeley from September 12–28, 2025. Performances are Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 PM and Sundays at 2:00 PM.

### **About the Play:**

The Royal Underground Theatre Company proudly presents Theresa Rebeck’s *Seminar*, a sharp-witted comedy about power, ambition, and the price of success. Four young writers sign up for a private seminar with Leonard, a celebrated novelist whose unorthodox teaching style borders on brutal. As the sessions unfold, alliances form, secrets surface, and each student must decide how much they are willing to sacrifice to make it in the literary world.

*Seminar* was a critical success on Broadway, originally starring the late Alan Rickman as Leonard, with Jeff Goldblum later taking over the role and leading the show’s celebrated transfer to Los Angeles. The Royal Underground Theatre Company proudly presents Theresa Rebeck’s razor-sharp comedy *Seminar*, directed by Enrico Banson, featuring Harrison Alter as Leonard, Chika Okonkwo as Kate, David Patino as Martin, Kristy Aquino as Izzy and Michael Carlos as Douglas. Playing at the historic Live Oak Theater in Berkeley from September 12–28, 2025. Performances are Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 PM and Sundays at 2:00 PM.

### **Why Now:**

In 2025, *Seminar* feels more relevant than ever. In an era when creative careers are shaped as much by connections, politics, and personal branding as by talent, the play holds a mirror to today’s high-pressure, gig-driven world. It asks the same question every artist must face: Do you want to be told you are good, or do you want to actually be good?

### **Cast:**

Leonard - Harrison Alter

Martin - David Patino

Kate - Chika Okonkwo

Izzy - Kristy Aquino

Douglas - Michael Carlos

## **About Royal Underground Theatre Company:**

Royal Underground Theatre Company produces daring, high-quality theatre that challenges, entertains, and sparks conversation. Our work is intimate, thought-provoking, and unapologetically bold — theatre that speaks to our community and resonates far beyond the stage.

Founded as a nomadic company in San Francisco at the start of the millennium, we found our creative home at Fort Mason's Southside Theatre before continuing to evolve with the ever-changing Bay Area arts scene. Through shifting cultural priorities and the upheaval of the pandemic, our belief has never wavered: bold theatre matters. We create transformative experiences that linger long after the curtain falls.

Our most recent production, *Freud's Last Session*, was presented with ServeFirst Productions last October at the Berkeley City Club as an immersive theatrical experience. The production drew critical acclaim, with Barry Horwitz of Theatrius praising:

"The subtle direction by Enrico Banson leads us in new directions. We are led to new ideas and new resolutions by the highs and lows in their subtle and intellectual debate."

Notably, Harrison Alter — who plays Leonard in *Seminar* — portrayed Freud in this production to great acclaim.

### **Performance Dates and Times:**

Fridays and Saturdays - 8:00 PM

Sundays - 2:00 PM

September 12–28, 2025

Live Oak Theater, Berkeley, CA

### **Press Contact:**

For press inquiries email [info@theroyalunderground.org](mailto:info@theroyalunderground.org)

***Seminar* contains adult language, sexual content, and mature themes. Recommended for audiences ages 16 and up. Viewer discretion is advised.**

## Director's Note

When Theresa Rebeck's *Seminar* premiered in 2011, it was marketed as a dark comedy about a master class in fiction writing. Peel back the layers and you will find a sharper, more unsettling play about power, ambition, and the uncomfortable bargains we make to "make it."

Leonard, the celebrated novelist at the center of the seminar, wields authority with the precision of a scalpel or a wrecking ball, depending on his mood. His four students arrive hungry for validation and leave with a more sobering education: talent matters, but so do politics, connections, timing, and the ability to survive someone else's judgment.

Rebeck's world is a microcosm of the creative industries and not just publishing. In 2025, replace the idea of a novel with a screenplay, a podcast, a brand, or a content channel and the story still holds. We live in a culture that rewards the bold, the loud, and the well connected, often at the expense of the measured, the thoughtful, and the quietly brilliant. For many artists, the real seminar begins the moment they realize the myth of meritocracy is exactly that, a myth.

The play is also a meditation on how truth and validation collide. Leonard's critiques are brutal, sometimes cruel, but his question is one that any artist eventually faces: Do you want to be told you are good, or do you want to actually be good? In a world of instant likes and algorithm driven praise, that question has never felt more urgent.

And then there is sex. In *Seminar*, sex is a currency, a distraction, and a transaction. It is never free of power dynamics. These are not love stories. They are survival tactics. It is uncomfortable, but it is real, and it is still happening.

As you watch these five characters collide, seduce, and betray each other, remember this is not just a story about a writing class. It is about the systems we all navigate, the ones that promise opportunity but deliver it unevenly, the ones that demand a little piece of you in exchange for access.

The lesson is as relevant now as it was when the play premiered. In the seminar of life, the syllabus is never fair, the grading is subjective, and the real test is whether you can keep creating anyway.

— Enrico Banson