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Pap Smear (A Rip Roaring Comedy)

October 25th, 2007 - November 4th, 2007

Star Theater
300 West 43rd Street 4th Floor

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Seeing Stars:

When most people hear the words "pap smear" they don't think of it as a "rip roaring comedy," but that's exactly what Marshaline Letcher's new play with the provocative title promises. Directed by Jennifer Vermont-Davis, *Pap Smear* tells the story of Eugene, a devoted husband who, after a brief and timely viewing of his wife's yearly exam, suspects she's having an affair with her gynecologist. With the encouragement of his guy friends, Eugene schemes to catch the doctor red-handed. High jinx ensues, as does cross-dressing, miscommunication and an unconventional way of looking at the gynecologist.



Playwright Marshaline Letcher
clearly writes for laughs

The idea for *Pap Smear* came when Marshaline was getting her own annual exam on her birthday one year. "I thought to myself, what would happen if my man walked in right now!" she says with a laugh. *Pap Smear* was first written as a ten-minute play and received its initial production by NYC's Revolving Stages in 2004. As a full-length play, it was developed in several readings around the country, including last fall's OctoberFest at Ensemble Studio Theatre. Having taken several playwriting workshops around New York City (including Leslie Lee's at the Frederick Douglass Theatre Arts Center), Marshaline notes that thanks to one special teacher, the *Pap Smear* process was different. "My instructor one day said to me, why are you trying to guide your characters? Let the characters guide you. I really thought this was going to be [the wife] Sharon's play," she says, noting that to her surprise, Sharon's husband took more of a prominent role. "I let Eugene guide me."

Marshaline found playwriting through her acting career. Starting in the late 70s, she operated an on-camera acting studio for children and acted in Off-Off Broadway and in film. Though her career was stable and satisfying, she took a sabbatical to have a son and focus on family. Her creative family was formed in the 70s as well, when Marshaline met

director Jennifer Vermont-Davis in a writing workshop. "The play I was writing at the time had 900 scenes and about 5,000 characters," she exclaims, obviously in exaggeration. "But Jennifer managed to make sense of it. She got the play down to two acts." That was 1978, and the two have been collaborators and friends ever since. "She has a family and I have a family," says Marshaline. "We're friends."

With *Pap Smear*, Letcher is clearly writing for laughs but the subject matter has its serious side. "I hope that women take home [from the play] the importance of a yearly exam," says Marshaline. "And men will understand how important monogamy is." With her son now in college she hopes to focus on her writing again, and to make a career out of playwriting. "I love writing plays," she says, "and I hope to be a successful playwright." In regards to how she measures success, she says, "I don't think Broadway is the pinnacle...though I hope to get representation...and get paid!"

Written for United Stages by Liza Lentini, contributing columnist.

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