

NEW PLAY

Comedy premiere at Saltpillar

DANNY GOCS

THREE years ago Melbourne psychiatrist Rob Selzer decided to spend more time on his dream of being a playwright – and found instant success.

Selzer won a prize in a local competition and the following year entered one of his plays in a competition in London that also won a prize.

Saltpillar Theatre's co-chairperson Steven Curtis heard about Selzer's London success and approached him about writing a play for the long-running Melbourne Jewish theatre company.

"It was a lucky break for me," Selzer told *The AJN*. "I jumped at the opportunity."

The result is the comedy *In Bed With The Bishops*, which premieres at the Phoenix Theatre, Elwood on August 11. Directed by Greg Ulfan, it stars Tali Brash, Joseph Sherman, Adi Snir and Tiffany Davis.

"I had a couple of ideas brewing away in my mind at the time," said Selzer. "In fact, *In Bed With The Bishops* was going to be a book and then I decided to make it a play."

"So I wrote a comedy with lots of Jewish themes. When I write, it is mostly dialogue and I have found that the stage is better for me to write for."

In Bed With The Bishops is a comedy set around a couple, Betty and Barry Bishop (played by Davis and Snir) whose marriage is in trouble and they seek the help of therapist Dr Jack Glass (Sherman).

Although Dr Glass has a new



Playwright Rob Selzer (second from right) with cast members (from left) Joseph Sherman, Tiffany Davis, Tali Brash and Adi Snir. Photos: Peter Haskin

book coming out and a new relationship blossoming, he has his own problems and is forced to confess them to Zelda (Tali Brash), his absent-minded mentor. Meanwhile the Bishops, uptight and conservative, slowly reveal another side to their personalities, which add to Dr Glass's problems.

There are plenty of laughs with one-liners – the play is driven by the dialogue and the repartee.

Rob Selzer, playwright

Using a humorous take on couples therapy, the play champions the ideas of people accepting each other for who they really are, seeing beneath appearances and rejecting stereotypes.

"There are plenty of laughs with one-liners – the play is driven by the dialogue and the repartee," said Selzer.

"I see the world as a marvellous, absurd place that we are inhabiting."

In Bed With The Bishops went through two readings with the Saltpillar production team, starting late last year.

"I got some feedback and made

substantial changes before we had a second reading with director Greg Ulfan," said Selzer.

"Watching your own work being performed on stage is pretty daunting. I expect to be quite nervous on opening night for *In Bed With The Bishops*.

"This opportunity with Saltpillar is amazing, like a dream come true. I'm really happy with the script."

After graduating in medicine, Selzer tried different specialties and has worked in child and adolescent mental health.

"I have always been fascinated by people's stories – that's why psychiatry was perfect for me," he said.

In 2015 Selzer decided to spend more time on his writing and is also teaching.

"It's a time in my life where I can transition to spend more time on something that I love," he said. "I've written a few plays that I plan to shop around."

Selzer, whose two children attend The King David School, also hosts a long-running radio show on RRR titled *Radio Therapy*, discussing health related matters.



Director Greg Ulfan.

Saltpillar Theatre's *In Bed With The Bishops* is at the Phoenix Theatre, Elwood from August 11-26. Bookings: www.saltpillar.org.au