

Wednesday, October 1, 2008, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Alexander McCall Smith



Tara Murphy

The Very Small Things in Life

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Alexander McCall Smith has written more than 60 books, including specialist academic titles, short-story collections and a number of immensely popular children's books. Referred to as our new P. G. Wodehouse, he is best known for his internationally acclaimed *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series, which rapidly rose to the top of bestseller lists throughout the world. The fifth novel in the series, *The Full Cupboard of Life*, received the Saga Award for Wit. The latest and ninth book in the series is *The Miracle at Speedy Motors* (April 2008). The series has now been translated into 39 languages and has sold over 15 million copies worldwide. The first episode of a film adaptation, directed by Anthony Minghella and produced by the Weinstein Company, is scheduled to premiere on HBO in March 2009. Another series, beginning with *The Sunday Philosophy Club*, about an intriguing woman named Isabel Dalhousie, appeared in 2004 and immediately leapt onto national bestseller lists, as did the sequels *Friends, Lovers, Chocolate, The Right Attitude to Rain* and *The Careful Use of Compliments*. The fifth Dalhousie novel is *The Comfort of a Muddy Saturday* (fall 2008). Mr. McCall Smith's serial novel, *44 Scotland Street*, was published in book form to great acclaim in 2005, followed by *Espresso Tales* and *Love Over Scotland* (November 2007). In late 2008, the serial novel, *Corduroy Mansions*, depicting the lives of the inhabitants of a large Pimlico house, began to be published and podcasted in 100 daily web episodes by the UK's *Daily Telegraph* prior to its hardcover release in 2009.

In addition, Mr. McCall Smith's delightful German professor series, *Portuguese Irregular Verbs, The Finer Points of Sausage Dogs* and *At the Villa of Reduced Circumstances*, were published in the United States in January 2005. He is also the author of several children's books, including the *Akimbo* series, about a boy in Africa, the *Harriet Bean* series, the *Max & Maddy* series and *The Perfect Hamburger and Other Delicious Stories*.

Akimbo and the Baboons, the fifth book in the *Akimbo* series, will be published in November 2008. Pantheon has published Mr. McCall Smith's collection of African folktales, *The Girl Who Married a Lion*. Mr. McCall Smith is also the author of *Dream Angus: The Celtic God of Dreams*, a contemporary reworking of a beloved Celtic myth, and *Heavenly Date and Other Flirtations*, a collection of short stories examining the mysteries of dating and courtship.

Mr. McCall Smith was born in what is now Zimbabwe and was educated there and in Scotland. He became a law professor in Scotland, and it was in this role that he first returned to Africa to work in Botswana, where he helped to set up a new law school at the University of Botswana. For many years he was Professor of Medical Law at the University of Edinburgh, and has been a visiting professor at a number of other universities elsewhere, including ones in Italy and the United States. He is now a Professor Emeritus at the University of Edinburgh.

In addition to his university work, Mr. McCall Smith was for four years the vice-chairman of the Human Genetics Commission of the UK, the chairman of the British Medical Journal Ethics Committee, and a member of the International Bioethics Commission of UNESCO. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Crime Writers' Association's *Dagger in the Library Award*, the UK's *Author of the Year Award* in 2004 and Sweden's *Martin Beck Award*. In 2007, he was made a CBE for his services to literature in the Queen's New Year Honours List.

Alexander McCall Smith currently lives in Edinburgh with his wife, Elizabeth (an Edinburgh doctor), and their two daughters, Lucy and Emily. His hobbies include playing wind instruments, and he is the co-founder of an amateur orchestra called "The Really Terrible Orchestra," in which he plays the bassoon and his wife plays the horn.