

*Harlem
Renaissance
Celebration*

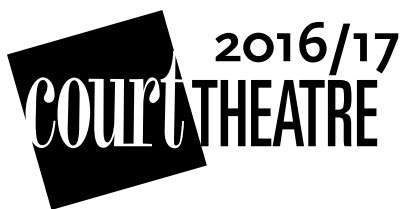
COURT THEATRE

*Blues
for an
Alabama
Sky*

BY **PEARL CLEAGE**

DIRECTED BY **Resident Artist
RON OJ PARSON**





Dear Court Theatre Family,

Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky* introduces audiences to characters who live during the Harlem Renaissance: an era of African American artistry and culture bracketed by the end of World War I and the Great Depression. During this period, Harlem was a magnet that attracted black writers, artists, musicians, and scholars who created a social and artistic explosion that we still feel today.

Blues for an Alabama Sky captures the hopefulness of this period, when inspiration and discovery abound. It also captures a moment of extraordinary change for the African American community, how it was perceived, and its emerging leaders. The characters in the play discuss Langston Hughes' adventures, follow the triumphs of Josephine Baker, attend services where Adam Clayton Powell preached, and support the efforts of Margaret Sanger to bring family planning to the community.

Our decision to produce this play was propelled by Resident Artist Ron OJ Parson's vision for bringing it to life on our stage. As we grew to know this play, it inspired us to build a community-wide investigation and exploration of this historic era: a Harlem Renaissance Celebration. Our instinct is to always search for works that might provide a broader platform for engagement with the University, neighboring schools, and our Hyde Park community.

The University of Chicago's Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture (CSRPC) has been extremely supportive of our previous productions of *Invisible Man* and *Native Son*. CSRPC faculty members Michael Dawson and Ken Warren embraced the idea of a Harlem Renaissance Celebration, and both are teaching classes this winter quarter focused on the period. We are grateful to have this kind of faculty support on campus. In addition, the Ancona School in Kenwood has incorporated the work of the period into their literature, history, and political science courses. Seventh and eighth grade students attended both the first rehearsal and a technical rehearsal of *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, and will see a full performance. We are proud of this model of intermingling artistic practice with academic study at all levels.

Audiences may also experience the depth of the Harlem Renaissance's influences at other unique events throughout January and February. Musicians of the period—Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, and Jelly Roll Morton, to name but a few—inspired concerts at The Promontory and the Logan Center. Visual arts from the period will be on display at the Beverly Arts Center, films will be screened at the DuSable Museum of African American History, and Young Chicago Authors will open various events by performing poetry from the period alongside original works.

We believe that being a Center for Classic Theatre is not only about producing plays, but also about creating events that have the power to inspire and energize happenings both on campus and in the community.

We hope you will join us in this celebration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles".

Charles Newell, Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen".

Stephen J. Albert, Executive Director



CHARLES NEWELL
Marilyn F. Vitale
Artistic Director

STEPHEN J. ALBERT
Executive Director

Court Theatre's 2016/17 Season is sponsored by **Barbara and Richard Franke**.

BLUES for an ALABAMA SKY

BY PEARL CLEAGE

DIRECTED BY RESIDENT ARTIST
RON OJ PARSON

JAN 12 – FEB 12

Scenic Design by Linda Buchanan U.S.A.

Costume Design by Rachel Healy U.S.A.

Lighting Design by Keith Parham U.S.A.

Sound Design by Joshua Horvath U.S.A.

Cree Rankin, Casting

Martine Kei Green-Rogers, Production Dramaturg

Amanda Weener-Frederick, Production Stage Manager*

Erin Albrecht, Stage Manager*

SETTING: Summer 1930. Harlem, New York.

There will be a fifteen-minute intermission.

WARNING: Please keep the aisles clear as actors will be using them during the performance.

This production contains the sound of gunshots.

Sponsored by  **Allstate** The Women's Board
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Commissioned by and World Premiered at ALLIANCE THEATRE COMPANY, Atlanta Georgia

Kenny Leon, Artistic Director | Edith Love, Managing Director

With support from the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund's Resident Institute

Presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

Designers and Scenic Artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E. Local USA829, AFL-CIO,CLC.

**Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

CAST

Delia Celeste M. Cooper
Sam James Vincent Meredith*
Guy Sean Parris*
Angel Toya Turner
Leland Geno Walker
Young Man Al'Jaleel McGhee
Understudies: N. LaQuis Harkins, Al'Jaleel McGhee, Michael Anthony Rawlins

**Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Director Ashley Honore Roberson
Dialect Coach Adam Goldstein
Movement Consultant Cristin Carole
Scenic Artists Samantha Bodnar U.S.A., Scott Gerwitz U.S.A., Julie Ruscitti U.S.A.
Carpenters Andrew Hildner, Chris Walls, Andrew Halvorsen,
Theron Seckington, Ian Olsen, Tony Cooper
Wig Designer Christina Carlson
Draper Beth Uber
Tailor Austin Pettinger
Costume Shop Assistant Stephanie Cluggish
Wardrobe Supervisor Jody Schmidt
Stitcher and Wardrobe Crew Alex Rutherford
Assistant Lighting Designer Mike Durst
Assistant Master Electrician Billy Murphy
Electricians Chris Cvikota , Austin Packard, David Trudeau, Kenny Cole,
Jonah White, Brandi Alexander, Raphael Grimes, Cameron Petti , Jason Lynch
Associate Sound Designer Sarah Espinoza
Floor Managers Gabby Welsh, Jaclynn Joslin
Scenic Artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E. Local USA829, AFL-CIO,CLC.

Court Theatre performs in the intimate Abelson Auditorium, made possible through a gift from Hope and Lester Abelson.

Cover art by Daniel Minter.

Please turn off all phones, pagers, and chiming watches. Photographs and video recording are strictly prohibited.

Court Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Productions are made possible, in part, by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. Court Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American Theatre, the League of Resident Theatres, the Illinois Humanities Council, Arts Alliance Illinois, and the League of Chicago Theatres.



the center for **COURT** **THEATRE**

Court Theatre recognizes those individuals whose generosity supported the creation of the Center for Classic Theatre at Court Theatre and the University of Chicago.

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Dana Levinson and James Noonan
Michael Lowenthal and Amy Osler
Helen and Roland* Baker

*deceased

Photo of Toya Turner and Sean Parris by Joe Mazza.



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In Conversation with Playwright Pearl Cleage & Director Ron OJ Parson



Best-selling novels, plays, and poetry—Pearl Cleage has written it all. Her 1995 play *Blues for an Alabama Sky* thrusts audiences into the creative ferment of the Harlem Renaissance, just as the problems of the Great Depression begin to overshadow artistic triumphs and creep into characters' lives. While set in the past, her work sends echoes to us in the present that are impossible to ignore. Court staff member Shelby Krick enjoyed a fascinating conversation with Cleage and Resident Artist and Director Ron OJ Parson.

In *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, you're not writing about the Harlem Renaissance alone. You also focus on the Great Depression. How do you find that this time period intersects with the Great Depression, and why was that an inspiration for your work?

Cleage: When I set *Blues* in the middle of the Harlem Renaissance, I realized we always write about it as a period of wonderful creative energy ... people were in an opportunistic moment making great work. But once the stock market crashed, a lot of that money dried up and lots of artists were in worse times—especially black artists. I was more interested in placing a story, I realized, in that time when a lot of that hope and artistry has dried up, and how different people reacted to it. Angel responds with absolute fear. Guy's response is to pursue a moment beyond the present, and to become a citizen of the world.

Being a citizen of the world, having hope past that moment—I think these thoughts resonate with our audience given what's happening in our country right now. Have things changed, or do we still have the same historical motives?

Cleage: Absolutely. Running through African American history and literature, there have always been two responses. One is that “we’re here, we belong here, and we’re not going to be run off.” The other is that “we don’t really belong here, and we don’t really like it here.” [The latter] becomes the impetus to leave, to go to West Africa

or Paris and become a citizen of somewhere else. My father was a Black nationalist, and his attitude was always that we’re going to dig in right here. But I was always fascinated by Langston Hughes and the ex-patriots; what would happen if we left and tried something new? Doc and Delia represent people like my dad. They’re here in Harlem, they have gifts that could take them out of the realm of a poor struggling community. Their class and privilege doesn’t drive them to leave.

Parson: I’ve always loved the whole environment of the Harlem Renaissance, the richness of it, and it’s always an honor working on your pieces, Pearl. When people walk into the theatre, I want older people to say, “That looks like my grandmother’s house!” Even before the play starts, they have the feeling of going back to that time. The timing is so right for some of the classic plays, because they’re more relevant now than ever.

Cleage: Yes, it’s interesting. We just did a 20th anniversary production [of *Blues*] at the Alliance Theatre, and I hadn’t seen the play for a long time. Beforehand, I thought, do I want to see this play again? Is it necessary to do it? Then I said to myself—wow! Intolerance, homophobia, anti-abortion ... I could be writing this right now.

Parson: I was asked to do this during [the aftermath of] Ferguson, and I read it and said, this is today. I can do this and make this relevant to people who may think that this was just the past. We want artists to create artwork for the set that connects the show to the community. When they come, they see that there is a fire here that instills something new.

Talk to us about your original ending, which will be produced here at Court. What does this change do for your story, and why include it now?

Cleage: When we first did [*Blues*] at the Alliance, we couldn’t keep my original ending, and so the new ending became the published one, lacking an extra character. The original ending was produced for the first time at the Alliance in the 20th anniversary production in 2015. The point of Angel is that she didn’t change, she didn’t learn the lesson, she isn’t redeemed. But I’ve seen so many productions where she is. That is not who this woman is. The original ending makes it much clearer and takes away the ambiguity.

Parson: I’m interested in her protracted struggle: that she’s going to make it work, make it happen, and she has her way to do that. She knows what she’s got to do to survive. When I was reading it I thought of *Dutchman* and how when she comes back, it’s the same cycle over again.

I thought, do I want to see this play again? Is it necessary to do it? Then I said to myself—wow! Intolerance, homophobia, anti-abortion. I could be writing this right now.

CONTINUED ON P 8

Cleage: It's exactly that! I've been thinking even more now than when I first wrote it, people don't change. They do what they do. We like to think that they would, but they don't. Angel is always going to have that fear, that selfishness—she was always in it to do the best for her, to find a man who could protect her.

Parson: A good friend and mentor of mine, Steven Henderson, taught me that characters' history before they get on stage and on the page is so important. It's how they got to where they are before people see them, and that's a whole world. I like to get into that with all of these characters because that depth is there for me: it's in the art on the walls, on the carpet.

Bringing plays from the African American canon to life on Court Theatre's stage is a crucial part of our mission. For you personally, why is it so important to keep producing these classic works?

Cleage: When young people think of this time, it's so far removed and dusty. So I didn't want to write biographical work that's about real people. But somebody knew these real people and went to their parties. Part of the pleasure is having these characters move around in this world of real people, so you can recognize it or learn from it.

Parson: I've been working in Chicago for 20 years, so it's good to have young, fresh actors. But it's interesting to learn that in training programs, they do Shakespeare and other classics, but they don't know the work of the Harlem Renaissance or the Civil Rights movement. As actors of color, we need to do this stuff.



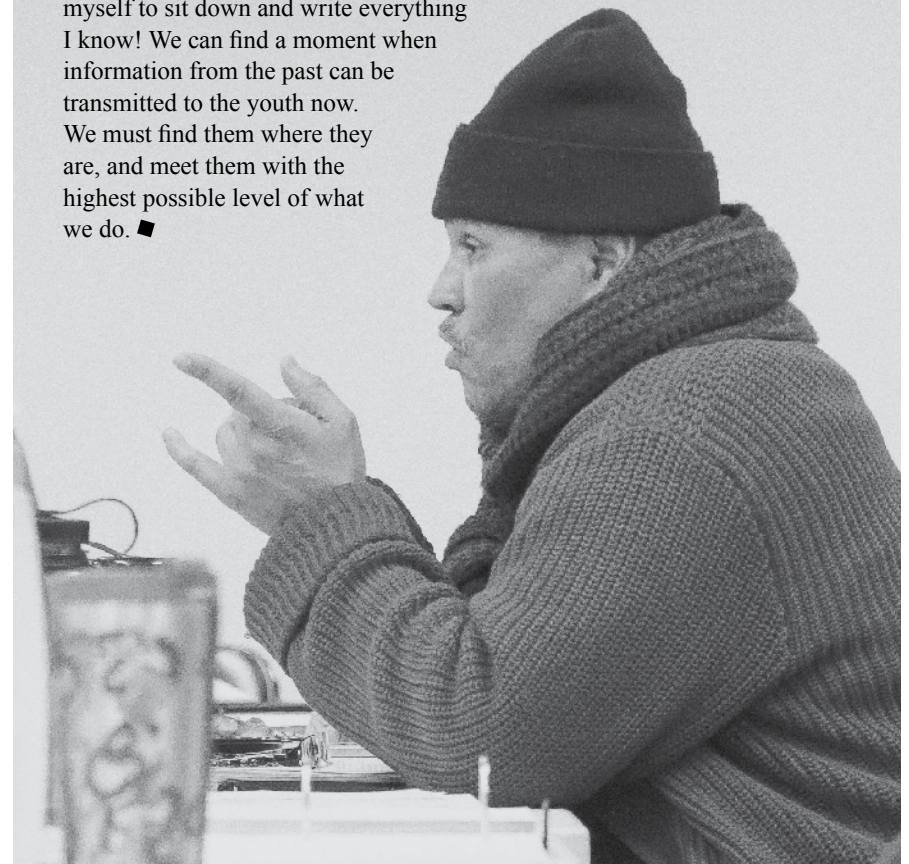
Photo by Joe Mazza.

Cleage: When I was 11, I saw *A Raisin in the Sun*. The auditorium was packed with an all black audience, all black community. When the show ended, there was a beat of absolute silence, then everyone stood up and clapped for 15 minutes! That was when I realized: poems are great, novels are good, but I want to be a playwright.

We're in a time when art is certainly more important than ever. What inspires you to keep working and moving forward?

Cleage: I can't imagine not writing. I've always felt that my writing is a vehicle to tell the truth, allow audiences to see life, and to be a part of the resistance. It couldn't be more important now to write about compassion, put forth the truth, and question what is the longing.

This is not the first time we've had to deal with an adversarial relationship with the government; I remember when segregation was legal. We continue to move forward. We've always done theatre because we're determined to. I never think about stopping; I always tell myself to sit down and write everything I know! We can find a moment when information from the past can be transmitted to the youth now. We must find them where they are, and meet them with the highest possible level of what we do. ■



Highlights of the HARLEM RENAISSANCE

by Skye Robinson Hillis

1910s

1909

The **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** is founded.

W.E.B. Du Bois becomes editor of the monthly magazine, *Crisis*. Du Bois was an American historian and civil rights activist—he was the first African American to earn a Ph.D from Harvard.



1912



James Weldon Johnson's novel *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* is published.

1917

Marcus Garvey, born in Jamaica, arrives in Harlem and founds the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Marcus Garvey was a political leader and journalist who spearheaded the Black Nationalism and Pan-African movement.

Between 10,000-15,000 African-Americans join the **Silent Protest Parade**, marching down Fifth Avenue.



1920s →

1920

James Weldon Johnson becomes head of the NAACP.

W.E.B. Du Bois' *Darktower* is published.



Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* opens at the Provincetown Playhouse in November **Charles Gilpin** in the lead role.

1921

The Black Swan Phonograph Corporation produces "**race records**," which helped bring jazz to a larger audience.



Langston Hughes' poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" is published in *Crisis*.



The first musical revue written and performed by African Americans, *Shuffle Along*, by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake opens on Broadway, launching careers for **Josephine Baker** and **Florence Mills**. *Shuffle Along* was recently revived in a successful Broadway run starring Audra McDonald.

The **Colored Players Guild of New York** is founded.

1922

Meta Warrick Fuller's sculpture *Ethiopia Awakening* is shown in the "Making of America" exhibition.

The **Harmon Foundation** is established to promote black artists.

The **Boston Public Library** has an exhibition of African American visual arts.

Publication of *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, edited by James Weldon Johnson and Claude McKay.



1923

Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune* is produced by The National Ethiopian Art Players, becoming the first drama by a black playwright to appear on Broadway.



Joe "King" Oliver's Creole Jazz Band records with trumpet player **Louis Armstrong**; they make 37 recordings together.

Duke Ellington arrives in New York with his band, the Washingtonians.



Jean Toomer's novel *Cane* is published.

The **Cotton Club**, Harlem's largest and most famous cabaret, opens.

1923

Aaron Douglas arrives in New York; his art style becomes the official one of the Harlem Renaissance.

Jessie Redmon Fauset's *There is Confusion* is published; this is the first Harlem Renaissance book by a woman writer.



Josephine Baker appears on Broadway in *Chocolate Dandies*.

Zora Neale Hurston publishes her first short story in *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*.



1924

The Emperor Jones opens in London, with Paul Robeson in the lead role.

Miguel Covarrubias' illustrations of black entertainers are featured in *Vanity Fair* magazine.

Paul Robeson stars in Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*.

Countee Cullen wins first prize in the Witter Bynner Poetry Competition.

Marcus Garvey's *Aims and Objects for a Solution of the Negro Problem Outlined* published.

NAACP leader Walter White's novel *The Fire in the Flint* is published.



1925

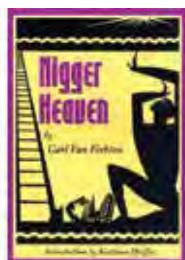
The new musical form known as jazz is showcased at Aeolian Hall in New York in the "First American Jazz Concert."

Survey Graphic publishes an issue about the work of Harlem Renaissance artists and writers.



White poet Vachel Lindsay reads Langston Hughes poems at his own poetry reading, and announces Hughes as a bright new talent.

The New Negro anthology introduces the ideas and ideals of the Harlem Renaissance.



1926

Controversial novel, *Nigger Heaven*, by white author Carl Van Vechten, is published.

The Carnegie Corporation buys Arthur Schomburg's collection of African Americana, becoming the basis for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

The Savoy Ballroom in Harlem opens.



1927

Porgy by Dorothy and Du Bose Heyward, opens on Broadway.



Sculptor Jacob Epstein arrives in New York, and has Paul Robeson sit for a portrait bust.



In Abraham's Bosom by Paul Green, performed by an all-black cast, wins the Pulitzer Prize in May.

Countee Cullen publishes three works: *Ballad of the Brown Girl*, *Copper Sun* and *Caroling Dusk*.

Arthur Fauset publishes *For Freedom: A Biographical Story of the American Negro*.

1928

Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* is published, becoming the first bestseller by a black author.

Poet Countee Cullen marries Nina Yolande Du Bois, daughter of W.E.B. Du Bois, on April 9th, in an elaborate celebration described as the social event of the decade.

1929

The Harmon Foundation sponsors an exhibition at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. of black artists' works.

Broadway premiere of *Ain't Misbehavin'*, featuring music by Fats Waller.

The Negro Experimental Theater, the Negro Art Theatre, and the National Color Players are all founded.



The stock market crashes on October 29—the economic crisis known as the Great Depression begins, and brings an end to the 'Jazz Age.'

1930s

1930

Universal Holy Temple of Tranquility founded; Black Muslims open Islam Temple in Detroit.

1931

Artist Augusta Savage opens the Savage School of Arts and Crafts in Harlem.



The Scottsboro Trial runs from April to July. The trial involved nine black teenagers in Alabama who were accused of raping two white women on a train.

James Weldon Johnson's *Black Manhattan*, a history of Harlem, is published.



Louis Armstrong is featured in the musical short "A Rhapsody in Black and Blue."

Langston Hughes publishes four works: *Dear Lovely Death*, *The Negro Mother*, *Not Without Laughter*, and *Scottsboro Limited*.

1932



Twenty young black intellectuals travel to Russia to make a film, "Black and White," in June.

Langston Hughes publishes *The Dream Keeper*.

1933

Many Harlem Renaissance writers and artists find employment in a government-sponsored program, the **Works Project Administration**, designed to create American jobs.

Dudley Murphy releases a film of *The Emperor Jones* starring Paul Robeson.



Aaron Douglas creates murals for the Harlem YMCA.

1934

Aaron Douglas is commissioned by the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library to design a series of murals entitled **Aspects of Negro Life**.



Josephine Baker's first sound film, *Zou Zou* is released in France.

The film "*Harlem After Midnight*" is released by Oscar Micheaux.

Zora Neale Hurston's first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, is published.



The Apollo Theatre opens.

Wallace Thurman dies in the charity ward of a hospital on December 26th.

1935



The **Harlem Race Riot** on March 19th was sparked by anger over discrimination by white-owned businesses.

Miguel Covarrubias illustrated *Mules and Men*, by Zora Neale Hurston.

African Negro Art exhibition is mounted at The Museum of Modern Art.



Paul Robeson and Hattie McDaniel appear in James Whales' film *Show Boat*.

Porgy and Bess opens on Broadway on October 10th with an all-black cast.

Langston Hughes' *Mulatto*, the first full-length play by a black writer, opens on Broadway on October 25th.

More than fifty percent of Harlem's families are unemployed.

1937

Paul Robeson stars in the film, "King Solomon's Mines."

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston is published.

1938

Jacob Lawrence's first solo exhibition at the Harlem YMCA opens; he finishes his Toussaint L'Ouverture series.



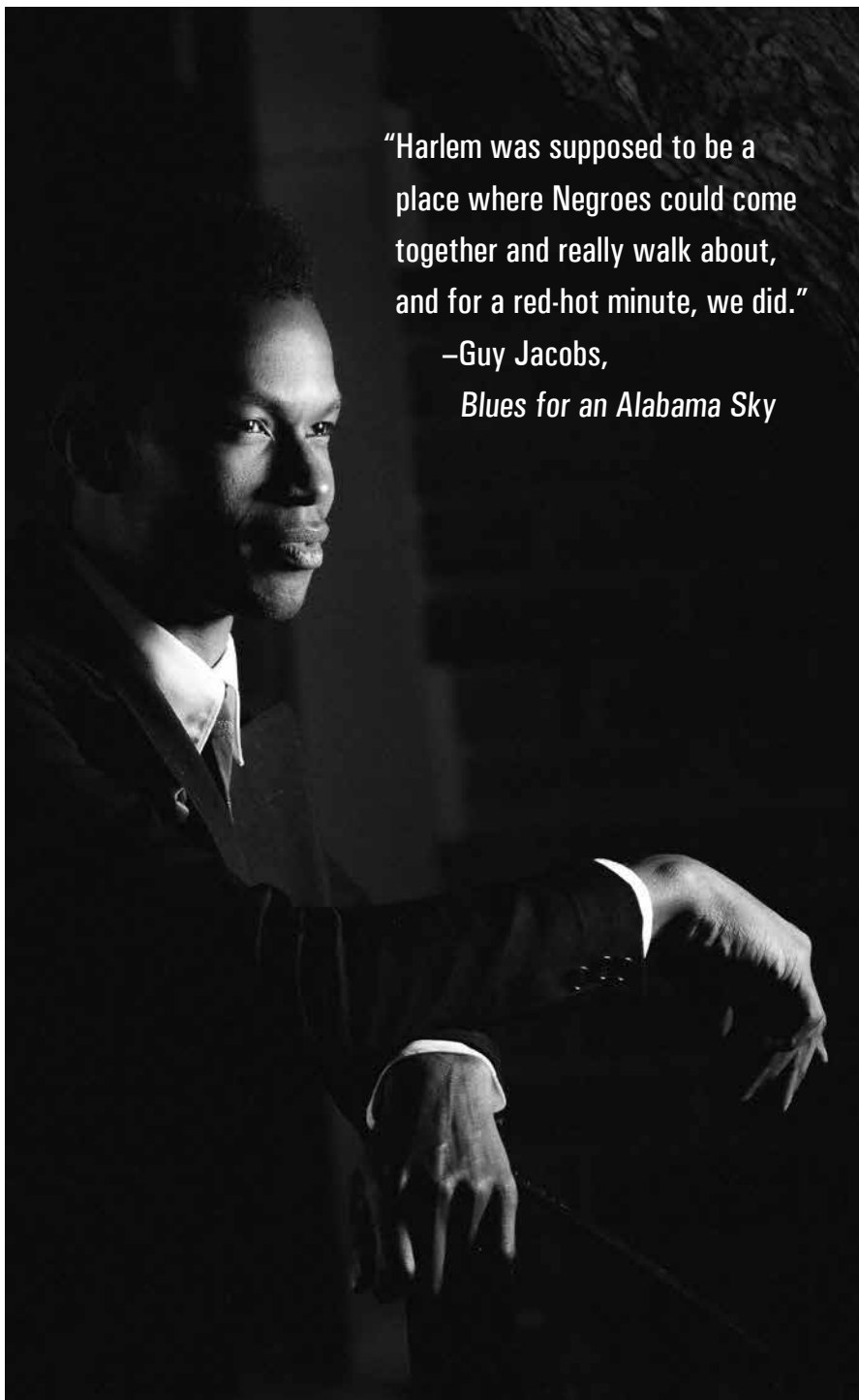
Mother Horn, a Pentecostal preacher, opens her famous church in Harlem. ♦

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"Harlem was supposed to be a place where Negroes could come together and really walk about, and for a red-hot minute, we did."

—Guy Jacobs,
Blues for an Alabama Sky

Photo of Sean Parris by Joe Mazza.

the Harlem Renaissance

by Kenneth Warren

Looking back on the Harlem Renaissance in 1940, the poet Langston Hughes, who never becomes more than a tantalizing offstage presence in Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, recalls the period as having been little more than a vain dream. Sure, it had been "a swell time while it lasted," according to Hughes. But for those "Harlemmites [who] thought the millennium had come" accompanied by "green pastures of tolerance created by" black poets, novelists, singers, bandleaders, and intellectuals, he had nothing but pity. "I don't know what made any Negroes think that," he writes, "except that they were mostly intellectuals doing the thinking. The ordinary Negroes hadn't heard of the Negro Renaissance. And if they had, it hadn't raised their wages any."¹

The cultural movement of the 1920s known as the Harlem, Negro, or Black Renaissance was fueled by what is now known as the First Great Migration, when hundreds of thousands of black Americans from the southern states fled disfranchisement and the expansion of Jim Crow segregation in the South to seek the greater social freedom and the labor opportunities created in Northern cities by the World War I and new restrictions on European immigration. The migration was in many respects a rank-and-file movement of men and women seeking better lives. But Hughes was certainly right about the role of intellectual figures in shaping the cultural moment. The historian David Levering Lewis has argued that the Harlem Renaissance was largely the collective brainchild of such figures as W.E.B. Du Bois, Charles S. Johnson, Alain Locke, A. Phillip Randolph, and Jessie Fauset who believed that the careful cultivation of literature and the arts could play a significant role in managing relations between blacks and other racial groups in urban centers. Black creativity and genius would elicit respect for the race generally, reducing prejudice and tension between blacks and whites. For various reasons, this belief was indeed a pipedream, and when the 1929 Stock Market crash precipitated the Great Depression, the idea that artistic innovation would bring with it economic prosperity and civic equality was largely tattered. By 1940 Hughes's sober estimate of the period seemed warranted.

Nonetheless, the cultural landscape of the nation had been forever altered. What underwrote the idea of the Harlem Renaissance was the pluralist belief that every racial group was responsible for working out its own distinctive form and style of cultural expression. The path to becoming truly American ran not through

CONTINUED ON P 19

"I've been all over Harlem and nobody will even give me the time of day. There aren't any jobs doing anything, especially singing for your supper. Whole families sitting on the sidewalk with their stuff set out besides them. No place to sleep. No place to wash. Walking all day."

—Angel Allen, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*



Photo of Toya Turner by Joe Mazza.

embracing a generic Americanness but through some form of racial, ethnic or perhaps even regional particularity. The 1920s not only gave us the major writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance (which, along with Hughes, include such figures as Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen, and Jean Toomer), but also the major writers of American modernism—Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Willa Cather, William Carlos Williams, and William Faulkner—who are all preoccupied in one way or another with figuring out who “we” are and how “we” should go about expressing ourselves. Our America, as the literary historian Walter Benn Michaels has argued, is one where we have been enjoined to embrace and celebrate cultural difference. In the words of Cleage’s Guy Jacobs, who dreams of designing costumes for dancer Josephine Baker, “Harlem was supposed to be a place where Negroes could come together and really walk about”—a place of mutual black expression that would be appropriately echoed in other ethnic enclaves across the nation.

Undercutting the vision of collective black political power, as represented by another offstage presence in *Blues*—the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who succeeded his father as pastor of the prominent Abyssinian Baptist Church and would go on in 1945 to become the first African American New Yorker to be elected to the House of Representatives—was the fact that black Americans were never an homogeneous group. Delia’s belief that birth control and the right to abortion were key to the liberation of black women was indeed endorsed by the Abyssinian Baptist Church and influential individuals like Du Bois, and echoed in some Harlem Renaissance fiction, like Angelina Weld Grimké’s short story “The Closing Door” and Nella Larsen’s novel *Quicksand*, in which the refusal to bring black male children into the world was offered up as a protest against lynching. Even so, the opening of the first birth control clinic in Harlem by Margaret Sanger’s American Birth Control League was hardly an occasion of universal approbation, with some blacks fearing the League’s aims were too closely aligned with the eugenicists.

But for writers, performers, artists, particularly those whose sexualities did not adhere to prescribed social norms, 1920s Harlem was, if only for “a hot minute” a place where it seemed possible to construct what Langston Hughes called, “temples for tomorrow.” And if the moment of the Harlem Renaissance left us with some ideas we might be better off without, it also produced some of the most intriguing art and literature of the 20th century.

KENNETH WARREN is the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago. He specializes in African-American literature and 19th- and 20th-century American literature and critical theory. Warren is the author of *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism*, *Black and White Strangers: Race and American Literary Realism*, and *What Was African American Literature? (The W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures)*. He has been at University of Chicago since 1991.

¹ Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1940), p. 228.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"That's one of the secrets of life ...
Don't forget it. Learn to spot the romance."

These lines, spoken by the character Guy in *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, resonate loud and clear. So many times, as playwright Pearl Cleage suggests, we miss the love and beauty that surround us. The richness of the Harlem Renaissance's culture changed America forever. Cleage's play fully reveals to us how romance and a love for beauty infused the music, the poetry and the art of that time.

It is always an honor working on a Pearl Cleage play, but for me it is an honor to work on *Blues* in particular. The Harlem Renaissance is an open canvas, a singularly vibrant landscape for a gifted writer and historian such as Cleage to explore. Her plays brings to life the magic of one of the most artistically fertile periods in American history. So many of the towering artists we revere today are those who found their voice and thrived during the Harlem Renaissance.

Blues may be set in 1930, but many of the issues in the play remain strongly relevant today. It is disheartening to realize just how relevant those issues are now. Our protracted struggle continues. Through it all, we must strive to spot the romance, and find the strength both to continue to dream and to achieve our dreams. Hopefully, love will pull us through. It has to. In the words of Langston Hughes' *Dreams*,

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.



Ron OJ Parson
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Chip Bamberger and Martha Van Haitsma

Chip Bamberger and Martha Van Haitsma, Producers' Circle members and long-time subscribers, are firm believers in the transformative power of the arts in education.

In addition to their three decades as loyal subscribers, Chip and Martha are generous patrons of Court. Their most recent gift will fund an innovative collaboration between Court and the Ancona School in Hyde Park/Kenwood. Court staff, in conjunction with faculty and staff at Ancona, have developed a new program that will immerse students in the artistic and theatrical process surrounding Court's production of *Blues for an Alabama Sky*. At the same time, the Ancona faculty are focusing their coursework throughout the academic year on the history, art and music of the Harlem Renaissance.

Chip and Martha's interest in funding this unique program was spurred by a memorable experience one of Court's First Rehearsals, where cast members gather to read a script through together for the first time. "We attended a reading of *Skylight* in 2012 with one of our sons, and were impressed at how actors at a table reading could make the story and characters come alive instantly," recalls Martha. "We'd seen plays at Court for decades, but witnessing a First Rehearsal deepened our appreciation for the work and process behind the scenes." As a Board member at the Ancona School, Chip thought that attendance at a First Rehearsal would be an unforgettable opportunity for students, affording them the same rare insight into a dramatic work in the process of creation. Their youngest son, an Ancona alumnus, enthusiastically supported the idea.

As discerning theatre goers, Chip and Martha rank Court among the top-performing theatres that consistently produce work of the highest quality. "The acting is top-notch, and the intimate setting of the theatre provides a visceral view of the action on stage," says Martha. Chip especially appreciates the wide range of genres that Court produces—dramas, comedies, musicals—and he fondly recalls *Travesties* and *Scapin* as highlights, while Martha lists *Caroline, or Change* and *The Invention of Love* among her favorites. Productions they both found particularly moving include *Angels in America*, *Man of La Mancha*, and the plays of August Wilson's Century Cycle. As members of the Producers' Circle, Court's premier giving society, the couple has also enjoyed attending special events featuring Court artists and University of Chicago scholars. "Being able to further understand the background of plays, and hear the insights of playwrights and translators, certainly enriches our theatre-going experience," reflects Martha.

Chip and Martha are excited for Court's upcoming collaboration with the Ancona School. "Court's receptiveness towards the idea, combined with the energy and enthusiasm of educators at Ancona, will create an exceptional experience for the students," says the couple. Court Theatre thanks Chip and Martha for their continued support, and applauds their exemplary commitment to the arts and education. ■



Martha Van Haitsma and Chip Bamberger at the opening night celebration of Court Theatre's *Electra*.

Partnerships: The Ancona School

Thanks to the generous support of Chip Bamberger and Martha Van Haitsma, students at Hyde Park's Ancona School gained a special, behind-the-scenes experience with the artists, actors, and designers at work on Court's production of *Blues for an Alabama Sky*.

Throughout their entire academic year, the Ancona School's seventh and eighth graders are dedicated to exploring the Harlem Renaissance. The school's faculty have incorporated the Harlem Renaissance as a unifying theme across the curriculums of language arts, social studies, and visual arts. For several months, Ancona students have been learning about the art, the history, and the extraordinary impact of the period.

The students' work in school was combined with an in-depth look at the way Court's production team brought *Blues for an Alabama Sky* to life on stage. They also used Pearl Cleage's script to learn about everyday life during the Harlem Renaissance through a theatrical text. In November, before the rehearsal process began, director Ron OJ Parson went to Ancona to talk with seventh and eighth grade students about the play, the artistic process, and his role as director. The students then attended Court's First Rehearsal of *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, during which they heard from the designers about the set, costumes, lighting, and sound, and listened to the actors read through the script for the very first time. Several weeks later, the students attended the first technical rehearsal



of the production, observing the technical team in action as the actors' work and the designs were brought together. Finally, they experienced the complete performance at a student matinee.

Through this program, the students are able to experience and understand the full arc of the artistic production process. They are learning not only the way live theatre is made, but also gaining a richer sense of a unique historical period. In addition to studying the Harlem Renaissance, students are asking how the artists of the 1920s and 30s worked together to create social change. They have composed biographies of period figures, investigated primary sources, and analyzed the literature and visual art of the times. By watching experts at work during the artistic process for *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, students are learning about collaboration and creative problem-solving in a real-world setting. In the spring, these scholars will participate in their own theatrical event, "Blues for an Ancona Sky," a Harlem Renaissance-themed cabaret including performances by the seventh and eighth grade Advanced Band and Performing Arts students.

Court Theatre is very grateful for the enthusiastic participation of the teachers and administrators at the Ancona School, and for the generosity of Chip and Martha, who made this experience possible. ■





CELESTE M. COOPER (*Delia*) is extremely grateful to make her Court Theatre debut! Celeste most recently appeared in Eclipse Theatre's production of *Our Lady of 121st Street*. Some theatre credits include: *Measure for Measure* (Goodman), *Stick Fly* (Windy City Playhouse/nominated for Best Featured Actress from BTAA), *Never the Sinner* (Victory Gardens), *Ruined* (Eclipse/ensemble member/casting associate/BTAA Most Promising Actress recipient), *Animal Farm* (understudy, Steppenwolf), *The Hammer Trinity* (House/Adrienne Arsht in Miami), *The Mecca Tales* (Chicago Dramatists), *How We Got On* (Citadel), and her original one woman shows *Fight 4 Your Life*, and later *The Incredible Cece* (MPAACT & Stage 773). Some TV/Film credits include a recurring role on *Chicago PD* (NBC), Spike Lee's *Chirag*, and *Sense8* (Netflix). Ms. Cooper has a BA in Speech Communications and Theatre from Tennessee State University and an MFA in Acting from The Theatre School at DePaul University. Celeste is incredibly thankful for Papa God, family, friends like family, and the lovely ladies at Paonessa Talent Agency.



AL'JALEEL MCGHEE (*Young Man*) is elated to be making his Court Theatre debut in *Blues for an Alabama Sky*. He studies at University of Illinois at Chicago and under renowned drama educators Richard Poole and Kathryn Gately. He has worked with the Black Ensemble Theatre, Artemesia Theatre, the American Vicarious and will be performing at TimeLine Theatre in their upcoming production of *Paradise Blue*. His television credits include *Chicago PD* and *APB*, which premieres on FOX this Spring. He is proudly represented by the amazing people at Gray Talent Group. Follow him at @ThatsJustAJ for updates.



JAMES VINCENT MEREDITH (*Sam*) makes his Court Theatre debut. Broadway: *Superior Donuts*. National Tour: three years as Mafala Hatimbi with *Book of Mormon*. Chicago credits: *The Crucible*, *Carter's Way*, *The Tempest*, *Clybourne Park*, *The Pain and The Itch*, *Superior Donuts*, *The Hot L Baltimore*, *The March*, and *Between Riverside and Crazy* (Steppenwolf, ensemble member); *Othello*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King John*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Measure for Measure* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Othello* and *The Duchess of Malfi* (Writers); and *Roz and Ray* (Victory Gardens). TV credits: *Prison Break*, *Chicago Code*, *Detroit 187*, *ER*, *BOSS*, *The Beast*, *Betrayal*, *Mob Doctor*, *Law and Order: SVU*, *The Exorcist*, and *Chicago Justice*.



SEAN PARRIS (*Guy*) was born in L.A., raised in Miami and Georgia, with parents from Barbados and a stepfather from Ohio. He currently lives in Pilsen with boyfriend Ricardo Gamboa. Sean received his MFA from The Theatre School at DePaul University. He is a graduate of Black Box Acting Academy and staff writer for the podcast *PleasureTown* in Chicago. He is excited to be making his Court Theatre debut. Chicago credits include: *Space Age*, a two man show, created with real life intimate partner Ricardo Gamboa; *The Magic Play*, *The Solid Sand Below* (Goodman Theatre); *Compass*, *The Drunken City*, *Animal Farm* (Steppenwolf); *The Whipping Man* (Northlight Theatre); *Seascape* (Remy Bumpo); *Pornography* (Steep Theatre); *Shakespeare's Greatest Hits* (Chicago

Shakespeare Theatre); and *A Girl With Sun in Her Eyes* (Pinebox Theatre). Television credit: *Sickos* (Gun Collective). Next, he will be seen in the Ricardo Gamboa's original web series *BRUJOS*. He is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency. Love to Mom, Ricardo Gamboa, and to all family, friends, and the ladies of Paonessa Talent.



TOYA TURNER (*Angel*) is finally realizing her dream by making her Court Theatre debut. Toya is a Jamaican-American from Houston, Texas. She's a proud graduate of the British American Drama Academy at Oxford University. Stage credits include: *Christina*, *The Girl King* (Cor Theatre), and *For Her As A Piano* (Pegasus Theatre). TV credits include: *Easy* (Netflix), *Chicago Med* (NBC), and *Empire* (FOX). Up Next: Tracy in *The Chi* (Showtime) and Mayme in *Intimate Apparel* (TheatreSquared, Arkansas). She would like to thank her family, agents at Gray Talent Group, mentor Karen Aldridge, and director Ron OJ Parson for believing in her and helping her achieve her dreams. Visit www.IAmToya.com.



GENO WALKER (*Leland*) is very excited to join the cast of a production at Court Theatre. Raised on the South Side of Chicago, Geno attended Kenwood Academy. A graduate of Oberlin College and a Bob Curry Fellow with Second City Chicago, Geno is represented by Grossman and Jack Talent.



RON OJ PARSON (*Director/Resident Artist*) hails from Buffalo, New York and is a graduate of the University of Michigan's professional theatre program. He is a Resident Artist at Court Theatre, former co-founder and artistic director of the Onyx Theatre Ensemble, and co-founder of the Beyond the Stage Theatre Project. Ron is a company member of TimeLine Theatre, and associate artist at Writers Theatre and Teatro Vista. Recent directing credits include *Sunset Baby* by Dominique Morriseau (TimeLine Theatre), *East Texas Hot Links* (Writers Theatre), *Apt 3A* (Windy City Playhouse), *The Who & The What* (Victory Gardens); *Gem of the Ocean* and *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson, *The Mountaintop* by Katori Hall, and *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett (Court Theatre); *Detroit 67* (Northlight Theatre); and *A Raisin in the Sun* (TimeLine Theatre). Chicagoland theatres Ron has worked with include Black Ensemble Theatre, ETA, Congo Square Theatre, Goodman, Writers, Victory Gardens, Teatro Vista, Chicago Dramatists, Urban Theater Company, Steppenwolf, Chicago Theatre Company, and City Lit. Regional theatres include Virginia Stage Company, Portland Stage, Studio Theatre, Studio Arena Theater, Roundabout Theatre, Mechanic Theatre, Center Stage in Baltimore, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Milwaukee Rep, St. Louis Black Rep, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre, Geva Theatre, Signature Theatre (New York), Alliance Theatre, South Coast Rep, and Pasadena Playhouse. In Canada, Ron directed the world premiere of *Palmer Park* by Joanna McClelland Glass at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. Ron is a proud member of AEA, SAG-AFTRA, and SDC. Visit www.RonOJParson.com.

PROFILES

LINDA BUCHANAN (*Scenic Designer*) has designed environments for hundreds of productions at theatres throughout the country and abroad. Her work has been seen in Chicago at Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, Court Theatre, the Paramount, and others. Buchanan has designed regionally for Arena Stage, the Alley Theatre, Indiana Rep, Cleveland Playhouse, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Kansas City Rep, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Rep, Seattle Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Syracuse Stage, Yale Rep, Resident Ensemble Theatre, and others. Buchanan received the Merritt Award for Design and Collaboration; Joseph Jefferson Awards for *House* (Goodman), *Black Snow* (Goodman), and *I Hate Hamlet* (Royal George); a Helen Hayes Award for *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Arena Stage); and a Syracuse Area League of Theatre Award for *Peter Pan*. Upcoming work includes *The Elephant Man* (Resident Ensemble Players), *The Tavern* (Utah Shakespeare Festival) and the opera *Lucio Silla* for the Buxton Festival, UK. She is Head of Scene Design and Associate Dean at The Theatre School at DePaul University.

RACHEL HEALY (*Costume Designer*) is based in Chicago and her costume designs have been seen on numerous stages including Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Writers Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Chicago Children's Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Drury Lane Theatre, American Theater Company, Next Theatre Company and Remy Bumppo Theatre Company. Regionally, she has designed with the Alliance Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Cincinnati Playhouse, First Stage Children's Theatre of Milwaukee, American Players Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company and Delaware Theatre Company. Ms. Healy is also a professor at Loyola University, Chicago, teaching costume design and rendering techniques to theatre designers. Visit rahealy.com.

KEITH PARHAM (*Lighting Designer*) Court credits include: *An Iliad*; *Angels in America*; *Proof*; *The Misanthrope*; *Tartuffe*; *M. Butterfly*; *The Good Book*; *Satchmo at the Waldorf*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; and *Man in the Ring*. Broadway: *Thérèse Raquin* (Roundabout Theatre Company). Off-Broadway: *The Purple Lights of Joppa Illinois* (Atlantic Theater Company); *Between Riverside and Crazy* (2econd Stage Theatre/ Atlantic Theater Company); *The Model Apartment* (Primary Stages); *Tribes*, *Mistakes Were Made*, and *Red Light Winter* (Barrow Street Theatre); *Stop the Virgens* (Karen O at St. Ann's Warehouse/Sydney Opera House); *Ivanov*, *Three Sisters* (CSC); *A Minister's Wife* (Lincoln Center); and *Adding Machine* (Minetta Lane). International: *Homebody/Kabul* (National Theatre in Belgrade, Serbia). Regional: TUTA, Goodman, Steppenwolf, The Mark Taper Forum, and Arena Stage, among others. Awards: Obie, Lortel.

JOSHUA HORVATH (*Sound Designer*) is an award-winning Chicago Sound Designer/Composer/Music Producer. Court credits include *Fences*, *Porgy and Bess*, *The Secret Garden*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Arcadia*, *Angels in America*, *Tartuffe*, *Raisin in the Sun*, *Native Son*, *End Game*, *The Romance Cycle*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Recent shows include *Into the Woods* (Oregon Shakespeare), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Cleveland Playhouse), *The Verona Project* and *King Lear* (California Shakespeare), *Blood Wedding* (Lookingglass Theatre), *Start Down* (The Alliance), *An Iliad* (Geva,

PROFILES

Kansas City Rep), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Milwaukee Rep), *Baskerville* (Arena, McCarter), *Oliver* (Arena), *Comedy of Tenors* (Cleveland Playhouse, McCarter), *Immediate Family* (The Mark Taper Forum), *A Long Red Road* (Goodman Theatre), *Civil War Christmas* (Long Wharf), *Crime and Punishment* (Centerstage), *The Realness* (Merrimack Rep), *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park), and *Clay* (Lincoln Center). Mr. Horvath has taught sound design for theatre and film at Northwestern University and DePaul University. He is a four time Joseph Jefferson Award winner and an LA Ovation winner, a company member of The House Theatre of Chicago, an artistic associate at Lookingglass, and a collaborative partner with Goodman.

MARTINE KEI GREEN-ROGERS (*Production Dramaturg*) is currently an Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of Utah. Her dramaturgical credits include: *Fences* and *One Man, Two Guvnors* at Pioneer Theatre Company; *Clearing Bombs* and *Nothing Personal* at Plan-B Theatre; the Classical Theatre Company's productions of *Uncle Vanya*, *Antigone*, *Candida*, *Ghosts*, *Tartuffe*, and *Shylock*, *The Jew of Venice*; productions of *Blues for An Alabama Sky*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Seven Guitars*, *The Mountaintop*, *Home*, and *Porgy and Bess* at the Court Theatre; *The Clean House* at CATCO; *Shakespeare in Love*, *UNISONS*, *Comedy of Errors*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The African Company Presents Richard III*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Fences* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; *10 Perfect* and *The Curious Walk of the Salamander* as part of the 2006 and 2007 Madison Repertory Theatre New Play Festival; and *A Thousand Words* as part of the 2008 Wisconsin Wrights New Play Festival.



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NORA TITONE (*Resident Dramaturg*) is the author of the 19th-century theater history *My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth* (Simon & Schuster, 2010). As a dramaturg and historical researcher, Titone has collaborated with a range of artists and scholars including playwright Anna Deavere Smith and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. She also contributed to projects at Arena Stage and DreamWorks Studios. Titone studied history at Harvard University and the University of California, Berkeley, and is represented by ICM Partners.

ASHLEY HONORE ROBERSON (*Assistant Director*) has been working as an artist and teaching artist in the Chicagoland area for the past 8 years. She has worked on stage with Chicago Children's Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, Writers Theatre, and Court Theatre. As a teaching artist, Ashley works all over the city with several theatres/programs such as Congo Square, Northlight, Steppenwolf, Victory Gardens, and Writers Theatre. She recently wrote and directed a children's play for the Chicago Fringe Festival and received a DCASE Grant to take it on tour to Chicago's South and West Side communities. She has assistant directed for Emerald City, Chicago Children's Theatre, and recently directed the World Premiere of *Leavings* for Polarity Ensemble Theatre. Much love and thanks to her family and friends for their love and support.

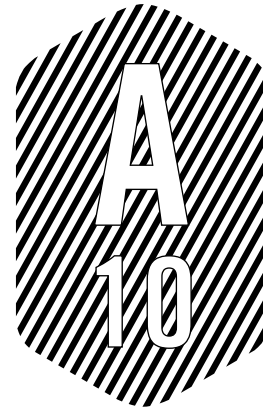
AMANDA WEENER-FREDERICK (*Production Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be spending her fourth season with Court Theatre. Amanda previously stage managed *Water by the Spoonful*; *M. Butterfly*; *Native Son*; *Iphigenia in Aulis*; *Waiting for Godot*; *The Good Book*; *The Secret Garden*; *Gem of the Ocean*; *Agamemnon*; *Satchmo at the Waldorf*; *Long Day's Journey Into Night*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; *Man in the Ring*; and most recently, *Electra*. Since moving to Chicago, Amanda has also worked with Lookingglass Theatre Company and Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Before that, Amanda spent eight seasons with Milwaukee Repertory Theater and seven summers with Great River Shakespeare Festival in Winona, Minnesota. Amanda is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

ERIN ALBRECHT (*Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be back at Court having previously worked on *Man in the Ring*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; *Long Day's Journey Into Night*; *Agamemnon*; *The Good Book*; and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Off Broadway: *And Away We Go* (original workshop with Terrence McNally); *In Acting Shakespeare, The Philanderer*; *The Bald Soprano*, and *Wittenberg* (The Pearl Theatre); *Richard III* and *Hamlet* (New York Classical Theatre); *A Touch of the Poet* (Friendly Fire); and *The Marvelous Wonderettes* (West Side Theatre—original cast). Regional Theatre: American Players Theatre, Arena Stage, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Blue Man Group Chicago, Phoenix Theatre, Quest Visual Theatre, BARD Summerscape, and 14 productions at Utah Shakespeare Festival. Erin holds a Bachelor's degree in Music from The Catholic University of America and a MFA in Stage Management from Virginia Tech. She is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

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CHARLES NEWELL (*Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director*) was awarded the SDCF Zelda Fichandler Award, "which recognizes an outstanding director or choreographer who is transforming the regional arts landscape through singular creativity and artistry in theatre." Charlie has been Artistic Director of Court Theatre since 1994, where he has directed over 50 productions. He made his Chicago directorial debut in 1993 with *The Triumph of Love*, which won the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best Production. Charlie's productions of *Man of La Mancha* and *Caroline, or Change* have also won Best Production Jeffs. Other directorial highlights at Court include *Man in the Ring*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; *Satchmo at the Waldorf*; *Agamemnon*; *The Secret Garden*; *Iphigenia in Aulis*; *The Misanthrope*; *Tartuffe*; *Proof*; *Angels in America*; *An Iliad*; *Porgy and Bess*; *Three Tall Women*; *Titus Andronicus*; *Arcadia*; *Uncle Vanya*; *Raisin*; *The Glass Menagerie*; *Travesties*; *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; *The Invention of Love*; and *Hamlet*. Charlie has also directed at Goodman Theatre (*Rock 'n' Roll*), Guthrie Theater (*The History Cycle*, *Cymbeline*), Arena Stage, John Houseman's The Acting Company (Staff Repertory Director), the California and Alabama Shakespeare Festivals, Juilliard, and New York University. He has served on the Board of TCG, as well as on several panels for the NEA. Opera directing credits include Marc Blitzstein's *Regina* (Lyric Opera), *Rigoletto* (Opera Theatre of St. Louis), *Don Giovanni* and *The Jewel Box* (Chicago Opera Theater), and *Carousel* (Glimmerglass). Charlie was the recipient of the 1992 TCG Alan Schneider Director Award, and has been nominated for 16 Joseph Jefferson Director Awards, winning four times. In 2012, Charlie was honored by the League of Chicago Theatres with its Artistic Achievement Award.



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STEPHEN J. ALBERT (*Executive Director*) is a founding partner in Albert Hall & Associates, LLC, a leading arts consulting firm. He has led some of America's most prestigious theatres, including the Mark Taper Forum/Center Theatre Group, Alley Theatre, and Hartford Stage Company. Albert began his career with the Mark Taper Forum/Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles where he worked in senior management positions for over a decade, rising to Managing Director. He went on to become Executive Director of Houston's Alley Theatre where he led a turnaround that stabilized the organization, enabling the Alley to return to national standing, and drove a capital campaign that secured the organization's future. At Hartford Stage, his partnership with Mark Lamos resulted in some of the theatre's most successful seasons and reinforced Hartford Stage's position at the forefront of the regional theatre movement. During his tenure in Hartford, Mr. Albert led the initiative to create a 25,000 square foot, state-of-the-art production center, securing the donation of the facility and the funding for its renovation. Albert has served as president of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and as a board member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG). He has written and produced a variety of productions for television, is an ACE award nominee, and has been an associate producer of numerous acclaimed Broadway productions. He is a Senior Fellow with the American Leadership Forum, a graduate of the University of Southern California, and holds an MBA from the UCLA Graduate School of Management. Stephen is on the Board of the Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce and the St. Thomas the Apostle Finance Committee.



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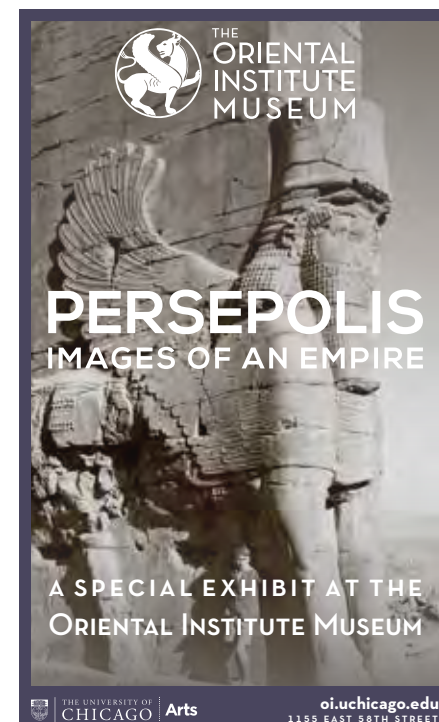
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