## August Wilson's TWOTRAINS RUNNING Directed by RON OJ PARSON

## 2021/22 SEASON COULPUTHEATRE

CHICAGO Arts

## ABOUT COURT THEATRE

Court Theatre is the professional theatre of the University of Chicago, dedicated to innovation, inquiry, intellectual engagement, and community service. Court endeavors to make a lasting contribution to classic American theatre by expanding the canon of translations, adaptations, and classic texts. The theatre revives lost masterpieces; illuminates familiar texts; explores the African American theatrical canon; and discovers fresh, modern classics. Court engages and inspires its audience by providing artistically distinguished productions, audience enrichment activities, and student educational experiences. In all of this work, we are committed to recognizing, addressing, and eradicating racism, as we strive to better serve our South Side community.

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## CHICAGO Arts

Dear Court Theatre Family,

We are thrilled to welcome you to August Wilson's *Two Trains Running*. Written in 1990 and nominated for both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play, *Two Trains Running* is the seventh installment in Wilson's magisterial literary creation, the American Century Cycle. Dedicating one play to each decade of the 20th century, Wilson created a matchless ten-play chronicle of the African American experience. Largely set in Pittsburgh's Hill District, the plays in Wilson's American Century Cycle document the epic history of American democracy through the everyday lives of the men and women who call the Hill District home.

Court Resident Artist Ron OJ Parson is nationally renowned as an interpreter of Wilson's dramatic vision. Since 2006, Parson has brought eight works from Wilson's ten-part magnum opus to our stage. With *Two Trains Running*, Parson brings the ninth Wilson play to Court's stage and draws nearer to our longcherished dream of completing the American Century Cycle.

Set in 1969, *Two Trains Running* looks back on the turbulent decade of the 60s, when the Civil Rights Movement, the war in Vietnam, the rise of Black Power, the Women's Movement, and the 1968 assassinations of King and Kennedy signaled the seismic changes re-making American democracy. Then as now, an upsurge in progressive political movements sparked a reactionary backlash. Against this backdrop of national conflict, the denizens of Wilson's Hill District contemplate an America on the brink of an uncertain future.

We are grateful to the Joyce Foundation for their ongoing support of Resident Artist Ron OJ Parson. We also thank our generous production sponsors, Allstate, Gustavo Bamberger and Martha Van Haitsma, and Neil Ross and Lynn Hauser.

Thank you for joining us and we hope you enjoy August Wilson's powerful text.

Charles Newell Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director

Angel Ysaguirre Executive Director



ANGEL YSAGUIRRE **Executive Director** 

# August Wilson's G MAY 13 - JUNE 12. 2022

#### DIRECTED BY RESIDENT ARTIST RON OJ PARSON

Scenic Design by Jack Magaw U.S.A. Costume Design by Christine Pascualusa. Khalid Y. Long, Production Dramaturg Lighting Design by Brandon Wardell U.S.A. Sound Design by Andre Pluess U.S.A.

Casting by Becca McCracken c.s.A. Jaclynn Joslin,\* Stage Manager Danny Fender, Assistant Stage Manager

Setting: Pittsburgh, 1969 There will be a 15-minute intermission

Sponsored by



Ron OJ Parson's residency supported by **The Joyce Foundation** 

#### Gustavo Bamberger and Martha Van Haitsma

#### **Neil Ross and Lynn Hauser**

August Wilson's Two Trains Running is presented by special arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

Originally Produced on Broadway by Yale Repertory Theatre (Stan Wojewodski, Jr., Artistic Director), Center Theatre Group/Ahmanson Theatre (Gordon Davidson, Artistic/Producing Director) Herb Alpert/Margot Lion, Scott Rudin/Paramount Pictures, and Jujamcyn Theaters (James H. Binger, Chairman; Rocco Landesman, President; Paul Libin, Producing Director; Jack Viertel, Creative Director); produced in association with Huntington Theatre Company (Peter Altman, Producing Director; Michael Maso, Managing Director), Seattle Repertory Theatre and Old Globe Theatre (Jack O'Brien, Artistic Director; Thomas Hall, Managing Director). Originally mounted by Yale Repertory Theatre (Lloyd Richards, Artistic Director; Benjamin Mordecai, Managing Director).

Designers 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.

## <u>CAST</u>

A.C. Smith <sup>*</sup>	Memphis
Ronald L. Conner <sup>*</sup>	Wolf
Kierra Bunch	Risa
Alfred H. Wilson <sup>*</sup>	Holloway
Jerod Haynes <sup>*</sup>	Sterling
Joseph Primes <sup>*</sup>	Hambone
Cedric Young <sup>*</sup>	West

Understudies: Kona N. Burks' (Risa), David Michael Dowd (Wolf, Sterling), Willie B. Goodson (West), Andre McGraw (Memphis, Hambone), and Joseph Primes' (Holloway).

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

## **PRODUCTION STAFF**

	Kona N. Burks Hershella Ashford
Assistant Scenic Designer	Lindsay Mummert
Scenic Artists	Julie Ruscitti U.S.A., Peter Brown, U.S.A.
Carpenters	Kelly Lesniak, Tony Cooper, Sean Ihnat
Assistant Costume Designer	Emily N. Brink
Costume Shop Assistant	Jessica Donaldson
	Eric Guy
Assistant Lighting Designer	Aidan Murphy
Assistant Lighting Supervisor	Billy Borst
Electricians	Michael Trudeau, Krystal Martinez, Billy Murphy,
	Arianna Brown
Assistant Sound Designer	Daniel Etti-Williams
Assistant Sound Engineer	Jessica Snyder
Scenic Artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United	Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E. Local USA829, AFL-CIO, CLC.

SPECIAL THANKS TO STEPPENWOLF THEATRE COMPANY

#### Cover art by Daniel Minter.

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, and the League of Chicago Theatres.









e Director and Choreographer are members of e STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS DCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.



## **IN CONVERSATION** DIRECTOR RON OJ PARSON

## You have said that you always want to direct August Wilson. What is it that excites you about returning to his work again and again?

Great plays are great plays. I get excited about doing great plays whether they're August Wilson or anybody. Besides Shakespeare, what playwright has written ten plays that you can see somewhere, at almost any time, and it's a beautiful piece of work? Wilson's plays are deep—rich in character and language.

I've done *Jitney* five times and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* four times. But each time they're different because of the artists you're working with. I do use a lot of what I call "Wilson-ites." These are actors who perform a lot of August Wilson, not only with me, but with other directors as well. They know the rhythm and music of the piece. The characters are so well-developed that you can really dig into it as an actor or director. I've acted in a couple of Wilson's plays as well, and it's always fun. That's the basic thing—they're fun.

# There is a photo of you with August Wilson. What was your relationship to him, and what can you tell us about August Wilson the man?

I met August Wilson when he was the resident writer at Yale before he blew up. On the opening night of *Ma Rainey on Broadway*, I got to go backstage, and that was a big deal going backstage with the original cast of that play. Little did I know that later on, I'd be doing this.

That picture of us was taken when I directed the inaugural production of *The Piano Lesson* with Congo Square Theatre Company. He came to see it.

Also, I understudied *Jitney* at the Goodman, when he was writing it. I would watch the play and watch how he worked. He was a cool dude. You could talk to him, anybody could ask him questions. He loved talking about the world.

#### Many classic playwrights insert themselves into their plays. Where do you see August Wilson in this play?

Definitely in the music, in the characters, the poetry, the language, the lyricism, all of that. Also, you can see how he understood the history and the specifics of the neighborhoods he was writing about. I have a couple friends in Pittsburgh who were around when Wilson was first getting started, and they used to talk about how he would sit in the diners and just listen to people and talk. That's what you hear in his writing, the reality of those situations.

## How does *Two Trains Running* stand out from the other plays in Wilson's American Century Cycle?

They all stand out in their own way. Each decade has its own thing that makes it special. The 60s was a volatile time in this country, and that makes *Two Trains* special. A lot of people remember it, and older audiences can relate. They'll know the music, they'll know the style of dress, the hairstyles, so it will resonate with them. Younger people look at it as history.

#### What does August Wilson reveal or teach us in this play?

I don't like to say that a writer is trying to teach somebody a lesson. If I had to say, it would be that we are resilient people and we deal with difficult issues. We are relentless people, and we're able to persevere through everything. That's what the characters have to do in this play. The Black Power Movement is happening, and they're dealing with mental illness, and it's those issues that permeate the environment in this urban setting. We have had to deal with a lot of the things that communities like the Hill District in Pittsburgh had to deal with, the change. The lesson is that we are a strong people and we will survive through everything that is thrown at us.

## Tell us about your approach to this play and if you have discovered something new about it this time.

The approach to this play is the same as any play. I try to find the spiritual aspect of it and enhance the love that is in the play. I always start plays with love, and in particular, this one is love of the neighborhood, love of the people, love of the culture—all of those things.

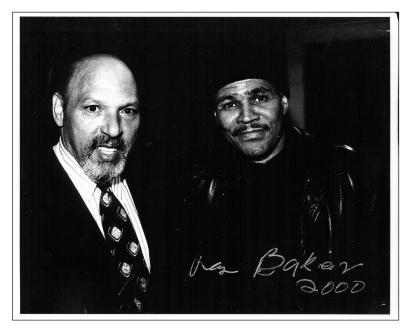


Photo of August Wilson with Ron OJ Parson by Ray Baker.

Jack Magaw does a lot of my sets, and we always try to make it so that when people from Pittsburgh come in, they feel like they're in Pittsburgh. That's done with the accessories on the set. Adding those little things make it Pittsburgh—like the mugs, a poster on the wall, even the music. A lot of great musicians are from Pittsburgh. There's a lot of those details that make it comfortable for people from Pittsburgh to come see the play and feel like they're at home.

# *Two Trains Running* is somewhat of a marathon for the actors. How do you help them keep the flow and energy going throughout the entire play?

All plays are marathons, but these are Wilson-ites. For them it's not a marathon, it's just a joy. As far as keeping the flow, it's music. They're playing an instrument when they talk. It's like a band playing a song. It's August Wilson, and they know the rhythm.

#### What can audiences expect to see in this production?

They can expect a good production—what they've always gotten from us when we do August Wilson. These actors are rarin' to go. ■

-Melissa Schmitz, Marketing Associate

## DRAMATURGICAL NOTES Khalid Y. Long, PhD, Production Dramaturg

Let's begin with a few earned titles and monikers: Playwright. Historian. Preserver of culture, And as New York Times theatre critic Charles Isherwood once called him. "Theatre's Poet of Black America." Known as the playwright that put 100 years of African American history on the stage, no other playwright has been able to achieve what August Wilson has accomplished with his ten-play cycle, also known as the Pittsburgh Cycle or the American Century Cycle. Wilson himself has described his ten-play cycle as his effort to craft a 400-year autobiography of the African American experience. The plays in the cycle include Jitney (1982); Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (1984); Fences (1987); Joe Turner's Come and Gone (1988); The Piano Lesson (1990); Two Trains Running (1991); Seven Guitars (1995); King Hedley II (1999); Gem of the Ocean (2003); and Radio Golf (2005). Wilson's oeuvre has earned him several awards, including the Tony Award for Best Play (Fences, 1987), the Olivier Award for Best New Play (Jitney, 2002), and two Pulitzer Prizes for Drama (Fences, 1987 and The Piano Lesson, 1990), among others.

Undeniably, August Wilson was fascinated with the history of Black Americans. The lack of being formally educated about Black history piqued his curiosity. Wilson once stated that he was "encouraged by the fact that in all [his] reading of history, seldom, if ever, was the Black experience in America given any weight, seldom were they admitted to the larger playing field of cause and effect." As such, August Wilson "sought then to simply restore that experience to a primary role, thereby giving the facts of history a different perspective, and creating, in essence, a world in which the Black American was the spiritual center." Wilson said, "Since I was not a historian but a writer of fiction, I saw as my task the invention of characters." Accordingly, through his characters, Wilson laid claim to a past that is too often forgotten, thus filling the gaps in historical records by using his artistic license to mesh facts with a fictional imagination.





Wilson's engagement with history is prominent in *Two Trains Running*—the 1960s play. However, Wilson does not directly address the historical events of the 1960s. Instead, these events hover over the play as a backdrop, thus informing the actions and motivations of the characters. The history that hovers over the play includes the legacies of leaders of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, namely Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. It also includes the death of Robert Kennedy, the beginning of gentrification and displacement within Black communities, and the fallout from the Vietnam War. When asked why he kept these historic events of the 1960s off the stage, Wilson responded with the following:

The play does not speak to the so-called red-lettered events of the sixties, because at the time all of that was going on—the assassination of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy and all the anti-war administrations, go to work every day, you still had to pay your rent, you still had to put food on the table. And those events, while they may have in some way affected the character of society as a whole, didn't reach the average person who was concerned with just simply living. And so in *Two Trains* I was more concerned with those people and what they were doing and how they were dealing with it, than I was writing a "sixties" play.

As such, Wilson peoples his plays with everyday folks—those whose lives fluctuated between what was happening nationally and what was happening regionally. Although Wilson put fictional stories on the stage, it is evident, as in *Two Trains Running*, that these stories are inspired by—and perhaps haunted—by real history.

#### Photographs

Page 11: Charles "Teenie" Harris, Billboard at the corner of Crawford Street and Centre Avenue, denouncing the redevelopment of the lower Hill District, 1969. Carnegie Museum of Art, Heinz Family Fund.

Left: Clyde Hare, Overview of the Hill District, 1952, Carnegie Museum of Art.



# **SEASON** As we emerge from the challenges of the last two years, we're thrilled to share plays that take audiences on a journey of healing, redemption, and celebration. From

As we emerge from the challenges of the last two years, we're thrilled to share plays that take audiences on a journey of healing, redemption, and celebration. From classic comedy to resonant dramas, and culminating in a celebratory musical, it is our hope that the 2022/23 season will both delight and uplift audiences with stories of our shared humanity.

## **ARSENIC AND OLD LACE**

by Joseph Kesselring Original Broadway Production by Howard Lindsay & Russel Crouse Directed by Ron OJ Parson

#### September 2 - October 2, 2022

Mild-mannered sisters Martha and Abby Brewster live in their spacious Victorian home in a quiet neighborhood in Brooklyn with an eccentric nephew, Teddy. Famed for their hospitality, Martha and Abby are adored by their neighbors and frequently entertain guests. But when their other nephew, Mortimer, discovers his aunts' macabre secrets, a hilarious chain of events ensue in this character-driven farce. Resident Artist Ron OJ Parson directs this beloved American classic, bringing much-needed humor and healing laughter to the stage in Court's 2022/23 Season opener.



by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona Directed by Gabrielle Randle-Bent

#### November 11 - December 4, 2022

John and Winston are political prisoners on South Africa's infamous Robben Island, spending their days toiling at grueling, futile tasks in the prison's quarry. At night, they secretly rehearse a two-man version of *Antigone* and find solace and strength in their burgeoning friendship. *The Island* is at once a sobering glimpse into the social, physical, and psychological wounds of Apartheid; a lesson in the complex work of liberation; and a testament to the transformative power of theatre. Frequent collaborator Gabrielle Randle-Bent makes her solo directorial debut at Court, bringing her vision of resistance and resilience to the stage.

## FEN

#### by Caryl Churchill Directed by Vanessa Stalling **February 10 - March 5, 2023**

On the marshy fens of England in the 1980s, ghosts of the past haunt the women who labor as tenant farmers in the potato fields. When Val seizes on a new relationship as a path to escape the crushing bonds of work, poverty, and family, she is confronted with the explosive repercussions of her decision. Employing astonishing theatrical imagery, Churchill's *Fen* shows how the intricate pressures of gender and class both shape and distort the women. Jeff Award-winning director Vanessa Stalling returns to Court to bring her striking clarity and fresh perspective to the path-breaking text that cemented Churchill's reputation as one of our greatest living playwrights.

## THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS

Adaptation and Original Lyrics by Lee Breuer Adapted Lyrics by Lee Breuer & Bob Telson, Music by Bob Telson Production by Mark J.P. Hood and Charles Newell

#### May 12 - June 11, 2023

COUPENTHEATRE

Soulful and stirring, *The Gospel at Colonus* reimagines the story of Oedipus as the centerpiece of an African American Pentecostal church service. A redemptive celebration, this one-of-a-kind theatrical event breathes new life into a classic myth with a score of powerful gospel music. A bold collaboration from an extraordinary team of artists led by Mark J.P. Hood and Charles Newell, *The Gospel at Colonus* builds upon the strengths and experiences of its artists to bring this smash hit to life with new clarity on Chicago's South Side.

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**KIERRA BUNCH** (*Risa*) is thrilled to be back at Court after appearing *King Hedley II* (Jeff Nomination/Supporting Role). She was recently seen in Definition's *White* and Windy City Playhouse's *Recipe for Disaster*. She also appeared Windy City Playhouse's *Southern Gothic* and Lookingglass' *Plantation*. She's had the honor of working with many other Chicago theatres including Urban

Theater Company, Black Ensemble, and eta Creative Arts (Black Theater Alliance Nomination, Best New Actress, Best Performance in an Ensemble). She can currently be seen in a recurring role in *South Side* on HBO Max. Television includes *Shameless, Chicago Med*, and FOX's *Empire*. She was a series regular on the Emmy Award-winning children's show *Green Screen Adventures*. Kierra is very thankful for her family and friends who helped her embark on this journey. A special thank you to Gyton for his unmeasurable support. Kierra is represented by the wonderful team at Paonessa Talent Agency.



**RONALD L. CONNER** (Wolf) was last seen in Court's Titanic (Scenes from the British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry, 1912). He has performed in nine out of ten plays in August Wilson's Century Cycle. Also at Court: King Hedley II (Jeff Award, Production), Seven Guitars, The Piano Lesson, and The First Breeze of Summer. Other Chicago credits: Jitney, King Hedley II, and Small Oak Tree Runs

Red (Congo Square, Ensemble Member); A View from the Bridge, Father Comes Home from the Wars, and SWEAT (Goodman); Pipeline (Victory Gardens); SS! Twelfth Night (Chicago Shakespeare); and Paradise Blue (TimeLine). Regional credits: The St. Louis Black Repertory, Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati, Portland Stage, Olney, and Geva Theatre. Ron has a recurring role in seasons one and two of South Side (HBO MAX). Television/film: Chasing the Blues (film), The Chi (Showtime), Empire (FOX), Sirens (USA), and Chicago P.D. and Chicago Med (NBC). Ron is represented by Paonessa Talent.



JEROD HAYNES (Sterling) was born and raised on Chicago's South Side. He was last seen in Court's Gem of the Ocean and also appeared in Seven Guitars. He played Bigger in Court and American Blues' Native Son (Joseph Jefferson Award, lead actor). Other theatre credits include A Raisin in the Sun (TimeLine); The Royale and Columbinus (ATC); To Kill a Mockingbird (Milwaukee Rep);

Contribution and Greensboro 4: Downpayment on Manhood (eta Creative Arts). Film/ television: 61st Street (AMC); Project Blue Book (History); Chicago Med, The Village, Good Girls, and Crisis (NBC); Benji, Sense8 (Netflix); Blueprint (Amazon); Southside With You and Consumed (film); Empire and The Mob Doctor (FOX); Betrayal (ABC). Jerod spent time in the UK where he studied at the British American Drama Academy. He also finished the entire training program at the Acting Studio Chicago. Jerod thanks God, his family, and dedicates his work to his daughter, Jalaiya.



JOSEPH PRIMES (Hambone, u/s Holloway) is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and now resides in Chicago. Credits include Sweat and Gem of the Ocean (u/s, Goodman); EthiopianAmerica (Definition Theatre); and Familiar and Lindiwe (u/s, Steppenwolf); King Hedley II (u/s, Court Theatre). Regional theatre: Morning After Grace (Indiana Rep). Television/Film: Chicago P.D. (NBC) and

*Underdogs* (Netflix). Joseph was nominated for a Jeff Award as a member of the ensemble of *Familiar*. Joseph is the recipient of the Black Theater Alliance's Ossie Davis Award. He is a member of SAG-AFTRA and AEA.



A.C. SMITH (Memphis) was last seen at Court in King Hedley II, for which he won the Jeff Award for Supporting Role. Also at Court: Thurgood (staged reading), Harvey, Gem of the Ocean, Waiting for Godot, The Misanthrope, Tartuffe, Jitney, Invisible Man, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, The Piano Lesson, and Fences, for which he received a Jeff Award for Lead Actor. A native of Chicago, Smith

has performed at Victory Gardens, TimeLine, Writers, Steppenwolf, Goodman, Chicago Theatre for the Performing Arts, Illinois Theatre Centre, Second City, and Chicago Shakespeare. Regional credits: Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, Portland Stage, Geva Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Saint Louis Black Repertory Company, where he has been a company member for 18 years (nine-time Woodie King, Jr. Awardwinner). In addition, A.C. has done film, television, radio, commercials, and voice-overs, and he has appeared in *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines. He is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency.



ALFRED H. WILSON (Holloway) has appeared at Court Theatre in Radio Golf, Agamemnon, Gem of the Ocean, Waiting for Godot, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, and The Piano Lesson. Other credits include Holloway in Two Trains Running (Goodman Theatre); Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (University of Wisconsin–Madison); The Exonerated (Next Act Theatre); Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (Actor's

Theatre of Louisville and Milwaukee Rep); *The Etiquette of Vigilance* (Steppenwolf); *Two Trains Running* (Geva Theatre); *"Master Harold"...and the Boys* (TimeLine); *Gem of the Ocean* and *Radio Golf* (Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati); *Radio Golf* (Pittsburgh Public Theatre); *Bourbon at the Border* (Eclipse Theatre); *Jitney* and *Two Trains Running* (Jeff Citation–Best Actor, Pegasus Players); and *Panther Burn* (MPAACT). He was a co-founder of Onyx Theatre Ensemble.



**CEDRIC YOUNG** (*West*) returns to Court for his third collaboration with Ron OJ Parson with *Two Trains Running*. Previously he appeared as Cutler in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and as Doub in *Jitney*. He was last seen at Steppenwolf in *Lindiwe* and *Familiar*. As always, he wants to acknowledge the love and support of his wife, Mary, for helping him thrive in this business. I LOVE YOU FOREVER! 241 IN TIME!

KONA N. BURKS (*u/s Risa/Assistant Director*) is excited and honored to be working with Court again. Chicago credits include: *King Hedley II, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, Long Time Since Yesterday* (Spotlight Reading), and *Harvey* (Court); *The Snowy Day* (Emerald City); *The Grapes of Wrath* (The Gift Theatre); *Domesticated, How Long Will I Cry* (Steppenwolf); *Heaven, How I Got Here* (Provision Theatre); *Good People* (Redtwist Theatre); *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (Prologue at Steppenwolf's Garage); *Small* (Open Door); *Intimate Apparel, Crumbs from the Table of Joy* (Illinois Theatre Center); *Levi James, The Trip, A Fool Such As I* (eta Creative Arts). Kona has received a BTAA Award and Black Excellence Awards for Outstanding Actor. Kona is a member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA. She attended The School at Steppenwolf, and holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a master's degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**DAVID MICHAEL DOWD** (*u/s Wolf, Sterling*), actor, illustrator and 2D animator, makes his Court Theatre debut with *Two Trains Running*. His credits include work with Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, and Facility Theatre, the contribution of several animated works to productions at Free Street Theatre and Walkabout Theatre, as well as a host of television and film credits including *Chicago Fire, The Chi*, and *Fargo*.

WILLIE B. GOODSON (*u/s West*) is a native of Cleveland, where he started his acting career at the Karamu House. Credits include *East Texas Hot Links* (Writers); *Jitney, Elmina's Kitchen*, and *A Soldier's Play* (Congo Square); *Conversation on a Dirt Road, Father and Son Night, The Last Apple, Riffs, The Lifting* (eta Creative Arts); *Wendell Green, The Horn,* and "Master Harold"...and the Boys (Steppenwolf Studio); *East Texas Hot Links* and *Sty of the Blind Pig* (Onyx); *Of Mice and Men* (Organic Theater); *The State of Mississippi vs Emmett Till, Ghost Garden, Bronzeville* (Pegasus); *Pill Hill, The Little Tommy Parker Celebrated Colored Minstrel Show* (Chicago Theatre). Television: *Angel Street, Early Edition,* and *Playboy Club.* Film: *Light it Up, Barbershop,* and *Dark, Left Over Blessings.* Mr. Goodson thanks his wife and family for their support, and God for the talent, and always love to Rian, Jazmyne, Angel, Korina and Elijah Jalen, DJ, and Nova.

ANDRE McGRAW (u/s Memphis, Hambone) is a native of Omaha, Nebraska, and now resides in Chicago. His pursuit of the performing arts started at the John Beasley Theater and Workshop in Omaha, where his credits include *Fences*, "Master Harold"...and the Boys, Jitney, Two Trains Running, Radio Golf, Gem of The Ocean, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Crowns (Assistant Sound/Light Tech), Death of a Salesman, A Raisin in the Sun, Boys Next Door (Omaha Entertainment Award, Best Supporting Actor); The Piano Lesson, Race (Award for Supporting Actor, Omaha Community Playhouse); The Exonerated, To Kill a Mockingbird, Topdog/Underdog (BlueBarn Theatre); Praying for a Hurricane (Great Plains Theater); A Man of Fish (Director) and Bourbon at the Border (Assistant Director) (Union Contemporary Arts Union Contemporary Arts); To Go (Great Plains Theatre), Romeo and Juliet (Shakespeare Touring Company); The Olympians (Northwestern/Piven Theatre); and Titus Andronicus (Haven Theatre). This marks Andre's first time working at Court Theatre.

AUGUST WILSON (Playwright, April 27 1945–October 2, 2005) authored Gem of the Ocean, Joe Turner's Come and Gone, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, The Piano Lesson, Seven Guitars, Fences, Two Trains Running, Jitney, King Hedley II, and Radio Golf. These works explore the heritage and experience of African Americans, decade-by-decade, over the course of the twentieth century. His plays have been produced at regional theaters across the country and all over the world, as well as on Broadway. In 2003, Mr. Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show, How I Learned What I Learned. Mr. Wilson's works garnered many awards including Pulitzer Prizes for Fences (1987) and for The Piano Lesson (1990); a Tony Award for Fences; Great Britain's Olivier Award for Jitney; as well as eight New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Fences, Joe Turner's Come and Gone, The Piano Lesson, Two Trains Running, Seven Guitars, Jitney, and Radio Golf. Additionally, the cast recording of Ma Rainey's Black Bottom received a 1985 Grammy Award, and Mr. Wilson received a 1995 Emmy Award nomination for his screenplay adaptation of The Piano Lesson. Mr. Wilson's early works included the one-act plays The Janitor, Recycle, The Coldest Day of the Year, Malcolm X, The Homecoming and the musical satire Black Bart and the Sacred Hills. Mr. Wilson received many fellowships and awards, including Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, the Whiting Writers Award, 2003 Heinz Award, was awarded a 1999 National Humanities Medal by the President

of the United States, and received numerous honorary degrees from colleges and universities, as well as the only high school diploma ever issued by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. He was an alumnus of New Dramatists, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a 1995 inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and on October 16, 2005, Broadway renamed the theater located at 245 West 52nd Street The August Wilson Theatre. Additionally, Mr. Wilson was posthumously inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 2007. Mr. Wilson was born and raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and lived in Seattle, Washington at the time of his death. He is immediately survived by his two daughters, Sakina Ansari and Azula Carmen Wilson, and his wife, costume designer Constanza Romero.



**RON OJ PARSON** (*Resident Artist/Director*) hails from Buffalo, NY, and graduated from the University of Michigan's Professional Theatre Program. Ron is Court's Resident Artist, cofounder and former Artistic Director of Onyx Theatre Ensemble, a company member of TimeLine, and is an associate artist at Writers Theatre and Teatro Vista. In Chicagoland: Black

Ensemble Theatre, eta Creative Arts Foundation, Chicago Dramatists, Congo Square, Oak Park Theatre Festival, Goodman, Victory Gardens, Northlight, Steppenwolf, and others. Regional: American Players Theatre, Roundabout, Studio Theatre (DC), Baltimore Center Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Milwaukee Rep, St. Louis Black Rep, Geva, Signature (NY), The Alliance, South Coast Rep, Kansas City Rep, Pasadena Playhouse, and more. Ron directed the world premiere of *Palmer Park* at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. Ron is a proud member of SAG-AFTRA, SDC, and Actors' Equity. Visit www.ronojparson.com. This production is dedicated to the memory of Paul Carter Harrison.

JACK MAGAW (Scenic Designer) returns to Court Theatre having previously designed Radio Golf and Gem of the Ocean, among many others. Recent Chicago and regional credits include Relentless (TimeLine), The Agitators (Alabama Shakespeare Festival), Indecent (Arena Stage, Baltimore CenterStage, and Kansas City Rep), Legacy Land and Frankenstein (Kansas City Rep), America V. 2.1: The Sad Demise and Eventual Extinction of the American Negro (Barrington Stage), The Scarlet Ibis (Chicago Opera Theatre), Approval Junkie (Alliance Theatre and Audible Theatre Off-Broadway), Bloomsday (Remy Bumppo), and Tally's Folly (Peninsula Players). Upcoming projects include I and You (Peninsula Players), American Jade (Bucks County Playhouse), and Cabaret (Music Theatre Heritage, Kansas City). Jack is an Adjunct Professor of Design at The Theatre School at DePaul University and he resides in Chicago. Visit www.jackmagaw.com.

**CHRISTINE PASCUAL** (*Costume Designer*) is very pleased to be back at Court where she previously designed Seven Guitars, The Piano Lesson, and Flyin' West. Recent credits include *Relentless* (world premiere) Oslo, To Catch A Fish, and Paradise Blue (TimeLine); I, Cinna (Chicago Shakespeare); How To Defend Yourself, The First Deep Breath (world premiere), Fade, and Roz and Ray at (Victory Gardens); Dance Nation and La Ruta (world premiere) (Steppenwolf); The Total Bent and The Displaced (world premiere) (Haven Theatre); Lady in Denmark (world premiere) and Feathers and Teeth (world premiere) (Goodman); Dutch Masters, The Light Fantastic (world premiere) (Jackalope Theater); Crumbs From The Table of Joy (Raven Theatre); East Texas Hot Links (Writers); Put Your House In Order (world premiere) (The Roustabouts). In 2018, Christine received a 3Arts Award. She holds an MFA from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and is a member of United Scenic Artist Local 829. Her portfolio website is at christinepascual.carbonmade.com.

**BRANDON WARDELL** (*Lighting Designer*) is a lighting and scenic designer based in Chicago. He is an Ensemble Member at Steep Theatre Company, an Artistic Associate with Griffin Theatre Company, and Associate Professor of Lighting Design at Northern Illinois University. Recent designs include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Steppenwolf); *A Number* (Writers); *The Father* (Remy Bumppo); *Birdland, Lela & Co.*, and *Earthquakes in London* (Steep); *Cardboard Piano* and *The Vibrator Play* (TimeLine); *Men On Boats* (American Theatre Company); *Titanic, London Wall*, and *Men Should Weep* (Griffin); *The Game of Love and Chance* (American Players); and *Million Dollar Quartet* (Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival). Other designs include Touring Immersive productions such as the Sleepy Hollow Experience, and the Little Mermaid Cocktail Experience. Brandon earned his MFA from Northwestern University. Visit Brandonwardelldesign.com.

ANDRE PLUESS (Sound Designer) has designed over 30 productions at Court, including An Iliad, Man in the Ring, Oedipus Rex, and Iphigenia. Broadway credits include Metamorphoses, I Am My Own Wife, 33 Variations, The Minutes, and The Clean House (Lincoln Center). Chicago credits include composition and sound design for numerous productions at Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare, About Face Theatre, and many others. Regional credits include multiple projects at Center Theatre Group, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, California Shakespeare Theater, American Conservatory Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Guthrie and Arena Stage. Andre is an ensemble member of Lookingglass Theatre Company.

KHALID Y. LONG (*Production Dramaturg*) is an assistant professor of theatre at Columbia College Chicago. Khalid's dramaturgical credits include *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage (Paramount Theatre, IL), *Relentless* by Tyla Abercrumbie (TimeLine Theatre), *Native Son* by Nambi E. Kelley (Mosaic Theater, D.C.), *Sunset Baby* by Dominique Morisseau (REPStage, Maryland), *Milk Like Sugar* by Kirsten Greenidge (Mosaic Theater, D.C.), *Mom, How Did You Meet the Beatles?* by Adrienne Kennedy and Adam Kennedy (Forward Theatre, Wisconsin), *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage (UMD, College Park), and *Kill Move Paradise* by James Ijames (REPstage, Maryland).

JACLYNN JOSLIN (Stage Manager) is thrilled to return to Court where her credits include: The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice, Oedipus Rex, The Adventures of Augie March, For Colored Girls, Photograph 51, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, All My Sons, Harvey, The Hard Problem, and Blues for an Alabama Sky. Additional theatre credits include: King James, Bug, True West, Familiar, Guards at the Taj, BLKS, The Crucible, Between Riverside and Crazy, The Flick, East of Eden (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); Linda Vista (Center Theatre Group); Continuity, The King of Hell's Palace (Goodman Theatre), Hard Times (Lookingglass Theatre); and Roz and Ray (Victory Gardens). Touring: Oklahoma!

**DANNY FENDER** (Assistant Stage Manager) is grateful to return to Court Theatre for his first production as a member of AEA. Previous Court credits include *The Lady from the* Sea; The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice; The Mousetrap; Oedipus Rex; and King Hedley II. Other Chicago credits include DREAM (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), Pipeline and Rightlynd (Victory Gardens), Red Kite, Brown Box (Chicago Children's Theatre), and Ah, Wilderness! and The Music Man (Goodman Theatre). Danny is also one of the founders and owners of The Understudy Coffee and Books, a new theatre bookstore and coffee shop opening in Andersonville this summer.



**CHARLES NEWELL** (*Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director*) has been Artistic Director of Court Theatre since 1994, where he's directed over 50 productions. Recent Court highlights include *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice; Oedipus Rex; The Adventures of Augie March; All My Sons; The Hard Problem; Man in the Ring;* and *Satchmo at the Waldorf.* Charlie has directed at

Goodman, Guthrie Theater, Arena Stage, John Houseman's The Acting Company, Lyric Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, Glimmerglass, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Awards received include the SDCF Zelda Fichandler Award, the TCG Alan Schneider Award, and the League of Chicago Theatres' Artistic Achievement Award. Charlie has been nominated for 16 Jeff Awards, winning four times.



ANGEL YSAGUIRRE (*Executive Director*) most recently served as Executive Director of Illinois Humanities. During his tenure there, the organization established a number of new programs demonstrating the contribution that the humanities can make in addressing today's most pressing challenges. Previously, he was the Director of Global Community Investing at The Boeing Company

and a program officer at the McCormick Tribune Foundation. He has served on the boards of the Theatre Communications Group, Donors Forum of Chicago, the Illinois Center for the Book, Horizons Community Services, Blair Thomas and Company, and Next Theatre.



**NORA TITONE** (*Resident Dramaturg*) is the author of the 19thcentury 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.



**BECCA McCRACKEN** (*Casting Director*), is honored to be on staff at Court Theatre. She also freelances, most recently with Lyric Opera, The Rep, and the HBO series *Somebody Somewhere*. She worked at Simon Casting for 8 years. Favorite projects include: *Million Dollar Quartet* (Apollo and Tour); *1776* (Asolo); *Rock 'n Roll Christmas Tale* and *Working* (Broadway In Chicago), *The* 

Sound of Music, Showboat, and Carousel (Lyric); national tours of Sister Act and How to Train Your Dragon; Divergent; Contagion; The Watchmen; Justice League; Empire; Chicago Fire; Chicago P.D.; and Prison Break. Becca is committed to creating casting space that empowers the artist and focuses on inclusivity, diversity, and humanity.

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