



2022 REGIONAL
THEATRE
TONY AWARD

COURT THEATRE

THE ISLAND



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO | Arts

ABOUT COURT THEATRE

Court Theatre is the Tony Award-winning 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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Dear Court Theatre Family,

The Island tells the story of a prison devoid of bars. Through John and Winston, we're transported to Apartheid-era South Africa and, more specifically, to Robben Island. A detainment center for political prisoners (most famously, Nelson Mandela), it is a physical manifestation of state-sanctioned cruelty.

However, to classify *The Island* as a play solely focused on the prison system would be doing it a disservice. Rather, the whole play hinges on one of the most fundamental human emotions: love.

It's a tale of John and Winston's brotherly love and their inextricable bond formed in the crucible of brutality and injustice. It's a love letter to those who came before, shining a light on past struggles, thereby allowing us to see ourselves more clearly. And John and Winston's staging of *Antigone* is a glowing endorsement of the creative process as liberatory practice.

That process of reenvisioning the classics—as we do at Court—throws the play's fundamental questions into sharp relief. Who gets to determine accountability? How do we add to ongoing, nuanced conversations about justice?

These questions don't dissolve once the stage is clear and the actors are out of costume. They persist—through this production of *The Island*; through its companion piece, our own upcoming interpretation of *Antigone*; and long into the future. We invite you to ask them of yourselves, and we invite you to explore how art restores the humanity that so many institutions, systems, and laws are so hungry to strip away.

Don't turn a blind eye to the inhumanity of Robben Island. But first, see John and Winston in their full personhood. See the love. That's the beating heart, the beating drum, of this protest play.

With gratitude,

Charles Newell
Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director

Angel Ysaguirre
Executive Director



CHARLES NEWELL
Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director

ANGEL YSAGUIRRE
Executive Director

NOV 11 - DEC 4, 2022

THE ISLAND

BY **ATHOL FUGARD, JOHN KANI,
AND WINSTON NTSHONA**

DIRECTED BY ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT

Scenic Design by Yeaji Kim U.S.A.

Costume Design by Raquel Adorno U.S.A.

Lighting Design by Jason Lynch U.S.A.

Sound Design by Andre Pluess U.S.A.
and Daniel Etti-Williams

Original Composition by
Daniel Etti-Williams

Jacinda Ratcliffe, Movement Designer

Michael Keith Morgan, Dialect Coach

Matthew Randle-Bent,
Production Dramaturg

Casting by Becca McCracken C.S.A.

Kate Ocker,* Stage Manager

Caitlin Body,* Asst. Stage Manager

Setting: Robben Island during South African Apartheid.

Presented without intermission.

*The Island is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of
Samuel French, Inc., www.concordtheatricals.com.*

Cover photo of Ronald L. Conner and Kai A. Ealy by Joe Mazza.

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.

CAST

Ronald L. Conner* *Winston*

Kai A. Ealy* *John*

Understudies: alfonzo kahlil (John), Jamaque Newberry (Winston)

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

PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Director Wenke (Coco) Huang

Casting Assistant Ben F. Locke

Properties Assistant Persephone Lawrence-Wescott

Scenic Charge Julie Ruscitti U.S.A.

Scenic Painter Samantha Bodnar U.S.A.

Carpenters Jenny Bauer, Tony Cooper, Micah Hofferth, Alexandra James

Costume Shop Assistant Jessica Donaldson

Assistant Lighting Designer Brenden Marble

Assistant Lighting Supervisor Daniel Moses

Electricians Emily Brown, Katherine Dumais, Ann Huerta,
Ish Petersen, Amelia Simonoff, Sasa Vulovic

Sound Engineer Kiera Battles

Floor Manager Maurilio Rodriguez

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 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. 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.

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IN CONVERSATION

**DIRECTOR / ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT**

Associate Director of Marketing Camille Oswald sat down with Director, and Court's new Associate Artistic Director, Gabrielle Randle-Bent to learn about her approach to The Island.



What attracted you to *The Island*?

I first learned about Fugard and his work in 2008 when I went to South Africa as a student; it was there that I was initially exposed to the rich, witty, and subversive tradition of South African political protest performance. Since then, in the last few years at Court, I've grown to really appreciate Greek theatre. Specifically Sophocles. There's something about his themes and how they resonate through time, and the more I thought about it, the more I saw how *The Island* is one of these resonances. It feels like we're living in a similar moment right now, where people are questioning the efficacy and the sustainability of democracy; understanding that the law is not always righteous; and serving all kinds of rules and ideas of what's right and what's wrong.

This all gets a little bit topsy-turvy, but what I love about *The Island* is that it ties these themes back to people. It's political because it's about John and Winston's humanity; it's not about their incarceration. As a result, it makes the violence evident without celebrating the violent action and that was really intriguing to me.

Why did the play staged by John and Winston have to be *Antigone*? What is it about that play that makes it particularly resonant?

Antigone is a political activist. She's a revolutionary. She speaks truth to power—not in spite of the consequences, but *because* of the consequences. She's giving her life fully to what she believes is right. For Winston, burning a passbook [the act for which he is incarcerated] is no more complicated than throwing dirt over your brother's body; both are literally a flick of the wrist. But the fact that something that simple might have mortal consequences is always going to be the strongest critique of a violent regime. *Antigone* shows that the smallest acts of resistance are the ones that oppressive powers fear the most.

What does *The Island* teach us about the creative process?

Fugard, Kani, and Ntshona devised this show together; they were co-creators. Fugard wrote the words, but only one third of this play is actually dialogue. All of the stage directions, all of these beautiful interludes, were John and Winston figuring out how to use their skills as these prolific, amazing performers to tell a story that simply isn't full with just words. The challenge that this poses for our team—and the thing that I'm most excited about—is that in order for this production to be as alive, as relevant, and as engaging as I know it can be, we have to make it together. It's something that should be *re-made* through the creative process, rather than re-staged; to try to be faithful to the text is actually a kind of infidelity. You have to make it alive for your moment, for the relationship between the two men you're working with, and for the political stance they're taking in their society today. Using that as a starting point is really thrilling.

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What does *The Island* teach us about freedom?

We live in a carceral state in America. We have a carceral mindset. We imagine that if we put everything awful behind a closed door, then it's handled. I mean, there are millions of young people—mostly men, and mostly Black men—that we have literally thrown away in the prison system. The idea that that has something to do with justice, or that that's the mark of an advanced civilization, is so distorted and disgusting that it can be hard to not focus on the walls first. It's extremely difficult to not focus on what a prison is, what it does, and how it dehumanizes, destabilizes, and debilitates people.

The beautiful thing, because of how Robben Island works, is that the walls are inconsequential. Robben Island is an island on the edge of the world. There's nowhere to go. Once you take away the walls, it's a great way to conceptualize what incarceration really is, what it does, how it's used by the state, and how people resist. For example, you can talk about what's wrong with a birdcage all day long. Or, you can invite someone to watch how a caged bird acts. All of a sudden, you don't have to make the argument for why a cage is cruel.

I hope that *The Island* creates space for people to feel the deep humanity of these men. And that by seeing them, audiences feel differently equipped—whatever that might mean—to think about our own Johns and Winstons, our own captives in *this* country, and what every single person means to a community, to a family, and to a space.

How can theatre serve as a tool for political resistance?

Theatre, and live performance in general, is a tool for generating empathy. It gives us a new way of recognizing how our humanity is connected—even in our difference, even in our separation from someone, or an idea, or a moment in time. So often, we're really excited to talk to one another, but theatre asks you to sit in a dark room, to see, and to listen. That's the first step towards a more compassionate and empathetic society, so in that way, it's political.

How does John and Winston's staging of *Antigone* reflect Court's mission of reimagining classics?

It fits perfectly, doesn't it? It's like they wrote the play for us! For the past few years, Charlie [Newell] and I have been working with the Civic Actor Studio, a program for leaders on the South Side that's organized by the University of Chicago's Office of Civic Engagement. And, in the Civic Actor Studio, we actually read scenes from *Antigone*! We read scenes, and we ask the folks involved to look at Ismene, Antigone, Creon, and Haemon and decide who they're similar to, who they empathize with, and who they disagree with. We then ask them to dig deeper into how each of these specific characters display leadership. That's exactly what John and Winston are doing.

You can't have an *Antigone* without a Creon. And you can't dismantle these systems of oppression without recognizing that that power has a legacy too. In their staging,



Ronald L. Conner and
Kai A. Ealy (Joe Mazza).

John and Winston speak to the genuine feeling of both sides, but they're able to elevate Antigone's voice in a way that makes clear that, though Creon is powerful, he is not justified. Are there other ways they could do that? Yes, a thousand times yes. But Greek culture has been co-opted by a greater European identity-making establishment as the purview of exclusively white people...as if wisdom has a color [laughs]. So, by using this Greek play, John and Winston are able to say, "Actually, we understand the thing that you think is your history better than you do, and we can use it to help everyone else see the righteousness of our cause—even when we're exhausted, even when we feel ridiculous." They're literally reimagining a classic play. I mean, that's pretty cool.

In the play, John says of *Antigone*, "That's all we want them to do... listen in the end!" When the audience is listening to this play, what do you want them to hear?

I just want them to listen, I'm less focused on what they actually hear—I guess I'm like John, right? [laughs] I think that even the practice of listening is something we're at risk of losing, but that's what theatre makes us do. They might laugh at you at first, but then they'll listen. And that's the most important thing. ■



The quarry on Robben Island where prisoners were forced to carry out hard labor (Rüdiger Wölk).

Kinship, Conviviality, and Athol Fugard's *The Island*

Athol Fugard is the most celebrated South African playwright of our time, and in many ways *The Island* (along with *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*) propelled his international career. The play is an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* set on Robben Island, the prison where Nelson Mandela was held in a damp, eight-foot cell for eighteen of his twenty-seven years in jail for his opposition to Apartheid laws. Apartheid, condemned in 1962 by the United Nations General Assembly, which then declared the system a crime against humanity in 1966, separated groups by skin color, establishing a ruling, minority class of whites (dominated by Afrikaners, descendants of the Dutch settler colonialists) over the majority Black population, in many cases kin to their white oppressors. In *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*, Trevor Noah, the famous South African comedian, son of a Swiss-German father and Xhosa mother, has written about what it was like to embody the paradoxes of Apartheid.

A bit of background on the Greek antecedent, which would always have been, in countless ways, the perfect cipher for Fugard and his other South African actors of the Serpent Players theater company, John Kani and Winston Ntshona: The play, as performance theorist Judith Butler masterfully teased out in her Housman Lecture at UCLA (2017), is expressly concerned with kinship—the feelings, behaviors, and actions it provokes, and its limits. Seeking support for her bold move of burying her brother against the edict of King Creon, Antigone goes straightaway for support to her sister, Ismene. The first words of *Antigone* are her greeting to Ismene, who is reluctant to join the cause. Antigone calls Ismene “my own dear sister,” regarding her as if part of her body, even her own head. Creon is Antigone's kin, too; he is her uncle (her mother's brother). The paradoxical interplay between the bloodline and the blasé, allyship and

by Patrice Rankine, Professor of Classics, University of Chicago

betrayal, or oppressor and liberator, exposes the knottiness of familial ties. Often difficult to disentangle, kinship ties compel Antigone's rebellion, her act of civil disobedience: she breaks the law of the land by disregarding the king's edict, but in doing so she purports to honor her brother, claiming an affinity to unwritten laws. Her defiance disrupts Antigone's sociability. Cut off from others in a cave, she is socially dead even before passing away. Her single strongest advocate is Haemon, her fiancé, who happens also to be Creon's son. Haemon advises Creon to give way to the wisdom of widespread opinion, the consensus that his punishment of Antigone is unjust and unmerited.

The legacy of Sophocles' *Antigone* in South Africa precedes *The Island*. (See Betine Van Zyl Smit, “Antigone in South Africa,” *Bulletin for the Institute of Classical Studies* 2006: 281-298.) There were several Afrikaans productions of the play by the 1970s, some of which were part of a broader advocacy for slow, social change. The Serpent Players workshopped *Antigone* in 1965 before developing *The Island*, which toured internationally. Kani and Ntshona each faced brutality and imprisonment under Apartheid. In the name of kinship within and beyond bloodlines, these men defied unjust laws. Mandela himself, in *A Long Walk to Freedom* (1995), recounts his “thespian career” in prison, performing Creon's role as his personal lesson in leadership. Although “there is wisdom in [Creon's] early speeches when he suggests that experience is the foundation of leadership and that obligations to the people take precedent over loyalty to an individual” (456), Mandela concurs with Haemon. Creon's “inflexibility and blindness ill become a leader, for a leader must temper justice with mercy. It was Antigone who symbolized our struggle; she was, in her own way, a freedom fighter, for she defied the law on the grounds that it was unjust.”

continued

Beyond bonds of blood, dwelling together is what makes people kindred.

Mandela's affirmation of the wisdom of consensus, consistent with Haemon's appeal to flexibility, insight, and mercy, is a call for conviviality: the reality that if people are to live together in peace, there must be ways to understand one another's points of view. To understand another person is to dwell with them for a time, to inhabit their ideas, commitments, and concerns—to break bread, as one saying goes. In the United States, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called for this conviviality, in his April 16, 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail," when he wrote to fellow clergy who had opposed the protests to end segregation and Jim Crow. In this case, King compared himself not to Antigone, but to Socrates, arguing that "one has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws." King writes that protest, nonviolent direct action, is a way to "dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored." Through conviviality, King would weave a "beloved community," which affirms the neighbor as kin within a human family.

For King, dramatization is more than a metaphor for imagining conviviality. Theater itself is one way of dwelling together. Theater has been shown to promote pro-social behavior, change attitudes, and foster empathy (*Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 2021). It is no wonder, then, that *Antigone* appealed to those on opposite sides of Apartheid. Beyond bonds of blood, dwelling together is what makes people kindred. And, we can dwell together well or poorly, convivially or contentiously. It has become commonplace to see Kani and Ntshona as Creon and Antigone, respectively, since they embodied the roles. Fugard also deserves notice as a remarkable, Antigone-like figure. Even as a white South African, he faced restrictions and surveillance for his public opposition to Apartheid, but from early in his life, he imagined kinship, friendship, and conviviality across the artificial racial divide. From childhood, three commitments shaped him. The first was to his own dear Afrikaner mother, his kin, whom he writes lovingly as a young twenty-year-old working on a steamer ship. The second was his commitment to his Black companions alongside whom he traveled and worked: "The camaraderie of nameless strangers made brothers by a common fate" (*Notebooks: 1960-1977* 2013, 205). Fugard resolves to "dedicate my life to alleviating the suffering of others" (*The Captain's Tiger* 1999, 19). His third and equally important commitment has been to theater. Early on, he concluded that he could not make compelling plays under Apartheid—this not even as a matter of principle, but as he puts it, as a matter of taste. *The Island* is proof positive, appealing to many tastes, drawing diverse audiences into a common dwelling, and changing a few minds along the way. ■

UP NEXT "A DARK BEAUTY"

Vanessa Stalling is no stranger to Court's stage. She most recently directed Titanic and Photograph 51 and soon, she'll add another title to that list: Caryl Churchill's Fen, onstage at Court February 10 through March 5, 2023. Here, Vanessa shares some insight into this production and its haunting beauty, stoking excitement for Churchill's feminist drama.

Written in an episodic series of vignettes, Caryl Churchill's 1983 play *Fen* is as much a story about social and economic constraints as it is a ghost story. It is as much a story about pursuing one's ability to have agency and make choices about one's life as it is a great love story. And so it is that a play written decades ago still speaks to us today.

When I see the play in my head, I see three worlds living all together in one place. There is the 1983 world of the English fens, where every move is dictated by economic necessity. Alongside this world, just out of reach, is one of beauty, of desires, of possibility, of choice. And riding underneath both of these is the world of ghosts and all who came before us...causing us to think about the impact of our actions on future generations decades from now.

Although the majority of the play follows a woman named Val and her pursuit of a better life, it also provides us the



opportunity to meet several incredible women. Like Val, each woman is a rebel, struggling in her own unique way to thrive in a world that demands choices be made by economic necessity rather than by desires, dreams, or love. I don't think the play is called an Expressionist play, but thinking about Expressionism is helpful to me when I think about this play. Through it, we have access to how the world makes the women of this play feel—feelings of isolation, of endurance, and ultimately of a great power deep down that they must simply trust is there.

Some may want to call this play a tragedy. But thinking of it like that isn't helpful to me. It somehow negates the power of the play. Instead, I think of the play as a dark beauty, one that must go to a dark place in order to reveal beauty and possibility that have been here all along. ■

—Vanessa Stalling, Director, *Fen*

Photo of Vanessa in rehearsal for *Titanic*, May 2021 (Joe Mazza).

More than Brothers

by Matthew Randle-Bent, Production Dramaturg

In a 1985 statement read by his daughter, Zindzi, at a rally in the Jabulani Stadium, Nelson Mandela wrote of the African National Congress's President-in-Exile: "Oliver Tambo is much more than a brother to me. He is my greatest friend and comrade for nearly fifty years. If there is any one amongst you who cherishes my freedom, Oliver Tambo cherishes it more, and I know that he would give his life to see me free."


From his cell in Pollsmoor Prison, to which he had been transferred from Robben Island in spring of 1982, Mandela chose to highlight the ties that bound those committed to overthrowing Apartheid through the language of revolutionary love.

Through this language, Mandela demonstrated how commitments made through social struggle could run much deeper than those of traditional family relations. John and Winston, the two characters in *The Island*, might call each other brother, but they are clearly more: they are great friends and comrades. They are political prisoners who support, heal, and work alongside one another in the name of

liberation against state-organized terror. During the twentieth century, millions of people across the world found a profound sense of empowerment and belonging through this type of political friendship. African National Congress (ANC) members called each other "comrade" to establish what scholar Jodi Dean describes as a deeply egalitarian political relation and a carrier of expectations towards one another. When Winston wants to lash out at Hodoshe, an unseen character in the play, John brings him back from the brink: the ongoing struggle, and Winston's capacity to act in it, is too important. Their friendship is always directed towards the greater movement: John and Winston cherish each other, they cherish each others' freedom, they cherish freedom everywhere.

Kani and Ntshona, the two actor-devisers who created these roles alongside Athol Fugard and their collaborators in the Serpent Players, knew that the political risks in making *The Island* reflected the risks of John and Winston staging their production

continued



Kai A. Ealy and Ronald L. Conner
(Joe Mazza).

of *Antigone*. Ensemble-building in the Serpent Players, a theatre company made up mostly of Black workers who invited Fugard to join them, had been continuously hampered by arrests and harassment. When the company first started playing for multiracial audiences, police would regularly disrupt performances. Arrests of the players' leading performers thrust Kani and Ntshona, promising younger actors, to the fore. The company's belief in the political force of art is reflected in John's speech convincing Winston to persevere in the face of the officers' sneers: "There'll come a time when they'll stop laughing, and that will be the time when our Antigone hits them with her words." The Serpent Players' repertoire in the late 1960s-early 1970s was characteristic of progressive theaters around the world: politically-charged adaptations of Ancient Greek texts; the plays of Bertolt Brecht; and new, ensemble-based work produced in collaboration with a playwright. *The Island* as we know it was made in fourteen days, but it was the product of a collective who knew each other well, and were accustomed to working quickly in intensive, often clandestine, workshops and rehearsals.

The original production of this play, which toured in South Africa and internationally, was an exercise not just in changing hearts or winning the sympathies of liberal-minded allies, but changing structures: empowering audiences to take action against Apartheid, however they could. President-in-exile Tambo had, in 1960, set up a headquarters for the ANC in London, from which he could organize international action against the colonial state. This is where Fugard, Kani, and Ntshona went first in 1973-74, for a residency at the Royal Court, the UK's leading state-subsidized theatre dedicated to new plays. That "South Africa Season," bringing together *The Island*; Fugard, Kani, and Ntshona's other great collaboration, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*; and Fugard's solo-authored *Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act*—collectively known as the "Statements" plays—became a legendary moment in theatre history. *The Island* is arguably the most enduring of this trilogy: a play about something more than brotherhood, a political love between two Black men committed to the role of art in anti-colonial struggle, soliciting action from audiences at home and abroad.

In 1973, freedom was not in sight; the end of Apartheid was not right around the corner. Yet since the formal end of the Apartheid system, the status of *The Island* has only increased. Reviving plays like *The Island* offers a dialogue between past and present. When John and Winston speak to us, we are in a shared time. As we look at them, looking at us, they pose questions of our current moment. To what lengths will a society go to break the spirits of its own people? What kind of society condones mass incarceration? What are the politics of its culture? What does it mean to truly cherish each others' freedom? These are just some of the questions we still have to answer. ■



RONALD L. CONNER (*Winston*) is pleased to return to Court, where he was last seen in *Two Trains Running*. Other Court credits: *Titanic: Scenes from The British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry, 1912*; *King Hedley II*; *Seven Guitars*; *The First Breeze of Summer*; and *The Piano Lesson* (BTAA Award, Lead Actor). Chicago credits: Congo Square (ensemble member), Goodman, Chicago Shakespeare, and TimeLine. Regional credits: The Black Rep, Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, Portland Stage, Olney Theatre Center, Geva Theatre Center, and Berkeley Repertory. On television, Ron plays the character Bluto on *Southside*. Other T.V. and film credits: *Chasing the Blues* (film), *The Chi*, *Empire*, *Sirens*, *Chicago P.D.*, and *Chicago Med*. Ron is represented by Paonessa Talent.



KAI A. EALY (*John*) is honored to be returning to Court Theatre. His performance credits include the Chicago premiere of *Kill Move Paradise* (TimeLine), Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright David Auburn's *The Adventures of Augie March* (Court), *Cardboard Piano* (TimeLine), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Theatreworks), *Schiller's Mary Stuart* (Chicago Shakespeare), *Franklinland* (Jackalope), *Migration* (eta Creative Arts), and the 30th Annual Young Playwrights Festival (Pegasus Theatre Chicago). Television: *61st Street*, *The 4400*, *Ordinary Joe*, *Chicago P.D.*, and *Chicago Fire*. Kai was born in Maine and raised in Alabama. He is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency, Chicago, and WEG Talent, New York.



ALFONZO KAHLIL (*u/s John*) is an actor and wordsmith that specializes in the dramatic arts. Raised on the W(B)estside of Chicago, alfonzo believes in the power of performance to document, the power of writing to dismantle, and the power of words to delectate. alfonzo holds a BFA in theatre from New York University and was last seen in *#ENOUGH: Plays to End Gun Violence* as Younger Nehemiah at Goodman Theatre. alfonzo is the author of *Scorpio* and *The New / New Testament*.



JAMAQUE NEWBERRY (*u/s Winston*) hails from Fort Lauderdale, Florida and is a recent graduate of Northern Illinois University with a Masters of Fine Art in Acting. As for his time on stage, roles he has enjoyed include Roger in *Kernel of Sanity*, Everybody in *Everybody*, and The Griot in *The Brothers Size*. He currently lives in

Chicago where he hopes to continue his love for expressing language and creativity that pushes our world forward.

PROFILES



GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT (*Director, Associate Artistic Director*) is a mother, director, dramaturg, and scholar. Her directorial highlights include co-directing Court Theatre's production of *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice* with Charles Newell, directing *1919* for Steppenwolf for Young Adults, and *The Year of Magical Thinking* at Remy Bumppo. In 2019, Gabrielle was Court Theatre's inaugural Research Fellow. She is a co-founder of the Civic Actor Studio, a leadership program of the University of Chicago's Office of Civic Engagement. She has a BA in Drama from Stanford University, an MA in Performance as Public Practice from the University of Texas at Austin, and is a PhD candidate at Northwestern University, and a Senior Lecturer in the Theater and Performance Studies program at the University of Chicago.

YEAJI KIM (*Scenic Designer*) is excited to make her Court debut. She is a scenic and projections designer. Recent Chicago credits include: *Fences* (American Blues, scenic); *Dear Jack, Dear Louise* (Northlight Theatre, scenic); *Bull: A Love Story* and *Fun Home* (Paramount Theatre BOLD Series, scenic); *White* (Definition/Steppenwolf LookOut, scenic and projections); *In Every Generation* (Victory Gardens Theater, projections); *Passage* and *The Year Of*



PROFILES

Magical Thinking (Remy Bumppo, scenic); *Solaris* (Griffin Theatre, projections); *The Secret Council* (First Folio Theatre, projections). Regional: *The Chinese Lady* (Geva Theatre Center, Kitchen Theatre Company, scenic). She is currently working on *Chlorine Sky* (Steppenwolf). Visit yeajikimdesign.com.

RAQUEL ADORNO (*Costume Designer*) is thrilled to return to Court Theatre. Past Chicago credits include *Intimate Apparel* (Northlight); *Wife of a Salesman* (Writers Theatre); *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice* (Court Theatre); *I, Banquo* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Mies Julie* (Victory Gardens Theater); *Unelectable You* (The Second City); *D.O.A.* (Strawdog Theatre Company); and *Murder Ballad* and *CARRIE* (Bailiwick). Regional: *The Tempest, Intimate Apparel* (Utah Shakespeare Festival); *A Raisin in the Sun, The Taming of the Shrew, Cymbeline, A Doll's House, and A Doll's House, Part 2* (American Players); *Small Mouth Sounds* (Theatreworks). Film: *Limerence*. Education: MFA Northwestern University. Visit raqueladorno.com.

JASON LYNCH (*Lighting Designer*) is excited to make his Court Theatre debut. Off-Broadway: *You Are Here: An Evening with Solea Pfeiffer* (Audible Theater/Minetta Lane Theatre). Regional: Alley Theatre, Alliance, Baltimore Center Stage, Berkeley Repertory, Chicago Shakespeare, Dallas Theater Center, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Geva Theatre Center, Goodman, Long Wharf, The Old Globe, Oregon Shakespeare, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Seattle Rep, Steppenwolf, and Victory Gardens, among others. Jason is a proud member of The Association for Lighting Production and Design and is represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE and The Gersh Agency. Visit jasondlynch.com or [@jasondlynch.design](https://www.instagram.com/jasondlynch.design) on Instagram.

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

DANIEL ETTI-WILLIAMS (*Co-Sound Designer*) is an up-and-coming sound designer and engineer local to Chicago. After studying acting at Oklahoma City University, they moved to Chicago to participate in Steppenwolf's Apprenticeship Program. They have had the opportunity to work all over Chicago making theatre and telling stories and expressing their passion through design. They're no stranger to Court, and they're excited for their debut here as a Co-Sound Designer. Chicago

PROFILES

design credits include *Run the Beast Down*, *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*, and *On the Greenbelt* (Strawdog); *The Beatrix Potter Holiday Tea Party* (Chicago Children's); *Haus of Atreus* (Mudlark); *Peerless* (Northwestern); *At the Vanishing Point* (The Gift); and *Paris and Light Falls* (Steep).

JACINDA RATCLIFFE (*Movement Designer*) is a Chicago-based dancer, choreo-grapher, and actor. A 2021 recipient of the 3Arts Make a Wave Grant, she is currently a company member with Winifred Haun & Dancers and Lucky Plush Productions, in addition to performing in a variety of live theatre and on-camera work. Artistic team credits include *The Ode at Pint's End* as Choreographer (Birch House Immersive); *Mlima's Tale* as Movement Director (Griffin); *Laced* as Choreographer and Assistant Director (About Face); *The Lady from the Sea* as Associate Movement Artist (Court); *Get Out Alive* as Co-Choreographer (Haven Chicago). Visit jacindaratcliffe.com.

MICHAEL KEITH MORGAN (*Dialect Coach*) served as vocal/text coach for productions at the Cleveland Playhouse, American Players Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Portland Center Stage. He is the creator of The Odyssey Project, a theatre initiative for incarcerated youth. Teaching credentials include UC Santa Barbara, Yale School of Drama, Shanghai Theatre Academy, Theatre Conservatorium in Brussels, and Royal Conservatoire



PROFILES

in Liege. He has performed at Mark Taper Forum, Yale Rep, California Shakespeare Festival, Ensemble Theatre New York, Independent Shakespeare Company, La Jolla Playhouse, Shakespeare and Company, Red Pear Theatre in the South of France, and Shakespeare Santa Cruz.

MATTHEW RANDLE-BENT (*Dramaturg*) is a scholar and artist from the United Kingdom, based in Chicago. This fall, he is an Artist in Residence at The Watermill Center, the laboratory of performance and the humanities founded by Robert Wilson. His most recent theatre project was as dramaturg on Chicago Shakespeare's production of *I, Banquo*. He teaches Dramaturgy and Theatre Studies at DePaul University's Theatre School and Loyola University Chicago's Department of Fine and Performing Arts, while completing his PhD in Theatre and Drama at Northwestern University. His writing has been published in *Contemporary Theatre Review*, *caa.reviews*, and *Theatre Journal*.

KATE OCKER (*Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be back at Court Theatre. Regional credits include *It Came From Outer Space*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *As You Like It* (Chicago Shakespeare); *An Iliad*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis* (Court Theatre); *Six Corners*, *BUDDY – The Buddy Holly Story*, and *The Spitfire Grill* (American Blues Theater); *Noises Off* (Asolo Rep); *Shakespeare In Love*, *Venus in Fur*, *Georama: A Mississippi River Musical*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Hamlet*, and *Twelfth Night* (Great River Shakespeare Festival); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Odd Couple*, and *An Inspector Calls* (Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma); and *Red* (Resident Ensemble Players).

CAITLIN BODY (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is making her ASM debut at Court. She previously served as Stage Manager for *Wellesley Girl* and *What We're Up Against* (Compass Theatre); *Nunsense* (Porchlight); *The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights* (Writers); *La Havana Madrid* (Teatro Vista); *The Comedy of Errors* and *Andares* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Forgotten Future: The Education Project*, *Gender Breakdown*, *Connected*, *Encounter*, *A Blue Island in the Red Sea*, and *Peacebook* (Collaboraction). She was Assistant Stage Manager for *Romeo and Juliet* (Idaho Shakespeare); *Spring Awakening* (Porchlight); and *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* (Goodman). Caitlin is a founding member of Stage Managers of Color – Chicago. She attended The Theatre School at DePaul University with BFA Theatre Arts and is a proud member of AEA.



CHARLES NEWELL (*Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director*) has been Artistic Director at Court since 1994, where he's directed many productions. Recent highlights include *The Tragedy of Othello*, *The Moor of Venice*, co-directed with Gabrielle Randle-Bent; *Oedipus Rex*; *The Adventures of Augie March*; *All My Sons*; *The Hard Problem*; and *Man in the Ring*. Charlie has directed at Goodman, Guthrie, Arena

PROFILES

Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, 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, TCG Alan Schneider Award, League of Chicago Theatres' Artistic Achievement Award, four Jeff Awards, and sixteen Jeff nominations for directing. Together with Joanie Friedman, Harry Davis, and Gabrielle Randle-Bent, Charlie is a co-founder of the Civic Actor Studio, a leadership program of the University of Chicago's Office of Civic Engagement.



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 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 CAA.



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 eight 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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