

# FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE/ WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF

By Ntozake Shange

Directed by Seret Scott

**court** THEATRE



Dear Court Theatre Family,

Welcome to *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf*. When we selected this play, we knew it was cherished. We've come to understand this depth of feeling more clearly as we've heard from you over the past months. With this production, it seems we're offering something that actually belongs to you. Ntozake Shange's passing this past October makes this production even more special.

*For Colored Girls* was groundbreaking. A "choreopoem," a term coined for this play, it combines poetry, dance, music, and song. In *The Washington Post*, Jacqueline Trescott wrote that it "was a refreshing slap at the traditional, one-two-three-act structures" of Western drama. As we've heard from many, it was also the first time African American women saw the complexities of their lives fully represented on stage, wholly recognized and understood. The women in this play survive the brutality that blasts their lives, and come to recognize in each other the promise of a better future.

Seret Scott—who directed *Native Son*, *Electra*, and *Spunk* at Court—brings insight and vision to this piece. She's assembled a powerhouse ensemble of eight women who breathe truth and heart into Shange's text. Seret's history with *For Colored Girls* began with the original Broadway production, when she played the Lady in Orange in the 1970s. Now, she's bringing this story to a new generation of audiences—in a city and moment when its messages of hope, resilience, and empowerment are needed more than ever.

We're complementing performances of *For Colored Girls* with a series of community engagement events, *beyond the rainbow*, to expand its reach. Featuring opportunities for fellowship and wellness, *beyond the rainbow* offers multiple entry points to Shange's work. You can learn more about this on pages four and five—we hope you'll join us.

We're especially grateful to Poetry Foundation and Sidley Austin for bringing this choreopoem to life. Thank you for attending this rich celebration of fearless beauty and vivid poetry.

Sincerely,



Charles Newell  
Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director



Angel Ysaguirre  
Executive Director





CHARLES NEWELL  
Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director

ANGEL YSAGUIRRE  
Executive Director

March 14 – April 14, 2019

# FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE / WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF

By Ntozake Shange

Directed by Seret Scott

*Scenic Design* by Courtney O'Neill U.S.A.

*Costume Design* by Samantha C. Jones U.S.A.

*Lighting Design* by Paul Toben U.S.A.

*Sound Design* by Andre Pluess U.S.A.

*Additional Music* by Melody Angel

*Choreography* by Leah Casey

*Casting* by Becca McCracken C.S.A.

Gabrielle Randle, *Production Dramaturg*

Erin Albrecht,\* *Production Stage Manager*

Kelly Montgomery,\* *Stage Manager*

Gabriella Welsh,\* *Assistant Stage Manager*

WARNING: This production contains the use of water-based haze.

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Additional Sponsor

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*For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf* is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

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

Melody Angel ..... Lyric  
Melanie Brezill\* ..... *Lady in Yellow*  
Leah Casey ..... *Lady in Purple*  
Melissa DuPrey ..... *Lady in Blue*  
Angelica Katie\* ..... *Lady in Green*  
Patrese D. McClain\* ..... *Lady in Brown*  
Alexis J. Roston\* ..... *Lady in Orange*  
AnJi White\* ..... *Lady in Red*

Understudies: Chanell Bell, Taylor Cannon, Myesha-Tiara, Angela Peel

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

## PRODUCTION STAFF

*Associate Director* ..... Sydney Chatman  
*Interim Technical Director* ..... Jacob Palmer  
*Scenic Artists* ..... Scott Gerwitz U.S.A., Julie Ruscitti U.S.A., Vivienne Marie U.S.A.  
*Carpenters* ..... Luke Brooks, Tony Cooper, Emily Hartig, Morgan Lemel,  
John Steven Nichols III, Theresa Murphy, Andre Payne-Guillory  
*Associate Costume Designer* ..... Paul Kim  
*Costume Shop Assistant* ..... Alex Rutherford  
*Draper/Stitcher* ..... Steppenwolf Costume Shop  
*Assistant Lighting Designer* ..... Conchita Avitia  
*Assistant Master Electrician* ..... Raphael Grimes  
*Electricians* ..... Alexis Birts, Arianna Brown, Kenny Cole, Danny Drust,  
Nils Fritjofson, Alex Hammond, Billy Murphy, Megan Turnquist  
*Floor Manager* ..... Jaclynn Joslin  
*Production Management Intern* ..... Olivia Malone

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

Cover photo of the *For Colored Girls* ensemble by Joe Mazza.

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

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. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency. Court Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American Theatre, League of Resident Theatres, Illinois Humanities Council, and League of Chicago Theatres.







# beyond the rainbow

## COURT COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

In conjunction with our production of Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf*, Court is presenting a series of curated, community-focused events allowing participants to engage with the themes in Shange's work in a variety of ways.

For the most up-to-date information about participants and events, and to secure reservations where required, please visit [CourtTheatre.org/beyond-the-rainbow](http://CourtTheatre.org/beyond-the-rainbow).

**We hope you will join us!**

Melody Angel (Joe Mazza).

### *phrases of womanhood* / **Dramatists Guild Panel**

**March 24 at 4:30pm at Court Theatre**

Five female playwrights of color discuss Ntozake Shange's influence on their work in a post-play panel moderated by Tracie Hall of the Joyce Foundation. *Free and open to the public.*

### *sing your song* / **A Night of Personal Stories**

**Monday, April 1 at 7:00pm at Court Theatre**

Performers share their stories on the set of *For Colored Girls*, celebrating original work and personal anecdotes about the play. *Free and open to the public. Reserve tickets online at CourtTheatre.org.*

### *there wuz no air* / **A Community Conversation**

**Friday, April 5 following the 7:30pm performance at Court Theatre**

A post-show panel featuring leaders from men's and boys' groups to discuss their role as allies to women. *Free and open to the public.*

### *a tribute to Ntozake* / **Spotlight Reading Series**

**April 8 at 6:30pm at Experimental Station, 6100 S Blackstone Ave**

A reading of Shange's play, *Boogie Woogie Landscapes*, about the dreams and memories of a young, black woman as part of Court's Spotlight Reading Series. Light refreshments catered by Exquisite Catering. *Free and open to the public. Reserve tickets online at CourtTheatre.org.*

### *FCGirls project* / **Exelon South Side Youth Performance Fest**

**April 9 at 7:00pm at Court Theatre**

The second act of the annual Exelon South Side Youth Performance Fest will be dedicated to student work engaging with *For Colored Girls* as part of Court's FCGirls Project. A post-show reception at the Smart Museum of Art will include catering by Piccolo Mondo. *Free and open to the public. Reserve tickets online at CourtTheatre.org.*

### *loving her fiercely* / **A Day of Wellness for Women of Color**

**Saturday, April 13th 11:00am—4:00pm at a Location To Be Announced**

**Wellness panel following the 7:30pm performance at Court Theatre**

Meditation, art, and wellness techniques combine for this event for women of color, featuring massage, reiki, and a vendor fair of female-run businesses including custom jewelry designed by K-Fleye and inspired by *For Colored Girls*. Presented in partnership with A Long Walk Home. *Free, open to the public. Reserve tickets online at CourtTheatre.org.*



# Paying Homage to Ntozake Shange

by Dr. Khalilah T. Watson

Looking back at 2018, many may argue that it was a year of and about women. Women broke their silence, and spoke out about what matters to them. Women ran for office in record numbers, and held influential and powerful men accountable in cases of sexual harassment and assault with the #MeToo Movement. Women everywhere—white, yellow, red, brown, and black alike—used their voices to fight against sexism, racism, classism, ableism, and ageism. Using various platforms like music, movies, literature, poetry, and speeches, women unapologetically, truthfully, and boldly expressed themselves.

Women like Michelle Obama, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Beyoncé, Nikki Minaj, Reese Witherspoon, Amy Poehler, Meryl Streep, Sandra Oh, Emma Stone, Stacey Adams, Tamika Mallory, Angela Davis, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison made their voices heard and inspired others to do the same. Even Oprah Winfrey's speech at the Golden Globes touched on issues of sexual abuse and empowered women to call out their abusers. In the midst of all of this amazing female power, one who embodies the spirit of all of these women, Ntozake Shange, made her transition from this life. In the African tradition, as well as in other cultures, some may say Shange is now one of the ancestral elders who will continue to guide and inform us.

To this end, Shange's death is inspiring many to reflect and revisit the genius of and in her work. While Shange's literary oeuvre is quite extensive, she is best known for *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf* (1975). This play received an Obie Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, and the AUDELCO Award, as well as Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award nominations. In 2010, director Tyler Perry adapted the choreopoem into a feature-length film. Furthermore, on the Poetry Foundation's website, *For Colored Girls* is characterized as:

[a] unique blend of poetry, music, dance and drama called a "choreopoem," it "took the theatre world by storm," noted Jacqueline Trescott in the *Washington Post*, as it "became an electrifying Broadway hit and provoked heated exchanges about the relationships between black men and women. ... Its form—seven women on the stage dramatizing poetry—was a refreshing slap at the traditional, one-two-three-act structures.

Mel Gussow, writing in the *New York Times*, stated that "Miss Shange was a pioneer in terms of her subject matter: the fury of black women at their double subjugation in white male America."



Shange attending the premiere of *For Colored Girls* at Ziegfeld Theatre in 2010 in New York City. (Stephen Lovekin/Getty Images)





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Shange's fury and insight brought fire, drama, and excitement to the stage and has been voiced by others, particularly black, female playwrights. For example, in the posthumously written *New York Times* article, "Seven Flames Kindled by the Focused Fire of Ntozake Shange," Laura Collins-Hughes shares how playwright and spoken word artist Aleshea Harris pays homage to Shange in her work: "She's given me so much permission—to be unapologetic, to talk about my pain and my joy. I've certainly been a colored girl who's considered suicide, so just the title, everything, it feels like 'You are here, I affirm you, you exist and you should exist loudly.'" These very sentiments are also connected to the movement of women today. In viewing this play, particularly in the city of Chicago, women—particularly black women—who choose to voice their concerns and bring themselves to the forefront of the American landscape will see themselves reflected in Shange's work.

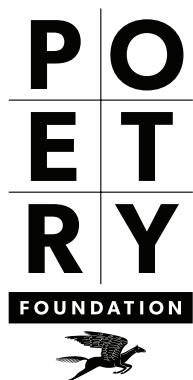
Although *For Colored Girls* first appeared on the stage in 1975, its themes permeate our current American conversation. Simultaneously, Shange's text is laced with key historical references, including Willie Colon, Toussaint L'ouverture, and Claude McKay's poem "Harlem Dancer." The women express feeling excluded from critical places and spaces in cities like St. Louis, New York City, Chicago, Houston, Baltimore, Detroit, and San Francisco. This notion of "being on the outside as a woman," particularly a black woman, contributes to its timeliness as women continue to fight for a seat at the table.

In the forward of the 2010 second publication of her play, Shange beautifully articulates: "*For Colored Girls* continues to resonate so profoundly almost forty years after I first set pen to paper. It is bittersweet for me. Though we have achieved many milestones, the stories and struggles of our lives as women, and in particular, women of color, are still not granted the full address due. But, then, perhaps that is part of the fuel that moves me to continue writing." Parallel to Shange's guiding words here, *For Colored Girls* continues to resonate as we examine the stories and struggles of women today. Witnessing these powerful stories will inevitably move us all to empathize with women beyond Court Theatre's stage, supporting their march to be heard throughout America and across the world. ■

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Dr. Khalilah T. Watson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communications at Olive-Harvey College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago. Her areas of specialization are composition, twentieth century African American fiction, and literary theory, particularly Toni Morrison. She holds a Ph.D. in English from Georgia State University, a master's degree from Eastern Michigan University, and a bachelor's degree from Albion College.





The Poetry Foundation is honored to support Court Theatre's production of Ntozake Shange's seminal choreopoem, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Unruly*. We may have lost Ntozake Shange too soon last year, but as the following small sampling of Chicago-based poets reveals, her influence is very much alive among young writers.

## to the notebook kid

BY EVE L. EWING

yo chocolate milk for breakfast kid.  
one leg of your sweatpants rolled up  
scrounging at the bottom of your mama's purse  
for bus fare and gum  
pen broke and you got ink on your thumb kid

what's good, hot on the cement kid  
White Castle kid  
tongue stained purple  
cussin on the court  
till your little brother shows up  
with half a candy bar kid

got that good B in science kid  
you earned it kid  
etch your name in a tree  
hug your granny on her birthday  
think of Alaska when they shootin  
curled-up dreams of salmon  
safety  
tundra  
the farthest away place you ever saw in a book  
polar bears your new chess partners  
pickax in the ice  
Northern Lights kid

keep your notebook where your cousins won't find it.  
leave it on my desk if you want  
shuffle under carbon paper  
and a stamp that screams LATE  
yellow and red to draw the eye from the ocean  
you keep hidden in a jacked-up five star.  
your mama thought there was a secret in there  
thought they would laugh  
but that ain't it.

it's that flows and flows and flows  
and lines like those rip-roaring  
bits you got  
bars till the end of time  
you could rap like  
helium bout to spring  
all of it  
down to you  
none left in the sun — fuelless  
while the last light pushes from your belly

climbing your ribs

and you laugh into the microphone  
and who is ready for that?

## Daddy Dozens

BY JAMILA WOODS

My Daddy's forehead is so big, we don't need a dining room table. My Daddy's forehead so big, his hat size is equator. So big, it's a five-head. Tyra Banks burst into tears when she seen my Daddy's forehead. My Daddy's forehead got its own area code. My Daddy baseball cap got stretch marks. My Daddy pillowcase got craters. His eyebrows need GPS to find each other. My Daddy forehead lives in two time zones. Planets confuse my Daddy forehead for the sun. Couch cushions lose quarters in the wrinkles in my Daddy forehead. My Daddy so smart, he fall asleep with the movie on and wake up soon as the credits start to roll. My Daddy so smart, he perform surgery on his own ingrown toenail. Momma was not impressed, but my Daddy got brains. My Daddy know exactly how to drive me to my friend's house without lookin at no map. My Daddy born here, he so smart, he know the highways like the wrinkles in his forehead. He know the free clinics like the gray hairs on his big ass head. My Daddy so smart, he wear a stethoscope and a white coat. My Daddy drive to work in a minivan only slightly bigger than his forehead, that's just how my Daddy rolls. My Daddy got swag. My Daddy dance to "Single Ladies" in the hallway. My Daddy drink a small coffee cream and sugar. My Daddy drink a whole can of Red Bull. My Daddy eat a whole pack of sour Skittles and never had a cavity. My Daddy so smart, he got a pullout couch in his office. Got a mini fridge there too. Got a cell phone, and a pager, and a email address where I can leave him messages when he's not at home. My Daddy's not home. Momma saves a plate that turns cold.

But when my Daddy does come home, he got a office in his bedroom too. Computer screen night light, Momma says she can't sleep right, but my Daddy got work, my Daddy at work, at home, in the attic, with the TV on, in the dark, from the front yard, through the windows, you can see him working, glass flickering, my house got its own forehead, glinting, sweaty, in the evening, while my Daddy at work, at home, in his own area code,

a whole other time zone.

## Hip Hop Analogies

BY TARA BETTS

*After Miguel and Erykah Badu*

If you be the needle  
I be the LP.  
If you be the buffed wall,  
I be the Krylon.  
If you be the backspin,  
I be the break.  
If you be the head nod,  
I be the bass line.  
If you be a Phillie,  
I be the razor.  
If you be microphone,  
then I be palm.  
If you be cipher,  
then I be beatbox.  
If you be hands thrown up,  
then I be yes, yes, y'all.  
If you be throwback,  
then I be remix.  
If you be footwork,  
then I be uprock.  
If you be turntable,  
then I be crossfader.  
If you be downtown C train,  
then I be southbound Red Line.  
If you be shell toes,  
then I be hoodie.  
If you be freestyle,  
then I be piece book.  
If you be Sharpie,  
then I be tag.  
  
If you be boy,  
then I be girl  
who wants to  
sync samples  
into classic.

All poems presented on pages here are copyright © by their authors and are reprinted with their permission. The work originally appeared in *Poetry*, April 2015. "to the notebook kid" copyright © 2017 by Eve L. Ewing ([www.eveewing.com](http://www.eveewing.com)) from *Electric Arches*, published by Haymarket Books ([www.haymarketbooks.org](http://www.haymarketbooks.org)). For more information on Jamila Woods, please visit [www.jamila-woods.com](http://www.jamila-woods.com). These poems and more also appear in *The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop*, ed. by Kevin Coval, Quraysh Ali Lansana and Nate Marshall (Haymarket Books, 2015).



Up Next:

*Sneak Peek*

# THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH

This May, Court will stage its final production of the season, the world premiere of *The Adventures of Augie March*, Saul Bellow's epic, coming-of-age story that bridges continents and stages of life, exuding the endearing confidence of a boy taking in a complex world.

Charles Newell, Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director, directs this play, which is adapted by David Auburn, a University of Chicago alumnus and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright. *Time* magazine listed this quintessential American classic on its All-Time 100 Novels list, stating, "With this teeming book Bellow returned a Dickensian richness to the American novel."

Of his work on this world premiere, Charles Newell shared that, "Staging an epic story such as *The Adventures of Augie March* is a thrilling challenge that has called upon the insight and diverse talents of a team of designers and collaborators that includes ambitious playwright David Auburn, artistic collective Manual Cinema, and Thusnelda Mercy and Pascal Merighi, former dancers in Pina Bauch's internationally-acclaimed dance company and founders of the dance company merighi / merci. Having such an accomplished patchwork of creatives involved is heightening the picaresque qualities of Bellow's novel in truly exciting ways."

Tickets for *The Adventures of Augie March* are on sale now and can be purchased at [CourtTheatre.org](http://CourtTheatre.org) or by calling (773) 753-4472. ■

Photo of Kai Ealy, Patrick Mulvey, Chaon Cross, and Aurora Real de Asua by Joe Mazza.



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Top right photo: Professor Kenneth Warren and Playwright Nambi E. Kelley share artistic insights with Producers' Circle members. Bottom right photo: Producers' Circle members enjoy dinner at The Chicago Club.





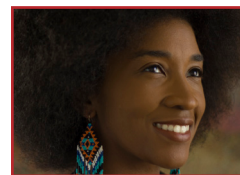
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**MELODY ANGEL** (*Lyric*) was recently named one of 2018's HOT New Faces of Chicago Theatre by Chris Jones of the *Chicago Tribune*. She made her theatre debut at Goodman Theatre in the highly-rated production of *Father Comes Home From the Wars* by Pulitzer Prize-winner Suzan-Lori Parks.

Melody's performance led her to star in the short film *Knockout* by Alley Cake Films for the 48 Hour Film Project (Chicago). This short film went on to win best film and will now be a part of the International Film Festival Filmapalooza 2019. She is also a singer/songwriter/guitarist, who has performed all over the world with her "Blues-Rock-Soul." Her second album will be available at [www.melodyangelmusic.com](http://www.melodyangelmusic.com).



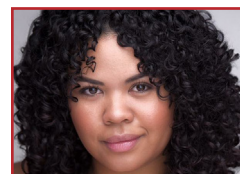
**MELANIE BREZILL** (*Lady in Yellow*) is thrilled to return to Court Theatre! Previous Court credits include *Man in the Ring* and *Caroline, or Change*. Broadway and national tour credits: *The Book of Mormon* and *Mamma Mia!* Select regional credits: *Nina Simone: Four Women* (Northlight Theatre); *Little Shop of Horrors* (Drury Lane Oakbrook Theatre); *Crowns, A*

*Christmas Carol* (Goodman Theatre). She has also appeared in numerous productions at Chicago Children's Theatre, Writers Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Marriott Lincolnshire, Porchlight Music Theatre, and Victory Gardens Theatre. TV Credits: *Empire*. Melanie would like to thank her family, friends, and Stewart Talent for their support.



**LEAH CASEY** (*Lady in Purple/Choreographer*) is a Chicago-based performer. She was most recently seen on Court Theatre's stage in Manual Cinema's *Frankenstein* as Mary Wollstonecraft, Percy Shelley, and Caroline Frankenstein. Some of her previous credits include *Romeo and Juliet* with Teatro Vista, and *STORM* with Walkabout/

Moon Fool. When not onstage, Leah can be found behind the mic narrating audiobooks, or working with the cast of *Project STELLAR*, a science fiction podcast.



**MELISSA DUPREY** (*Lady in Blue*) is an actor, stand-up comic, activist, playwright, and musician from Humboldt Park, Chicago. She has three critically acclaimed solo shows with two more in development. Her play *Brujuja* is an official selection of 16th Street's 2019 Pop Up Reading Series. She was a new talent for the 2014 ABC Diversity Showcase in

New York. She is featured in the Emmy-nominated web series *Brown Girls* in development with HBO. She has multiple credits in TV and Film. She has been seen at Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, Victory Gardens, Free Street Theater, and is honored to be making her Court Theatre debut. She is an Ensemble Member at UrbanTheater Company, and the Director of Production and Community Relations at Free Street Theater.

## PROFILES



**ANGELICA KATIE** (*Lady in Green*) After receiving her degree in Theatre Performance from Bradley University, Angelica spent her acting career in Los Angeles, New York City, and at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in Williamstown, Massachusetts. She was most recently seen off-Broadway in the premiere of *The Parlour* at Rattlestick Playwrights Theater in New York City. She is beyond thrilled to have her Chicago debut in the city where she was born and raised. Angelica is honored and ecstatic to be a part of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf* at Court Theatre! She would like to thank her teams at BMT and CTI for their hard work and dedication. She would also like to thank her friends and family for always being ride-or-die!



**PATRESE D. MCCLAIN** (*Lady in Brown*) is thrilled to return to Court where she's appeared in *Tartuffe*, *Misanthrope*, and *Spunk*. Additional credits: *Pipeline*, *Skeleton Crew* (Actors Theatre), *The Mountaintop*, *Skeleton Crew* (People's Light, Theatre Co.); *Hang* (Remy Bumppo); *Bright Half Life* (About Face); *SS! Romeo and Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Cocked* (Victory Gardens); *White Guy on the Bus* (Northlight). Regional: *Two Trains Running* (GEVA Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet*, *Pericles*, *For Colored Girls*, *No Child...* (Black Rep). Film/TV: *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago Med*, *Sirens*, *Detroit 1-8-7*, *Widows*, and *Captive State*. Recognition: Barrymore Winner (Outstanding Leading Actress), Barrymore Nomination, two Jeff nominations, and St. Louis Circle Theatre Award (Best Actress). Training: MFA Penn State, BFA Howard University. Visit [www.patresdmccclain.com](http://www.patresdmccclain.com).

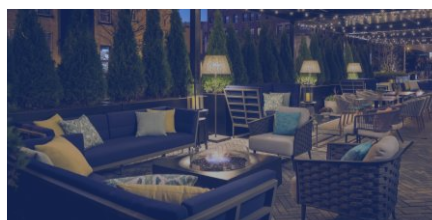
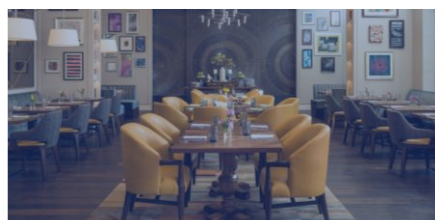
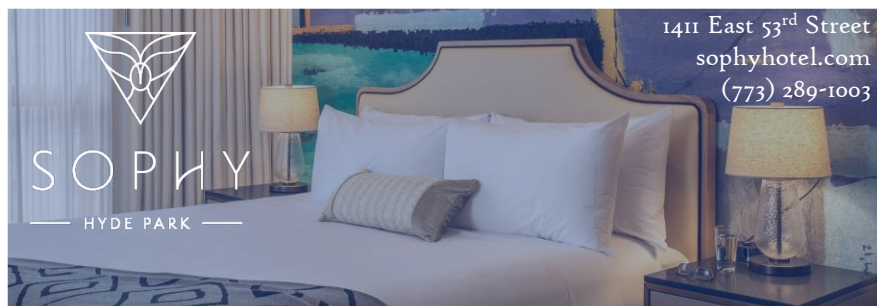


**ALEXIS J. ROSTON** (*Lady in Orange*) returns to Court after last being seen in *Spunk*. She has won Jeff, Black Excellence, and Black Theatre Alliance Awards for her performance as Billie Holiday in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* (Porchlight). Other Chicago credits: *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Paramount), *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Crowns* (Goodman); *Porgy and Bess* (Court); *Shrek* (Chicago Shakespeare); *What I Learned in Paris*, *Black Nativity* (Congo Square); and *Company*, *The Old Settler* (Writers). TV credits: *The Chi* and *Chicago PD*. Alexis is a proud ensemble member of Congo Square, as well as a member of SAG-AFTRA. She is represented by Paonessa Talent.



**ANJI WHITE** (*Lady in Red*) is extremely grateful to God to be a part of this powerful production! She extends her gratitude to Court Theatre, Ms. Seret Scott, Becca McCracken, Ron OJ, the powerhouse cast and production team! Thank you to Mom and Dad, Dana, Ms. Sydney, Mamma Linda, and Mr. Evans! Thank you to Paonessa Talent! Thank you to all of you for coming out and supporting this show! Thank you Ntozake Shange. Visit [www.anjiwhite.com](http://www.anjiwhite.com).

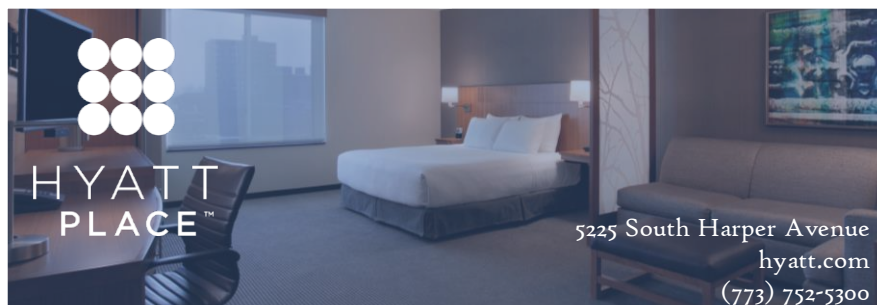
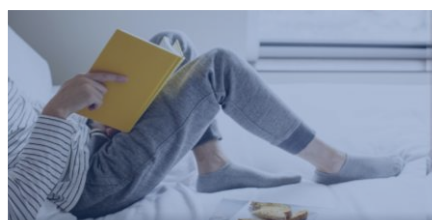
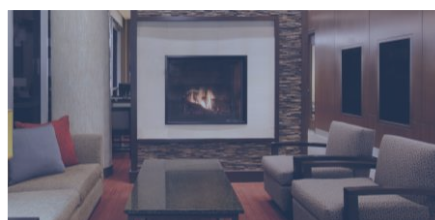




To *sleep*  
perchance  
to *dream*

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**CHANELL BELL** (*Understudy*) is delighted to be understudying at Court Theatre. Previous roles include Ernestine Crump in *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* at Raven Theatre, Petrushka in Definition Theatre's *Moon Man Walk* (BTAA Phylisia Rashaad Most Promising Actress award), Cinderella in *Cinderella the Remix* at the Merle Reskin Theatre, Lena/Francine in Generic Theater's *Clybourne Park*, and Coretta Scott King in *Satyagraha: Gandhi/King* at The Theatre School of DePaul. She holds a BFA from the illustrious Howard University and an MFA from DePaul University. She can be seen on Netflix's *Easy* this upcoming season and is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency.

**TAYLOR CANNON** (*Understudy*) is an actor born and raised on the south side of Chicago. She recently received her BFA in Acting from Northern Illinois University. She also had the opportunity to study abroad in Russia at Moscow Art Theatre. Her previous roles include Helen in *A Song For Coretta*, Pontius Pilate in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, Stage Manager in *Our Town* at NIU, and Gillian/Pupil in *Rock 'n' Roll* at The Artistic Home. TV credits include an appearance on *Chicago Fire*. She is represented by Big Mouth Talent and is very excited and honored to make her Court debut telling this wonderful story by the great Ntozake Shange.

**MYESHA-TIARA** (*Understudy*) is pleased to be working with Court Theatre for the first time. She has been seen in *Steel Magnolias* as Annelle (Theatre at the Center); *The Wedding Band* (The Artistic Home/Jeff Recommended); and *Hamlet* as Gertrude and Ophelia/Osric u/s (The Gift Theatre). Outside of Chicago, Myesha-Tiara has appeared in *The Miracle Worker* and as Mrs. Muller in *Doubt* (Round Barn Theatre). She was also featured in the film *12 Years a Slave*. Myesha-Tiara is a graduate of Northwestern State University with a BS in Theatre with a concentration in Performance and Directing. She is represented by NV Talent. Visit myesha-tiara.com.

**ANGELA PEEL** (*Understudy*) cultivated her craft in the arts at Chicago's Sherwood Conservatory of Music studying classical voice. She appeared as a Top 30 and Wild Card contestant on FOX's *American Idol* and went on to be featured in a national spot for Coca-Cola along with her self released single, "No More." Angela is an alum of *The Lion King* Broadway National Tour as Nala. Regional theatre credits include *Ragtime* (Marriott Theatre), *Little Shop of Horrors* (McCoy Rigby Performing Arts Center), *Sammy: A Musical* (Debbie Allen Dance Academy), *The Playground* (The Complex Theater), and *Masterclass* (TimeLine). Angela co-starred on NBC's *Chicago Fire* and looks forward to the releases of two feature films, *Imago* and *The Killing of Kenneth Chamberlain*.

**NTOZAKE SHANGE** (*Playwright*), an acknowledged master in the genres of drama, fiction, memoir, and poetry, has written fifteen plays, nineteen poetry collections, six novels, five children's books, three collections of essays, and a memoir called *Lost in Language & Sound*. Her theatre piece *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf* (dubbed a "choreopoem" for its highly original combination of music, poetry, and dance) was a stunning success on Broadway in 1976-77. Considered a landmark not just in American theatre, but also in theatre worldwide, it won an Obie while still off-Broadway at the Public Theater. *For Colored Girls* has been performed continuously since then, both in the United States and



## PROFILES

abroad, has remained in print since its publication in 1974, and was made into a movie by Tyler Perry in 2010.

**SERET SCOTT** (*Director*) directed *Spunk*, *Native Son*, and *Electra* at Court Theatre. Directing credits: Old Globe Theatre (San Diego—Associate Artist), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Denver Center Theatre Company, New Victory Theater, Pan Asian Rep, and Second Stage Theater (Off-Broadway), Philadelphia Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company and Studio Theatre (DC), American Conservatory Theater (San Francisco), South Coast Repertory and L.A. Theatre Works (CA), Long Wharf Theatre and Yale Repertory Theatre (New Haven), Two River Theater Company (NJ), Hartford Stage (CT), Indiana Repertory Theatre, Pan Asian Repertory Theatre and National Black Theatre (New York City), Alliance Theatre (Atlanta), Westport Country Playhouse (NY), Actors Theatre of Louisville, Virginia Stage Company, New Mexico Repertory, and Playmakers Repertory Company (NC). She is a member of the executive board of the Stage Directors and Choreographer's Society and a recipient of a TCG/PEW Residency Grant (Long Wharf Theatre) and Drama Desk Award in acting (*My Sister, My Sister*). Ms. Scott's play *Second Line* was produced by Passage Theatre (NJ) and Tribute Productions (DC).

**COURTNEY O'NEILL** (*Scenic Designer*) designed *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Harvey*, and *Waiting for Godot* at Court Theatre. Recent designs include *A Doll's House, Part 2* (Steppenwolf Theatre); *A Number* (Writers Theatre); *Miss Bennett: Christmas at Pemberley* (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)* (Goodman Theatre). Chicago: Chicago Shakespeare Theater, The Gift Theatre, The Hypocrites, Lookingglass Theatre, Northlight Theatre. Regional: Alliance Theatre, Arena Stage, Children's Theatre Company, Kansas City Repertory, Marin Theatre Company, Round House Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Virginia Stage Company. She's a recipient of the Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award, a Jeff Award, as well as numerous nominations. She holds an MFA from Northwestern, a BFA from DePaul University, and currently teaches at both institutions. Visit [courtneyoneill.com](http://courtneyoneill.com).

**SAMANTHA C. JONES** (*Costume Designer*) is grateful to return to Court for this production that means so much to so many. She previously designed here for *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *The Belle of Amherst*. Previous credits include Victory Gardens (*Rightlynd*, *Breach*, *Native Gardens*, *Samsara*, *The Gospel of Lovingkindness*), Steppenwolf Theatre (*The Roommate*, *Monster*), Northlight Theatre (*Into the Breach*, *Skeleton Crew*), Lookingglass Theatre Company (*Thaddeus and Slocum*), Chicago Children's Theatre (*The One Hundred Dresses*), American Blues Theatre (*The Buddy Holly Story*), TimeLine Theatre Company (*A Shayna Maidel*, *Boy*, *Inana*), and others. Regionally, she has worked with The Alley, Seattle Children's Theatre, First Stage Theatre, Skylight Music Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Peninsula Players Theatre, and others. Upcoming productions include: *Big River* (First Stage Theatre), and *Lottery Day* (Goodman Theatre). Visit [samanthacjones.com](http://samanthacjones.com).

**PAUL TOBEN** (*Lighting Designer*) Chicago: *Electra* (Court Theatre); *Macbeth* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Cry it Out*, *The Book of Will*, *Daddy Long Legs* (Northlight);

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*The Mystery of Love and Sex, Witch* (Writers); *The Firebirds Take the Field* (Rivendell). Broadway: *The Story of My Life*. Off-Broadway: *The Judy Show* (DR2), *Saturn Nights* (Incubator Arts Project), *Electra in a One Piece* and *The Realm* (The Wild Project). Regional: *The Wolves* (Studio Theatre); *Noises Off* (Guthrie); *Angels in America*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *4000 Miles*, *Evocation to Visible Appearance*, *Airness*, *Wondrous Strange*, *The Grown-Up*, and *The Roommate* (Actors Theatre); *Futurity* (Walker Arts Center); *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* (Portland Center Stage); *NSFW* (Round House); *The Book of Will* (Denver Center Theatre); *Silent Sky*, *Triangle*, *Upright Grand* (TheatreWorks); *Fly by Night*, *Medea*, (Dallas Theater Center); *The Who and The What* (Kansas City Rep).

**ANDRE PLUESS** (*Sound Designer*) previously worked at Court on *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, *The Belle of Amherst*, *The Hard Problem*, *Electra*, *Man in the Ring*, *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, *Agamemnon*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *An Iliad*, and more. Broadway: *Metamorphoses*, *I Am My Own Wife*, *33 Variations*, and *The Clean House* (Lincoln Center). Regional: *Cymbeline* (Shakespeare Theatre D.C.); *Legacy of Light* (Arena Stage); *Ghostwritten* (Goodman); *Palomino* (Center Theatre Group); *Equivocation* (Seattle Repertory); *Merchant of Venice* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Marcus* (American Conservatory Theatre); *Macbeth and Much Ado About Nothing* (California Shakespeare Festival). Pluess is an Artistic Associate at Lookingglass Theatre and the California Shakespeare Festival, resident designer at Victory Gardens, and teaches sound design at Northwestern University.



The Promontory offers a complimentary wine pairing with each entrée purchased by Court Theatre patrons with same day ticket stub.

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**GABRIELLE RANDLE** (*Production Dramaturg*) is a PhD student, director, and dramaturg who is passionate about social justice, storytelling, and the power of performance to change the world. She has a dual BA degree in Drama and Sociology from Stanford University and an MA degree in Performance as Public Practice from The University of Texas at Austin. She has directed, devised, dramaturged, and produced professionally across the United States in Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Austin, and New York City (off-Broadway) and internationally on three continents. In Chicago, she has worked with Sideshow Theatre Company (Artistic Associate), Chicago Dramatists, Victory Gardens Theater, Court Theatre, and Steppenwolf Theatre. She is a third year PhD Candidate at Northwestern in their Interdisciplinary PhD program in Theatre and Drama.

**SYDNEY CHATMAN** (*Associate Director*) is a director, educator, mentor, producer, writer, and founding director of The Tofu Chitlin' Circuit. Ms. Chatman is an African-American Arts Alliance Award and 3Arts Make a Wave winner. Her credits include Lincoln Centers Director's Lab, Goodman, TimeLine, Court, Congo Square, and eta Creative Arts. Rooted in her community, she bridges the divide between the audience and the stage through creative collaborations with the Adler Planetarium, Hyde Park Jazz Festival/Back Alley Jazz, The Reva and David Logan Center, Court Theatre, and Victory Gardens Theatre. She has been a theatre teacher for sixteen years at the University of Chicago Charter School, where she writes/directs countless plays rooted in social justice and empowerment. Ms. Chatman is a champion for new work that seeks to support, challenge, empower, and make space for Black women and girls. She is the recipient of the 2019 Michael Maggio Directing Fellowship at Goodman Theatre.

**ERIN ALBRECHT** (*Production Stage Manager*) Previously at Court: *Photograph 51*; *Frankenstein*; *Radio Golf*; *The Originalist*; *All My Sons*; *The Belle of Amherst*; *Five Guys Named Moe*; *Harvey*; *Blues for an Alabama Sky*; *Man in the Ring*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; *Long Day's Journey Into Night*; *Agamemnon*; *The Good Book*; and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Off-Broadway: The Pearl Theatre, New York Classical Theatre, Friendly Fire, and West Side Theatre. Regional Theatre: American Players Theatre, Arena Stage, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, Blue Man Group, The Utah Shakespeare Festival, and others. Erin holds a Bachelor of Music from The Catholic University of America and an MFA in Stage Management from Virginia Tech. She is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association. Erin is an adjunct Instructor of Stage Management at The Theatre School at DePaul University.

**KELLY MONTGOMERY** (*Stage Manager*) Chicago and regional credits include work with Goodman Theatre, Theatre for a New Audience, Paramount Theatre, Court Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Maine State Music Theatre, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company and Greenhouse Theatre Center, among others. Montgomery also served as the production stage manager at Transcendence Theatre Company in Sonoma, CA for three seasons. She holds an MFA in stage management from the Yale School of Drama.

**GABRIELLA WELSH** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) Previous Court Theatre credits include *Frankenstein*, *Radio Golf*, *The Belle of Amherst*, *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Blues for An Alabama Sky*, *Electra*, and *Man in the Ring*. Gabriella has worked at various



# PROFILES

theaters around Chicago as well as Actors Theatre of Louisville in Kentucky. Gabriella is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.



**CHARLES NEWELL** (*Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director*) has been Artistic Director of Court Theatre since 1994, where he has directed over 50 productions. Recent Court highlights include *All My Sons*; *The Hard Problem*; *Man in the Ring*; and *Satchmo at the Waldorf*. Charlie has also directed at Goodman, Guthrie Theater, Arena Stage, John Houseman's The Acting Company, Lyric Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, 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, a program officer at the McCormick Foundation, and a deputy arts commissioner at the City of Chicago. He has served on the board of Theatre Communications Group, National Arts Strategies, Chicago Dancemakers Forum, Restore Justice Illinois, Blair Thomas and Company, Next Theatre, and Forefront Illinois.



**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.



**BECCA MCCRACKEN** (*Casting Director*) is insanely proud of the Court Theatre casts this season. Additional casting credits include American Blues, Asolo Rep, Florida Studio, Infusion, Indiana Festival, Indiana Rep, Lyric Opera, Madison Rep, Milwaukee Rep, New Theatre, Paramount, Provision, Silk Road Rising, Syracuse Stage, Writers, *Djembe!*

*The Show*, *Spamilton*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Old Jews Telling Jokes*, *Evil Dead: The Musical*, *Working*, *Dee Snyder's Rock & Roll Christmas*, and *Mozart the Rock Opera*. National Tours: *How To Train Your Dragon*, *Peter Pan*, and *Sister Act*. She is an Artios Award winner for her casting of the Lyric Opera of Chicago's *Carousel*. Her casting career also spans into television, film, and commercial.



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