

THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS

CONCEIVED AND ADAPTED BY

LEE BREUER

MUSIC COMPOSED BY

BOB TELSON

DIRECTED BY

MARK J.P. HOOD AND
CHARLES NEWELL

WITH ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

TARON PATTON

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CHICAGO

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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,

Welcome to the final production of our 2022/23 season: *The Gospel at Colonus*. This is a play I have held in my heart for almost forty years. It is impossible to express the depth of my gratitude that you have come to witness it.

In 1983, I saw the original production of *The Gospel at Colonus* at the newly opened Brooklyn Academy of Music. Experiencing how the staging of an ancient Greek text could lift up and transform a contemporary audience instantly changed me: from that moment, I was launched on my life's calling as a director of classic theatre.

My theatrical career led me to Court and a close relationship with Nick Rudall, Court's Founding Artistic Director and a Classics professor at the University of Chicago. Decades later, towards the end of Nick's life, I found myself at his bedside, where, in a rush of creative energy, he shared his ideas for presenting *The Gospel at Colonus* to a modern audience. It was his final gift to me before he passed away.

Shortly thereafter, Angel Ysaguirre joined Court Theatre as Executive Director. When he asked me what project I most wanted to do, the answer was self-evident. He then challenged me to think more ambitiously, leading to Court's commitment to produce a three-play cycle of Sophocles texts, *The Oedipus Trilogy*. We fulfill the second installment of that vision with this production.

Enter Mark J.P. Hood. As directors of *The Gospel at Colonus*, Mark and I share many things: we are both preachers' sons; we are both disciples of creative pursuits; and we both love collaboration. An actor and musician himself, Mark comes from a gospel background, and possesses a profound and encyclopedic understanding of the music's history and power. His insights and generosity of spirit have taken this production to heights I could have only imagined. And, as you'll see in our conversation in the pages that follow, we both believe in the spiritually transcendent power of theatre. Thank you, Mark.

The Gospel at Colonus has been the journey of a lifetime. It is my honor to share this production with you.

With gratitude,

Charles Newell

Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director



CHARLES NEWELL
Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director

ANGEL YSAGUIRRE
Executive Director

MAY 12 - JUNE 11, 2023

THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS

DIRECTED BY

MARK J.P. HOOD AND
CHARLES NEWELL

MUSIC DIRECTION BY

MARK J.P. HOOD

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

TARON PATTON

CONCEIVED & ADAPTED BY

LEE BREUER

MUSIC COMPOSED BY

BOB TELSON

ORIGINAL LYRICS BY

LEE BREUER

ADAPTED LYRICS BY

LEE BREUER AND
BOB TELSON

ASSOCIATE MUSIC DIRECTOR

MAHMOUD KHAN

Scenic Design by John Culbert U.S.A.

Costume Design by Raquel Adorno U.S.A.

Lighting Design by Keith Parham U.S.A.

Sound Design by Sarah Ramos

Movement Design by Cristin Carole

Wenke (Coco) Huang,

Production Dramaturg

Casting by Becca McCracken C.S.A.

Kate Ocker,* Production Stage Manager

Natalie Cohen,* Asst. Stage Manager

Based on an adaptation of Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus* in the version by Robert Fitzgerald and incorporating passages from both Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* in the versions by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, which are published as *The Oedipus Cycle of Sophocles*, a Harvest/HBJ Book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Please note: This production contains the use of water-based haze; actors will be using the aisles.

Presented without intermission.

The Gospel at Colonus
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**GUSTAVO BAMBERGER AND
MARTHA VAN HAITSMA**

**DAVID J. AND
MARILYN FATT VITALE**

This project is supported
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The text of *The Gospel at Colonus* is available through Theater Communications Group, NYC, and the original cast recording is released on the Elektra/Nonesuch label.

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

CAST

Kelvin Roston Jr.* *Oedipus*
Ariel Williams* *Antigone*
Timothy Edward Kane* *Creon*
Ariana Burks *Ismene*
Mark Spates Smith* *Theseus*
Kai A. Ealy* *Polyneices*
Shari Addison* *Choragos / Soloist*
Eric A. Lewis* *Choragos*
Juwon Tyrel Perry *The Friend / Chorus*
Jessica Brooke Seals* *Evangelist / Chorus*
Jerica Exum* *Chorus*
Shantina Lynet* *Chorus*
Isaac Ray *Chorus*
Eva Ruwé *Chorus*
Cherise Thomas* *Chorus*

Understudies: Daryn Alexis (*Ismene / Chorus*), Wesly Anthony Clergé (*Polyneices / Chorus*), Jason Huysman (*Creon*), Miciah Lathan (*Evangelist / Chorus*), Kristen-Ilycia Lowe (*Chorus*)

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

MUSICIANS

Mahmoud Khan *Associate Music Director / Conductor / Keyboard / Organist*
Joshua Griffin *Bass Guitar / Music Programmer / Playback Engineer*
Amr Fahmy *Keyboard*
Oscar Brown, Jr. *Lead Guitar*
Leonard Maddox Jr. *Drums*

Produced on Broadway, 1988 by Dodger Productions, Liza Lorwin, Louis Busch Hager, Playhouse Square Center and Fifth Avenue Productions; Executive Producers Michael David, Edward Strong and Sherman Warner. Originally Produced by the Brooklyn Academy of Music Next Wave Festival, Harvey Lichtenstein, Executive Producer, Joseph V. Melillo, Producer, in association with Liza Lorwin and Walker Art Center. Subsequent productions since 1997, produced by Sharon Levy, Dovetail Productions.

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.

This project is partially supported by a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events. Court Theatre acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Cover photo of Kelvin Roston Jr. by Joe Mazza.



PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Director	Hailey Brunson
Oedipus Trilogy Dramaturg.....	Gabrielle Randle-Bent
Casting Associate	Jennifer Glasse
Movement Design Assistants	Faunta Luckett, Charles McGregory
Scenic Design Assistant	Lauren Nichols
Charge Scenic Artist.....	Samantha Bodnar U.S.A.
Scenic Artist.....	Julie Ruscitti U.S.A.
Carpenters.....	Daniel Carraher, Micah Hofferth, Nicholas Svoboda
Properties Assistant.....	Persephone Lawrence-Wescott
Assistant Costume Designer	Jeanette Rodriguez
Costume Shop Assistant	Jessica Donaldson
Stitcher	Eric Guy
Wardrobe Crew	Hailey Springer
Assistant Lighting Designer.....	Trey Brazeal
Assistant Lighting Supervisor	Daniel Moses
Electricians	Sibyl Ashcraft-Holt, Emily Brown, Aljoja Hall, Nik Hunder, Kenneth Martin, Nell Morrissey, Ish Peterson
A2/Deck Audio	Ian C. Weber
Audio Assistant.....	Christine Burquest
Floor Manager	Kate Nagorski
COVID Safety Manager.....	Emily Dykstra

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



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SYNOPSIS

The Gospel at Colonus is Lee Breuer and Bob Telson's 1983 adaptation of Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus*, written at the end of the fifth century BCE. It is a symbiotic world blending ancient Greece with Black spiritual practice.

After years of exile away from Thebes, the legendary city he once ruled, the blind Oedipus arrives at Colonus, a town outside of Athens. Pursued by adversaries, Oedipus promises Theseus, king of Athens, that if this sacred spot can be his resting place, he will posthumously protect the city. Theseus agrees. With the help of Theseus and his daughters, Antigone and Ismene, Oedipus thwarts King Creon, ruler of Thebes, and Polyneices, Oedipus's own son. At the end of a life steeped in murder and incest, Oedipus eventually finds rest and redemption. Through his death, he becomes divine and showers blessings upon Colonus and those of us gathered in communion.

—Wenke (Coco) Huang,
Production Dramaturg

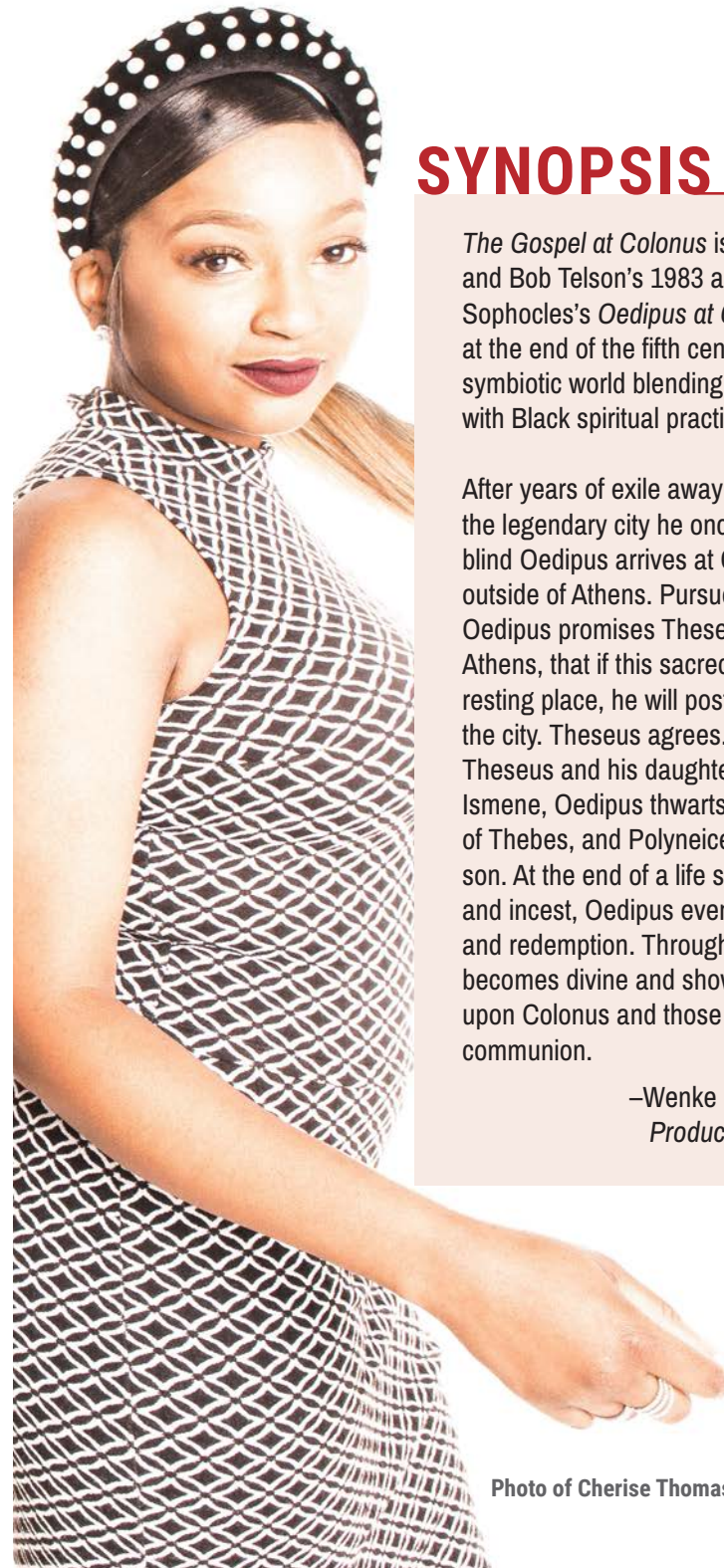


Photo of Cherise Thomas by Joe Mazza.

IN CONVERSATION:

Directors Mark J.P. Hood and Charles Newell

Associate Director of Marketing Camille Oswald interviewed Directors Mark J.P. Hood and Charles Newell to discuss the myth and the music of *The Gospel at Colonus*. Drawing parallels between spirituality and performance, their conversation was a deep dive into the history of gospel, the evolution of the sound, and the personal journey to redemption.

Can you share your history with this production?

Mark: I'll never forget when I got that first email in 2018 about doing this project. We spoke on the phone for an hour and, from that first conversation, we were basically sure we were going to work with each other; we just somehow knew. As a Chicago native who now resides in Los Angeles, I'm glad to be doing this show here, because Chicago is so rich in gospel culture. The father of gospel music, Thomas Dorsey—although he isn't from Chicago, he migrated to Chicago—brought Southern blues and jazz, and created something here that people hadn't been messing with! He started creating stuff with Mahalia Jackson, all of these people here in Chicago. And we've got such a rich history, even now in 2023—people like Jonathan McReynolds, Donald Lawrence, VaShawn Mitchell, Ricky Dillard & New G, Percy and Jeral Gray. This show deserves to be done in Chicago because of the history that we have with gospel music.

Charlie: I always knew that I wanted to stage *Gospel*, so the next step was finding a music collaborator who could make it happen. You, Mark, were always this mythological figure that everyone wanted to work with and, after that first conversation, I thought, "Man, would this guy ever do this with me?" You just blew me away. You knew the sound, and what you wanted, so precisely and beautifully. It was something I could have never imagined.

How has the sound of gospel music changed since this production's inception, and what is the role of modern gospel today?

Mark: The history of gospel music is evolution and, even though gospel has changed, the message is still the same. Now, gospel music not only just shares the Gospel—meaning literally the good news—but it's also a form of inspiration and uplifting. You will leave this show uplifted. There are no "gospel songs" in the show, other than "Lift Him Up," where they sing "cry hallelujah," but the way I've envisioned the show, I want to pay tribute to all generations of gospel music. I want some things to sound like they're from Albertina Walker and The Caravans, which was from the 1950s and 1960s, and then some things to sound like Donald Lawrence and Company in 2023. Gospel music is that expansive. When I think about the music in the original production, and where gospel music started and where we are now, it has only gone up.

continued



Photo by Joe Mazza, l-r:
TaRon Patton, Associate Director
Charles Newell, Director
Mark J.P. Hood, Director and Music Director
Mahmoud Khan, Associate Music Director



Photo by Joe Mazza.

Charlie: That's so inspiring because doing classic texts, the question we ask ourselves most is, "Why now? What's it got to say about now?" So when you talk about that evolution of the sound, "Lift Him Up" and the refrain "cry hallelujah"—what a powerful way of answering that question of "Why now?" Because of where gospel music itself is going. Gospel honors its history, but at the same time, it meets the present moment and, as you say, continues to evolve; that's what we want to do as a classic theatre. That's why we want to do this production now.

In the Court Theatre space, we have a kind of spiritual exchange between the audience and artists. Thanks to your understanding about the specific sound of gospel in an intimate space, we see the intersection between the Sophocles story and how the *Gospel* score is fueling that story. If you haven't ever seen it before, you're gonna see one heck of a production in the theatre. We're going to blow the roof off.

Mark: Absolutely. Any song in the show has the potential to be a highlight, but when we get to "cry hallelujah," folks are going to be crying hallelujah!

The passing of knowledge—and in Oedipus's case, the passing of curses—from generation to generation is a prominent theme in this production. What does this production teach us about legacy and forgiveness?

Charlie: *The Gospel at Colonus*, or Sophocles's play *Oedipus at Colonus*—the play that *Gospel* is based on—is this journey of the most accursed man: "I am Oedipus...the accursed" is the line in the text. That legacy of a family curse, that we all have our own versions of, is so hard to change. Here Sophocles is writing this play towards the very end of his life, saying that change is possible. Release from the curse, finding a resting place to be our most pure, authentic, beautiful selves is possible. And the fact that the most accursed person can find that? This is a Greek play that *isn't* a tragedy.

Mark: I'm all about legacy. I love my parents, I love my family. And I'm a firm believer that most families—most people—have things that have been passed down, good and bad. But I do believe that we can find a resting place, that we can find solace, and that we

can break some of those patterns. Truly, if Oedipus can find it and "cry hallelujah," surely we can find it in our own lives. Oedipus has been on this journey to get to Colonus, and us waking up every day and living life—that's our journey. That's our walk.

Charlie: In my case, that family legacy is four generations of Presbyterian ministers. To put it another way: I'm a Preacher's Kid, a PK.

Mark: A PK!

Charlie: I'm not a Presbyterian minister myself, but there is a reason why I'm doing this kind of work. I don't know if you have a reflection about that?

Mark: I've got no desire to be a minister in that way, either, but this *is* ministry, what we're doing. That's the thing that people get confused by: if you don't know this show, you just think you're coming to a gospel concert, and it's gonna be about Jesus, it's gonna be about God. It's not, but you will feel the spirit in the same way that you'd feel if you went to church on Sunday or however you celebrate or worship. That spirit is still there in our show.

Charlie: Following the spirit of this piece, finding each other and collaborating, and creating this together—this journey feels like we've been endowed with grace. And this is where I do want to honor Nick Rudall, founding Artistic Director of Court Theatre. He passed in 2018 and, like people on that journey between life and death—like Oedipus in this story, like Sophocles when he wrote this play—Nick had this rush of creative energy in the last hours of his life, in which he explained the story to me in minute detail. So Nick's spirit is in the room all the time with us. Honor to him.

Describe this production in three words.

Mark: Show of possibilities. It doesn't matter who you worship to, or if you worship at all—it's all possible here.

Charlie: I'm just going to go right to the lyrics: lift you up.

Mark: Hallelujah. ■



Photograph of Mark Spates Smith by Joe Mazza.

Ecstatic AND THE *Pentecostal* WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

by Emily D. Crews

The Gospel at Colonus opens with a classic American art form: the sermon. Theseus, transformed from Sophocles's ideal Athenian king to a Black Pentecostal pastor, delivers a damning account of the sins of now-disgraced Oedipus: he murdered his father, married his mother, and brought into the world children of incestuous parentage. Theseus's sermon is framed by all the elements of a conventional Pentecostal service, from its stirring music to its rich language of hope and redemption.

Like the central figures of *Gospel*, Black Pentecostals have been preaching, dancing, singing, and sinning since Pentecostalism was conceived in the early 1900s. Indeed, the rich religious life-worlds of African Americans are at the heart of the denomination. It was William J. Seymour, an African preacher and the son of formerly enslaved parents, and Lucy Farrow, a formerly enslaved woman and the niece of Frederick Douglass, who were largely responsible for fanning the flames of Pentecostalism. Around 1905, Seymour and Farrow had been students of Charles Fox Parham, a white traveling evangelist who taught that people must break with the corrupt ways of the world in order to draw close to God and renew Christianity. Parham promised, drawing on the New Testament Book of Acts, that those who followed him would receive what he called "baptism in the Spirit," an experience of contact with the Holy Spirit that produced overwhelming emotion and could result in radical gifts like the speaking of strange tongues (or *glossolalia*) and the power of divine healing.

Seymour and Farrow were early and enthusiastic converts of Parham, in spite of his segregationist politics. In 1905, Seymour traveled to Los Angeles to become a pastor at a small Holiness church. When the position fell through, he founded a new congregation and invited Farrow, who was said to be rich in gifts of the spirit, to join him. The church grew rapidly, and after only a few months it was forced to expand into a larger space—an old building that had once been a boarding house and a stable—on Azusa Street. While its members were primarily poor or working-class African Americans, there were nonetheless people of "all ages, sex, colors, nationalities and previous conditions of servitude" in attendance at what came to be called the Azusa Street Revival. Standing amongst the fallen lumber and crumbled

continued

“In Chicago, Black Pentecostal churches became a fixture of the city’s religious landscape, swelling with African Americans who had come to the city as part of the Great Migration.”

plaster that littered the mission’s dirt floor, Seymour, Farrow, and hundreds (some even say thousands) of worshippers clapped, sang, and stomped themselves into a frenzy three times a day, seven days a week. Reports from revivalists proclaimed that the Holy Spirit had descended amongst them, giving them the power to speak in foreign tongues and heal broken bodies. By the summer of 1906, the services reportedly became so crowded that people were spilling out of the building and into the street. Those unable to gain entrance watched through windows in the hope that they might “catch the spirit,” or at least a story worth telling (or printing).

At the same time that the participants at the Azusa Street Revival were speaking in tongues and shouting their songs into the Los Angeles night, other Pentecostal missionaries were seeding their own revivals across the country and around the world. In Chicago, Black Pentecostal churches became a fixture of the city’s religious landscape, swelling with African Americans who had come to the city as part of the Great Migration. By 1919, there were over a hundred Pentecostal or Holiness storefront churches. More established churches like All Nations Pentecostal Church, led by Pastor Lucy Smith and a host of female “saints,” held a wildly popular Wednesday night healing service and hosted a radio broadcast from the 1920s through the 1940s, with thousands of primarily Black Chicagoans in attendance. In 1955, Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ presided over the funeral of Emmett Till, a Chicago child murdered by white supremacists while visiting his family in Mississippi. The church hosted some one hundred thousand mourners that September and is now understood to be a key site in the birth of the American Civil Rights Movement.

Many of Chicago’s Black Pentecostal churches embraced the ecstatic forms of worship popularized by Seymour, Farrow, and later revivalists, including exuberant dancing, shout bands, emphatic breath (also known as “whooping”), healing through the laying on of hands, and speaking in tongues. They also crafted their own forms or iterations of such practices, as the city’s various urban cultures shaped and were shaped by the denomination. First Church of Deliverance, whose choir reached national renown, was the first church to embrace the now-customary sound of the Hammond Organ, informing Black religious soundscapes for decades to come. The influence of the Hammond Organ can still be heard in Pentecostal churches today, and in the gospel music that tells Oedipus’s story in *Gospel*.

Pentecostalism is fundamentally about experience—the embodied, highly emotional experience of the Holy Spirit that goes beyond rational reflection or textual study (though these, too, are significant). It is, at its heart, about the senses—practitioners’ sensory experiences of God and the world through what their bodies can feel and know. Through *The Gospel at Colonus*, Court Theatre offers guests a window into that experience. It is a classic tale of sin, disgrace, and redemption told with and through a uniquely American idiom. There are few experiences like it. ■


Emily D. Crews is the Assistant Director of the Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion at the University of Chicago. Her research and teaching investigate the ways that women’s religious lives are bound up with issues of race, gender, and reproduction. Her current research project focuses on the significance of alternative reproductive health practices to the construction of certain forms of white femininity in evangelical Christian communities in the American South. Dr. Crews is the co-editor of *Remembering Jonathan Z. Smith: A Career and Its Consequence* (with Russell McCutcheon, 2020) and *African Diaspora Religions in 5 Minutes* (with Curtis J. Evans, forthcoming 2023).

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Ariel Williams who will portray
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SHARI ADDISON (*Choragos, Soloist*) has had a tremendous career that has spanned many genres over five decades, but she especially loves gospel. She was first runner-up on BET's *Sunday Best*, hosted by Kirk Franklin, and appeared on BET's *Celebration of Gospel*, hosted by Steve Harvey. Shari performed at Carnegie Hall for the 1000th performance of *The Gospel at Colonus*, as well as performing on the world tour. A Stellar Award-winning gospel artist and Jeff Award-winning actress, Shari is thrilled to celebrate her friends, Lee Breuer and Bob Telson, and the rebirth of their masterpiece here at Court Theatre.



ARIANA BURKS (*Ismene*) is so blessed to be a part of her first show at Court Theatre! Theatre credits include *Children of Eden* (Cadillac Palace); *Spring Awakening* (Porchlight); *Urinetown* (BoHo Theatre); *The Nutcracker* (The House Theatre); *Hairspray* (Paramount Theatre); *Wonderland: Alice's Rock & Roll Adventure* (Chicago Children's Theatre); *The Compass, Dance Nation* (Steppenwolf); *Trevor: The Musical*, *Next to Normal* (Writers); *Life After, A Christmas Carol* (Goodman). Television/film credits include *Beats*, *South Side*, *Chicago Med*, *Chicago Fire*, *The Jr. Cuisine Cooking Show* (2011 Emmy Award nomination), and *PrankStars*. @arianaburks.



KAI A. EALY (*Polynices*) is honored to return to Court Theatre. His performance credits include *Toni Stone* (Goodman); *Kill Move Paradise* and *Cardboard Piano* (TimeLine); *The Island*, *Oedipus Rex*, and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright David Auburn's *The Adventures of Augie March* (Court); *A Raisin in the Sun* (UCCS 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*. He is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency, Chicago, and WEG Talent, New York. @kaiealy.



JERICA EXUM (*Chorus; u/s Antigone*) is making her Court Theatre debut. Jerica was last seen as Middle Allie in the world premiere of *The Notebook* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Other select Chicago credits include: *Cinderella*, *Newsies* (Paramount); *Women of Soul* (Mercury Theater). National tour: Nurse Norma (u/s Becky) in *Waitress*. Regional: Ivoryton Playhouse, Little Theatre on the Square, and Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse. International: Norwegian Cruise Line, Hong Kong Disneyland, and Universal Studios Japan. Represented by DDO Artists Agency.



TIMOTHY EDWARD KANE (*Creon*) Court credits: *An Iliad*; *The Tragedy of Othello*, *The Moor of Venice*; *Oedipus Rex*; *All My Sons*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; *The Wild Duck*; *Titus Andronicus*; *Uncle Vanya*; *Hamlet*; and others. Chicago credits include Writers, Northlight, TimeLine, Goodman, Steppenwolf,

PROFILES

and Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Regional credits: Mark Taper Forum, Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, Peninsula Players, and the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. TV: *Chicago P.D.*, *Chicago Fire*, and *Empire*. Awards: Jeff Award, AfterDark, Chicago Magazine. Mr. Kane is married to actress Kate Fry with whom he has two sons; he's an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Loyola University Chicago.



ERIC A. LEWIS (*Choragos; u/s Oedipus*) was last seen in Court's production of *Five Guys Named Moe*. National tour: *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Off-Broadway: *Spamilton*. Other credits include: Jimmy Early in *Dreamgirls* at Porchlight Music Theatre, which earned him a Jeff Award; *Parade* (BoHo Theatre); *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *All Shook Up* (Fireside Theatre); *Ragtime*, *Sister Act* (Marriott). Eric would like to thank God and his family for their continued love and support.



SHANTINA LYNET' (*Chorus*) is a singer, songwriter, performer, arranger, actress, musical director, vocal coach, and public speaking coach. These are just a few roles to describe Miss Shantina Lynet' Lowe's abilities. She has performed with Lizzo, Kanye West, and Carrie Underwood, and has opened for artists like Jeremih and Taylor Bennett. Shantina hopes to inspire creatives everywhere to confidently share their art and leave a unique stamp on the world.



JUWON TYREL PERRY (*The Friend, Chorus; u/s Theseus*) is a genre-bending, multidisciplinary artist who hails from Osceola, Arkansas. Juwon has had the opportunity to perform with North Carolina Theatre, Court Theatre, Paramount Theatre, Geva Theatre Center, Marriott, Chicago Shakespeare, and many more. Juwon owes his love of music to his late father, Joe Charles Perry Jr., who himself was a musician whose musical taste knew no genre. Love galore to his family and guardian angels; "Ya'll are the music in me!" IG: @juwontyrelperry; BFA: Columbia College Chicago. Additional Training: Black Box Acting Academy.



ISAAC RAY (*Chorus*) is an artist from Chicago. He prides himself on his work ethic, passion, precision to detail, and ability to adapt to a variety of music genres. He has a background in classical music and vocal techniques, and is an alumnus of the Chicago High School for the Arts. Isaac is currently a full-time professional artist, dancer, actor, vocal director, and recording session singer. His theatre credits include: *A New Attitude: In Tribute To Patti LaBelle* and *Urban Love Story* (Black Ensemble Theater).



KELVIN ROSTON JR. (*Oedipus*) is excited to be back at Court! Court credits: *Oedipus Rex* (Oedipus), *King Hedley II* (King Hedley), *Five Guys Named Moe* (Four-Eyed Moe), and many others. Recent credits include: *Clue* (Mercury Theater); *The Color Purple* (MSMT); *The Wiz* (Fulton Theatre). Chicagoland: Congo Square, Paramount, Marriott, Goodman, ITC, eta, Writers, Black

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Ensemble, TimeLine, Northlight, Steppenwolf. International: Orb (Tokyo, Japan); Festival Hall (Osaka, Japan). Television: *Chicago Med*, *Chicago P.D.*, *South Side*. Film: *Get a Job*, *Princess Cyd*, *Breathing Room*. Awards: Jeff Award, three BTAA Awards, two Black Excellence Awards, NAMI Award. AEA, Paonessa Talent.



EVA RUWÉ (*Chorus*) is multi-talented coloratura soprano with a five-octave vocal range, specializing in jazz, gospel, and R&B. Theatre credits: *Little Shop of Horrors* (Theatre at the Center). Eva has toured the country as a comedian and recording artist, is a Stellar Award nominee, and hit the Top 10 Billboard Jazz

Charts. Her recent projects include her album, *Dark Love*. Spring of 2023 marks her first television appearance and Court Theatre debut. You can follow her on Instagram at @evaruwe.



JESSICA BROOKE SEALS (*Evangelist, Chorus*) is an actress and singer from Chicago who has been performing since the age of six. A few of Jessica's theatrical credits include: *The Other Cinderella* (Black Ensemble Theater); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Paramount); *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and *Women of Soul*

(Mercury Theater). Her latest renderings as Associate Hair/Wig Designer were showcased in TimeLine Theatre's *Boulevard of Bold Dreams*. Jessica is ecstatic to be returning to the stage and sends a huge thanks to her family and the VB's for their support. You can keep up with Jessica on Instagram: @jessicabrooke90.



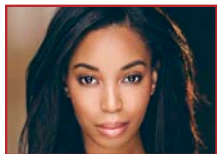
MARK SPATES SMITH (*Theseus*) is honored to be back at Court Theatre. His last production at Court was 2019's *Oedipus Rex*, in which he played the Chorus Leader. Assorted theatre credits include *How Long Will I Cry?* (Steppenwolf); Katori Hall's *Hoodoo Love* (Collective Theatre); *The Lake Effect* (Silk

Road Rising); *Dreamgirls*, *The Color Purple* (Theater 47); and *The Mountaintop* (Court Theatre). Television credits include *The 4400*, *Black Lightning*, *The Chi*, *Chicago P.D.*, *Empire*, and *Shining Girls*.



CHERISE THOMAS (*Vocal Supervisor, Chorus; u/s Choragos, u/s Soloist*) Broadway: *Waitress*. Tour: *Disenchanted! A New Musical Comedy*. Regional: *Hair*, *Dreamgirls*, *A New Attitude: In Tribute to Patti LaBelle*. TV: *The Chi*, *Empire*. Film: *Plow*, *The Talented Tenth*. Music available on all streaming platforms

under Cherise Coaches. Thank you to my family and friends, Stewart Talent, the VB's, and most of all, TGBTG! IG/TikTok/Twitter: @CheriseCoaches.



AERIEL WILLIAMS (*Antigone*) was last seen in Court's production of *Oedipus Rex* as Antigone. National tour: *The Color Purple*. Off-Broadway: *Trevor: The Musical*. Regional credits include: *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Memphis*, *Black Pearl: A Tribute to Josephine Baker*, *Women of Soul*, *Dreamgirls*, *A*

Winter's Tale, and *Seven Guitars*. TV Credits: *The Chi* and *Empire*. Aerial was

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recognized as one of the Hot New Faces of Chicago Theater and Top Performers in 2017 by the *Chicago Tribune*. Music available on all streaming platforms under Mon'Aerie. Aerial would like to thank God for every opportunity, her family and mentors, and her reps at Stewart. Psalms 91. IG/TikTok: @MonAerie.

DARYN ALEXUS (*u/s Ismene, u/s Chorus*) studied music and theater at Columbia College Chicago. Credits include: *A Jolly Holiday* (Skylight Music Theatre); *Dreamgirls* (Paramount); *Love Actually? The Unauthorized Musical Parody* (Apollo Theater). Television credits include: *Chicago Med*, *Empire*, *Next*, and *The Chi*, as well as a variety of commercials with Adidas, State Farm, McDonald's, and many more. Daryn continues to make a name for herself in her solo music career touring the US, Italy, and the Middle East, as well as sharing stages with artists such as the late Biz Markie and Kendrick Lamar. She is represented by Stewart Talent.

WESLY ANTHONY CLERGÉ (*u/s Polyneices, u/s Chorus*) happily joins the cast of *The Gospel at Colonus* for his Court Theatre debut. Recent theatre credits include *Rent* (Porchlight); *Children of Eden*, starring David Phelps and Michelle Williams (Cadillac Palace); *Disney's The Little Mermaid* (Music Theater Works); *New Faces Sing Broadway 1979* (Porchlight); Jeff Award-nominated *8-TRACK: The Sound of the '70s* (Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre); *In the Heights* (Vision Latino Theatre); *Pagliacci* (Portland Opera); and many others. Wesly is represented by Shirley Hamilton Talent. For more information, visit weslyanthonyclerge.com. @iamweslyanthony.

JASON HUYSMAN (*u/s Creon*) is thrilled to be back at Court Theatre. Court credits: *The Tragedy of Othello*, *The Moor of Venice*; *Oedipus Rex*; and *An Iliad*. He would like to thank Nancy, Ava, Griffin, and Vivian for their love and support.

MICIAH LATHAN (*u/s Evangelist, u/s Chorus*) is delighted to be a part of this talented cast. She is passionate about this industry and enjoys being a part of the process. She recently appeared in *Blue Heaven* as Big Mama Thornton (Black Ensemble). She is also a choreographer, with her work featured in *Urban Love Story*, also at Black Ensemble Theater. She is grateful to God and her husband, who has always supported her.

KRISTEN-ILYCIA LOWE (*u/s Chorus*) has been singing her whole life. She is a part of The Lowe Family of Chicago. Since she was a young child, Kristen has loved singing. In 2011, she won Dwayne Wade's *Chicago's Got Talent* competition and went on to be a Top 20 finalist on BET's *Sunday Best*. She has toured and sung with artists such as Donald Lawrence, Kirk Franklin, Anita Wilson, Jennifer Hudson, Kanye West, and Ari Lennox.

JON PIERCE (*u/s Choragos, u/s The Friend, u/s Chorus*) is a recording artist, author, and activist. Jon is deeply embedded in Chicago's diverse soul and theatre scenes, and has toured and performed throughout Germany, Japan, and the UK. His latest project is his EP *The Love Take Over*, a vibrant and up-tempo dance collection produced by Chicago-based DJ Sean Ali. He is also the author of the affirmation series *Say It Until You Mean It: A Collection of Thoughts and Affirmations*. Jon is so excited to be working with Court on this amazing production.

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MAHMOUD KHAN (*Associate Music Director, Conductor, Keyboard, Organist*) works as a musician, conductor, composer, arranger, and producer. His theatrical credits include: *A Fool Such As I* (eta Creative Arts, BTAA for Sound Design); the touring production of *Crowns*; *Hitzville: The Show* (Planet Hollywood Las Vegas); *Dreamgirls* (Alhambra Theatre and Dining); *Eyes* (eta Creative Arts); *A Nativity Tribute* (Congo Square); and many others. He currently serves as the Minister of Music at Carter Temple C.M.E. and is owner of Geniuskhan Music LLC. You can follow him on Instagram at @geniuskhan or visit www.geniuskhan.com.

OSCAR BROWN, JR. (*Lead Guitar*) is a multi-instrumentalist and music producer from Chicago. Recent theater credits include *Blue Heaven* (Lead Guitar), *Grandma's Jukebox* (Lead Guitar/Vocal Arranger/Band Leader), and the Plays With A Purpose series at Black Ensemble Theater; *Women of Soul* (Guitar, Mercury Theater). Oscar is very excited to be making his debut here at Court Theatre! Follow him on Instagram: @ojoose.

AMR FAHMY (*Keyboard*) studied jazz piano and violin performance at DePaul University. He has performed at the Chicago Jazz Festival, the Hyde Park Jazz Festival, and the Red Sea Jazz Festival. He is currently a keyboardist with artist Marqueal Jordan and the Chicago Soul Jazz Collective.

JOSHUA GRIFFIN (*Bass Guitar, Music Programmer, Playback Engineer*) is a multi-instrumentalist, music producer/director, and a mixing and mastering engineer based in Chicago. Josh found his love for music at the age of six when his parents bought his first bass guitar. He's recorded with artists in the US and abroad, producing, touring, teaching, and inspiring new and upcoming artists. Joshua combined his accreditation, skill, and talent to launch Griffin Music Group LLC, a production company dedicated to assisting recording artists (independent and signed) in songwriting, song arranging, music production, mixing, and mastering. Joshua is a very proud father and husband.

LEONARD MADDOX JR. (*Drums*) was born in Chicago, and is the son of Julia and the late Leonard Maddox, Sr. He was the lead drummer for Steppenwolf's *The Christians*, and has performed vocals and drums for *Fannie: The Life and Music of Fannie Lou Hamer* at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. He has also accompanied renowned artists including Gerald Albright, Kurt Whalum, K-Pop sensation TXT BigHit, and Grammy Award-winning Darius Brooks & The Tommies, among others.

LEE BREUER (*Adaptation, Original Lyrics, Adapted Lyrics, 1937-2021*) was a director and writer whose work expanded the boundaries of storytelling in the American theater. Breuer's theatrical presentations spanned performance art, theater, film, video, music, the visual arts, literature, and opera, and have engaged audiences beyond the avant-garde world where his early work originated. His works include *The Lost Ones* (1976), *Sister Suzie Cinema* (1980), *A Prelude to Death in Venice* (1980), *The Gospel at Colonus* (1983), *The Warrior Ant* (1986), *Peter and Wendy* (1997), and *Dollhouse* (2003).

PROFILES

BOB TELSON (*Adapted Lyrics, Composer*) is an American composer, singer/songwriter, and pianist best known for his work in musical theater and film, for which he has received Tony, Pulitzer, and Academy Award nominations. Among his best known works are the score for *Bagdad Café*, and the musical *The Gospel at Colonus*, starring Morgan Freeman and The Five Blind Boys of Alabama. His songs have been recorded by Barbra Streisand, Natalie Cole, Jeff Buckley, George Benson, Joe Cocker, Celine Dion, Etta James, k.d. lang, Shawn Colvin, Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa, George Michael, and The Five Blind Boys of Alabama.

MARK J.P. HOOD (*Director, Music Director*) is thrilled to be collaborating with Charlie Newell, Mahmoud Khan, and the entire *Gospel* cast and creative team. Television credits include *House of Payne*, *Grand Crew*, *The Resident*, *Churchy*, and more. He was a fan favorite on *The Voice* and has been seen on stage in *The Scottsboro Boys*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Sister Act: The Musical*, *The Other Cinderella* (BTAA Award, Best Leading Actor in a Musical), and others. He's performed with Kirk Franklin, Maverick City, Snoop Dogg, Kanye West, Kelly Rowland, H.E.R., and many more. Mark would like to thank Court Theatre, Mahmoud Khan, his family, and the VB's. @MarkJPHood.

CHARLES NEWELL (*Director, Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director*), together with Angel Ysaguirre, accepted the 2022 Regional Theatre Tony Award on behalf of Court staff and artists. Recent directorial credits include *The Tragedy of Othello*, *The Moor of Venice*, co-directed with Gabrielle Randle-Bent; *Oedipus Rex*; and *The Adventures of Augie March*. Charlie has directed at Goodman, Guthrie, Arena Stage, Long Wharf, and many others. Awards received include the SDCF Zelda Fichandler Award, four Jeff Awards, and sixteen Jeff nominations. Charlie is a co-founder of the Civic Actor Studio, a leadership program of the University of Chicago's Office of Civic Engagement.

TARON PATTON (*Associate Director*) is the CEO of GLP PRODUCTIONS, INC. Producer credits: *The Billboard* (Jeff Award recipient, 16th Street Theater); *N* (Greenhouse Theater Center); *Misty Tanner* (Q&A Productions). Directing credits: *The Billboard* (16th Street Theater); *N* (Greenhouse Theater Center); *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning* (Steppenwolf Garage Rep); *Bulrushier* and *A Nativity Tribute* (Congo Square). Acting credits: *Her Honor Jane Byrne* (Lookingglass Theatre); *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (Goodman); *Hot L Baltimore* (Steppenwolf). Television credits: *The Chi*, *Empire*, *Chicago P.D.*, *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago Med*.

JOHN CULBERT (*Scenic Designer*) designed scenery or lighting for many Court productions, including *Arsenic and Old Lace*; *The Tragedy of Othello*, *The Moor of Venice*; *Oedipus Rex*; *The Adventures of Augie March*; *All My Sons*; and *Iphigenia in Aulis*; Goodman's *Having Our Say*; Lookingglass's *Villette*; and TimeLine's *The Chinese Lady*. He has also designed for Northlight, Writers, Glimmerglass Opera, Singapore Repertory, Opera National du Rhin, Berkeley Rep, McCarter Theatre, and Shakespeare Theatre Company. He served as the dean of The Theatre School at DePaul University for over 20 years.

PROFILES

RAQUEL ADORNO (*Costume Designer*) is thrilled to return to Court. Chicago credits include *Intimate Apparel* (Northlight); *Wife of a Salesman* (Writers Theatre); *The Island* and *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice* (Court); *I, Banquo* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Mies Julie* (Victory Gardens); *Unelectable You* (Second City); and many others. 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* (UCCS Theatreworks). Film: *Limerence*. Education: MFA Northwestern University. Visit raqueladorno.com.

KEITH PARHAM (*Lighting Designer*) returns to Court, having previously worked on *Fen*; *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice*; *Oedipus Rex*; *Photograph 51*; *All My Sons*; *The Hard Problem*; *An Iliad*; *Angels in America*; *Proof*, and many others. Broadway: *Thérèse Raquin* (Roundabout); *Between Riverside and Crazy* (2nd Stage Theater). Off-Broadway: *Wild Goose Dreams* (The Public); *Man from Nebraska* (2nd Stage); and *The Purple Lights of Joppa Illinois* (Atlantic Theater), among others. Awards: Obie, Lortel. Visit Keithparhamlighting.com, tutattheatre.org.

SARAH RAMOS (*Sound Designer*) returns to Court after designing *Arsenic and Old Lace* last fall, and having previously spent nine seasons as the Sound and Video Supervisor. Chicago sound credits: Goodman, Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, Drury Lane, Writers, American Blues, Griffin, About Face, The Gift, Congo Square, Bailiwick, Teatro Luna, and Prop Thtr. Regional credits: Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, First Stage, Renaissance Theaterworks, Indiana Repertory, The Gateway, and Piedmont Opera. She is an alumnus of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and a mother of two.

CRISTIN CAROLE (*Movement Designer*) is excited about returning to Court. She most recently created movement and intimacy designs for Goodman Theatre's production of *Toni Stone*. Cristin has worked at Steppenwolf, TimeLine, American Blues, and Writers Theatre in Chicago. At Court Theatre, she was the movement consultant for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Seven Guitars*, *Home*, *Porgy and Bess*, and the Jeff Award-winning production of *Blues for an Alabama Sky*. As director of the Shirley Hall Bass Foundation, she advocates for performing arts education in the Bahamas.

WENKE (COCO) HUANG (*Production Dramaturg*) graduated from Northwestern University with a BA in Performance Studies and Art History. Born and raised in Beijing, China, she now calls Chicago her second home and will start the joint PhD program in Theater and Performance Studies and East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago in fall 2023. She was the Assistant Director of *The Island* at Court Theatre. Other credits include *Villette* at Lookingglass Theatre (Dramaturg), *The Garden of the Phoenix* for Lookingglass's 50 Wards (Puppeteer), and *Seagull* at Steppenwolf Theatre (Assistant Dramaturg).

GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT (*Oedipus Trilogy Dramaturg, Associate Artistic Director*) is a mother, director, dramaturg, and scholar. Her directorial highlights include *The Island* and *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice* (co-directed with Charles Newell) at Court Theatre; *1919* (Steppenwolf); and *The Year of Magical*

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Thinking (Remy Bumppo). 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.

KATE OCKER (*Production 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); *Fen*, *The Island*, *An Iliad*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis* (Court); *Six Corners*, *BUDDY – The Buddy Holly Story*, and *The Spitfire Grill* (American Blues Theater); *Noises Off* (Asolo Rep); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Odd Couple*, and *An Inspector Calls* (Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma); *Red* (Resident Ensemble Players).

NATALIE COHEN (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is thrilled to make her ASM debut at Court Theatre. Recent credits include *Once*, *Manual Cinema's A Christmas Carol*, *Athena* (Writers Theatre); *Clyde's*, *Pequeños Territorios en Reconstrucción* (Goodman Theatre); *Love Actually? The Unauthorized Musical Parody*, *Bachelor: The Unauthorized Parody Musical* (Right Angle Entertainment); *Kinky Boots* (Paramount). She is a graduate of Truman State University.

ANGEL YSAGUIRRE (*Executive Director*) has been Court's Executive Director since 2018. Prior to this role, he 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 thrilled to see the incredible cast of *Gospel* bring this story to life. She has spent 17 years casting in Chicago, covering the Midwest market working on TV/film, commercial, and theatre projects. In addition to her work at Court, Becca works with HBO, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. Becca is an Artios Award winner and proud member of the Casting Society of America. She is committed to creating a casting space that empowers the artist, and is focused on inclusivity and humanity. Thank you to Michael, James, Hayes, and Ruby for their love and support. ■

THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS BACKERS LIST

Court Theatre is grateful to the following donors who contributed to the Backer's Challenge at our 2019 Gala. Their early investment in *The Gospel at Colonus* is sincerely appreciated. Thank you!

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Photo of Kelvin Roston Jr. by Joe Mazza.

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