

AN ILIAD

By **LISA PETERSON & DENIS O'HARE**

Based on **HOMER'S THE ILIAD**

Directed by **CHARLES NEWELL**

Translated by **ROBERT FAGLES**

Featuring **TIMOTHY EDWARD KANE**



COURT THEATRE



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

WELCOME

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the final production of the 2024/25 season: *An Iliad*, directed by Charles Newell.

Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare's masterpiece—one of the most celebrated productions in our history—concludes what has been the most successful season in our history, thanks to multiple extensions, rave reviews, and unprecedented numbers of new audiences. Each production in the 2024/25 season thus far has illustrated how the decisions of our past directly impact our present, offering a map of where we are, how we got here, and what that means for our collective future. *An Iliad* is a crucial next chapter in that conversation.

This is the fourth time we have staged *An Iliad*—based on Homer's epic poem, *The Iliad*—in part because this production continues to teach; fitting, given our location on the University of Chicago's campus. Here, Homer's works are regularly studied and celebrated by faculty and students, and a major collection of rare Homeric translations lives at the Special Collections Research Center. We are proud to be part of a community that supports this depth of intellectual engagement and artistic ambition, and *An Iliad* is a perfect marriage of the two.

The distinctly prismatic nature of *An Iliad* makes revisiting it an exciting and worthwhile endeavor each time. In every staging, the story remains the same. We feature the same performer, Timothy Edward Kane. Yet the play takes on new weight and resonance with every iteration. We look through the prism alongside The Poet, and new meaning reveals itself. New horrors come to the surface. New hope takes root, reaching further than the roots laid down before, and we pray—yet again—that this will be the last time we tell this story. After all, what is theatre if not one communal prayer, a shared call to action?

Thank you for joining us as we answer the call, and thank you for joining us for the most successful season in our history. We cannot think of a more fitting end to a banner year.

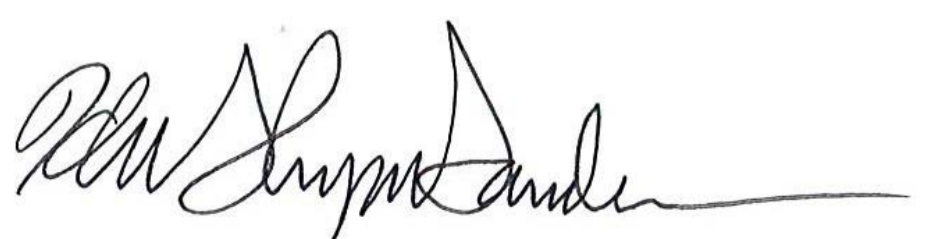
With gratitude,



Angel Ysaguirre
Executive Director



Gabrielle Randle-Bent
Senior Artistic Producer



Heidi Thompson Saunders
Senior Managing Producer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Welcome Letter >>](#)

[Title Page >>](#)

[Cast >>](#)

[Production Crew >>](#)

Articles and Interviews:

[In Conversation: Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare >>](#)

[The Homeric Question >>](#)

[One and Many *Iliads* >>](#)

[Reading Homer's *Iliad* Today >>](#)

[Up Next: Spotlight Reading Series >>](#)

[Artist Profiles >>](#)

[About Court Theatre >>](#)

[Donor Recognition >>](#)

[Staff >>](#)

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Ron OJ Parson



NOV/DEC 2025

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

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Directed by Marti Lyons



FEB/MAR 2026

MISS JULIE

By August Strindberg
Directed by Gabrielle Randle-Bent



APR/MAY 2026

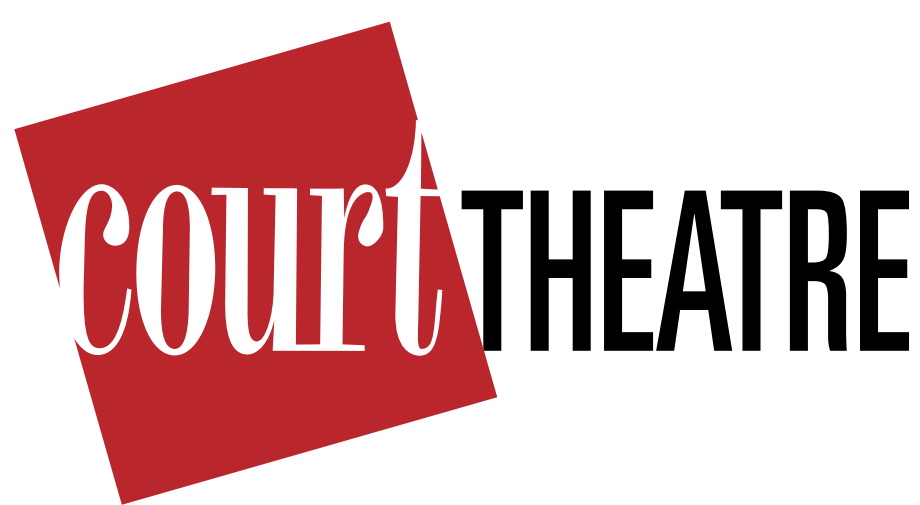
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Angel Ysaguirre
Executive Director

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Heidi Thompson Saunders
Senior Managing Producer

June 11 – 29, 2025

AN ILIAD

BY LISA PETERSON & DENIS O'HARE

BASED ON HOMER'S *THE ILIAD*

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT FAGLES

DIRECTED BY CHARLES NEWELL

FEATURING TIMOTHY EDWARD KANE

Todd Rosenthal U.S.A., Scenic Designer

Rachel Anne Healy U.S.A., Costume Designer

Keith Parham U.S.A., Lighting Designer

André Pluess U.S.A., Sound Designer

Drew Dir, Production Dramaturg

Becca McCracken C.S.A., Casting

Kate Ocker,* Production Stage Manager

Lauren Peters, Assistant Stage Manager

An Iliad is presented without intermission.

Please note: Production contains water-based haze.

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Lise and Edward Spacapan

The Charles Newell Production Fund

AN ILIAD was originally developed as part of the New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspects Program, Off-Broadway premiere produced by New York Theatre Workshop (Jim Nicola, Artistic Director; William Russon, Managing Director) in 2012.

AN ILIAD was originally produced by Seattle Repertory Theatre (Jerry Manning, Producing Artistic Director; Benjamin Moore, Managing Director).

It was subsequently produced by McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton, NJ (Emily Mann, Artistic Director; Timothy J. Shields, Managing Director, Mara Isaacs, Producing Director).

AN ILIAD was developed in part with the assistance of the Sundance Institute.

AN ILIAD is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, New York.

United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE is the union representing scenic, costume, lighting, sound, and projection designers in Live Performance.

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

Cover photo of Timothy Edward Kane by Michael Brosilow.

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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.



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

CAST

The Poet..... Timothy Edward Kane*

Understudy

Jason Huysman* (*Performing Sunday evenings 6/15 and 6/22*)

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

PRODUCTION CREW

Assistant Director Lorenzo Blackett
Associate Scenic Designer Lauren M. Nichols U.S.A.
Scenic Artists.....Michael A.C. Besancon U.S.A., Sarah Lewis U.S.A.,
Rachel Meierotto U.S.A.
Carpenters Cordell Brown, Sean Moore, Tseela Sokolin-Maimon
Properties Artisan Persephone Lawrence
Associate Lighting Designer Josiah Croegaert
Assistant Lighting Supervisor Eli McEwan
Electricians Emily Brown, Kenneth Martin
Associate Sound Designer Josh McCammon
Audio Engineers Christine Burquest, Ian C. Weber
Floor Manager Kate Nagorski



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

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



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IN CONVERSATION

PLAYWRIGHTS LISA PETERSON AND DENIS O'HARE

BY DREW DIR, PRODUCTION DRAMATURG



Playwrights Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare built successful careers respectively as a director and an actor before they came together to work on their very first play, An Iliad. Originally intended as a vehicle for O'Hare to perform and for Peterson to direct, An Iliad has taken off as a popular script in its own right, performed by theatres across the country. Prior to Court Theatre's 2013 staging, Production Dramaturg Drew Dir spoke with Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare about how An Iliad came to be; below is an excerpt of their original conversation.

How did the idea for *An Iliad* originate? Was it born purely out of an interest in adapting Homer's *Iliad* for the stage?

Lisa: It actually came out of a response to America's engagement with a real war in Iraq, to our "Shock and Awe" attack on Baghdad in 2003. I started reading through war plays, because... I was very aware of us being a country at war in a way that I had never been in my lifetime. In the spring of 2003, I started thinking about how theatre should respond... mostly that we ought to be talking about what it's like to be a country at war. Thinking about *The Iliad* was a part of a bigger question: "What are the great war plays?" [Dramaturg] Morgan Jenness had told me years before that she teaches *The Iliad* as one of the first plays, which surprised me because I had studied it in college as an epic poem, not a play. It was that idea that made me think: maybe it *is* a play, *why* is it a play... It probably was a solo performance before it was ever written down. When I started looking into that and thinking about it, I thought it would be fun to work directly with an actor on this, instead of with a writer.

Denis: My story begins with getting a phone call from Lisa, where she said, "Hey, have you ever read *The Iliad*?" and I was like, "I think so. Maybe?" At that point, I don't think either of us ever thought we would end up with a script. What we thought we would end up doing was a performance of some kind.

Lisa: I thought that it would be a good idea to find an actor who had opinions and could be articulate about them, because what I really thought we would be doing was recreating the improvisation of *The Iliad*—that we would read *The Iliad*, get really familiar with the story of the Trojan War, and that Denis would literally walk into a bar or a pub and say, "Hey, anyone want to hear the story of Hector?" and on any given night it would be different. Then, as we started working on it, we realized that we should codify it, write it, etc.

Describe the process of creating the script for *An Iliad*.

Denis: It was very accidental. I'm kind of a documentarian, and I thought it would be fun to have a video camera present to document our conversations. So we had the camera, and we would go back to the camera occasionally for a reference; we would say, "Oh, what was that conversation we had last time? Let's rewind and look at that." We realized that what we talked about ended up becoming us acting it out—I'm an actor, so I understand things through the process of acting, which means that in order to talk about it, I'll get up and start acting it out. We were talking about a contemporary understanding of *The Iliad* anyway, so I was improvising on my own reactions to things. We wanted that contemporary reaction to the text, and that contemporary reaction ended up being part of the text.

How familiar were you with Homer's *Iliad* before you sat down to work on it?

Denis: I remembered very little, and I think I had a better grasp on *The Odyssey*. In fact, I may have not even read *The Iliad*; what I knew about *The Iliad* was the Trojan Horse (which, of course, is not in *The Iliad*), I knew it had something to do with Helen and Paris, I knew it had something to do with Achilles (and Achilles's boyfriend Patroclus), and I knew about Menelaus, and Agamemnon from *The Oresteia*, and what happens when they come back from Troy. I had a vague understanding of what *The Iliad* was, and certainly did not appreciate that *The Iliad* was not the entire ten-year war, that *The Iliad* was only—as we came to find out—about forty days within that war.

Lisa: I had read it in college—not the Robert Fagles translation, but the Fitzgerald. I went to Yale, and in my freshman year, I did a thing called Directed Studies, which was like Crash Course Western Civilization, and *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were probably the first books [in that course]. My memory of it was that it was powerful and difficult; I wouldn't say that I immediately fell in love with it, I remember it just being hard. I think I probably liked *The Odyssey* better—I think a lot of people do, because *The Odyssey* has romance and adventure. When we went back to look at *The Iliad*, in the Fagles translation, suddenly my eyes opened and I realized how glorious and surprising it was.

You've obviously condensed a lot of material into a relatively short performance. Was there material you particularly regretted leaving on the cutting room floor?

Denis: We struggled with the scope of the story and which stories to tell, because *The Iliad* doesn't tell one story, it tells many stories, and depending on how you edit it, you can produce a different emphasis. We kept boiling it down to the basics. We realized that the story is Achilles's story. It's the rage of Achilles—it begins with "Sing goddess the rage of Achilles..." That's a framing device, but it's also the major theme.

What draws you to epic, foundational texts like *The Iliad*?

Denis: They're challenging and they're terrifying, and that's a good reason to do them. I would also love to do Dante's *Inferno*, I would love to do *Paradise Lost*... But the other reason is that they're just great works. Oddly enough, I think for Lisa and I, it's not even a matter of taking on great works. What we're taking on are great subjects, and those don't have an expiration date, and those don't have a time and a place, they're universal and they're timeless. So war, killing, murder, and death are the subjects we took on for *An Iliad*... those are really exciting things to dwell on theatrically.

Lisa: It's a passion that Denis and I just happen to share. We both are drawn to the history of culture just as much as literature... [we're both] trying to understand how the human species developed this shared culture. I think it's about that, as much as it's about literature... these texts are key to how we organize ourselves as human beings.

This article was edited and reproduced from the 2013 program of *An Iliad*.

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



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A NOTE FROM DIRECTOR CHARLES NEWELL

Dear Friends,

As we embark on the fourth staging of *An Iliad*, I want to thank you for joining us on this journey.

The good fortune of returning to the same production multiple times with the exact same performer is not lost on me. Few directors ever receive such a chance in the first place, let alone four times. This staging, coming at the end of my tenure at Court Theatre—first as Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director, then as Senior Artistic Consultant—feels particularly profound.

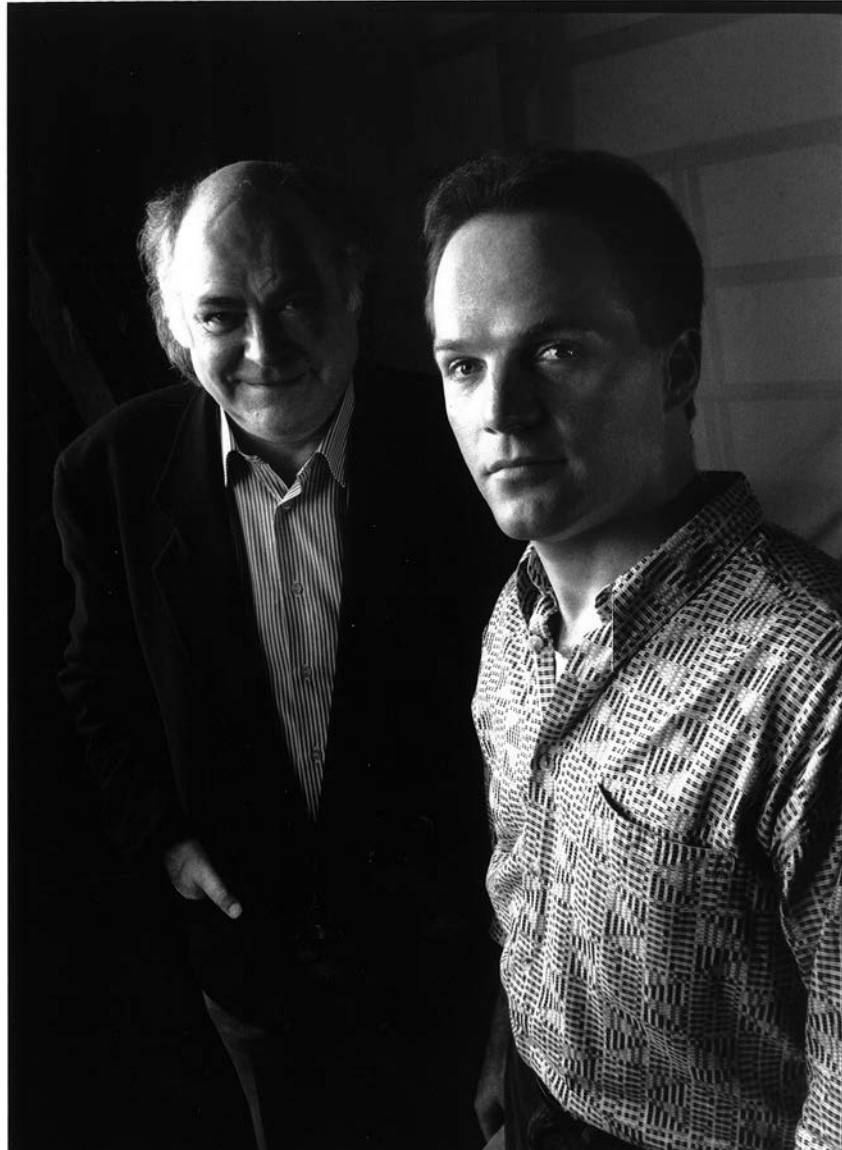


Photo of Founding Artistic Director Nicholas Rudall and Charles Newell in 1993.

Over the last thirty-plus years, I have stood in the lobby for hundreds of performances, greeting patrons, gratefully accepting feedback, and getting to know you. The work we do onstage is important, but these interactions are perhaps the most rewarding part of the job. As I look ahead to my future after Court, there are many things that I will miss, but that depth of audience engagement and investment is, without question, at the top of the list.

Thank you for your years of support and trust; for joining us on transcendent and transformational journeys, much like this one; for taking creative risks alongside us; and, quite simply, for continuing to show up. What makes a performance is having an audience, and we—at Court—have the best audience.

Whether this is your first time experiencing *An Iliad* or your fourth, please know that I am immensely grateful that you are here. We could not do this without you.

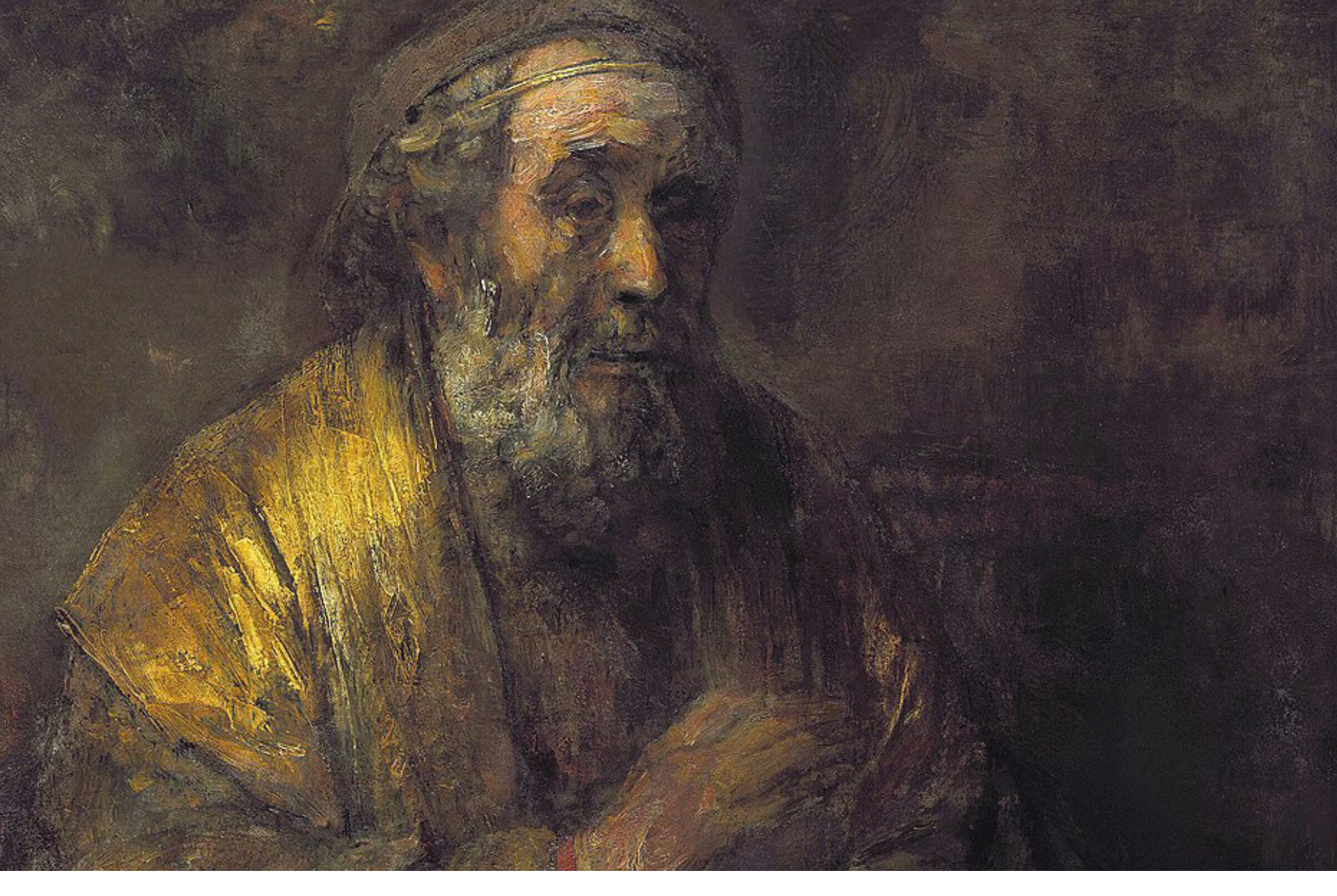
Thank you for everything.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles Newell".

Charles Newell
Director

THE HOMERIC QUESTION

BY EVAN GARRETT, FORMER COURT THEATRE
DRAMATURGY INTERN



Homer Dictating his Verses by Rembrandt (1663).

Homer is undoubtedly the most well-known author from Ancient Greece. At the same time, he also remains one of the most mysterious authors of modern scholasticism. Partly, this is due to the substantial distance between our modern times and when he wrote. This distance has created a question of authorship, notoriously known as “the Homeric question.” We do not know who, truthfully, wrote *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*: it may have been a group of poets, a poor and blind nomad, a woman, an aristocrat, anyone—we simply do not have the information to make a solid claim. However, we can make hypotheses, use our imagination, and perform some impressive detective work to make a best guess—that is to say, to do what classical historians do. If (and what a big “if” that is!) Homer were to exist as a single person, we would be able to use historical records, archaeology, and geographical evidence to make educated claims about what type of person he would be.

Currently, it is thought that Homer must have composed his famous poems sometime in the eighth century BCE. The epic style of the poems hints that they would have needed to be composed sometime after 750 BCE, when Pan-Hellenic festivals celebrating poetry became popular. If this were the case, Homer would have been traveling through the larger Greece, delivering his poems to adoring and upper-class fans. While this is our best guess based on archaeology, one cannot ignore the fact that ancient authors dated Homer much earlier than this relatively late date. Herodotus claimed that Homer lived 400 years before he did, dating Homer to around 850 BCE. Other ancient authors claimed that Homer must have existed even closer to the Trojan War, sometime around 1200 BCE. Thus, it appears that there is a five hundred-year span of when Homer may have lived, with a larger likelihood on the later dates.

The next unsolved mystery is determining where Homer would have lived. Much of the geology and flora described in *The Iliad* would make it seem that Homer had intimate knowledge of Ionia (roughly modern-day Türkiye). This would seem to place him somewhere where Ancient Troy would have been. However, Homer also illustrates a great deal of knowledge of island geography in his *Odyssey*, which would support the fact that he spent much time on various Greek isles. Many of the cities existing in Attica (the area around Athens) and even Laconia (Greece’s Southern Peninsula) made claims that Homer rested in their town while composing his epic, which provides evidence (albeit weak) that Homer may have actually been a wandering poet traveling throughout Greece. These records are probably false, however—created by towns wanting to attract tourism and fame. Who wouldn’t want to spend a night in the same town as history’s greatest poet? Despite nomadic legends, it is important to note that Homer’s dialect was Ancient Ionic Greek, making the case, once again, for his more eastern roots.

Why does there exist this idea of Homer as a “blind poet”? Most likely, it derives from his name “Ὅμηρος,” which in Ancient Greek roughly translates to “follower.” In the Eastern dialect of Greek, however, this word takes on the second and literal meaning, “blind.” Additionally, much has been written about the blind poet, Demodocus—appearing in book eight of *The Odyssey*—who recounts the story of the Trojan War to a disguised Odysseus. This has been described as a self-referential moment in the story where Homer illustrates the power and importance of epic poetry as a tool for recording history and catharsis. This theory is acceptable, but must be taken with a grain of salt: not all great authors intentionally write themselves into their stories. In general, modern scholars have no reason to think Homer was blind, especially since his poems include such strikingly visual descriptions. If anything, Homer’s “blindness” is another fiction we recount in order to maintain a mystery around the masterworks he created.

While these are some of the knowns and unknowns of this ancient author, one is forced to acknowledge a very simple fact: our knowledge of the ancient world is incomplete. Indeed, it is very likely that Homer is a fictive personage created by stringing together dozens of ancient poets’ renditions of war stories. We are so distanced from Homer’s time that we will probably never know for sure whether he actually existed. However, one may look at the evidence we have so far and make the case that his poetry does seem to come from a common experience, from a common culture, and from a common style. It is for this reason that one should have no qualms stating that Homer, either the person or the idea, remains one of the most masterful authors standing the tests of time.

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[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

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ONE AND MANY *ILIADS*

BY DREW DIR, PRODUCTION DRAMATURG



Papyrus fragment of *The Iliad*. Book 10, second century BCE.

How much of Homer is there in Denis O’Hare and Lisa Peterson’s adaptation, *An Iliad*?

The inspiration for *An Iliad* originated from theatre director Lisa Peterson’s interest in developing a play about war. Teaming up with actor Denis O’Hare (a Broadway, film, and TV actor who was last seen on Court’s stage during the 1990/91 season), Peterson turned to Western civilization’s first war story: Homer’s *Iliad*, an epic poem about the mythical ten-year Trojan War. Reading aloud from the Robert Fagles translation of the poem—a popular translation admired for its liveliness and contemporary idioms—O’Hare would then explain, extemporize, and elaborate on the story in his own words. Peterson recorded these digressions, many of them improvised, and together, the two assembled a multi-layered script using O’Hare’s words, Fagles’s translation of Homer, and even some of Homer’s Ancient Greek. Originally, Denis O’Hare intended to play the role of The Poet with Lisa Peterson directing; however, when their mutual schedules postponed that production, Peterson directed productions at Seattle Rep and McCarter Theatre Center with different actors. Peterson and O’Hare generously allowed Court Theatre to produce the Chicago premiere of *An Iliad* in 2011 with its own actor-director team. (O’Hare and Peterson finally got the opportunity to mount *An Iliad* together in February 2012 for a production at New York Theatre Workshop.)

The insight required to gracefully consolidate Homer’s *Iliad* into a single night of theatre is formidable: Homer’s poem contains over 15,000 lines of verse, divided into 24 “books” (it would take roughly twenty-four hours to speak the entire poem out loud). Fortunately, Homer himself was an excellent dramatist—rather than tell the entire ten-year history of the Greek siege of the city of Troy, he limited the story of *The Iliad* to only a few weeks in the last year of the war, focusing on the drama of the Greek warrior Achilles, his dispute with Agamemnon, and his defeat of the Trojan general Hector. Many of the most iconic details we associate with Homer’s *Iliad* didn’t actually originate from the poem. The story of the Trojan Horse and the fall of Troy is told not in *The Iliad* but in *The Odyssey*. The story of Achilles’s heel was invented by poets and tragedians long after Homer. Even the story of Helen of Troy’s kidnapping by Paris is only alluded to indirectly (and the famous line, “The face that launched a thousand ships,” is from Christopher Marlowe, not Homer). Homer’s poem begins with the rage of Achilles and ends with the burial of Hector. It was this dramatic unity that prompted Aristotle to call Homer the epic poet who most resembled a tragedian, and *An Iliad* draws on this fundamental feature to dramatically flesh out the confrontation between Achilles and Hector.

At least one other aspect of *An Iliad* is true to its source material: the fact of its oral performance by a single performer. While modern readers are fortunate enough to possess a singular text of Homer’s *Iliad*, the poem was orally transmitted for many hundreds of years before it was finally written down. Scholars today conceive of *The Iliad* as a poem that a bard would have performed through both memorization and improvisation (much like *An Iliad*’s Poet); the performer would have been equipped with certain “formulas” that he could freely rearrange from night to night, depending on the audience. Lisa Peterson and Denis O’Hare have captured in their adaptation a modern understanding of the immediacy and liveness of those ancient Homeric performances. As a result, *An Iliad* is in dialogue with not only the content of its source material, but also its form, presuming correctly that Homer’s *Iliad* is, and always has been, a poem meant to be experienced as an act of live performance.

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[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



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READING HOMER'S *ILIAD* TODAY: AN INTERVIEW WITH SCHOLAR GLENN W. MOST

BY DREW DIR, PRODUCTION DRAMATURG



King Priam Begging Achilles For The Return Of Hector's Body

by Aleksandr Andreevich Ivanov, 1824.

Many of us read *The Iliad* for the first time in high school or college. Do you remember the first time you read *The Iliad*, and what your first impressions were? Did it immediately grab you or did it appreciate with time?

I first read *The Iliad* in high school—in English translation, of course. But I had the feeling that I already had some acquaintance with it, even though I did not know any of the details and was unclear on the exact ending. As Italo Calvino wrote, a classic is a book that one cannot read for the first time: it is such a part of one's culture that one always feels that one has already known it. When I read it in high school, I found it enthralling. Despite the episodes of bloodshed (which I found so horrific that I had difficulty sleeping for weeks), I found the scenes of friendship, of loyalty, of risk, of self-sacrifice deeply moving. And the last book—in which Priam crosses at night from his walled fortress city to the encampment of his deadliest enemies in order to plead with the murderer of his son to give him back that son's body—moved me so deeply that I could not help weeping when I read it then—or now.

What do we non-Greek readers lose by reading *The Iliad* in its English translations?

It is better to read Homer in Greek than in English; but it is better to read Homer in English than not at all. Read in translation, Homer loses most of the sounds and the exact meanings of many of the words, and some of the interrelations between various words and sounds, and all of the meter. But a lot comes through: the moral vision, and the plot, and the characters, and the speeches, and the similes, and the speed, and the sorrow. Still, there is no doubt that reading a work in translation is like kissing through a screen door.

Much modern scholarship has been devoted to the question of whether *The Iliad* was composed by a single poet (perhaps called Homer, perhaps not) or a work by many poets who differed in style and emphasis. Setting aside for a moment all the philological scholarship on the origins of the poem, as a reader, do you experience *The Iliad* as a poem composed by a single poet or a poem woven from multiple voices?

Whenever I read *The Iliad*, I respond to it as to a profoundly unified and complex vision of the world formulated in terms of a coherent and carefully organized plot, theme, set of characters, and use of language. To be sure, this unity seems sometimes to be marred by defects and inconsistencies of all sorts, most of them quite minor, some of them more serious. But I do not believe that the only way to explain all these problems is to suppose that there were multiple authors—for example, the Ancients, who studied Homer closely, concluded instead that he sometimes dozed—and I do think that, even though positing a single author is one way to explain its fundamental unity of purpose, it is not the only one. Homer, for me, is a multiple but ultimately harmonious voice expressing, but also criticizing, the complex and dissonant visions of his whole culture.

In your essay “Anger and Pity in Homer's *Iliad*,” you wrestle with one of the most notable features of *The Iliad*, namely that the poem begins with a word for anger (translated “rage”) and ends with an expression of pity (Achilles returning the body of Hector to his enemy Priam). Do you see anger and pity as opposing forces in *The Iliad*?

Not so much as opposing forces, but rather as complementary ones. When an Ancient Greek saw a friend being harmed by an enemy, he felt pity for the friend and simultaneously anger at the enemy: the two feelings were the two sides of the same coin, inseparable from one another and equally justified. Are we any different?

Do you consider Homer's *Iliad* an anti-war poem?

Absolutely no; and absolutely yes. Absolutely no, in the sense that Homer presupposes as simply true his culture's view that war is an inevitable feature of human and divine existence and that glory in war is one of the greatest possible achievements. Homer does not imagine that there can be life without war and thinks that, given that there is always going to be war, we must prepare for it and acquit ourselves in it as nobly as possible. But absolutely yes, in the sense that Homer is fascinated by the price that must be paid for military victory and martial prowess—the price in young lives lost, in hopes snipped prematurely, in horrific bloodletting, but also, and even worse, in the brutalization of otherwise gentle souls, in the bestialization of better human potentials. In *The Iliad*, men and countries quarrel over futile stakes, and in consequence, men die and whole cities burn to ash. Homer's men fight other men and wound and slay them and die, and their women are left to mourn them—and to raise their sons to avenge them, bloodily. We might hypothesize that Homer inherited a bloody-minded epic tradition that he faithfully retold at the same time as he criticized it. But why should we suppose that he was the first Greek to notice that epic glory was purchased at a terrible price? Better, probably, to think that a complex and self-contradictory set of attitudes and emotions regarding war characterized Greek culture from the beginning.

GLENN W. MOST was until 2020 Professor of Greek Philology at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, and remains a regular Visiting Professor on the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, and an External Scientific Member of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. He has published books on Classics, on ancient philosophy, on the history and methodology of Classical studies, on comparative literature, cultural studies, and the history of religion, on literary theory and on the history of art, and has published numerous articles, reviews, and translations in these fields and also on such other ones as modern philosophy and literature. Most recently he has published co-edited comprehensive editions of the early Greek philosophers, a co-edited volume on scholarly methods in a variety of canonical written traditions, a co-edited volume of essays on mathematical commentaries in Chinese, Sanskrit, Babylonian, and Ancient Greek, a co-edited volume on myth and reason in Ancient China and Greece, an edited collection of essays on the Derveni Papyrus, a co-edited reader on plurilingualism in the history of science in a number of pre-modern scholarly traditions, a co-edited volume of essays on a sentence of Kafka, a collection of his essays in Italian on ancient and modern psychology, and another collection of his essays in Chinese on Ancient Greek poetry.

This article was edited and reproduced from the 2011 program of *An Iliad*.

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



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UP NEXT: SPOTLIGHT READING SERIES



Photo of the 2023 Spotlight Reading Series by Ollie Photography.

Join us for the annual **Spotlight Reading Series**. This year's Spotlight highlights **Theodore Ward**, author of *Big White Fog*, which will open Court's 2025/26 Season.

Playwright Theodore Ward, born in Thibodaux, Louisiana, left home at age 13 and traveled widely across the United States. He studied at both the University of Utah and the University of Wisconsin. Later, in Chicago, Ward taught at the Lincoln Center Players and became friends with author Richard Wright, who introduced him to the South Side Writers Group. Through Wright, Ward also joined the Chicago Writers Workshop of the Federal Theatre Project, where he wrote *Big White Fog* in 1938. The play was later produced by the Negro Playwrights Company, which Ward co-founded in New York City with Langston Hughes and others in 1940. In 1949, Ward made history as the first Black playwright to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship. Over the course of his career, he wrote more than 30 theatrical works, along with essays, poems, and parts of two folk operas. From 1968 until his death in 1983, he lived and worked in Chicago.

We invite you to engage with Court's **Spotlight Reading Series, August 13–15**, as we explore Theodore Ward's extraordinary contributions to the American theatre and Black cultural history.

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

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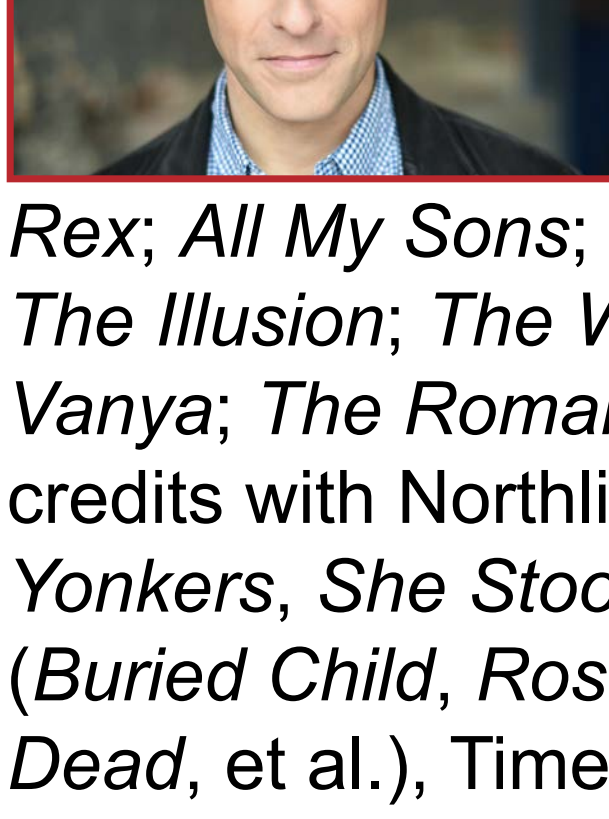
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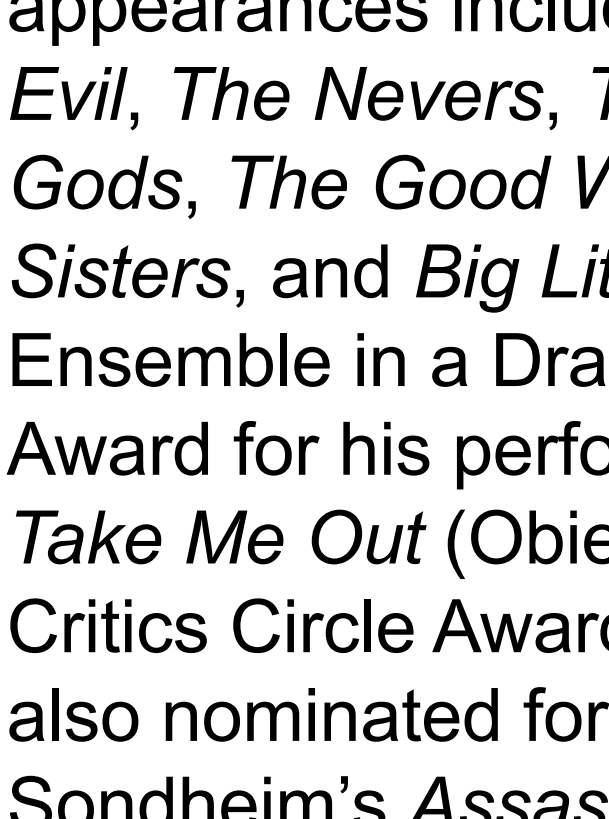
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ARTIST PROFILES



TIMOTHY EDWARD KANE

(*The Poet*) Court credits: *An Iliad*; *Antigone*; *The Gospel at Colonus*; *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*; *Oedipus Rex*; *All My Sons*; *Harvey*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; *The Illusion*; *The Wild Duck*; *Titus Andronicus*; *Uncle Vanya*; *The Romance Cycle*; *Hamlet*. Other Chicago credits with Northlight (*Birthday Candles*, *Lost in Yonkers*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, et al.), Writers (*Buried Child*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, et al.), TimeLine, Goodman, Steppenwolf, and 20 productions with Chicago Shakespeare Theater, including *Hamlet*, *Tug of War: Civil Strife*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *King Lear*. 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.

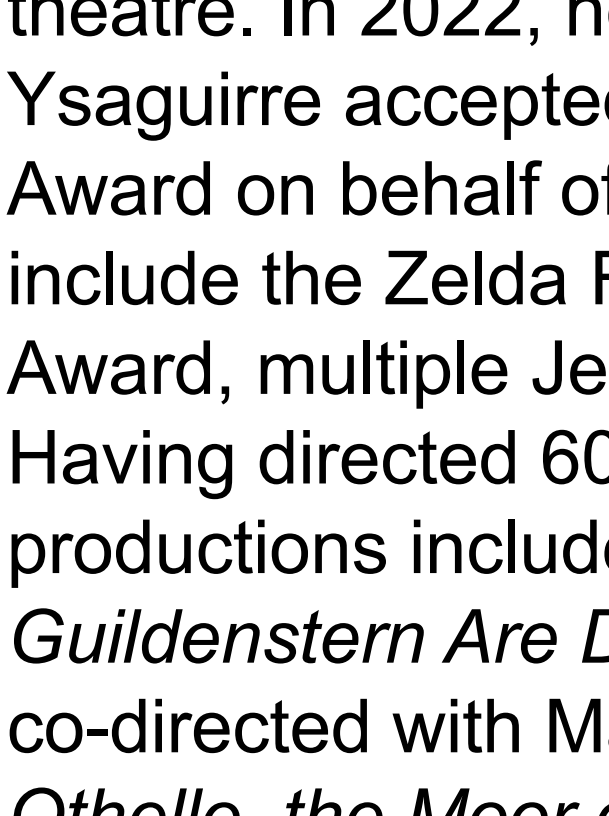


JASON HUYSMAN (u/s *The Poet*)

is thrilled to be back at Court Theatre. Court credits: *The Gospel at Colonus*; *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.

DENIS O'HARE (*Playwright*) was nominated for an Emmy Award for his role on *This Is Us* and has been twice nominated for his performances on *American Horror Story*. His other notable television appearances include his roles on *The Boroughs*, *Evil*, *The Nevers*, *Trying*, *True Blood*, *American Gods*, *The Good Wife*, *When We Rise*, *Brothers and Sisters*, and *Big Little Lies* (SAG Award nomination, Ensemble in a Drama Series). He won the Tony Award for his performance in Richard Greenberg's *Take Me Out* (Obie Award, Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Lucille Lortel Award) and was also nominated for his work in the revival of Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins*. He received an Obie Award for his one-man performance of *An Iliad*, of which he is also the playwright. His other stage credits include *Here We Are*, *Sweet Charity* (Drama Desk Award), *Cabaret*, *Inherit the Wind*, *Major Barbara*, *Elling*, *Racing Demon*, *Hauptmann*, *Into the Woods*, *Ten Unknowns*, his performances at London's National Theatre in the title role of *Tartuffe* as well as a reprisal of his New York premiere of *Here We Are*. His various film credits include *Infinite Storm*, *Swallow*, *Late Night*, *The Postcard Killings*, *The Goldfinch*, *Novitiate*, *The Normal Heart*, *Dallas Buyers Club* (SAG Award nomination, Cast in a Motion Picture), *The Proposal*, *Duplicity*, *Milk* (SAG Award nomination, Cast in a Motion Picture; Critic's Choice Award, Best Acting Ensemble), *Changeling*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Michael Clayton*, *A Mighty Heart*, *Half Nelson*, *Garden State*, *21 Grams*, *The Anniversary Party*, *Private Life*, and *The Parting Glass*, of which he is also the screenwriter. He is the recipient of the Outer Critics' Circle Award and Lucille Lortel Award for his play, *An Iliad*.

LISA PETERSON (*Playwright*) is a theatre director who wrote and adapted *An Iliad* with actor Denis O'Hare, for which they won 2012 Obie and Lucille Lortel Awards. Her other adaptations include *The Waves*, adapted from the novel by Virginia Woolf, with composer David Bucknam (Drama Desk nominations), *The Good Book* with Denis O'Hare, and *Insurance Men* with composer Todd Almond. She was Resident Director at the Mark Taper Forum for ten years, and Associate Director at La Jolla Playhouse for three years before that. Her directing credits include the world premieres of Tony Kushner's *Slavs!*, Donald Margulies's *Collected Stories* and *The Model Apartment*, Naomi Wallace's *Trestle at the Pope Lick Creek*, Janusz Glowacki's *The Fourth Sister*, John Belluso's *The Poor Itch*, Beth Henley's *Ridiculous Fraud*, Jose Rivera's *Sueno*, Marlane Meyer's *The Chemistry of Change*, and many others. She has worked at theatres around the country, including New York Theatre Workshop, The Public, Playwrights Horizons, The Vineyard, Primary Stages, Manhattan Theatre Club, MCC, Guthrie Theater, Seattle Rep, Berkeley Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Yale Rep, and the McCarter Theatre. Lisa won an Obie in 1991 for Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* at NYTW, and Dramalogue, Drama Desk, and Calloway Award nominations for many other productions. She was the recipient of a TCG/NEA Career Development grant, and regularly develops new plays with the Sundance Theatre Lab, New Dramatists, The Playwrights' Center, and the O'Neill Theater Center. She is a graduate of Yale College, a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre, and on the executive board of SDC.



CHARLES NEWELL (*Director*)

was the Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director of Court Theatre for 30 years and is currently Court's Senior Artistic Consultant. In 2024, Charlie received the Joseph Jefferson Special Award, honoring his enduring impact on Chicago theatre. In 2022, he and Executive Director Angel Ysaguirre accepted the Regional Theatre Tony Award on behalf of Court Theatre. Additional credits include the Zelda Fichandler Award, Alan Schneider Award, multiple Jeff Awards, plus 18 nominations. Having directed 60+ productions at Court, recent productions include *Berlin*; *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*; *The Gospel at Colonus*, co-directed with Mark J.P. Hood; and *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, co-directed with Gabrielle Randle-Bent. He has also directed at Goodman, Lyric Opera, Guthrie, Arena, and more. Charlie is a co-founder of the Civic Actor Studio and regularly teaches leadership at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

TODD ROSENTHAL (*Scenic Designer*) is a Chicago-based set designer and educator. Broadway credits include: *August Osage: County* (Tony and Olivier Awards for Best Set Design of a Play), *The Motherfucker with the Hat* (Outer Critic's Circle Award nomination and Tony Award nomination for Best Set Design of a Play), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Tony Award for Best Revival), *Of Mice and Men* (filmed by National Theatre Live), *This is Our Youth*, *Fish in the Dark*, *Straight White Men*, *Linda Vista*, *Eureka Day*, and *Purpose*. Set designer for The Big Apple Circus (Lincoln Center and tour) for six years. Todd designs for theatres nationwide, including Steppenwolf Theatre Company (35 productions), Goodman Theatre (30 productions, Artistic Partner), Guthrie Theater, Mark Taper Forum, and others. He has received many accolades, including the Laurence Olivier Award (first American set designer), the Helen Hayes Award, the LA Stage Alliance Ovation Award, the Backstage Garland Award, and many others. Todd is the Jaharis Family Foundation Endowed Professor of Theatre at Northwestern University and a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.

RACHEL ANNE HEALY (*Costume Designer*) is thrilled to return to Court Theatre, where her designs have been seen in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *An Iliad*, *Radio Golf*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *Skylight*, and *Guys and Dolls*. Based in Chicago, her costume designs have been on numerous Chicago stages, including: Goodman, Steppenwolf, Writers, Chicago Shakespeare, Chicago Children's, Northlight, Drury Lane, Next, and Remy Bumppo. Regionally, she has designed with Alliance, American Players, Arena, Arizona Theatre Company, Cincinnati Playhouse, Hartford Stage, The Huntington, Indiana Repertory, Long Wharf, and Milwaukee Rep. Ms. Healy is also a professor at Loyola University Chicago, teaching costume, makeup, and puppetry design to budding theatre artists.

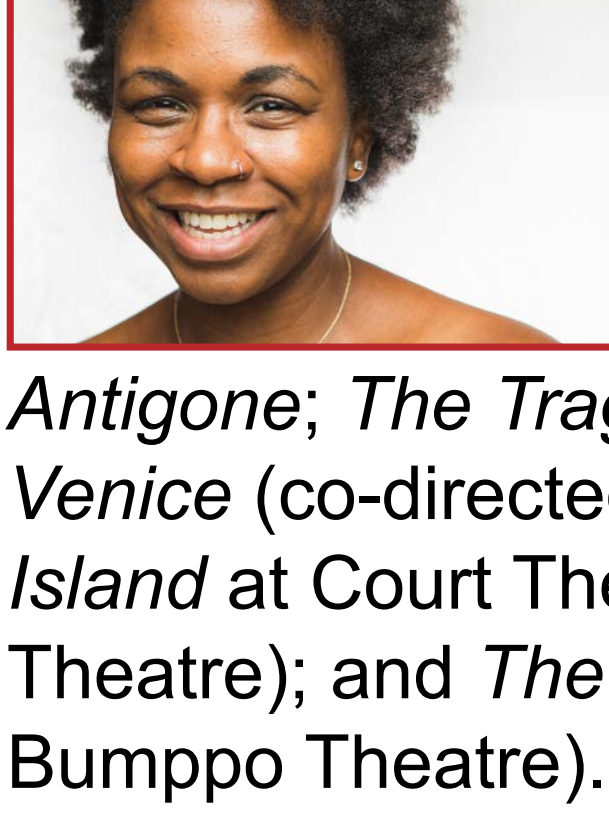
KEITH PARHAM (*Lighting Designer*) returns to Court, having previously worked on *Berlin*; *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*; *Antigone*; *The Gospel at Colonus*; *Fen*; *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*; *Oedipus Rex*; *Photograph 51*; *All My Sons*; *The Hard Problem*; *An Iliad*;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

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

DREW DIR (*Production Dramaturg*) served as the Resident Dramaturg of Court Theatre from 2009 to 2014 (*An Iliad* was his favorite production). He currently works as a puppet designer and co-artistic director of Manual Cinema.

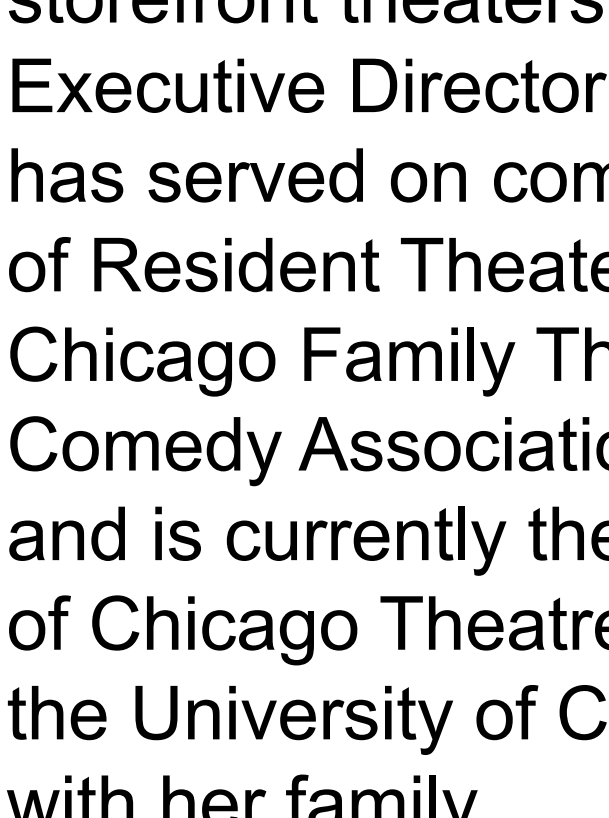
KATE OCKER (*Production Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be back at Court Theatre. Regional credits include *Berlin*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Falsettos*, *East Texas Hot Links*, *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Antigone*, *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Fen*, *The Island*, *An Iliad*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis* (Court Theatre); *It Came From Outer Space*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *As You Like It* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Six Corners*, *Buddy – The Buddy Holly Story*, *The Spitfire Grill* (American Blues); *Noises Off* (Asolo Rep); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Odd Couple*, *An Inspector Calls* (Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma); *Red* (Resident Ensemble Players).

LAUREN PETERS (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is excited to return to Court, having previously worked on *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution* and *The Lion in Winter*. Select Chicago credits include: *A Prayer for the French Republic* (Northlight Theatre); *Cinderella*, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* (Marriott Theatre); *Ironbound* (Raven Theatre); *Native Gardens* (Williams Street Repertory); *Last Night and the Night Before* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Welcome to Matteson!* (Congo Square Theatre Company). Much love and thanks to her family, friends, and Zach.



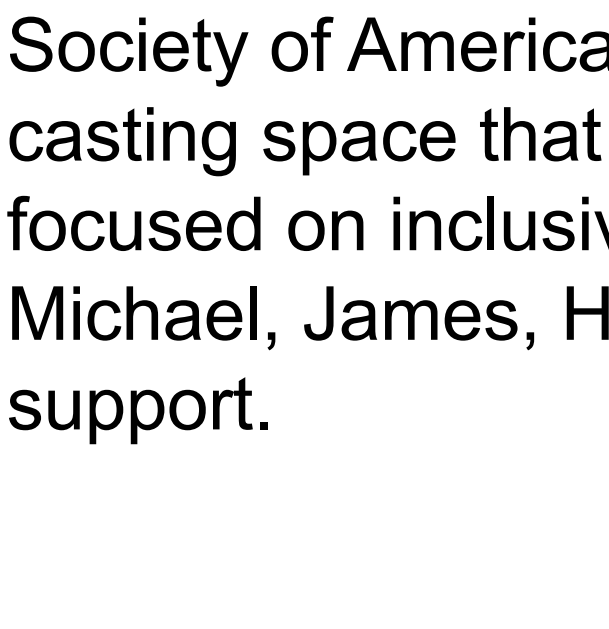
ANGEL YSAGUIRRE

(*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 Boeing and a Program Officer at the McCormick Tribune Foundation. He has served on the boards of the Poetry Foundation, Theatre Communications Group, Forefront Illinois, Restore Justice, and Chicago Dancemakers Forum.



GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT

(*Senior Artistic Producer*) is a mother, director, dramaturg, and scholar. Her directorial highlights include *A Raisin in the Sun*; *Antigone*; *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* (co-directed with Charles Newell); and *The Island* at Court Theatre; *1919* (Steppenwolf Theatre); and *The Year of Magical Thinking* (Remy Bumppo Theatre). 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 a PhD from Northwestern University.



HEIDI THOMPSON SAUNDERS

(*Senior Managing Producer*) has dedicated her entire professional career to Chicago theatre, including 15 years at Court Theatre where she is proud to be part of the leadership team. Prior to coming to Court, Heidi worked as a stage manager and technician for many storefront theaters and spent four years as the Executive Director of PlayMakers Laboratory. Heidi has served on committees or boards for the League of Resident Theaters, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, the Chicago Family Theater Association, the Chicago Comedy Association, the Illinois Theatre Association, and is currently the Chair of the Board of the League of Chicago Theatres. Heidi has an AB and MBA from the University of Chicago, and lives in Hyde Park with her family.

BECCA MCCRACKEN

(*Director of Casting and Artist Cultivation*) has spent 19 years casting in Chicago, covering the Midwest market working on TV/film, commercial, and theatre projects. Becca is an Artios Award winner for her casting work at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and is a 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 Luna for their love and support.

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ABOUT COURT THEATRE

Winner of the 2022 Regional Theatre Tony Award, Court Theatre reimagines classic theatre to illuminate our current times. In residence at the University of Chicago and on Chicago's historic South Side, we engage our audiences with intimate and provocative experiences that inspire deeper exploration of the enduring questions that confront humanity and connect us as people.

Court Theatre defines classic theatre as texts from any culture, tradition, or era that resonate throughout time and speak to our present moment.

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[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

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COURT THEATRE STAFF

<i>Executive Director</i>	Angel Ysaguirre
<i>Senior Artistic Producer</i>	Gabrielle Randle-Bent
<i>Senior Managing Producer</i>	Heidi Thompson Saunders
<i>Senior Artistic Consultant</i>	Charles Newell
<i>Resident Artist</i>	Ron OJ Parson
<i>Director of Casting and Artist Cultivation</i>	Becca McCracken C.S.A.
<i>Associate Casting Director</i>	Celeste M. Cooper
<i>Executive Assistant</i>	Tyler Calhoun
<i>Casting/Archival Intern</i>	Avery Echols
<i>New Canon Cultivation Assistant</i>	Claudia Roth Hesson
<i>Director of Engagement</i>	Kamilah Rashied
<i>Director of Education</i>	Jarrett King
<i>Engagement Programs Manager</i>	Kelcie Beene
<i>Education Programs Manager</i>	Kate Wiseman
<i>Education Coordinator</i>	Sade' May
<i>Teaching Artists</i>	India Nicole Burton Monet Felton Sonia Goldberg Willow James Jamaque Newberry
<i>Director of Production</i>	Jennifer Gadda
<i>Associate Production Manager and Company Manager</i>	Lorenzo Blackett
<i>Technical Director</i>	Luke Lemanski
<i>Assistant Technical Director</i>	Kelly Lesniak
<i>House Carpenter</i>	Tony Cooper
<i>Head of Props</i>	Lara Musard
<i>Costume Shop Manager</i>	Erica Friesen
<i>Wardrobe Supervisor</i>	Jody Schmidt
<i>Lighting Supervisor</i>	Andrei Borges
<i>Technical Director of Sound and Video</i>	Josh McCammon
<i>Interim Director of Development</i>	Dakota Williams
<i>Senior Assistant Director of Development</i>	Jean Osberger
<i>Assistant Director of Development</i>	Cara Peterson
<i>Director of Marketing</i>	Traci Brant
<i>Associate Director of Marketing for Content Creation</i>	Camille Oswald
<i>Associate Director of Marketing for Audience Services</i>	Matthew P. Sitz
<i>Audience Development</i>	Phillip H. Lewis
<i>Associate and House Manager</i>	
<i>Box Office and Ticketing</i>	Heather Dumdei
<i>Software Manager</i>	
<i>Associate Box Office Manager</i>	Abbey Freestone
<i>Assistant Box Office Managers</i>	Jordan Brown Evin McQuiston
<i>Front of House Assistants</i>	Jazmine Dixon Dawn Heatherly Ryan Isdonas Alana Yevzlin
<i>Marketing Intern</i>	Clara Bennett
<i>Public Relations</i>	Cathy Taylor Public Relations
<i>Captions</i>	CaptionPoint
<i>Volunteer Ushers</i>	Courtesy of The Saints
<i>Volunteer Coordinator</i>	Rick Babcock

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)