Professional Theatre at court THEATRE the University of Chicago

BOLD CLASSICS

Charles Newell, *Artistic Director*

Dear Friends,

Welcome back to Court! A few months ago, in this space, Charlie Newell invited you to join our theater's conversation about August Wilson during my production of *The Piano Lesson*. That show was an opportunity for me to reexamine a play I know well—I've directed it all over America with a variety of collaborators. Bringing it home to Court Theatre gave me a chance to question one more time what themes speak most directly to me out of all the rich material August incorporated into one of his thickest, most mature plays.

Working on *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* has been a different kind of experience. It was August's first major play, and it feels to me like the work of a younger playwright. Where *Fences* or *Piano Lesson* contemplate ideas, working through arguments and taking time for digressions, *Ma Rainey's* is fast and brash like Levee, its central character. *Ma Rainey's* is also the play where I met August and first experienced the thrill of his work when it opened on Broadway in 1984. Then, in 1992 I had the opportunity to direct myself as Levee and again felt the thrill of the play, this time from the inside. Now, to get to go back and pick up that energy, to explore the beginnings of August's work and my own, has made this rehearsal process exciting in a new way. We're communicating with a different August Wilson—one who hasn't yet won Pulitzer prizes and international acclaim, but whose voice is already clear and powerful.

I hope that you've enjoyed our work thus far with August. And, I hope you'll check out the rest of Court's season—it's a terrific bunch of plays and I'm proud to be a part of it.

Sincerely,



Ron OJ Parson
Resident Artist

Professional Theatre at court THEATRE the University of Chicago

BOLD CLASSICS

Charles Newell, *Artistic Director*

Court Theatre presents

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

by: August Wilson
Directed by: Ron OJ Parson

September 17 – October 18, 2009

Set Designer .....John Culbert**
Lighting Designer .....Marc Stubblefield**
Sound Designer .....Joshua Horvath** and Ray Nardelli**
Costume Designer .....Jacqueline Firkins**
Production Stage Manager.....Ellen Hay*
Assistant Stage Manager .....Jonathan Nook*

* Denotes a member of the Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers

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CAST

Levee .....James T. Alfred*
Sturdyvant .....Thomas J. Cox*
Policeman.....David Chrzanowski
Dussie Mae .....Kristy Johnson
Ma Rainey.....Greta Oglesby*
Sylvester.....Kelvin Roston, Jr.
Slow Drag .....A.C. Smith*
Irvin.....Stephen Spencer*
Toledo.....Alfred H. Wilson*
Cutler .....Cedric Young*

Understudies .....Kyra Morris, Terrence Mosley, Steve O'Connell
Cynthia Jackson Pearson, George C. Stalling

SETTING

A band room and recording studio in the late 1920's.

There will be one fifteen-minute intermission.

*Denotes a member of the Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

Court Theatre performs in the intimate Abelson Auditorium, made possible through a gift from Hope and Lester Abelson. The use of cameras, videotape recorders, or audio recorders by the audience during the course of this performance is strictly prohibited. Please turn off all cellular phones and pagers.

Court Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Productions are made possible, in part, by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and by a City Arts grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. 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; the Illinois Arts Alliance; and the League of Chicago Theatres.

ssdc The Director is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.

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ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION 1913

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BEFORE AUGUST WAS AUGUST:
A Conversation with Ron OJ Parson and Greta Oglesby

August Wilson was the kind of playwright whose very presence could silence a crowded room. Since his passing in 2005, he has left behind not only a formidable canon of plays but a vital oral history of stories and memories that surround him and his work. Continuing a conversation that Court Theatre began with *The Piano Lesson*, we sat down with Ron OJ Parson and Greta Oglesby to chat about August and his first major play, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Ron and Greta reflected on how their own artistic careers have grown and intertwined with August's, and in this conversation they talk about their experience with the language, the stories, and the man himself.

-Drew Dir and Anastasia Barron

DREW: Greta, what was your first experience with August Wilson?

GRETA: Well, my first experience with August was in Minneapolis. I was doing *Joe Turner's Come and Gone.* I was playing Bertha, and Claude Purdy—God rest his soul, he just passed away—Claude was directing the show, and there was so much buzz because it was the first show of their season and they were doing a whole season of August Wilson. (I frequent that restaurant all the time [where] August would just sit and write notes and stuff on napkins. It's a little place called [Fabulous] Fern's.) Anyway, so I was doing the show and there was such buzz about August coming and you know, you gotta get all of his words right. I never look in the audience anyways because I never break the fourth wall but we have other actors going, "Oh, he's sitting in the third row!" and I was like "Don't nobody tell me where August is sitting, I don't want to know!" So anyway we get through the first act and Claude Purdy bursts through the dressing room door and goes, "Oh my God, August Wilson said he's gotta meet you after the show," and I'm just like "get out, get out, don't tell me nothing!"



Ron, Greta, and Kelvin Roston Jr. in rehearsal

RON: In the middle of the show!

GRETA: In the middle of the show. So anyway I met him after the show and we talked a little bit—just how wonderful the show was, and this and that—and then as the show was going on that weekend the artistic director of Penumbra Theatre came to me and said August is writing something right now that he thinks you'd be perfect for. I had heard he was writing *Gem of the Ocean* so I just thought, "Oh, OK, he's probably got this little part…" So anyway, months went by and I got a call from his New York agent and they said, "August is doing *Gem of the Ocean* at the Goodman in Chicago and he wants you to be a part of the production. Are you available?" And I was like, "Well I'm not, but I will be when I call you back." So they sent me the script and they said "you'll be playing Aunt Ester." I had no idea who Aunt Ester was, so I'm flipping through it and I was just floored. I was really humbled that he looked at me and thought this is the woman that will originate this role, and kind of set the template for who this woman should be from now on.

DREW: What were your impressions of August, as just a guy?

GRETA: He was a walking encyclopedia. He was such the voice of history and wisdom, and just to be in the same room with him and to hear him talk, you wanted to write stuff down. It was like, "OK hold it, let me get that down!" He told me something after opening night of *Gem of the Ocean* and if I never get another compliment about my craft, I don't never have to have another one.

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BEFORE AUGUST WAS AUGUST (CONTINUED)

He said to me, "there are two women that say my words just like I hear 'em in my ear, and you're one of them." So I'm like Ron, I could get choked up just talking about August and the piece that I'm working on, because these pieces that he wrote, I mean, they *are* the African-American experience in this country. I'm always honored when I can say his words. I always want to say them just like he got them on the paper because you don't have to add anything to them, you don't have to take anything away from them.



Ron OJ Parson and Greta Oglesby.

RON: The more you talk the more choked up you get.

DREW: What are your memories of him, Ron?

RON: My first experience with him is with this play, *Ma Rainey*. I was friends with Rock [Charles S.] Dutton. We were telemarketers in New York, associates selling the *Weekly Reader*, and he had told me that he wasn't gonna be there long because this guy at Yale was writing this play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, he was gonna play [the role of Levee], and it was gonna change his life. So I went to Yale and saw them work on *Ma Rainey* and I met him there. So this play was my first experience when it was in its initial incarnation, before August was August—before he was the August we all came to know.

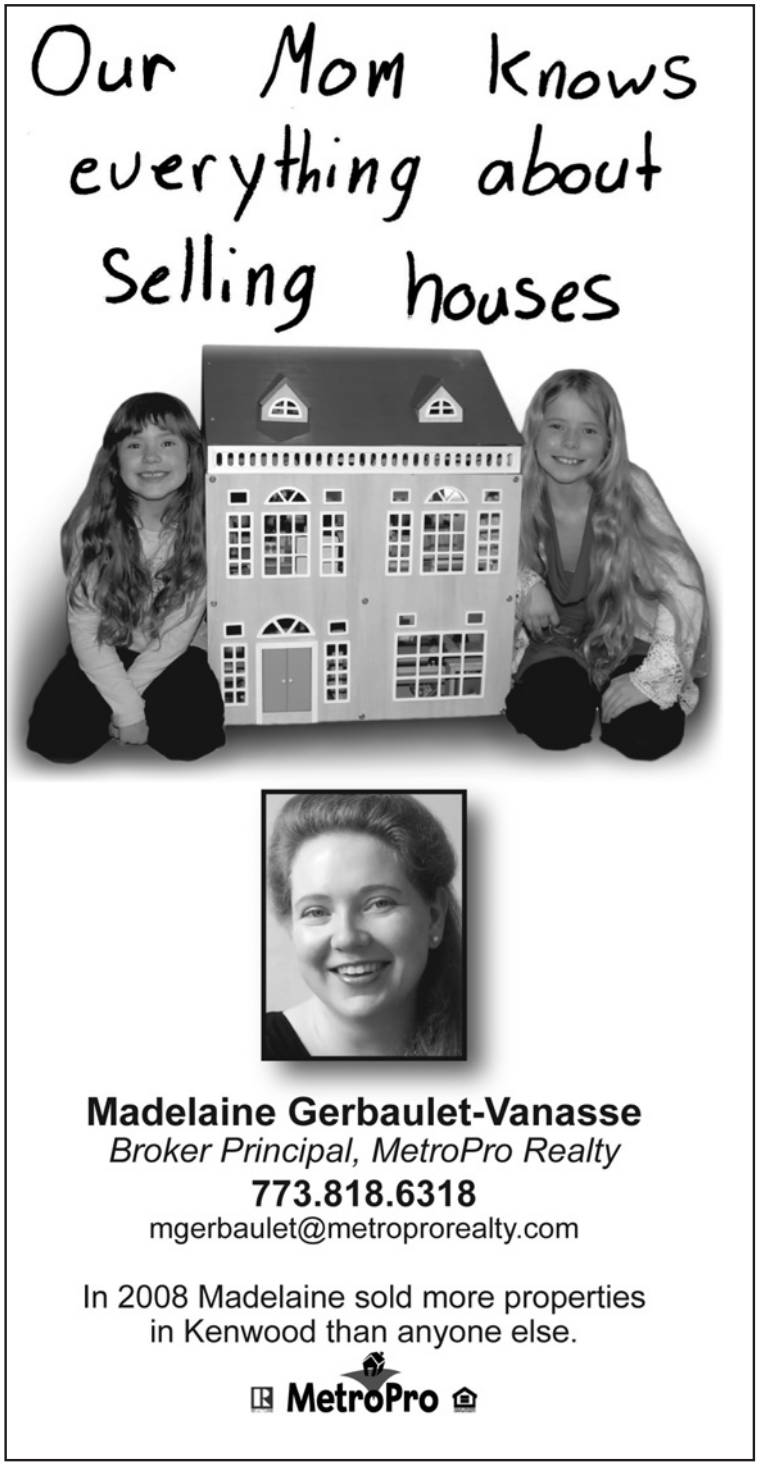
DREW: Do either of you remember what it was like when *Ma Rainey* hit Broadway?

RON: Yeah, I was there. Rock had got me a ticket to the opening and I went with him that night. It was a good experience, [but] a lot of people thought it was a musical. In fact Derrick Sanders told me a story that August had told him that they wanted it to be a musical and they were gonna not do it if he didn't change it. And he said: "Well, no, I'm not gonna change it. This is what it is. This is the play." But people did expect a musical, and it was interesting listening to the crowd. "Who's this August Wilson?" "What's this play?" "Where's Ma? I want to see more about Ma," you know, "Where's the singing and dancing?" It turned out to be a little bit different but then, of course, the rest is history.

ANASTASIA: Do you have a sense of what set apart a good production from a bad production for August?

RON: The language, people not hearing the poetry, not saying the lines. A lot of productions I've seen, they think they are improving the lines, they ad lib and they change the words. Sometimes people want to correct the grammar and you gotta say "No no no, this is what it is." This one production of *Ma Rainey* in Detroit, they used musicians who had never acted. So they knew the music and they could play the music. But I think August, with *Ma Rainey*, he felt they should be actors. If you can get an actor who can play, that's great, but not a musician who's not an actor, because these characters are deep, and there's more than just the surface. I think that productions that don't deal with the subtext lack some of the spirit that's inside them. And to be honest I haven't seen too many bad productions of August but I have seen some, and you can tell.

GRETA: I agree, I just saw a *Gem of the Ocean* recently, in fact what you said about changing, wanting to correct the language, and the Aunt Ester corrected a lot of the language. I just thought oh man, you know—



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BEFORE AUGUST (CONTINUED)

RON: A couple of times you catch yourself 'cus your natural speech patterns and your education makes you want to correct those things, but if you delve into the character and that's the way the character talks, the rhythm of the character sometimes gives you the way to say it and sometimes it's in punctuation, a comma or a period or an ellipsis can give you a rhythm of a character and there are some actors who are so good at the experience of being in and working on August.

ANASTASIA: There aren't any manifestly metaphysical or spiritual moments in the play, but I remember you talking a little bit Tuesday about how you felt there were some very spiritual aspects to it, so I was wondering what parts of the play you felt express that most?

RON: There's maybe not a specific overt situation like in *Piano Lesson*, but what I mean with August is the spirit in the room. The spirit that you come out of the theater with after seeing one. There's just a connection to the ancestral spirit of the people that I feel causes what happens, like what Levee's going through when he curses God, like what is going on with Ma Rainey's exploitation and where her soul and her spirit is hurt by the fact of the situation of African Americans at the time. In that scene when she's talking about "they ain't caring about us," and what that does to us as a people, what slavery and all the rest of that has done to a people. So the spirituality in this particular play, I think is just innately in the characters. That's why I'm trying to get us to summon up our own spirituality and our own ancestral connections to bring forth in the spirit of the piece.

(To continue reading the full interview, please visit http://www.courttheatre.org)

PROFILES



JAMES T. ALFRED (*Levee*) makes his Court Theatre debut with *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. This also marks his third of August Wilson's ten play cycle. Other Wilson credits include *Jitney* and *Fences*, both directed by Obie Award-winning director Lou Bellamy. Regional credits include *The Glass Menagerie* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Arizona Theatre Company/KC Rep), *RedShirts* (Penumbra/Round House Theatre), *Romeo and Juliet* (American Repertory Theatre), and *The Baccae* (Moscow Art Studio Theatre). James T. Alfred is a graduate of the Institute for Advanced Theatre Training at Harvard University and holds an M.F.A in Acting from the Moscow Art Theatre School.



DAVID CHRZANOWSKI (*Policeman/ Understudy for Sturdyvant & Irvin*) is delighted to be working with Court Theatre for the first time. Other Chicago productions include work at: Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Victory Gardens Theater, Polarity Ensemble Theatre, Chicago Children's Theatre, Lifeline, Silk Road Theatre Project, The Goodman Theatre, and Apple Tree Theatre. Regional work includes stops at: Montana Shakespeare in the Parks (six seasons), Kentucky Shakespeare (four seasons), Milwaukee Repertory Theater, and the Performance Network in his home town of Ann Arbor.



THOMAS J. COX (*Sturdyvant*) is thrilled to return to Court Theatre, where he has appeared in *Fräulein Else* and *Raisin*. Thom is a founding ensemble member of Lookingglass Theatre, where he has participated in over thirty pro-

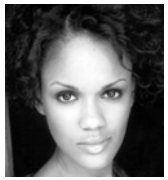
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ductions since 1988. Other performing credits include Illinois Theater Center, Weston Playhouse Theatre Company (Vermont), Victory Gardens Theater, Northlight Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, and film for The House Theatre. Directing credits: Lookingglass, Eclipse, Piven Workshop, and Weston. Film/Television credits: *Since You've Been Gone* (Miramax), *Brotherhood* (Showtime), and *Chi-Girl* (Van Lier Productions). Love to Chris and Joanie.



KRISTY JOHNSON (*Dussie Mae*) is thrilled to make her Court Theatre debut. Previous credits include: *A Song for Coretta* (Eclipse Theatre Company), *It's A Wonderful Life: A Radio Play* (Touring Company, American Theater Company), *I Am Who I Am: The Story of Teddy Pendergrass* (Black Ensemble Theatre), *The Trial* (ETA Creative Arts Foundation) and others. In 2008, she received a Black Theatre Alliance Award for Most Promising Actress. Kristy is a graduate of Harvard University.



GRETA OGLESBY (*Ma Rainey*) most recently starred as Caroline in *Caroline, or Change* at the Guthrie Theatre. Other theatre credits include: *Five Fingers of Funk* and *Beggars' Strike* (Children's Theatre Company); *The Piano Lesson*, *Dinah Was*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *A Love Song for Miss Lydia*, and *Black Nativity* (Penumbra Theatre); *Gem of the Ocean*, *The Tempest*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Crowns* (Guthrie Theatre); *Salt Fish and Bakes* (Mixed Blood Theatre); and *Once On This Island, King Lear,* and *The Furies* (Ten Thousand Things Theatre.)

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Michael Brosilow photo: Court Theatre's *Caroline, or Change*, directed by Charles Newell.



KELVIN ROSTON, JR. (*Sylvester/ Understudy for Levee & Cutler*) is happy to be making his Court Theater stage debut. His last work with Court was as the music consultant for *The Piano Lesson*. Kelvin's Chicago stage credits include *Pill Hill, Drip, Get Ready* (eta), *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black* (ITC), *Saint James Infirmary* (Congo Square Theatre Company). Other credits include: *Dreamgirls*, *Death and the King's Horseman*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Damn Yankees*, *Before it Hits Home*, and many others. "Thank you for this opportunity."



A.C. SMITH (*Slow Drag*) has appeared at Court Theatre in *The Piano Lesson, The First Breeze of Summer* and *Fences*. He is always happy to return to a company that allows an actor to grow and be challenged at the same time. His portrayal of Troy Maxon in August Wilson's *Fences* (Court) earned him the prestigious Jeff Award for lead actor in a drama. He has appeared at the Victory Gardens Theater , Timeline Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, The Chicago Center for the Performing Arts, Illinois Theatre Center, Second City, and Chicago Shakespeare Theater to name a few. "May God Bless."



STEPHEN SPENCER (*Irvin*) appeared in last season's *Wait Until Dark* at Court Theatre and is especially pleased to add another August Wilson play to his resume. Other Chicago productions include Congo Square Theatre Company's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (staged at the Goodman Theatre) and *The House That Jack Built*. As an Associate Artist at Chicago Dramatists, he has performed in countless new play readings and appeared in the Jeff Award-winning *The Liquid Moon*. Recent film credits include *Public Enemies*, *Morning Due* (Cannes 2008), *Son of America* and *Greg's Leg*.



ALFRED H. WILSON (*Toledo*) is happy to be returning to Court Theatre. Recent credits include August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* (Court), *Gem of the Ocean* and *Radio Golf* (Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati), and *Radio Golf* (Pittsburgh Public Theatre). Chicago credits include *Bourbon at the Border* (Eclipse Theatre), *Panther Burn* (MMPAACT), *Jitney* and *Two Trains Running* (Pegasus Players), where he was awarded a Jeff Citation as best actor. He has also worked at the Goodman Theatre and Victory Gardens Theatre, and is a co-founder of Onyx Theatre Ensemble.

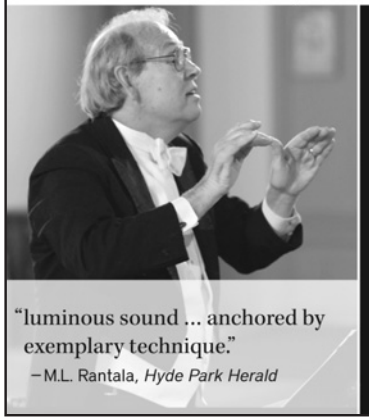


CEDRIC YOUNG (*Cutler*) has worked at most of Chicago's theatres as well as many regional houses. *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* is his debut on Court Theatre's stage. Most recently he played Jesse in *I Just Stopped by to See The Man* at Milwaukee's Repertory Theater. Some other roles include: Troy in *Fences*, also directed by Mr. Parson, Walter Lee in *A Raisin In the Sun*, Turnbo in *Jitney*, Bynum in *Joe Turner's Come & Gone*, Crixus in *Coming of the Hurricane* and Sam in *Master Harold & the Boys*. Cedric has also appeared in many films and television series. He would like to thank his lovely wife Mary for her love and support. "241 in time."

AUGUST WILSON (April 27, 1945-October 2, 2005) authored *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Seven Guitars*, *Fences*, *Two Trains Running*, *Jitney*, *King Hedley II*, and *Radio Golf*. These works explore

the heritage and experience of African-Americans, decade-by-decade, over the course of the twentieth century. His plays have been produced at regional theaters across the country and all over the world, as well as on Broadway. In 2003, Mr. Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show, *How I Learned What I Learned*. Mr. Wilson's works garnered many awards including Pulitzer Prizes for *Fences* (1987) and for *The Piano Lesson* (1990); a Tony Award for *Fences*; Great Britain's Olivier Award for *Jitney*; as well as eight New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars*, *Jitney*, and *Radio Golf*. Additionally, the cast recording of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* received a 1985 Grammy Award, and Mr. Wilson received a 1995 Emmy Award nomination for his screenplay adaptation of *The Piano Lesson*. Mr. Wilson's early works included the one-act plays *The Janitor*, *Recycle*, *The Coldest Day of the Year*, *Malcolm X*, *The Homecoming* and the musical satire *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*.

Mr. Wilson received many fellowships and awards, including Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, the Whiting Writers Award, 2003 Heinz Award, was awarded a 1999 National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States, and received numerous honorary degrees from colleges and universities, as well as the only high school diploma ever issued by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. He was an alumnus of New Dramatists, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a 1995 inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and on October 16, 2005, Broadway renamed the theater located at 245 West 52nd Street as The August Wilson Theatre. Additionally, Mr. Wilson was posthumously inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 2007.

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Mr. Wilson was born and raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and lived in Seattle, Washington at the time of his death. He is immediately survived by his two daughters, Sakina Ansari and Azula Carmen Wilson, and his wife, costume designer Constanza Romero.



RON OJ PARSON (*Director*) is a native of Buffalo, New York and a graduate of the University of Michigan's professional theatre program. He is the co-founder and former Artistic Director of the Onyx Theatre Ensemble of Chicago, and a co-founder and co-director of Ripe Mango Productions Film and Television Production Company. Ron currently resides in Chicago, Illinois and is a Resident Artist at the Court Theatre. Since moving to Chicago from New York in 1994, Ron has worked as both actor and director. Some of the theatres Ron has worked with in Chicago include The Chicago Theatre Company, Victory Gardens, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf, Chicago Dramatists, Northlight, Court, Black Ensemble Theatre, ETA Creative Arts Foundation and Writers Theatre. Some of the regional theatres include Virginia Stage Company, Portland Stage Company, Studio Arena Theatre, Studio Theatre, Roundabout Theatre, Wilshire Theatre, The Mechanic, Center Stage and, most recently, The Actors Theatre of Louisville. Court Theatre directing credits include *Fences*, *Flyin' West*, *The First Breeze of Summer*, *Wait Until Dark*, and, most recently, *The Piano Lesson*. Also an accomplished actor, some of Ron's TV and film credits include *ER*, *Early Edition*, *Turks*, *American Playhouse*, *Vamping*, *Ali*, *Barbershop 2*, *Primal Fear*, and *Drop Squad*.

JOHN CULBERT (*Scenic Design*) recently designed scenery for Court Theatre's productions of *Caroline or Change*, *Man of La Mancha* (for which he received a Joseph Jefferson award) and *Carousel*, Northlight Theatre's *Grey Gardens*, *Rigoletto* for Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Lyric Opera of Chicago's *Regina*. He also designed Lookingglass Theatre's *Argonautika*, Goodman Theatre's *Rock 'n' Roll* and *Mirror of the Invisible World*, Chicago Children's Theatre's *A Year with Frog and Toad* and Long Wharf Theatre's *Hughie*. He has designed productions for the Singapore Repertory, Opera National du Rhin, Berkeley Rep, Boston Lyric Opera, McCarter Theatre, and the Shakespeare Theatre.

JACQUELINE FIRKINS *(Costume Design)* is pleased to return for her 6th season at Court Theatre. Design work includes sets and/or costumes for Hartford Stage, Dallas Theater Center, Portland Center Stage, The Goodman Theatre, Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Westport Playhouse, Shakespeare and Company, Shakespeare Festival of Tulane, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Yale Repertory Theater, New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, Brave New Repertory, About Face Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre, and Yale School of Drama. Jacqueline is a recipient of a 2001 Princess Grace Award and heads the design program at Loyola University Chicago.

JOSHUA HORVATH (*Sound Design*) Court credits: *Wait until Dark*, *Fences*, *Caroline or Change. Carousel*, *The Romance Cycle*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?*, *Endgame, Raisin*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Man of La Mancha*, and many others. Off-Broadway credits: *Clay* (Lincoln Center). Chicago credits: Goodman, Steppenwolf, Chicago Shakespeare, Northlight, Lookingglass, About Face, The House Theatre, Timeline, and Congo Square. Regional credits: The Kennedy Center, Hartford Stage, Long Wharf, Centerstage, Kansas City Rep, Center Theatre Group, Peninsula Player, Illinois Shakespeare, Great River Shakespeare, Milwaukee Rep, Milwaukee Shakespeare, and Madison Rep. Mr. Horvath has won two Jeff awards and has been nominated 6 times.



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Greely Myatt, *Cleave* (detail), 2002-2008, cotton plant roots and found object. Installation vier at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Photo by Peter Cox. Courtesy of the artist and David Lusk Gallery, Memphis, TN.

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PROFILES

RAY NARDELLI (*Sound Design*) Past Court credits include *Wait Until Dark, First Breeze of Summer, What the Butler Saw, Flyin' West, Endgame*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and *Fräulein Else* (Jeff Nomination). Ray has composed music and designed sound at The Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Northlight Theatre, AppleTree Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, Victory Gardens Theatre, The Gift Theatre, Northwestern Theatre, DePaul Theatre, Notre Dame Summer Shakespeare, Meadow Brook Theatre, Dolphinback Theatre, American Girl Theatre, Skylight Opera. Memberships include ASCAP, IATSE #2 and USA #829.

MARC STUBBLEFIELD (*Lighting Design*) is currently in his 9th year as Court's Director of Production. This is his fifth design for Court, having worked with Artistic Director Charlie Newell on *The Glass Menagerie* and *Arcadia*, and Ron Parson on *The First Breeze of Summer* and *Wait Until Dark*. He's also excited to be teaching lighting design at the University of Chicago in the spring. He has worked at the Geffen Playhouse, the Berkshire Theatre Festival, and the Alley Theatre among others. He received a dual MFA in Production Management and Scenic Design from UCLA's school of Theatre, Film and Television, and his BA in Technical Theatre from Rice University.

ELLEN HAY (*Production Stage Manager*) has had the pleasure of stage managing more than 20 productions at Court Theatre over the past decade. Favorites include *The Piano Lesson*, *Caroline, or Change*, *Arcadia*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *My Fair Lady, The Invention of Love*, and *Nora*. Other credits include work at The Goodman Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, Hartford Stage Company, and The Public Theater.

JONATHAN NOOK (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be returning to the Court Theatre, where he was not seen in productions of *The Piano Lesson*, *Wait Until Dark*, *The Wild Duck*, *Caroline, or Change*, *The First Breeze of Summer*, *Carousel*, *Titus Andronicus*, *What the Butler Saw*, and *Thyestes*. Other stage management credits include *Sex with Strangers*, *The 3rd and 4th Annual First Look Repertory of New Work*, *Superior Donuts*, *Huck Finn* (Steppenwolf); *Radio Macbeth* (Court/SITI); *Measure for Measure*, *Arms and the Man* (American Players Theatre); *Misalliance*, *Moonlight Room*, *Take Me Out* (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre).



CHARLES NEWELL (*Artistic Director*) has been Artistic Director of Court Theatre since 1994, where he has directed over 30 productions. He made his Chicago directorial debut in 1993 with *The Triumph of Love*, which won the Jefferson Award for Best Production. Directorial credits at Court include *The Wild Duck*, *Caroline, or Change*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Carousel*, *Arcadia*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Raisin*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Man of La Mancha*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Travesties*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Cyrano*, *Guys and Dolls*, *James Joyce's "The Dead," Hamlet*, *Piano*, *The Invention of Love*, *The Little Foxes*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Nora*. Charlie has also directed at the Guthrie Theatre (Resident Director: *The History Cycle*, *Cymbeline*), Arena Stage, John Houseman's The Acting Company (Staff Repertory Director), the California and Alabama Shakespeare Festivals, Julliard, and New York University. He is the recipient of the 1992 TCG Alan Schneider Director Award and is a multiple Jeff Award recipient/nominee.

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Teaching Artists	Melanie Brezill, Ben Dicke, Jennifer Foughner, Emjoy Gavino, Kam Hobbs, Carolyn Hoerdemann, Mechelle Moe, Jack Tamburri
Artistic Administrator	Jack Tamburri
Casting/Education Assistant	Sara Tamler
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Mission

Court Theatre is guided by a mission to discover the power of classic theatre. Underlying this mission is the goal of becoming the national center for classic theatre, where the arts community looks for leadership in the creation, production and study of classic plays. Court fulfills this mission by rigorously exploring a wide range of dramatic texts, including African-American and musical works; by expanding the canon of classic theatre through initiatives such as the Barbara E. Franke Commissioning Program for New Classics; and by engaging in ongoing strategic organizational planning, which currently includes an investigation into the possibility of an expanded, state-of-the-art facility.

Named "the most consistently excellent theater company in America" by *The Wall Street Journal*, Court has a national reputation for excellence and innovation. Through five main stage productions per season, as well as a wealth of free symposia, post-performance discussions and education programs, it endeavors to make a lasting contribution to American theatre by thoroughly examining and imaginatively re-envisioning classic works to illuminate timeless themes and uncover immediately relevant messages.

History

Court Theatre was founded in 1955 as an amateur outdoor summer theatre at the University of Chicago. In 1971, classics professor Nicholas Rudall assumed the role of director and conceived Court's tradition of translating and adapting classic texts for contemporary audiences; the theatre was then established as a professional company with Actors' Equity Association in 1975. In 1981, Court built its current home, the intimate, 251-seat Abelson Auditorium, and in 1983 the theatre incorporated as an independent non-profit organization. Artistic Director Charles Newell (named "one of the city's most significant artistic assets" by the *Chicago Tribune*) has led Court since 1994.

With an operating budget of approximately $3 million, Court reaches nearly 35,000 patrons annually through its main stage productions, as well as 400 South Side high school students each year with intensive in-school and extracurricular programs, including an annual high school performance festival, and 3,200 Chicago-area teens through our deeply-discounted student matinee series.

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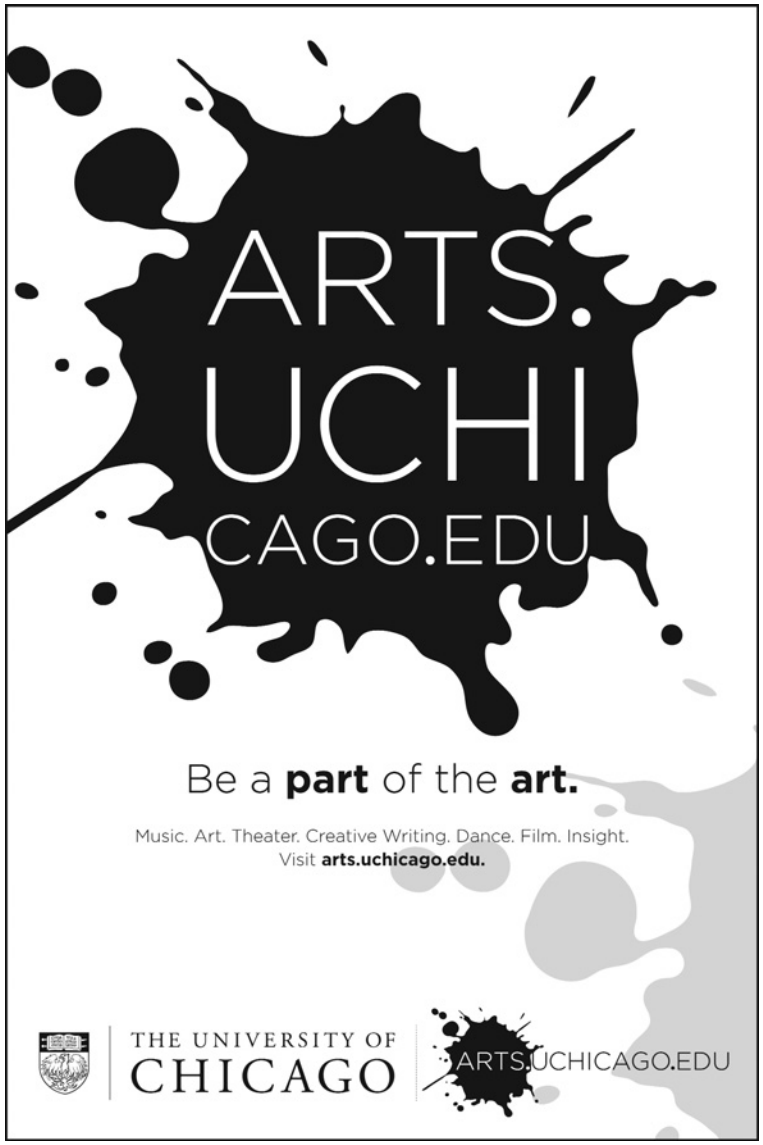
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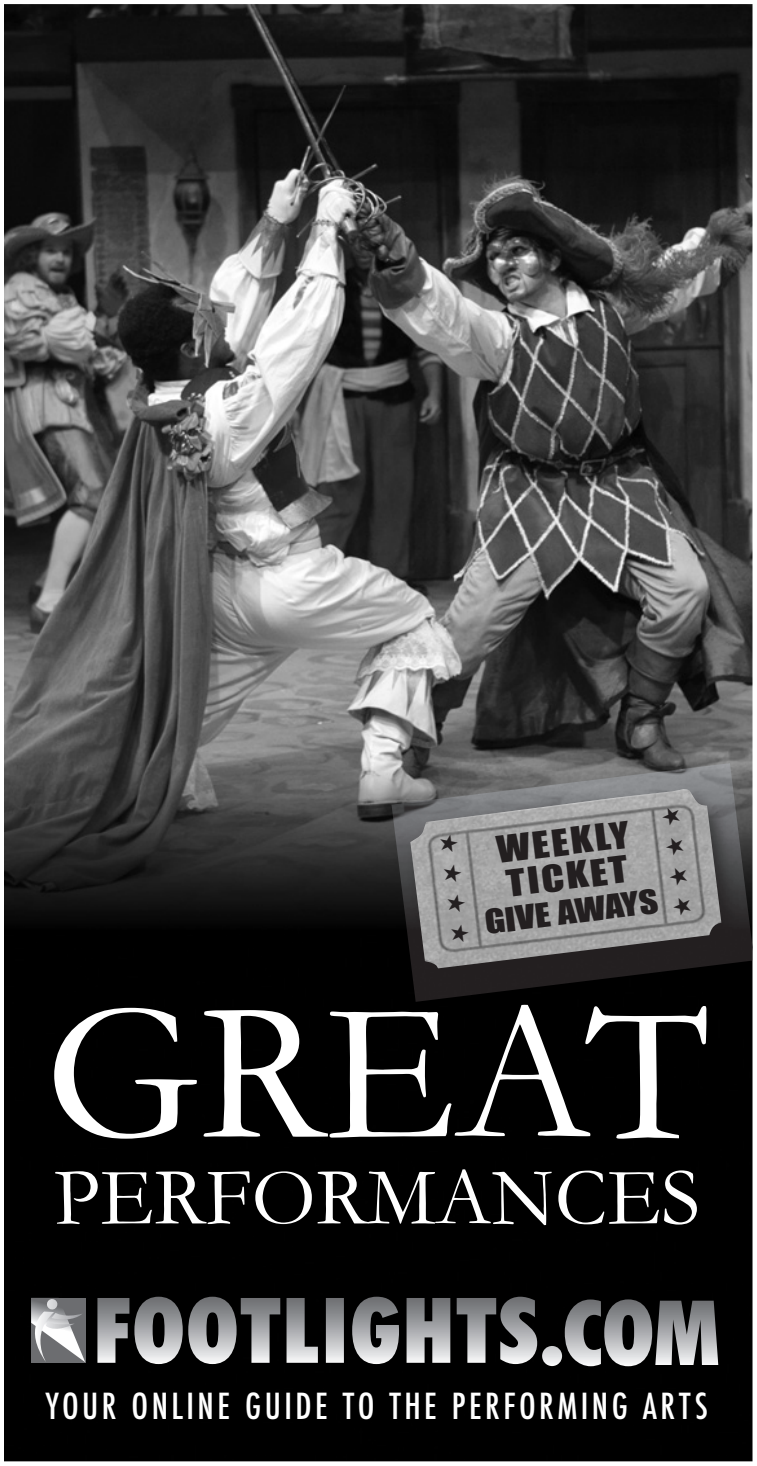
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