THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | Arts

2013/14: the 59th Season

Court Theatre

Dear Court Theatre Family,

Back in October, Court hosted a very special event celebrating Resident Artist Ron OJ Parson, who recently marked an important milestone: his tenth production at Court Theatre, *The Mountaintop*. It was a remarkable moment; Ron had a highly acclaimed production of *A Raisin in the Sun* at TimeLine Theatre, had opened *The Mountaintop*, and received Jeff Nominations for 2012's *Jitney*, all in less than two months. As the evening unfolded, we recounted Ron's achievements here at Court: his success with August Wilson's plays, beginning with his award-winning *Fences* and continuing with *The Piano Lesson, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom,* and *Jitney*; his eye for new classics like *The First Breeze of Summer, Flyin' West, Wait Until Dark,* and *Home*; and his talent for shaping riveting performances like those of *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *The Mountaintop*. In attendance was an impressive array of Ron's perennial collaborators: A.C. Smith, Lisa Beasley, Alfred Wilson, Greta Oglesby, Tyla Abercrumbie, and Kamal Angelo Bolden, just to name a few—all familiar faces to Court audiences. With this company of artists, we celebrated the positive impact that Ron has made on our lives and on Court Theatre, as well as the contributions that this exceptional director has made to theatre in Chicago and around the country.

Ron's residency and work at Court Theatre is the result of a visionary investment that the Joyce Foundation has made in him and our theatre. That evening we explored the larger context for Ron's work with the African American canon and recognized the demographic sea-change that is taking place in our country. It was a trend that many of us heard iterated by experts during the 2012 United States presidential election: the country is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, and within just a few decades, white or Caucasian Americans will represent an overall demographic minority. As theatre artists, supporters, and audience members, the question we face is paramount: does the American theatre truly reflect all of America in its multitude of stories, voices, and faces? Given that Court Theatre is situated in Hyde Park, one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the country, we have sustained a long engagement with this question; when Ron OJ Parson joined us as Resident Artist seven years ago, it was part of a larger strategy to rededicate ourselves to making Court Theatre's work more inclusive. We believe that the exploration of a wide array of stories that reflect America's many textures is richly rewarding; diversity leads to amazing perspectives and discovery.

At the same time that *Seven Guitars* is occupying our stage, high school students throughout the country are working on preparing for the August Wilson Monologue Competition. Court Theatre's Artists-in-the-Schools Program has been in South Side high schools since this fall working to enhance the ability of the Chicago Public Schools to introduce students to August Wilson's body of work. Students read the plays, examine the history surrounding the work, explore the characters, and then choose a monologue to perform. Many report that this single act of standing on the stage and performing before their friends is a transformative experience that builds confidence and possibilities. The program is yet another gift from August, whose voice continues to teach, inspire, and entertain.

Welcome to Court Theatre's production of August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*.

Sincerely,

Charles Newell, *Artistic Director*

Stephen J. Albert, *Executive Director*

court THEATRE

2013/14: the 59th Season

Artistic Director CHARLES NEWELL

Executive Director STEPHEN J. ALBERT

August Wilson's

SEVEN GUITARS

Directed by Ron OJ Parson

January 9 - February 9, 2014

Scenic Design by Regina Garcia U.S.A.

Costume Design by Christine Pascual U.S.A.

Lighting Design by Marc Stubblefield U.S.A.

Sound Design by Joshua Horvath U.S.A.

Cree Rankin, *Casting*

Martine Kei Green-Rogers, *Dramaturg*

Sara Gammage,* *Production Stage Manager*

William Collins,* *Stage Manager*

SETTING: Pittsburgh, the Hill District. Spring 1948.

Seven Guitars is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

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

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

Sponsored by Grant Thornton WINSTON & STRAWN LLP

Ron OJ Parson's Artistic Residency is made possible by a grant from The Joyce Foundation

Cover art by Daniel Minter.

CAST

Red Carter ..... **Ronald Conner*†**

Louise ..... **Felicia Fields***

Hedley ..... **Allen Gilmore***

Canewell ..... **Jerod Haynes**

Ruby ..... **Erynn Mackenzie***

Floyd Barton ..... **Kelvin Roston Jr.***

Vera ..... **Ebony Wimbs***

Fight Announcer ..... **John Hoogenakker***

Understudies ..... Kristin E. Ellis, Brian Keys, Deanna Reed, Mark Smith

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

PRODUCTION STAFF

Haitian Dialect Coach ..... William Balan-Gaubert

Assistant Director ..... Aaron Mays

Fight Choreographer ..... Matt Hawkins

Movement Consultant ..... Cristin Carole

Scenic Artists ..... Scott Gerwitz U.S.A., Julie Ruscitti U.S.A.

Carpenters ..... Brian Claggett, Kevin Decker, Andrew Hilder, Dylan Jost, Tristan Meredith, Myra Su, Erik Tylkowski

Props Artisan ..... Meredith Miller

Costume Assistant ..... Valerie Vanderkolk

Wardrobe Supervisor ..... Jody Schmidt

Wardrobe Crew, Costume Shop Assistant ..... Alexia Rutherford

Stitcher ..... Tina Stasny

Wig Design ..... Christina Carlson

Lighting Assistant ..... Claire Chrzan

Assistant Master Electrician ..... Elizabeth Smith

Electricians ..... Liz Boros-Kazai, Nicholas Carroll, Tamar Daskin, Andrew Glasenhardt, Ellie Humphrys, Jason McCreery, Cassie Mings, Pete Mugg, Alex Schmaus, Ted Smith, Michael Trudeau, Chirstopher Wilham

Associate Sound Designer ..... Joe Court

Floor Manager ..... Katie Adams

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

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

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited. Please turn off all phones, pagers, and chiming watches.

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; a City Arts grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; and the Cultural Outreach Program of the City of Chicago. 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, Arts Alliance Illinois, and the League of Chicago Theatres.

CITY ARTS GRANTS Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs · Illinois ARTS council · ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION 1913 · IA · SDC The Director and Choreographer are members of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.



Ron OJ Parson shares the costume designs at the first rehearsal for *Seven Guitars.*
Photo by joe mazza/brave lux inc.

RON OJ PARSON

"Awww… What a joy to be back home at Court, and with 'The Man'—August Wilson. With Seven Guitars, we revisit the world of August and the blues. Of course, it's always an honor to take August Wilson's words off the page and bring them to life, particularly in a decade (the 1940s) that was, in many ways, a turning point for African American culture and the music industry. With Seven Guitars, August explores the hopes and dreams of a vibrant world where our Spirit is an integral part of who we are. He educates and entertains, simultaneously. His richness of character and lyricism are on display here, as well as the music in the language that makes August Wilson so special."

—Director Ron OJ Parson

AUGUST WILSON

"In Sister Mary Eldephonse's seventh grade class, history was at the top of my list of favorite subjects. I was intrigued merely by the record of events that had happened prior to 1957, as it would be years later before I would come to understand that the events had meanings that were connected and played out on a larger playing field of politics and culture.

In my reading of history, seldom if ever was the black experience in America given any historical weight, any meaning or purpose beyond that provided by a culture and politic that had enslaved and still in 1957 refused to accept the equality of its black citizens. As a black American artist, I have sought in all my work to restore the experience to a primary role, to create in essence a world in which the black American is the spiritual center, thus giving the events of history a different perspective. It is one thing to be the owner of a plantation, and another to be a slave. Both have equally valid perspectives. Both share the same physical space, and in the irreversible sweep of history, the same intertwining of national will and purpose, yet there can be no doubt that they lived very different lives. Despite my interest in history, I have always been more concerned with culture, and while my plays have an overall historical feel, their settings are fictions, and they are peopled with invented characters whose personal histories fit within the historical context in which they live.

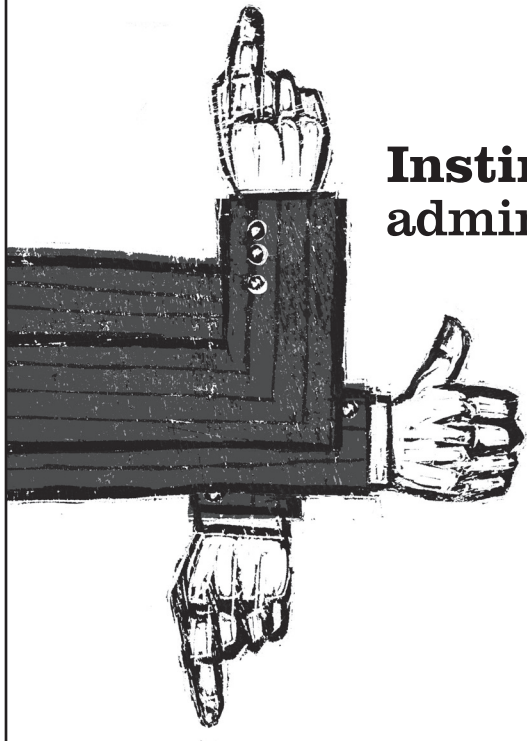
I have tried to extract some measure of truth from their lives as they struggle to remain whole in the face of so many things that threaten to pull them asunder. I am not a historian. I happen to think that the content of my mother's life—her myths, her superstitions, her prayers, the contents of her pantry, the smell of her kitchen, the song that escaped from her sometimes parched lips, her thoughtful repose and pregnant laughter—are all worthy of art.

Hence, *Seven Guitars*."

—August Wilson, 1995, Goodman Theatre

Originally published by the Goodman Theatre for the world premiere production of Seven Guitars.

Reason says:
applaud the achievement.



Instinct says:
admire the effort.

Behind every great achievement lies talent, dedication and inspiring perseverance. On behalf of the Grant Thornton professionals who live and work here in Chicago, **we are proud to sponsor the Court Theatre**. To see how we help unlock the potential for growth for businesses and organizations here at home and around the world, visit **GrantThornton.com**.

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Playwright as Literary Prophet: August Wilson's Seven Guitars

By Khalilah T. Watson, Ph.D.



Art by Daniel Minter

August Wilson is a prominent black playwright who is not in need of any introduction. When one thinks of black life and the theatre, his name should automatically come to mind. It is on stage through the characters, the music, the language, and his treatment of the American historical landscape that Wilson bears witness to the significant implications of black life. Like the prophets, griots, and storytellers that have gone before him, he uncovers the embedded matters that lie within the society: notions of sexism, classism, racism, and ageism.

August Wilson is best known for his ten-play "Pittsburgh Cycle." Nine of these plays take place in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, the neighborhood where Wilson spent the majority of his childhood. Each play is set in a different decade during the twentieth century and together, as Wilson once stated, his works chronicle the "four hundred year" black experience in America. Starting with the 1900s: *Gem of the Ocean*; 1910s: *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*; 1920s: *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*; 1930s: *The Piano Lesson*; 1940s: *Seven Guitars*; 1950s: *Fences*; 1960s: *Two Trains Running*; 1970s: *Jitney*; 1980s: *King Hedley II*; 1990s: *Radio Golf*. In 1982, the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center developed his first play in the Pittsburgh Cycle, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. It was the success of this play that brought about Wilson's national notoriety. *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play and a Tony Award nomination; *Fences* was even more successful, obtaining an Outstanding Play Award from the American Theatre Critics, a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding New Play, a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and a Tony Award for best play. Eventually, he won another Pulitzer Prize for *The Piano Lesson*, and the National Humanities Medal in 1999.

Supporting the spellbinding and profound effect that Wilson's plays have had on American culture, his awards, prizes, and other means of recognition extend beyond his own physical presence. Posthumously, the Virginia Theater in New York's Broadway district was renamed the August Wilson Theater. This is the first Broadway theatre to be named after an African American, symbolizing his unmatched

CONTINUED ON P 8

success and contributions to the field of drama. Each of Wilson's plays is a timeless treasure and a gift to American society, manifesting the multiplicity and complexity of Black American life.

Now at Court Theatre, similar to *Seven Guitars*' first opening on January 21, 1995 at the Goodman Theatre, the genius of August Wilson's artistry will find its place in Chicago again. *Seven Guitars* is set in Pittsburgh's Hill District in 1948. Primarily taking place in the backyard of Louise's house (and Vera's apartment), a group of friends are gathered to reflect and remember Floyd "School Boy" Barton. As once explained by Wilson, as the title suggests, "There are seven characters. Each one of the characters is a guitar." Betrayal, love, honesty, pain, displacement, justice, and redemption are some of themes embedded in each character's story. The stories are bold in language, rich in texture, colorful in mood, and delicious in taste; remembering Buddy Bolden, Muddy Waters, Joe Louis, Marcus Garvey, and Touissant L'Ouverture; to foods like sweet potato pie, chicken, potatoes, green beans, and corn bread.

Each character's story mirrors the composition of a blues song and intertwines the historical complexity of black life, while Floyd Barton is the centrifugal force for each character. First, Floyd is the musician that is on his way to fame, and he wants to take his friends with him, especially Vera. It is through him that one sees the importance or the necessity for second chances in life. Vera, Floyd's girlfriend, is a woman who has been bitten by love and is contemplating opening up her heart again. Louise is the cautious, independent, elder female voice. She is also the landlord for the edifice, or the set, that provides a residence to the other characters and the safe space for the characters to interface. Ruby, as her name suggests, is the bold, youthful, submissive, and vivacious niece of Louise. She is the lady in red. She provides the vulnerable female presence.

Through these female characters Wilson sheds light on the delicate intricacies of the male-female relationships. Red Carter is a drummer in Floyd's band, and more importantly, he is his friend. Meanwhile, Hedley and Canewell echo the prophetic voices that one reads about in the Bible or uses to interpret the condition of the world based upon the Old Testament. Hedley is also the Black Nationalist voice that recounts some aspects of slavery and believes that the white man has a plan against him. The historical injustices experienced by these black men have merely transformed into the racial profiling and stop-and-search laws of today. Floyd, Red Carter, Canewell, and Hedley can all relate, no matter what; they cannot escape being arrested for anything, anytime, and anywhere.

It is through the blues songs for each of these male characters that one can begin to understand the plight of the black man in America and his desire for self-identity. This examination as given by August Wilson, through Floyd's character, supports other articulations that resemble a similar tone during this time and beyond: Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. Like Nelson Mandela discusses the absence of equality of opportunity in *African life*, Floyd Barton's life is a flashback and flash forward of life lessons to be learned and the stories that are not to be forgotten. Thus, the literary prophetic voice of August Wilson speaks again; he is bearing witness. ■

Dr. Khalilah T. Watson is Professor of English, Reading, and Literature at Olive-Harvey College, where she specializes in twentieth-century African American fiction and literary theory, particularly Toni Morrison. She holds a Ph.D. in English from Georgia State University, a master's degree from Eastern Michigan University, and a bachelor's degree from Albion College.

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Court Theatre
and the Opening Night
of "Seven Guitars"

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Wilson, Black Theatre and Seven Guitars:

Discussing the Importance of African American Voices

by Martine Kei Green-Rogers, PhD



Dr. Martine Kei Green-Rogers is the production dramaturg for *Seven Guitars* and a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Theatre at the University of Utah.

Photo of Kelvin Roston, Jr. by joe mazza/brave lux inc.

In 1996, August Wilson gave a definitive talk at the Theatre Communications Group (TCG) conference. This speech became a uniquely watershed experience for black theatre. The reason? Wilson took to task the space, or lack thereof, he felt that white theatre and its supporters/funders have given to black theatre.

In light of the upcoming production of *King Hedley II* (Wilson's "continuance" of the story of several characters from *Seven Guitars*) by a fellow Chicago theatre, Congo Square, in March 2014, I thought it would be a good idea to discuss Wilson's thoughts on black theatre, how he felt about majority run institutions doing black theatre, and how those thoughts connect to *Seven Guitars*.

Wilson states in his speech during this conference:

> "There are and have always been two distinct and parallel traditions in black art: that is, art that is concerned and designed to entertain white society, and art that feeds the spirit and celebrates the life of black America by designing its strategies for survival and prosperity." (*Ground* 18).

During this speech, Wilson throws down a gauntlet for those attending the conference and the entirety of American theatre. He acknowledges, reveres, and then complicates the work by "crossover artists that slant their material for white consumption" (*Ground* 19). The reason for his harsh stance is simple: he feels black theatre is as important and nationally relevant as any other theatre that exists, yet it was, and still is, marginalized in American regional theatre. Hence, when moments such as this come along, when theatres in a city begin, consciously or unconsciously a conversation about the importance of black theatre by doing several works by black artists (I am also evoking the Goodman with *Pullman Porter Blues* and the work that is done by the Black Ensemble Theatre, among other local theatres), this moment should be acknowledged and celebrated for numerous reasons. The most important reason being that several theatres celebrating the rich diversity of African American stories various times over a city's larger theatrical season occurs a lot less in American theatre as one would hope (or like). This coupled with the fact that we are eighteen years past Wilson's speech, yet still suffering from a lack of reverence (found in the form of production) for the dramatic work of black artists, both regionally and on Broadway.

Wilson states in this same speech, "we can meet on the common ground of theatre as a field of work and endeavor" (*Ground* 26). He goes on a little later in this speech to add, "the commonalities that we share are the commonalities of culture…there are some commonalities to our different ideas" (*Ground* 27). As a result, "we can meet on the common ground of the American theatre" (*Ground* 28). This is where the burgeoning collaboration and resultant cross-city conversation between Congo Square and the Court Theatre becomes imperative. As Wilson states, "we need a value system that includes our contributions as Africans in America…a value system that is inclusive of all Americans and recognizes their unique and valuable contributions" (*Ground*, 28). This value system that forwards the traditions of African American theatre is being forged in Chicago Theatre in its growing commitment to telling the stories of African American authors and employing African American artists (as well as authors and stories from other ethnic and racial categories). These stories are important because of the cultural diversity found in Chicago, but even more importantly, the cultural diversity to be found in America in general.

CONTINUED ON P 12

PLAY NOTES



Theatres that specifically produce black theatre, like Congo Square in Chicago and Penumbra in Saint Paul, are dwindling (for numerous reasons). Therefore, the question remains, where are the people who will make it a priority to make sure these black theatres and black dramatic works (at the very least) will survive? I believe the work Court Theatre is doing, by producing *The Mountaintop* and *Seven Guitars* in the same season, is a wonderful step forward in an important direction. Although, in some respects, this is a step that is only one aspect of Wilson's entire point, i.e., that a space should be made in majority theatres for the works of people of color and that space needs to be made in American theatre for minority institutions to grow and thrive. I do want to note, however, that Wilson's point is far more complicated than my reductive analysis in this moment reflects.

These thoughts bring me back to *Seven Guitars*. Speaking only for myself, this play is my favorite of the Wilson canon. Wilson, in my humble opinion, does a wonderful job of weaving a story of seven people, seven guitars, who play the song of their lives and their ancestors with every breath they take. With this weaving of their stories, Wilson does a magnificently brilliant thing with this play: he creates a story that does not cater to majority audiences, per se, but does tell a black story that—while rooted in its race, culture, and that history—is more than just a "black story." It is a black story that embodies universal themes: family, the pursuit of a dream, the willingness to take a chance, the pang of loss, and the triumph of those who continue on despite the loss.

The works of August Wilson have become canonized in professional, community, and academic theatrical circles. The relevance of his work is no longer a point of discussion. If anything, the conversation centers on the poetry and history embodied in the Pittsburgh cycle. However, there are other people whose stories, like the stories found in *Seven Guitars*, are still struggling to find acceptance and respect. There are some lines that the character Floyd says that conjures the importance of Chicago theatre's commitment to these voices. Floyd exclaims, "Chicago is what you make it…It got whatever you want. That's why everybody go there. That's why I'm going there. I'm going there to take advantage of the opportunity" (*Seven Guitars* 80). Wilson has a prophetic moment within Seven Guitars in these lines: the space and opportunity he desires is being made, numerous years later, in Chicago.

The "triumph of those who remain" and their stories becomes even more resonant as one leaves this production of *Seven Guitars* and then supports Congo Square's production of *King Hedley II*. I encourage you to do so, and to continue your support of the stories of all American theatre voices. ■

Works Cited
Wilson, August. *Seven Guitars*. New York: Plume, 1996.
Wilson, August. *The Ground On Which I Stand.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1996.

Footlights Ad 1: Metropro-Full Page
Full – Color – far forward



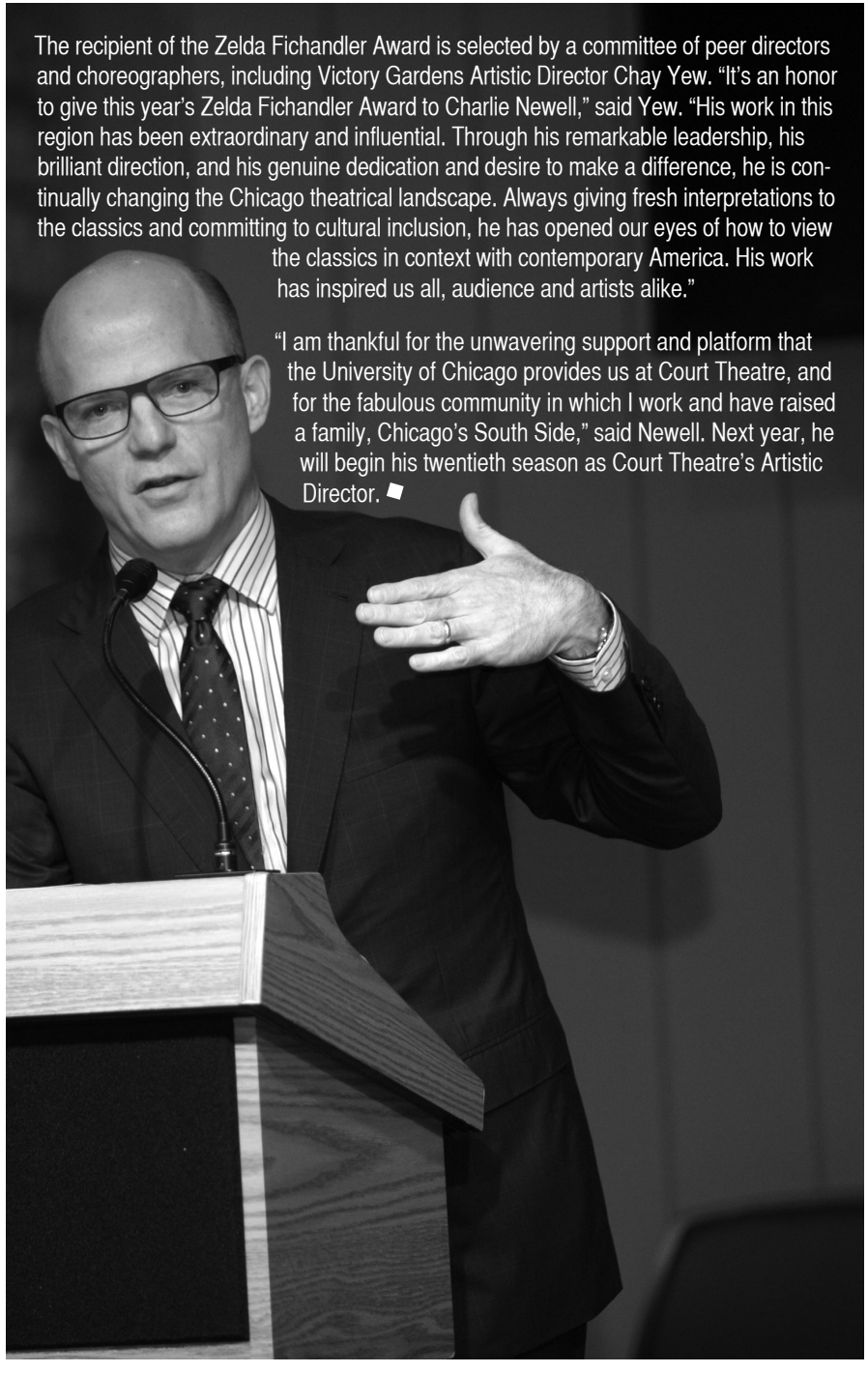
Above: Artistic Director Charles Newell (right) accepts the 2013 Zelda Fichandler Award from fellow SDC director Sean Graney.

On Monday, November 4, Court Theatre Artistic Director Charles Newell accepted one of the most prestigious awards that a director can receive in the American theatre: the Zelda Fichandler Award. It is a remarkable prize awarded by the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation that recognizes the work of a director or choreographer who is "making an exceptional contribution to the national arts landscape through theatre work in a region," ie. beyond New York City. The award is named after Zelda Fichandler, the founding director of Arena Stage in Washington, DC who was a shining model of the far-ranging positive impact that an artistic director can have on a community.

"To receive the Zelda Fichandler Award from SDCF means the world to me," said Newell. "My very first theatre-going memories are of my mother taking me to Zelda's Arena Stage. The daring theatre she created and produced, the singular artists she championed, the impact her art made on her community: these all have been a beacon of inspiration to me. For twenty years, I have been fortunate to build a life in the theatre here in Chicago, seeking to follow Zelda's example. I am very proud to be a member of this most vibrant theatre community, and am constantly inspired by our artists and patrons."

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The recipient of the Zelda Fichandler Award is selected by a committee of peer directors and choreographers, including Victory Gardens Artistic Director Chay Yew. "It's an honor to give this year's Zelda Fichandler Award to Charlie Newell," said Yew. "His work in this region has been extraordinary and influential. Through his remarkable leadership, his brilliant direction, and his genuine dedication and desire to make a difference, he is continually changing the Chicago theatrical landscape. Always giving fresh interpretations to the classics and committing to cultural inclusion, he has opened our eyes of how to view the classics in context with contemporary America. His work has inspired us all, audience and artists alike."

"I am thankful for the unwavering support and platform that the University of Chicago provides us at Court Theatre, and for the fabulous community in which I work and have raised a family, Chicago's South Side," said Newell. Next year, he will begin his twentieth season as Court Theatre's Artistic Director. ■



"Charlie, I send you a message of admiration and celebration – for what you have achieved at the Court Theatre in the past twenty years and what you will continue to achieve as you embark on the next twenty, for you know what you are doing and why... Our main strength is that we touch each other, learn from each other, support each other. And you represent that salient strength. You are mentoring young artists as you were mentored. And out of what you discovered about the art of theatre, you found your own path and went on to create one of the leading theatres of America." —Zelda Fichandler



"I am delighted that Charlie Newell is the current recipient of the Zelda Fichandler Award not only because he deserves the honor and attention but also because like Zelda, Charlie is an exuberant and successful champion of the art of theatre and he is making a difference in our cultural environment. His intelligence and savvy palpably occupies his productions as well as his theatre-building and his city. I am grateful to be sharing the planet with Charlie now. Congratulations, Charlie!" —Anne Bogart, SITI Company Artistic Director



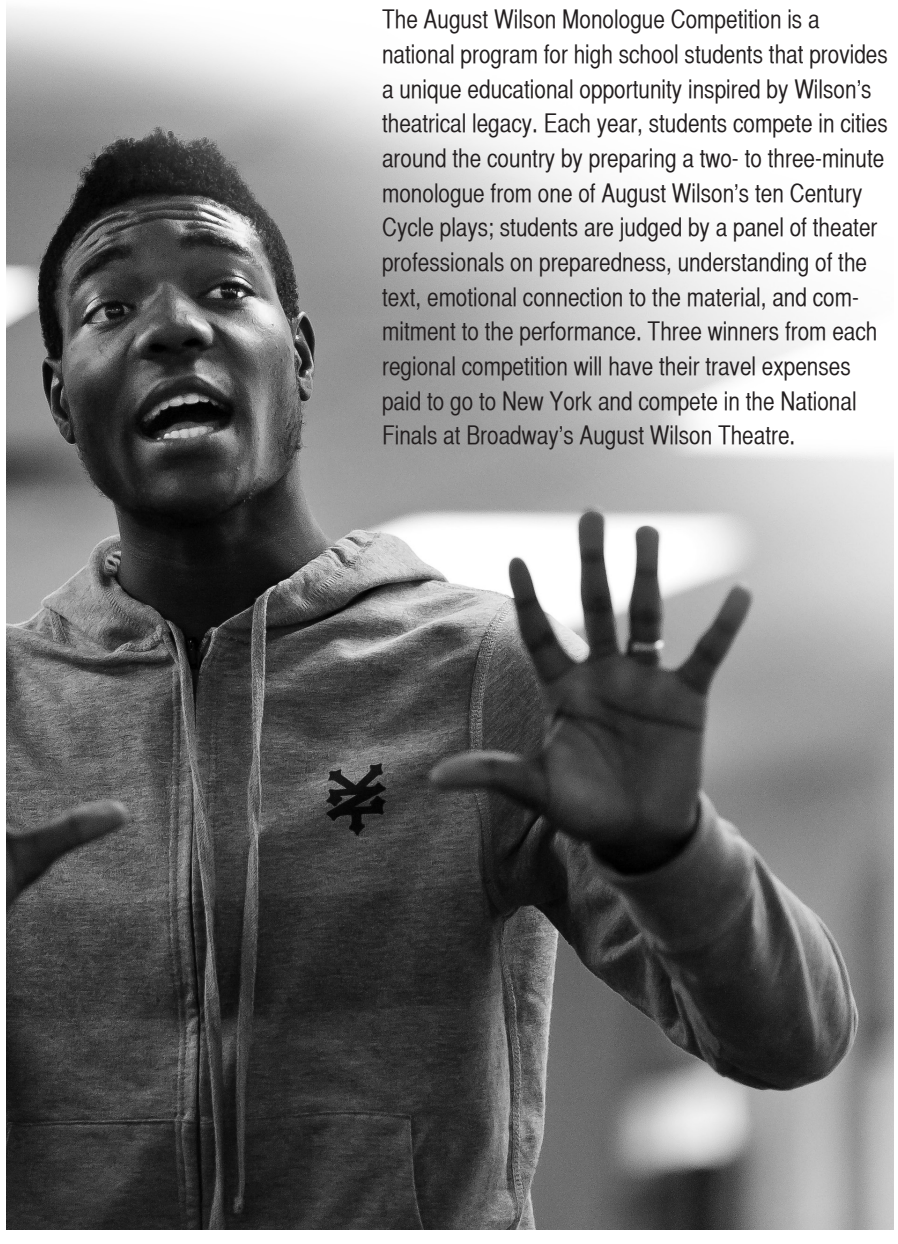
"I am so glad Charlie's accomplishments and future promise are being recognized with the Fichandler Award. It seems perfect. I remember his arrival at the Guthrie—it must have been 1988, I think—after we decided that a theater organized around the company ideal must have resident directors. I don't know how Garland found Charlie, but what a great choice he was. I am not surprised that he has been such a success at the Court. "

—Ed Martenson, Guthrie Theatre Executive Director (1986–1997)



"I'm so delighted that Charlie Newell is receiving this award. Charlie's work is an example of forging a life and career in resident theatre, going from being a fan to assisting to directing to being an Associate to finally becoming an Artistic Director himself. He had goals, and he followed a path, all along retaining and cherishing his fundamental belief in the healing and elevating art of theatre. He made no compromises. I'm from Chicago, and I went to the University of Chicago. Being in Chicago is like being in the center of the universe for me. Charlie's belief in a community of Chicago theatre artists without excluding those, like myself, from the outside, and the support that he gives to all of his artists—directors, designers, actors—and the fiercely loyal audience he has cultivated: I love Charlie because he is an example to all of us who believe in theatre-making." —JoAnne Akalaitis, Director

The 2014 August Wilson Monologue Competition



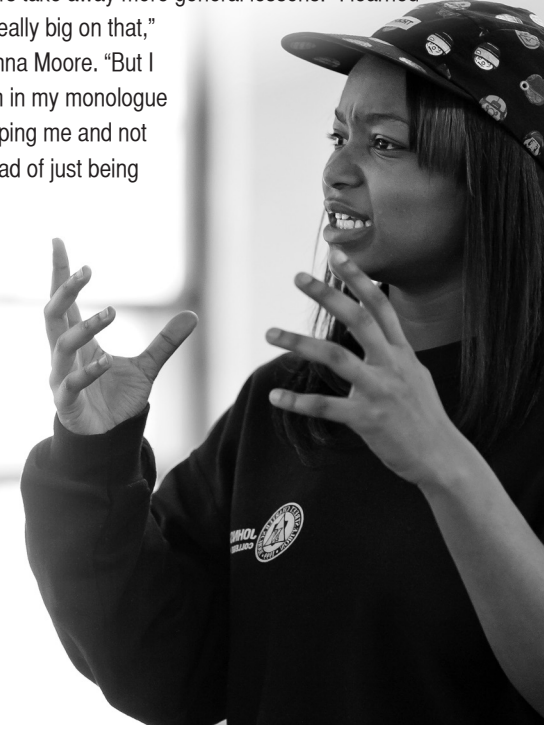
The August Wilson Monologue Competition is a national program for high school students that provides a unique educational opportunity inspired by Wilson's theatrical legacy. Each year, students compete in cities around the country by preparing a two- to three-minute monologue from one of August Wilson's ten Century Cycle plays; students are judged by a panel of theater professionals on preparedness, understanding of the text, emotional connection to the material, and commitment to the performance. Three winners from each regional competition will have their travel expenses paid to go to New York and compete in the National Finals at Broadway's August Wilson Theatre.

This year marks the third year of Court Theatre's involvement with the August Wilson Monologue Competition, which is closely integrated with the theater's Artists-in-the-Schools Program, a series of intensive in-class residencies conducted at six South Side partner high schools and taught by Court Teaching Artists. Over the past three years, Court's Artists-in-the-Schools Director, Cree Rankin, has worked to orient the curriculum toward preparing high school students for the monologue competition. Court's teaching artists spend six weeks in the classroom with students working to ready them for the preliminary audition, covering Wilson's plays, acting technique, and general presentation skills. These teaching artists are all also professional actors, many from Court's recent productions of Wilson's plays. They encourage the students to bring discipline to their performances, as well as their own creativity and life experiences.

"It's not so much about being the character you are portraying but to make it your own—to make it realistic, to feel it, to connect," said Kenwood Academy student Devyn Harvey, who participated in the program last year. "I like the fact that everybody whose monologue is the same has their own rendition, their own part, their own style."

Many students who have participated in the conversation have gone on to pursue more opportunities in theater, while others take away more general lessons. "I learned to take criticism, because I'm not really big on that," said Hyde Park High School's Rionna Moore. "But I learned to take notes and put them in my monologue like they say, and that they are helping me and not just telling me what to do. So instead of just being mad, I can go with the flow."

This year, seventy-five students from Court Theatre's partner schools will compete with 175 other students from around Chicago. In the preliminary round of auditions on January 28, students will compete right here at Court Theatre on the set of August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*. ■



Photographs of Kenwood Academy students Barton Fitzpatrick (left) and Khamya Johnson (right) rehearsing for last year's competition. (joe mazza/brave lux inc.)



PROFILES



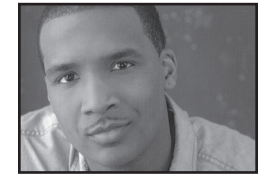
RONALD L. CONNER *(Red Carter)* is pleased to be returning to Court Theatre. He was last seen in Court's 2009 production of August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson*. *The Piano Lesson* received a Jeff nomination for Best Production and Conner received the Black Theatre Alliance Award for Best Lead Actor. He was also seen at Court Theatre in *The First Breeze of Summer*. Ron is a proud ensemble member of Congo Square Theatre where he has appeared in *The Colored Museum, Deep Azure, The African Company Presents Richard III,* and *The Talented Tenth* (2008 BTAA Best Actor in an Ensemble). Other Chicago theaters include Chicago Shakespeare, Urban Theatre Company, and Pegasus Players. Regional credits include: New Harmony Theatre, Geva Theatre of Rochester, Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, and The St. Louis Black Rep where Ronald has just finished performing four shows in repertory and a one man show where he played over 40 characters. Ron's most notable television and film credits are *The Dark Knight* and the Coors Light National NFL Campaign (2007-2010). Ronald L. Conner is represented by Paonessa Talent.



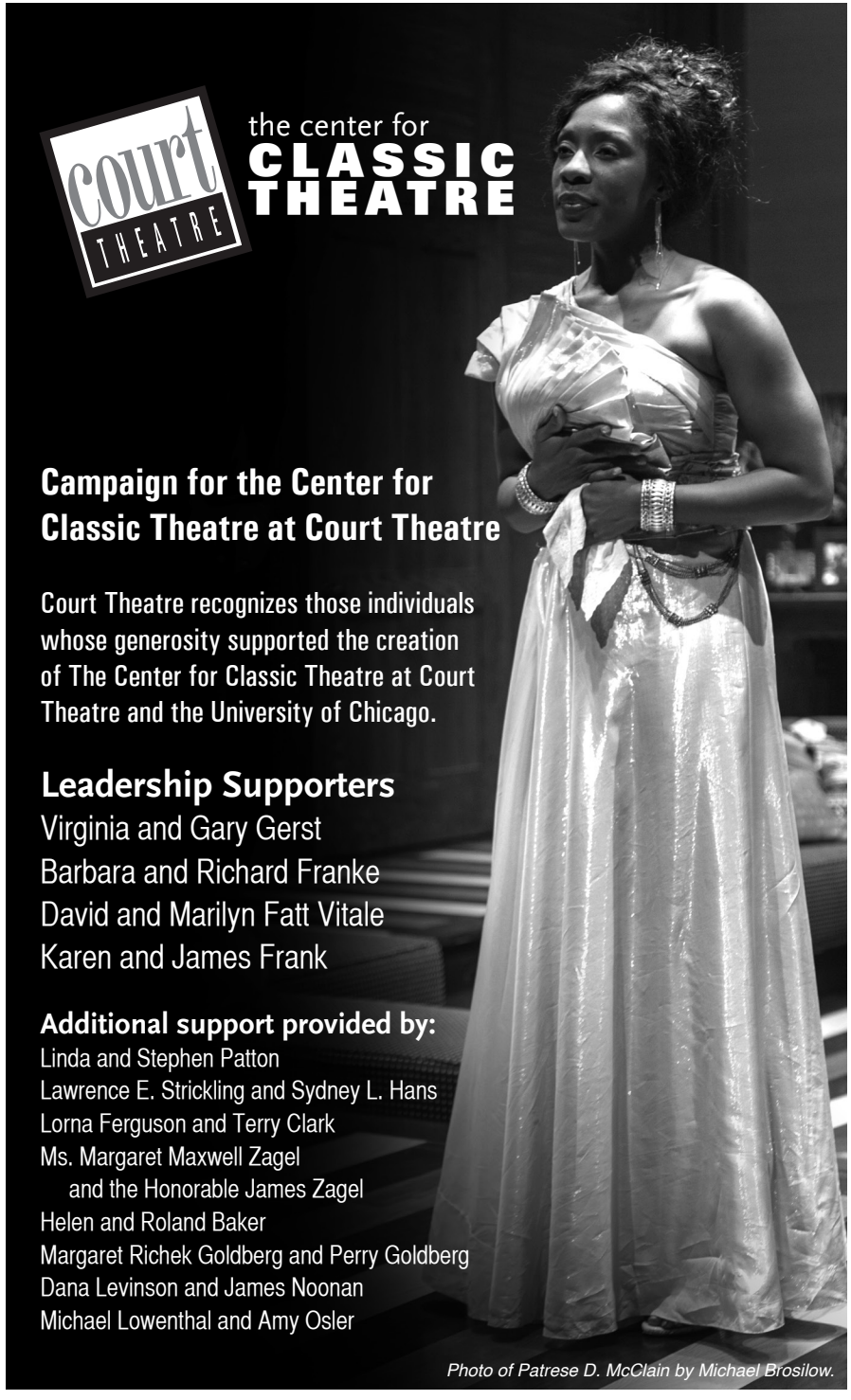
FELICIA P. FIELDS *(Louise)* is excited for the opportunity to perform on the Court Theatre stage after almost 30 years in the business. Born and raised on the South Side of Chicago, it will be a blessing to work so close to home where if her car breaks down she can get a ride to work! Felicia is best known for her portrayal of Sofia in the Broadway and first touring company of the musical *The Color Purple*, for which she received a Tony nomination, Clarence Derwitt Award, and several other awards. She has performed at the Marriott, Goodman, Drury Lane, Broadway in Chicago, Northlight, Theatre at the Center, as well as many productions throughout the United States and Canada including commercials, voice-overs, and films. When not in the theatre she enjoys working with "The Smiley Tillmon Band" as well as her own Blues and R&B productions. But most of all, she enjoys spending time with her first grandson Jeremiah! Thanks Ron, Mr. Newell, the entire Court Theatre staff, a very supportive family, and most of all a Great God!



ALLEN GILMORE *(Hedley)* was last seen at Court Theatre in *The Misanthrope* as the villainess Arsinoe and *Tartuffe* as Madame Pernelle, both directed by Charles Newell. Other Court credits include Turnbo in *Jitney*, the title role in *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (Jeff, BTA nominations), both directed by Ron OJ Parson, the title role in *Cyrano*, Hamm in *Endgame*, and M. Argante in *Scapin*. Recently he performed in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* at Yale Rep and will again in the spring at Berkeley Rep. Allen is a proud artistic associate of Next Theatre and a proud ensemble member of Congo Square Theatre Company.



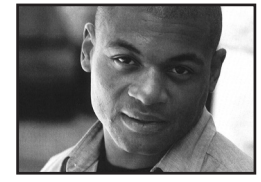
JEROD HAYNES *(Canewell)* was born and raised on Chicago's South Side and is excited to make his debut with Court Theatre. He was most recently seen as Walter Lee in TimeLine Theatre's production of *A Raisin in the Sun* directed by Ron O.J. Parson. Other theater credits include *Columbinus* (2013) at ATC Theater. He also played the role of Tom Robinson in Milwaukee Reparatory Theater's production of *To Kill*



a Mockingbird. Other theatre credits include Chicago's ETA Theatre in their productions of *Contribution* and *Greensboro 4: Downpayment on Manhood*. Jerod has spent time in the UK where he studied at the British American Drama Academy (BADA). He also finished the entire training program at the Acting Studio Chicago. Jerod thanks God and dedicates his work to his daughter, Jalaiya.



ERYNN MACKENZIE *(Ruby)* is proud to make her debut at Court. She attended Indiana University and majored in Theatre and Psychology. Theatre credits include *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* with Actor's Theatre of Lousiville and Milwaukee Repertory Theratre, *Raisin in the Sun* and *A Lesson Before Dying* with West Side Theatre Guild, *Hair* and *Rocky Horror Picture Show* with Dunes Summer Theatre in Michigan City, *The Darkest Pit* at Prop Theatre, *Strings Attached* at Viaduct Theatre, *The Vagina Monologues* at Star Plaza Theatre, and several others. Film credits include *Heirloom, The Gilded Six Bits, Prodigy, Comes To Shove, Rain, All About The Ring,* and her own short film project titled *A Chance Encounter*. Erynn is ecstatic to work with Director Ron OJ Parson again, along with the other talented actors and actresses gracing the stage with her and looks forward to an exciting and wonderful run of this play. Erynn is a proud member of AEA.



KELVIN ROSTON, JR. *(Floyd Barton)* counts it a blessing to return to the Court Theatre stage! He previously appeared at Court as Jim in *Porgy and Bess* and Sylvester in *Ma Rainy's Black Bottom*.Other Chicago credits include *Detroit '67 (Northlight Theatre), Dreamgirls (Marriott Lincolnshire), Crowns (Goodman Theatre)*, *The Jackie Wilson Story* (Black Ensemble–Jeff nomination, BTAA winner, Black Excellence Award winner), *The Ole Settler* (Writers'), *Pill Hill* (eta Creative Arts Foundation–BTAA winner). Regional and international credits include *Dreamgirls* (Theatre Orb [Tokyo, Japan], Festival Hall [Osaka, Japan], Fulton [Lancaster, PA], Maine State Music Theatre [Brunswick, ME]), *Ruined* and *Death and the King's Horseman* (St. Louis Black Rep), *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (HotCity), *Mama* (Unity), *Beowulf* (Metro), and many others. Kelvin is an artistic associate at Congo Square, represented by Paonessa Talent and a pround member of AEA.



EBONY WIMBS *(Vera)* is excited to return to Court after performing here in *The First Breeze of Summer*. Other Chicago credits include TimeLine, Mary-Archie, Goodman, Eclipse Theatre, Victory Gardens, MPAACT, and Sinnerman Ensemble. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University, The School at Steppenwolf, and a proud member of AEA. Ebony sends love and gratitude to her family, friends, and Anthony Peeples for their support. Above all, thanks to God for the journey.

JOHN HOOGENAKKER *(Fight Announcer)* is very happy to be lending his voice to this production at the Court, where he was last seen in *Wait Until Dark*. Chicago credits: *The Iceman Cometh* (Goodman Theatre), *Port Authority* (currently at Writers' Theatre), *100 Saints You Should Know* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), *The Retreat from Moscow* (Northlight Theatre), *Othello* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Killer Joe* (The Theatre at 2851 Halsted), *The Bomb-itty of Errors* (The Royal George and Chicago Shakespeare Theater). Regional credits: *Escape from Happiness* (Milwaukee



Photo by joe mazza/brave lux inc.

Repertory Theater), the role in *Hamlet* (Illinois Shakespeare Festival), *Work Song: Three Views of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Kansas City Repertory Theatre and Arizona Theatre Company). *Film: Flags of Our Fathers (Warner Brothers), The Lucky Ones (Lionsgate),* Public Enemies (Universal), *A Very Harold and Kumar Christmas* (New Line), *At Any Price* (Sony). Television: *ER* (NBC), *The Beast* (A&E), *Gifted Hands* (TNT), *Boss* (Starz), *Chicago Fire* (NBC), and *Mind Games* (ABC). John's voice-over work includes campaigns for McDonald's, Miller, OnStar and Comcast.



RON OJ PARSON *(Director/Resident Artist)* is a native of Buffalo, New York and a graduate of the University of Michigan's professional theatre program. He is a co-founder and former artistic director of The Onyx Theatre Ensemble of Chicago. He has worked as an actor and director. Chicago directing credits include Chicago Theatre Company, Victory Gardens Theater, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago Dramatists, Northlight Theatre, Court Theatre, Black Ensemble Theatre, eta Creative Arts Foundation, City Lit Theater, Writers' Theatre, Urban Theater Company, and Congo Square Theatre Company. Recently Ron directed the highly acclaimed production of *A Raisin in the Sun* at TimeLine Theatre. Regional credits include Virginia Stage Company, Portland Stage Company, Studio Arena Theatre, Roundabout Theatre, Wilshire Theatre, The Mechanic Theatre, CenterStage, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Milwaukee Repertory, St. Louis Black Repertory, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre, Geva Theatre, and Signature Theatre in New York. In Canada, he directed the world premiere of Palmer Park by Joanna McClelland Glass at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Ontario. Ron also directed *Blue* (South Bend Civic Theatre), *I Just Stopped by to See the Man* (Alliance Theatre), and *Jitney* (South Coast Rep and Pasadena Playhouse). Earlier this season Ron directed, *The Mountaintop* by Katori Hall, and *Detroit '67* by Dominique Morriseau. He is a proud member of AEA, SAG, AFTRA, and SDC. Visit www.ronojparson.com.

AUGUST WILSON *(Playwright,* 1945-2005*)* was an American playwright. His literary legacy is the ten play series, *The Century Cycle*, for which he received two Pulitzer Prizes. It consists of ten plays, nine of which are set in Pittsburgh's Hill District, an African-American neighborhood that takes on a mythic literary significance like Thomas Hardy's *Wessex*, William Faulkner's *Yoknapatawpha County*, or Irish playwright Brian Friel's *Ballybeg*. Each is set in a different decade, depicting the comic and tragic aspects of the African-American experience in the twentieth century. His best known plays are *Fences* (1985) (which won a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award), *The Piano Lesson* (1990) (a Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*.

REGINA GARCIA *(Scenic Design)* has been designing scenery for drama and ensemble-based theater for fifteen years. She has designed for directors Giovanna Sardelli, Daniella Topol, Thomas Kail, Victor Maog, Ron Himes, Michael J. Garces, Bonnie Metzgar, Megan Carney, and Bartlett Sher, amongst others; and for renowned Latino theaters including Repertorio Espanol, the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, INTAR, and Pregones Theater. Regina was invited to exhibit at the 2013 World Stage Design Conference & Exhibit, Cardiff, Wales; and is a Fellow of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Designers and the Princess Grace Awards, USA. A graduate of NYU's Department of Design for Stage and Film, Regina is a company member with Chicago's Teatro Vista and Rivendell Theatre Ensemble. She is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829 and a Regional Associate Member of the League of Professional Theatre Women.

CHRISTINE PASCUAL *(Costume Design)* is delighted to be working at Court Theatre and with Ron once again. Previous Court Theatre shows: *The First Breeze of Summer*, *Flyin' West*. Recent credits include: *The St. James Infirmary* at Congo Square, *Four Scenes in Three Acts* at Roosevelt University, *True West* and *Topdog/Underdog* at American Theater Company with Congo Square, *Our Lady of the Underpass* at Teatro Vista, *Capriccio Barocco* for the Yale Baroque Opera Project, *Jarred* for Teatro Luna at Chicago Dramatists, *Ten Cent Night* at Chicago Dramatists, *The People's Temple* at American Theatre Company, and *Fast Forward* at About Face Theater. Other companies she has designed for: Defiant Theatre, Remy Bumppo, Centerstage Baltimore, Apple Tree Theater, Infusion Theater, Silk Road Theatre Project, Steppenwolf, Goodman, Infusion Theater, Pegasus Players. Christine is an Artistic Associate of Teatro Vista and member of the United Scenic Artists Local 829. For examples of her work, visit www.ChristinePascual.com. She wishes to thank her family for their unwavering support.

MARC STUBBLEFIELD *(Lighting Design)* is the Associate Production Manager for La Jolla Playhouse. *Seven Guitars* is Marc's ninth design for Court Theatre, having previously worked with Artistic Director Charlie Newell on *Glass Menagerie*, *Arcadia*, and *Three Tall Women*, and Director Ron OJ Parson on *Jitney*, *Spunk*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson*, and *The First Breeze of Summer*. He was the Director of Production at Court Theatre for 11 years, and has also 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.

Footlights ad half 1: Sitdown Cafe

JOSHUA HORVATH *(Sound Design)* Court credits: *James Joyce's "The Dead," Jitney*, *Angels in America*, *Invisible Man*, *Spunk*, *Porgy and Bess*, *The Illusion*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Wait Until Dark*, *Caroline, or Change*, *The First Breeze of Summer*, *Carousel*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Arcadia*, *Flyin' West*, *Raisin*, *Lettice and Lovage*, *Fences*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Endgame*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *The Romance Cycle*. Regional: The Kennedy Center, The Lincoln Center, Long Wharf Theatre, Hartford Stage, Centerstage, The Alliance, Milwaukee Rep, Madison Rep, Kansas City Rep, Center Theatre Group, Illinois Shakespeare, Great River Shakespeare, and California Shakespeare. Chicago: Goodman, Steppenwolf, Chicago Shakespeare, Writer's Theatre, Lookingglass, About Face, Northlight, Next, TimeLine, Lifeline, A Red Orchid, and The House. Mr. Horvath teaches sound design for theatre and film at Northwestern University, is an artistic associate of Lookingglass, a collaborative partner of the Goodman, a Company Member at House Theatre of Chicago, and has one LA Ovation Award and four Joseph Jefferson awards.

MARTINE KEI GREEN-ROGERS *(Production Dramaturg)* is currently a Raymond C. Morales Postdoctoral Fellow in Theatre at the University of Utah. Her dramaturgical credits include: *Nothing Personal* at Plan-B Theatre, the Classical Theatre Company's productions of *Uncle Vanya*, *Antigone*, *Candida*, *Ghosts*, *Tartuffe*, and *Shylock, The Jew of Venice*; productions of *The Mountaintop*, *Home*, and *Porgy and Bess* at Court Theatre; *The Clean House* at CATCO; *Comedy of Errors* (Feb 2014), *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The African Company Presents Richard III*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and *Fences* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; *10 Perfect* and *The Curious Walk of the Salamander* as part of the 2006 and 2007 Madison Repertory Theatre's New Play Festival; and *A Thousand Words* as part of the 2008 WI Wrights New Play Festival.

Footlights ad half 1: FILLER

WILLIAM L. BALAN-GAUBERT (*Haitian Dialect Coach)* is a native of Haiti and a Haitian History scholar in residence at the University of Chicago. He has lectured extensively on many aspects of Haitian history, society and culture. He is at present a Lecturer affiliated with the department of Romance Languages and Literatures and the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Chicago. He teaches Intermediate Haitian Creole.

AARON MAYS *(Assistant Director)* is excited to take on his first professional role as an assistant director at Court Theatre. A native of Buffalo, New York, Aaron has worked as a playwright, publicist and teaching artist. Currently, he teaches theatrical performance at Notre Dame College Prep, a high school in Niles, IL. He discovered a newfound love for the stage during his undergraduate years. While attending Northwestern University, he wrote several plays including *Hush Hush* and *The Sons of Tennessee* which he self-produced and directed. Most recently, Aaron devised a stage play with high school students for American Theater Company's Bridge program. His latest play *Sticks and Stones* was a semi-finalist for Stage Left Theatre's 2012-2013 Downstage Left Playwright Residency

SARA GAMMAGE *(Production Stage Manager)* is delighted to return to Court Theatre. Previous Court Theatre credits include *Flyin' West, What the Butler Saw, The First Breeze of Summer, Wait Until Dark, The Mystery of Irma Vep, The Illusion, Sizwe Banzi is Dead, Home, Orlando, Porgy and Bess, Spunk,* and *Proof*. Other Chicago credits include productions with Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Greenhouse Theater, Theatre at the Center, Marriot Theatre, Apple Tree Theatre, and Redmoon Theater. She spent several seasons at Peninsula Players Theatre in Door Country, WI; credits there include *A Little Night Music, Comic Potential, Wait Until Dark, Is He Dead?, Rumors,* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*. Sara is a proud graduate of Northwestern University.

WILLIAM COLLINS *(Stage Manager)* is in his eighth season with Court Theatre. William has worked at The Goodman Theatre (*Other Desert Cities*, *Rock N' Roll*, *Vigils*, and *Blue Surge*), Peninsula Players Theatre in Door County Wisconsin (*Chicago*, *Murder On The Nile*, *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*, and *Around the World in 80 Days*), Paramount Theatre (*My Fair Lady*), Drury Lane Theatre (*Sugar*), Chicago Humanities Festival, Redmoon, About Face, and The Guthrie Theatre.

DANIEL MINTER *(Illustrator, Cover Art)* is a painter, illustrator, and arts educator. He is from a small a small rural community in southern Georgia and much of his work reflects that upbringing. Minter's paintings and sculptures have been exhibited both nationally and internationally at galleries and museums. He is a director and vice-president of Maine Freedom Trails and he designed and created the markers for the Portland Freedom Trail in Portland, Maine. He created the 2004 Kwanzaa stamp and the 2011 Kwanzaa stamp for the U.S. Postal Service. Some of his children's books include *Seven Spools of Thread: A Kwanzaa Story*, winner of a Best Book Award from the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio, and *The Riches of Oseola McCarty*, named an Honor Book by the Carter G. Woodson Awards, and *Ellen's Broom*, recipient of the 2012 Coretta Scott King Illustration Honor Award. His work has taken him from Atlanta, Seattle, Salvador, Brazil to Brooklyn, Chicago and Portland, Maine where he currently resides.



CHARLES NEWELL *(Artistic Director)* was recently awarded the 2013 SDCF Zelda Fichandler Award, "which recognizes an outstanding director or choreographer who is transforming the regional arts landscape through singular creativity and artistry in theatre." Charlie has been Artistic Director of Court Theatre since 1994, where he has directed over 40 productions. He made his Chicago directorial debut in 1993 with *The Triumph Of Love*, which won the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best Production. Charlie's productions of *Man of La Mancha* and *Caroline, Or Change* have also won Best Production Jeffs. Other directorial highlights at Court include *The Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe, Proof, Angels In America, An Iliad, Porgy & Bess, Three Tall Women,Titus Andronicus, Arcadia, Uncle Vanya, Raisin, The Glass Menagerie, Travesties, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, The Invention of Love,* and *Hamlet*. Charlie has also directed at Goodman Theatre (*Rock 'N Roll*), Guthrie Theater (*The History Cycle, Cymbeline*), Arena Stage, John Houseman's The Acting Company (Staff Repertory Director), the California and Alabama Shakespeare Festivals, Juilliard, and New York University. He has served on the Board of TCG, as well as on several panels for the NEA. Opera directing credits include Marc Blitzstein's *Regina* (Lyric Opera of Chicago), *Rigoletto* (Opera Theatre of St. Louis), *Don Giovanni* and *The Jewel Box* (Chicago Opera Theatre), and *Carousel* (Summer 2014, Glimmerglass Festival). Charlie was the recipient of the 1992 TCG Alan Schneider Director Award, and has been nominated for 16 Joseph Jefferson Director Awards, winning four times. In 2012, Charlie was honored by The League of Chicago Theatres with their Artistic Achievement Award.



STEPHEN J. ALBERT *(Executive Director)* is a founding Partner in Albert Hall & Associates, LLC a leading arts consulting firm. Prior to forming the consulting practice, Albert was recognized as a leading arts manager. He has led some of America's most prestigious theatres, including the Mark Taper Forum/Center Theatre Group, Alley Theatre, and Hartford Stage Company. Albert began his career with the Mark Taper Forum/Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles where he worked in senior management positions for over a decade, rising to Managing Director. He went on to become Executive Director of Houston's Alley Theatre where he led a turnaround that stabilized the organization, enabling the Alley to return to national standing and drove a capital campaign that secured the organization's future. At Hartford Stage, his partnership with Mark Lamos resulted in some of the theatre's most successful seasons and reinforced Hartford Stage's position at the forefront of the regional theatre movement. During his tenure in Hartford, Mr. Albert led the initiative to create a 25,000 square foot, state-of-the-art production center, securing the donation of the facility and the funding for its renovation. Albert has served as both President and Vice President of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and as a board member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG). He has also written and produced a variety of productions for television, is an ACE award nominee, and has been an associate producer of numerous acclaimed Broadway productions. He is a Senior Fellow with the American Leadership Forum, a graduate of the University of Southern California and holds a MBA from the UCLA Graduate School of Management.

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Court Theatre salutes Hyde Park Bank, which has been a dedicated supporter of Court for over two decades and is the Theatre's largest corporate sponsor to date. In addition to providing outstanding support for the New Audiences Initiative and general programming efforts, the Bank is also a lead sponsor of Court's education programs. This includes the annual Hyde Park Bank High School Performance Festival, an afternoon of performances by students from the Theatre's six South Side partner public schools. The Festival celebrates students' hard work at the end of Court's Artists-in-the-Schools (AIS) residencies, a program which enables students to interact directly with professional artists in their own classrooms, as well as brings the students' existing curriculum to life by connecting it with theatrical classics. Throughout the course of each residency, students work with Court Teaching Artists to create their own productions of classic plays, which they then perform on Court's stage for family, friends, and members of the community during the Festival. "Hyde Park Bank is pleased to support Court Theatre's outreach and education efforts to provide young people with access to live theater both on the stage and in their classrooms," said Hyde Park Bank President and Court Theatre Trustee Mike McGarry. "The Bank has called Hyde Park home since its founding in 1928, and we are proud to contribute to programs that benefit our community." Hyde Park Bank has been a proud sponsor of some of Court's most successful productions, including the critically-acclaimed *Caroline, or Change* (2008), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (2009), and the Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess* (2011). Court Theatre is honored to be a partner of Hyde Park Bank.

Sarita Warshawsky

Court Theatre is grateful for the support of Sarita Warshawsky, a longtime friend of the Theatre and strong advocate of Court's education programs for more than a decade. Her generosity supports a host of student programs at Court, including Student Matinees and post-show discussions with Court Theatre artists that benefit 4,000 young people each season. Her generosity helps fund the August Wilson Monologue Competition residency, which exposes students to the work of August Wilson and trains them to analyze a text, memorize it, and perform it in front of their peers and a panel of judges. Students receive extensive, one-on-one coaching from Court Theatre Teaching Artists as part of the program. Over 300 students participate in the competition to fulfill a class requirement, but it is their choice whether or not to move on if they are chosen to advance to a later stage of the competition. After auditioning for a panel of Court judges, students perform two- to three-minute monologues from Wilson's plays for judges at a regional and then national level, and have an opportunity to win an all-expenses paid trip to New York City for the final round of the competition. "I have always admired Court's commitment to provide students with an introduction to professional theatre," Sarita notes. "It is so important for students to be given the opportunity to learn and experience the arts in a meaningful way, and I am glad to play a role in supporting Court's mission of making theater accessible." Sarita is an active philanthropist and a strong supporter of cultural organizations in Chicago, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the University of Chicago, and the Chicago Humanities Festival. Court Theatre applauds Sarita's commitment to enhancing student education through the arts, and thanks her for her longstanding generosity.

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The mission of Court Theatre is to create innovative productions of classic plays that are thought provoking, character-driven, and thematically enduring. Through main stage productions, audience enrichment programs, and collaborations with the University of Chicago, we re-examine, re-envision, and renew classic texts that pose enduring and provocative questions that define the human experience.

Vision

Court Theatre's vision is to create the Center for Classic Theatre at the University of Chicago. Dedicated to the creation and curation of large-scale interdisciplinary theatrical experiences, the Center will:

- Inspire, educate, and entertain audiences both on and off the stage.
- Attract and feature artists of extraordinary talent.
- Add new adaptations and translations of classic works to the canon.
- Collaborate directly with University of Chicago scholars and students.
- Connect Court Theatre to individuals throughout Chicagoland, and especially to our community on Chicago's South Side.

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