Professional Theatre at Court Theatre the University of Chicago

BOLD CLASSICS

Charles Newell, *Artistic Director*

Dear Patron,

It is my great pleasure to present to you the first of two August Wilson plays that you will see at Court Theatre between now and October. *The Piano Lesson*, for which Wilson won his second Pulitzer Prize in 1989, brings to a close our 2008/2009 season, of which I am deeply proud. Each of this season's plays explored, among other things, the theme of anxiety in the face of an uncertain future. The world has a way of shaping the products of its citizens; contemplating a body of work in retrospect is often a process of identifying patterns—that's just how memory works. *The Piano Lesson* is very much about the lessons of the past and how they can be used to build a better future. It is a monumental American play, brought to life for you by master Wilson interpreter Ron OJ Parson and a phenomenal Chicago cast.

As you have likely seen in our announcements of the 2009/2010 season, we will continue our exploration of August Wilson in the fall with *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, the 1920s entry in the Century Cycle, and the only play of Wilson's set in Chicago. It is no accident that Ron is helming two Wilson plays in a row at Court. I am very excited to participate in the dialogue between the two productions that will take place over the next six months, and I invite you to join me in it. *Ma Rainey's* feels to me like the next place in Court Theatre's journey with Wilson, and it is that impulse to grow and develop that informs all of our programming.

I hope you enjoy *The Piano Lesson*, and that you will join us again in the fall to continue our conversation.

Sincerely,



Charles Newell
Artistic Director

Professional Theatre at Court Theatre the University of Chicago

BOLD CLASSICS

Charles Newell, *Artistic Director*

Court Theatre presents

The Piano Lesson

By August Wilson
Directed by Ron OJ Parson

May 7 – June 7, 2009

Set Designer.....Keith Pitts**
Lighting Designer.....Richard Norwood**
Sound Designer.....Nick Keenan**
Costume Designer.....Christine Pascual**
Dramaturg.....Kate Bredeson
Production Stage Manager.....Ellen Hay*
Assistant Stage Manager.....Jonathan Nook*
Music Consultant.....Kelvin Roston, Jr.

The Piano Lesson is produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

**Members of the United Scenic Artists Union (USA)

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Professional Theatre at
The University of Chicago

CAST

Berniece.....Tyla Abercrumbie*
Boy Willie.....Ronald Conner*
Avery.....Allen D. Edge*
Maretha.....China Gray and M. Alettie Smith (alternating)
Grace.....Alexis J. Rogers*
Doaker.....A.C. Smith*
Lymon.....Brian Weddington*
Wining Boy.....Alfred H. Wilson*
Understudy.....Cecil Burroughs

SETTING
The action of the play takes place in the kitchen and parlor of the house where Doaker Charles lives with his niece, Berniece, and her eleven-year-old daughter, Maretha. Pittsburgh, 1936.

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; the League of Chicago Theatres; and the Hyde Park Cultural Alliance.

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

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THE LEGACY HE LEFT: A CONVERSATION WITH THE CAST

On April 14, I sat down with the cast of *The Piano Lesson* in Court Theatre's rehearsal hall to discuss their experiences with August Wilson, this play, and Wilson's legacy to performers, directors, and spectators. What ensued was a lively conversation full of memories and laughter—and vivid stories about the master playwright of Pittsburgh. The cast that director Ron OJ Parson has assembled at Court Theatre has a wide range of experiences and history with Wilson and his Century Cycle—the ten plays that Wilson wrote to document the African American experience in the 20th century. This ensemble is composed of some first time Wilson actors, and some who have been in nearly all of the Century Cycle canonical works. What follows are excerpts from our conversation.

—Kate Bredeson

Ron OJ Parson: I'll be brief, but I did want to say that [my first experience] is with *Ma Rainey ['s Black Bottom]:* hearing about the play through Roc [Dutton], being a friend of his at the time before the play was even produced, and meeting August. And then having the opportunity to do *Ma Rainey* back in the early nineties playing Levee and directing it at the same time.

A.C. Smith: My first experience with August Wilson was *The Piano Lesson.* I was in New York doing another show and [I was] asked to audition for *The Piano Lesson.* I had no idea what it was, or who [August Wilson] was. And a year to that day, they called me back, flew me in to New York. . . and I was cast. And that was for the Broadway tour for *The Piano Lesson.* I did that for a year. And I got to meet August's family, hung out every day down there. It was directed by Lloyd Richards, who did the original *A Raisin in the Sun*. And that was my first experience.

Kate Bredeson: And you played Boy Willie?

A.C.: Yes. And after that, after I came back from tour—about a year later—I got back to Chicago and they were doing it here again. I walked in, read a few lines, they said 'thank you.' Before I got home, I was cast as Boy Willie again in Chicago! And I did it like four other times after that as Boy Willie. And then I got too old to do Boy Willie—I still think I've got one more Boy Willie left in me, but! (*laughter from the group)* I really do! But then I played Doaker. . . . And I've done all of [Wilson's] shows except *Ma Rainey* and *Seven Guitars.*

Ron: I was talking to an actor last night… and he was telling me that Roscoe Lee Browne—he did *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* as a kid—told him 'one day August Wilson's going to put food on your table, he's going to feed your family,' and that is really what's happening with a lot of us, 'cause August Wilson has put a lot of people to work. It's just a blessing.

Brian Weddington: My first experience with August Wilson was actually on the other side of the stage…watching. And working behind the scenes. At Rutgers, he was the Mecca. If you could even just be in his presence, or be a part of any of the shows—just to see it was…you wanted to do that! You wanted to do an August Wilson piece. You had to do it. This is my first time being on stage in an August Wilson play in my career.



Director Ron OJ Parson and Assistant Stage Manager Jon Nook

A.C. Fresh meat!

Ron: So, it's great to be doing one with these people… in Chicago.

Brian: It's just a blessing. So when I got the script. . . I was reading it and I had the chills, and the whole spiritual thing came up.

Alfred Wilson: August Wilson told [Ron and me] how he writes, and he said he was just waiting and waiting, and that he hears this voice, and the voice starts talking, and he starts writing that, and then somebody else walks in, and he'd start writing—in call and response. . . . And then the first play I did was *Two Trains Running.* I want to play that again.

Ron: When we do August Wilson, we want to do it again.

Kate: How many of them have you directed, Ron?

Ron: I've been in or directed seven of them. . . . But it is that type of thing where . . . once you do one or two you want to do the entire canon. I think that is the whole legacy that he leaves—when we were talking about wanting to act in plays for an African American actor, it used to just be *A Raisin in the Sun.* Want to do Walter Lee, you know? … But now we got a cycle of plays with all these characters, and not to mention all the other characters that get listened to and read because of August Wilson. So you know, it's a beautiful thing.

Tyla Ambercrumbie: My first exposure was just reading it. And I read *Jitney.* And I thought it was poetic and unbelievable, and I loved that his characters just seemed to jump up off the page, and the people that you knew in your family, or they felt like uncles, or cousins, or the guys you heard sit around talking—at least in my neighborhood where I grew up. So that was great, and I was like 'Man, this guy is a fantastic writer!' And then I had the really really wonderful good fortune of working on my first August Wilson play with Ron in *Jitney* at St. Louis Black Rep. And it was also my first exposure to Equity. So . . . he moved my career to another level.

Alexis Rogers: The first play I did in Chicago was *Seven Guitars*, and I played Rudy. And I said 'Ooh I just wish I could have met this man [Wilson], 'cause he pinned me on this paper, this sassy girl up here for me to play!' I say, 'he done talked to my mama!' . . . And . . . the language was so awesome, and I was just in awe. . . I was just so proud, you know like I knew him or something. . . I was just so proud of the legacy he left, and what he was doing. So that's my first experience, and this is my second.

A.C. Proud. It's the ovations you get after from the audience. They really appreciate it when you're done, and that gives me the chills.

Ron: And I think it does make you feel like you know them when you hit it right, and you hit the language and poetry of it.

Ronald Conner: My first experience was in college. It wasn't even the whole play. The director of the theatre program used August as a way to gauge your growth in the theatre program, and you could only do August after you'd reached a certain level. So August was already put on this pedestal. And I just remember reading it, and it was like reading Shakespeare, but I didn't need a lexicon. I was just like 'Who are these people talking like?—like Tyla said 'like my uncles?' I was hooked.

Allen Edge: Like Tyla, my first experience was reading it. I had heard so much about August Wilson, so I said 'I really want to know what's the big deal.' And just about all my theatre career was seen in Chicago from [about] '74. And we had a lot of black plays [that were about] slavery, the Ku Klux Klan, the white man. And there really weren't many nuances. And so when you read August Wilson, you see some of the subtle nuances of everyday life.… And plus, there's the language, and the craft of the way he writes.

Ron: And just that whole legacy of letting people in on the African American culture that a lot of people don't know. And it surprises me how many people don't know August Wilson. . . . This is [Court Theatre's] second one, and then we're opening the [next] season with *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom.* . . .So hopefully in my time here we'll do all ten of them.

Tyla: You know what else is great about Court doing *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*. . . . It is in Hyde Park! When people do know about August Wilson, they do come out to see it, they do like it, so it's nice to have this play on the South Side.

Kate (to China Gray and M. Alettie Smith): Is this your first August Wilson play, for both of you?

China and Alettie: Yes.

Ron: Did you know who August Wilson was before?

Alettie: No! When my mom found out, she was like 'August Wilson! Oh my god!' *(laughter)*

(For a full transcript of the conversation, please visit www.courttheatre.org)



The cast and crew of *The Piano Lesson*



TYLA ABERCRUMBIE (*Berniece*) is excited to be returning to Court Theatre. Regional credits include: *Magnolia* (Goodman Theatre), *Radio Golf* (Pittsburgh Public Theater), Short Shakespeare! *Romeo & Juliet (*Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Flyin' West* (Court Theatre), *The Piano Lesson* (Portland Stage Company), *Intimate Apparel* (Milwaukee Repertory), *Ariadne's Thread* (Victory Gardens Theater), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Studio Arena), *Jitney* (St. Louis Black Repertory Company) and *Four Queen No Trump* (Onyx Theatre Ensemble). Television credits: *The Beast, Family Practice,The Tracy Morgan Show, Bette, Cupid, Turks*. Film credits: *Poker House, Time Served, Mary & Jo.* Ms. Abercrumbie is also a published author and spoken word performance artist. She holds a B.A. in Theatre from Columbia College.



RONALD CONNER (*Boy Willie*) made his Court Theatre debut in *The First Breeze of Summer*. Other Chicago credits include Short Shakespeare! *Romeo & Juliet* and Short Shakespeare! *The Taming of the Shrew* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), The African Company Presents *Richard III* and *Deep Azure* (Congo Square Theatre), *The Oresteia* (Greasy Joan & Co.), *Black Caesar* and 2005 Young Playwrights Festival (Pegasus Players), and *Short Eyes* (Urban Theatre Co.). Regional credits include *The Piano Lesson* (Portland Stage), *Macbeth, The River Niger,* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (St. Louis Black Repertory Company). He is an ensemble member at Congo Square Theatre Company.

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ALLEN D. EDGE (*Avery*) has worked with the Goodman Theatre, e.t.a. Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater, the Black Ensemble Theatre Company, Portland Stage Company, First Stage Children's Theater, and the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. He has performed stand-up comedy at Zanies Chicago, Comedy Central's "Comic Justice," the Comedy Café, and Jokes & Notes. He was also featured in *Barbershop 2* and *Tyler Perry's "Meet the Browns."* Allen has a B.A. in Theatre from Columbia College Chicago.



CHINA GRAY *(Maretha)* has been seen in numerous radio and television commercials, print ads, and plays. She has performed on Carnival Cruise Lines and at Disney MGM Studios in Orlando. She was also featured in The Tommy Hilfiger Fashion Show. Born in Chicago, she has had many years of vocal training, dance, acting, and piano lessons.



ALEXIS J. ROGERS *(Grace)* is proud and honored to make her Court Theatre debut working with the revered Ron OJ Parson. She recently closed the world premiere of Brian Tucker's *St. James Infirmary* with Congo Square Theatre Company, of which she is an ensemble member. Other credits include *Black Nativity*, *Ragtime* (Sarah), *Don't Make Me Over* (Dionne Warwick), and *Seven Guitars* (Ruby), to name a few. Alexis received her formal training at Howard University.



A.C. SMITH (*Doaker*) marks his third production at the Court Theatre, and 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. Other Chicago credits include work at the Victory Gardens Theater, where he has been a part of many productions over the past twenty years. He has appeared at the Timeline Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, The Chicago Center for the Performing Arts, Illinois Theatre Center, Second City, and Chicago Shakespeare Theater, to name a few. He was last seen in *Gem of the Ocean* at the Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati. Mr. Smith can also be seen performing at his second home, The St. Louis Black Repertory Company, where he has been an active member for more than fourteen years and won nine Woodie King Jr. awards. He played Boy Willie in the National Broadway Tour of *The Piano Lesson*, as well as the title role in the New Federal Theatre's production of *Jelly Belly* off Broadway, which earned him an Audelco Award nomination. A.C. has appeared in many independent and feature films, radio, voice overs, television, and commercials, and has done print work for *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines. He has a B.F.A. in theatre from Columbia College in Chicago. "May God Bless."



M. ALETTIE SMITH (*Maretha*), now 14 years old, has studied and performed with The Second City, Lookingglass Theatre, Light Opera Works, Chicago Children's Choir, Chicago Theater company, and Paradise Releasing Group. She recently co-starred in the PBS series 'Dragonfly TV' and starred in *The People's Jazz Theater's Raven: A Kwanzaa Tale*.

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BRIAN WEDDINGTON (*Lymon*) is thankful to return to Court Theatre this season. He appeared last season in the role of Nate in *The First Breeze of Summer*. He is an instructor of theatre at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he also received his B.A. in theater. Continuing his studies at Rutgers University earned him an M.F.A. in acting. His professional acting career is extensive and varied with theatrical, film, and television work throughout the United States and abroad. Some of his creative works include the hit movie *Barbershop 2*, ABC's "One Life to Live," *The People Who Could Fly* (National Black Arts Theater Festival), *The Darker Face of the Earth* and *Thieves Carnival* (Kennedy Center), the latter of which was performed in Moscow. He has instructed at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Chicago Public Schools Advanced Arts Education Program at Gallery 37, After School Matters, Upward Bound, Project CHANCE, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. He is the Principal Director and Co-Founder of the HHW School for the Performing Arts, and is presently writing a book of monologues for youth and a book of scenes and monologues from the Christian experience. He thanks God for allowing him the opportunity to share his gift.



ALFRED H. WILSON (*Wining Boy*) is happy to be returning to Court Theatre. Recent credits include August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* and *Radio Golf* (Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati), and *Radio Golf* (Pittsburgh Public Theater). 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 Theater, and is a co-founder of Onyx Theatre Ensemble.

AUGUST WILSON (*Playwright*) (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, a 2003 Heinz Award, a 1999 National Humanities Medal awarded 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 The August Wilson Theatre. Additionally, Mr. Wilson was posthumously inducted into the Theatre 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.



RON OJ PARSON (*Director*) hails from Buffalo, New York and is a graduate of the University of Michigan's professional theatre program. Ron is the co-founder and former artistic director of the Onyx Theatre Ensemble and co-director of Ripe Mango Production Company. Currently Ron is the Resident Artist at Court Theatre. Recent directing credits include *Palmer Park* by Joanna M. Glass at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, *Home* at New York's Signature Theatre, the Pittsburgh premiere of August Wilson's *Radio Golf* (Pittsburgh Public Theatre) and also Wilson's *Gem of The Ocean* at Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati. At Court Theatre Ron directed the critically acclaimed *Fences*, *Flyin' West* by Pearl Cleage, and *The First Breeze of Summer* by Leslie Lee, and, most recently, *Wait Until Dark* by Frederick Knott. Other Chicago Theatres include Goodman, Steppenwolf, Victory Gardens, Chicago Dramatists, Black Theatre Ensemble, e.t.a. Creative Arts Foundation, Chicago Theatre Company, Northlight, Congo Square, Urban Theatre Company, and Writers' Theatre. Regional theatres include Actors' Theatre of Louisville, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Pittsburgh Playwrights' Theatre, Studio Arena Theatre, Portland Stage Company, Virginia Stage, The Mechanic Theatre, Wilshire Theatre, Mystery Writers' Theatre Festival, Karamu House, Paul Robeson Theatre, Madison Repertory Theatre, and CENTERSTAGE Theatre in Baltimore. Film and TV credits include *Early Edition*, *ER*, *Turks*, *American Playhouse Theatre, Barbershop 2*, *Ali, Drop Squad*, and *Primal Fear*.

KATE BREDESON (*Dramaturg*) is Resident Dramaturg at Court Theatre and Lecturer in the Theatre and Performance Studies Program at the University of Chicago. She comes to Chicago after working as Assistant Professor of Theatre at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and living in Paris for several years before that. She has earned awards including a Fulbright, a residency at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, and fellowships from the Killam Foundation, Mellon Foundation and the Institut Français de Washington. She is currently working on a book about theatre and performance surrounding the May 1968 events in France. Kate holds an M.F.A. and a doctorate in Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism from the Yale School of Drama, regularly presents at international conferences, and has published articles in *Theater*, *Theatre Symposium*, *Modern and Contemporary France*, *The Tennessee Williams Literary Journal*, and *Time Out Paris*. As a dramaturg, she has worked at theatres such as the Guthrie and the Yale Repertory Theatre, and with the Ensemble Company of Performing Arts.

NICK KEENAN (*Sound Design*) is delighted to design for Court Theatre for the first time. Designs include Goodman Theatre (*Strange Interlude,* assistant for *Mirror),* Dog & Pony, BackStage, Collaboraction, Rivendell, Raven, Apple Tree, A Red Orchid, the Neo-Futurists, the side project, and New Leaf Theatre, where he is a company member. Nick operates sound at Goodman, teaches at Northwestern's Cherub program, and authors a blog (theaterforthefuture.com) discussing arts sustainability and technology in theater.

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 Theatre. Other companies she has designed for: Defiant Theatre, Remy Bumppo, Centerstage Baltimore,



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

PROFILES

Apple Tree Theatre, InFusion Theatre, Silk Road Theatre Project, Steppenwolf, Goodman, Pegasus Players. Upcoming productions include: *Sanctified* at Congo Square Theatre and *Blackbird* at Victory Gardens Theater. 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.

KEITH PITTS (*Scenic Design*) is pleased to be designing at Court. Professional Theatre credits include shows at Milwaukee Rep, Steppenwolf, Writers', Victory Gardens, American Theater Company, Northlight, Timeline, A Red Orchid, Next, Peninsula Players, and Chambers. Film: *Static* with Galatrax Pictures. Current Shows: *Hedwig and The Angry Inch* (American Theatre Company) and *Curtains*(Drury Lane Oakbrook). Upcoming Shows: *Around the World in 80 Days* (Chamber), *Wait Until Dark* (Peninsula Players), and the independent feature film *Annihalation Day* with Galatrax Pictures.

RICHARD NORWOOD (*Lighting Design*)'s recent designs include *Bus Stop* for Madison Repertory Theatre, *Beethoven As I Knew Him* at The Geffen (L.A.) and The Old Globe Theater (San Diego), starring Hershey Felder and directed by Joel Zwick. Other recent designs include *Stupid Kids* for About Face Theatre, *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* for Drury Lane Water Tower, *The Voysey Inheritance* for Remy Bumppo, and *Horses at the Window* for Trap Door Theatre. Richard is the Performance Coordinator at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

ELLEN HAY *(Production Stage Manager)* has been stage managing for the past decade and has worked on over 15 productions at Court Theatre, including *Caroline, or Change, The Wild Duck, Carousel, Titus Andronicus, Thyestes, Arcadia*, *Raisin, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *My Fair Lady*, and *The Invention of Love.* Other credits include work at the Goodman Theatre (*Floyd & Clea Under the Western Sky, Moonlight and Magnolias*, *The Play About the Baby*, *Trojan Women*, *Lobby Hero*, *Among the Thugs*, *House and Garden*, *Schoolgirl Figure*, *Millennium Mambo*, and *Mirror of the Invisible World*), Northlight Theatre (*Grace* and *Lady*) and Hartford Stage (*Floyd & Clea Under the Western Sky*).

JONATHAN NOOK *(Assistant Stage Manager)* was last "not seen" in two stints as floor manager for the Court Theatre, including productions of *Thyestes*, *What the Butler Saw*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Wait Until Dark*. All that blood [literally] and sweat was a precursor to having the honor of joining Actors' Equity Association for this production of *The Piano Lesson*. He has enjoyed stage management work with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, SITI, American Players Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, and Children's Theatre of Madison. He has also worked as a freelance electrician with Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Northlight Theatre Company, Lookingglass Theatre, Writer's Theatre, Victory Gardens, Next Theatre, Pegasus Players, Skylight Opera Theatre, Madison Rep, and Bialystock and Bloom.



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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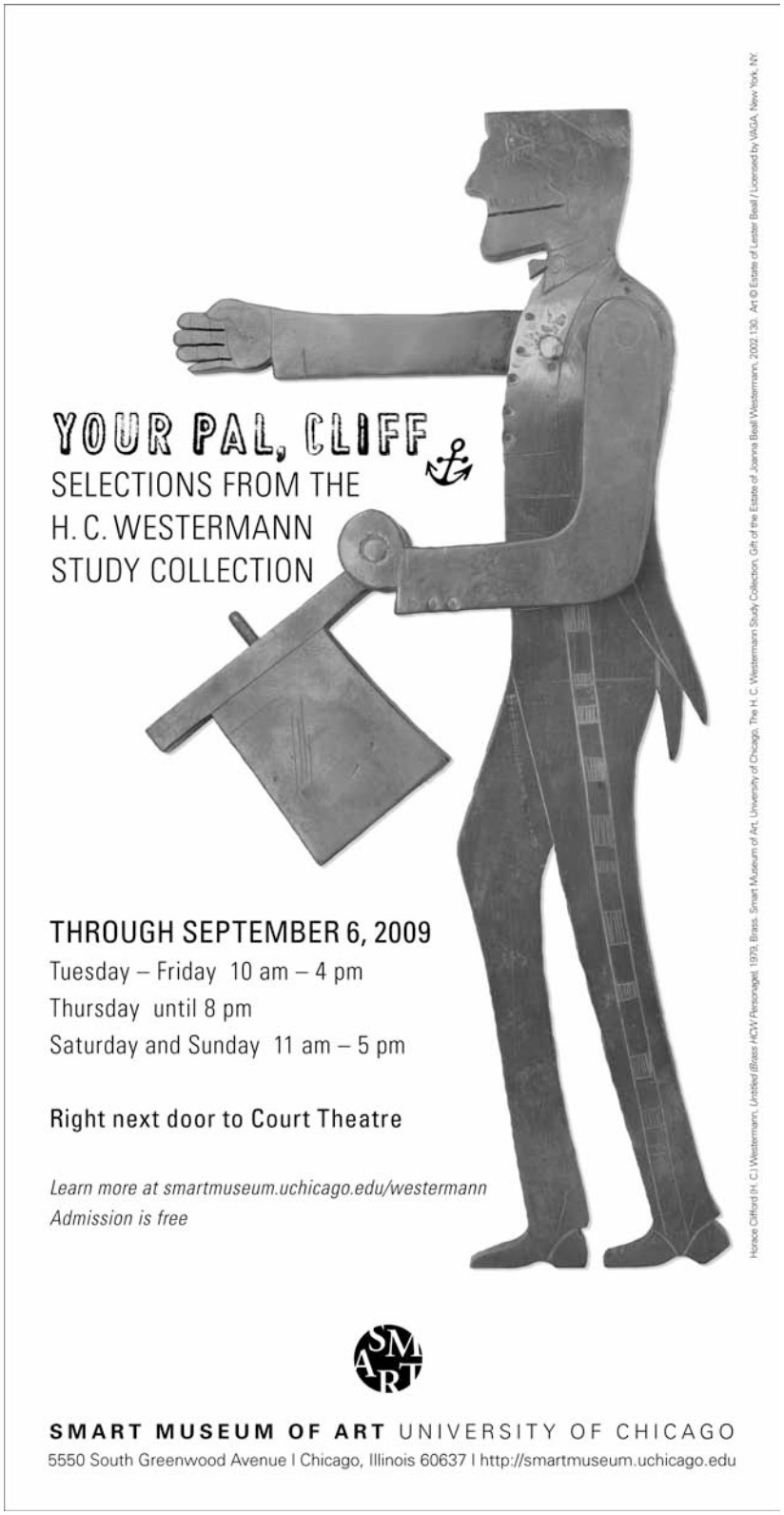
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ABOUT COURT THEATRE

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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.

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.

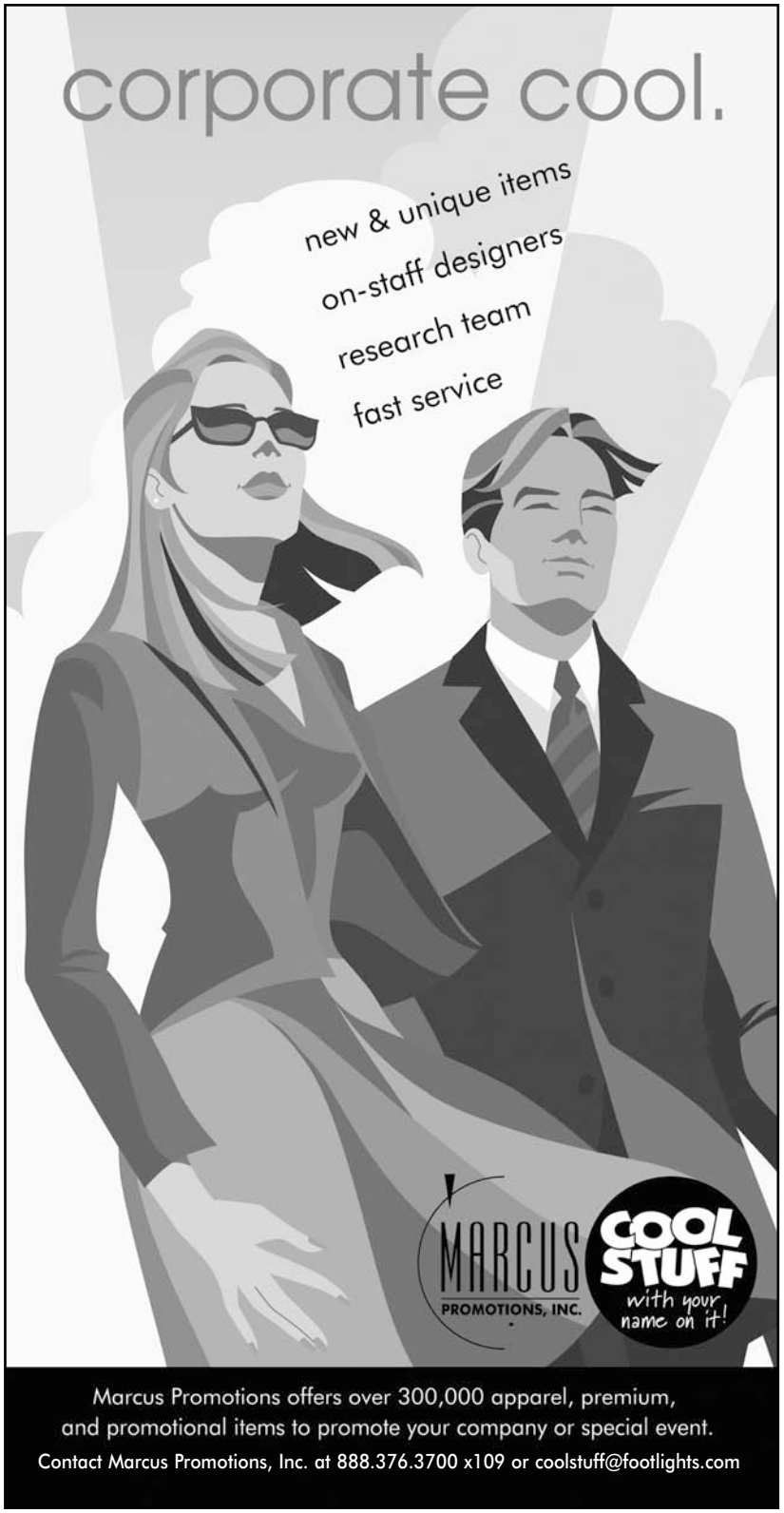
With an operating budget of approximately $3 million, Court reaches nearly 35,000 patrons annually through its main stage productions, as well as 400 South Side high school students each year with intensive in-school and extracurricular programs, including an annual high school performance festival,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

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