

WT

WRITERS' THEATRE
THE BRIEF CHRONICLE
ISSUE TWENTY-ONE MAY 2008

NOW ON STAGE:
**THE LION
IN WINTER**



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Nixon's Nixon
returns to
Writers' Theatre
for a limited
engagement!



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Shannon Cochran
& Michael Canavan
work as a husband
and wife team in
The Lion in Winter.



24

Writers' Theatre
celebrated its
annual WordPlay
Gala at The
Peninsula Chicago.



\$2.00

**05 ON STAGE: THE LION
IN WINTER 06 THE GOLDMAN
YEARS 09 HENRY AND ELEANOR
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Kevin Asselin and Ross Lehman, As You Like It, 2008

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THE BRIEF CHRONICLE

ISSUE TWENTY-ONE MAY 2008

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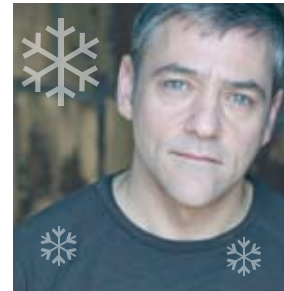
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THE 2008/09 SEASON!

PICNIC

By William Inge

Directed by David Cromer

September 16 – November 16, 2008

THE MAIDS

By Jean Genet

Translated by Martin Crimp

Directed by Jimmy McDermott

November 18, 2008 – April 5, 2009

WORLD PREMIERE!

OLD GLORY

By Brett Neveu

Directed by William Brown

February 3 – March 29, 2009

WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL!

A MINISTER'S WIFE

A musical based on *Candida* by G.B. Shaw

Music by Josh Schmidt

Lyrics by Jan Tranen

Adapted by Austin Pendleton

Conceived & Directed by Michael Halberstam

May 19 – July 19, 2009

Limited Run Performances:

A REVIVAL OF

NIXON'S NIXON

By Russell Lees

Directed by Michael Halberstam

Featuring William Brown and Larry Yando

August 19 – September 28, 2008

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By Charles Dickens

Adapted & Performed by Michael Halberstam

December 13 – 23, 2008

RENEW TODAY!

writerstheatre.org

847-242-6000



Michael Halberstam
Artistic Director

Kathryn M. Lipuma
Executive Director

Dear Friends:

We are delighted to welcome director Rick Snyder back to Writers' Theatre after his wonderfully truthful production of William Inge's *Bus Stop* two seasons ago. With *The Lion in Winter*, Rick has put together an incredible cast and design team. In such capable and fearless hands we look forward to a revival of true Writers' Theatre fashion, in which a familiar classic gets a fresh, visceral, earthy, first-class staging in our intimate theatre. The dramatic family dynamics that Rick explored as an actor in *August: Osage County* will very much compliment the dangerous and yet highly entertaining circumstances of Goldman's play. It is perfect summer viewing and the right show to wrap up our 2007/08 Season!

Looking forward to the 2008/09 Season, we have an exciting mix of wonderful productions for you, including two world premieres, one of which will be *our first musical ever!* With a talented array of actors and artists, it will truly be a season you do not want to miss. For more information about the season, please turn to page 3.

Outside of our regular season programming, we are pleased to announce a revival of *Nixon's Nixon*, featuring the original cast of William Brown and Larry Yando. As only season ticket holders are guaranteed advance access to this production, we hope that you will renew your season tickets, and reserve your *Nixon's Nixon* tickets today. This event is a limited run and will sell out! If you are not currently a season ticket holder, more information about our packages can be found on page 33.

On behalf of the board, staff and artist at Writers' Theatre, thank you ever so much for joining us this season. We hope that you enjoy *The Lion in Winter* as much as we enjoy bringing it to you and we hope to see you again next season.

Yours Sincerely,

Michael

Michael

Kate

Kate

May 27 – August 3, 2008

Performed at 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe

It is Christmas in England, 1183, and the aging monarch, Henry II, brings together his exiled wife Queen Eleanor and his three sons in order to plan for his succession. The ensuing power struggles and attempts to craft political alliances engage you in the dramatic exploration of the ultimate family gathering. Goldman creates a modern fiction from the circumstances of the past resulting in a deliciously witty and resonant evening of theatre. Director Rick Snyder brings a wonderfully authentic touch to this very contemporary play.

THE LION IN WINTER

BY JAMES GOLDMAN DIRECTED BY RICK SNYDER

THE CAST

Tiffany Bedwell
Robert Belushi
Michael Canavan
Shannon Cochran
Lea Coco
Laura Coover
Michael Fagin
Christopher McLinden
Kipp Moorman
Rawson Vint

SCENIC DESIGN

Jack Magaw

COSTUME DESIGN

Nan Zabriskie

LIGHTING DESIGN

J.R. Lederle

SOUND DESIGN

Josh Schmidt

PROPERTIES DESIGN

Meredith Miller

DRAMATURG

Brett Janecek

DIALECT COACH

Tiffany Bedwell

STAGE MANAGEMENT

David Castellanos

*“We have each
other and
for all I know
that’s what
hope is.”*

– HENRY II, *THE LION IN WINTER*

THE GOLDMAN YEARS

BY KAMILAH RASHIED AND JIMMY McDERMOTT

James Goldman (1927 – 1998) was an American playwright and screenwriter who was born in Chicago and grew up in Highland Park. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Chicago and went on to study musicology at Columbia University until his postgraduate work was interrupted by the draft. Following his discharge from the army, he decided to become a playwright. He would later marry Barbara Deren, a producer, in 1975. James was known for his casual, yet professorial demeanor, perhaps due to his background in academia. He was an associate professor at Brooklyn College before his first play, *They Might Be Giants*, was produced on Broadway in 1961 giving way to a full-time writing career.

“LION AS A STAGE PIECE WAS MORE THAN REPRIEVED BY THE MOVIE...

Goldman is most renowned as the author of *The Lion in Winter*, a contemporary dissection of the dysfunctional family dynamic by way of medieval history's most notorious kinfolk, the Plantagenets. Although most celebrated for this play and the screenplay for the resultant movie, Goldman was a prolific writer who focused many of his novels, plays, and screenplays on history, a subject for which he had great affection. In addition to *The Lion in Winter*, he also wrote the screenplay for *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1971) and a novel, *Myself as Witness*, a further exploration of the Plantagenet dynasty concerning King John's rule of England in the 13th century. Goldman, describing himself primarily as a comedic writer, once remarked, “The best laugh I ever got was in *The Lion in Winter*. There's that big horrendous scene in the bedroom when Queen Eleanor and King Henry say terrible things to each other. And finally the Queen asks, ‘What family doesn't have its ups and downs?’”

The 1966 Broadway premiere of *The Lion in Winter* was commercially unsuccessful and closed after only 83 performances despite a powerhouse original cast boasting Robert Preston as Henry II, Rosemary Harris as Eleanor of Aquitaine, and 22-year-old newcomer Christopher Walken as the young French King. Two

years later, however, the material would fare far better in another medium. “*Lion* as a stage piece was more than reprieved by the movie,” reflected Goldman over a decade after the fact. “It was transformed into a theater work that has been performed all over the world.” Anthony Harvey’s 1968 faithful film adaptation took three Academy Awards, including one for Goldman’s own adapted screenplay and a Best Actress prize for Katherine Hepburn. Hepburn’s Eleanor opposite Peter O’Toole’s Henry established one of the most popular and iconic battling duos in motion picture history. The film also marked the notable debuts of Timothy Dalton and Anthony Hopkins on screen.

Prior to the breakthrough achievement of *The Lion in Winter*, Goldman had been part of a writing team with his brother William. They collaborated on a play called *Blood, Sweat & Stanley Poole* and the book for John Kander’s musical *A Family Affair*, for which James also co-wrote lyrics with the composer. William left the theatre to go on to a fruitful career as a screenwriter (*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *All the President’s Men* and *The Princess Bride*). And while James’s *Lion* gave way to a reasonably flourishing film resume (*Robin and Marian* starring Audrey Hepburn and Sean Connery, *White Knights* starring Mikhail Barishnikov) he never lost his roots in the theatre, writing the book for Stephen Sondheim’s *Follies* in 1971.

...IT WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A THEATER WORK THAT HAS BEEN PERFORMED ALL OVER THE WORLD.”

Much of his writing over the next few decades was almost exclusively for television, often under the clever moniker “Winston Beard.” However, his last complete work was fittingly a stage play of historical fiction called *Tolstoy*, based on the life of Russian author. This received a brief run in London two years prior to Goldman’s death in 1998. ■

HENRY AND ELEANOR: BRINGING THE LEGEND TO LIFE AND LIFE TO THE LEGEND

BY ANNE KOENIG, DOCTORAL STUDENT IN MEDIEVAL
HISTORY AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

“We have all come from the Devil,” King Richard I used to say of his family, “and to the Devil we will go.” This charming piece of family identity comes to us today from Gerald of Wales, a colorful chronicler of 12th and 13th century England. Gerald’s portraits of Henry II, Eleanor and their “demon brood” were generally not very pleasant. Gerald called Richard “Henry’s successor in vice.” Richard’s younger brother, Geoffrey, possessed, in Gerald’s estimation, a tongue that was “smoother than oil,” a mixed compliment at best. And Gerald described John “Lackland,” the punching bag of medieval English history, as immature, “rude” and given over to the “seductions of youth.” Yet despite his sensationalist focus on the sexual misdeeds and excesses of Henry’s family, Gerald also spoke with unmistakable awe and praise for the King’s virtues and power. The family may have come from the Devil, and indeed, the rather disastrous reigns of Henry’s sons suggested to contemporary chroniclers that the Devil was claiming his due, but Henry himself was undeniably a great man. He was “obstinate and obdurate,” but also eloquent, subtle, merciful and brave. With his fiery hair, unruly wife and power-hungry children, he was and is the stuff of legends.



Costume Rendering for Eleanor of Aquitaine, play by Shannon Cochran. Costumes designed by Nan Zabriskie.

Ladies of the period would be found in long garments. The outer *bliaut* (tunic, gown) became as fitted as fabric would allow and were laced up the side or back or even sewn on to get the necessary tightness needed to show off the form.



It is no wonder, then, that Henry and his family have captured imaginations since the 12th century. New scholarship, however, now chips away at some of the most accepted and beloved stories of the lives of Henry and Eleanor, and we are beginning to see that elements of the story, once held as fact, have little basis in evidence. And yet, these elements are no less true for their factual insufficiency. As Writers' Theatre prepares for its production of James Goldman's *The Lion in Winter*, the most famous modern adaptation of this famous medieval story, it thus seems fitting to revisit the process by which the real became legend and the legend, in turn, became real.

Far from changing the historical narrative on Henry and Eleanor, Goldman's play, carefully researched, is laudably true to the tenor of medieval sources on the lives of Henry and Eleanor. It is no accident that Goldman's "imaginary king and queen and their imaginary children" are remarkably similar to the legendary characters that grace Gerald's pages. In fact, despite a lack of corroborating evidence, the stories that have been told about Henry and Eleanor for the past 800 years have shown a striking consistency. This consistency feeds and sustains our imagination and it has become its own historical reality. We do not know whether Eleanor truly had an illicit relationship with Henry's father, Geoffrey, before her marriage to Henry himself. Yet the truth is almost immaterial; it is now infinitely more meaningful that both Eleanor's contemporaries and our own have found resonance in this aspect of her legend. While Eleanor likely never slept with her father-in-law, and she certainly never rode bare-breasted on Crusade, the enduring nature of these legends suggests that the hyperboles and fabrications carry a modicum of truth, even if they carry very little fact.

Costume rendering for Henry II, King of England, play by Michael Canavan.
Costumes designed by Nan Zabriskie.

Playwright James Goldman tells us that "there are no signs of royalty, wealth or pomp" in Henry's palace. Director Rick Snyder is interested in the simplicity and grittiness of the world of the play, so we will be portraying all the men in clothes very similar in shape to that of what we see on working peasants. Clothing of the period would be made primarily of wool and linen. Only a bit of silk or fine needlework would separate the rich from the poor.

These stories, then, that were told by medieval chroniclers and have been reframed by James Goldman, have thus become their own history. In the case of Henry and Eleanor, the entwined nature of fact and fiction from the very inception of the story is itself what gives social meaning to the story. Thus, in the end, Goldman the playwright and Gerald the chronicler, separated by 800 years, perform the same act: they immortalize the characters who occupied their own imaginations, and they immortalize the imaginative lens itself. Gerald wrote that "Life here below lasts a brief moment and is always in a state of flux. It is, then, a pleasant thought that one's name will live forever and that, having won the right to eternal fame, one will always be praised and honored." Today we can recognize that the fame, and thus the praise and honor, belong to writer and subjects alike. ■

Costume rendering for Richard, play by Lea Coco. Costumes designed by Nan Zabriskie.

In keeping with the simple, casual portrayal, the silhouette will be the short bliaut that was more practical for the working man instead of the angle-length robe that gained popularity among higher classes in the 12th century.



A REVIVAL OF NIXON'S NIXON

BY RUSSELL LEES DIRECTED BY MICHAEL HALBERSTAM
FEATURING WILLIAM BROWN AND LARRY YANDO

6 WEEKS ONLY!

**August 19 –
September 28, 2008**

Performed at 664 Vernon Avenue

This limited engagement will sell out!

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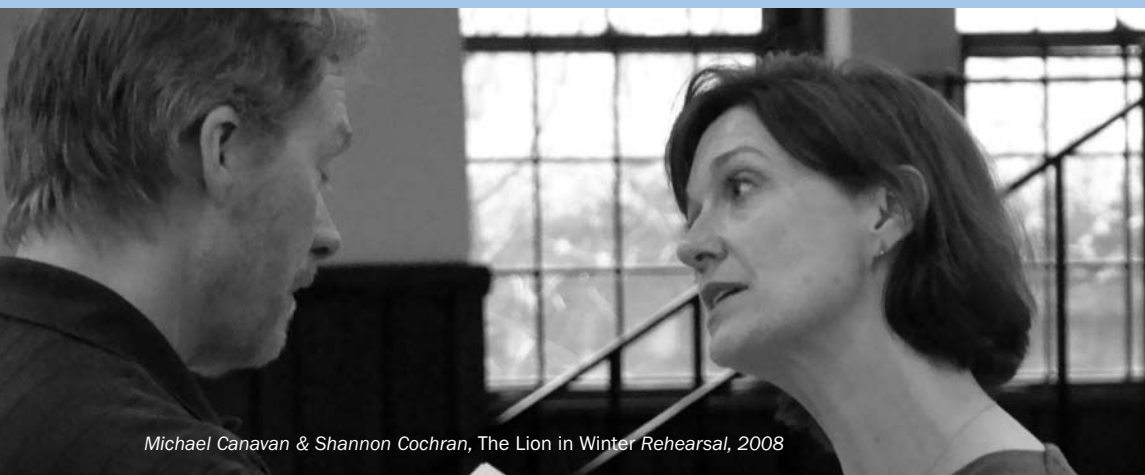
\$54 until May 30, 2008

(Regular price: \$60)

Just in time for the elections, we bring back our critically acclaimed, award-winning production of *Nixon's Nixon*. This box office record-breaking production returns to our most intimate theatre for a limited engagement. Artistic Director Michael Halberstam will once again direct William Brown and Larry Yando as they reprise their tour-de-force performances as Kissinger and Nixon in this thrilling, hilarious and brilliantly imagined story of what *might* have happened in the Lincoln sitting room the night before Nixon resigned.

ARTISTIC CONVERSATION: PLAYING HOUSE WITH SHANNON COCHRAN AND MICHAEL CANAVAN

Following the trend of Tracy Michelle Arnold and Marcus Truschinski as *Rosalind and Orlando* in *As You Like It*, Shannon Cochran (*Private Lives*, *The Father*) and Michael Canavan (*The Father*), will appear as *Eleanor of Aquitaine* and *Henry II, King of England*, in *The Lion in Winter*. Artistic Associate Jimmy McDermott recently interviewed the husband and wife team about the history in the play, of the play, and their own personal history.



Michael Canavan & Shannon Cochran, *The Lion in Winter* Rehearsal, 2008

Jimmy McDermott: The last time you both appeared on our stage was in 2001 with *The Father* by August Strindberg. Have you had to occasion to work together on stage since?

Shannon Cochran: *The Father* was our first and only experience working together. In all honesty, I would prefer not to work together all that often, the way some couples do. I mean, how

can you talk about anything new when you come home after work? Our first experience was certainly not typical. Michael came into *The Father* late in the rehearsal process because of a series of happy accidents and had to play catch-up from the moment he arrived. We didn't have the luxury of working with the director together from the beginning, crafting the show as a team. This time around should be a lot more satisfying to all parties.

Michael Canavan: Shannon and I were also together a couple of years ago in *Bug* off-Broadway. I came into the show after it had been running for several months, so, once again, we didn't share a full rehearsal experience. We performed together for over three months but it always slips her memory. I think it's because she'd developed such a crush on Reed Birney, the actor I replaced.

Jimmy: What has been unique about your experiences performing at Writers' Theatre?

Michael: One of the truly unique elements of the Writers' Theatre experience in the bookstore space was the way audiences would talk to the cast through the curtains that defined the dressing rooms. It always sounded so spontaneous, they just *had* to say something about what they felt and there we were, a few feet away, it was irresistible. And perhaps because the performance had just ended, some would address their comments to the characters. It was great. It was also fun to overhear bits of conversation from other audience members who seemed to have no idea the actors were within earshot.

“THE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SHOW SEEMED REAL AND PAINFUL.”

Shannon: I started out in the bookstore space with *Private Lives*. I couldn't believe we were going to do such a sumptuous, elegant play in that tiny space, but it really worked beautifully. The intimacy of the bookstore allowed us to do a kind of acting that you rarely get to do on the larger stages. I loved it. I also loved the Tudor Court theatre the moment I saw it. Though it's larger, the construction of the space still allows for a very intimate exchange with the audience, which I think enriches the experience immeasurably.

Jimmy: When did each of you first encounter *The Lion in Winter*?

Michael: I saw the film when it first ran on television, back when dinosaurs still roamed the planet. Those used to be such big events, the first network airing of a major motion picture. I've never seen a stage production or the made-for-TV movie version, so I come to this with a fairly clean slate.

Shannon: Of course I saw the movie as a teenager and one of the very first plays I did as a professional was *The Lion in Winter*. I played the young princess, Alais, and worshipped the actors playing Henry and Eleanor. They were so gifted with the language, and at the same time, had a way of making it sound so natural and familiar. The relationships in the show seemed real and painful, and I just marveled at the audience's response to these characters.

Jimmy: Have you played historical figures before? What type of preparation does that require?

Michael: To the best of my memory, I have never played an historical figure

Shannon: Usually, for me, it requires doing some background reading on the period and perhaps the character. I'm reading a fascinating biography by Alison Weir, called *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, appropriately enough, which delves into the events which lead up to the play's action. I like to do some museum work as well, looking for paintings and especially portraiture of the period. You can learn so much about carriage and posture, as well as hair and apparel, of course.

Michael: Our primary responsibility is to the work of the playwright not the historian. That's one of the reasons it is so helpful to immerse yourself in the arts and crafts of the period — music

and paintings, fabrics and jewelry, weapons, tools, furniture and other things that you can engage in with your senses. They can give you a feel for a person in their original time and place that lives more comfortably in your body than do biographical facts.

Jimmy: What edge do you think being a married couple gives you in playing these roles?

before...at least not on the stage. I did play James Monroe on a sitcom once and the preparation consisted entirely of putting on a very unpleasant wig. In the case of Eleanor and Henry, there is so much information available on the internet, it's a little overwhelming. Knowing the opinions of historians, or the guy at Wikipedia, is helpful, but actors frequently fall into the trap of becoming so enamored of our research that we become determined to force it into the play.

“OUR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

Shannon: I'm not sure it gives us an edge. Good actors always seem to find a way to convey marriage and intimacy in a completely believable way. I think we may have a bit of a shorthand with one another, which should lead to a slightly more efficient way of working in rehearsal.

Michael: It allows us to communicate with grunts and nods. I imagine that will be extremely annoying to Rick and the rest of the cast. I've heard actors say that the worst thing about working with your spouse is that you can play the character as mean as it's written and they still think it's just you.

Jimmy: How did the two of you meet?

Shannon: It's the best story: We met on the set of *Star Trek: Deep Space*

Nine. We were the only two guest stars on the episode, with the exception of Jonathan Frakes, a series regular on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, who was guesting as his character's evil twin brother. The director was so busy kissing up to Mr. Frakes that he never bothered to learn Michael's or my name the entire week! Come to think of it, I don't think he gave us any direction either. So we basically only had each other to commune with.

Michael: It was a classic case of misery needing company.

Shannon: Michael kept me laughing the whole week, and the experience actually was great fun. We briefly considered a *Star Trek*-themed wedding, but cooler heads prevailed somewhere along the way. ■

NOT THE HISTORIAN.”



Rick Snyder returns to Writers' Theatre after his 2006 production of *Bus Stop*. Since then, he has directed *The Actor* at the Goodman Theatre as part of the Horton Foote Festival, *Aristocrats* at Strawdog Theatre (named one of the Best Productions of 2007 by the *Wall Street Journal*) and *Betrayal* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company where he has been an ensemble member since 1983. At Steppenwolf, he originated the role of Steve Heidebrecht in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *August: Osage County*, currently

running on Broadway. However, Rick chose not to follow the production to New York, saying, "I've been on Broadway twice. It's wonderful and exciting, but as you get older you get more realistic. I also didn't want to be away from home for that long, I've done that an awful lot." A native of Illinois, Rick lives in Wheaton with his wife of twenty-seven years. In addition to family, Rick felt a professional obligation to remain at home, adding, "I had directing and teaching commitments here that I would have had to give up. I didn't want to do that. They were and are very important to me. *The Lion in Winter* was one of them."

The Lion in Winter holds a particular significance for this director. He played the role of Henry II while attending Illinois State University. When asked about his experience as the monarch, he remarks "I can't remember much about it. I just remember I had lots of hair and that I was doing a Peter O'Toole impression because I thought he was so cool in the movie." Rick also had his first opportunity to direct in college in a class "I did the Lenny/Curly's wife scene from *Of Mice and Men*. One of my favorite plays ever. My roommate Chuck, a little guy, played Lenny. It worked anyway. I am still proud of that." After graduation, Rick went on to build an impressive career as an actor with over forty credits at Steppenwolf alone. But he only recently returned to directing, a shift he found to be "truly refreshing and enlightening" in 2003 while helming *Things Being What They Are* at Steppenwolf. "I understand actors," Rick elaborates, "Acting is hard. I learned quickly that an actor needs a director. They truly cannot know how they are being perceived and they certainly cannot see the whole picture. I try to take care of them. I enjoy that more than I can say."

With such an eclectic mix of plays on his resume, one is tempted to ask Rick what is it about a script that draws him in as a director. He would respond, "Under the clever dialogue and mental fencing they are people driven by very real basic emotions, fears and desires. It is timeless that way. Nothing changes really." ■

FAMILY: A CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Lion in Winter is the mother of all family gatherings. It is in this spirit that the cast shares with you some memories of the supporting actors in their lives: Family.



I grew up with three older brothers and a very creative and resourceful mother. Every fall she would build us Halloween costumes from scratch. One year I was Dorothy and my brothers were the Lion, the Scarecrow, and the Tin (foil) Man. Another year we were Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Mother insisted that our middle brother, Allen, six years old at the time, fulfill his predetermined role in the bear trinity. In his pink apron and pearl necklace and a wooden spoon in hand, he was the most miserable and indignant Mama Bear anyone had ever seen.

– LAURA COOVER

There was the incident of Little Christmas. My girlfriend Marguerite and I expected to stay aloof when some relatives came over to my grandma's house the week after Christmas. So we pulled out the chess board. Little did we know we would be putting it away, just a few moves in. My great aunt Cecilia pulled us in with the conundrum of whether to get a dog, because it could scare off intruders, but then again it could just bark and make her think there were intruders, ruining the sense of safety it was there to create. My great uncle Dave designed Marguerite and my future, informing us that our first few kids could be bagpipers, but any more than that and they'd have to be drummers. After my grandma's own Irish cream was passed around, we were all singing a hearty round of "In the Band." We young folks learned a thing or two about partying from our elders that night.

– MICHAEL FAGIN





Our family motto, attributed to an unknown source, has always been: “Sarcasm, family size...subtle yet bitter.” The dinner table was always a place to exercise one’s wit, and a successful outing results in the reducing of your adversary to tears of laughter. In our opinion there are no better people to ruthlessly make fun of than the ones you love, and no one more likely to return the favor.

– CHRISTOPHER MCLINDEN

My family once burned a house practically to the ground. We hadn’t spent a Christmas together in several years and a friend of the family offered their mountain cabin in Tennessee. I came from Chicago, my parents from North Carolina and my brother from Texas. We stayed up half the night in front of the fireplace, eating and talking, and the fireplace sleeve became overheated (not our fault technically, bad construction) and the whole chimney caught fire. We spent the rest of the night watching the fire department try to save the living room. Strangely, the friend hasn’t been heard from since.

– SHANNON COCHRAN



My mother told me about the time one of her aunt’s water broke at Thanksgiving dinner. The aunt was understandably embarrassed but my mother says this kind of event is not the big deal they make it out to be in movies and everyone went on eating. “You know how we are about food,” she said, and I guess I do now.

– MICHAEL CANAVAN

My parents took the ’80s like champions: they were divorced three years in. So now my family gathers in dichotomy. My mom’s side, all Berwyn born and bred, smoke around the dinner table and toss scathing sarcasm at each other like the failed Czech revolutionaries they see themselves as. My mom is an amazing cook and, in the end, we all find common ground in her culinary excellence and a shared nap. My father, who reinvented himself as a family man when marrying my Jewish stepmother, often leads the family in prayer before dinner, which is weird for me. However, the convention is calming and my new little brother and sister are as adorable as they are hyperactive. All in all, my family gatherings are as fragmented as the ’80s but they have one thing the decade totally lacked: love and compassion. Nonetheless, I’d stay away if I were you.

– ROBERT BELUSHI ■



WHAT’S HAPPENING BACKSTAGE AT WRITERS’ THEATRE

EDUCATION

THE CAROL MARKS JACOBSON ARTS & EDUCATION PROGRAM

WRITERS' THEATRE PRESENTS



**THE MLK
PROJECT:
THE FIGHT FOR
CIVIL RIGHTS**

2007/08 SEASON WRAP UP

BY MICA COLE

At our final performance of *The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights* at Francis Parker Elementary in Chicago, we had a dialogue that was unprecedented in the program: a student expressed a sense of disillusionment over the death of Dr. King. Unprecedented not because no one had ever pointed it out before, in fact, it was often the one irreconcilable point most noted by younger audiences as they struggled to grasp the positive message in Dr. King's death. I say "unprecedented" because we had never been challenged to consider the implications of the death of our title hero. What did his death say about hope and the cost of freedom? How did the struggle for peace and unity ultimately result in violence?

If you have ever seen the play, you could argue that the main character, Alaya, is inspired to find inner peace when she interviews poet and civil

rights activist David Hernandez. Up until Dr. King's death, Hernandez was a supporter and participant in violent protest. "Peace after revolution," says Hernandez in the play. "That was our motto: Peace after revolution."

Later in the play, Alaya re-tells the moment when Hernandez is inspired by King's death and discovers that his words are more powerful than his weapons. Recalling that monumental moment in history he proclaims, "It was on this anvil that my pen was forged."

Still, it was impossible to ignore the fate of our celebrated hero and the implications made, not necessarily by the play, but by the unfolding of history. But I turned the question back around to them. You tell me. What is the cost of freedom? Are peaceful protests still relevant? Effective? Aren't there enough laws to protect us?

Since the prospect that an African-American man or a woman might become president has been at the forefront of media coverage, the issues of prejudice, socio-economic disparity and the racial divide have been more prominent in the thoughts of Americans than they perhaps have been since the Civil Rights Movement. Discussing the cost of freedom, a young lady at Francis Parker said that freedom is much more affordable for some than others. She talked about the need to close the economic gap in American society so that freedom is, well, free...for everyone.

So, while *The MLK Project* takes a retrospective look at the Civil Rights Movement and issues of racism and inequality, it also prompts progressive discussions and provides fertile planting ground for new ideas and laws; marching grounds for social reform. One seemingly cynical student said that laws were irrelevant, that laws don't change people, people change laws.

"But what changes people?" I asked.

"People," he said. People.



Did you know?

- *The MLK Project* has served nearly 18,000 students since the program's inception.
- *The MLK Project* has toured to nearly 100 schools.
- 90% of the performances were offered at little to no cost to schools in underserved communities.

The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights

The *MLK Project* will return again in winter 2009. Book your date today!

January 19 – February 27, 2009

For more information please call Mica Cole, Director of Education, at 847-242-6007.

WordPlay

enchanted evening

On April 4, 2008, Writers' Theatre celebrated its annual WordPlay Gala with over 350 friends and supporters. The glamorous benefit, held at The Peninsula Chicago, celebrated the art and artists of Writers' Theatre and championed its bright future. The Gala was a resounding success, raising over \$380,000 in support of continued artistic ambitions.

Gala Co-Chairs Patty Becker, Christie Osmond and Christine Pompizzi organized a thrilling evening which featured delectable cuisine, an exciting Live Auction and a rousing performance directed by Writers' Theatre favorite William Brown. The evening commenced with a cocktail reception studded with theatrical displays offering a glimpse into the work behind the magic produced on the stages at Writers' Theatre. Guests were then invited into the Grand Ballroom for a gourmet dinner with the glimmering lights of Michigan Avenue creating a festive backdrop for the evening. The performance featured cast members from the acclaimed Writers' Theatre production of *As You Like It*. Wittily weaving together a satirical look at Writers' Theatre's previous and upcoming seasons, the performance was the highlight of the evening showcasing the vocal talents of Tracy Michelle Arnold, William Brown, Katie Jeep and Marcus Truschinski. The performers returned to the stage for the grand finale, a beautiful rendition of Andy Hansen's delightful *In the Springtime* from *As You Like It*. Another highlight of the evening was the Raffle, featuring a 2008 Triple White Limited Edition Volkswagen Beetle or \$20,000 cash as the grand prize. To the delight of all in attendance, the winning ticket belonged to Chris Knight, Board President. He promptly returned the prize, adding to the evening's financial success. Guests were delighted when Chicago favorite Garrett Popcorn was delivered at the end of the night as a party favor.

The Writers' Theatre Board of Trustees congratulates the Gala Co-Chairs on the tremendous success of the 2008 WordPlay Gala, and extends their gratitude to everyone who helped make the evening possible. Every year, the Gala Host Committee is the driving force behind the event. By filling their tables with enthusiastic theatre supporters, the Host Committee ensures the success of the Gala. We would like to recognize the following Host Committee members:

Philip & Janice Beck
Melvin & Randy Berlin
Clay & Amy Brock
Michael & Deborah Cogan
Keith & Betsy Colburn
Scott & Becki Etzler

Mary Winton Green
Richard & Nancy Kehoe
Donald & Tricia Manhard
Suzanne Pattou
Christopher & Sara Pfaff
Irene Pritzker

William & Stephanie Sick
Avy & Marcie Stein
Gary & Chris Weitman
Shepherd & Sally Young



1



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1. Emily & Board President Chris Knight;
2. Actor Penny Slusher, Jack Segal, Executive Director Kate Lipuma & Trustee Carol Dawley;
3. Gala Co-Chairs Tina Pompizzi, Patty Becker and Christie Osmond with Artistic Director Michael Halberstam;
4. Michael & Deborah Cogan;
5. Trustee Barbara Melcher and Fabrice & Cara Braunrot;
6. Todd Nickow & Bjorn Berkhout

It took hundreds of generous people making donations, purchasing raffle tickets and bidding on Auction packages to help Writers' Theatre exceed its Gala fundraising goals. The Board of Trustees would like to thank all those who participated in the Gala through their generous donations, including:

Gala Sponsor:

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois

Video Sponsor:

Harris Bank

In-kind Donations:

Alinea

An Apple a Day Catering

The Autobarn

Philip & Janice Beck

Bruce & Patty Becker

Don & Susan Belgrad

Bob & Kathy Bernstein

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois

CDW

Dan & Sara Cohan

Mark & Carol Dawley

Garrett Popcorn Shops

Ellis & Gillian Goodman

The Grand Food Center

Harris Bank

Michael Halberstam

Tom & Gail Hodges

International House of Wine & Cheese

J & L Catering

Kaehler Travel Works

Bill & Molly Mahoney

Donald & Tricia Manhard

Tom & Ann Mann

Rick & Barb Melcher

David & Leslie McGranahan

Bob & Lorel McMillan

The Oprah Winfrey Show

Mark & Christie Osmond

The Peninsula Chicago

Michael & Christine Pope

Mike & Debbie Richwine

John & Phyllis Russell

David & Kelly Ryan

James & Joan Sears

Stan & Jodi Slovin

Sony Pictures

Mary Pat Studdert

Suits 20/20

Ultra Diamond

Urban Oasis Spa

Rachel Weinstein & Jason Pizer

Roger & Pam Phillips Weston

Pam Zdunek & Clifford Sladnick



7. Trustee Sara Cohan, Artistic Director Michael Halberstam; 8. Bootsie & Joe Nathan; 9. Stephanie & Bill Sick; 10. Actor Suzanne Lang, Jason Pizer & Trustee Rachel Weinstein; 11. Bisi & Bruce Mau; 12. Gwenyth & Bill Sharp; 13. Trustee Janice Beck & husband Phil; 14. Jan & Trustee Bruce Tranen

The Annual Director's Society Garden Party

On July 13, 2008, Writers' Theatre will toast its Director's Society members at the annual Garden Party to be held at the home of Bill & Stephanie Sick overlooking Lake Michigan. The event will feature cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and an exclusive performance.

If you are already a member of the Director's Society, please watch the mail for your invitation. If not, it's not too late to join. The Garden Party is just one of the many benefits offered to members in recognition of their generous contribution of \$1,000 or more.

For more information, or to join the Director's Society, please contact Associate Director of Development Kellie de Leon at 847-242-6012.

SPONSOR SALUTE

Through the generous support of our sponsors we are able to produce shows of the quality for which Writers' Theatre is so well known. Below are the sponsors who made *The Lion in Winter* possible:



JPMorgan is a global leader in financial services. Through the JPMorgan Private Bank, the firm delivers customized wealth management advice and solutions, leveraging its broad capabilities in investing, tax and estate planning, family office management, philanthropy, credit, fiduciary services and special advisory services to help its clients advance toward their own particular goals. For more than 150 years, JPMorgan's comprehensive product offering, commitment to innovation and integrity, and focus on placing the interests of its clients first and foremost have made JPMorgan an advisor of choice to people around the world.



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Scott Byron & Co. is an award-winning landscape architectural company based on Chicago's North Shore. The company is dedicated to creating environments that its customers are proud of and in which they can live or work comfortably. By offering an integrated system of design, installation, and maintenance, Scott Byron ensures its customers' design and plant investment while sustaining the beauty of landscapes, allowing them to mature over time.

TOURS

Enchanted April

On Saturday, March 8th, twenty trustees and dedicated supporters of Writers' Theatre traveled to Milwaukee to see a performance of *Enchanted April*, the play at Milwaukee Repertory Theater directed by Artistic Director Michael Halberstam. The group participated in an engaging costume lecture before watching the delightful production. After the play, everyone enjoyed a fabulous dinner at Kil@wat. A great time was had by all.



Trustee Barb Melcher, Board President Chris Knight & his wife Emily and Sonia Marschak



Irene Pritzker, Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and Mary Winton Green

TOURS

The Stratford Festival

October 2–5, 2008

Join Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and *Chicago Tribune* former Chief Theatre Critic Richard Christiansen on a delightful and exhilarating trip to The Stratford Festival in Ontario, Canada.

A former Stratford Festival company member himself (1990, 1991), Michael invites you on this magnificent Shakespearean adventure, which continues Writers' Theatre's 13-year tradition of excellent performing arts tours around the world.

The trip includes roundtrip airfare on American Airlines, all transfers, accommodations at the charming Queen's Inn, gourmet meals at award-winning restaurants, exclusive preparatory seminars and the best available tickets to *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Caesar and Cleopatra* starring Christopher Plummer. Guests will also have the opportunity to add an optional performance of *The Music Man*.

The cost of the trip including airfare, accommodations and tickets is \$1,950. The space on this tour is limited to 22 places, and reservations must be received by August 1, 2008. For reservations, please contact Associate Director of Development Kellie de Leon at 847-242-6012.

The 2008/09 New Year's London Tour

Writers' Theatre is pleased to announce the dates for our annual New Year's Trip to London! This year, the tour will run from Tuesday, December 30 through Tuesday, January 6.

The trip will include accommodations at the exquisite Waldorf Hilton, and tickets to six must-see shows including *Twelfth Night* starring Derek Jacobi as Malvolio. Other highlights are dinner at Scott's, one of London's hottest new restaurants, and tea at the elegant Goring Hotel which is frequented by the Royal Family. The trip promises to be filled with unforgettable experiences, exclusive access, and first-rate theatre.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list to receive information about this or other tours, please contact Associate Director of Development Kellie de Leon at 847-242-6012 or kdeleon@writerstheatre.org.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE: THE LION IN WINTER

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
25	26	27 7:30	28 7:30	29 8:00	30 8:00	31 4:00/8:00

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 2:00/6:00	2	3 7:30	4 7:30	5 Sold Out	6 8:00	7 4:00/8:00
8 2:00/6:00	9	10 7:30	11 2:00/7:30	12 8:00	13 8:00	14 4:00/8:00
15 2:00	16	17 7:30**	18 7:30**	19 8:00	20 8:00	21 4:00/8:00
22 2:00/6:00*	23	24 7:30	25 7:30	26 8:00	27 8:00	28 4:00/8:00
29 2:00/6:00*	30					

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 7:30	2 7:30	3 No Show	4 No Show	5 4:00/8:00
6 2:00/6:00	7	8 7:30	9 2:00/7:30	10 8:00	11 8:00	12 4:00/8:00
13 2:00	14	15 7:30**	16 7:30**	17 8:00	18 8:00	19 4:00/8:00
20 2:00/6:00	21	22 7:30	23 2:00/7:30	24 8:00	25 8:00	26 4:00/8:00
27 2:00	28	29 7:30	30 7:30	31 8:00		

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 8:00	2 4:00/8:00
3 2:00/6:00	4	5	6	7	8	9

* Pre-Show Lectures

June 22 and 29, 2008 at 5 p.m.

Writers' Theatre guest artists will guide patrons through the inner-workings of the play. The pre-show lecture for *The Lion in Winter* will be held at the Woman's Library Club (325 Tudor Court, Glencoe).

** Post-Show Discussions

June 17, 18 and July 15, 16, 2008

Audience members will have the opportunity to engage with artistic staff and cast members to ask questions about the process, the characters and the production.

Dinner Theatre

Enjoy a meal at Morton's The Steakhouse, consisting of a salad, entrée, dessert and a glass of wine for only \$83, including tax! For more details or to purchase your meal, call the Writers' Theatre Box Office at 847-242-6000.



699 Skokie Blvd
Northbrook, IL 60062
www.mortons.com

Morton's The Steakhouse is the official restaurant partner of Writers' Theatre's production, *The Lion in Winter*.

IN BRIEF

Please join us in welcoming the following people to the Writers' Theatre community!

New Trustee

Janice Beck was born in Cleveland, Ohio and spent her childhood in La Crosse, Wisconsin. She attended the University of Wisconsin, graduating with a degree in Communication Arts: Radio-Television-Film. After living in Boston and Washington, D.C., while her husband finished his studies, she moved to Chicago. Beck has worked with many community organizations, including as dues treasurer for the Junior League, treasurer and president of the Northwestern University Settlement House North Shore Board, manager for various Winnetka Hockey Club teams, program co-chair and House Walk co-chair for the Garden Guild of Winnetka and the Field Museum Women's Board. Beck has lived in Winnetka for 22 years with her husband Phil and their three boys, Jeffery, Stephen and Gregory. Janice participates in numerous current events groups, a film group and two book groups and has a passion for skiing, golf, reading and, of course, the theatre!

Staff Update

Kellie de Leon

Associate Director of Development

Kellie, a proud native of Littleton, Colorado, has resided in Chicago since 2003. She received her BA in Theatre Arts from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After college, Kellie wore many hats including co-founding a theatre camp in Colorado, acting and teaching in Maryland and touring with the Repertory Theatre of America. She spent the past four years in Development at a non-profit organization in the Loop. Kellie resides in Chicago with her husband, Jose, and is excited to bring her development skills and passion for theatre to Writers' Theatre.

Margaret Reeder

Director of Audience Services

Margaret comes to Writers' Theatre with over 10 years of experience in Ticketing and Audience Services. Her first box office position was with *Shear Madness* at the Blackstone Hotel. Since then, she has managed the box office at Theatre IV, Virginia's largest theatre, and worked for over seven years with Chicago Shakespeare Theater as the Director of Ticketing and Guest Services. Margaret is thrilled to be a part of Writers' Theatre's staff and looks forward to seeing you at the Theatre.

Thank You for Joining Us This Season

This year has been filled with plays ranging from classic to contemporary and from funny to touching and even chilling — all of which received rave reviews from audiences and critics alike. As we look toward the 2008/09 Season and the wonderful productions we have lined up for you, we would like to encourage you to **renew your season tickets** so that you won't miss a moment!

Renew today!

As a Writers' Theatre season ticket holder, you will receive the theatergoing experience that fits into your life while guaranteeing access to all four season shows...all this at one GREAT price! Your season packages will include:

More Shows!

- **Guaranteed tickets** to the 2008/09 Season productions: *Picnic*, *The Maids*, *Old Glory* and *A Minister's Wife*.
- **Exclusive advance access** to limited-run engagements during the 2008/09 Season, including *Nixon's Nixon* and *A Christmas Carol*.

More Flexibility!

- **The Rain Check** is a **NEW** benefit that allows you to make up a missed performance at no cost via our waitlist.
- Swap your season tickets from one season production to another once during the season with the **Trade-A-Show Benefit**.
- **Exchange your ticket at no charge** up to **24 hours** prior to your scheduled performance.

More Savings!

- Season Ticket Holders save **up to 30% off** single ticket prices!
- **FREE ticket exchanges** by phone, mail and fax, with **no upgrade charges** if you change to a different day of the week.
- Book tickets for your friends and they will have **access to great seats** before tickets go on sale to the public at **only \$50 per ticket** to any show of the four season productions.

More Service!

- Receive a free, one-year subscription to **The Brief Chronicle**, the Writers' Theatre newsmagazine, providing an in-depth look at upcoming shows and events.
- **Courtesy reminders** will be sent to all season ticket holders one week prior to your scheduled performance.

Simply choose between **The Membership** that maximizes your flexibility or **The Subscription** that allows you to determine your schedule up front and call the Box Office to purchase or renew today!

The Membership: \$180
Up to 30% off single tickets!

or **The Subscription:** \$200
Up to 25% off single tickets!

Call today!
847-242-6000



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Writers' Theatre has gone green!
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