

THE OFFICIAL NEWSMAGAZINE OF  
WRITERS' THEATRE

ISSUE THIRTY-SIX  
HESPERIA  
JANUARY 2012

# THE BRIEF CHRONICLE

20<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
SEASON

EXPERIENCE  
EXTRAORDINARY

WT  
WRITERS'  
THEATRE

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# THE BRIEF CHRONICLE

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ISSUE THIRTY-SIX JANUARY 2012

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*Artistic Director*

**Kathryn M. Lipuma**  
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**Michael Halberstam**  
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Dear Friends,

We are delighted to welcome you back to our Tudor Court space for the third production of our 20th Anniversary season, *Hesperia*, a stunning new work by gifted young Chicago playwright Randall Colburn.

We're thrilled to have been able to provide Randall the opportunity to explore his ideas and his characters in a workshop setting with other actors in the room, before beginning the rehearsal process for the full scale production that you will see in the Theatre. The result, we hope you'll agree, is a profound and moving piece that the Theatre benefits by having on its stage.

In this issue of *The Brief Chronicle* we'll introduce you to Randall Colburn and the cast of *Hesperia* and talk about the process leading up to this production with Associate Artistic Director Stuart Carden. We'll also delve into the unique combination of themes that form the basis of this play: faith and sexuality. Be sure to check out the opportunities to expand your *Hesperia* experience, with our slate of special events throughout the months of February and March—there are some fascinating opportunities, all free and open to the public!

Backstage, you'll find information about our upcoming 20th Anniversary season Gala and a celebration of the opening of *The Caretaker*. Plus, we'll give you a special sneak peek at our Literary Development Initiative and *The Making Of... Series*.

Remember, to get the most up to date information about Writers' happenings, please consider joining our email list at [writerstheatre.org](http://writerstheatre.org), join our growing community on Facebook or follow us on Twitter at [@writerstheatre](https://twitter.com/writerstheatre).

Yours sincerely,

Michael

Kate

# HESPERIA

By **RANDALL COLBURN**

Directed by Associate Artistic Director **STUART CARDEN**

January 24 – March 18, 2012

Performed at 325 Tudor Court

The Cast

**REBECCA BULLER, ERIK HELLMAN\*, NATHAN HOSNER\*,  
KELLY O'SULLIVAN\* AND TYLER ROSS**

Scenic Design by **Chelsea Warren**

Costume Design by **Jacqueline Firkins, USA**

Lighting Design by **Heather Gilbert, USA**

Sound Design by **Mikhail Fiksel, USA**

Properties Design by **Nick Heggstad**

Stage Management: **David Castellanos\***

\*Denotes Members of Actors' Equity Association,  
the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers



# INTRODUCING RANDALL COLBURN

By **BOBBY KENNEDY**, *Producing Assistant/Literary Associate*

Photo by Michael Brosilow

When *Hesperia* begins performances on the Writers' Theatre stage in January 2012, it will be the highest profile production yet for swiftly emerging local playwright Randall Colburn. It will also mark the culmination of a personal journey that the 29-year-old has been on since reaching adulthood. "This is a deeply personal play about the emotions I've been struggling with throughout my twenties," he confesses.

Colburn grew up in the Detroit suburbs of Roseville and Mt. Clemens, where he discovered an interest in writing in 5th grade after seeing the film *Jurassic Park* and deciding to write his own version of the novel. More stories and novels followed, but theatrical opportunities were rare during middle school and high school. As a result, he didn't start writing plays until college, instead dabbling in acting when he could.

Reading David Mamet's play *Edmond* at the age of 18 had a profound influence on the young writer and steered him toward playwriting, rather than fiction. "I had no idea plays could be that way," he remembers thinking. Playwrights Eric Bogosian, Harold Pinter, and Sarah Kane were also influential on Randall's writing, as was the Irish novelist James Joyce.

Although not raised in a religious household, Colburn found himself oddly fascinated by faith. "I used to pray every night until I didn't get cast in my seventh grade play, after which I was an atheist for a year," he recalls. "But then I just went right back to praying.

This desire for faith seemed to be in my bones from a very young age."

In 2002, while a freshman at Central Michigan University, Colburn met the daughter of a fundamentalist Pentecostal preacher, joined her congregation and the two began a three-year relationship. "When I met my ex," he explains, "I had this yearning desire to believe in something. I fell in love and fell into religion simultaneously. I was really gung-ho about everything, but as soon as we split, my faith began to wane. Without the comfort of her and her family and the church, there was nothing."

The beginnings of *Hesperia* date from this period of profound change in Colburn's life, as the writer transitioned from a God-centered, abstinence-based relationship to a volatile, unhealthy sexual relationship with an emotionally abusive woman. "I felt as if I'd gone from one extreme to the other very quickly, stirring up a great deal of conflicting emotions." In December 2005, he stumbled across the Myspace page of an adult film star who had recently converted to born-again Christianity, and was inspired to begin work on *Hesperia*.

After completing his MFA in Playwriting at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale in 2008, Colburn moved to Chicago and began to make contacts in the industry. Writers' Theatre Artistic Director Michael Halberstam quickly took to his writing and gave the playwright his first commission—a play that Colburn is continuing to develop for

the Theatre. He also garnered readings of his plays at Victory Gardens, the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, and the Public Theatre in New York, among others. Despite all these readings, getting his work produced in Chicago proved challenging.

**“I FELT AS IF I’D GONE FROM ONE EXTREME TO THE OTHER VERY QUICKLY, STIRRING UP A GREAT DEAL OF CONFLICTING EMOTIONS.”**

Then in 2010, everything fell into place, as Colburn had seven productions staged in Chicago that year. “It was literally just a product of forming a lot of relationships, writing a ton of plays, and saying yes to everything,” he maintains. The Right Brain Project produced a full season of plays by Colburn, and the writer also had productions of his work at InFusion Theatre, Tympanic Theatre Company and Brain Surgeon Theater. Both *Time Out Chicago* and the *Chicago Reader* ran profiles on the emerging playwright and his ascending star in the local theatre community.


What is particularly remarkable about Colburn’s output is how diverse the subject matter is, ranging from the day-to-day of phone sex operators to life in small-town Michigan, and even to the death of Kurt Cobain. Yet all of Colburn’s plays—particularly *Hesperia*—ultimately deal with two central themes: faith and identity. The playwright says he’s consumed by “the idea that everyone needs a savior [and] what faces we place on that savior.”

Now, at the end of his twenties, with much behind him and a bright future ahead, Colburn is finally getting a handle on his success. At first, it was “cool and difficult and weird and made me freak out a bit,” he relates, but “it was satisfying because it felt like my hard work was beginning to pay off. It’s weird, though, to have people suddenly start caring about your work, and following your career. It’s taken me a while to get used to.” Coming to terms with his views on faith continues to be a process. “I have no strong opinion about religion these days,” he says. “I’m just writing about it. I like not having a stance. It makes my plays stronger, I think. Someday, though, I’ll have to face up to it all.” ■

# 20 years of getting it write.

BMO Harris Bank is proud to be Season Sponsor of Writers’ Theatre as it celebrates its 20th Anniversary.



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# WELCOME TO HESPERIA

In conversation with director **STUART CARDEN**  
and playwright **RANDALL COLBURN**

**BOBBY KENNEDY, Literary Associate:**  
**Randall, what was the inspiration for Hesperia? Why did you want to write this play?**

**RANDALL:** In 2005, I stumbled across the Myspace page of an adult film star who had converted to born-again Christianity. That got the wheels turning, and I wrote my first draft in the following months, purging, I think, some of my resentment for the way religion's puritanical mores had shaped my sexual identity. As I continued to work on the play, I delved further into my feelings about faith, the malleability of identity and the sacrifices we must make if we hope to ever truly redefine ourselves.

**STUART:** *What is clear after even the first few pages of Hesperia is how intimate and deeply personal a play it is. There is an emotional honesty and a visceral intensity that only comes from a playwright who knows the struggles, pleasures, vulnerabilities and desires of his characters.*

*I'm also fascinated by the play's depiction of those twin lightning rods of the American experience—SEX and RELIGION. Randall examines the intersection of the two with tremendous wisdom, humor, sensuality and unflinching honesty—rather than taking a satiric stance on*

*religion or using sex to provoke. He has created characters that are actively and dramatically negotiating their sense of selves as both spiritual and sexual beings.*

**BK: The Right Brain Project production of Hesperia was only a year and a half ago. Randall, why did you want to explore this play again so soon? Stuart, what made Writers' decide to produce the play here, just a few miles north of its last production?**

**RANDALL:** In 2010, a handful of the plays I had produced went from the writing stage to the production stage in mere months. While this was exciting, often I felt the plays were underdeveloped. I've been working on *Hesperia*, on and off, for about six years, and have seen it produced in two different permutations. Now, I feel like the play is in its home stretch, and what people are going to see at Writers' Theatre is, perhaps, my first completely finished play.

**STUART:** *First, this is simply a phenomenal new play by one of Chicago's most interesting young playwrights. [Artistic Director] Michael Halberstam and I both saw the terrific world premiere at The Right Brain Project and found ourselves continuing to talk about it long afterward. When we spoke to Randall after the premiere, it was clear that he was still*

*very much in process with the play and wanted to continue developing his ideas. It seemed logical that Writers' might help him with the play's evolution. So for the past year we've been a sounding board for his ideas. The collaboration has been thrilling and I'm anxious to see how our audience connects with the piece.*

*Additionally, the American Theater seems to be suffering from a terrible case of "World Premiere-itis" right now. The tendency, by many theaters, is to pursue almost exclusively first productions, and playwrights often struggle to get that second or third production, which can have a deleterious effect on the quality of new work being produced. Michael and I hope to combat that trend, in a small way.*

*A play like Hesperia, even after a successful first production, would rarely be produced by another theater in Chicago. But a second production can be even more valuable to a play's life. With that first production a writer begins to understand how his/her play works on stage and how an audience receives it—whether or not they are hearing the play the playwright believes he/she has written. The second production serves the writer and improves the quality of the play, but it also benefits the audiences who get to engage with a new work that is building on lessons learned in the premiere.*

**BK: The play underwent a developmental workshop at Writers' in August, 2011. Tell us about that process.**

**STUART:** *Randall, our five incredible actors and I spent five days pouring over the script and passionately debating*

*the ideas of the play. The actors shared personal stories about how their own lives intersected with their character's. Their empathic understanding began to inspire new ideas, new dialogue and, very quickly, new scenes. It was thrilling to come in a day after a discussion about a turning point to find that Randall had worked through the night to write a new scene that deepened that precise moment. By the end of the week, the play had become something even more layered, surprising and moving.*

**RANDALL:** I pushed myself harder that week than I ever have in a workshop before. Stuart is one of the best collaborators one could ask for—unceasingly positive and jaw-droppingly articulate—and the cast was game for any and all changes that I threw at them. As we began peeling away the layers, I saw the potential for so much more. We fleshed out the script in some amazing ways, with a number of new scenes, deepened relationships and a few new twists.

**BK: The cast that has been assembled for our production features some fresh faces for our audience, and is one of the youngest casts we've had here in a while. What were you looking for during the audition process?**

**RANDALL:** Vulnerability. And warmth. An open mind.

**STUART:** *Randall writes characters that are driven as much by their emotions as they are by their intellect, so we looked for actors that have the ability to negotiate those emotional switchbacks. Chicago is blessed to have so many wonderfully*

## THE LIFE OF HESPERIA

*skilled young actors that are committed to honesty and connection on the stage. We've brought together five who really embody that Chicago acting ethos.*

**BK: How do you hope this play will resonate with Writers' Theatre audiences?**

**RANDALL:** Despite its sensational subject matter, the play is not crafted to alienate or exploit. I'm drawn to characters that subvert the audience's expectations, and in *Hesperia* I've attempted to pen warm, complex people that struggle with their desires and identities in the same ways we all do. I love and empathize with every character, and I've treated the town of Hesperia with the kind of respect that I feel isn't often afforded to small towns in art anymore, not really since *Picnic* and *Our Town*. That kind of treatment is infectious, and I hope audiences allow themselves to be immersed in it.

**STUART:** *What I love about our audience is the pressure of their gaze. Our audience watches with an intelligent intensity that I don't see anywhere else. They notice details, analyze, question, empathize and, most importantly, listen deeply. This play and the complexities of the young characters that populate it will offer many rewards for an audience like ours. I hope people will recognize in their own lives the central question of the play—one with which all of the characters in Hesperia grapple: How do you reconcile your past and who you are with the person you want to be?* ■

- FEBRUARY 2006** Randall writes the first draft of *Hesperia*.
- MARCH 2006** A staged reading of the play is held at the Longbranch Coffee House in Carbondale, Illinois.
- DECEMBER 2006** Randall begins writing *Hesperia* as a novella.
- MARCH 2008** Randall fuses the novella and the play into a full-length script, incorporating presentational monologues, traditional scenes and satirical sketches.
- JUNE 2008** Writers' Theatre starts a relationship with Randall.
- AUGUST 2008** A truncated version of the play is produced in an evening of Randall's short plays by Hangar 9 Theatre in Chicago.
- JULY 2009** Randall workshops *Hesperia* with InFusion Theatre's New Play Development Workshop, rewriting the entire script from scratch.
- OCTOBER 2009** The Right Brain Project chooses to produce an entire season of Randall's plays.
- JULY 2010** The Right Brain Project produces *Hesperia* in Chicago.
- MARCH 2011** Writers' Theatre announces *Hesperia* will be part of its 20th Anniversary Season.
- AUGUST 2011** A developmental workshop of *Hesperia* is held at Writers' Theatre with Associate Artistic Director Stuart Carden directing.
- JANUARY 2012** The new version of *Hesperia* begins performances at 325 Tudor Court in Glencoe.

# ACTOR Q&A

*Is there something that your character experiences in Hesperia that really resonates with you and intersects with your life?*

## NATHAN HOSNER

Reading *Hesperia* for the first time, I was flooded with memories of my childhood. I grew up in and around the farmland, small forests and orchards to the west of Kalamazoo, Michigan. We would sit above the railroad tracks, waiting for the Westbound Amtrak on its way to Chicago. The sound of the signal horn always filled me with anticipation, the ground shuddering and the slow flash of the headlight approaching. Then the train flashed by, the passengers lit up like an old film reel in the dim yellow glow of the windows.

After the last car passed I could hear the tinkle of the hazard switches and then the fading cry of the signal horn; so exciting before, now somehow sad. What did Chicago hold for all those folks flashing by? Would I too someday live on the other side of that endless expanse of Lake Michigan, so full of possibility?



### THIS IS IAN

He's not from around here.  
He's starting to understand salvation.  
Someone is looking for him.



## KELLY O'SULLIVAN

I grew up in the south, and God was all around me. In the catholic school I attended through 8th grade, the student-organized rallies at my public high school, the non-denominational church ski trips the cool kids went on, and on billboards, jewelry, and lower back tattoos. God is a given where I'm from, but I never felt any kind of personal connection until I experienced loss for the first time. One of my best friends was killed in a car accident at the end of our junior year, and I began to understand the longing for God and the desire for something larger than yourself. Claudia searches for God after a tortuous low in her life, returning to the faith of her childhood. While God was not the answer for me as it might be for Claudia, I respect the pursuit of faith and the healing power it holds.

### THIS IS CLAUDIA

That's not her real name.  
She is learning to forgive.  
She fits in perfectly.



## ERIK HELLMAN

Because of some long relationships early in my life, I was in my mid-twenties before I dated someone with past loves. History's a killer and everybody has one. To give over to someone else and the events that made them who they are is a difficult juggle. Negotiating this situation for the first time as an "adult," I found my feelings at odds with the way I wanted to feel; the boy I could be at odds with the man I was trying to become.

### THIS IS TRICK

He's the nicest guy.  
He has all the faith in the world.  
That doesn't make this any easier.

Trick is also trying to digest someone's history. In doing so, he oscillates between naivety and wisdom, callousness and need, often nurturing and manipulating simultaneously. I recognize in Trick's dichotomies my own back and forth: wrestling with hard feelings and the harder feelings brought on by judging those feelings. The greatest strength of Randall's play is that the characters act out of character. They are not manifested ideas, or cogs in the machine of "situation"; they are beautiful, messy people just like me and you.

## REBECCA BULLER

I don't share many qualities with Daisy, my character in *Hesperia*. Perhaps that's why I love her. What draws me to her is her enduring faith—in people, in God, in herself. She maintains an optimism that I find admirable. Her faith gets shaken when she must either trust someone who may not be trustworthy or ignore her every impulse and push them away. This is the part of her with which I can identify. Three years ago I met a man who was moving halfway across the country in only two weeks. Logically, I knew that allowing myself to love someone who was leaving was terribly ill-advised, but I spent every second of those two weeks with him and cried like a child when he left. Then, just as quickly, he came back, and we're still together today. I'm glad my heart won that round.



### THIS IS DAISY

She's a good girl.  
She would never hurt you.  
Kissing doesn't hurt, does it?

## TYLER ROSS

Like my character in *Hesperia*, I was raised as a Christian. Specifically, Southern Baptist—and if you know anything about them, you know that “ultra conservative” is a pretty fair description. That's how my particular church was, anyway. My life was a very sheltered one. Any “art” that found its way into my life was through the church: worship songs, biblical theatre and symbolic baptismal ceremonies. Secular culture, however, had no place in my life. I couldn't listen to the music my friends at school did. I couldn't watch R-rated movies. I had no idea what curse words were until I entered the 6th grade. And when I did eventually discover the rest of the world around me and began to explore it? Let's just say that it completely rocked my world.



### THIS IS AARON

He can recite  
Corinthians, Chapter 13.  
He knows something he shouldn't.  
He has a lot of questions.

Photos by Michael Brosilow

# THE SEXUALITY OF *HESPERIA*:

## The Influence of Adult Entertainment

By Bobby Kennedy, Producing Assistant/ Literary Associate

In *Hesperia*, Claudia is trying to escape a past in the adult entertainment business when the arrival of her ex-boyfriend and co-star, Ian, threatens to disrupt her new life. Although no actual pornographic acts are seen in Writers' Theatre's production, some understanding of Claudia and Ian's former profession is essential to grasping what their past meant and how it can jeopardize their future.

As traditional filmmaking has transitioned towards more realistic narrative depictions in the past few decades, so too has pornographic filmmaking. Widespread and cheaper access to technology and the Internet has given rise to a genre of "real porn." In these videos, everyday people—not professionals on a movie set making adult films for a living—are recording themselves having sex and distributing the videos.

Dr. Gail Saltz, an associate professor of Psychiatry at New York Presbyterian Hospital, points out that a pornographic film made by a studio has a script and uses hired actors, whereas the realism of amateur films proves more exciting to some. "Porn has always been there but it was fictional," she says. "There's a new trend towards the amateur everything... and, at the moment, a sensational appreciation for it."

Roughly 43% of internet users visit pornographic websites, and amateur

homemade porn has become a popular option on many of them. Like any trend or fad, the established studios have attempted to get in on the action by producing their own "realistic" videos. However, as consumer spending has dwindled during the recession, it has become difficult for studios to compete with truly amateur videos, which are cheap or often free to make and thus yield a higher profit margin. The appealingly high returns that can be reaped from homemade videos have enticed more and more cash-strapped people to put themselves on film. Nightline ran a story in October 2011 about a couple who have turned to filming live sex sessions in order to help support themselves and their 20-month-old child, earning roughly \$1,000 a week from their videos.

Randall Colburn leaves the details about Claudia and Ian's past in adult entertainment deliberately vague, but we can safely assume they began by filming themselves at home in Michigan, and only later came to Los Angeles and became involved with traditional pornography studios. Even after joining the professional industry, Claudia and Ian continued to film only with each other, never with other actors, concluding each video with an exchanged "I love you." These powerful, lingering emotions, in addition to the graphic video evidence of their past together, set the stage for what is to happen between Claudia, Ian and the rest of *Hesperia*'s cast of characters.

# THE RELIGION OF *HESPERIA*:

## The Religious Youth and the Young in Faith

By Jamie Bragg, Dramaturg

Many of the characters in *Hesperia* practice a fundamentalist form of Christianity, which receives its name from the attempts of conservative Protestants to articulate and codify certain "fundamentals" of Christian faith: the inerrancy of scripture; the historical reality of Christ's virgin birth, miracles and resurrection; and the belief in Christ's death as an atonement for human sin. To better understand the religious vocabulary of the play, it is helpful to understand the significance of baptism, youth ministry and sexual abstinence in fundamentalist Christian communities.

*Hesperia*'s depiction of baptism is joyful, and the rite indeed celebrates new life; a Christian is washed in water to publicly recognize his or her spiritual rebirth, following the example of John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus in water. Unlike churches that practice "infant baptism" (christening), the church in *Hesperia* practices "believer's baptism," in which a person must profess Christian faith before being baptized by full immersion in water. This can be compared to the exchanging of wedding rings, in that both acts symbolize a deep commitment.

After baptism a new Christian is expected to find a church home and to devote him or herself to the leadership of a minister and youth minister. Youth ministers generally lead the worship and religious education of congregants between

the ages of twelve and eighteen, and have great autonomy in planning class curriculum and events, as long as their teachings conform to church orthodoxy.

One of the greatest challenges facing any fundamentalist youth minister is exhorting his charges to sexual abstinence. Believing that sexual activity and emotional commitment are inextricably linked, fundamentalists hold that any pre-marital sexual activity will compromise the physical and emotional purity of a future marriage. Many avoid any form of physical contact or social situations that might encourage sexual thoughts. Yet the line between voluntary sexual abstinence and involuntary (and destructive) repression is often unclear. Many of *Hesperia*'s characters, taught to sublimate sexual desire into religious service, find themselves deprived of a vocabulary for physical and human connection and discover their natural desires are profoundly at odds with their religious teachings.

Fundamentalist faith is often criticized for its intolerance and inflexibility, and though *Hesperia*'s portrayal of religion is complex, it is not cynical. *Hesperia* celebrates the rewards of a religious community, but at the same time it does not ignore the potentially painful by-products of fundamentalism. Playwright Randall Colburn's own biography has well-equipped him to explore these profoundly dramatic and compelling dichotomies.

# THEN AND NOW

WRITERS' YEARS 11 THROUGH 15

## 2003-2007

### January 2003

Tom Stoppard's *Rough Crossing* opens at Books on Vernon, featuring original songs and score by Josh Schmidt.

### September 2003

Jennifer Bielstein joins Writers' Theatre as Executive Director. William Brown's production of *Our Town* inaugurates the new theatre at 325 Tudor Court a few weeks later.

### 2004/05 Season

With a very generous grant from David and Mary Winton Green, Writers' Theatre launches its formalized Literary Development Initiative to commission, develop and produce new plays, musicals and adaptations.

### January 2005

The U.S. premiere of Nick Whitby's *To the Green Fields Beyond* opens at Tudor Court, directed by Kate Buckley.

### January 2007

*The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights*, an educational touring one-woman show written by Yolanda Androzzo and commissioned by Writers' Theatre, begins its inaugural tour of North Shore and Chicago schools, directed by Ron OJ Parson.



### May 2003

*Crime & Punishment*, adapted from Dostoevsky's novel by Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus, receives its world premiere, directed by Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and plays a box office record-breaking, standing-room-only run.



Scott Parkinson and John Judd

### March – August 2006

*The Chosen*, adapted by Aaron Posner from Chaim Potok's novel and directed by Shade Murray, becomes one of the longest-running and best-selling productions in Writers' Theatre history.



Jurgen Hooper and Sean Fortunato

## WRITERS' THEATRE SALUTES URBAN INNOVATIONS

Writers' Theatre sincerely thanks Urban Innovations, the Corporate Sponsor Partner for *Hesperia* by Randall Colburn. We are pleased to have Urban Innovations' renewed partnership in support of this exciting new work.



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Writers' Theatre extends a sincere thank you to the following individuals for their sponsorship support of the third production of the 20th Anniversary Season—*Hesperia*. (As of December 12, 2011)

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# HESPERIA AUDIENCE ENRICHMENT

Please join us for these special events designed to enhance and enrich *Hesperia* and give you a glimpse into the new play process.

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## INSIDE THE NEW PLAY PROCESS—REHEARSAL AND REWRITES

A two-part event series to give audiences an inside perspective on how artists bring new work to life.

Part one “**rehearsal**” features a live workshop of a scene from one of Randall Colburn’s plays that is still being developed. Audience members can watch how a director, playwright and actors work on the scene to revise the text.

Part two “**rewrites**” features a reading of the entire script from the previous workshop and allows those who attended the “rehearsal” phase to hear both the changes to the text and how the scene fits into the overall play. The reading will be a way to hear new work for the first time, even if you didn’t attend the “rehearsal” phase! — **Monday, February 6 and Monday, February 13, both at 6:30pm**

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## FAITH, FORGIVENESS, SIN AND SALVATION—EXPLORING RELIGION IN HESPERIA

A conversation between Glencoe Union Church’s Reverend David Wood and playwright Randall Colburn led by Director of Education Nicole O’Connell, exploring the themes of forgiveness, starting over, sin, redemption, and community in *Hesperia*. — **Saturday, February 18 at 6:00pm**

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## WHO WE ARE VS. WHO WE WERE—THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX AND RELIGION IN HESPERIA

A conversation between Professor Dan McAdams, Department Chair of Psychology at Northwestern University, and playwright Randall Colburn led by Director of Education Nicole O’Connell.

The conversation will explore the psychology of the characters in *Hesperia*. The discussion will focus on questions about identity development, redemption, and the intersection of religion and self. — **Saturday, March 10 at 6:00pm**

## READING OF PRETTY PENNY BY RANDALL COLBURN

Join us for a reading of another of Randall Colburn’s plays, directed by Artistic Director Michael Halberstam. The reading will be followed by a Q&A with playwright Randall Colburn.

*Pretty Penny* tells the story of Victoria who is trying to make a little extra money by working as a phone sex operator, using the name Penny as her alter-ego when on a call. The pictures of Penny that clients see are actually old photos of Crystal, taken by her former boyfriend who now runs the sex service. Victoria, Crystal and the men in their lives get caught up in a whirlwind of self-discovery in Randall Colburn’s unflinching exploration of perception and perversion.

— **Monday, March 12 at 6:30pm**

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## CREATING HESPERIA - A PRE-SHOW PRIMER ON THE INSPIRATION FOR THE PLAY

Join one of the artists from *Hesperia* every Tuesday evening 30 minutes before the performance for a pre-show conversation about developing new work, information about playwright Randall Colburn, and an introduction on themes of the show.

— **January 24, 31, February 7, 14, 21, 28, March 6 and 13 at 7:00pm**

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## POST-SHOW DISCUSSIONS WITH PLAYWRIGHT RANDALL COLBURN AND HESPERIA CAST MEMBERS:

Join us every Wednesday evening following the performance for a short post-show discussion featuring playwright Randall Colburn and members of the *Hesperia* cast.

— **January 25, February 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, March 7 and 14**

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Space is limited and reservations are required unless otherwise noted. Please reserve your spot early, as we expect these events to fill up quickly! **To RSVP, please call 847-242-6018 or email [rsvp@writerstheatre.org](mailto:rsvp@writerstheatre.org)** and leave your name phone number and event you wish to attend.

# WRITERS' THEATRE SALUTES MARY PAT STUDDERT

MAJOR PRODUCTION SPONSOR  
OF *HESPERIA*

Mary Pat has been intricately involved in supporting several Writers' Theatre productions including: *She Loves Me*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *A Minister's Wife*, which just premiered in New York at Lincoln Center Theater. Along with being a Trustee, she is an avid and enthusiastic supporter of the Theatre and new work.



Mary Pat Studdert with actor Bobby Steggert, who portrayed Eugene Marchbanks in the Lincoln Center Theater production of *A Minister's Wife*.

## Invest in Art. Invest in Community.

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John Hoogenakker in *Travels With My Aunt*, 2010.

## COMING SOON



### A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

Music and Lyrics by **STEPHEN SONDHEIM**  
Book by **HUGH WHEELER**  
Musical Direction by **ROBERTA DUCHAK**  
Directed by **WILLIAM BROWN**

Performances start May 1, 2012 at 325 Tudor Court



Limited Engagement Production

### THE BLONDE, THE BRUNETTE AND THE VENGEFUL REDHEAD

By **ROBERT HEWETT**  
Directed by **JOE HANREDDY**

Performances start May 22, 2012 at 664 Vernon Avenue

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WHAT'S  
HAPPENING  
AT WRITERS' THEATRE  
BACKSTAGE

## WELCOME TO WRITERS' THEATRE

Writers' Theatre welcomes our newest Board Member **Julie Bernstein**



Julie Bernstein graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and received her Masters of Business Administration from New York University. After a successful career in equity research, she left finance to accompany her husband Larry Bernstein to Japan, and then England. Since returning to the U.S., she has devoted herself full time to raising her children. In addition to Writers' Theatre, Julie's philanthropic focus has been with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, The Friends of Israel Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art (at the University of Pennsylvania), the Hewitt School, the Allen-Stevenson School and the New York City Opera.

## Excellence.

Just ask  
Writers' Theatre.

As a proud sponsor of the Novel Series Study Plan, Aon is pleased to support Writers' Theatre in its mission to promote artistic excellence, innovative educational programming and strong ties to our community.

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# SAVE THE DATE: 20TH ANNIVERSARY WORDPLAY GALA

**SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 2012  
THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL**

Mark your calendars for one of the most anticipated events of Chicago's social season!



20th Anniversary Gala Co-Chairs  
Christine Pope and Pam Phillips Weston

Thank you to the following for their early commitments in support of our 20th Anniversary Gala (as of December 12, 2011):

## VICE CHAIRS

Eric and Liz Lefkofsky  
Christine and Michael Pope,  
Co-Chairs  
Roger and Pam Phillips  
Weston, Co-Chairs  
Wintrust Financial  
Anonymous

David and  
Leslie McGranahan  
Beth L. Kronfeld and  
Matthew Means  
Christopher S. Pfaff &  
Sara Pfaff  
Bill and Pam Hutul Ross  
Elaine and Rich Tinberg

Sara and Dan Cohan  
Carol and Mark Dawley  
Scott and Rebecca Etzler  
Debbie Gonzalez  
Tom and Gail Hodges  
Christopher and  
Emily Knight  
Mark and Christie Osmond  
Christine and  
Michael Pompizzi  
John and Alice Sabl  
Marcie and Avy Stein  
Mary Pat and Andy Studdert  
Carl and Marilynn Thoma  
Rachel Weinstein and  
Jason Pizer  
Gary and Chris Weitman

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Abbott Labs  
Lawrence and  
Carol Adelman  
Patty and Bruce Becker  
Julie Bernstein  
BlueCross BlueShield  
Cafaro Livingston  
Charitable Trust  
Robert and Joan Clifford

In the past, WordPlay has sold out several months in advance, so be sure to reserve your place early by calling 847-242-6012. Tables for 10 guests are available at the following levels: Vice Chair \$20,000, Sponsor \$10,000, Benefactor \$5,000.

# LITERARY DEVELOPMENT RECEPTION



Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and Associate Artistic Director Stuart Carden were thrilled to be in dialogue with Randall Colburn, playwright of *Hesperia*, and Laura Eason, (book-writer) and Alan Schmuckler (composer/lyricist) of a new musical in development, *Summertime*. A group of Writers' Theatre's closest friends participated in this discussion and heard the brand-new opening number of *Summertime*.

The Literary Development Initiative currently also has four other projects in development: Joshua Schmidt and Austin Pendleton's new musical *The Overcoat*, which is adapted from the short story by Nikolai Gogol; Randall Colburn's *Houghton Lake*, based on a childhood vacation spot in Michigan; a new work by Brett Neveu, who previously brought *Do The Hustle* and *Old Glory* to the Writers' Theatre stage; and a new work by Keith Huff, whose recent world premiere of *The Detective's Wife* played to critical and popular acclaim in an extended run at Books on Vernon.

## Celebrating the legacy of the Literary Development Initiative



*The Savannah Disputation*, 2007. Marilynn Bogetich, Linda Kimbrough, Suzanne Lang and Robert Scogin.



*A Minister's Wife*, 2009. Kevin Gudahl and Kate Fry



*Old Glory*, 2009. LaShawn Banks and Penny Slusher



*Do The Hustle*, 2010. Patrick Andrews, Francis Guinan, and Joe Minoso

# THE CARETAKER OPENING NIGHT

Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* marks the second production in Writers' Theatre's 20th Anniversary Season. This dark comedy full of deceptions and failed communications opened on Friday, November 18th under the critically-acclaimed direction of Ron OJ Parson. A full house of Writers' Theatre's close friends toasted the production's success with champagne provided by Good Grapes of Glencoe and appetizers by Whole Foods Market in Northbrook.

20th Anniversary Season Sponsor



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Season Sponsor

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**Ann and Tom Mann**  
**Bill and Kate Morrison**

Event Sponsor



Opening Night Sponsor



1. Executive Director Kate Lipuma with Trustee Joseph Dillon of BMO Harris Bank, 20th Anniversary Season Sponsor 2. Andy Studdert of NES Rentals, Corporate Sponsor Partner of *The Caretaker*, Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and Trustee Mary Pat Studdert 3. Trustee Sara Cohan and Season Sponsor Mary Winton Green 4. Artists' Council Member Philip Beck with Trustee Janice Beck 5. Artists' Council Members Bill and Stephanie Sick 6. Director's Society Sponsors of *The Caretaker* Judy and Bill Cottle 7. Larry Adelman and wife Carol 8. Trustee Chris Knight, his wife Emily and Executive Director Kate Lipuma

# THE MAKING OF... SERIES

A series just for you, our Subscribers, Members and supporters!

Save the date for our third event in *The Making of...* Series, which features a behind-the-scenes glimpse into *Hesperia* on Monday, February 27, 6:30 – 7:30pm on our Tudor Court stage. Scenic Designer Chelsea Warren will join Associate Artistic Director Stuart Carden to talk about the unique design, inspired by stained glass and the innovative technologies used to create the scenery. Space is limited; please RSVP to [specialevents@writerstheatre.org](mailto:specialevents@writerstheatre.org) or by calling 847-441-8194.

Event Series Sponsor



## SAVE THE DATE! LITERARY LUNCHEON

Tuesday, February 28, 2012

Mark your calendars ladies for the third annual Literary Luncheon. Share in the discussion with Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and members of the *A Little Night Music* creative team. Lunch will be provided by Restaurant Michael of Winnetka at a private North Shore home. We hope you will join us! Tickets will be \$40. Call 847-441-8194 to reserve. Space is limited.

Event Sponsor



## HESPERIA

JANUARY

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
22	23	24 7:30	25 7:30	26 8:00	27 8:00	28 4:00/8:00
29 2:00/6:00	30	31 7:30				

FEBRUARY

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
			1 7:30	2 Private Event	3 Opening	4 4:00/8:00
5 2:00/6:00	6	7 7:30	8 2:00	9 8:00	10 8:00	11 4:00/8:00
12 2:00/6:00	13	14 7:30	15 7:30	16 8:00	17 8:00	18 4:00/8:00
19 2:00/6:00	20	21 7:30	22 7:30	23 8:00	24 8:00	25 4:00/8:00
26 2:00/6:00	27	28 7:30	29 7:30			

MARCH

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
				1 8:00	2 8:00	3 4:00/8:00
4 2:00/6:00	5	6 7:30	7 7:30	8 8:00	9 8:00	10 4:00/8:00
11 2:00/6:00	12	13 7:30	14 2:00/7:30	15 8:00	16 8:00	17 4:00/8:00
18 2:00	19	20	21	22	23	24

■ Writers' Wednesdays – Post-Show Discussion



# DO NORTH

Writers' Theatre has come together with three of the North Shore's most acclaimed cultural attractions—Chicago Botanic Garden, Kohl Children's Museum and Ravinia Festival—to bring awareness of the rich artistic, cultural, community and family activities available in the area.



As a Subscriber or Member of Writers' Theatre, you are eligible for discounts and perks at our partner Do North organizations.

- **Chicago Botanic Garden:** half-price parking (admission is already free) to members of its partner organizations.
- **Kohl Children's Museum:** two-for-one admissions after 1pm daily to members of other Do North institutions.
- **Ravinia Festival:** two-for-one pavilion tickets on selected Chicago Symphony Orchestra concerts. Members of any Do North organization will also receive a 10 percent discount on their Ravinia Gifts purchases at the park.

For a complete list of discounts and more information go to [donorth.org](http://donorth.org).



**Administration & Box Office**  
376 Park Avenue  
Glencoe, Illinois 60022

*Artistic Director*  
Michael Halberstam  
*Executive Director*  
Kathryn M. Lipuma

# HESPERIA

By **RANDALL COLBURN**  
Directed by ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **STUART CARDEN**



**FOR TICKETS: 847-242-6000 | [writerstheatre.org](http://writerstheatre.org)**

Student tickets only \$20! (with student ID) • Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. Call 847-441-8102 for more information.