

WT

WRITERS' THEATRE
THE BRIEF CHRONICLE
ISSUE SEVENTEEN MAY 2007



OTHELLO

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Michael Halberstam
Artistic Director

Kathryn M. Lipuma
Executive Director

Dear Friends:

We are delighted to welcome Shakespeare back to Writers' Theatre after an absence of almost a decade. As we go to print with this magazine, we are two weeks into rehearsal for *Othello* and what a remarkable journey it is proving to be. Shakespeare's plays are overflowing with humanity and every moment of every play involves making a series of specific choices that chart the psychological journey of his text. The result is a wonderfully accessible and recognizable cast of characters who find themselves in extreme circumstances while making fascinating decisions. We can hardly wait to share this production with you!

Thank you for being with us over the course of this most exciting 15th Anniversary Season. We are looking forward to bringing you a most wonderful lineup next year! Although we have premiered many adaptations and a number of regional premieres, *The Savannah Disputation*, which launches the season in September, is our first world premiere play. Evan Smith, the author of *The Uneasy Chair*, has drawn a delicious look at a conflict between faith and understanding. We will follow with one of the world's greatest psychological thrillers, *The Turn of the Screw*, adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher from the novel by Henry James. Its large cast of characters will be realized by two actors taking on a multiplicity of roles! Next we invite you into the magical Forest of Arden for *As You Like It*, an astonishingly sophisticated look at gender, romance, fathers and daughters and the nature of love itself. We close the season with *The Lion in Winter* by James Goldman. This wonderful classic of the American Theatre takes a look at the world through the eyes of history and creates a wholly recognizable modern family conflict. More about all these shows and the featured artists can be found on page 25.

Outside of our regular season programming, we offer a new host of exciting adventures, including the premiere of *Crime and Punishment* in New York this November, a new family production in the spring and the continuation of our highly successful outreach production *The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights*. Stay tuned for further details.

As you can see, this coming season is going to be one to relish! In fact, by the time you read this letter you should have received our subscription renewal materials. If you have not done so already, please do send in your renewal so as to not miss out on a single moment of theatrical magic. (If you have not received your notice, please let us know immediately so that we may rectify this!)

Finally, please look carefully at the many options we are making available to you including the 100% Club. As you know, tickets sales only cover half the cost of running a production. With the 100% Club, we give you the opportunity to cover the true cost of your ticket. In return, we invite you inside the creative process with a series of events especially catered to compliment the enthusiasm of your support.

We look forward to seeing you at the theatre for another fifteen seasons.

Sincerely,



Michael Halberstam
Artistic Director



Kathryn M. Lipuma
Executive Director

May 15 – July 15, 2007

Performed at 325 Tudor Court

The grandeur of Shakespeare and the signature intimacy of Writers' Theatre combine to create the potential for theatrical nirvana. This masterpiece tells of a general led into a frenzy of jealousy and insecurity by his most trusted soldier. Whispers, secrets and lies unravel domestic bliss into shreds of insanity. Come closer to Shakespeare than you ever thought possible and fully realize the glorious language, intricacies of plot and breathtakingly specific characters as scribed by the world's greatest playwright.

OTHELLO

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE DIRECTED BY MICHAEL HALBERSTAM

THE CAST

Chris Cantelmi
Kelly Cooper
David Dastmalchian
Audrey Francis
Kevin Gudahl
John Judd
Suzanne Lang
James Vincent Meredith
Braden Moran
Karen Janes Woditsch

SCENIC DESIGN

Keith Pitts
COSTUME DESIGN
Nan Zabriskie
LIGHTING DESIGN
Brian Sidney Bembridge
SOUND DESIGN
Josh Schmidt
PROPERTIES DESIGN
Ross Moreno

FIGHT DIRECTOR

David Woolley
DRAMATURGY
Martha Wade Steketee
STAGE MANAGEMENT
David Castellanos

*"The Moor is of a free,
and open Nature,
That thinks men honest,
that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be
lead by the Nose
As Asses are!"*

– IAGO

ARTISTIC CONVERSATION



Barbara Gaines



Michael Halberstam

For two weeks in February, Writers' Theatre Artistic Director and Director of *Othello* Michael Halberstam exchanged emails with Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) Artistic Director Barbara Gaines about the process of preparing for, rehearsing and directing Shakespeare.

Michael Halberstam: Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this “e-dialogue” with me. Nearly 20 years have passed since I was cast in your production of *Cymbeline* at the Ruth Page Theatre in 1989, a seminal production in my career. It is fascinating to consider that in these 20 years since, you have built one of the most beautiful theatres in the nation and I find myself celebrating the 15th Anniversary as founding artistic director of a marvelous theatre company that derives its inspiration from the word and the artist.

Let's start this off by discussing how to prepare to direct a production. For you,

does it change from play to play? Do you have rituals?

Barbara Gaines: Preparing for a production seems always to begin with a pulse, a phrase, that keeps running through my head, or a visual image, or something I've read in a book – that I can't shake. It's always SOMETHING that won't let me go. So, when I acknowledge that a play is calling me, I sit down at my desk and just read it. Usually, if not always, there are six or eight images that I see in my mind's eye, most of which make it into the final production. I can't tell you where they come from, just that they come. They are triggered by Shakespeare's words and/or a

connection to something happening now. I also read a lot of nonfiction and that always filters into the work.

Once a play is chosen, or rather, once it chooses me, I usually read poems that relate to it or look at paintings or photographs that give me a feeling for which I am searching. Then I start talking about it to anyone who'll listen. Usually that means the designers and our artistic team here at CST: Bob Mason, Rick Boynton and Gary Griffin. It is this talking – trying to communicate ideas – that makes it all seem real to me and more grounded than floating thoughts that travel thought the air. Chocolate also helps.

the production. I like to take in any production I can find whether it be video, audio or live. For *Othello*, I have even found a magnificent comic book version along with five or six films. I spend most of my time with the folio (which I learned about from CST), pouring through it for clues in the spelling, grammar and punctuation that almost certainly comes closest to representing the hand and thoughts of the author. Do you protect yourself from other productions prior to rehearsal? Or do you seek them out?

BG: In the early years I didn't have the opportunity to see many Shakespeare productions, so I started out each show with a clean slate. I had never seen

PREPARING FOR A PRODUCTION SEEMS ALWAYS TO BEGIN WITH A PULSE, A PHRASE THAT KEEPS RUNNING THROUGH MY HEAD

MH: Chocolate is crucial to the process! When I direct Shakespeare, I find myself gathering as many different editions of the text as I can. I am very keen to peruse the peripheral materials and the footnotes. I often try to find a piece of music that contains the emotional landscape of the play and I take great comfort in that when dreaming of

Troilus and Cressida when I directed it in 1987 or the *Cymbeline* that you were in (singing and acting, by the way). Come to think of it, I never saw most of the early productions. That actually was helpful, because I was dreaming my dreams, not being influenced by another's work. Now seeing someone else's production can be informative, inspirational or quite painful.

MH: Oh my goodness, I sang! I'd forgotten about that! Do you miss acting? I keep my feet a little wet with my annual one-man performance of *A Christmas Carol*. Are there any roles that would draw you back to the stage?

BG: There isn't enough money in the entire world to get me back to performing again. I really don't miss anything but the dressing room high jinks before a show. I miss the camaraderie and the

something within? Or the opposite happens: I could be miles away from my books, as I was in Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1989 when I saw Russian tanks all around their country. Lines from *King John* haunted me throughout the trip, "When laws can do no right...let it be lawful that law itself is perfect wrong." I directed my first *King John* right after that trip and it took place in Eastern Europe with plenty of barbed wire.

BG: Believe it or not, all of them. I can't get enough and, as my life goes on, the plays shift. It's like looking at a diamond in the light and seeing entirely new facets. It's miraculous.

MH: Do you ever long to direct something other than Shakespeare?

BG: I'm always looking...and in truth, every time I return to a Shakespeare, it is a completely different play. So the canon of 38 plays is, in a sense, infinite. Do you think I need an intervention?

BG: Yes, I want to direct *Porgy and Bess*.

MH: I look forward to it! One of the consistent wonders of CST is the clarity of your text work, which is manifested in clear storytelling and solid technical delivery. This is no small accomplishment!

BG: Thanks for this. My only secret here is that my brain needs to understand every moment and the folio technique is the basis for this. This and superb actors make it possible.

EACH SHOW MUST BE BORN WITH NEW IMPULSES

jokes, but as far as getting up on a stage and having people watch me? Oh, Michael, I'd rather clean the bathroom at a bus station first. I think that as I get older, I become shyer. I also just love the very dynamic process of directing. The ground is always shifting.

MH: Then let's talk a little about process. Tell me about your design experience. I have found with Shakespeare that it rarely helps to locate the play in a specific moment of time. My concern is always that the enormous universal themes suddenly become reductively about a single moment in time, and then the design choices often become distractions. For instance, it's difficult to care about the plot of *Julius Caesar*, a play about a struggle for world power, if the play is set in some small remote and crumbling South American country (as I have seen it played). Of course, there are always exceptions.

BG: Well, my process begins with reading the plays very closely for hints in the text: is there something hidden, a thought or an image that triggers

Or, as in the case of *Cymbeline*, when the god Jupiter makes his entrance, you can either cut it from the show (as many recent productions have done), or you can make it a spectacular event. Since I believe in Jupiter, I think you may remember his entrance in the production that you were in. In any case, design must come from the vision, the breath of the piece.

MH: I must say that your productions always have a timeless quality. I suppose it's not really a matter of temporal verisimilitude is it? It's really what you say about the personal image. Start there and let it grow.

Which are the Shakespeare's you still lust to direct?

NEW

BREATH

AND A TREMENDOUS PASSION.

MH: I think you're fine! The wonderful thing about Shakespeare is how the production can transform under the interpretation of a single actor. In the West End, there is usually at least one *Hamlet* a season, often two. There was a *New York Times* article this past weekend that discussed the notion that English audiences are excited to go see repeat performances of these iconic plays because they know that each experience will be like seeing a different play. Nonetheless, are there any non-Shakespearean dream plays you hold dear to your heart?

MH: The word and the artist. Sounds familiar. When it comes to repeating plays from Shakespeare that you have directed or produced previously, do you have any guiding principals that direct your approach?

BG: Every new production must be of the moment, fresh and new. I've learned NEVER to try and duplicate anything. Each show must be born with new impulses, new breath and a tremendous passion. Peter Brook once said that "from personal discovery comes shared experience" – in the end we're all struggling and we're all searching. It never stops.



What follows is a biography of Michael's professional affiliations with the Bard of Avon.

In 1980, he found himself in Champaign-Urbana when his family emigrated to the United States. After graduating college, he toured *Romeo and Juliet* with the Virginia Shakespeare Festival. He moved to Chicago in 1986 where he was cast in Shozo Sato's *Kabuki Othello*. His next production in 1987 was with now-defunct Chicago Shakespeare Company (not to be confused with Barbara Gaines' thriving venture) where he played Lucio in *Measure for Measure* and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*. He acted in a single performance on closing night in *As You Like It* directed by Eric Simonson at the Bailiwick Repertory Theater. He was subsequently cast as the tailor in *The Taming of the Shrew* at Oak Park Shakespeare Festival and the following season as Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*. His next foray into Shakespeare in Chicago was with Barbara Gaines (when her company was still called Shakespeare Repertory). There he played Arviragus in *Cymbeline*, the show that put the company firmly on the map as a force to be reckoned with. He then joined the company of the Stratford Festival in Canada for two seasons where he played in *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *Timon of Athens* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Upon returning to Chicago, he founded Writers' Theatre where he appeared in *Richard II* in 1997. For two and a half years following, he supplemented his time at Writers' Theatre by teaching Shakespeare at The Theatre School at DePaul University. He spent a few years in collaboration with Shakespeare on the Green at Barat College, serving in an advisory capacity on their productions of *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *The Tempest* and *King Lear*. In 2004, he directed *Hamlet* at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival which *Chicago Tribune* Theatre Critic Chris Jones named one of the top ten productions of the year. He is delighted to finally be directing Shakespeare for Writers' Theatre.

THE PLAYERS ON SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's plays put any actor's skill set to the test. *Othello* is certainly no exception. Artistic Assistant Jimmy McDermott asked some members of our accomplished cast a few questions about their experience with Shakespeare on stage, in rehearsal and as an audience member. Here are some of their insightful responses.

Jimmy McDermott: *What was the first Shakespeare production you ever saw on stage? What do you remember about that experience?*



James Vincent Meredith (Othello): I saw a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on the Chicago Shakespeare Theater stage several years ago. I'm sure I had seen other Shakespeare before that, but that was the first one that really sticks out in my memory. It was the first time that I really understood what I was seeing and what was being said. The set was amazing and the costumes and lighting were wonderful, but the actors are what I remember most. They made the language clearer for me than I'd ever heard it before. That's when I began to really become a fan of Shakespeare.



Braden Moran (Cassio): The first Shakespeare I ever saw on stage was *The Taming of the Shrew* at American Players Theatre in Spring Green, Wisconsin when I was a freshman in high school. It was fascinating because I was thoroughly convinced I wouldn't understand a word of the show and was pleasantly surprised to discover that I actually "got it." It was a revelation to find the show wasn't ancient and inaccessible – but rather timeless and relevant. The characters were so fleshed out and the language was so playful and beautiful – and the world, as different and magical as it was, wasn't so far away from the world in which we live.



from a trapdoor and pranced around the stage for awhile, grabbing his crotch and making profane gestures. The audience was positively delighted. I learned two things that day: (a) what “bawdy” meant, and (b) given the proper context, crude potty-humor can effectively masquerade as genuine wit. When the time came to leave home and go away to college, I went to Ashland.

Suzanne Lang (Desdemona): My first Shakespeare production was also *The Taming of the Shrew* at Actors Theatre of Louisville. I was in third grade, Kate wore a black leather jacket and I was ready to ditch my plaid outfit for a Kate coat. It was my first memory of a strong female character and I loved it. Words were flying on stage and in the audience. The kids were cheering for sides. I loved feeling as if Kate might be listening to me.



Audrey Francis (Bianca): I am embarrassed to say that I have only seen one live Shakespeare production. When I was nine years old, my mom took my sister and me to see *Hamlet* at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. Val Kilmer played Hamlet. All I wanted him to say was, “I don’t like you because you’re dangerous,” and then play shirtless volleyball (*Top Gun*, 1986).



Kelly Cooper (Roderigo): I don’t recall the title of the play, but I do remember the experience well. It was at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon. At some point an actor emerged

JM: What is your favorite Shakespearean production, either on film or stage?



Karen Janes Woditsch (Emilia): My favorite film “experience” was Branagh’s *Henry V*. When I watch it now, there are some things I don’t care for, but when I saw it in the theatre I was absolutely transported. I didn’t know Shakespeare could feel so personal and epic at the same time and I was on my feet at the end of the film. My favorite theatre experiences are John Wood’s performance as Prospero in *The Tempest* with the Royal Shakespeare Company and Scott Parkinson’s *Richard II*.

Theater was wonderful. It was performed by an all-Russian cast with subtitles. It was hugely imaginative with a lively, physical and musical ensemble. It was the best Shakespeare I’ve seen in recent memory.

SL: My favorite experience was a production of *The Tempest* in Dusseldorf, Germany. It was performed with bamboo, a trunk for props and a shadow screen of linen, behind which the storm was created with the actors’ shadows. Very simple, with only the language and the company onstage.

JM: What do you think it takes be a good Shakespearean actor?

KC: A great head of hair, a well-trimmed beard and a cape.

AF: And the bravery and willingness to let the language do the work for you.

KJW: Exactly. Just give over to the fact Shakespeare did it right. If you understand the language intimately, you are enough to fill the role. So, if in real life you are flawed, joyful, petty, noble and passionate, you should have no problem with his characters. You just need years of training first and good breath support.

CC: Flexibility, too. It generally has never served me or anyone I’ve worked with to have a rigid understanding of the text or their character.



Chris Cantelmi (Gratiano): Declan Donnellan’s touring production of *Twelfth Night* last fall at Chicago Shakespeare

BM: I think your first care and concern with performing Shakespeare must be clarity of thought and action so that you can translate the understanding you have discovered to someone who may be encountering the language, story or style for the first time.

JM: *Do you have any dream roles from Shakespeare's canon?*

JVM: Iago has always been a favorite of mine, though I will probably never play it, for obvious reasons. I've got to say that the role that I'm presently playing is a dream role of mine, and I'm honored to do it.

SL: Desdemona is very close to my heart as well. There's also Queen Isabel in *Richard II* – and in a fantasy world, Richard himself, he fascinates me. His character and the story behind him are so relevant and needed right now.

BM: There are so many...I'd love to play *Henry V* (also in his younger incarnation as Prince Hal in *Henry IV, 1 & 2*). It'd be nice to get a crack at some of the big ones as I get a bit more experience under my belt like Hamlet, Iago, Antony... I also love some of the secondary roles such as Enobarbus, Banquo.

JM: *How do you prepare for this, or any, rehearsal process?*

JVM: I try to make sure that I know what every word that I say means, or could mean. I listen for what other characters

say about my character. And I try to get off-book as soon as I can, as it's hard to get into a character during rehearsal when I have the script in my hand.

CC: Me too. Being reliant on the page for my lines is kind of like having one eye open.

KJW: I go through my entire role in the first folio edition and using folio technique to help me understand the path of my scenes or monologues and where best to breathe and other technical language stuff. Then somewhere in rehearsal I throw that all out and listen to the other actors. Some of the best Shakespeare actually happens in the rehearsal process.

AF: I really try to find a way to make everything in the context of the play extremely personal to me. That way (hopefully) I can always bring my full self to the table, no matter what the case.

KC: I daydream. Aside from the obvious technical work – research, memorization, text analysis, etc. – I'd say that active daydreaming plays the largest and perhaps most crucial role. Focusing attention on the character, the story, the feelings and longings and unique circumstances of the play and its people – that's what makes rehearsal a joy rather than a chore.

AFRICANS IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

BY MARTHA WADE STEKETEE

IMAGE: Leo, Africanus. *A geographical historie of Africa, written in Arabicke and Italian.* Translated by John Pory. London, 1600. Shelfmark STC 15481 copy 1.

*Race and "otherness" in Elizabethan England are not a matter of numbers but of recognition. In Shakespeare's day, it is not a question of whether individuals of color existed but how they were recognized literally and figuratively. Dr. Imtiaz Habib, Associate Professor of Literature at Old Dominion University (Norfolk, Virginia), has examined this question in several works and lays out many themes, including his powerfully argued conclusion that people of color were differently categorized depending upon the social, cultural, religious, political and economic interests at play. At best, they were ignored; at worst, persecuted. What follows addresses the definition and migration of persons of color, business and political interests and literary precursors setting the Elizabethan stage for Shakespeare's *Moor*, *Othello*.*

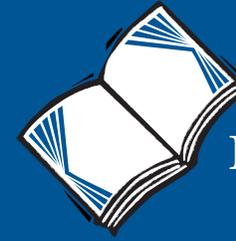
Defining Moor. The term "moor," is derived from the country name Mauritania, an Islamic country on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean in northwest Africa. The word was used to refer to a range of population groups including North Africans, West Africans and non-whites or Muslims of any origin. The term Moor was fairly vague, used interchangeably with a range of terms, including "African," "Ethiopian," "Negro" and "Indian."

Population Movements. Habib notes that Blacks who appeared in European locales were not willing travelers but were kidnapped from their African coastal villages and brought back to England in the 1500s. These immigrants eventually were absorbed into English society, given new names and took on a range of roles including workers, maids and entertainers. Despite their prevalence and the general awareness of their presence, there was no official categorization for race, providing a primary source for the definitional confusion already discussed.

Business and Politics Play a Part. Queen Elizabeth I granted Moors diplomatic recognition due to their assistance in conquering Spain in the mid-1500s and trade became institutionalized with the formation of The Barbary Company in 1551 to facilitate trade with Africa. In 1600, a Moroccan envoy of ambassadors was received by Elizabeth and two characterizations of the Moor arose, influenced by business interests. The merchants who belonged to The Barbary Company preferred old, unregulated trade and characterized the new Moorish trading partner as unpredictable and devious. Other merchants without alliance to old business practices saw the Moors as good business men. A decree in 1601 expelled Moors from Africa, citing concerns about behavior and overpopulation. The slave trade was firmly established later in the 1600s in direct response to this decree.

Role of Literature. The literature of the Elizabethan era, such as John Leo Africanus' *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, widely read in Europe in the late 1500s and translated into English by John Pory in 1600, could have affected popular perceptions of Africa. John Leo Africanus was a Spanish Morisco, one of the groups often lumped in as "Moor" and oppressed by other cultures. Africanus describes the origin of Africans and Moors, writing that, because of their heritage as sons and daughters of Cham, the cursed son of Noah in the Bible, they are condemned to slavery and servitude. In his descriptions of African nations, he reveals what he terms the "noble" effort of the King of Portugal to colonize the Congo and bring Christianity to its people.

Business, politics and literature offer a range of threads to follow to understand the role of persons of color, Shakespeare's Moor, in Elizabethan England. Habib presents Othello as a character struggling with the competing impulses of subjugation and assimilation versus resistance. Whether one follows the arguments of Dr. Habib or others writing on this subject, people of "difference" were present in Elizabethan England in significant numbers. The question for the play's original audiences was, "What role should a person like Othello have in society?" The question for us today is the same.



FROM PAGE TO STAGE

Read the book. See the play. Get involved!

Through the presentation of Othello, special receptions, giveaways and more, Writers' Theatre and eight North Shore libraries have partnered to enhance your experience and allow exclusive access to the art. These From Page to Stage events are offered to you FREE OF CHARGE by the participating libraries in order to further your appreciation and understanding of Othello. Please join us for these exciting events and activities!

MAY 3, 7:30 P.M.

FROM PAGE TO STAGE KICK-OFF RECEPTION

Glencoe Public Library at
Writers' Theatre, 325 Tudor Court

Join Writers' Theatre Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and actors James Vincent Meredith (Othello) and John Judd (Iago) for a look at the process of creating characters and bringing the play to life.

MAY 10, 7:00 P.M.

MURDER & OTHELLO: CRIME WRITERS' REVELATIONS

Glenview Public Library
1930 Glenview Road

Well-known Chicago writers Rick Kogan, Maury Possley and Rich Lindberg have a fascinating discussion of murder and serial killers from their own writings and relating to *Othello*.

To register for this event, please call 847-729-7500 ext. 112.

MAY 17, 7:30 P.M.

TWO PROFESSORS VIEW OTHELLO

Wilmette Public Library
1242 Wilmette Avenue

Northwestern University professors Wendy Wall and Edward Muir offer their unique perspectives on Shakespeare's *Othello*. Wall is a professor of English, specializing in early modern literature and culture and writes extensively on topics ranging from Shakespeare to Martha Stewart. She will be joined by history professor Edward Muir, whose field is Italian social and cultural history, with a focus on the Renaissance.

MAY 24, 7:00 P.M.

VERDI'S OTELLO

Northbrook Public Library
1201 Cedar Lane

Pioneer Press classic music critic Dorothy Andries provides an entertaining and illuminating look at Verdi's opera *Otello*, considered among the best adaptations of Shakespeare set to music.

MAY 31, 7:30 P.M.

LOVE V. CHAOS IN OTHELLO

Glencoe Public Library
320 Park Avenue

The action and characters in *Othello* create a tragedy that stems from a failure of selfless love in the face of evil. Herbert Bronstein, Rabbi-Emeritus and Senior Scholar at North Shore Congregation Israel and Shakespeare scholar, will show how this relates to the circumstances of our own personal lives in a special preview of his program for the Stratford Festival this summer.

JUNE 7, 7:00 P.M.

**I KISSED THEE ERE I KILLED
THEE: CLOSING ARGUMENTS IN
THE TRIAL OF OTHELLO**

Deerfield Public Library
920 Waukegan Road

Chicago-area attorneys and Deerfield residents Perry M. Laks and Jeffrey C. Blumenthal will present closing arguments in the trial of *Othello*. This mock trial will put a contemporary spin on a classic crime.

JUNE 14, 7:00 P.M.

**SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO:
INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS WITH
RACISM AND EVIL**

Highland Park Public Library
494 Laurel Avenue

Writers' Theatre Artistic Director Michael Halberstam will engage in a dialogue with Dr. Richard Pettengill, Assistant Professor of English and Theater at Lake Forest College, and Susan Phillips, Assistant Professor of English

at Northwestern University, about Shakespeare's approach to racism and the depiction of evil as seen through the eyes of the world's greatest playwright.

JUNE 21, 7:30 P.M.

**PERSPECTIVES: EXPLORING
OTHELLO THROUGH FILM**

Winnetka Public Library
768 Oak Street

Film scholar Toby Nicholson will take an in-depth look at the portrayal and interpretation of *Othello* in film by comparing and contrasting clips from several theatrical releases, including some of those available as part of the From Page to Stage movie viewings and discussions that can be found on www.frompagetostage.org.

JUNE 28, 7:00 P.M.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR MURDER

Lake Bluff Public Library
123 Scranton Avenue

Join Dr. Richard Pettengill, Assistant Professor of English and Theater at Lake Forest College and former dramaturg at Court and Goodman Theaters in Chicago, as he interviews the designers of *Othello* to find out what it takes to bring the greatest playwright's script to life before your eyes.

WHAT'S HAPPENING BACKSTAGE AT WRITERS' THEATRE

EDUCATION

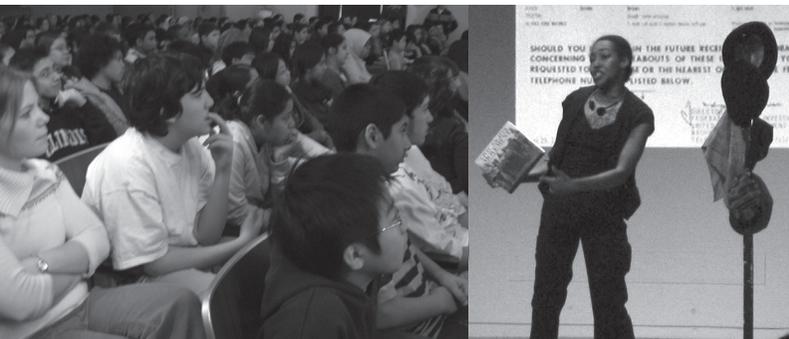
DONOR SPOTLIGHT

The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights - A Hit with Students and Teachers!

The first year of our educational touring show, *The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights*, culminated in a special premiere performance for a full house at the Chicago Cultural Center on February 28, 2007. The audience was comprised of special guests, including the civil rights activists interviewed for the play, donors, trustees, media and students from four Chicago

discussion was led by Saran Dunmore of NBC5 Chicago.

Beginning on January 12, 2007, *The MLK Project* had 37 performances at more than 30 different locations in and around Chicago. Performed for more than 8,700 school children over the course of six weeks, *The MLK Project* received rave reviews from



Left: Teacher and students of Peterson Elementary enjoying a performance of *The MLK Project*.

Right: Sharyon Culberson performs in the premiere of *The MLK Project* at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Public Schools: Milburn Alternative High School, Lozano Leadership Academy, Perspectives Charter School and Bronzeville Alternative Academy. The performance was followed by a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to talk with a panel of those involved in the process, including playwright Yolanda Androzzo, Director Ron OJ Parson and interviewees Reverend M. Earle Sardon, Reverend Samuel (Billy) Kyles, David Hernandez, Jennifer Weinshenker and Maynard Krasne. The

students, teachers and administrators. After a performance at Peck Elementary School, counselor Lorraine McClowery wrote, "We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for coming to Peck School. We are so fortunate to have seen *The MLK Project*." A student at Lawndale Community Academy said, "This project influenced my life," and School Administrator Cassandre Cancilla of Blaine Elementary wrote, "It was absolutely incredible! Everyone should see this!"



Misalliance (2002)



Crime & Punishment (2003)



My Own Stranger (2004)



To the Green Fields Beyond (2005)



The Duchess of Malfi (2006)

The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation

Writers' Theatre has benefited from a long and joyful partnership with The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation. For the past eight seasons, The Cheney Foundation has supported the work on our stages, including *Loot* (2000), *Booth* (2001), *Misalliance* (2002), *Crime & Punishment* (World Premiere, 2003), *My Own Stranger* (2004), *To the Green Fields Beyond* (North American Premiere, 2005), *The Duchess of Malfi* (World Premiere, 2006) and this year's production of *Othello*.

"We are truly grateful to Elisabeth Geraghty and the Trustees of The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation for their belief in our work and their support of that work," said Michael Halberstam, Artistic Director. "Elisabeth and her husband Bob regularly attend our Opening Nights and have become part of the Writers' Theatre family. We are so grateful for her advocacy on our behalf. Without the support of The Cheney Foundation, our celebration of this fabulous 15th Anniversary Season would not be possible."

Primarily interested in supporting artistic excellence in performance or presentation, the artistic projects supported by The Cheney Foundation are intrinsically worthy as well as being essential for a rich civic life. "We look for arts organizations which are rigorously engaged with their craft and which are supported by a solid management structure. We are proud of the organizations which we support and proud of their artistic efforts. We are pleased to support Writers' Theatre and extend our congratulations for its 15th Anniversary Season," said Elisabeth Geraghty, Administrative Director of The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation.

EVENTS

15th Anniversary Gala

On March 10, 2007, Writers' Theatre held our 15th Anniversary Gala with more than 320 of our closest friends and supporters in attendance. The black tie event commemorating 15 memorable years and celebrating our bright future was held at the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago. The Gala raised more than \$300,000 in support of this landmark season.

Gala Co-Chairs Carl & Mary Boyer organized the evening, which featured gourmet faire, a Live Auction and a rousing performance directed by Writers' Theatre favorite Susan Hart and performed by the cast of *Bach at Leipzig*. Titled *Sophisticated Gents*, the performance was the highlight of the evening, beautifully showcasing the vocal talents of the actors. Gala attendees were also treated to the world premiere of "These Four Walls," one of the first complete songs from the Writers' Theatre commissioned musical of George Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, currently in development to be produced during the 2008/09 season. Another highlight of the evening was the Raffle for a 2007 Toyota Prius, which successfully raised nearly \$50,000!

Writers' Theatre's Board of Trustees congratulates the Gala Co-Chairs on the tremendous success of the 15th Anniversary Gala and extends their gratitude to the Sub-Committee Chairs: Patty Becker, Auction Chair; Lorel McMillan, Ad Sales Chair; Barbara Melcher, Silent Support Chair; and Stanford Slovin, Raffle Chair. Every year, the Gala Host Committee is the driving force behind the event, ensuring the success of the Gala. We would like to recognize the following Host Committee members: Philip & Janice Beck, Bruce & Patty Becker, Harriet Berlin, Michael & Deborah Cogan, Keith & Betsy Colburn, David & Carolyn Colburn, Scott & Celia Drane, Eric & Denise Macey, Phil & Nancy Miller, Brace & Suzanne Pattou, Irene Pritzker, Merle Reskin, Avy & Marcie Stein and Carl & Marilyn Thoma.



Clockwise from the top:

Board President Chris Knight, Trustee Rachel Weinstein, Artistic Director Michael Halberstam, Executive Director Kate Lipuma, Gala Co-Chairs Carl & Mary Boyer

Trustee Judy Cottle & Billy Cottle, Trustee Sara Cohan

Ed Minor, Marilyn Thoma, Board President Chris Knight & Emily Knight

Boots & Joe Nathan

Robert McMillan & Trustee Lorel McMillan

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB CARL



Left: Jane & Jim Esser, Donna Craven & Jim Looman
Below: Trustee Rachel Weinstein, Trustee Gillian Goodman & Ellis Goodman, Corrine Brophy, Cynthia & John Pacholick
Middle Left: John & Carol McKinnon
Middle Right: Linda Krivkovich, Louise Weiss and Carolyn Colburn
Bottom: Hal Lochner, Virginia & Gary Gerst, Rosemary Tourville

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



Top Left: Jan Culbertson, Artistic Director Michael Halberstam, Lloyd Culbertson, Trustee Barbara Melcher
Top Right: Alec Litowitz & Trustee Jennifer Litowitz
Above: Ginny Hilton, Kip Kelley, Elisabeth & Bob Geraghty
Right: Bobbie & Jeff Vender



DIRECTOR'S SOCIETY

2007/2008 SEASON

During our 15th Anniversary Season members of the Director's Society enjoyed the following benefits:

Invitations to the following events:

- The Annual Garden Party
- The first public reading of *The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights*
- Caviar & Conversation with the cast of *Bach at Leipzig*
- Open Rehearsal: *Othello*
- Breakfast & Banter

A priority ticket order and exchange phone line.

Advance notice of important news at Writers' Theatre, including the announcement of our new Executive Director and the 2007/08 Season.

The Director's Society: Join now!

Intimacy is the signature of the Writers' Theatre experience. We place a premium on bringing our audiences face to face with Chicago's finest theatre artists and literature's greatest creators. However, this intimacy comes at a price. The generosity of our Director's Society members help to bridge the gap between our limited ticket revenue and the cost of producing world-class theatre, and in turn, our Director's Society members benefit from increased access to the art and artists of Writers' Theatre.

With an annual gift of \$1,000 or more, you will be welcomed into the exclusive Director's Society. As our way of thanking these generous supporters, members of the Director's Society enjoy unique opportunities to share in our creative process.

Next season promises to build upon the excitement of our 15th Anniversary Season. Your membership in the Director's Society will allow you to experience Writers' Theatre as you never have before.

Save the Date! The Annual Director's Society Garden Party

On July 15, 2007, Writers' Theatre will celebrate our annual Director's Society Garden Party. The event will feature cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and an exclusive sneak preview of our upcoming 2007/08 Season! This year, we are thrilled that long-time supporters Avy & Marcie Stein will be hosting the party in their beautiful garden overlooking Lake Michigan.

If you are already a member the Director's Society, please watch the mail for your invitation. If not, it isn't too late!

For more information, or to join the Director's Society, please contact Development Manager Lindsey Becker at 847-242-6012.

THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

THE SAVANNAH DISPUTATION

Written by Evan Smith

Directed by Michael Halberstam

Featuring Marilyn Bogetich, Linda Kimbrough and Suzanne Lang

Two elderly sisters forget all about southern charm when a young door-to-door evangelist comes knocking. This world premiere comedy by the playwright of our smash-hit production, *The Uneasy Chair*, beautifully blends Smith's trademark sharpness of wit and heartwarming depth of character, while telling a story in which a crisis of faith arises when seemingly similar beliefs are discovered to be worlds apart.

September 18–November 25, 2007

Performed at 325 Tudor Court

THE TURN OF THE SCREW

Adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher from

the story by Henry James

Directed by Jessica Thebus

Featuring Kymberly Mellen

Part ghost story and part psychological thriller, this classic tale concerns an unsuspecting governess hired by a wealthy recluse to look after his orphaned niece and nephew – two seemingly innocent children who soon reveal terrifying secrets. Henry James' spine-tingling novel brilliantly adapted for just two actors is ideally suited for the intimacy of the bookstore and guaranteed to keep you on the edge of your seat.

November 13, 2007–March 30, 2008

Performed at 664 Vernon Avenue

AS YOU LIKE IT

Written by William Shakespeare

Directed by William Brown

Featuring Tracy Michelle Arnold and Carey Cannon

"All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players..." A courtship with a twist, a duke and his merry men in exile, a melancholic wit, a clown and a lovesick shepherd and the shepherdess who spurns him all swirl together in a wildly beautiful romp through the magical Forest of Arden. Shakespeare brings to life some of the most romantic and charming scenes ever to be scribed for the stage in this most perfect of comedies.

February 5–April 13, 2008

Performed at 325 Tudor Court

THE LION IN WINTER

Written by James Goldman

Directed by Rick Snyder

Featuring Shannon Cochran

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 struggle and political alliances collide with themes of mortality and a story of fading romance. Goldman derives fiction from the circumstances of the past, crafting a wholly modern telling of deliciously historic times. Director Rick Snyder brings touches of gritty authenticity to this classic drama.

May 27–August 3, 2008

Performed at 325 Tudor Court



Roger Weston, Carol Walter, Trustee
Pam Phillips and John Walters



Actor Larry Yando and Trustee
Carol Dawley

SUBSCRIBE TODAY! PLEASE CALL 847-242-6000 TO RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION!

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF THE WORD AND THE ARTIST

So many people, so little space! We have been blessed with a wide array of funders, artists, staff, patrons and more, the list can go on and on. In trying to distill them down to a few, someone is sure to be left out. We have compiled these lists with our fingers crossed and our hearts on our sleeves. All of us at Writers' Theatre are profoundly grateful for everyone's unwavering belief in our work, generosity of spirit, financial resources and vision.

BOARD PRESIDENTS/BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Writers' Theatre has had seven Board Presidents, including Chris Knight (2007), Tom Hodges (2005-06), Carol Dawley (2001-04), Judy Cottle (1998-2000), Tom Sprandel (1996-97), Elaine Fiffer (1995-96) and Betty Lilienfield (1992-95). With an army of Trustees behind them, they have led our mission and realized our commitment to the Word and the Artist.

PLAYWRIGHTS

From the pen of co-founder Marilyn Campbell to the translations and adaptations of Curt Columbus to the sparkling stylings of George Bernard Shaw, we have enjoyed a remarkable legacy of writers in our 15 years. Special applause for the words of Noel Coward, William Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, Lillian Hellman, Kristine Thatcher, Evan Smith, Austin Pendleton, Anne Sexton, Anton Chekhov, Thornton Wilder, Nick Whitby, Itamar Moses, John Webster, William Inge, Clifford Odets, Charles Dickens, Chaim Potok, Aaron Posner, Frank Gilroy, Michael Frayn, Simon Gray, August Strindberg, Agustin Moreto, Dakin Matthews, Russell Lees, Arthur Miller, Joe Orton, Tom Stoppard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Austin Pendleton, Christopher Fry, John Osborne, Dorothy Bryant, Gustave Flaubert, George Sands, Ellen Lewis, Harold Pinter, John Murrell, Jerome Kilty, Elliot Hayes, William Blake, Maxim Mazumdar and Stephen MacDonald.

GALA CHAIRS

The Writers' Theatre Gala has been a major fundraising initiative over the past 15 years. The elegant, festive evenings have been guided by many wonderful individuals (some numerous times), including Carl & Mary Boyer, Christine Pope, Pam Phillips, Emily Knight, Lorel McMillan, Bobbie Schultz, Barbara Melcher, Nancy Miller, Diane Krasnow, Gerry Silverstein, Carol Dawley, Shirley Solomon, Joan Barney, Kay Wessel, Elaine Fiffer, Kathy Leck and Betty Lilienfield.

JOE & JEANNE SULLIVAN

As long-time champions of Writers' Theatre, Joe and Jeanne have provided significant spiritual support and consistent financial resources since the early days of Writers' Theatre. Their belief in Artistic Director Michael Halberstam has fueled their love of Writers' Theatre and they have consequently been at the forefront of support at every step of the way in both his development as an artist and the subsequent forward momentum of the company. Joe passed away in September 2006. He will be greatly missed.

GILLIAN & ELLIS GOODMAN

Gillian Goodman joined the Board of Trustees after she and Ellis fell in love with the jewel-box bookstore theatre while attending *Private Lives*. They played a significant part in securing Writers' Theatre's first Managing Director, moving Writers' Theatre into the Women's Library Club and recruiting our first corporate sponsor, LaSalle Bank.

WOMAN'S LIBRARY CLUB OF GLENCOE/ VILLAGE TRUSTEES

In 2003, Writers' Theatre opened its state-of-the-art space in the Woman's Library Club of Glencoe. This new theatre allowed us to meet the growing demand for tickets and reach new audiences. This was only possible because of the commitment of the members of the Woman's Library Club of Glencoe and the Glencoe Village Trustees.

CRITICS VIRGINIA GERST & RICHARD CHRISTIANSEN

Theatrical criticism has always enjoyed an uneasy alliance with practitioners. To acknowledge critics currently writing would seem to border on pandering and flattery. However, two critics, currently in retirement, stand up and demand to be mentioned. From the minute Virginia Gerst first stepped into our bookstore theatre she became a vociferous literary advocate for Writers' Theatre. At a point in time when we lacked press sophistication, she was there championing our work and drawing features out of us, coaxing us along the path to success. Within a few short years, she was joined by *Chicago Tribune* former Chief Critic Richard Christiansen who consistently, fairly and appropriately provided a vital link of communication between our production and his considerable readership.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS LEADING REMARKABLE STAFFS

We can safely say that Writers' Theatre has been very lucky in the quality of employees who have labored with their love of the arts at the forefront of their hearts. In our early days, we benefited greatly from the support of Ann Filmer, Judi Jeroslow and John Adams. We took an enormous leap with Jennifer Bielstein and are now delighted to move forward with Kate Lipuma joining Michael at the helm, to lead Writers' Theatre to a new level of creative possibilities. We would certainly be nowhere however without the staff support of former employees like Joe Turske, Jennifer Amling, Chris Toft, Mark Becker, Jeff Brown, Dennis Hull and our current team. The art on stage wouldn't be possible without them.

RICK PAUL

Designing sets for 30 productions at Writers' Theatre, Rick single handedly created and defined the Writers' Theatre design aesthetic. A pioneer of the Chicago arts scene and an artist of remarkable depth and vision, Rick never ceased in his quest to redefine the bookstore theatre.

BOOK STORE WOMEN

It would have never happened without Pat Rahmann, Diane Schwartz and Linda Wine who started the literary dreams at 664 Vernon Avenue in 1992. And lest we forget their husbands, (the late) John Rahmann, Gerry Wine and Dick Schwartz, who also provided admirable support!

DESIGNING MEN AND WOMEN

Rachel Anne Healey has been costuming regularly at Writers' Theatre since 2002. She was preceded by Jen Keller, who created miracles on a shoestring and is joined by Nan Zabriskie, who has clothed four of our more recent productions in her rich imagination. Scenic Designers Brian Sidney Bembridge, Geoff Curley, Jack Magaw and Keith Pitts have fitted varying worlds into our intimate venues, as has Linda Buchanan, who also gave us her beautiful designs for our theatre at Tudor Court. Andre Pluess, Ben Sussman, Josh Schmidt and Andy Hansen have all created a remarkable array of soundscapes and musical compositions that have gently and subtly lifted our plays into your hearts. Our design worlds would not have been complete without Rita Pietrazek who elegantly illuminated some of the world's greatest plays upon our stages.

STARS AT WRITERS' THEATRE

In order of appearance: Karen Janes Woditsch, Michael Barto, Nicolas Pennell, David New, Penelope Milford, David Cromer, Scott Parkinson, Aaron Alpern, Kate Buckley, Robert Scogin, Gary Houston, J. R. Sullivan, Kristine Thatcher, Donald Brearley, Michael Garcia, Jenny Friedmann, Shannon Cochran, Ann Filmer, Susan Hart, P. J. Powers, Rebecca Covey, Annabel Armour, Tom Kelly, Jenn Dede, Sean Fortunato, Steve Hinger, Mark Richard, Kevin Fox, Linda Kimbrough, Larry Yando, Gary Griffin, Matt Brumlow, Linsey Page Morton, Austin Pendleton, Kimberly Mellen, Deanna Dunnegan, Michael Canvan, Jonathan Weir, David Castellanos, John Judd, Jeff Still, LeeRoy Rogers, Howard Witt, Joel Hatch, Guy Adkins, Susan Bennett, Hollis Resnick, Ora Jones, Steve Haggard, Mary Beth Fisher, Natasha Lowe, Kevin Gudahl, Janet Ulrich Brooks, Chris McLinden, Karen Aldridge, LaShawn Banks, Matt Kozlowski, Craig Spidle, Penny Slusher, Shade Murray, Timothy Edward Kane, Greg Vinkler, Ross Lehman, Rick Snyder, Suzanne Lang, James Vincent Meredith, John Reeger, Jimmy McDermott and Larry Neumann, Jr.

WILLIAM BROWN

Bill came to Writers' in 1997 performing in *Private Lives* and directing *The Glass Menagerie*. His remarkable gift for storytelling and lifting complex and difficult theatre into easily accessible forms without compromising the structure of the text has significantly contributed to the artistic landscape of Writers' Theatre. His seminal directorial visions have included *Incident at Vichy*, *Misalliance*, *Our Town* and *Another Part of the Forest*. His significant acting creations have included *Candida*, *Nixon's Nixon* and *Bus Stop*. We are breathless with anticipation for his *As You Like It* next season.

DAVID & MARY GREEN

David and Mary have been remarkable philanthropists for causes ranging from politics to fine arts. At Writers' Theatre, they not only provided a significant gift towards the establishment of our theatre at Tudor Court, but they also gave us the resources to launch our Literary Development Initiative. Last season, they provided Writers' Theatre with an inspiring Challenge Grant, which generated more than \$232,000 in new and increased gifts. David's recent passing was a loss to us all.

YOU & I (THE AUDIENCE & MICHAEL HALBERSTAM)

When asked if he is proud of what he has created, Artistic Director Michael Halberstam often replies, "pride cometh before a fall," or "not proud so much as grateful." False humility? Not at all. Often times, one finds oneself standing still with congratulations for past accomplishments as the future slips gains distance. As Ulysses says in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*:

*Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-sized monster of ingratitudes:
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devoured
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done.*

However, at this time, as we close our 15th Anniversary Season, we would like to take a moment to recognize Michael for his accomplishments and congratulate him on the formation and continued success of an amazing theatrical institution. For that, all of us are grateful.

In turn, when asked for what he is most grateful, Michael responded, "I'm grateful to all of the dramatic artists, the committed staff, Trustees and the collection of philanthropists, all of whom have opened their hearts as freely as they make their resources available to us. Most of all, however, I'm truly, madly grateful to our audience for their undying support and faith in our mission over the past 15 years. It's been a fine odyssey of creative adventuring and I can't wait to see what the next 15 years will bring."

IN BRIEF

Community Partners

Please join the artists, staff and Board of Trustees of Writers' Theatre in thanking our current community partners for their continued support by visiting their establishments and telling them we sent you. Let them know that their support means as much to you as it does to everyone at the Theatre.



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Special Thanks

Writers' Theatre would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the organizations that made our 15th Anniversary Gala a resounding success.

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IN MEMORIAM

*We are such stuff
As dreams are made on,
and our little life
Is rounded in a sleep.*

– SHAKESPEARE

*Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there; I did not die.*

– DO NOT STAND AT MY GRAVE AND WEEP,
MARY ELIZABETH FRYE



David Green

David Green was a force of nature. He was a highly successful and deeply respected businessman. David was a fine father and husband to his true love Mary Winton. David Green was a proud American. He advised and supported a considerable collection of politicians, and in later years, he was particularly inspired to support the cause of women in politics. This is no doubt a testament to his partnership with his remarkable wife.

He was loyal and passionate about the institutions that helped to shape him, including his alma mater the University of Chicago where he endowed a professorship. He believed in the power of the arts and he provided vital foundational support for the institutions that gave him much happiness over the years. He and Mary endowed a Chair at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, a curatorship at the Art Institute of Chicago and a capital gift to the Stratford Festival of Canada. They have also played a vital role in the forward momentum of Writers' Theatre, having been instrumental in seeing us into our Tudor Court theatre in 2003 and then providing the resources for us to bring life to our Literary Development Initiative.

In a very real sense, I believe David would bridle at being overly praised, as he was a humble man. But I am confident he would be happy with this expression of gratitude for his faith and support. In fact, one of his greatest delights was seeing the look of astonishment on the faces of those who were lucky enough to receive his generous support, myself included. I am personally humbled by David's belief in me and the mission I pursue at Writers' Theatre. The more I got to know him, the more I realized that his support came with a faith and loyalty that demanded respect and provided an ever renewing source of inspiration. His presence in my life has changed it forever.

David lives on! He lives palpably, tangibly and viscerally in the hearts and artistry of our Writers' Theatre family. He will continue through the literary voice of our playwrights and when you next come to a play, he will live a little inside you.

*I need no gravestone, but
If you need one for me
I would like it to bear these words:
He made suggestions. We
Carried them out.
Such an inscription would
Honour us all.* – BERTOLT BRECHT

– Michael Halberstam

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