

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF
WRITERS' THEATRE

ISSUE TWENTY-NINE

MAY 2010

THE BRIEF CHRONICLE



WT
WRITERS'
THEATRE

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**“DROPPED OVERBOARD...
INTO AN OCEAN
AS BLUE AS
MY FIRST
LOVER’S EYES!”**

- **BLANCHE**, A *STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE*

THE BRIEF CHRONICLE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSMAGAZINE OF WRITERS' THEATRE

ISSUE TWENTY-NINE MAY 2010

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Michael Halberstam
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Dear Friends:

David Cromer has grown from being one of the most important directors in Chicago to one of the most important directors in the country—and with good cause. Time and time again David gets to the heart of a classic play and elegantly finds a way to make the playwright's words feel current without ever sacrificing the original intent. When you see David's work you frequently feel as though you are seeing a play for the very first time (even though you may have seen it previously). This approach is a particularly good match for Writers' Theatre as it represents, in no small part, our mission statement.

A Streetcar Named Desire will be David's sixth adventure with Writers' Theatre, although he has advised and supported the growth of the company on many more occasions. As with his extraordinary production of *Picnic*, David and his design team have re-conceived the seating configuration of the Tudor Court theater, and for some of you, this means you will be sitting in new seats. The overall effect of the design places us as proverbial "flies on the wall." You will literally feel as though you are eavesdropping on the lives of Stella, Blanche, Stanley and Mitch as Williams's extraordinary play comes thrillingly to life within touching distance.

Meanwhile, in this issue read about how we celebrated sisterhood at an intimate Literary Luncheon featuring actresses Cheryl Lynn Bruce and Wandachristine from *The Old Settler*. We'll also share a moment or two from the sparkling Behind-the-Scenes Brunch, during which we explored the music of *Oh Coward!* with Musical Director Doug Peck and actor Rob Lindley. We'll also share with you how our education programs are continuing to reach students across the Chicagoland area, and now with our newest venture, the *Novel Series Study Plan*, we are empowering young readers to explore personal relationships with the books they read and share their findings with their classmates.

Thank you for coming with us on another unforgettable journey of dramatic adventure this season. It's been challenging this past year, as on many occasions we have had to turn patrons away from the box office with so many performances being sold out. The renewal of your Subscription or Membership will guarantee that this will not happen to you. We're looking forward to continuing our travels together with *A Streetcar Named Desire* and of course all the excitement in the upcoming 2010/11 Season.

Yours Sincerely,

Michael

Kate



A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

BY **TENNESSEE WILLIAMS**

DIRECTED BY **DAVID CROMER**

Performances start May 4, 2010 at 325 Tudor Court

Blanche DuBois arrives unexpectedly on the doorstep of her sister Stella and her explosive brother-in-law Stanley. Over the course of one hot and steamy New Orleans summer, Blanche's fragile façade slowly crumbles, wreaking havoc on Stella and Stanley's already turbulent relationship. Embodying the turmoil and drama of a changing nation, *A Streetcar Named Desire* strips Williams's tortured characters of their illusions, leaving a wake of destruction in their path.

THE CAST: **ESTEBAN ANDRES CRUZ, JENN ENGSTROM, RYAN HALLAHAN, DEREK HASENSTAB, MATT HAWKINS, LOREN LAZERINE, NATASHA LOWE, DANNY MCCARTHY, CAROLYN E. NELSON, STACY STOLTZ AND ROSARIO VARGAS**

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THE MAN

Born on March 26, 1911 in St. Louis, Missouri, Thomas Lanier Williams endured an upbringing that would forever manifest itself in his many plays and stories. His mother was the daughter of a Mississippi pastor and embodied the mannerisms of a traditional southern belle. His father, a traveling salesman, was fond of drinking and gambling. Domestic warfare was the norm in their home as Williams's father continued to drink, gamble and bully the children. His mother inched closer and closer to hysteria under the duress of Mr. Williams's abuse and Rose, his sister and confidant, began to exhibit similar symptoms. As his sister's condition worsened, Williams felt cut off from his only friend and turned to writing to fill the void.

Williams failed most of his classes while enrolled at local universities, but it was during this period that he saw his first play and took an interest in writing for the stage. Torn between staying with Rose—whose fragile psyche was deteriorating more and more each year—and pursuing his writing career away from home, Williams left for a playwriting course at the University of Iowa in 1937. While he was away, his parents lobotomized Rose to end her fits of madness. Consequently, she spent the rest of her life in an institution and Williams never forgave himself for not being home to stop his parents.

The playwright made his first trip to New Orleans in 1938 and immediately

fell in love with the French Quarter lifestyle. It was here that he likely embraced his homosexuality for the first time as he, in his own words, found “a kind of freedom I had always needed. And the shock of it against the Puritanism of my nature has given me a subject, a theme, which I have never ceased exploiting.” It was in 1939 that he began to consistently use the name “Tennessee” instead of his birth name.

About that time, influential New York agent Audrey Wood came across some of Williams's one-act plays, took an immediate interest in the young writer and helped him find a job in Hollywood with MGM as a screenwriter. Although a failure at screenwriting, it was while working at MGM that Williams began an intensely personal play that would eventually thrust him into the national spotlight.

The Glass Menagerie opened in Chicago in December 1944 to poor advance ticket sales. However, the reviews were rapturous and the run quickly sold out. Opening on Broadway in March 1945, the cast took over 20 curtain calls on opening night and the audience demanded Williams also take the stage for a bow.

THE PLAY

Williams began work on a new play soon after *The Glass Menagerie* opened in Chicago. By the time the production moved to New York, he had completed almost sixty pages of what

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

THE MAN. THE PLAY. THE LEGACY.

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

would become his most enduring masterpiece, *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Streetcar was inspired by a vision Williams had of a woman whose youth was fading “sitting in a chair all alone by a window with the moonlight streaming in on her desolate face, and she’d been stood up by the man she planned to marry.” As the new play took shape, it went through a number of different titles including *The Moth*, *The Primary Colors*, *Blanche’s Chair in the Moon* and *The Poker Night*.

Williams continued working on the play while in Mexico in 1945 before relocating to New Orleans later that year and beginning a relationship with Pancho Rodriguez y Gonzalez (who was ten years younger than Williams). Their relationship was turbulent, filled with jealousy and fighting but was ultimately sustained by an intense sexual chemistry—something that would influence Stanley and Stella’s relationship in *Streetcar*.

Williams completed *A Streetcar Named Desire* in January 1947. Audrey Wood loved the script and hired producer Irene Selznick to bring the play to New York. They all agreed to approach director Elia Kazan about helming the play, after his successful work on the premiere of Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons*.

While not as explicitly personal as *The Glass Menagerie*, much of the playwright’s life found its way into *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Noticing the similarities between Williams’s real life and his fiction on the page, Kazan said

“I saw Blanche as Williams, an ambivalent figure who is attracted to the harshness and vulgarity around him at the same time as he fears it, because it threatens his life.”

Jessica Tandy was cast as Blanche after Kazan, Selznick and Williams saw her perform in Los Angeles. Casting Stanley proved more difficult. They offered the role to John Garfield and Burt Lancaster before turning to the young Marlon Brando. Kazan gave Brando twenty dollars for a bus ticket to Provincetown, Massachusetts to meet Williams at his Cape Cod home, but the actor spent it on food and instead hitchhiked to the meeting with his girlfriend. After fixing the plumbing and lighting of Williams’s cottage, Brando gave a reading of Stanley and immediately won him over. Kim Hunter and Karl Malden rounded out the principal cast playing Stella and Mitch respectively.

THE LEGACY

After out-of-town tryouts in New Haven, Boston and Philadelphia, *A Streetcar Named Desire* opened on Broadway at the Barrymore Theatre on December 3, 1947 and permanently entered the western theatrical canon. On opening night, the audience gave the play a thirty-minute ovation. Critics raved and the show ran for 855 performances. It would go on to win the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Such was the demand to see the play that a national tour was organized with two separate touring

casts. The principal tour starred Uta Hagen as Blanche and Anthony Quinn as Stanley, with Judith Evelyn and Ralph Meeker tackling the roles in the second company.

Over the course of the next few years, *Streetcar* played in many of the most prestigious theatres across the globe. By 1951 the play had been produced in Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Sweden, France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Australia. For the London premiere in 1950, Laurence Olivier was hired to direct and he cast his wife Vivien Leigh in the role of Blanche.

Kazan directed the 1951 film adaptation with Brando, Hunter and Malden reprising their roles with Vivien Leigh replacing Jessica Tandy as Blanche. To avoid being censored, the screenplay had to deviate from the original play, most notably by removing any reference to Blanche’s dead husband’s homosexuality and by providing a less morally ambiguous ending. The film was an equally huge success, earning twelve Academy Award nominations and winning four—including Best Actress for Leigh and Best Supporting Actress and Actor for Hunter and Malden.

The play remains as beloved today as it was over 60 years ago. Major New York revivals of the play have occurred in 1973 (with Rosemary Harris and James Farentino), 1988 (with Blythe Danner and Aidan Quinn), 1992 (with Jessica Lange and Alec Baldwin) and 2005 (with Natasha Richardson and

John C. Reilly) and most recently The Sidney Theatre Company’s production with Cate Blanchett. Two television versions of the play have been produced, one in 1984 with Ann-Margaret and Treat Williams and another in 1995 with Jessica Lange and Alec Baldwin, based on their previous Broadway revival.

A string of hit plays followed in the wake of Williams’s *Streetcar* success including *Summer and Smoke* (1948), *The Rose Tattoo* (1951), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) and *The Night of the Iguana* (1961), but he spent the remaining years of his life as a critical outcast when his new plays were routinely panned. Williams passed away in 1983 after abusing drugs and alcohol for most of his adult life. However, his best known works are still performed perennially across the country. After Shakespeare, Williams is one of the most studied dramatists around the world. *A Streetcar Named Desire* managed to become a part of our cultural consciousness, with universal recognition of the iconic lines: “I’ve always relied on the kindness of strangers,” “we’ve had this date with each other from the beginning” and “STELLA!” This is a fitting legacy to one of the 20th century’s best plays and to one of the best playwrights to ever put pen to paper. ■

DIRECTOR'S SIDEBAR: **DAVID CROMER**

TWENTY YEARS OF COLLABORATION

BY **MICHAEL HALBERSTAM**, *Artistic Director*



David Cromer in rehearsal for *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

David Cromer and I first met while auditioning for the same role at Victory Gardens Theatre (which he eventually won)... (I'm not bitter)...(well maybe a little). Our casual conversation in the lobby led to a long friendship and professional collaboration that has lasted now for 20 years.

Back in 1995 at Writers' Theatre I needed a director for a one-man show I was performing in called *Oscar Remembered*, and at the time David was artistic director at Big Game Productions. I had not yet seen his work, but he was highly respected within the theatre community and a conversation with him quickly convinced me that he was absolutely the right man for the job. When we finished our first read through, there was a palpable sense of tension. We both realized that the text was more than a little rocky and as soon as I confessed this to David he sighed with relief. We both shared the same concerns and got to work aware of the challenges that lay ahead. To both of our surprise we managed to pull off a very engaging evening in the theatre and I would lay the lion's share of that success at David's feet.

When directing, David often starts with a visual image as a focal point, which is then incorporated into the final scenic design. In *Oscar Remembered* it was mirrors covering the walls in a variety of ornate frames. In *Booth*, which David directed at Writers' Theatre in 2001, it was moonlight shining through gently moving tree branches. In *The Price*, which David also directed at Writers' Theatre in 2002, it was the dense clutter of furniture in an attic, which, when

crammed into the small bookstore performance space, gave a sense that the set was just a corner of a much larger room. And finally with *Picnic*, which he directed last season, it was a lawn and a large tree limb stretching out over the audience with two front porches transforming the Tudor Court venue into seating in the round.

Once the physical setting is on the road to being realized, David begins the exhaustive process of casting and he does not rest until he finds the right actor for each and every role. No decision is made lightly as he looks for a very specific quality. Acting bravura is eschewed in favor of simple and elegant honesty. When he finds an actor who is simply trying to 'be' the character and carries enough of the qualities of the role naturally inside them, he is ready to consider casting them. Then he sits with the idea for a few days before making the decision.

In rehearsal, David gently aims to remove all distractions between the actors and the truthful delivery of text. He gives them an environment, a world, in which they can easily exist. He then starts to efficiently and sometimes ruthlessly bring it all together. It's not always easy working with David, but it is always rewarding. Without fail, he affirms all the reasons why we do what we do in the theatre. In fact, I would say that what he has presented to Writers' Theatre over the last two decades of collaboration has ultimately strengthened our commitment to supporting the art and artists who make theatre. ■

ACTING CROMER

Working with director David Cromer is often an experience like no other. Here we asked his long-time collaborators to reflect on what it is that draw artists back time and again to his projects.



ACTOR JOHN JUDD

When you don't see David Cromer, he's off imagining plays. His mind is, a library of memorized text and a trove of images and effects all waiting to be executed. This archive is constantly curated; edited like an exquisite art collection. His plays are perfect, but the problem has always been one of compromise, the medium through which his perfect plays are rendered into being on the actual stage. Yet through the 20 years of our acquaintance, neither poverty, adversity, doubt, sabotage nor despair could eradicate the magic. Even compromised Cromer is extraordinary.



ACTOR JEFF STILL

I like working with David because of his honesty. He is brutally honest as a director and keeps me brutally honest as an actor. Honesty isn't always pretty, but it is always human and you can see this in the acting ensembles of his productions. You have a group of people committed to being honest with themselves and with each other, which believe me, is often uncomfortable. One of the reasons his ensembles get so close is that everyone is living outside of their comfort zones. And that's scary, intimate and exhilarating.



ACTOR/DIRECTOR/PLAYWRIGHT AUSTIN PENDLETON

I like working with David because everything he says about whatever you're working on sounds to me like new-fallen snow. His vision is so focused that it's like a magnet and the cast, designers and everybody else become like iron filings. I think his work keeps shifting only in that his focus gets even more simple and pure and intense as the years go by. Nothing seems to stop that, not rain, not snow, not sleet, not even New York City. I love him.

SETTING THE SCENE

Director David Cromer is known for creating ultra-realistic environments on stage, and *A Streetcar Named Desire* is no exception. The action of the play takes place in the cramped New Orleans apartment of Stanley and Stella Kowalski, a space clearly meant for two people. It's a tight squeeze and when Stella's sister Blanch moves in, the apartment is clearly bursting at the seams.

The intimacy of the Tudor Court stage naturally lent itself to creating a space where the audience would feel like a fly on the wall watching the world of the play. Cromer turned to scenic designer Collette Pollard, who designed this season's opening production *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, to turn that notion into a reality. Pollard has essentially lifted an entire apartment (walls, ceiling, stairs and all) and dropped it onto the Tudor Court stage.

This innovative new scenic design has resulted in some exciting changes to the seating configuration at Tudor Court. Although much of the seating footprint remains the same, the edges of the set spill out into the house resulting in the elimination of some seats, but the addition of a completely new fourth bank of seats. Audiences will have the unique opportunity to experience a Tudor Court show like never before, and this "fish bowl" atmosphere is the perfect setting to watch Tennessee Williams's famous characters unravel before their eyes.

WHY HERE?

The Brief Chronicle series closes out the season exploring what brings a director and a particular production together with David Cromer, director of *A Streetcar Named Desire* in conversation with Writers' Theatre Associate Artistic Director Stuart Carden.

STUART CARDEN: Yell "STELLA!!!!" or coyly say you've "always depended on the kindness of strangers" and just about everyone in the room could name the play that originated these famous lines. Why do you think this play, written in 1947, still holds such a fascination for us?

DAVID CROMER: The uninteresting answer is that it's a great play and a truly great play cannot lose its fascination. It cannot be conquered or used up or emptied of its potential. Every visit back to it yields something new. The more specific answer is that *Streetcar's* greatness is applied to one of the most basic human circumstances; if we unabashedly follow our desires, where will

they take us? The history of mankind on earth is the history of us negotiating our base appetites with our responsibility to behave ourselves in society. Religion, government, all institutions are designed to formalize and control our desires.

S. C.: You have become known for your incisive takes on classic mid-twentieth century American plays (including your wildly successful production of *Picnic at Writers' in 2008*). What draws you to these works and to the writing of Tennessee Williams in particular?

D. C.: I don't know what draws me and I don't want to know. It may tell me things I don't want to know about myself. It's possible it's because I was born at the tail end of the era that formed these plays and they are in my DNA. But I'd say the mid-twentieth century was the golden age of American playwriting. The moment we unshackled ourselves from the grip of English theatre, it turned out that a young, brash, rich, insecure, open-hearted, cynical, egotistical

country had an enormous amount to say about the basic building blocks of the human condition. So I'm just smart/insecure enough to focus on great plays and not expose my incompetence by working on crap.

S. C.: What from your experience directing Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* last year at Kansas City Repertory Theatre will you take into the rehearsal room for *Streetcar*?

D. C.: I'll take the intimidating knowledge that Williams was writing simultaneous poetry and prose; and that we have to sing and talk at the same time; and that we have to be both men and women to understand it. Wow, that sounds hard. Maybe I've just talked myself back into working on a bad play.

S. C.: For *Picnic* you reconfigured the Tudor Court space to give audiences a decidedly new perspective on our intimate space. How will this intimacy impact our audience's experience of *Streetcar*?

D. C.: *Streetcar* very significantly takes place in a two-room apartment occupied by three people. Tudor Court offers the actual, truthful scale of the rooms they occupy. Maybe *Streetcar* is effective in grand proscenium houses, but this version puts you there and that keeps me coming back to Writers' Theatre. The physical footprint of the space is so special. Maybe you guys are used to it by now, but it's still exciting for me.

S. C.: The last time Tennessee Williams's work was seen on Writers' stage was *The Glass Menagerie* in 1998. Why is 2010 the right time for *A Streetcar Named Desire* to make a stop in Glencoe?

D. C.: Tennessee was ahead of his time when he was at the height of his fame. He was writing about the outcrying heart of humankind. As long as our hearts are doing that, calling out a despair and a joy we cannot name or share, these plays will play. If I were a great writer I'd say that better. Watch the play, he says it best.

WHY NOW?

ANNOUNCING THE

2010/11 SEASON

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She Loves Me

Book by **JOE MASTEROFF**
Music by **JERRY BOCK**
Lyrics by **SHELDON HARNICK**
Musical Direction by **BEN JOHNSON**
Directed by Artistic Director **MICHAEL HALBERSTAM**

September 14 – November 21, 2010
Performed at 325 Tudor Court

WORLD PREMIERE

Do The Hustle

By **BRETT NEVEU**
Directed by **WILLIAM BROWN**

January 25 – March 20, 2011
Performed at 325 Tudor Court

Travels With My Aunt

By **GRAHAM GREENE**
Adapted for the stage by **GILES HAVERGAL**
Directed by Associate Artistic Director **STUART CARDEN**

November 9, 2010 – March 27, 2011
Performed at 664 Vernon Avenue

Heartbreak House

By **GEORGE BERNARD SHAW**
Directed by **WILLIAM BROWN**

April 19 – June 26, 2011
Performed at 325 Tudor Court

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Photo of Allen Gilmore in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Michael Broslow.

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The Detective's Wife

By **KEITH HUFF**
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Three of Chicago's finest talents come together to create a tour-de-force evening of theatre: playwright **Keith Huff**, fresh from his box office record breaking Broadway debut of *A Steady Rain* and writer for AMC's award-winning drama *Mad Men*; Broadway director and multi award-winning favorite **Gary Griffin** and **Barbara Robertson**, one of Chicago's greatest actresses bring you this exclusive special engagement.

WHAT'S
HAPPENING
AT WRITERS' THEATRE
BACKSTAGE



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THE ARTS ALLOW US TO DISCOVER WHO WE CAN BE

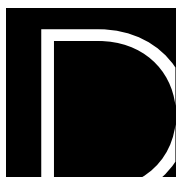
Imagine the world without music and dance, or literature and art. Life is incomplete without ways to express ourselves, and to discover who we are and what we can be. That's why Northern Trust proudly supports Writers' Theatre and outreach in our communities so that everyone can experience the arts in its many diverse forms.

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THE
DIRECTOR'S
SOCIETY

BEHIND-THE-SCENES BRUNCH

Members of the *Director's Society* braved the cold winter weather on Sunday, January 10 to take an inside look at the musical world of one of the theatre's great masters: Noël Coward. After indulging in delightful brunch fare, generously provided by Whole Foods Northbrook, attendees were treated to an intimate and thoughtful discussion led by Artistic Director Michael Halberstam, joined by *Oh Coward!* Musical Director Doug Peck and actor Rob Lindley. The morning was capped off by the poignant performance of a selection from *Oh Coward!*. All in all, it was a marvelous way to kickoff the New Year!



1. *Director's Society* Members Dale and Betsy Pinkert and 2010 WordPlay Gala Co-Chairs Jan and Lloyd Culbertson with Artistic Director Michael Halberstam
2. *Director's Society* Member Bianca Juarez with Ann Marie Streibich. 3. Jan Bartlett with *Director's Society* Members Phyllis Berning and Joyce Bottum. 4. Trustee Carol Dawley with Executive Director Kate Lipuma and former Director of Institutional Advancement Rachel Weinstein. 5. Associate Artistic Director Stuart Carden with Donna LaPietra and Bill Kurtis.

This event is just one of the exclusive events offered to members of the *Director's Society*, a group of Writers' Theatre's most generous supporters. *Director's Society* members provide a secure financial foundation for the theatre through annual contributions of \$1,000 or more.



JOIN US FOR OUR 10TH ANNUAL *DIRECTOR'S SOCIETY* GARDEN PARTY – JULY 25, 2010

Held at a beautiful private lakeshore home in Winnetka, this exclusive event provides the perfect setting to celebrate the 2009/10 Season and look forward to the next!

For more information on *Director's Society* membership contact Development Manager Amber Bel'cher at 847-242-6012 or abelcher@writerstheatre.org.

LITERARY LUNCHEON

On January 20 forty ladies and Writers' Theatre Artistic Director Michael Halberstam gathered at the beautiful home of Trustee Jennifer Litowitz for Writers' first Literary Luncheon. It was a lovely afternoon dedicated to uniting our female supporters in conversation about sisterhood as explored in our production of *The Old Settler*. Guests were greeted by mimosas while they mingled in the Litowitz's cozy British-style drawing rooms. At the stroke of noon, guests were ushered into the dining room for a lively discussion led by Director of Education Nicole Gilman with actresses Cheryl Lynn Bruce and Wandachristine on the remarkable, and sometimes complex, relationships shared by women. Afterwards, a scintillating buffet of gourmet soups and finger sandwiches awaited our guests, beautifully presented by Restaurant Michael of Winnetka. Over the course of the afternoon, guests casually gathered in groups, sipped wine and shared their own stories of the women in their lives.

We would like to extend very special thanks to Restaurant Michael for so generously sponsoring our lunch and to Trustee Jennifer Litowitz for so graciously opening her home to our guests.

1. Trustee Barb Melcher, Actress Wandachristine, Artistic Director Michael Halberstam, Meg McLarlane and Lizzy Schienfeld 2. Trustee Dagmara Kokonas, Dara Milner, Mary Phillips, Betsy Hough and Sonali Edwards 3. Nancy Kehoe, Pat O'Brien and Trustee Tina Pompizzi 4. Maggie Scheyer, Trustee Jennifer Litowitz and Monique Parsons 5. Jill Schield, Sonia Marschak and Trustee Mary Pat Studdert



WRITERS' WELCOMES:

WRITERS' THEATRE IS DELIGHTED TO WELCOME **BETH L. KRONFELD** TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES!

Ms. Kronfeld is an avid theater fan and is delighted with the community and quality of Writers' Theatre. She is Managing Partner of DKB Enterprises, a family holding company with diversified investments. She previously worked for Morgan Stanley's investment banking division in New York City and in the advancement office of the SYDA Foundation in upstate New York where she developed and conducted trainings on fundraising. Ms. Kronfeld holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Vassar College where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and with Honors and an MBA, with Honors, from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2006, she joined the Board of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Canada and serves as the Chair of the eStratford Task Force and the Chair of the Advancement Committee.



A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE SPONSOR SALUTE

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Writers' Theatre deeply appreciates our continued partnership with The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation. For nearly a decade, Writers' Theatre has been able to rely on the Foundation, one of Chicago's leading arts funders, to provide support for productions at Writers' Theatre including:

- The American premiere of Nick Whitby's *To the Green Fields Beyond*
- The world premiere adaptation of *Crime and Punishment* by Writers' Theatre co-founder Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus (winner of a 2004 Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Adaptation)
- Artistic Director Michael Halberstam's original adaptation of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*
- Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, directed by William Brown
- And most recently, the world premiere of *A Minister's Wife*, Writers' first-ever musical, adapted from Shaw's *Candida* by Austin Pendleton, conceived and directed by Michael Halberstam, with music by Josh Schmidt and lyrics by Jan Tranen

We extend our deepest thanks to The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation for helping to bring this searing and emotionally powerful production of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* to our stage.

"We are committed to supporting fresh interpretations of American classics by area theatres," said Elisabeth Geraghty, Executive Director of The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation. "Writers' Theatre is uniquely able to breathe new life into familiar texts, and [director] David Cromer has a special gift for putting a modern and distinctive touch on classic works, so we were very pleased to provide funding for this production."



THE ELIZABETH F. CHENEY FOUNDATION

Elisabeth Geraghty, Executive Director of The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation with actress Natasha Lowe (Blanche) and David Cromer, director of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTION SPONSORS



Marilynn and Carl Thoma, Production Sponsors of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

We would also like to salute longtime patrons Carl and Marilyn Thoma who have made a generous multi-year commitment to help launch our new Artists Council. Mr. and Mrs. Thoma have decided to direct their first year of support towards our production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

"We frequently find Writers' Theatre productions to be profoundly moving. Texts are crystal clear, focusing on themes without the distraction of superfluous material. Casting taps actors who deliver convincing, nuanced portrayals. Like other ticket buyers, we count on Writers' Theatre to touch our hearts and open our eyes with its artistry season after season. Consequently, with our gift, we wish to nurture the culture of artistic risk taking that has produced exceptional theater experiences to date."

— Carl and Marilyn Thoma

As Production Sponsors, Mr. and Mrs. Thoma receive exclusive access to the rehearsal process and special one-on-one interactions with the artists involved.



THE ARTISTS' COUNCIL

For more information on how to join the Artists Council and/or become a Production Sponsor, please contact Development Manager Amber Bel'cher at 847-242-6012 or abelcher@writerstheatre.org.

CORPORATE PRODUCTION SPONSOR

Writers' Theatre would like to extend its sincere thanks to our Corporate Production Sponsor Magnetar Capital. We are very pleased to continue this partnership for a third consecutive year—previously, Magnetar was Corporate Production Sponsor of *As You Like It* and *A Minister's Wife*.



TRUE TALES OF A FOURTH GRADE NOTHING



In 2009 Writers' Theatre developed the *Novel Series Study Plan* in collaboration with the Literature and Writing Magnet Cluster Schools in Chicago. This new program was designed to give students another way to explore a novel using their bodies and voices in addition to traditional discussion exercises, writing assignments and vocabulary lessons. Writers' Theatre Teaching Artists work in tandem with classroom teachers to give young readers multiple ways to connect to a story.

One of the first schools in the program ended up having one of the most profound experiences. Price Elementary's fourth grade class in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood studied *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume. This particular class struggled at the beginning of the year because they did not have a consistent teacher. Eventually they were joined by Ms. Wyatt, a wonderful teacher who worked to bring her students together as a community and the *Novel Series Study Plan* played an integral role. After participating in the program, Ms. Wyatt was amazed by how the students supported each other, collaborated on their pieces and invested in the activities. Most importantly, even struggling readers rose to meet the challenges of the activities and thoroughly enjoyed reading the book.

Here is what Ms. Wyatt had to say about working with Writers' Theatre in the classroom:

The experience was amazing! My class had become known as the "challenging" group last year. However, this program brought out the best in my students and I was elated to see how well they performed and even my least motivated students took part in the activities. I believe that this program is a wonderful way to allow students the chance to take an active role in their reading and helps to reinforce the reading strategies that they learn in the classroom. Thank you for the wonderful experience and I am sure that the students of room 209 will never forget the roles they played in bringing their novel to life.

MS. WYATT
Price Elementary School

Writers' Theatre Teaching Artist Jenny Avery reflects on her experience leading the *Novel Series Study Plan* in Ms. Wyatt's classroom:

I must admit that I was a little bit anxious about this particular residency. I was told at our planning meeting that this class had problems and a lack of cohesion. I expected to walk in and see a group of lackluster students who rolled their eyes when I asked them to get in a circle to play a warm-up game. Instead I was greeted by eager eyes, ready to explore a book they had loved reading. I expected disengaged students who would be unwilling to read out loud and instead I was overwhelmed by raised hands excited to participate. I expected competition and fighting over roles and instead I was graced with cooperation and support from each and every student.

I can't attest to why this happened: perhaps it was a love for the book, a new dedicated teacher in the classroom, my work in small groups giving each student individual attention or all of the above, but this residency was a joy from beginning to end.

JENNY AVERY
Writers' Theatre Teaching Artist

Writers' Theatre's educational residencies are supported by The Polk Brothers Foundation, The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust and several anonymous foundations.



Sarah Lillian Heberlein
1972 - 2010

On March 30, 2010 our great friend and colleague Sarah Heberlein passed away after a rather sudden and unexpected battle with cancer. She was 37 years old and served as Writers' Associate Production Manager for the past six years. As an integral member of our production team, Sarah's artistry was tangibly present throughout the season, especially in her work with our designers. In making sure their visions were realized to the highest degree of skill and professionalism, Sarah has been, without exaggeration, a good part of the reason that Writers' sets and costumes come to life with such flourish and attention to detail.

What is more important is that Sarah worked so tirelessly and with such good grace because she believed in the mission of Writers' Theatre. She loved the theatre and she loved the art. She loved the people and she was loved in return. She was respected by many throughout the theatre community. Sarah was not simply a colleague, she was our friend. She was a good friend—the best kind of friend—loving, fiercely loyal, dedicated, intelligent, generous and always (without exception) there when we needed her. We miss her terribly, but we are thankful that we were given the chance to have known her—and her determination lives as an inspiration to all of us.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

MAY

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

JUNE

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

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 8:00	2 8:00	3 4:00/8:00
4	5	6 7:30	7 7:30	8 8:00	9 8:00	10 4:00/8:00
11 2:00						

* Pre-Show Lectures ** Post-Show Discussions





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Artistic Director
Michael Halberstam
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