Dear Friends,

The first production of the 2018/19 Season is upon us, and we could not be more thrilled to kick things off with this innovative, irreverent and important new play by Qui Nguyen—Vietgone, directed by Lavina Jadhwani, who has been part of the WT family for almost a decade. Qui’s piece grew from a desire to know his parents and their “origin story” better, and from that investigation came an epic adventure that reveals universal truths about family, history and the American Dream.

To begin this issue of The Brief Chronicle, we bring you an interview with playwright Qui Nguyen, courtesy of American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco (where Vietgone played earlier this year). We will then examine the aftermath of the Vietnam War, focusing on what life was like for displaced Vietnamese refugees who relocated to the United States. We’ll continue by introducing you to director Lavina Jadhwani, revealing how her life and career up to this point has fed her passion for this play. We also checked in with the cast of Vietgone, who told us about their personal connections to the piece, reflecting on their own family histories and experiences with stereotypes.

Next, we’ll provide a wrap-up of last season’s Play Reading Series, where we first introduced our audiences to Vietgone and also presented readings of two other exciting new works. We will have four more free staged readings throughout the 2018/19 Season, so keep your eyes peeled for invitations in your email! We will also tell you all about the momentous year that our Education team had, which included a three-month-long residency about “The Business of the Art” at Senn High School and the successful premiere of our onsite classes for young people. Registration for Fall Onsite Classes is open now!

We would also like to say that we greatly appreciate the time and energy you spend sending us your feedback. Thank you for writing us letters, filling out comment cards and completing the online post-performance surveys. We read every word, and we hear you. We have selected a slate of plays for the coming year that will enlighten, engage and entertain, and we cannot wait to hear what you think!

Next up in the Nichols Theatre is William Shakespeare’s rowdy and timely comedy, Twelfth Night, or What You Will. The Gillian Theatre will open with the world premiere of Witch by Jen Silverman, continuing the WT tradition of developing new plays that reinvent classic works. The new year will bring you August Wilson’s masterful and musical Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, followed by the suspenseful twist on a family drama, A Number by Caryl Churchill and the electric Broadway musical Next to Normal by Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey, directed by the 2018 Tony Award-winner for Best Director of a Musical, David Cromer (who you may remember as director of our hit productions of Picnic and A Streetcar Named Desire). If you’re not already a subscriber, it’s not too late to join us with a package to enjoy the rest of this exhilarating season!

With deepest thanks and gratitude,

Michael Kate
STATE OF THE ART
by Michael Halberstam, Artistic Director

Welcome to the first production of our 2018/19 Season!

Director Lavina Jadhwani has been working with Writers Theatre for close to ten years now. When Director of New Work & Dramaturgy Bobby Kennedy first started with the company, he drew together a group of bright young artists to work with him on reviewing new script submissions (as you can imagine, a theatre called Writers Theatre receives an unwieldy number of new plays to peruse). Lavina was one of those artists. She has stayed in touch with the company through her tenure as artistic director of Rasaka Theatre Company, a tenacious and brave theatre dedicated to performing works with South Asian themes. When she went to DePaul Theatre School to study directing in their graduate program, she invited me to mentor a classroom project during which I learned as much from her as I hope she learned from me.

After her graduation we began conversations in earnest to bring a directing project to fruition. In a tangible way, Lavina has grown with the company, and her arrival as a director in our Nichols Theatre is a testament to her patience and her understanding of both our mission and the audience we serve—that is to say, you! In the meantime, she has also cultivated relationships with Asolo Repertory Theatre in Sarasota, Florida, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Actors Theatre of Louisville, among many other regional giants.

When Lavina presented Vietgone as a text that she thought we should consider, and a play that she passionately wanted to realize, I had a number of questions. How would audiences respond to the rather prolific use of the word motherf*cker throughout the play? Would the unconventional structure, which draws much from pop culture, appeal to our audiences? The writing was fresh and witty and punctuated by bursts of poetic insight
You should be prepared to laugh; to be taken on a wild road trip; to embrace a deliciously theatrical storytelling vocabulary and ultimately utterly engaging, but would Glencoe give it a chance? How should we address and answer these concerns?

Bobby was a fierce champion of the play, and of Lavina, and he encouraged me to greenlight a reading, which we staged this past December. We invited our subscribers to hear the piece and, in an unprecedented and immediate display of enthusiasm, we filled the house a few short hours after sending the invitation and were even forced to turn people away. The reading was riotously successful, and any questions about the subject matter were answered in the tide of enthusiasm articulated by the attendees.

Indeed, the play is both hilarious and touching, sentimental and organically truthful, surprising and accessible. It has played to great success in New York, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and at many regional companies, including American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco where it became the first play to extend in their beautiful new Strand Theater.

So, what should you be prepared for? You should be prepared to laugh; to be taken on a wild road trip; to embrace a deliciously theatrical storytelling vocabulary employing projections that pay homage to contemporary pop cultural iconography. Most of all, you should be prepared to lean forward and engage with a superb cast, a terrific script and a great design team under the guidance of a first-rate director. We will be taking you on a road trip between time zones, nations and the hearts and minds of Qui Nguyen’s wonderful creations in the classic Writers Theatre tradition. It’s a great way to launch our season.
Growing up in Arkansas with Vietnamese refugee parents, Qui Nguyen loved hip-hop, action movies, and comic books. So when he began writing plays, he filled them with these passions: martial arts in Begets: Fall of a High School Ronin, superheroes in Men of Steel, and zombies in Alice in Slasherland. Many of these works were written for Nguyen’s Obie Award-winning theater company, Vampire Cowboys. We caught up with Nguyen to chat about Vietgone, a play that combines his passions with the story of his parents.

On the surface, Vietgone doesn’t resemble your other plays. Where did the idea for it come from?

It’s the play I’d always planned on writing. The first time I tried to write anything about my family was a play called Trial By Water, which was a big bag of garbage. My mom saw it and said, “It’s interesting but it doesn’t sound like you. You’re mischievous, you’re funny, and you goof around. None of that is on the stage.” It was one of the most profound criticisms I ever got. So I created Vampire Cowboys to explore who I was as a mischievous artist. When I got “old enough,” I thought I’d write my parents’ story. My parents are older now, and I have kids. At some point I thought, “I’m never going to become this mature artist. So I’m just going to write this play using all the tools in my toolbox, and see what it sounds like.”
You grew up in a primarily African American neighborhood in El Dorado, Arkansas. How did that experience create the artist you’ve become?

It was one of the major influences in my life. Before I realized that I was different—which sounds silly, because I could look at myself and see that I was different—I just felt like a kid from that neighborhood. When my black friends and I did realize we were different from each other, I remember a very distinct thing happened: we used to watch a lot of kung fu double features and Blaxploitation films [a 1970s movie genre featuring crime-based plots and African American actors in leading roles] in this small theater called the Rialto. All my black friends would say, “I wish I was like Bruce Lee because he knows kung fu.” And I’d say, “I’d rather be like Shaft. He gets to say cool stuff and gets the ladies.” That crisscross admiration still influences who I am as an artist today.
Why did you choose to use rap as a major part of the musical landscape?
My brain doesn’t think in terms of melody. It’s an extension of being a writer and picking up words and seeing how I can play with the rhythms. I first fell in love with rap when I was freestyling on the corner with my friends. It’s part of who I am.

In a time when the issue of refugees is more charged than it’s been for generations, what might an audience take away from Vietgone?
Politics can quickly dehumanize people, while the goal of art, stories, and plays is to remind people of our humanity. I want to remind people that refugees are people. They’re not terrorists or rapists. Most of them, if not all, are just people trying to escape a situation in which they’re victims. Like my parents, they aren’t running to this country for a better job, they’re coming because it’s life and death.

This article by Michael Paller first appeared in American Conservatory Theater’s performance guide series, Words on Plays, in 2018. For more information about Words on Plays, visit www.act-sf.org/wordsonplays.
AFTER VIETNAM: REDEFINING HOME, CULTURAL IDENTITY AND NATIONAL BELONGING

By Carol Ann Tan, Production Dramaturg

Pictured: This sign, titled “New Horizon,” in front of Fort Chaffee showed the number of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees who had lived at the camp and had been subsequently resettled, as well as the number still living there. Credit: UC Irvine, Southeast Asian Archive.
Most historical sources will state that the Vietnam War ended on April 30, 1975. On that day, South Vietnam surrendered, after its capital, Saigon, fell to the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong. But for many South Vietnamese, the date signals a rebirth of their national and cultural identities.

In the final days before the fall of Saigon, the United States evacuated over 130,000 South Vietnamese at risk of retaliation from the North Vietnamese government. As former officials of the South Vietnamese military or government, many of these refugees had close ties to the United States. Still, many Americans were concerned that welcoming these Vietnamese immigrants into the country might lead to increased unemployment and public welfare. A Gallup poll taken in May 1975 showed only 36 percent in favor of the action, with the majority — 54 percent — disapproving. Despite these political difficulties, President Gerald Ford believed that welcoming the refugees was the right thing to do. Under his leadership, Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975, which set aside $455 million to help resettle the Vietnamese refugees.

Refugees were initially brought to Guam, then flown to one of four military bases: Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Camp Pendleton in California, Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania or Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Vietgone is largely set in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas — the base that took in the largest share of the 1975 evacuees. By the end of that year, over 50,000 refugees had passed through the camp.

Life in the camp was, essentially, a waiting game. Fort Chaffee was crowded, and most of the refugees had brought very little from Vietnam, which meant that everyone had to stand in long lines for essentials like food, clothing and restrooms. “There wasn’t much to do except sit around and wait to get a sponsor family,” said Le Ri, who had been relocated through Fort Chaffee. “You had time to sit and talk to others who faced the same thing as you. You met new friends. You had an opportunity to learn English.”

To leave Fort Chaffee, each refugee needed to find a sponsor: an American who would help them find housing, employment and other necessities. But because many sponsors came from out of state, refugees ended up moving all over the country. For a people that deeply valued community, this separation proved disorienting.

Unsurprisingly then, many Vietnamese immigrants would leave their sponsors over the years to converge in large metropolitan areas where they could build communities of their own. As of 2014, a majority had settled in either California (39 percent) or Texas (13 percent). Specifically, 31 percent were based in just four counties: Orange County, Santa Clara County and Los Angeles County in California; and Harris County in Texas. At least 17,000 Vietnamese are estimated to have settled in the greater Chicago area. In the city of Chicago itself, the community is concentrated around Argyle Street in Uptown, a neighborhood on the North Side; within the rest of the metropolitan area, the community can mainly be found in the north and west suburbs.
Pictured: On April 5, 1975 President Gerald Ford and First Lady Betty Ford welcomed Vietnamese orphans at the San Francisco Airport. Photographs by White House photographer David Hume Kennerly.
By December 20, 1975, the first wave of Vietnamese immigrants to America had been successfully resettled. However, a second wave would begin fleeing Vietnam by sea, driven by fear and persecution under the new Communist government. The exodus of the “boat people” began in September 1978 and peaked in June 1979, with the latter month seeing 54,000 arrivals in various countries. It’s further estimated that between 200,000 to 400,000 refugees died in the attempt. These numbers declined only after the United Nations instated the Orderly Departure Program, which helped the Vietnamese to depart the country through safer means.

Faced with a growing influx of immigrants seeking asylum, Americans inevitably developed compassion fatigue. Immigration policies slowly but surely shifted away from humanitarian empathy, and towards stricter standards in granting visas. Immigrants were expected to prove that they were political refugees fleeing actual persecution, and not economic migrants simply seeking better living conditions. Forced repatriation became the norm — a practice doubly complicated by the rising number of stateless citizens being born into the no man’s land of refugee camps.

But even those fortunate enough to be resettled would struggle with a sense of displacement and exile. Within the American narrative, Vietnamese immigrants were relatively invisible, their cultural biographies rendered inconsequential out of context. For one, the war hadn’t affected only Vietnam; it further displaced other U.S. allies all across the former French colonies of Indochina. As a result, the Southeast Asian refugees resettling in the United States in the late ‘70s to ‘80s actually consisted of a heterogeneous mix of Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian and Hmong. But despite the diverse backgrounds of the Indochinese population, most Americans would perceive them to be just "Vietnamese."

Additionally, the United States had experienced a humiliating loss during the Vietnam War, which dealt an unrelenting blow to national self-perception. The word “Vietnam” took on a radically different meaning in America — one that had nothing to do with Vietnam as a country, but instead painted Americans as the central protagonist. The Vietnamese in America would establish their new lives in the shadow of this legacy, relegated to the sidelines in a story that was rightfully also theirs.
Today, more than 40 years after the fall of Saigon, almost 2 million Vietnamese live in the United States, making them the country’s sixth largest immigrant group. In Vietnam, they’re called Viet Kieu: Vietnamese nationals living abroad who are often perceived to be more successful and more wealthy than those who never left. But in the United States, they’re Vietnamese-American: a hyphenated identity straddling two worlds that continues to explore the uncharted territory between Vietnam and America.

Our media has unfailingly covered the chronology of war in breathtaking detail. But too often we do not account for the dispossessed left behind in the wake of those wars. In 1975, President Gerald Ford enacted policies to ensure the United States would continue supporting the innocent victims of the Vietnam War, but today we lack both sustainable solutions and the political will to accommodate the increasing number of refugees across the globe who can return home only in their memories.

“It is easy now to return, but impossible to go home,” Andrew Lam writes in his book, Perfume Dreams. He was evacuated from Vietnam in April 1975. “I myself have been back to a country that was once my home but is no longer. The country I remember and yearn for is not the country I visit.”

Pictured: Class of 2016 Tuan Le receives his commissioning bars from his mother (left) and his significant other while his uncle, Maj. Ben Nguyen, looks on May 21 after the U.S. Military Academy Graduation Ceremony (U.S. Army photo by Kathy Eastwood, USMA West Point Public Affairs/released.) Photo Credit: U.S. Army.
WORLD PREMIERE

WITCH

WRITTEN BY JEN SILVERMAN
INSPIRED BY THE WITCH OF EDMONTON
BY ROWLEY, DEKKER & FORD
DIRECTED BY MARTI LYONS

September 26 – December 16, 2018

Performed in the Gillian Theatre
325 Tudor Court, Glencoe
TWELFTH NIGHT
OR WHAT YOU WILL

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DIRECTED BY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL HALBERSTAM

November 7 – December 16, 2018

Performed in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre
325 Tudor Court, Glencoe
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Join us for these exciting engagement events, tailored to enhance your WT experience! For more information and to RSVP visit writerstheatre.org/events.

THE MAKING OF…VIETGONE: MEANING THROUGH THE MUSIC

Music plays a huge role in Vietgone, and the styles employed by playwright Qui Nguyen and composer Gabriel Ruiz are specific and intentional for each musical moment. At this engaging Q&A, WT Associate Artistic Director Geoff Button moderates a discussion with guest artists and experts to break down the music in Vietgone, looking at the rich storytelling in rap and how popular music makes its way from radio waves to the stage. Seating is limited, RSVP is required.

Save the date for The Making of…Vietgone on Monday, September 10th at 6:30pm, and RSVP at writerstheatre.org/events.

SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT: HISTORY FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE

In Vietgone, playwright Qui Nguyen gives us a dynamic look at the Vietnam War and its aftermath from a rarely observed point of view. At this Sunday Spotlight event, we will be joined by a diverse panel of historians, activists and artists to discuss varying perspectives on this contentious time in history when the country—and the world—was undergoing great change. This free one-hour event begins at 11:30am, leaving you plenty of time for coffee or lunch before the 2pm Sunday matinee performance begins (though you may attend even if you are not staying for the performance)! Seating is limited, RSVP is required.

Save the date for the Sunday Spotlight for Vietgone on Sunday, September 16th at 11:30am before the matinee performance, and RSVP at writerstheatre.org/events.

FROM PAGE TO STAGE

Writers Theatre and select North Shore libraries and community partners are proud to present this series of special events, lectures and workshops designed to enhance your appreciation of the art. From Page to Stage is generously sponsored by Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin. For an up-to-date list of new events, visit writerstheatre.org/fpts.
WT FILM SERIES
For the third year in a row, we are excited to present a curated film series in association with the Wilmette Theatre to complement our six productions. Join us for these special screenings and compare themes with the plays in our 2018/19 season. Visit writerstheatre.org/fpts for an updated schedule of films and to purchase tickets!

PRE-SHOW CONVERSATION: UP CLOSE
Join us at 6:45pm before every Thursday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) for a 15-minute primer on the context and content of the play, facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

POST-SHOW CONVERSATION: THE WORD
Join us after every Tuesday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) of every production in our 2018/19 Season for a 15-minute discussion of the play facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

POST-SHOW CONVERSATION: THE ARTIST
Join us after every Wednesday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) of every production in our 2018/19 Season for a 15-minute discussion with actors from the production facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

SOCIAL HOUR AT WT
Remember that our Concessions Center is open for an hour before and after our performances. You are welcome to enjoy a snack or beverage and discuss the play in the Litowitz Atrium, on our Grand Gallery Walk or on the Stephanie and Bill Sick Rooftop Terrace.
Proudly part of your supporting cast.

BMO Harris Bank is proud to be Season Sponsor of Writers Theatre.
“I think a big part of the reason audiences respond to Vietgone is because it is filled with so much joy and romance and comedy – and pain, of course,” director Lavina Jadhwani remarks, several weeks before starting rehearsal. “This is the story of two people who end up with each other despite themselves and despite extraordinary circumstances. But the play doesn’t aim to shame anyone and I think that’s important. I’m so proud to be directing the first Asian American play to enter the WT canon.”

Jadhwani was born and raised in the western suburbs of Chicago. Both her parents are members of the Sindhi ethnic group, a people native to the province of Sindh in southeastern Pakistan. After the 1947 partition of British India into the countries India and Pakistan, most of the Hindu population of Sindh emigrated to India or elsewhere in the world. Both sides of Jadhwani’s family settled in Mumbai, India’s most populous city. Her parents’ families knew of each other, since the Sindhi population of Mumbai is small. But even though they attended the same high school, her parents were not very well acquainted. It wasn’t until later after they

Pictured: Lavina Jadhwni directing for Rasaka Theatre Company. Photo by Peter Hoffman for USN & WR. This photo was originally published on HowlRound on October 1, 2016.
both immigrated to Chicago that they would meet by chance while visiting a mutual friend.

The future director was drawn to theatre and literature as a child. She enrolled at Carnegie Mellon University as a Scenic Design major, but when she took a directing class at the end of her freshman year, she discovered her calling. “Being a designer, a lot of your work happens outside of the rehearsal room,” explains Jadhwani, “and I found that I was a social collaborator and wanted to be in the room working with people.” Jadhwani decided to stay an extra year at Carnegie Mellon to earn a Masters in Arts Management. “I knew I wanted to direct plays after I graduated, but I was also interested in learning how to get audiences in the theatre,” she says. “Yes, I want to direct good work, but also, who am I making it for? How do I engage them?”

Upon coming back to Chicago after graduation, Jadhwani pursued both arts administration and directing jobs. Surprisingly, the directing work came more easily than she expected. She assisted Frank Galati on a production of The Snow Queen at Victory Gardens Theater, and Apple Tree Theatre in Highland Park hired her to helm a stage adaptation of Where the Red Fern Grows. At the same time, Jadhwani’s mother discovered that there was a South Asian theatre company in Chicago called Rasaka and told her daughter about it (she had also noticed that many of the founders had Sindhi last names). Jadhwani was soon directing several smaller projects for the company and, before long, the nascent company made her its Artistic Director. She led Rasaka for seven years, with the Chicago premiere of Yoni Ki Baat, a piece inspired by The Vagina Monologues that features monologues written and performed by South Asian women, a highlight of her time with the company.

In 2013, Jadhwani decided to attend grad school at DePaul University to earn an MFA in Directing. Almost all of her work to that point had consisted of contemporary Asian-American plays and the director wanted to explore different styles of theatre, specifically Shakespeare and other works that featured heightened language. Writers Theatre Artistic Director Michael Halberstam became one of Jadhwani’s professional mentors during that time. After graduating, Jadhwani landed two competitive directing fellowships: the National Directors Fellowship—a new program jointly run by the O’Neill Theatre Center, the National New Play Network, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Society of Directors and Choreographers—and the Phil Killian Directing Fellowship at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. She spent the next two years going back and forth between working on new and classical plays. “I got some pushback from colleagues in grad school about ‘which director are you: classical plays or new plays?’” Jadhwani reveals. “And I was like ‘I don’t understand the question. They’re all new plays.’ Even with classical texts, you’re still having to figure out how you are doing it through the lens of the present moment.”

While assisting on two productions at Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2016, Jadhwani also got to observe the company’s production of Vietgone, the second staging of the play following its world premiere the prior year at South Coast Repertory. Even though it wasn’t a project she was working on, Jadhwani was captivated by the play. For one, the play also had a lot of personal resonance for her. Although her parents were immigrants to America, not refugees, they had a similar story of meeting each other and falling in love after their arrival in the U.S. Her dad left India to attend grad school in America.
with an understanding between his family and the family of a young lady that he would return afterwards and marry her. But instead he met and married Jadhwani’s mother, and the couple worked to make Chicago their new home. “I latched onto this idea of coming to a new country, trying to make it home, feeling very other-ized, but speaking to that from the center of the story, as opposed to a minor part,” says Jadhwani. “A lot of the time, particularly with the Vietnam War, we see white Americans at the center of the story, not Asians. But Asian characters are at the center of the story in Vietgone and many Asian American artists are engaged in crafting the production. That’s still the exception, not the rule, in most American regional theatres.”

Jadhwani was determined to direct a production of Vietgone in Chicago. It wasn’t an easy task, as many of the theatres she discussed the play with doubted whether a production could be cast here, a remark she found ignorant and dismissive of the incredible Asian theatre artists in Chicago. At the same time, Jadhwani came up against another significant challenge. In the fall of 2016, she was diagnosed with stage 2B breast cancer. The director, still in her early 30s at the time, was courageous in the face of such terrifying news, continuing to work on her directing projects and to pursue future opportunities. She co-directed a production of Great Expectations for Remy Bumppo Theatre Company and Silk Road Rising in 2017, and a production of Roe by Lisa Loomer at Sarasota’s Asolo Repertory Theatre earlier this year. Through it all, her passion for Vietgone never wavered. She pitched the play to the Writers Theatre artistic staff and helmed a staged reading of it in December 2017. The audience of WT supporters responded to the play with wild positivity and that audience response helped catapult it into the 2018/19 season. Now, with rehearsal only a few weeks away, Jadhwani is finished with chemotherapy and completely cancer free, and is as excited as ever for the entire WT audience to experience Vietgone fully realized. “I think another reason the play is so successful is that it offers a perspective on a story, the Vietnam War, that most people think they know, but they don’t because they haven’t heard it from the Asian-American perspective. So for me, I hope the play sparks a broader curiosity and empathy for other perspectives they might not have considered before.”
MEET THE CAST OF VIETGONE

“The complexity of intergenerational relationships is a central theme in Vietgone. Are there ways in which your relationship with your parents is similar to or different from those found in the play?”

AURORA ADACHI-WINTER (Tong)
I think Tong and I have very different relationships with our parents. We don’t see Tong’s father, but I work with mine every week. Her mother is trying to find Tong a husband, whereas my mother is trying to take me to see another play. My parents are the most understanding, giving, loving people in the galaxy, and I truly owe it all to them.

IAN MICHAEL MINH (Playwright/Giai/Bobby/Captain Chambers/Redneck Biker/Hippie Dude)
Getting to tell this story means so much to me because it is the story of my family. I read an interview in which Qui pointed out that it can be hard to learn these stories from our parents and grandparents because people who have gone through traumatic loss often don’t want to talk about it. Growing up, there were always pictures of my family’s lost home in Vietnam hanging on our walls, but it took years of piecemeal listening to put together their journey from Đà Lat, Vietnam to becoming refugees at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, and then building new lives here in the U.S. These stories tell us so much about where our families come from, who they are, and in turn who we are. Learning them—and in turn telling them—helps bridge that gap between immigrant families and the first generation born in a new world.

RAMMEL CHAN (Asian Guy/American Guy/Nhan/Khue)
There are many things that people don’t know about their parents, but what speaks to me most about that in Vietgone is that the character of the Playwright, like many of us on stage, belongs to the broader American culture and sees his parents through that perspective and so he, as I have done, sees his parents the way Americans see his parents: Vietnamese, with all the myths and assumptions that come
with that. And I have personally also found it often a struggle to see my parents for who they are and not just what they are, particularly when their story is part of a much larger cultural story of war and refuge. Like Qui, in talking to my parents as people, I discovered that their ideas and feelings don’t fit neatly or align with the larger whole.

"Right from the start, Vietgone deliberately undermines the tropes and stereotypes often seen in stories about Vietnam and Asian-Americans. What do you admire most about the way the play subverts expectations?"

**AURORA ADACHI-WINTER (Tong)**

I remember laughing out loud when Qui explained how American characters were going to sound in this play. They yell things like "Cheeseburgers" and "Botox." It's absolute nonsense, yet for decades American audiences have listened to Asian characters say things like "me love you long time" on Broadway and in film, and never saw a problem. It's a simple turn of the tables, but it hit me hard.

**RAMMEL CHAN (Asian Guy/American Guy/Nhan/Khue)**

One of the biggest ways that Asian Americans, and other immigrants and refugees in general, are marginalized and “othered” in broader American society is through language. There is an insidious myth in American culture, that if you have an accent, if you speak in a different language, you are foreign and if you are foreign you don’t belong to the broader American story. The way Qui subverts this is amazing. The choice to make American English the “othered” language and for Vietnamese to be accessible allows the audience to really identify with the characters without the hindrance of transliteration while at the same time calling direct attention to problematic connotations we have of foreign languages.

“Music plays an important role in Vietgone, allowing for Tong and Quang to express their emotions in a heightened and explosive manner. What do you find most exciting about the presence of hip-hop in the play?”

**AURORA ADACHI-WINTER (Tong)**

What’s important to me is that this production is being done in Chicago, well, near Chicago. And Chicago is currently going through a poetry/hip-hop/spoken word renaissance. From Chance the Rapper to Jamila Woods and Noname to new groups like Growing Concerns, Chicago is bursting with music. I’m beyond excited to work with Gabe Ruiz to bring the work of Qui Nguyen to the Chicago music scene and vice-versa.
WT’S PLAY READING SERIES HITS ITS STRIDE

As part of the expansion of programming in our new home, Writers Theatre formalized and launched a new Play Reading Series. The series’ goals are to provide more opportunities for audiences to engage with exciting new plays and writers, to allow WT artistic staff to learn more about scripts we are considering for future productions and to create additional opportunities for directors, actors and other artists to work on our stages.

Over the course of the 2017/18 Season, WT staged three public staged readings as part of this series:

Qui Nguyen’s *Vietgone*, directed by Lavina Jadhwani
Nick Jones’s *Vérité*, directed by Brian Balcom
Anna Ziegler’s *The Last Match*, directed by Keira Fromm

The reading of *Vietgone* was so successful that it launched the play into our 2018/19 Season, joining past productions such as *East Texas Hot Links, Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf* and *The Detective’s Wife*, all of which also graduated from reading to full production.

Another series of public readings will be produced over the course of the 2018/19 season, with the titles and dates for each to be announced later. If you are interested in learning about upcoming readings, please contact the Box Office at 847-242-6000 or email boxoffice@writerstheatre.org.

The Play Reading Series is one of the many endeavors of WT’s new work program, the Literary Development Initiative. For more information on new work at Writers Theatre, visit writerstheatre.org/LDI.

Pictured: Tyla Abercrumbie, A.C. Smith, Namir Smallwood and Kelvin Roston, Jr. Photo by Saverio Truglia.
WT Education partners with Senn Arts students to investigate the intersections of art and administration in Chicago's cultural landscape

This spring, WT Education embarked on a three-month-long journey through the world of arts administration with students at Nicholas Senn High School. Students in the Visual Arts, Music, Dance and Theatre departments at Senn participated in a three-phase residency program - the goal of this intensive process was for Senn Arts to gain a simultaneously wider yet more in-depth understanding of the identities and logistics of an arts organization, and how they as individual artists could use their tools and talents within an organization.

Phase I of this residency focused on identity. In a series of fast-paced, one-day workshops throughout February (facilitated by WT Education), students explored and dissected the mission statements and values of various arts organizations in Chicago, then shifted focus to identifying their own core values as artists. This culminated in the students devising their own mission statements for their relevant Fine Arts department.

Pictured: Students of Senn Arts present their work during the February workshop in Phase I of WT’s residency. Photo courtesy of WT Education.
Phase II in April saw WT Education partnering with other revered Chicago arts organizations and inviting core members of their artistic and administrative teams to serve on a panel where students could ask questions about career trajectory, life goals and artistry. Panelists from Marwen (for Visual Arts students), Joffrey Ballet (for Dance students), Lyric Opera (for Music students) as well as members of Writers Theatre’s administration team engaged students in a conversation about the intersections of art and business, as well as the multitude of different paths one can take throughout their career.

The Dance panel with Joffrey Ballet was facilitated by WT Director of Education Lauren Sale and included Kathleen Hechinger, Deputy Director & Chief Financial Officer; Amy Wiklund, Director of Human Resources; and Afton Battle, Director of Annual Campaign.

The Visual Arts panel with Marwen included Akilah Halley, Deputy Director; Sara Lewinsky, Grants Manager; Kennon Reinard, Senior Manager of Communications; and Regin Igloria, a Marwen teaching artist and was facilitated by WT Education Coordinator Michele Stine.

The Music panel with Lyric Opera featured Scott Podraza, Associate Director of Annual Giving; Cayenne Harris, Vice President of Lyric Unlimited; and Alejandra Boyer, the Director of Community Programs, with facilitation by WT Education Manager Kelsey Chigas.

The third and final phase of this residency was a deep-dive into the administrative structure that goes into creating an arts organization and was delivered this past May. Within each arts discipline, students participated in a three-day workshop that focused on a specific area of arts administration; ninth-grade students learned about Marketing, tenth-grade students focused on Development, eleventh-grade students explored Leadership and the twelfth-grade students worked on Art-Making. In total, 85 hours were taught with 250 students in all disciplines (Visual Art, Music, Theatre and Dance). WT Education brought on two new teaching artists with a range of specialties as artists and arts administrators specifically for this project, Kari Lindquist and Kelsey Shipley, in addition to utilizing other members of our incredibly skilled, multi-faceted Teaching Artist cohort.

This ambitious and unique partnership with Senn High School was made possible by a Creative Schools Fund grant awarded by Ingenuity, Inc – an arts education advocacy organization based in Chicago that dedicates itself to increasing arts education access, equity and quality in Chicago Public Schools. WT Education is thrilled to have had the opportunity to once again partner with a CPS school under the auspices of a CSF grant to bring thorough, engaging and sustainable arts education to Senn Arts!
INFUSE YOUR CLASSROOM WITH THE ARTS THROUGH ONE OF WT EDUCATION’S THREE RESIDENCY PROGRAMS!

THE NOVEL SERIES: Our celebrated flagship residency program is a theatre and literary arts curriculum designed to allow students to explore literature and the artistry of bringing text to life. Students engage in a layered investigation of text and enter a rigorous artistic process that includes deep academic enrichment and meaningful text-to-self and text-to-world connections. The program fosters a love of reading, appreciation of how themes and events in literature relate to real life and stretches students’ creative potential.

WRITE ON!: This customizable residency program pairs students and teachers with WT teaching artists to create a unique artistic and educational program designed with a specific school’s need and goals in mind. This flexible, highly-tailored approach provides dynamic opportunities to explore theatre and text with a focus on creating transformative experiences and encouraging young people to find their creative voice.

ACTIVATE: WT Education’s wraparound residency is designed to deepen students’ engagement with the art on our stages. ACTIVATE workshops take place in the school before and after students attend a student matinee performance at Writers Theatre and offers opportunities for students and teachers to prepare for and extend their experience at the theatre participatory workshops designed to investigate contextual information and the major themes in the play.
GET CREATIVE AT WRITERS THEATRE!

Registration for Fall Session of WT’s onsite classes is open now!

Fall Session begins September 25!

Playful Players – ages 5 to 7 (Tuesdays, 4 - 5pm)
Through creative storytelling, students will explore the storied world of William Shakespeare! Fairies, monsters, storms and sailors abound in a magical look at *The Tempest* designed specifically for budding young actors!

Twisted Fairytales – ages 8 to 12 (Tuesdays, 5 - 6pm)
Have you ever wondered what really happened Once Upon A Time? This class will explore and draw inspiration from beloved fairytales, and students will devise their very own fairytales with familiar characters – but we will flip them, twist them and fracture them into brand-new tales!

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Writers Theatre is committed to making our Theatre accessible for everyone. We are proud to offer Access Subscriptions and the following services:

For People with Mobility Difficulties
- Accessible parking spaces along Tudor Court
- Drop-off lane by the building’s main entrance
- Accessible entrances to the building
- Doorbell at the main entrance to request assistance with the front doors
- Courtesy wheelchair to assist with entering the building and theatre spaces
- Wheelchair-accessible seating*
- Elevator Access to second-level seating, Grand Gallery Walk and Stephanie and Bill Sick Rooftop Terrace and Garden

*Depending on your preference, you may transfer into a theatre seat or request to have the theatre seat removed to remain in the wheelchair. When purchasing your tickets, please let the Box Office know if you would like the theatre seat removed.

For People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
We are pleased to offer assistive listening devices in each of our performance spaces. Contact the Box Office with questions or for advance reservations. Assistive listening devices are offered free of charge.

In all of the performance spaces in our new theatre center, we have t-coil induction loop technology. For anyone with a telecoil built into their hearing aid or cochlear implant, by switching it on you will be able to hear our performances with additional amplification and clarity. Check with your audiologist for specific instructions on how to operate your personal telecoil-equipped device.
We are happy to connect you with scripts for our shows to read prior to your attendance. For details, review our Script Policy at writerstheatre.org/script-policy or contact the Box Office.

**For People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision**

Large print programs are available at every performance at the Box Office.

Braille programs are available by prior request through the Box Office. Contact the Box Office at least two weeks prior to your scheduled performance with this request.

We can accommodate seating needs for guests with service animals. Contact the Box Office to request this accommodation.

Writers Theatre offers Open-Captioned and ASL-Interpreted performances on select dates for each production. For additional information on accessibility services and subscriptions, contact access@writerstheatre.org or 847-242-6014.

Open-Captioned performance: **Thursday, September 6, 2018 at 7:30pm**
ASL-Interpreted performance: **Saturday, September 22, 2018 at 7:30pm**

The Accessibility Fund is a gift of Doris Conant and the Conant Family Foundation.
WINE

RED
Ostatu Rosé ............................................................................ $9
Amalaya Malbec ................................................................. $8
Van Duzer Pinot Noir ......................................................... $9
The Seventy Five Wines Cabernet Sauvignon. ....................... $12

WHITE
Raymond Vineyards R Collection Chardonnay.......................... $8
Van Duzer Pino Gris ................................................................ $8
Yorkville Cellars Sauvignon Blanc ........................................ $9

SPARKLING
Charles de Fere Cuvée Jean Louis Blanc de Blancs
(187ml—single serving)............................................................... $12
Hillinger Secco Rosé (187ml—single serving)............................ $12
Fantinel Prosecco (187ml—single serving) ............................... $9
Joseph Perrier Cuvée Royale Brut (375ml—half bottle)........... $30
Fantinel Prosecco (750ml—full bottle) ................................. $30

Our beer and wine products are subject to change, please ask your bartender for an up to date listing of our current selection.
### BEER

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<tr>
<th>Brewery</th>
<th>Beer Style</th>
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<tr>
<td>Half Acre</td>
<td>Daisy Cutter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Half Acre</td>
<td>Seasonal IPA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Brothers</td>
<td>Ebel’s Weiss</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Brothers</td>
<td>Domaine DuPage</td>
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<td>Off Color Brewing</td>
<td>Sibling Rivalry</td>
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<td>Ace</td>
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### LIQUOR

A selection of **Koval** and other premium liquors.

### DESSERTS

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<th>Dessert</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chocolate Chunk Cookie</td>
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<td>Oatmeal Cherry Cookie</td>
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<td>Peanut Butter Cookie</td>
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<td>Brownie</td>
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<td>Coconut Macaroon</td>
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<td>Croissant</td>
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### SNACKS

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<tr>
<td>Charcuterie &amp; Cheese</td>
<td>$7</td>
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<td>Nuts and Dried Fruit</td>
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### ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS

<table>
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<th>Concession</th>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee (Regular, Decaf)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rishi Hot Tea (Chamomile, Earl Grey, Peppermint)</td>
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<td>Soda (Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, Ginger Ale)</td>
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<td>Water</td>
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CUSTOM COCKTAILS

Enjoy a custom cocktail from our Concessions Center—specially created for each of our productions by Mixed metaPours!

GONE AWAY
PLANTATION ORIGINAL DARK RUM
BAI COCONUT LIME INFUSION
MANGO NECTAR
ANCHO REYES ANCHO CHILE LIQUEUR
FRESH LIME QUARTER

FINAL DRAFT
TWO BROTHERS TWENTY-PLUS PILSNER LAGER
BAI COCONUT LIME INFUSION
FRESH LIME WHEEL

All of our signature cocktail creations are designed by WT Cocktail Consultant Cheryl Rich Heisler & Glencoe-based Mixed metaPours.
312-613-7499 | www.mixedmetapours.com
STAY IN TOUCH WITH WRITERS THEATRE
JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Share your thoughts on the show!

Take this survey about Vietgone: bit.ly/WTVietgone

Write a review of your experience on Yelp: bit.ly/WTonYelp

Find us on Facebook: facebook.com/writers-theatre

Follow us on Twitter: @WritersTheatre

Follow us on Instagram: @writers_theatre

Check in to Writers Theatre on Swarm

Sign up for our email list to receive news updates, backstage stories, photos, videos and more: writerstheatre.org/email

Follow our company on LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/writers-theatre

Join our circle on Google+

We look forward to hearing from you!
## AUGUST

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## SEPTEMBER

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- **D** Post-Show Conversation
- **M** The Making of...
- **S** Sunday Spotlight
- **U** Pre-Show Discussion
Student tickets only $20 (with valid student ID).
Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more.
Call 847-242-6005 for more details.