PICTURED: RYAN HALLAHAN AND AUDREY FRANCIS. PHOTO BY SAVERIO TRUGLIA.
Dear Friends,

It is with great pride and excitement that we bring you the first world premiere play commissioned specifically for you, the Writers Theatre audience, since 2014: Witch by Jen Silverman.

While we have staged at least one world premiere every season in our new home so far, this piece holds the distinction of being the most recent graduate of our own Literary Development Initiative, led by Director of New Work & Dramaturgy Bobby Kennedy. With the support of Bobby and director Marti Lyons, Jen has taken an old Jacobean-era play and infused it with fresh relevance—and more than a little humor—to offer a smart hybrid of classic and contemporary that will draw you in and make you laugh, listen and reflect on our world.

This issue of The Brief Chronicle begins with a welcome from Bobby, who will give you some more insight into the development process of Witch. You will learn how Jen Silverman became the perfect collaborator to write this play, especially considering she already had the idea in her head to write an adaptation of the Jacobean play The Witch of Edmonton. We will then introduce you to Jen and the work that has led her back to the theatre, touching on why the Gillian Theatre is the ideal space for Witch to have its world premiere.

After examining how the character of “the Devil” has been personified throughout history, we will check in with director Marti Lyons and the cast of Witch to learn what it’s like to work on a play that has never been done before. Next, we will give you an update on some other projects in the Literary Development Initiative path. Who knows—you may see some of those projects on our stages as full productions in the coming years!

Finally, we will offer you a summary of WT Education’s record-breaking achievements from the 2017/18 Season. Thanks to the support of theatregoers like you, we continue to expand the reach of our education programs with a growing staff and exciting new initiatives.

Thank you for joining us for the world premiere of Witch, and keep an eye on your email inbox for a survey about your experiences with this production. We deeply appreciate your support, your trust and your feedback.

With deepest thanks and gratitude,

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PHOTO BY JOE MAZZA, BRAVE LUX.
STATE OF THE ART
by Bobby Kennedy, Director of New Work & Dramaturgy

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to this world premiere production of Witch by Jen Silverman, a play that was commissioned and developed through Writers Theatre’s Literary Development Initiative. While we have staged at least one world premiere every season since moving into our new home, this is the first commissioned work written expressly for Glencoe to debut here since 2014, which makes it extra special. At every new play reading I host, I remind the audience that your favorite classic play was once a world premiere. This statement seems especially apropos here, since Witch is both a classic play and a world premiere.

Shakespeare has transcended his time in an unparalleled way, but there are countless plays from his contemporaries, as well as those who came before him, that have largely been consigned to history. WT Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and I have long been interested in rediscovering these plays by asking today’s best playwrights to revisit and adapt them. In 2012 at the Woman’s Library Club, we produced David Ives’s new version of The Liar, based on Pierre Corneille’s play from 1644, which Shakespeare Theater Company in DC had originally commissioned and premiered. Here was an immensely talented playwright of our time taking the groundwork given him by a predecessor from an earlier time and making something new, a perfect mingling of the classic and the contemporary. This is what we wanted to do more of here at Writers Theatre, where we’ve always been equally enamored with plays from the canon and new works.

Jen Silverman made this easy, as she already had a brilliant idea in mind when we first started talking about a collaboration. She was familiar with The Witch of Edmonton, a 1621 play by Thomas Dekker, William Rowley and John Ford, and knew it had an extraordinary amount to say about our present moment. After reading the original, I enthusiastically concurred and asked her to write her version of this story for WT. Characters and relationships from the Jacobean original have been kept, but most of the narrative arc and all of the dialogue are Jen’s own creation. The new play is a witty and fun journey inspired by its ancestor, full of stimulating questions regarding legacy and whether a single person can have an impact on the world.

Although we no longer live in a world where most of us consider the Devil showing up at our door a possible occurrence, Witch is without question a play for our times.

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Although we no longer live in a world where most of us consider the Devil showing up at our door a possible occurrence, Witch is without question a play for our times. At one point in the play, the Devil refers to himself as a “merchant of hope,” and indeed we watch all six of these characters question and ponder how strong their hope is: for themselves, for their relationships with others and for the entirety of civilization. One of them will come to propose a radical course of action that is as shocking as it is well argued. By now we are no strangers to messages of hope and despair, or to radical courses of action. You may have already been pondering to what degree you do or do not imagine a better future ahead for us all before you even came to the Theatre.

This play will be an energetically imaginative, disarmingly funny and relentlessly inquisitive exploration of that question of hope, prompting you, the audience, to come to your own conclusion. Out of the handful of people who’ve encountered the play prior to its premiere, I’ve had one person confess to me their pessimism about humanity’s chances, while another, affirmed in their optimism, has told me that as a result of this play they’ve made the decision to bring new life into the world. Such a wide variety of responses is a testament to the power of the art and the timeliness of the question.

My hope is that this is a production of many firsts. The first outing of many for Witch. The first Jen Silverman work to play Glencoe, a relationship we hope continues for years to come. The first of many more classic plays rediscovered and reinvigorated at Writers Theatre. Thanks for being here at the beginning of something special.
JEN SILVERMAN: A HOMECOMING TO THE THEATRE

After making a strong foray into writing for television, the playwright of Witch is back to write for women on stage.

By Bobby Kennedy, Director of New Work & Dramaturgy

“I think of Witch as a dark comedy, even though the original play is a medley of tones: cautionary tale, slapstick comedy, morality play,” says playwright Jen Silverman. “It was important to me to reckon fully with the darkness of the original, while bringing to it a rich vein of character-driven comedy.”

Playwright Jen Silverman grew up all over the world. Her father was a physicist who taught and researched for several foreign universities. Though both trained as scientists, Silverman’s parents loved to read and passed that love onto their daughter. “Growing up our house was full of books, so I was always reading,” she notes, several weeks before starting rehearsals for Witch. “I knew I wanted to write, and I knew that telling and reading stories was the most exciting thing to me. But it wasn’t until undergrad that I stumbled into theatre.” While at Brown University, Silverman was pursuing a Comparative Literature major and under the assumption she would try to be a novelist. But a randomly chosen playwriting class “brought [her] over to the dark side” and she knew what she wanted to do with her life. But first, Silverman moved back to Japan, where she had moved with her parents when she was a child but hadn’t visited in a decade. She spent her time abroad writing plays and honing her craft. “At a certain point, I realized that I wanted to participate in the making of theatre, not just the crafting of texts,” she says. After moving back to America, Silverman attended the MFA Playwriting program at the University of Iowa. For the first time, she had access to true professional collaborators and theaters to see her work brought to life. “Put your work up, see if it fails, see if it works, learn from it,” she says as a summary of what the program at Iowa gave her the opportunity to do.

After a few years of living in New York, writing more plays and making important connections—including with director Mike Donahue, who would direct many of Silverman’s plays— the playwright’s big break came in 2015. Actors Theatre of Louisville had read a first draft of her unproduced play The Roommate and decided to stage a full production of it as part of their Humana Festival of New American Plays. “I mean, they just took a huge risk on me. We had no prior relationship,” she confesses. The risk paid off and The Roommate was a big success, going on to receive several more major productions, including one this past summer at Steppenwolf Theatre Company. This opened more doors for the rising writer, and she had another two plays premiere within the next year and a half: The Moors at Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven and Collective Rage: A Play in Five Betties at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in D.C.—both of which were also well-received and enjoyed multiple productions.

One remarkable thing about Silverman’s plays is that she writes about women—often women over the age of 40—with an appreciation and authenticity that is rarely seen on stage. “In those plays, there is such a conversation about women and visibility and intimacy,” explains Silverman. “Whether it’s in The Roommate where this 55-year-old woman suddenly realizes that she has been rendered invisible in the world in a way that she’s not comfortable with. Or in The Moors, all these characters are living in this super isolated place, and they are trying so hard to be seen clearly and correctly by each other. And it’s the desire for visibility that leads to some of the drastic acts that end the play. And in Collective Rage it’s about these five women who have all been seen in a very particular way, they’ve been told who they are. And their journey through the play is about both figuring out and deciding who they’re going to be that isn’t the thing that’s been put on them.”

Several years ago, Silverman was reading Stacy Schiff’s The Witches: Suspicion, Betrayal and Hysteria in 1692 Salem. She found that era of witch hunting enthralling because of “the powerful mix of mysticism and constant ambiguity, the unknown of living in that time period. People would just die and it’d be like, ‘why did they die,
we don’t know, Western medicine isn’t advanced at all, so maybe Satan killed them.’ Anything could happen at any moment. And there’d be no explanation for it other than God. So the combination of an explosive and uncertain time plus the way these girls had been repressed, repressed, repressed to a breaking point—reading that history was a really powerful thing for me. It doesn’t feel like we are so far removed from that combination of things.”

Soon afterwards, she ran across a play from 1621 called the Witch of Edmonton by Thomas Dekker, William Rowley and John Ford, and was equally captivated.

“Soon afterwards, she ran across a play from 1621 called the Witch of Edmonton by Thomas Dekker, William Rowley and John Ford, and was equally captivated. The original play is subversive because it pays constant lip service to the good people of this town - but then every action you see them take onstage is really shitty,” Silveman says. “And the ‘witch’ is not even a witch. The play keeps being like, ‘she is an evil witch’ and people keep saying to her ‘you’re a witch’ but when finally she defends herself, she’s like ‘I wish I was a witch, if I was a witch I would never put up with this behavior from you.’ She becomes a witch because they make her that way. And you sympathize with her, and the play means you to. It tells you it’s doing one thing but actually dares to do the opposite thing.”

The Witch of Edmonton stuck with her, and when Silveman started having conversations with Writers Theatre and learned about the Theatre’s affinity for classic works, she pitched a new version of the Jacobean classic. Witch maintains the old world setting and characters, but explores it all with 21st century language, emotional complexity and a generous dose of humor. “There’s a safety in using that kind of distance to talk about disempowerment and visibility and anger and despair,” admits the playwright. “And I think it’s a necessary safety because we are bombarded by so many stories right now in the news and in the media that are just emotionally draining and horrible and upsetting and I understand why an audience doesn’t want to sign up to go to a theatre and be bombarded by things that upset them. I can’t blame them. So it feels to me that, maybe this is my bent in general, but particularly in this country and in this moment, I think comedy is such a powerful weapon. Or, if you will, a powerful invitation to say ‘I will take good care of you, audience, you will have a good time, it will be okay, but we’re going to talk about some really tricky things, and we’re gonna look carefully at some really tricky things, but we’re gonna do it in a way that doesn’t damage you.’”

Writers Theatre connected with Silveman just in time, because her star has continued to rise. After focusing solely on theatre for a decade, the writer has been branching out into other media with incredible dexterity and success. She worked on the writing staff for Tales of the City, a TV series for Netflix adapted from Armistead Maupin’s book series, which stars Laura Linney, Olympia Dukakis and Ellen Page and will debut in 2019. Additionally, her collection of short stories The Island Dwellers was published by Random House in 2018 and she’s now hard at work on her debut novel. Because of all this success, Witch will be an exciting homecoming to the theatre for Silverman. “I think when you’re doing nothing but theatre it can be easy to get really worn down by the grind,” she reflects. “The industry can be brutal, and it can be so hard to make a living from it. But when you go away for a little while, and you find yourself missing theatre and then you get to come back, that kind of love affair is the feeling I went into it for in the first place. I am so interested in how theatre facilitates intimacy. Intimacy with an audience, intimacy inside of the play that’s being made. I feel like The Gillian Theatre at Writers Theatre is the perfect space to encounter this play for the first time.”
“Oh! Sorry, my apologies. Can’t believe it slipped my mind. I’m the devil.”

-Witch

Every culture and religion has had to consider the nature and origin of evil. If some sort of intelligence created the universe, are they then also responsible for evil? Most societies conclude that the intelligence that created the universe is ambivalent, that it embodies both good and evil, causing both to happen in the world. Only four major religions have created what scholar Jeffrey Burton Russell calls “a single personification of evil[:] Mazdaism (Zoroasrianism), ancient Hebrew religion (but not modern Judaism), Christianity, and Islam.”

The attempt to understand evil’s place in the world occupied much of early Hebrew and Christian theology. As the Hebrews began to conceive of God as “all-powerful and all-good” (as opposed to ambivalent, like other religions), they began “to posit as the source of evil a spiritual being opposed to the Lord God.” Russell writes in his book, The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History. “The Hebrews’ insistence upon God’s omnipotence and sovereignty did not allow them to believe that this opposing principle was independent of God, yet their insistence on God’s goodness no longer permitted it to be part of God. It had therefore to be a spirit that was both opposed and subject to God.”

Satan is a Hebrew word that “derives from a root meaning ‘oppose,’ ‘obstruct,’ or ‘accuse,’” explains Russell. Early Old Testament books such as Numbers and 2 Samuel use the word as a common noun. It’s not until later books such as Job and Zechariah that Satan is used to refer to a specific personality. Still, even in these books, Satan is seen as a tool or partner of God’s, carrying out his will or at least under his instructions. Between 200 B.C.E. and 100 C.E., the pseudepigrapha (Jewish books that were never included in the Old Testament at any point) advanced Satan’s agency, trying to make him as fully responsible for evil as a monotheistic religion could. While Rabbinic Judaism would ultimately reject the pseudepigrapha understanding of Satan after 70 B.C.E., early Christian theology built off these advances.

The New Testament, written in a much shorter amount of time than the Old Testament, had a more consistent view of the Devil. “The Devil is a creature of God, a fallen angel, but as chief of fallen angels and of all evil powers he often acts almost as an opposite principle to God,” writes Russell. “Satan is not only the Lord’s chief opponent; he is the prince of all opposition to the Lord. Anyone who does not follow the Lord is under Satan’s power.” Later, Christian theologians including St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, among others, would better explain the existence of evil in a divine universe, articulating that God gave humans free will so that we might choose good of our own volition. Without the freedom to choose, there could be no good for it would be compelled. It is only by being given the choice of evil that goodness can affirm itself and have value. Without vice there can be no virtue. This development of thought, which placed the blame for original sin more on Adam and Eve than ever before, marginalized Satan’s role in Christian theology.

At the same time, however, the Evil One was becoming a cultural fascination. Many of the characteristics and practices commonly associated with Satan come from folklore, not theology. His association with animals and his bestial appearance was due to the pagan gods’ fondness of other creatures. Folklore also propagated the idea that the devil could be outwitted in certain contests,
such as wrestling, gambling and debate. The concept of a pact between the devil and a human would quickly transcend its populist origin and influence official church doctrine. As literacy among the general population grew, the presence of the Devil in literature and art flourished. While only briefly seen at the end of Inferno, Satan is a memorable presence in Dante's The Divine Comedy, which was completed in 1320. He also appeared in many plays of the later Middle Ages, where the chronology of the angel's creation to his fall were explored to the fullest extent yet and established the figure's backstory that we commonly know today.

Also fueling the cultural popularity of Satan was a growing belief in rampant diabolical witchcraft. People began to be accused by their neighbors, friends and family members of having been corrupted by the devil and were now bewitching the innocent, flying on broomsticks and causing other mischief. The witch-craze, peaking between the 15th century and the 17th century, was responsible for the execution of tens of thousands of people both in Europe and in North America. The Witch of Edmonton appeared in 1621, towards the end of the witch-craze in Europe but still seventy years before the events in Salem, Massachusetts. The play shows how some people in London were starting to doubt that the people being accused were actually witches and that perhaps a tragedy of injustice was being perpetrated.

The first literary depictions of the Devil with at least serious complexity if not sympathy emerged at the same time as the witch-craze. A German legend about a man named Faust first appeared in print in 1587. A successful man but dissatisfied with his life, Faust makes a pact with Mephistopheles (as the Devil is called here), selling his soul in exchange for knowledge and power. After 24 years, Mephistopheles comes to collect and carries Faust off to Hell. Unlike Medieval stories, where the Devil was in conflict with God or Christ, here it is a human facing off with the Devil, alone, with no support from the Church. The story's pessimistic ending was also groundbreaking, as are the glimpses of introspection and humanity in Mephistopheles. British playwright Christopher Marlowe would use the Faust legend to write his 1588 play The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, which follows the German story closely, preserving the dark ending. It wouldn’t be until Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's version of the Faust story—Part One appearing in 1806, followed by Part Two in 1832—that the protagonist would be saved at the end.

John Milton's Paradise Lost, an epic poem first published in 1667, is the most famous depiction of Satan as protagonist and influenced all subsequent characterizations of the Devil. The poem tells the story of the Fall of Man, as a result of Satan’s temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and includes references to how Satan was cast out of heaven. Whether or not Milton intended for it to be taken as such, Paradise Lost is cited as one of the first sympathetic portrayals of Satan, with some even calling his role in the epic that of an anti- or tragic hero. A subsequent poem, Paradise Regained, published in 1671, continues Satan’s story, covering his effort to tempt Christ in the Judaean desert.

As the 18th century ushered in the Enlightenment and science and reason pushed the world towards a more secular point of view, the presence of the Devil in serious art and literature diminished. Although he is called a “devil” and a “demon,” the monster in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein was created by humans and taught evil by us (he also reads a copy of Paradise Lost). And in all the horror stories written by Edgar Allen Poe, the Devil is not a part of the darkest and most disturbing ones, only the ones with a more comedic and whimsical tone.

Although increasingly secular, writers of the 20th and 21st centuries continue to find creative inspiration in the idea of the Devil and a personification of evil. All of the historical representations and behaviors of Satan continue to be explored, whether it be demonic possession (The Exorcist), the creation of the Antichrist (Rosemary's Baby), corruption of souls (C.S. Lewis’s The Screwtape Letters), or general causation of mischief and despair (“Sympathy for the Devil” by The Rolling Stones). On stage, the Devil has enjoyed an equally rich life. On the lighter end of the spectrum is the 1955 musical Damn Yankees, with its Devil-in-disguise character Mr. Applegate offering real estate agent Joe Boyd an opportunity to be a baseball star. A darker and more contemplative example is Irish playwright Conor McPherson’s 2006 play, The Seafarer, which portrays a rematch between the Devil and a man he lost a poker game to twenty-five years ago.

With Witch, Jen Silverman adds another interesting chapter to the life of the Devil in art. Here we see the Evil One depicted as a junior salesman, eager to collect souls on his trip through Edmonton. Already quite skilled at his job, Scratch (as he is called in the play) has an unexpected and life-changing encounter with Elizabeth, the so-called Witch of Edmonton. After revealing more of his inner life than ever before, it is remarkably the Devil who is left searching his soul in order to make an all-important decision. Thousands of years after his debut, this fascinating figure continues to capture the imagination of artists and audiences alike.
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For more information, visit writerstheatre.org/PigPen.

Pictured: The Old Man and the Old Moon at Writers Theatre. Photo by Liz Lauren.
LEAN FORWARD AND ENGAGE!

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

SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT: REINVIGORATING A CLASSIC

Jen Silverman’s Witch is the most recent example of a play developed through our Literary Development Initiative, and it joins the ranks of other world premieres produced by Writers Theatre as a result of this program. Many LDI works refresh classic pieces through a new contemporary lens, and with Witch, Silverman has taken a Jacobean-era play and given it modern relevance and bite with its themes of revolution, feminism and morality. Join Director of New Work & Dramaturgy Bobby Kennedy and guests as they break down the process of reinvigorating a classic through fresh eyes, shedding light on how a play from 1621 can be adapted for today’s world. 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 Witch on Sunday, October 28th at 11:30am before the matinee performance, and RSVP at writerstheatre.org/events.

THE MAKING OF…WITCH: WITCHCRAFT THEN & NOW

Before The Wizard of Oz introduced the idea of “good witches” and “bad witches,” beyond Wicked and The Crucible and Harry Potter, witchcraft has mystified humankind for centuries and has always been present in popular culture and media. At this installment of The Making Of series, Director of Education Kelsey Chigas will walk us through a brief history of witches and witchcraft across time periods and cultures, exploring the deeper meanings behind the accusations and celebrations of witches throughout history and exposing the cultural misogyny so often at the root of the persecution of women who defied social norms. We’ll also examine what witchcraft looks like in today’s society, busting myths about this spiritual practice. Seating is limited, RSVP is required.

Save the date for The Making of…Witch on Monday, November 12th at 6:30pm, 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!

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.
IN CONVERSATION: MARTI LYONS

Director Marti Lyons discusses Witch and Jen Silverman’s plays with former WT Artistic Assistant Alexandra Kunath.

Alexandra Kunath: Witch is a play that you’ve been involved with since Writers Theatre commissioned the work. What is your artistic relationship like with the playwright, Jen Silverman?

Marti Lyons: I have been a fan of Jen’s work for a long time, dating back to first reading her work in my Literary Manager days at Lookingglass Theatre Company years ago. I had the pleasure of first collaborating with Jen when I directed Wondrous Strange for the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville in 2016. That project was a
collaboration between myself, a wonderful team of collaborators (including 20 actors), and four playwrights; Jen Silverman, Jiehae Park, Meg Miroshnik and Martyna Majok. Jen and I became close collaborators on the project. Her writing was, as always, innovative, sparkling, incendiary, heart-gripping and tragicomic. It is larger than life and somehow cuts to the core of being alive. She is a brilliant writer and an incredibly gracious, fierce and visionay collaborator. It is always a pleasure to work with her.

AK: How is your preparation and rehearsal process as a director different when you are working on the world premiere of a new work?

ML: When directing an existing work, my partners in the creative process are the designers, choreographers and actors. When directing a new work, I have a primary partnership with the playwright and often also with a dramaturg, in this case playwright Jen Silverman and dramaturg Bobby Kennedy, in addition to our designers and actors. I love this partnership. I love working together in the act of storytelling and creation, especially with a writer like Jen who will both respond to other’s impulses about the script while staying true to her own internal compass. I think one of the reasons we work so well together is we often tend to have the same true north. There may be multiple ways to create or solve something—through the acting, directing, design or through writing—but as often as not it’s the same something we are after. Or, if different somethings, we learn more about the piece from that differentiation. Jen’s work is unique and beautiful and idiosyncratic so if you try to fit it into a cookie cutter shape you could potentially reduce it to something it is not. The challenge and joy is in bringing the work to its unique and full fruition with its own logic, deep humor and strange beauty.

AK: Although there are many themes in the play, the one that struck me and excited me as a female-identifying theatre artist was the feminist bent to the work. Can you talk a bit more about that specifically?

ML: In an interview about a different play of hers, Jen Silverman said, “Let me just put it this way: there are a lot more plays about straight men trying to figure out how to be happy than there are plays about queer women trying to do anything. I wrote Collective Rage because I was tired of waiting for someone else to write the thing I needed to see.” When I first read Witch it pierced me. There was an immediacy to the work as it felt closer to my experience and struggle with American-ness in the last two years than anything else I had encountered. This is the play I needed to work on, this is the play I need to see. It is urgent, immediate, unapologetic and ultimately a reckoning.

NEW SEASON, NEW WORK

Witch is the 27th world premiere to debut at Writers Theatre, and the first commissioned world premiere play or musical since 2014.

A commission is when a Theatre contracts and pays a playwright (or multiple writers/lyricists/composers) to create an original work specifically for that theatre. Writers Theatre has a long history of commissioning writers to create work for us to premiere on our stages. Some past commissions have included Laura Eason and Alan Schmuckler’s Days Like Today, Brett Neveu’s Old Glory, Austin Pendleton, Jan Levy Tranen and Joshua Schmidt’s A Minister’s Wife and Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus’s adaptation of Crime and Punishment.

Writers Theatre has several new projects under commission, including:

A new play by Lydia R. Diamond, the award-winning author of Smart People, which played WT last season.

Diamond’s work has been produced on Broadway and at many of America’s leading regional theatres, including Roundabout Theatre Company, Denver Center Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Second Stage Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre Center and Goodman Theatre.

A new musical about Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple, written by playwright Randall Colburn and lyricist/composer Michael Mahler.

Colburn is the writer of Hesperia from WT’s 2011/12 season, and writes for The AV Club, Consequence of Sound and The Guardian. Mahler composed the music and lyrics to Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Musical (Children’s Theatre Company), Wonderland: Alice’s Rock & Roll Adventure (Chicago Children’s Theatre), October Sky (Marriott Theatre), Hero (Marriott Theatre), and How Can You Run with a Shell on Your Back? (Chicago Shakespeare Theater).


Brown, who most recently directed A Moon for the Misbegotten and Company for WT, is also the co-author of To Master the Art (Broadway Playhouse, TimeLine Theatre Company).

Commissions are one of the many endeavors of WT’s new work program, the Literary Development Initiative. For more information on new work at WT, visit writerstheatre.org/LDI.
RYAN HALLAHAN (Scratch)
Working on a new play allows me to feel like a more integral part of shaping the story. It’s great to work on an old classic that has experienced a long life before I ever have set foot in the rehearsal room. But to be the first person to perform these words out loud, and to have a gifted writer like Jen Silverman there making tweaks and cuts and discovering things right alongside the cast and the director, gives me a chance to create a voice that is more authentically me. All of the reasons I love live theater—the sense of communal storytelling, the opportunity for self-exploration, the cathartic connection with others, the chance to create something ephemeral that only exists right here, right now—are heightened when we are all working together to create something that is finding its life for the very first time.

ARTI ISHAK (Winnifred)
There is a lot I love about working on a world premiere, but my absolute favorite part is getting to tell new stories about what the world could be. My character is posed with the question: what would a perfectly equitable world look like? Much like Winnifred I can’t think of an easy answer when there’s no precedent of a great world for us to go back to. For as long as western history has been recorded we’ve been operating under broken structures that serve the privileged few over the many; perpetuating the idea that rugged individualism is more important than communal thriving or (like Sir Arthur believes) that anyone with a solid work ethic can pull up their boot straps and rise in the free market. To me, it’s more a call to action than a literal query. We can either settle for scraps and learn to get by with the hand we’ve been dealt in a rigged game. Or we can dare to imagine a truly inclusive world filled with radical love for one another, far removed from the way things have always been, and fight to make that world our reality. There is bravery in the ability to hope for better, and power in the art that fuels it.

DAVID ALAN ANDERSON (Sir Arthur)
As a student at Indiana University, my very first role was a guy named Jimmy in a new play called The Cashier by Glen Merzer. I soon learned that all of my tools as an actor would inform the development of the character and, along with the writer and under the watchful eye of the director, I quickly discovered that my job was not just to play the character but to build him. New plays are a great way to learn how to create a foundation for a character. Starting from scratch, I really enjoy being a part of that process, working with a writer to find the voice of the character.

AUDREY FRANCIS (Elizabeth)
One of my favorite parts about working on a world premiere is that it allows everyone in the room to approach the work as a beginner. By nature, theatre is an incredibly collaborative art form. Adding a world premiere to that collaboration challenges each artist to bring their voice to a never-been-told story.

“Witch is a world premiere new play. What’s your favorite part about working on a show that the playwright is still in the process of finalizing?”
ACTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ARTISTS AND EDUCATORS

WT Education programs reached a record 11,300 students in the 2017/18 Season

In the 2017/18 school year:

- 844 students in 34 classrooms and 10 schools participated in the Novel Series program
- 458 students working in 20 classrooms with 5 schools and 2 community groups participated in the Write On! residency program
- 1,352 students attended student matinees. 720 students saw TREVOR the musical and 632 students attended The Importance of Being Earnest
- 1,226 students participated in ACTIVATE workshops that contextualized TREVOR the musical and The Importance of Being Earnest in the classroom before and after attending a student matinee
- 7,500 students participated in The MLK Project: The Fight For Civil Rights by Yolanda Androzzo
- 10 teens participated in the WT Youth Council with 7 returning members and 3 new members
- 19 young people learned how to be an artist in WT Education’s brand new onsite Creative Learning through weekly classes
- 5 new teaching artists joined our WT Teaching Artist Cohort and 1 new WT Education administrative position emerged with the creation of the Education Coordinator position
- 7 early-career artists and educators participated in our inaugural Emerging Teaching Artist (ETA) program, designed to provide professional development and hands-on classroom experience to new or rising teaching artists in the field
KEEP THE DREAM ALIVE

Bring dynamic theatre to your school and make history come to life – book a performance of *The MLK Project* today!

*The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights* by Yolanda Androzzo is a one-woman show that follows a Chicago student’s personal transformation through studying the Civil Rights Movement. Alaya uses her fists as an outlet for anger, but after interviewing local heroes of the Movement she discovers she can put “anger into action” and that her power is in her voice and her art, not violence.

Weaving together real interviews, poetry, hip-hop, history and multimedia projections, this tour-de-force performance features stories of both celebrated and unsung Chicago-based Civil Rights activists.

Visit writerstheatre.org/tours for more details. To book a performance, contact WT Education at education@writerstheatre.org.

Pictured: Jennifer Latimore as Alaya in *The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights*. Photo by Tom McGrath.
PLAN YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH WRITERS THEATRE

In addition to housing sophisticated, high-quality theatrical productions, Writers Theatre is an elegant space for all types of events to serve the Chicagoland area. Located along Chicago’s North Shore, Writers Theatre is situated in downtown Glencoe, Illinois, steps from local shops, restaurants, galleries and public transportation.

Writers Theatre is the perfect location to host your event, business meeting or intimate celebration. Capacity levels range from 85 to 350 persons, depending on space requirements. To learn more about our spaces and to arrange your next event, visit www.writerstheatre.org/rentals.

Theatre spaces are not available for performance rentals.

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](http://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, November 15, 2018 at 7:30pm**
ASL-Interpreted performance: **Saturday, December 1, 2018 at 7:30pm**

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

Box Office: 847-242-6000
WT CONCESSIONS CENTER

WINE

RED
Ostatu Rosé ............................................................................ $9
Alpamanta Malbec .................................................................... $8
Van Duzer Pinot Noir ................................................................. $9
La Garrigue du Midi Cabernet Sauvignon ........................................ $12

WHITE
Santome 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
Nomikai Sparkling Rosé (187ml—single serving) ......................... $7
Fantinel Prosecco (187ml—single serving) ....................................... $9
Joseph Perrier Cuvée Royale Brut (375ml—half bottle) .................. $30
Fantinel Prosecco (750ml—full bottle) ........................................... $30

BEER
Half Acre Daisy Cutter .................................................................. $6
Two Brothers Twenty Plus ............................................................ $6
Two Brothers Domaine DuPage .................................................. $5
Off Color Brewing Sibling Rivalry ................................................ $7
Ace Pear Cider ............................................................................. $4
Original Cider Black Widow Blackberry Cider ................................ $6

LIQUOR
A selection of Koval and other premium liquors

DESSERTS
Assorted cookies ........................................................................... $4
Assorted bars ................................................................................. $5
Coconut Macaroon ...................................................................... $3
Ethereal Confections chocolate bar .............................................. $7

SNACKS
Charcuterie & Cheese .................................................................. $7
Nuts and Dried Fruit ..................................................................... $6

ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS
Coffee (Regular, Decaf) ............................................................. $3
Rishi Hot Tea (Chamomile, Earl Grey, Peppermint) ................. $2
Soda (Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, Ginger Ale) ...................................... $2
Water .......................................................................................... $2

Our beer and wine products are subject to change. Please ask your bartender for an up-to-date listing of our current selection.
CUSTOM COCKTAILS

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

RED DEVIL

TWO BROTHERS VODKA, CINNAMON WHISKEY
PEACH BRANDY, CRANBERRY JUICE
CINNAMON STICK

STAY IN TOUCH WITH WRITERS THEATRE

JOIN THE CONVERSATION!
#WitchWT

Share your thoughts on the show!

Take this survey about Witch: bit.ly/WTWitch
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!

ABOUT THE THEATRE

WITCH

CUSTOM COCKTAILS

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

RED DEVIL

TWO BROTHERS VODKA, CINNAMON WHISKEY
PEACH BRANDY, CRANBERRY JUICE
CINNAMON STICK

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

ENGAGEMENT
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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.