

STAGEBILL

OCTOBER 1999





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This month Chicago Shakespeare Theater christens its new home on Navy Pier with a production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. THOMAS CONNORS previews the company's plans.

Pier PLAY

Nile cruises:
Kevin Goddard and
Lisa Dodson in
*Antony and
Cleopatra*

There's much ado on Navy Pier. While workers put finishing touches on the new, 525-seat Chicago Shakespeare Theater, cast and crew run through their paces. There's excitement in the air, mingled with the sense of responsibility that comes with achieving a milestone.

"It's terribly sad to close at the Ruth Page Theater," says Artistic Director Barbara Gaines, referring to the company's temporary home for the past 12 years. "There's a great energy in the space there. But there's the thrill of knowing that now, as long as the city of Chicago and its people want it, they will have a Shakespeare theater. That's really wonderful for me."

Suggestions of the company's formative years on the Gold Coast—during which time it gained renown as Shakespeare Repertory Theater—echo in this month's inaugural production, *Antony and Cleopatra* (previews begin October 15). "It was the second play we did at the Ruth Page," relates Gaines. "I directed it in 1988 and I had a wonderful time doing it. Then, about a year and a half ago, I had a dream about Antony and Cleopatra floating up to the pier. That's the truth. So I took that as a sign that I should do this play again. I also had the perfect actors for the leads." ▶



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Gaines is referring to Chicago actors Kevin Gudahl and Lisa Dodson. The Jeff Award-winning Gudahl, a veteran of more than half a dozen Shakespeare Rep productions, assays the role of Antony this time. Sizing up his character, Gudahl muses, "I'm probably putting too much of a contemporary bent on it by suggesting this, but I see him as revolutionary in the sense that he dared



Dandy digs: a view of the planned interior for the new Chicago Shakespeare Theater

to break down the traditional barriers between the sexes. He surrenders part of his masculine self in loving this very powerful woman; he lets the supposedly weaker sex have control over him. And he was willing to do so, apparently."

Like Gudahl, Dodson has appeared in a number of the company's productions, earning a Jeff nomination for her portrayal of Hermione in *Othello*. Cleopatra, who pleads and pouts one moment, dares and defies the next, is a woman both cunning and coy. Played poorly, the extremes of her behavior can seem false, rather than as variations of a very real passion. "The emotions—the highs and lows that Cleopatra goes through—are all genuine," observes Dodson. "It's a fine line between conveying that, so that an audience can get inside what propels her, and looking

like you're headed for melodrama. She may manipulate and her passions may be bigger than the normal person's, but I don't think she's melodramatic."

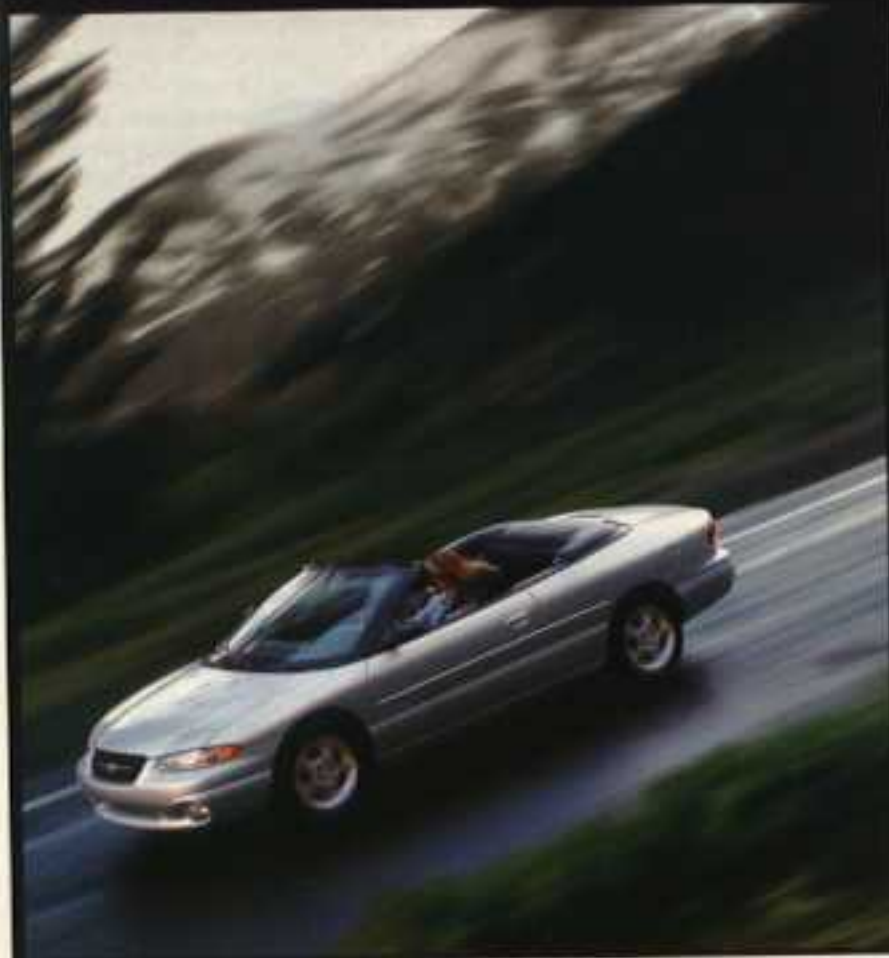
The renown of Antony and Cleopatra's love has transformed them from historical figures into nearly mythic personalities. That's the rub for Gaines when it comes to directing Shakespeare's telling of the tale. "It's just the greatest love story. It's so real to me: the kind of messy, quirky, joyous ways we behave when we're totally in the adrenaline rush of love. I mean, the first thing Antony and Cleopatra do is play the how-do-you-love-me-tell-me-how-much game. We've all done that."

With perhaps more shifts of scene than any other Shakespeare play, *Antony and Cleopatra* moves at an almost cinematic pace. Though appreciative of the enhanced amenities on Navy Pier (such as a seven-story fly-space that allows for elaborate scenery), set designer James Noone is taking a restrained approach to this show. "It's a fairly abstract set," says Noone, whose current projects include *The Rainmaker* on Broadway, starring Woody Harrelson. "It's all black carpeting with a huge staircase meant to be reminiscent of an Egyptian pyramid, or a Roman building. Shakespeare did such a great job of writing these things you could do them in a bare room and they'd be quite spectacular. I've kept it simple, but it shows, I hope, the capability of the space and gives audiences an idea of what they can expect in future productions."

Over the years, audiences have come to expect much of Shakespeare Rep. Now, as Chicago Shakespeare Theater, its aspirations—and our expectations—have never been higher.

Thomas Connors, a Chicago-based arts journalist, writes frequently for Stagebill and other national publications.

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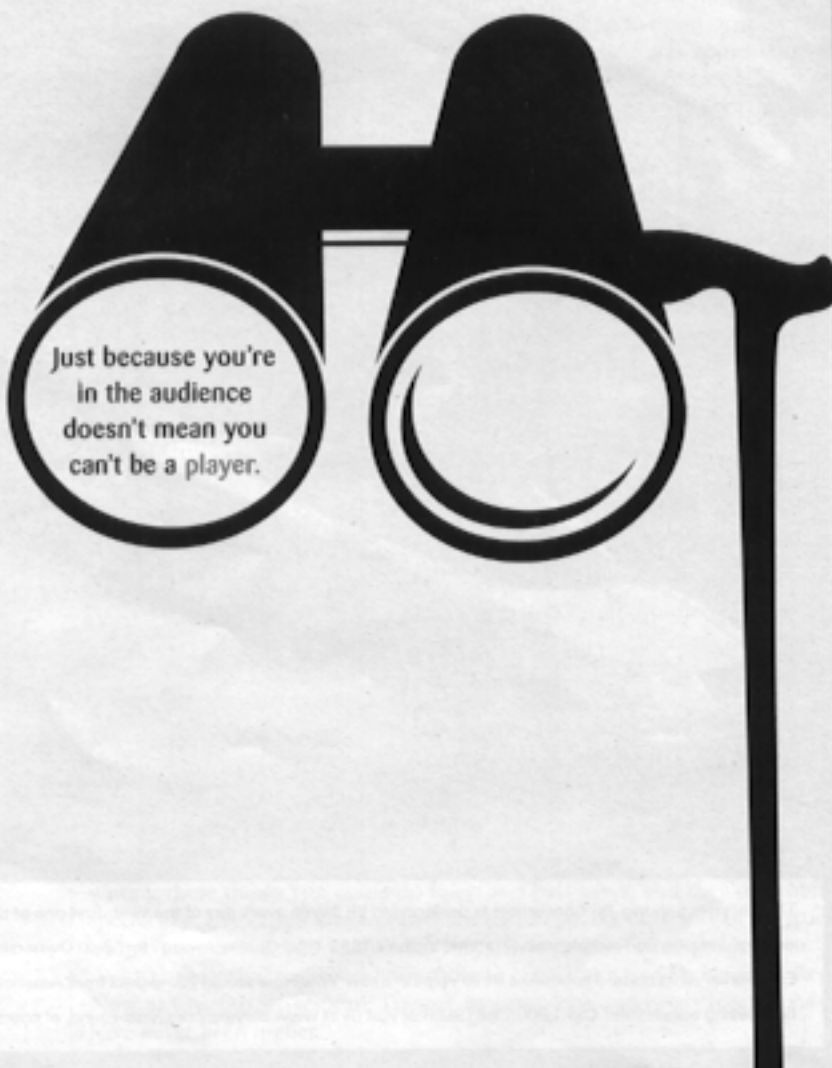
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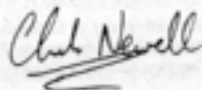
From the Artistic and Managing Directors

Season openings are times of expectation, excitement, and limitless possibilities. Two years ago, when we opened our season with JoAnne Akalaitis' glorious production of *The Iphigenia Cycle*, we had no idea of the impact it would have upon Court Theatre. We now see that JoAnne's work, together with the many other artists who created *The Iphigenia Cycle*, proved to be a major catalyst in this theater's evolution. As we begin this season with *Life's A Dream*, we cannot predict what this production's impact will be upon all of us. We can only welcome you to the beginning.

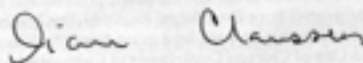


We also want to share with you news of changes and transitions here at the theater as we begin the season. After seven years of Bob McDermott's dedication, leadership, and vision as Chair of the Board of Trustees (praise to you, Bob, for the heights to which you brought Court Theatre!), we joyously welcome James E. Clark (J.D., University of Chicago) as our new Chair. His passion for theater, careful counsel, and ambition for Court foretell great things ahead for this theater.

Join us in welcoming a familiar face to a new challenge, as Andra Velis Simon takes on the leadership of our marketing efforts after having much success in fund-raising. We also are delighted to introduce our new Executive Assistant, Alyssa Volker; among the many other improvements that she will bring will be her friendly, live voice on the phone when you call the theater's office. And lastly, we are proud to introduce Celise Kalke as Court Theatre's new Resident Dramaturg. She brings a new level of intellectual rigor, national perspective, and artistic provocation to our artistic staff. We look forward to you getting to know her and all of the new faces as we move forward into the season. Together, we will have a fabulous year!



Charles Newell
Artistic Director



Diane Claussen
Managing Director



Court Theatre

Charles Newell
Artistic Director

Diane Claussen
Managing Director

presents

Life's A Dream

by Pedro Calderón de la Barca

Adaptation by John Barton and Adrian Mitchell

Gordana Svilar
Scenic Designer, USAA

Kaye Voyce
Costume Designer, USAA

Christine A. Binder
Lighting Designer, USAA

Andre Pluess and Ben Sussman
Sound Designers

Leslie Kniskern
Production Stage Manager, AEA

Celise Kalke
Dramaturg

Joanna Settle
Assistant Director

**Christine
Adaire**
Vocal Coach

**Alexander
Balanescu**
Composer

**Ginger
Farley**
Movement Coach

**Robin
McFarquhar**
Fight Choreographer

Directed by JoAnne Akalaitis, SSDC

September 10th through October 10th, 1999

Produced by special arrangement with DRAMATIC PUBLISHING, Woodstock, Illinois

Court Theatre is the not-for-profit professional theater in residence at the University of Chicago, and has been designated as an Established Regional Arts Institution by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. Productions are made possible, in part, by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and by a CityArts III grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs.

Life's a Dream is made possible, in part, by The Michael and Lillian Braude Theatre Fund, and The Women's Board of The University of Chicago.

Court Theatre is a participant in the National Theatre Artist Residency Program, administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American theatre, and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Court Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American theatre, the League of Resident Theatres, the Illinois Arts Alliance, and the League of Chicago Theatres.

Life's A Dream

C A S T

(in order of appearance)

Rosaura, a confused woman	Yvonne Woods*
Clarion, a foolish servant	Wilson Cain III*
Sigismund, Prince of Poland	Taylor Price*
Clotaldo, his keeper	Craig Spidle*
Courtier/Soldier 1	Anish Jethmalani
Courtier/Soldier 2	Mark Ulrich*
Courtier/Soldier 3	Jason Kendziera
Courtier/Soldier 4	Eddie Shin
Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy	Steven Rishard*
Estrella, Princess of Poland	Elizabeth Laidlaw*
Basilio, King of Poland	John Reeger*†
Lady in Waiting/Soldier	Arie Thompson‡

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Please Note: This production will feature the sound of gunshots.

Place: somewhere in Poland, 1635

Understudies:

Anish Jethmalani, *Clarion*; Jason Kendziera, *Sigismund*; Eddie Shin, *Soldier 1, Astolfo*;
Chuck Stubbings, *Soldier 2, Soldier 3, Soldier 4*; Arie Thompson, *Rosaura, Estrella*;
Mark Ulrich, *Basilio, Clotaldo*

Laxmi Kumaran*, *Assistant Stage Manager*
Kerry Wilks, *Associate Dramaturg*
Amanda Delheimer, *Directing Intern*

The Director is a member of the *Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc.*,
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*Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

†Denotes a member of Court Theatre's 1999-00 Resident Artists Program.

‡Denotes a member of Court Theatre's 1999-00 Resident Apprentices Program.

Program notes are made possible by the generous support of The John Nuveen Company,
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Court Theatre performs in the Abelson Auditorium, made possible
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The use of cameras, videotape recorders, or audio recorders by the audience during the course
of this performance is strictly prohibited. Please shut off all cellular phones and pagers.

La vida es sueño, vida infama no es vida.
(Life is only a dream, but a life disgraced is no life at all.)
Spanish proverb



Pedro Calderón de la Barca's (1600-1681) masterpiece, *Life's a Dream*, portrays the relationship between the waking and dream-states, an ages-old philosophical obsession. Calderón was the last great dramatist of the Spanish Theater's Golden Age, when the *corrales* (Spain's Public Theaters, similar to Shakespeare's Globe) reached an almost unparalleled popularity. The Empire that hosted the Spanish Golden Age was built on a strict honor code and absolute moral values. This Spanish world of right and wrong spawned archetypal characters like Don Juan and Don Quixote who, like Sigismund in *Life's a Dream*, manifest the tension between fate and free-will.

Born in Madrid on January 17, 1600, Calderón came from a family of noble distinction. His father's family were *hidalgos* (noblemen of a lower rank) from Montaña. Like most *hidalgos*, the Calderón family had noble blood but not enough resources to finance aristocratic obligations. Thus, Calderón, as the third child, had to find an occupation and faced the choice between becoming a soldier, joining the priesthood, or working for a member of the upper nobility. During his lifetime, Calderón followed each of these three career paths - vocations that supported his noble lifestyle and his career as a playwright.

At the age of 23, Calderón wrote his first play, *Love, Honor, and Power*. After the play's first professional production in Madrid, he quickly became one of Spain's leading dramatists. By

the 1630's, Calderón's dramatic career was thriving and he wrote frequently for both the palace and the *corrales*. Called *monstruo del ingenio* (monster-genius-playwright) by his contemporaries, Calderón's work was lauded for its intellectual sophistication and poetic craft. King Felipe IV recognized and rewarded the dramatist for his accomplishments in the theater by appointing him to the position of Court Dramatist and Knight of the Order of Santiago. In 1635, Calderón wrote *Life's a Dream*, the play considered to be his masterpiece.

Life's a Dream contains both beautiful baroque language and thematic intricacy. The play grows out of a series of dualities/antitheses: the highly textured double plot, multiple love intrigues, an Oedipal conflict of the highest magnitude, and characters who struggle with their own dual natures. The honor code motivates the play's action, a code challenged by the comic *gracioso*, Clarion. Even the Polish setting contains a dual nature, at once an exotic and mythical location but also a mirror for the 17th century Spanish Court.

Calderón wrote for the Spanish Monarchy during Spain's tragic decline. The Golden Age's Spanish Empire dominated the globe, only rivaled in history by Victorian England's empire where the sun never set. Felipe IV's court was run by favorites, but the King's lack of genius as the head of an Absolute Monarchy led to an Empire ridden with debt and plagued by wars. Calderón's world-view clings to personal honor as the one certainty in the midst of the Baroque tension that defined his era: "Al rey la hacienda y la vida / se ha de dar; pero el honor / es patrimonio del alma, / y el alma sólo es de Dios" (One's King lays claim to life and land, but the soul is honor's ruler and the soul belongs only to God).

In 1651, Calderón, most likely burdened by a feeling of *desengaño* (Iberian disillusionment) as the Spanish Empire disintegrated, entered the priesthood. After his ordination, Calderón stopped writing for the *corrales* and focused his attention on writing for the church and the court's theater. Between 1648 and 1681 Calderón was the only dramatist who wrote Madrid's *autos sacramentales* (plays which were presented in honor of the Corpus Christi). Calderón de la Barca died on May 25, 1681. Three thousand mourners, defying Calderón's request for a humble service, walked behind his open casket in the funeral procession.

Kerry Wilks with Celise Kalke



Liberi Arbitrii Cum Gratiae Domis

The debate about whether divine providence or free will determined an individual's actions dominated 16th and 17th European intellectual life. In his theological tract *De Servo Arbitrio* (The Will Enslaved), Martin Luther argued that since mankind remains forever blackened by original sin, free will is irrelevant to salvation. The Jesuits, a Catholic religious order founded in 1540, championed the idea of free will: "by his *scientia media* (middle knowledge) God knows all man's situations and circumstances. At the same time, His grace is free; but man's disposition is necessary . . . to produce the good act that is the joint product of grace and free will."

R. J. Oakley



YVONNE WOODS
(*Rosaura*) is delighted to be in Chicago working with JoAnne and Court Theatre. Previous credits at The Juilliard School include: *The Cherry Orchard*, *Fuddy Meers*, *Uncle Vanya*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Redwood Curtain*, and *Cake*. Williamstown Theatre Festival credits include: *Time Piece* and *The Prince of Denmark*. Yvonne is a 1999 graduate

of The Juilliard School.



WILSON CAIN III
(*Clarion*) was last seen at Court Theatre in *The Iphigenia Cycle*, and subsequently in the off-Broadway production. Wilson has worked with many of the leading Chicago theater companies, among them Goodman, Body Politic, Victory Gardens, and Pegasus Players. Wilson is delighted to once again be back at Court Theatre and working with JoAnne

Akalaitis.



TAYLOR PRICE
(*Sigismond*) is very excited to be working on this project. *Life's A Dream* will mark Taylor's fourth production with Ms. Akalaitis, and as always it is a brilliant challenge. It will also mark his third production in Chicago. When he was last seen here in *The Iphigenia Cycle* in 1997, he received a Joseph Jefferson Award nomination. As a Canadian citizen Taylor always looks forward to coming to Chicago. Music and meat—Hallelujah.

an citizen Taylor always looks forward to coming to Chicago. Music and meat—Hallelujah.



CRAIG SPIDLE
(*Clotilde*) was last seen at Court Theatre as Oscar in *The Little Foxes*. Previous credits include *Nora* at Court Theatre, the title character in *MacBeth* at Shakespeare on the Green and Lopahkin in *The Cherry Orchard* at Court. Other credits include Goodman Theatre in *As You Like It* and *Black Star Line*, Steppenwolf Theatre in *Libra* directed by John Malkovich,

and *As I Lay Dying* directed by Frank Galati. Craig has appeared in many Chicago and regional theaters. Love to Kristin.



ANISH JETHMALANI
(*Courtier/Soldier 1*) is thrilled to be making his first appearance at Court Theatre. Some of his Chicago stage credits include *Richard II* with Gilead Theatre Co., *Hamlet* with Streetsigns Theatre Co., *Romeo and Juliet* with Lookingglass Theatre Co., *Salome* with Footsteps Theatre Co., *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* with ShawChicago, *Knights of the Roundtable* and *Orpheus* with Eclipse Theatre Co., and understudying Mary Zimmerman's *Mirror of the Invisible World* at the Goodman Theatre. He would like to thank Ms. Akalaitis for the great opportunity, and his family for their continuing love and support.



MARK ULRICH
(*Courtier/Soldier 2*) is pushing the outer boundaries of happiness at making his first appearance with Court Theatre. Last spring, he appeared as Creon in 13th Tribe's production of *Bloodline: The Oedipus/Antigone* story. Other Chicago credits include *The Enduring Legend of Marinka Pinks* and *Tommy Atomic* at Summerette Productions, *Love! Valour! Compassion!* at the Organic, and *Buckets of Beckett* for Splinter Group.

Buckets of Beckett for Splinter Group.



JASON KENDZIERA
(*Courtier/Soldier 3, Ensemble*) is a Chicago native and graduate of Northern Illinois University with a BFA in Acting. He was recently seen in Fanto Theatre's *The Flight of the Butter Boy* at the Breadline. Other credits include work with the Ivanhoe Theatre, Bailwick Repertory, and Cat's Eye Theatre. *Life's A Dream* marks the first time Jason has worked with the Court Theatre and JoAnne

Akalaitis—and he is honored to do so. Much love as always to his family, friends, and teachers. Fabersham.



EDDIE "SHINDIG" SHEN
(*Courtier/Soldier 4*) is oh-so pleased to be playing with JoAnne Akalaitis and the Court Theatre crew. A recent University of Chicago graduate, Eddie sings grateful hymns for the sweet opportunities he's had to perform with the Steppenwolf, ImprovOlympic, Stage Two, Sir-Friday Night, and Holstein Players. Eddie was just seen in the Molibec Festival and looks forward to this winter and creating with Thirteenth Tribe on *The*

Mantach. A thousand thanks and dedication to Curt, Zannah Gavin, and the UT Tribe.



atre, Bailwick Repertory, and The Raven. Steven will return to Court Theatre this season in *The Real Thing*, directed by Gary Griffin.



University. Offstage, she teaches theatre at Near North Montessori. Thanks and love to Strawdog (especially Kirsten!), to her family, and to Gil.



ump of Love, Cloud Nine, Much Ado About Nothing, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Woyzeck and The Seagull. He has also performed at the Goodman Theatre, Northlight, Body Politic, Ivanhoe, Marriott Lincolnshire, Drury Lane Oakbrook, Great Lakes Festival, Goodspeed-at-Chester, and the Kennedy Center. He is married to actress Paula Scrodano. They are the proud parents of Adam and Alison.



market *Eight* and *Lyrus* in *Mother's Right* Thamyrist. Arie thanks the creator, her ancestors, the revolution, and her loved ones. Peace.

STEVEN RISHARD

(*Astolfo*) is pleased to be working with Court Theatre again after spending last season as a Resident Apprentice and performing in its productions of *Gross Indecency, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and La Bête*. His last project was with Eclipse Theater as John Buchanan in *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, directed by Steve Scott. Other Chicago credits include work with Circle Theatre, Bailwick Repertory, and The Raven. Steven will return to Court Theatre this season in *The Real Thing*, directed by Gary Griffin.

ELIZABETH LAIDLAW

(*Estrella*) makes her Court debut, marking her 25th Chicago production. Recent work includes the award winning *The Kentucky Cycle* and *The Journeyman's Angels in America*, and productions with Steppenwolf, Shakespeare Repertory, Lifeline, Powertap, and Strawdog Theatre. Film/TV credits include "Turks" for CBS and the feature *Three Days*. She is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan

JOHN REEGER

(*Basilio, 1999/00 Resident Artist*) appeared last season at Court Theatre in *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde, Nora, The Little Foxes, and La Bête*. Other Court Theatre credits include *Putting It Together, An Ideal Husband, The Cherry Orchard, Old Times, Tartuffe, The Philadelphia Story, The Play's The Thing, King Henry IV: The Shadow of Succession, Traces, The Misanthrope, The Triumph of Love, Cloud Nine, Much Ado About Nothing, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Woyzeck and The Seagull.* He has also performed at the Goodman Theatre, Northlight, Body Politic, Ivanhoe, Marriott Lincolnshire, Drury Lane Oakbrook, Great Lakes Festival, Goodspeed-at-Chester, and the Kennedy Center. He is married to actress Paula Scrodano. They are the proud parents of Adam and Alison.

ARIE THOMPSON

(*Lady in Waiting, 1999/00 Resident Apprentice*) is happy to be making her Court Theatre debut in *Life's A Dream*. Arie is a founding member of the Black Spots Cocoon Performance Collective. She has performed at various Chicago and regional companies including Steppenwolf, Madison Repertory, MPAACT, and Shakespeare's Motley Crew. Favorite roles include Lucy Paterson in *Haymarket Eight* and *Lyrus* in *Mother's Right* Thamyrist. Arie thanks the creator, her ancestors, the revolution, and her loved ones. Peace.

JOANNE AKALAITIS (Director) was co-founder and co-Artistic Director of Mabou Mines. Some productions: *Dressed Like an Egg and Dead End Kids* (Mabou Mines); *Endgame* (ART); *The Screens* (Guthrie); *The Pit* (Syracuse); *Whore* (Goodman); *Green Card* (Mark Taper); *Director of Death* (Arena Stage); *In the Summer House* (Lincoln Center); *The Vist* (New York City Opera); *Cymbeline and Henry IV, Parts 1 & 2* (New York Shakespeare Festival); *The Iphigenia Cycle* (Court Theatre and Theater for a New Audience); *Katya Kabanova* (Opera Theater St. Louis); *T. Jon Blues* (Humana Festival); and *Trojan Women* (Shakespeare Theater). Currently Co-Chair of the Directing Program at Juilliard's Drama Division and former Artistic Director of the New York Shakespeare Festival, Ms. Akalaitis is the recipient of five Obie Awards for Direction and Production, the Drama Desk Award, the NEA award for Sustained Artistic Achievement, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and the National Theatre Residency Grant at Court Theatre. She is the new Chair of the Theater Department at Bard College.

ALEXANDER BALANESCU (Composer) is recognized internationally as virtuoso violinist and composer specializing in music for film and dance. Making his debut at age nine, Romanian born Alexander finished his studies at Trinity College London and The Juilliard School in New York, his main teachers having been Dolly Koritzer and Dorothy Delay. He was a member of the Arditti Quartet from 1983 to 1986, playing the contemporary classical repertoire. In 1987, he formed the Balanescu Quartet, determined to make today's music accessible to today's audiences. He gained an enviable reputation as a truly interdisciplinary artist—as a composer, an improviser as well as performer. He has collaborated with musicians from such wide ranging fields as John Lurie, Gavin Bryars, Michael Nyman, Jack de Johnette, John Surman, Andy Sheppard, and Carla Bley. His work has also taken him into the pop world, supporting the Pet Shop Boys and recording the music of David Byrne and Kraftwerk.

GORDANA SVILAR (Scenic Designer) is a New York based designer. Recent projects include *Toxa* for the Opera Festival of New Jersey at McCarter Theatre, *Opera Omaha* and *Manitoba Opera, Woyzeck of Sarajivo* for the Lincoln Center Theatre Director's Lab, *Jazz Train* (Part 3) choreographed by Donald Byrd, and *Illusion* at Princeton University. Gordana collaborated with Robert Wilson on development of several projects including *Dreamplay* for the Stockholm Stadsteater. Gordana's future project is *Felice et Melisande* for the Romanian National Theatre. Ms. Svilar is a native of Croatia where she was trained in architecture. She received an MFA in design from NYU in 1995.

KAYE VOYCE (Costume Designer) previously designed Court Theatre's *Tartuffe*, directed by Daniel Fish. Recent credits include: *The Kate's Progress* (Wolftrap Opera), *The Timing of the Shrew* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Stop Kiss* (The Public Theatre), *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (The Shakespeare Theatre, Washington, D.C.), *Fathers and Sons* (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre), and *Hot Mouth* (Manhattan Theatre Club). Kaye co-designed sets and costumes for *Le Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein* (L'Opera Francaise de New York).

CHRISTINE A. BINDER (Lighting Designer) returns to Court Theatre with this production of *Life's A Dream*. Originally a dancer, the Illinois native studied at Northern Illinois University, and changed her focus to Lighting Design in graduate school. She is currently Resident Lighting Designer for Chicago's Redmoon Theatre and The Lyric Opera Center for American Artists. Recent designs include *Three Days of Rain* for the Steppenwolf Theatre Company, *Eugene Onegin* for Michigan Opera Theatre, and *Tales of Hoffmann* and *There is a Garden* for Chicago Opera Theatre. This October she will design the lighting for a new production of *I Capuletti e i Montecchi* for the Los Angeles Opera directed by Thor Steingraber with sets by Robert Israel. Ms. Binder has been Lyric Opera's Principal Assistant Lighting Designer since 1989. She teaches lighting design at DePaul University.

ANDRE PLESS & BEN SUSSMAN (*Sound Designers, 1999/00 Resident Artists*) met while undergraduates at the University of Chicago and have since collaborated on over 40 productions. They are pleased to return to Court after having designed *The Little Foxes*, *La Bête*, and *Nora* last season. Credits include composition and sound design for Victory Gardens (where they are resident designers), Lookingglass Theatre, the Steppenwolf Arts Exchange, About Face Theatre, Peninsula Players, Strawdog, Streetsigns, City Lit, the Midnight Circus, Naked Eye, Bailiwick Repertory, 7 Stages in Atlanta, and the Drama League and Rattlesnake Repertory in New York. They have received four Joseph Jefferson Citations for Original Music and Sound Design. Current projects include *Bluff* at Victory Gardens, *Whispering City* with the Steppenwolf Arts Exchange, *Dancer from the Dance* at About Face, *This Is Our Youth* with Roadworks, and the Berkeley Repertory and Seattle Repertory productions of *Metamorphoses*. They are thrilled to be working with Ms. Akalaitis and the music of Alexander Balanescu.

JOANNA SETTLE (*Assistant Director*) recently directed *The Enduring Legend of Maraka Pinker* and *Tommy Atomic* by Cajal (Theatre Building) with Thirteenth Tribe; *Play by Beckett*; *Bloodline: The Oedipus/Antigone Story* by Sophocles, translation by Nicholas Rudall; *The Balcony* by Genet; and *Bombs in the Ladies Room* by M. Rodgers. She also directed the South American tour of *Grease*. Joanna is a graduate of The Juilliard School directing program and is the Artistic Director of Thirteenth Tribe.

LESLIE KNISKERN (*Production Stage Manager*) previously stage managed Court Theatre's mainstage productions of *La Bête* and *The Little Foxes* in repertory, *Nora* and the workshop of *The Cherry Orchard*. Recent credits include *Once on This Island* and *Eastville* at Connecticut Repertory Theatre. At Chicago's Organic Theatre Company he was Production Stage Manager on *Moonlight*, *The Gift*, *Taking Sides*, *After-Play*, *The Steward of Christendom*, *Indiscretions*, and *Racing Demon*. He worked on *Falsettos* and *Arcadia* at Pittsburgh Public Theater, where additional credits include Assistant Stage Manager and Assistant to the Producing Director. Les holds a BFA in drama from Carnegie Mellon.

LAXMI KUMARAN (*Stage Manager*) returns to Court Theatre after working on the stage management team here last season. She has also stage managed *The Dying Gaul* at Apple Tree Theatre and *My Three Angels* at Next Theatre. In addition, Laxmi worked as part of the Stage Management team at Northlight Theatre and The Goodman Theatre, working on such productions as *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Play On!*

ROBIN H. McFARQUHAR (*Fight Choreographer*) previously worked with Court Theatre on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other Chicago credits include *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Libertine*, *Time to Burn*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Playboy of the Western World*, and *The Berlin Circle* for Steppenwolf; *Richard II*, *I Am a Man*, *All the Rage*, *As You Like It*, and *Griller* for The Goodman Theatre; *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *Henry IV part 1 & 2* for Shakespeare Rep. His work has also been seen throughout the country including seasons at the Idaho, Illinois, Utah and Virginia Shakespeare Festivals and on tours to Japan, Cyprus and Hungary.

CHRISTINE ADAIRE (*Vocal Coach*) is delighted to return to Court Theatre after having worked with JoAnne Akalaitis on *The Iphigenia Cycle* two seasons ago. Ms. Adaire is a Designated Linklater Voice Teacher trained by Kristin Linklater. She has voice coached and acted at regional theaters across the country, including: Shakespeare & Company (Lenox, MA), Chicago Shakespeare, Milwaukee Repertory, American Shakespeare Festival, and the American Place Theatre (NYC). She is on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



CHARLES NEWELL (*Artistic Director*) most recently directed Court Theatre's rotating repertory productions of *The Little Foxes* and *La Bête*. Other recent directorial credits include productions of *Nora* and the rotating repertory productions of *The Cherry Orchard* and *An Ideal Husband* also at Court. Mr. Newell made his Chicago directorial debut in 1993 with Court's production

of *The Triumph of Love*, which won the Joseph Jefferson Award for Best Production. He also directed Court's acclaimed pairing of *The Misanthrope* and *Travesties*, as well as *Travels with My Aunt*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *Henry IV: The Shadow of Succession*, *Barber of Seville*, and *Once in a Lifetime*. Other directing credits include *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Arena Stage, John Houseman's The Acting Company), *The History Plays*, *Cymbeline* (Guthrie Theatre), *Macbeth* (California Shakespeare), *Blithe Spirit* (Alabama Shakespeare), *Love's Labour's Lost* (PlayMakers Repertory), *Journey of the Fifth Horse* (Juilliard), *Pericles* (Tisch School, NYU), and *The Jewel Box* and *Don Giovanni* (Chicago Opera Theatre). Before coming to Court, Mr. Newell served as the Resident Director of the Guthrie Theatre, Staff Repertory Director for John's Houseman's The Acting Company, and won the 1992 TCG Alan Schneider Director Award. He has been a strong advocate for the arts by serving as a panelist on the NEA Theatre Program, the NEA/TCG Career Development for Directors, and the New York State Council for the Arts.



DIANE CLAUSSEN (*Managing Director*) joined the Court Theatre staff in July 1998. Prior to moving to Chicago she was the Managing Director, Assistant Professor and head of the Theatre Management Program at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York. From 1991-97, Ms. Clausen was the Managing Director of George Street Playhouse, a LORT C theater located in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

She has also worked extensively in marketing and fundraising at several regional theaters throughout the country including George Street Playhouse, Yale Repertory Theatre and Seattle Repertory Theatre, among others. Ms. Clausen has served on the Executive Committees for the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and New Jersey Theatre Group, and as a Trustee for ArtPRIDE New Jersey. Currently, she serves on the board for the League of Chicago Theatres, a service organization for more than 140 theaters in Chicago. Ms. Clausen has been a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts, a site-evaluator for the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and a member of several collective bargaining committees representing LORT with Actors' Equity Association, United Scenic Artists and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. Ms. Clausen received her M.B.A. and M.A. in Arts Administration from Southern Methodist University and is a graduate of the University of Washington with a B.A. in Theatre and a B.A. in Communications.

For Your Information



Court Theatre

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is supported by The John Nuveen Company.

PRODUCTION CREW FOR *LIFE'S A DREAM*

Carpenters Rich Bryant, Brian Hill, Glen Hyman, Greg Jones
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Light Board Operator James Halley
Electricians Lesley Boeckman, Seth Boeckman, Charles Pennebaker
Assistant Lighting Designer Josh Benghiat
Sound Operator Terri Osness, Ryan Churchill
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Floor Manager Ellen Gibbon
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- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for *The Little Foxes* and *La Bête*
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- The Provost's Office of the University of Chicago for technical support of *Nora*
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- Carol Mason Russell Memorial Fund for artistic workshops with students of the University of Chicago
- Theatre Communications Group and The Pew Charitable Trusts for support of JoAnne Akalaitis as Artist-in-Residence at Court Theatre
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At the start of its landmark 1997/98 season, Court launched a visionary five-year strategic plan to become a National Center for Classic Theater. Guided by this plan, Court will expand its ambitious artistic and educational programming and further develop its constituency and infrastructure. A few of the major initiatives have included bringing nationally-recognized JoAnne Akalaitis to Court to direct *The Iphigenia Cycle* and *Life's a Dream*, the Resident Artists Program, the Resident Apprentices Program, and this season's co-production of *Desire Under the Elms* with Freedom Theatre in Philadelphia. Court Theatre is pleased and proud to recognize these earliest donors who have pledged generous gifts to the Court Classics Campaign.

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The Crown Society at Court Theatre is a group of individuals committed to the development of new adaptations and translations of classics at Court Theatre. The theater is proud to acknowledge these individuals as partners in the artistic opportunities that will further enhance the theater's reputation nationally as a leading producer of classic texts. The generosity of The Crown Society has been critical to the following productions: *King Henry IV: The Shadow of Succession*, 1995/96; *Carmen*, 1996/97; *The Iphigenia Cycle*, 1997/98; and *Nora*, 1998/99.

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Mary

Auteur director Mary Zimmerman returns to the Goodman Theatre this month with *The Odyssey*. JUSTIN HAYFORD goes along for the ride.

Extraordinary



Mary Zimmerman

Ordinarily, director Mary Zimmerman creates a work of theater in a kind of self-imposed panic. Whether trying to make a compelling evening from a few hundred pages of theoretical musings (*The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*) or a few thousand pages of ancient myth (*The Arabian Nights*, *Journey to the West*), she walks into her first day of rehearsal without a script. By her own account, she spends the next several weeks in a state of free-fall until she lands, gracefully or with a splat, on opening night.

By contrast, her production of *The Odyssey*, running through October 31 at the Goodman Theatre, has been scripted, revised, produced, remounted, and generally slow cooked—for about 35 years.

The first time Zimmerman encountered the 3,000-year-old poem she was five, living in England because her father was a Fulbright scholar. Every afternoon her teacher read aloud stories of the great and wily Odysseus, thwarted by monsters, warriors, and all manner of meddlesome divinities on his quest to return to his family in Ithaca. She was spellbound. “I think I had a kind of unconscious identification with it,” she says, “because I was far from home.”

She read the saga on her own several times as she grew up. Then one day, a quarter-century after first hearing Homer’s tale, she was out jogging and had a flash of inspiration: she would stage *The Odyssey* in a swimming pool. ➤



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Donahue in the
1995 Goodman
production of
Journey to the
West

folding over there.’ The costuming was white shirts and black pants owned by the actors, and old party dresses for the goddesses. We had a few lights, bamboo poles, and 14 chairs.”

Rehearsals were by turns rigorous and ridiculous. The cast would spend hours drilling elaborate, stylized scenes, hoping to capture the poem’s epic sweep in tiny, enigmatic gestures—and then they would dance until two in the morning to the music of Prince. They even spent one afternoon playing hide-and-seek in the university’s theater building. “I think it was because I had no more ideas,” Zimmerman says. “I was at the end of my rope.”

By opening night, she’d found more ideas than most directors find in an entire season. Her childlike, sophisticated, sexy, mesmerizing experiment instantly established her as one of the most inventive and visually ingenious directors in Chicago—although only a handful of theatergoers witnessed her talents.

After the show closed, students from Northwestern who had seen her summer marvel, and who had recently started a scrappy little company called Lookingglass, invited Zimmerman over to stage the piece with them. The four-and-a-half-hour, two-night production was largely ignored by the media and audiences alike. Zimmerman, who should have burst onto the scene as was her due, simply crept into a barely illuminated spotlight.

“Part of the problem was, we were very inexperienced producers,” she says. “We literally didn’t advertise it. Our big publicity campaign was putting lime-green bumper stickers on light poles around the city.”

Worse still, the production was slammed in the *Chicago Reader*. “To this day, I can’t go past the newsstand where I stopped to pick up the *Reader* that day without a shudder going through me,” she says. “I was fresh out of the gate, and I loved that show. It just went into me like a knife, I had no defense.”

Miraculously, however, her nearly overlooked show scored five Jeff citations and Zimmerman was on her way.

Still a graduate student at Northwestern University, she turned her vision into a summer student project—although she had to settle for staging the show in a regular theater. “We did make a bunch of films in a swimming pool and in the lake,” she says, but quickly admits that she had little idea how the films would be used. “We were just collecting images,” she explains. “I thought a certain scene might be Hades. Or maybe it would be a dream.

“There really was no design,” she continues with a laugh. “I just said, ‘Let’s put some scaffolding over there.’”

Now a decade later, after Zimmerman has won numerous awards (including a MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant) and staged her imagistic productions all over the country, her *Odyssey* arrives on one of Chicago’s most prestigious stages. Yet, despite her decades-long relationship to the story, she still sees enormous challenges ahead of her.

“The story is so good, it’s been very difficult for me to hear it allegorically, metaphorically, psychologically,” she explains. “In *Journey to the West*, the metaphors are explained. But with *The Odyssey*, the text is so sparkling and so entertaining—there is so much depth on the surface—that it’s tempting not to ask what the significance is.

“And a lot of people have a great love and knowledge of *The Odyssey*. They have their own version of the story in their heads, and mine isn’t going to match that. It’s a little scary. So I always have to think that I’m just joining the chorus who’s been singing this story for millennia. I’m stepping in and harmonizing, but what I’m doing is in no way definitional.”

With tens of thousands more dollars at her disposal than she had for her previous productions of *The Odyssey*, she’s discovered something startling. “It’s still a bunch of chairs and bamboo poles. The clothes, the lighting, the music—those elements have come up in the world. But the basic conception remains: it’s a simple, ensemble-oriented piece. We’ve come full circle and ended up having been right in the first place. That’s kind of sweet.”

Justin Hayford, a Chicago-based arts journalist, writes frequently for Stagebill.

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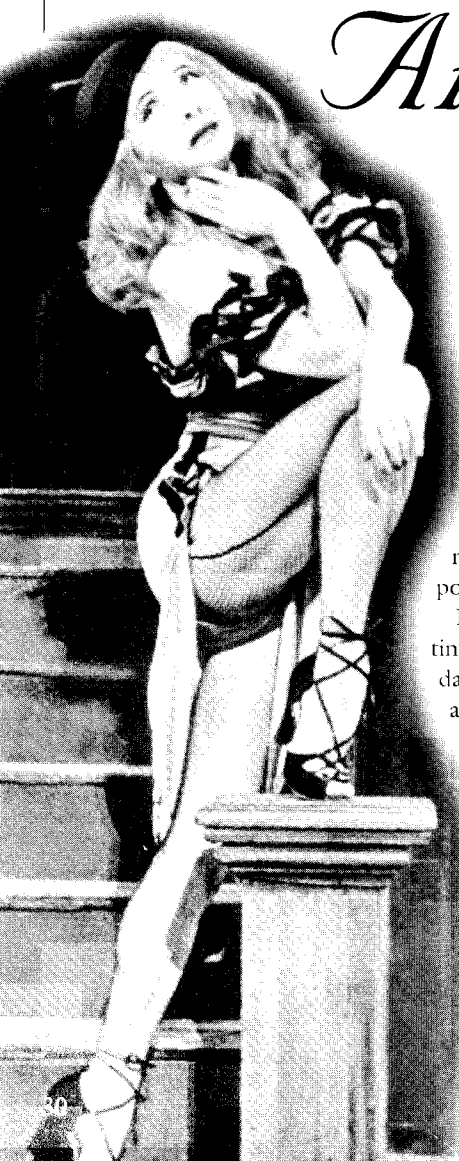
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The Joffrey Ballet's fall engagement at the Auditorium Theatre pays tribute to American dance pioneer Ruth Page (October 20–24).

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MODERN

Americana



This year marks the centennial anniversary of the birth of Ruth Page, one of the most visionary and brilliant dance figures to emerge in the twentieth century. As a ballerina, a modern dancer, choreographer, theater designer, ballet director, and founder of numerous dance companies, she gained international acclaim as a tireless innovator in American dance. Page helped pave the way for artists who now routinely blend popular, modern, and classical dance techniques, and was one of the first to bring social and political issues to the dance stage.

Her career-long identification with Chicago continues to this day: in the street named after her; in a dance series and dance awards that bear her name; and in the form of the Ruth Page Foundation, which she founded in 1970.

This October, audiences will see a seminal work in the Ruth Page repertoire, as the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago brings the 1938 Americana ballet *Frankie and Johnny* to the Auditorium Theatre stage. Created and danced by Ruth Page and Bentley Stone, this "ballet cartoon" was one of her early feminist works, presenting a familiar story from a woman's point of view. Scandalous when first

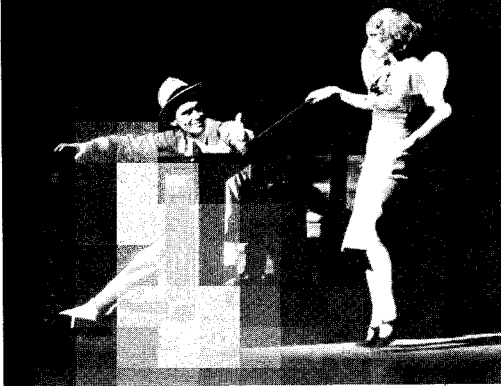
performed, it is now considered a classic, and the dance icon's most passionate role.

Gerald Arpino, co-founder and artistic director of the Joffrey, says that he and Robert Joffrey had long wanted to include the piece in the company's repertory. "Ms. Ruth is a loving legacy whom we both adored as an artist and as a dynamic American pioneer of dance," he says. Similarly, according to Venetia Stifler, the foundation's centennial director, "Ruth spoke for years about wanting *Frankie and Johnny* to be performed again."

For this year's revival, the Joffrey is fortunate to have the Ruth Page Foundation as its associate. After decades in storage, the original costumes from 1938 have been restored, as well as the unique sets, which were rebuilt when the piece was remounted in the 1950s. The costumes, constructed largely of canvas, have borne up remarkably well. "They're pieces of art in themselves," says Stifler. Restoring the sets was a more painstaking process, she says, since "the paint used in the past is different from what is used today, but they, too, have been returned to dazzling form."

When the curtain rises on *Frankie and Johnny*, these historical artifacts will literally leap to life onstage, and that significance is of particular importance to those at the foundation. "We want audiences to understand that there has been innovation in dance in Chicago for a very long time, and Ruth is one of its greatest representatives."

Robert Ritsema is Stagebill's Associate Managing Editor in Chicago.



Ruthian revival:
Ruth Page as
Frankie in Frankie
and Johnny
(opposite and
below left);
Bentley Stone and
Ruth Page in
Frankie and
Johnny(above);
the original ensemble
hovers over the
dead Johnny
(below right).



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUTH PAGE FOUNDATION

Chicago favorite Mike Nussbaum grouses as the title character in *Visiting Mr. Green* this month and then turns his attention to directing *American Buffalo*. He discusses his busy schedule with STEVE PINE.

VISITING

Mr. NUSSBAUM

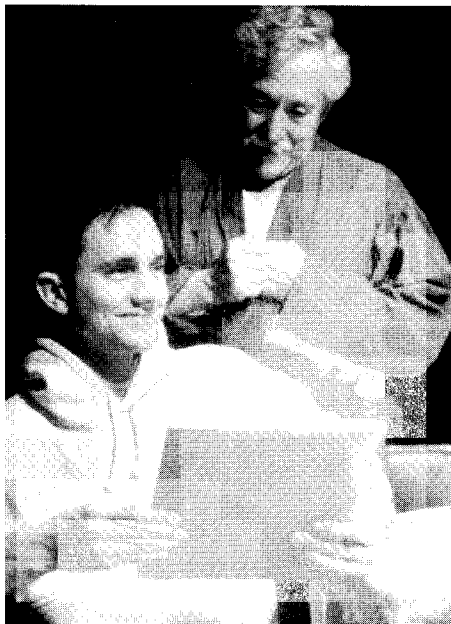
If Mike Nussbaum were the sentimental type, he might be tempted to describe his fall work schedule with phrases like “returning to my roots” or “coming full circle.” This month, the veteran actor returns to Northlight Theatre—he was the very first artistic director there—to star in the inaugural production of the theater’s twenty-fifth anniversary season, *Visiting Mr. Green* (through October 31). Then, in November, it’s on to the American Theater Company, where Nussbaum, the man who originated the role of Teach in *American Buffalo*, directs a new production of that David Mamet classic (November 23–December 26).

But Nussbaum is not the sentimental type. It’s not that he’s a curmudgeon, it’s just that he’s more interested in the actual work and the people with whom he can work. In the case of *Visiting Mr. Green* at Northlight, that means B.J. Jones, Northlight’s current artistic director and a frequent Nussbaum collaborator over the years.

“B.J. asked me to do it, and I love working with B.J., both as a director and as an actor,” says Nussbaum. “He’s directed me and I’ve directed him, we worked on stage together, and it’s nothing but fun. And this being really his first full year as artistic director at Northlight, I would have done anything he asked me to do.”

What Jones has requested is that Nussbaum take on the role of Mr. Green, a grumpy old man living out his

Male bonding:
Guy Adkins
and Mike
Nussbaum in
*Visiting Mr.
Green*



MICHAEL BROSILOW

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Friendly nosh:
Nussbaum and
Adkins in *Visiting
Mr. Green*

last years in a lonely Manhattan apartment. The off-Broadway hit *Visiting Mr. Green*, a two-character play by first-time playwright (and Northwestern University grad) Jeff Baron, pits Mr. Green against Ross, a young, gay businessman, who, after running into Green with his car, must pay court-ordered visits to make amends. A series of close encounters ensues, with each character working to reconcile his own demons and his perception of the other.

The role of Mr. Green was originated in 1996 by the 82-year-old Eli Wallach, who drew raves and awards for his characterization of the aging Jewish widower. Nussbaum remains undaunted by those who have gone before him, and, being seventy-ish, he doesn't feel it's a stretch to play the 86-year-old Mr. Green (although he admits he may have to play him a tad younger).

"I'm coming pretty much from that milieu myself," he says. "I'm almost the right age. My parents are Jewish immigrants from New York, so I don't have any difficulty identifying myself with that character. As B.J. is fond of pointing out, I have my curmudgeonly characteristics."

Nussbaum's take on Mr. Green won't be all bluster and bombast, though. His character has to confront a psychological minefield of familial betrayal, religious conflict, and the disorientation that sometimes comes with age.

"My character has disowned a daughter, because she has married outside of the faith," explains Nussbaum. "He says a Kaddish for her—the Jewish prayer for the dead—when she leaves the house after marrying outside of the faith. He never consciously thinks about her. Over the course of the play, his growing attachment to the young man helps him to finally admit she exists and that he has damaged his life immeasurably by refusing her existence. The character makes an enormous journey."

Nussbaum continues his own artistic journey next month, when he looks anew at *American Buffalo* for the American Theater Company. This time around he's in the director's chair—working with ATC ensemble players—almost a quarter-century after the original production at Remains Theatre.

Brian Russell, ATC's artistic director, says that he's been trying to find a project for Nussbaum since ATC was formed three years ago, and for this season's opening production he was looking for a "big event." He may have found it in *American Buffalo*.

"It's a simple and visceral play, but it's very difficult," says Russell. "There's a wonderful directness that gets to the heart of the matter. There's certainly been no one more associated with Mamet's works over the years. It seemed a perfect fit."

Fitting a playwright's words to a fully formed character has been a hallmark of Nussbaum's career. Whether he's onstage or behind the scenes, he's a talent Chicago theatergoers clearly have found worth a visit.

Steve Pine is a freelance writer and former Stagebill editor.



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