2015 - 2016 Season

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In the Heights, Fall 2014 (Photo by Michael Brosilow)
Curtain Raiser for The Theatre School’s 2015-2016 Season

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Metamorphosis, Winter 2015
(All Production Photos by Michael Brosilow)

Faculty Advisor ..................................................................................................................................................................................... Ernie Nolan
Staff Editors/Design ............................................................................................................................................................................ David Keohane, Leslie Shook, Mishari Zambrano
Letter from the Dean

Welcome to a season of exploration, enlightenment, and entertainment, right in the heart of Lincoln Park. Our productions are acted, designed, directed, managed, and built by our students under the guidance of award-winning faculty, staff, and guest artists. As an audience member, you are a part of our extended classroom in the city of Chicago.

We invite you to visit both the Fullerton Stage and the Sondra A. & Denis Healy Theatre and to experience the work we create both on and off stage. We look forward to engaging you in a wide range of contemporary plays, classics, and new work that explore the topics that touch the lives of our community.

Be a part of training the next generation of theatre artists!

[Signature]

John Culbert, Dean
Chicago Playworks
for Families and Young Audiences

Esperanza Rising
adapted for the stage by Lynne Alvarez from the book by Pam Munoz Ryan
music by Victor Zupanc directed by Lisa Portes musical direction by Mark Elliott
October 8-November 14, 2015
Recommended for ages 5 & up

Prospero’s Storm
based on William Shakespeare’s The Tempest
adapted and directed by Damon Kiely
January 14-February 20, 2016
Recommended for ages 8 & up

Peter Pan and Wendy
by Doug Rand from the novel by J.M. Barrie
directed by Ernie Nolan
April 21-May 28, 2016
Recommended for ages 5 & up

Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences was founded as the Goodman Children’s Theatre in 1925. Chicago’s longest continuously producing children’s theatre will open our 91st season with Esperanza Rising.

Our history is rich in creativity and connections with young people. We have served Chicago’s young audiences as the very first theatre experience for many, with total audiences numbering 1,407,348. We have performed in three major venues throughout our history, occupying our permanent home at DePaul’s Merle Reskin Theatre since 1989.

We provide Teacher Guides for each of our Chicago Playworks productions, created by our dramaturgy students who have a strong interest in theatre for youth. Guides are available on the web; if you would like a printed guide, please let us know.

Chicago Playworks Program Goals:
- To provide a live theatre experience for students and teachers in the Chicago metro area.
- To provide theatre for Chicago’s children that reflects their experiences in a contemporary, urban, and multi-ethnic environment.
- To serve principals, teachers, and students in their pursuit of Illinois State Learning Goals and Common Core Standards.
- To integrate performances and teacher guide information/activities into the classroom curriculum.
- To offer our performances within a workable, convenient time frame.
- To contact principals and teachers with valuable and solid information that will help them to make choices that fit their students’ needs.

Join us for Chicago Playworks 2015-2016 Season at DePaul’s historic Merle Reskin Theatre.

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION
If schools would like to apply for school bus transportation reimbursement for the plays in our 2014-2015 season, please contact us at theatregroupsales@depaul.edu. The bus reimbursement program is supported, in part, by Hilary Josephs.
On the Fullerton Stage

August Wilson’s

**Joe Turner’s Come and Gone**
directed by Phyllis E. Griffin
**November 6–15, 2015**
(previews 11/4 & 11/5)

**God’s Ear**
by Jenny Schwartz
directed by Andrew Peters
**February 12–21, 2016**
(previews 2/10 & 2/11)

**The Misanthrope**
by Molière
translated by Richard Wilbur
directed by Brian Balcom
**April 15–24, 2016**
(previews 4/13 & 4/14)

*World Premiere!*
**New Playwrights Series**
Title, Playwright, and Director TBA
**May 20–28, 2016**
(previews 5/18 & 5/19)

In the Healy Theatre

**The Lady from the Sea**
by Henrik Ibsen
translated by Pam Gems
directed by Erin Kraft
**October 23–November 1, 2015**
(previews 10/21 & 10/22)

**In the Blood**
by Suzan-Lori Parks
directed by Nathan Singh
**January 22–31, 2016**
(previews 1/20 & 1/21)

MFA16: *World Premiere!*
**The Translation of Likes**
a new play by Nambi E. Kelley
performed by graduating MFA 3 Actors
directed by Ron OJ Parson
**May 6-15, 2016**
(previews 5/4 & 5/5)

*Metamorphosis, Winter 2015 (Photo by Michael Brosilow)*
August Wilson’s stance on art is clear in his plays and in his history in the theatre. A pioneer of the playwriting tradition, Wilson used his work to enlighten and heighten the consciousness of his audiences through his culture. He released several plays in his lifetime, the most prominent being his Pittsburgh Cycle, a collection of 10 plays chronicling the African American experience through the 20th Century.

Wilson’s ability to capture the heart of his characters and to reflect the struggles he had seen throughout his communities is nothing short of poetry. Wilson was quick to call many states and cities his home because he was welcomed in the world of theatre. Though Pittsburgh was his home, Chicago, Detroit, New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, and more cities accepted him as their own.

Born in Pittsburgh on April 27, 1945, to a German baker and an African American cleaning woman, Wilson credits his mother with raising him and his siblings; his father was mostly absent during his childhood. He cemented this appreciation when he decided to use his mother’s maiden name as his surname when writing. He moved with his family from the Hill District to Hazelwood, a predominantly white neighborhood in Pittsburgh. He was the only African American student in his Catholic high school, resulting in an early exposure to threats, tormenting, and bullying. Wilson’s youth in the Hill District and his time in Hazelwood greatly affected him and inspired his writing for years to come. He later co-founded the Black Horizon Theatre in Pittsburgh “with the idea of using the theatre to politicize the community or... to raise the consciousness of the people.”

August Wilson eventually settled in Seattle, where he passed away on October 2, 2005.

August Wilson is a one-of-a-kind writer and poet who laid the groundwork for many contemporary playwrights to tackle the issues he addressed. In 2000, August Wilson received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from DePaul University. The degree citation read:

>You have chronicled the lives of your people, not through the analytical medium of history, but through the powerful force of drama, that which brings home to the audience not simply the facts but the affective experience of African Americans. You have brought us not simply a chronicle, but a state of being, so we will not simply understand the actions and fate of your characters, but rather feel as they do.

On the Fullerton Stage

directed by Phyllis E. Griffin
Dramaturgy by JD Garrastegui, BFA4/Dramaturgy/Criticism and Rachel Perzynski, BFA2/Dramturgy/Criticism

All art is political in the sense that it serves someone’s politics. Here in America, whites have a particular view of blacks. I think my plays offer them a different way to look at black Americans.

~August Wilson

(Photo from pbs.com)
Interview with the Director, Phyllis E. Griffin

JD Garrastegui: Was there any specific reason for doing this play now?

Phyllis E. Griffin: We selected the play because it is specific in terms of the African American Diaspora, along with the fact that it’s a period piece that challenges actors and designers. It also puts us on board with the rest of the city in celebration of August Wilson’s work.

Rachel Perzynski: What past experience do you have working on or with August Wilson?

PG: A young actor was playing a role in King Hedley II at the Goodman Theatre in 2000, and I was called in to work with him as a vocal coach. Somewhere along the way, I sat in on rehearsal and was able to meet the director, Marion McClinton. That’s how I met August Wilson. I noticed that he took copious notes and changed the script almost on a daily basis. It was a challenge for the actors, but they loved him and loved working on his poetry.

The second time I met him was when [DePaul] gave him the honorary doctorate [in 2000]. I was one of the people honored to be in his company when he was on campus, particularly at the dinner afterwards. That was a great limousine ride with conversation. We talked about Wole Soyinka and his book on reparations and forgiveness [The Burden of Memory, The Muse of Forgiveness]. I asked Wilson what he was reading, and he said that this is an important book that everyone needs to read. Of course, I went out and bought it immediately, and he was right.

Then, Gem of the Ocean [Goodman, 2003]. I worked with one actor in Gem of the Ocean who was having some difficulty vocally. Upon viewing the show, I could not leave the house after the curtain came down. The audience emptied, and I sat there along with my very good friends. All three of us thought, “What just hit us?” You know how you linger so long that the actors start to come out? They were struck by the fact that we were still sitting there, and I said, “I’m still in the show.” That’s how powerful I think his writings are.

The last interaction, besides Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, was Two Trains Running [The Theatre School, 2006]. I absolutely loved directing that play. I had a fabulous cast; we laughed through the first two weeks of rehearsal. And then we had to get down to business. But there was something about the laughter in the first two weeks that really helped the play to be buoyant in terms of the final production.

JD: This play is part of a larger series set in Pittsburgh. What does it mean for Chicago?

PG: I think that it could potentially remind Chicagoans that we had our own Great Migration coming into the city at the turn of the century. The struggle for the African American happened in the stockyards, in the factories. Chicago was part of the transition that America was going through.

RP: August Wilson said that he was “fascinated by the idea of an audience as a community of people who gather willingly to bear witness.” What do you want your audiences to bear witness to when seeing this play?

PG: First of all, bearing witness is like going to church. I hope that my audiences will be comfortable enough to be vocal as they journey through this play. Vocal with laughter, even vocal with sentences. If sentences get shouted out, I will feel that I have met with great success in terms of a sense of community. I want them to bear witness to their own history. And I don’t just mean black people. This is in America; it’s American History.

Listen to this

The rustic, early sound of recordings by black musicians underscore Joe Turner. Specifically, Willie Johnson’s Dark Was the Night, which represents a longing and a sense of loneliness that is in many of the characters.
**Playwright**

Jenny Schwartz talks to Sarah Stern, Associate Artistic Director of Vineyard Theatre, on the development of *God’s Ear*.

*Although the play’s plot and language—as well as some of its characters—are absurd and not realistic, the actors have absolutely approached their characters and the text in ways that are real and connected, while attending to the text’s strict rhythm and musicality. So I guess I work inside-out and outside-in at the same time. I started writing *God’s Ear* from an organic, emotional place. Then, I worked the language to try to create a structure to support the emotions, and a palate of words with which to work. I wanted to deal with the subjects of grief and estrangement in a way that felt honest and emotionally connected; the barrage of language that makes up the play is fueled by and grounded in the characters’ emotions and intentions. [One character] experiences a great deal of fury as she expresses her feelings and experiences through language and finds herself with no other vehicle than cliché.*

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**On the Fullerton Stage**

Dramaturgy by

Yasmin Mitchel, BFA2/Dramaturgy/Criticism and Lauren Quinlan, BFA3/Dramaturgy/Criticism

“It has been said time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens, but it’s never gone." ~Rose Kennedy

**Layers of Self**

Losing a child is an absolutely devastating, earth-shattering event for a couple to endure. There is no real way to prepare for it, and for Mel and Ted the event and its aftermath shake the core of their marriage until they become people they don’t recognize and a family unit that is no longer familiar. Though they remain a married couple seemingly strong on the outside, on the inside they struggle with how to recreate a semblance of the life they once had. To do this, they must confront their own pain, as individuals and as a family unit.

The pain of losing their son is a common pain between Mel and Ted but one they cannot share. Each experiences agonizing grief in isolation, and there is nothing the other can do to soothe the raw hurt that will never truly heal. This seclusion makes the ache all the worse because they can mirror and observe the other’s sorrow but can never help the other. The lost child is a part of each of them and something they created together out of love. That closeness affects each of them so acutely that any attempt to reach out a helpful, comforting hand brings only memories of the child and wounds the other person even more. Mel’s entire being to Ted, and Ted’s to Mel, is a constant biting reminder of their child. Seeing their marriage slip away is like having their son leave them all over again. That unthinkable tragedy is what makes Ted and Mel’s marriage, like so many marriages, begin to crumble and crack.

Jenny Schwartz’s haunting lyrical work on the nature of loss, language, and estrangement evokes this harrowing pain beautifully, pulling exquisite jewels out of biting words. Mel and Ted are both busy with their own pain, trying to patch up their own bleeding wounds alongside their equally battered partner. Focusing on their individual needs is the only way they can pass each day without spiraling, and that rigidity blinds them to their partner’s needs and bars them from communication that can heal. The heartbreak is one that cannot be expressed in words. Even a touch stings because, at some level, that touch is the touch of their son. This incongruity forever changes their relationship.

The lyrical, poetic structure of *God’s Ear* assists us in navigating that shift. Sometimes Mel and Ted speak to each other, sometimes at each other, but what is truly brave and commendable is that they can speak at all in the wake of such horrendous loss.
Interview with the Director, Andrew Peters

Lauren Quinlan: **How do you think the structure of God’s Ear supports the story?**

Andrew Peters: When I first read this play, I was really blown away by the poetry and the way the words are structured. It’s not your realistic “kitchen sink drama” where people are in a room speaking and the rules of the world are known. Rather, it’s one where the rules of the world really shift and change because the play is all about a huge event—a family dealing with the loss of a child. The play exists in a nebulous time where the rules change abruptly and feelings of disconnect prevail. One minute Mel and Ted are talking together at home, and then Ted leaves, taking business trips and frequenting hotel bars. The script explores the language and rules of loss and how this family is trying to come back together. This catastrophic event throws Mel and Ted into orbit, and they feel no sense of connection to each other until their daughter, Lanie, reminds them of what they can still latch onto. This all has a visceral impact because you’re hearing the words and how they flow. When I read them on the page I knew that they were meant to be spoken.

LQ: **How does this play speak to you?**

AP: When I realized that it is a family piece, there was something that really connected to me. I haven’t experienced, other than grandparents and such, a loss like that—I don’t have a child, so I can’t speak to that. What I could really connect to in this play is the idea of dealing with loss and how it feels to have the rules shatter in your world. This all has a visceral impact because you’re hearing the words and how they flow. When I read them on the page I knew that they were meant to be spoken. There are moments of strange joy and moments of “Why is this happening?” or “Why is there a song here?” I think that’s probably how this play interprets loss—it feels chaotic and tries to redirect you to think something completely different. But the memory of the son always anchors it. It’s not a play that you can get at from a purely intellectual place—you have to understand the nature of the words and how they connect to the voice. It’ll be fun to work with actors in that way.

LQ: **What message would you like to share with the audience through this play?**

AP: This piece feels like a purely personal story. I want to allow people into the world of the play, letting them take part in the emotional marathon. How loss is represented on stage must also be explored. I feel the family’s journey is like an odyssey, and exploring what that experience is and how it could happen onstage in an unexpected way is crucial for storytelling. Sometimes that will be very fantastic and theatrical, and other times it is just two people dealing with emotions they haven’t experienced together in a simple, clean-cut way. Personally, I’m drawn to plays that champion the theatricality of theatre because that presents opportunities to play and be imaginative and creative. This play is very much those things.

LQ: **How does God’s Ear speak to the larger community of Chicago?**

AP: There are parts of it that are nostalgic—you might hook into Lanie’s journey or hook into some of the symbols of childhood. I personally hooked into the GI Joes because I grew up with GI Joes. I want people to see a reflection of their own family or their own experiences—not that everyone has had to go through such a traumatic event. The play is theatrically representing an experience we will all likely go through—losing a loved one.

In terms of Chicago, it’s a great play to see in a city because Ted attempts to work through his pain by disappearing into the anonymous existence urban life grants. He’s trying to find “busy-ness” in his life that will allow him to not deal with the truth of it. That concept is important in a big city—there’s so much to do, and people move around so quickly. The play serves as a reminder that these people must come together as a family and as human beings and really connect.
Molière: The Father of French Comedy

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, known by his stage name Molière, was born January 15, 1622, in Paris, France. The young Molière was born into an affluent family: his mother was part of a prosperous bourgeois family; his father studied law but by day was an upholsterer. In 1631, he purchased the post of valet de chambre ordinaire et tapissier du Roi, valet of the King’s chamber and keeper of carpets and upholstery, from the court of Louis XIII. After completing his studies, Molière assumed the role from his father in 1641.

Two years later, Molière made a shocking decision to abandon his social status in favor of founding a theatre troupe, pursuing a career on the stage. He was inspired by the Italian improvisational style Commedia dell’arte, which his grandfather had introduced him to at a young age. At this time, France was not as culturally advanced as the rest of Europe, and it relied heavily on Italian art.

After his theatre troupe went bankrupt, Molière adopted his stage name to spare his father the embarrassment of his son being an actor. Molière almost immediately began performing again, piecing together a new troupe as he gained patronage from nobles. It was during this time that Molière began to move away from Commedia dell’arte and found his talent for satire and caricature.

After experiencing success outside of Paris, Molière was invited to perform for the King in Paris. This was significant not only because of the invitation, but because theatre troupes could only perform in the city of Paris with permission. Although he personally preferred tragedies, Molière found no success in writing them so he instead turned to his strength: comedy.

At this time, Molière created many plays with the intent to satirize social groups in France, including the Académie Française, a group created by Cardinal Richelieu. Its purpose was to establish rules for French theatre. At this time in France, theatre was governed by a very strict set of rules applicable to elements like structure, language, and character behavior.

Growing social and political tensions in France turned many of Molière’s once-friends and supporters into enemies who would often spread rumors and fabricate scandals about him. With continued support from King Louis XIV, Molière was able to continue creating theatre with limited damage done to his reputation and success.

Furthermore, the King became the official sponsor of Molière’s troupe even after the 1664 debut of Tartuffe, which depicted hypocrisy of the dominant classes in France and was met with contempt before being outright banned. Luckily, a year later, Molière’s company was given the title Troupe du Roi, Troupe of the King.

Although he often satirized the aristocracy in France, Molière made sure not to disrespect the monarchy. King Louis XIV was determined to build the culture of France and strongly supported the arts.
In 1666, Molière’s *Le Misanthrope (The Misanthrope)* was first produced. It’s larger-than-life characters were mockeries of specific people Molière knew. Although the characters appeared to act sophisticated, they were written in such a way that their deeply flawed personalities were obvious to the audience. Despite now being considered his most refined and well-written masterpiece, it was a commercial flop at the time.

Afterwards, Molière fell ill with tuberculosis, though he continued to work as much as he could. During a performance of *Le Malade Imaginaire (The Imaginary Invalid)*, Molière began coughing up blood and collapsed onstage. Although he insisted upon finishing the performance, he collapsed a second time in a fit of coughing before being taken home, where he died later that night.

Although Molière’s work was criticized at the time, mostly by those mocked in his plays, he is regarded as the father of French comedy.

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**Interview with the Translator, Richard Wilbur**

by Dana Gioia

It would be hard to overpraise Richard Wilbur’s special genius for verse translation. Whether re-creating the witty badinage of Molière or the high tragic music of Racine and Corneille, Wilbur has the uncanny ability to create English versions that never feel like translations. They read and play as if they were originally written in English. The same virtue is equally evident in his extensive translations of lyric poetry from French, Italian, Russian, and Romanian. The distinction, variety, and extent of his efforts have earned him a position as one of the greatest translators in the history of American poetry. His French translations alone fill half a bookshelf.

**What prompted your first translation of Molière [in 1955]?**

By 1952, T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry had brought verse drama to Broadway, and in Cambridge, the Poets’ Theatre was in high gear. I proposed to the Guggenheim Foundation that I write a verse play, but once I was funded and established in an adobe study in New Mexico, I proved unripe for the task. It then occurred to me that by translating *The Misanthrope*, I could keep my word and learn something.

**Can you describe your process of translating Molière?**

I read the play, mostly unassisted by scholarship or criticism, and get to know its characters and milieu. Then I render it couplet by couplet, aiming for a maximum fidelity to sense, form and tone. My chief virtue as a translator is stubbornness: I will spend a whole spring day, a perfect day for tennis, getting one or two lines right. Now that I have seen some splendid productions of my Molière translations, I render them in what I hope is the manner of Brian Bedford or Sada Thompson.

**What is the hardest part of translating Molière?**

The hardest thing is to find, playing with and against the pentameter, just the right timing for a witty or comical line.

**How does Molière speak to contemporary American audiences?**

Molière’s language is readily understood by any American audience. So are the plots of his major comedies, which study the effect of an unbalanced central figure on those about him. Molière’s idea of what is normal, natural or balanced is very much like our own, and so there is no need for “updating.” I have no patience with the sort of director who, thinking to render Alceste accessible, has him dress and behave like a hippie who “tells it like it is.” That did happen once, and I have not forgotten it.

Poet Dana Gioia served as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts from 2004 to 2009. This article was funded by the Sidney E. Frank Foundation. It first appeared in American Theatre magazine in April 2009.

http://www.tcg.org/publications/books/moliere/wilbur_interview.pdf
Enter the Mermaid

The Lady from the Sea is the tale of a woman who struggles to choose between two lives. One is a life of stability and community on land. The other is a life of fascination and the unknown on the ocean. Torn between the land and sea, people in her new town think of Ellida Wangel as a mermaid. This mythical nautical reference is only the beginning of Ibsen’s references to mythology in The Lady from the Sea.

The strongest influence of Norse mythology within the play is the naming of his protagonist, Ellida. In myth, The Ellida was King Viking’s ship, given to him by his father and subsequently given to Viking’s son, Thorsten. The Ellida is said to have been the fastest ship in all existence and is not held together by nails, but by the planks that have grown together. The Ellida, along with her sister ship, The Angurvaldal, are passed down through the family of Norse gods over several generations and defy all logic of a regular ship. By naming his protagonist Ellida, Ibsen ties her to the sea and shapes her into a character who is impossible to detach from the supernatural.

Ellida’s first appearance in the play is marked with her husband’s joke “Enter the mermaid.” Traditionally in literature, mermaids are not seen as innately good beings. They are often depicted as evil, wrongdoing, and tempestuous. Versions of mermaids such as sirens, harpys, and ondines are frequently “femme fatales”—women who distract men on the sea, usually causing them to shipwreck. The first positive description of a mermaid was in the tale by Hans Christian Andersen, The Little Mermaid, written about 50 years before The Lady from the Sea. His most well-known fairy tale, The Little Mermaid tells the story of a mermaid who is fascinated by the world above the surface of her watery home. In order to fulfill her desires, marry a human prince, and obtain an everlasting soul, the Little Mermaid gives up her voice to have legs. When she gets to the surface, every time she takes a step it feels like she’s walking on knives. She believes that her love for the Prince is worth her pain, but in the end, he chooses another woman as his wife. The mermaid seeks a way to go back to the sea and finds that the only way to become a mermaid again is to kill the Prince and spill his blood on her feet. She can’t kill him and kills herself, becoming seafoam like all Mer-folk do when they die. Ellida is a strange reflection of this lost little mermaid. She is stuck on the other side of the coin, a woman on land longing for the sea and a life connected to water and the world beyond.

Both influences drive The Lady from the Sea to be interpreted much differently than Ibsen’s other living room dramas. The fairy tale and mythological worlds that Ibsen draws from bring a sense of poetic realities and the supernatural that is rare in his other works. Director Erin Kraft’s (MFA2/Directing) The Lady from the Sea is sure to bring to life a metaphorical mermaid in the present who is haunted by the ghosts of her past. In order to know her future, you’ll have to see the play.

Henrik Ibsen and The Lady from the Sea

Known as the father of modern realism, Henrik Ibsen is one of the most popular and influential playwrights in the Western world. His work is not only the second most performed in the world, but his work influenced many other writers including George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, Arthur Miller, Eugene O’Neill, and James Joyce, among others.

Ibsen was born in a small port town in Norway in 1828. Unlike many “cultured” European countries, Norway still relied upon natural elements, such as the water. This harsh environment not only supported the strong supernatural beliefs held by the people but would also become the setting for many of Ibsen’s plays such as The Lady from The Sea. Although Ibsen’s early childhood was a time of prosperity, the family experienced financial ruin when Ibsen was around seven years old.
This was a significant time in his life, with much of his later work mirroring his memories of his parents and dealing with issues like financial trouble, dark secrets hidden from society, and the moral problems that stem these things.

Even though he wrote his first play at fifteen and was first published at twenty-two, Ibsen’s plays were largely unpopular. After his failures as a playwright left his wife, son, and himself living in near-poverty, he went to Sorrento, Italy, in a self-imposed exile at the age of thirty-six. During this time, Ibsen began reading the work of Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard and reflected his ideas in his plays. Afterwards, Ibsen experienced both popular and financial success as a playwright. As his success and confidence grew, Ibsen began placing his own beliefs into his work. During this Golden Age, he wrote some of his most famous plays including *Ghosts*, *A Doll’s House*, and *An Enemy of the People*. His work at this time was considered controversial and scandalous because he often challenged the expectation of strict morals in family life.

As a Modernist, Ibsen used his plays to question old and established modes of thinking. Ibsen created works that contained disconcerting conclusions in an attempt to reveal the realities behind human facades. It was during this period that Ibsen wrote *The Lady from the Sea*, which centers on a strong female protagonist and also deals with secrets, morality, and choice. Having seen many women in his life be pressured into submission, Ibsen was particularly drawn to traditional ideas about the narrow identities women were assigned by society. It is believed that Ibsen based the character of Ellida on Magdelene Thoreson, Ibsen’s mother-in-law, who had a love affair much like Ellida’s.

Written in the period between Ibsen’s Golden Age and his later works, *The Lady from the Sea* captures Ibsen’s interest in social and familial issues as well as his desire to understand realities that are hidden from society. Despite his many famous and influential works, *The Lady from the Sea* is truly unique among Ibsen’s writings, in many ways combining the best elements of his varied and complicated life.

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**Interview with the Director, Erin Kraft**

_Shea Corpora: What first drew you to *The Lady from the Sea*?_

_Erin Kraft:_ The longing. I remember being a little kid having tea parties at the bottom of the pool, wishing I never had to go back to the surface. Loving the feeling of weightlessness and being surrounded. Loving the distortion of sound, light, and shapes beneath the surface. It brought me the moments of intense peace and beauty. I still find the water hypnotic. I’d love to stay down there. But I’d drown if I tried.

When Ibsen wrote this play, the theory of evolution was only about 30 years old. People were still grappling with the idea that humans came from fish, and in *The Lady from the Sea* Ellida wonders, “If men had lived on the sea, in the sea…from the very beginning…we would be different creatures. Quite different. Better perhaps. Happier.” She feels she doesn’t belong in her new home but doesn’t know if she can go back. I’m heartbroken because the two main characters are haunted by their pasts. They can’t seem to figure out how to exorcise those ghosts. The humor, grief, and passion threaded through the story all spoke to me—the way Ibsen overlaps fear and desire is especially compelling.

_SC: What are you exploring in the play?_

_EK:_ In a letter to a friend, Ibsen wrote: “I believe that none of us can do anything other or anything better than realize ourselves in spirit and in truth.” Yeah, totally, Ibsen, but how? Like most people (including the folks in *The Lady from the Sea* and in DePaul hallways), I struggle with balancing my responsibilities to myself with my responsibilities to other people.

As a newlywed and a new transplant to Chicago, I also think a lot about what makes a marriage and what makes a home. In my spare time, I try to figure out how to “realize myself in spirit and in truth.” The play is full of worthwhile questions for a DePaul audience to explore: Where do you belong? Have you made the right life decisions? Are you sure? What do you owe to yourself, and what do you owe to the people you love?
Thoughts on the Play

The red A. Meaning slut, adulterer, shame. But does that shame belong with the woman who wears it or the people who pinned it on her?

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, a fictional account of true events published in 1850, is set in 1600s Boston. It shows us a woman, a daughter, a family, judged and ostracized because of societal norms; the necessity of a husband, the impropriety of a child without a father. Hester Prynne, the heroine of the novel, is forced to wear her sin on her chest and live the duration of her life in shame and exile because of social systems.

On the other hand, Suzan Lori-Parks’ *In the Blood*, based on Hawthorne’s novel, is set here and now (quite literally she writes, “Place: Here Time: Now”), 400 years of social and political evolution later. In this version of the story, our heroine is Hester La Negrita, a black, homeless, single mother of five. She is a member of a race and class most infamously disadvantaged, ostracized, judged, and punished since the beginning of “modern” times in this country, not for wearing a letter on their clothes, but for the very color of their skin.

This play is about our country’s political and social systems and the people swept up in them. Me, and you, and Hester La Negrita, and her children. It asks you to think about these systems, their long history, and where you fit into the picture. Because the fact is, in this country, some people inherit a history which goes on punishing them. They are born into a system which puts them at a disadvantage simply because of who they are; they are judged and ostracized by social norms that make the color of their skin as damning as a red letter “A” pinned to their chest. And these systems, this oppression, won’t quit. This play, the here and the now, could be any here and now from 1600s Boston to present day Chicago, Ferguson, Atlanta. Pick a city; pick a town. History is time that won’t quit.

Theatre seems mired in the interest of stating some point, or tugging some heartstring, or landing a laugh, or making a splash, or wagging a finger. In no other art form are the intentions so slim! As a playwright, I try to do many things: explore the form, ask questions, make a good show, tell a good story, ask more questions, take nothing for granted.
Jeremy Martens: *What drew you to In the Blood?*

Nathan Singh: After reading this play, I felt so shaken and inspired by the story, I knew I had to do it. I was drawn to the protagonist, Hester La Negrita and her children. I not only felt their pain, but their hopes and dreams among this bleak world. It was also the first time I experienced a contemporary American tragedy. A play that represents the screams and cries of our nation. Parks often says these characters were speaking to her while she was writing this play. They were certainly in the room when I presented it to The Theatre School.

**JM:** *Why is this play important to perform today?*

**NS:** I’m Indian and there is this social structure in India called the caste-system. It’s a systematic hierarchy based on where you were born, economic status, color of skin, family status/history, and other factors. There have been a lot of recent articles exploring our equivalent. The American caste-system. Especially how it is rooted in our own culture and history. The amazing thing about this play is that Parks is exploring this particular theme on a deeply human level. It doesn’t feel like there is a big platform or message shoved in the audience’s face. We are viewing this through the humans that are portrayed on-stage.

**JM:** *What are you hoping that audiences will gain/learn/react to in your production?*

**NS:** I’m more interested in hearing what the audience has to say about this play and the different things they feel while watching it. However, I can say that this is a brave play for brave audiences who want something powerful from their theatre-going experience, who want to confront and learn more about who we are as Americans.

**The Possession of Suzan-Lori Parks**

written by Shawn-Marie Garrett, 2006, from the Theatre Communications Group

Parks’ figures are nothing if not resilient; their very resilience makes a mockery of history’s boomeranging violence as well as its even more ominous interludes of silence. And Parks’ dramaturgy, negotiating and balancing political commitment, irony and play, ultimately engineers its own boomerang effect: Parks’ audiences, whatever their backgrounds, travel through her theatre’s repetitions and revisions to arrive at an understanding that they, too, must count themselves among history’s dupes. Parks challenges audiences to test with her the theory that seeing more deeply into our shared history is partly a matter of looking closer and longer. She takes her audiences through double- (and triple-) takes, asks them to observe what changes and what remains the same over the span of historical and performance time, and to take nothing at face value—particularly not the language through which history exerts its force.
What is NPS?

“I think of playwriting as simultaneously creating and solving a massive problem,” muses 4th-year BFA Jared Hecht when he was asked to explain how he created the play that took center stage last May. Jared began work on Video Galaxy in the fall of his third year at The Theatre School and worked on his text with Carlos Murillo, the head of Playwriting, and his classmates, for nearly a year and a half.

Each year, one student receives the honor of producing their play in full scale—with a team of directors, designers, and actors. This event is referred to as the New Playwrights Series or NPS. This production usually occurs in May, during the Wrights of Spring Festival, an event for up-and-coming playwrights to showcase what they have been working on throughout the year. Staged readings produced during this festival are considered for the next season’s NPS premiere. Having plays produced in this manner is one of the best ways for a young playwright to determine changes that still need to be made to the play, and according to Carlos, “A full production of a play is a gift to any writer. That we can give some of our playwrights productions that are fully rehearsed and designed is a major learning experience for them that few programs in the country can provide to undergraduate playwrights.”

How do Theatre School students go about writing full-length plays?

It all starts about 20 months before the production opens. Luckily for students, Wrights of Spring Festival is at the end of the school year. Third-year students have the entire year of playwriting to generate the play they will present as a candidate for NPS.

Third-year playwrights stay warm in the winter by the quick movements of their fingers across their keyboards. This is the time when all raw material from fall quarter becomes the first draft of the play. Carlos explains that this time includes “lots of peer feedback, rewriting, trial and error, and hopefully, a growing clarity of what the playwright wants the play to become.” He mentioned that between the beginning and the end of the process, most playwrights go through, on average, nearly a dozen drafts of their play.

Moving forward from the Wrights of Spring Festival, a decision is made over the summer. The playwright and play for the upcoming NPS production at The Theatre School is chosen. After that decision is made, an artistic team is decided, and production meetings begin in November. A cast will be set in late February of 2016, and rehearsals kick off in April, giving students about six weeks to produce the play.

Carlos explains, “The playwright is constantly working through the whole process—and once she or he is in the room with actors, the working process shifts again—the writer gets to see the work in three dimensions with living, breathing actors, and that often has a huge impact on rewrites, etc.”

Once the team has reached this point, opening night is inevitable, and the production runs before there is time to count all of the small revisions in the script.

It is a stressful, but immensely rewarding process for everyone involved, especially that one 4th-year playwright. The New Playwrights Series is a unique and truly special experience each year that fully showcases the talent that The Theatre School offers.
Meet the Playwrights

For 3rd-year playwriting majors, NPS are three of the most important letters to be uttered in The Theatre School hallways. For more than a year, these playwrights word and re-word and second guess their play until they reach playwriting nirvana. During the summer of 2015, one very talented, hard working writer will have his or her play chosen to be produced at The Theatre School. The candidates for the 2015-2016 NPS play include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Max Barr</th>
<th>Grace Cunyus</th>
<th>Dylan Fahoom</th>
<th>Caro Macon</th>
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<td>Max Barr claims to be the “most uninteresting, weird person” any one can ever meet. As a writer, he draws mostly from his own life, the relationships of the people who surround his everyday life, and his own personal stories. Max draws inspiration from musical muses such as Joy Williams, The Civil Wars, Brandi Carlile, Sarah Bareilles, and any artist capable of writing an “honest lyric and playing acoustic guitar.” Max’s play focuses on an “estranged family who ends up in their childhood home with their dying mother.”</td>
<td>Grace Cunyus, a native Texan, is influenced by her fellow playwrights, her own experiences, Sia, and “the usual people like Ghandi and Eleanor Roosevelt.” Music plays a big role in the writing process for Grace: “I usually have a playlist for every character as well as a playlist to listen to while I write.” Grace is focusing on two high school teenagers, Clara and Mykelti, who want to go to college together and become singers. However, pregnancy and love get in the way of their dreams.</td>
<td>Dylan’s play focuses on questions surrounding faith and identity. The subject matter is drawn from real life experiences. Dylan describes himself as “a romantic, short, Arab, and controversial” who writes mostly about “specific and defined communities.” Drawing inspiration from political figures/activists like John Berger, Arundhati Roy, Toni Morrison, Dave Hare, Hamid Dabashi, Rebecca Solnit, and Alice Walker, Dylan describes his work as “always political.”</td>
<td>Caro, a “sad/ happy hybrid” “ploetry” (play poetry) writer, is influenced by her favorite author, Deborah Eisenberg, female poets like Maggie Nelson, Mary Ruefle, and Anne Carson, and female playwrights Phyllis Nagy, Sarah Ruhl, and Caryl Churchill. Her play, Red Dot, is about “two sisters in a race to womanhood.” This particular piece of writing is birthed from Caro’s interest in writing about women, womanhood, and her fascination with puberty and youth.</td>
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Playwright Jared Hecht willingly gives advice to future writers: “If I had any advice for playwrights or anybody who’s trying to write anything, I’d just say write more and read more. Write more than you do, read more than you do, and if you’re feeling up to it, delete your Netflix account.”

All right, 3rd-year playwrights, delete those Netflix accounts. One of you has a long year ahead.
Nambi E. Kelley has recently made headlines with her play adaptation of the novel by Richard Wright, *Native Son*. Kelley grew up in Chicago, in the area where *Native Son* is set. She studied playwriting at The Theatre School, earning her BFA before receiving her MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College. Since then, Kelley’s career has been an illustrious one. As a playwright, along with *Native Son*, she has adapted *The Book of Living and Dying*, which was performed in Singapore. She has written plays for Goodman Theatre, American Theatre of Harlem, and Chicago Dramatists. Kelley has also held a successful career as an actor, with roles in television shows like *Person of Interest* and *Elementary*. She was Laura in Steppenwolf Theatre Company’s *The Glass Menagerie* (2008) and Risa in the Goodman Theatre’s *Two Trains Running* (2015).

**How does it feel to be working at the Theatre School again?**

The Theatre School is not the same school it was when I was there. So, it’s a brand new experience for me.

**What types of theatre inspire you?**

I like theatre that takes chances. When I walk into a theatre and see a kitchen sink and a couch, a part of my heart sinks a little. I like theatre that explores form and pushes the envelope of the imagination.

**So far, what has been your approach when you think about and writing the MFA16 script?**

I had an idea for a show right around the same time I was approached about the commission. It is a perfect fit.

**How does Chicago influence your writing?**

I was raised in Chicago so it is an intrinsic setting to all my plays.

**What play, musical, screenplay, etc., do you wish you had written and why?**

*Tommy*. I LOVE *Tommy*.

**Can you give us a glimpse into your process as a playwright? Where do you start when tackling a new piece?**

It depends on the play. Usually I just start with a blank page and go. Whatever happens next is up to the Gods.

Nambi E. Kelley’s play, *Native Son*, was recently honored as one of 53 recommended new plays written by woman and trans-identified playwrights, [THE LIST 2015](http://thekilroys.org/list-2015/), curated by The Kilroys, serves as a tool for producers committed to ending the systemic underrepresentation of female and trans playwrights in the American theatre. Several DePaul alums share her honor.
Ron OJ Parson is a prominent veteran director and performer in the Chicago theatre scene as well as the greater national industry. Before coming into the world of Chicago theatre, Ron, a native of Buffalo, was making splashes in New York. He then made the trek to Michigan to study at the University of Michigan’s professional theatre program. After arriving in Chicago, Ron founded and served as Artistic Director of the Onyx Theatre Ensemble of Chicago and later became a co-founder and co-director of Ripe Mango Productions. Other theatres Ron has worked with include Chicago Theatre Company, Victory Gardens Theater, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago Dramatists, Northlight, Court Theatre, Black Ensemble Theatre, ETA Creative Arts Foundation, and Writers’ Theatre.

If you could sum up your directing style in three words, what would they be?


I was recently reading an interview with you in TheatreInChicago. You said you didn’t like the word ‘blocking’ when you work.

Yeah, we call it crafting because blocking blocks creativity. We want to create, and we want everyone to be in a space to create.

Are you familiar with Nambi Kelley’s work?

I’ve known Nambi for about 20 years now, so I would say yes. We go back to 1995 and have worked together quite a few times in that span. She’s fantastic.

What challenges do you think you’ll encounter working on a new play like this?

I guess just the “newness” of it, not knowing what we’re specifically trying to say until we find it. It will be a very open and creative process. The challenge of that is always exploring, venting, and discovering. That will be very challenging, but challenges are what make it interesting.

Is there a particular production that you can recall from your extensive resume that always sticks out to you as a favorite or one you’re most proud of?

Let Me Live at the Goodman Studio (1998). That, to me, was my most compelling achievement. That was a play by OyamO, who is a strong influence on Nambi’s writing as well. It’s very non-linear. The play’s only been done twice, and he didn’t feel the need to produce it again after ours. Goodman can do things that other theatres can’t. I think he saw something because he was there with us for the process. We created it not necessarily like this [MFA], but we created a lot of it during rehearsal. He greatly enjoyed that. I don’t know, I’m sure people were probably scared of it a bit. It was very intense.

Have you ever written a play? If so, did you get to direct it?

I’ve written a couple of plays, but nothing has ever been done with any of them. It was more to see what I could come up with and to explore. But I have an idea in mind that I want to try in the next, subsequent years. Suspense thriller. That’s all I’ll say about it. That’s my genre. I love that. We just did Wait Until Dark at Court Theatre (2009), and it was a very good production in my opinion. That genre always excites me.

So is that what we can expect from MFA16? Possibly a Suspense Thriller?

We’ll see. Nambi and I haven’t really discussed yet, and since it’s so early in the process, it’s impossible to tell. But it would be cool to get deep with a murder mystery or something like that.

As somebody with as extensive and exciting a resume as yours in the world of theatre, I have to ask: what is one piece of advice you can dispense to young artists about working in the theatre?

Persevere. What do they say? The 4 p’s. Patience. Perservance. Positivity. And there’s a fourth one I can’t think of.

Play?

Ha, yeah definitely. Play around with it.
2015-2016 Chicago Playworks Season
at DePaul’s Merle Reskin Theatre, 60 E. Balbo Drive, Chicago

**Esperanza Rising**
by Lynne Alvarez, based on the book by Pam Muñoz Ryan, music by Victor Zupanc
directed by Lisa Portes, musical direction by Mark Elliott
recommended for ages 8 and up
October 8 - November 14, 2015
- Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 10/13, 10/20, 10/27, 11/3, 11/10
- Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 10/8, 10/15, 10/22**, 10/29+, 11/5, 11/12
- Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 10/10, 10/17, 10/24, 11/7**, 11/14

**Prospero’s Storm**
based on William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, adapted and directed by Damon Kiely
recommended for ages 8 and up
January 14 - February 20, 2016
- Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 1/19, 1/26, 2/2, 2/9, 2/16
- Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 1/14, 1/21, 1/28**, 2/4, 2/11, 2/18
- Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 1/16, 1/23, 1/30, 2/13**, 2/20

**Peter Pan and Wendy**
adapted by Doug Rand from the novel by J.M. Barrie, directed by Ernie Nolan
recommended for all ages
April 21 - May 28, 2016
- Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 4/26, 5/3, 5/10, 5/17, 5/24
- Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 4/21, 4/28, 5/5**, 5/12+, 5/19, 5/26
- Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 4/23, 4/30, 5/7, 5/14+, 5/28

+ASL/American Sign Language Interpreting, **Post-Show Discussion

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2015-2016 Theatre School Season
at 2350 N. Racine, Chicago

On the Fullerton Stage

**August Wilson’s Joe Turner’s Come and Gone**
directed by Phyllis E. Griffin
November 6 – 15, 2015 (previews 11/4 & 11/5)

**God’s Ear**
by Jenny Schwartz
directed by Andrew Peters
February 12 – 21, 2016 (previews 2/10 & 2/11)

**The Misanthrope**
by Molière, translated by Richard Wilbur
directed by Brian Balcom
April 15 – 24, 2016 (previews 4/13 & 4/14)

**New Playwrights Series The Women Eat Chocolate**
by Caroline Macon, directed by Heidi Stillman
May 20 – 28, 2016 (previews 5/18 & 5/19)

In the Healy Theatre

**The Lady from the Sea**
by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Pam Gems
directed by Erin Kraft
October 23 – November 1, 2015 (previews 10/21 & 10/22)

**In the Blood**
by Suzan-Lori Parks
directed by Nathan Singh
January 22 – 31, 2016 (previews 1/20 & 1/21)

**MFA16 The Translation of Likes**
by Nambi E. Kelley
directed by Ron OJ Parson
An ensemble piece performed by MFA III actors
May 6 - 15, 2016 (previews 5/4 & 5/5)

Check the web for performance dates and times.

Details as of date of publication; subject to change. Check the web for ASL and Audio Described performances.

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