

EAST TEXAS HOT LINKS



BY
EUGENE LEE

DIRECTED BY
RON OJ PARSON

SEPT 6 - 29



COURT THEATRE



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

WELCOME

Dear Court Theatre Family,

Welcome to the first production of the 2024/25 season, Eugene Lee's *East Texas Hot Links* directed by Resident Artist Ron OJ Parson.

East Texas was Ron's first play in Chicago. It first resonated with Ron as a young artist with Onyx Theatre Ensemble, when he was building a creative home. Thirty years later, he's since established that home in Chicago and at Court Theatre and gone on to become one of the most celebrated directors in the city. That richness of experience is unmatched, and the chance to return to one of his creative touchstones is particularly special. It's a homecoming.

This play is a classic, akin to Shakespeare, August Wilson, and Ntozake Shange. One key to the enduring relevance of these playwrights lies in the meter of their language; it allows us to enter effortlessly into the language of daily life and everyday people. The dialogue sings. Lee's lyricism, story, and characters may be rooted in the specific context of a rural Black population in East Texas in the 1950s, but they have wider resonance and speak to deeply human truths that span cultures and time. That is why Ron has returned to this story again and again; that is why we're staging it here and now.

Written in the 1990s but set in the 1950s, *East Texas Hot Links* immerses us in America's past to reflect on its future. This play is a conversation about the insidious and stubborn legacy of Jim Crow and racism in this country; oppression feeding inter- and intraracial violence; power and hatred; hope and love. In that way, *East Texas Hot Links* is both a mirror and an invitation. To experience something on the stage allows us to better understand it, and if we can understand it, only then can we understand our role in it. If we don't shy away from who we were (and are), we can consider who we are to become.

We hope you accept this invitation. Thank you for joining us for *East Texas Hot Links* and we hope you'll join us for the rest of the 2024/25 season for another incredible year of theatre.

With gratitude,



Angel Ysaguirre
Executive Director

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COURT THEATRE

ANGEL YSAGUIRRE, *Executive Director*

SEPT 6 - 29, 2024

EAST TEXAS HOT LINKS

BY
EUGENE LEE

DIRECTED BY
RON OJ PARSON

Scenic Design by Jack Magaw U.S.A.

Costume Design by

Christine Pascual U.S.A. and Janice Pytel U.S.A.

Lighting Design by Jason Lynch U.S.A.

Sound Design by André Pluess U.S.A.

and Josh McCammon

Kamesha Khan, Production Dramaturg

Sheryl Williams, Culture and Consent Consultant

Joe Foust, Fight Director

Jim Guy, Special Effects Consultant and

Firearms Coordinator

Casting by Becca McCracken C.S.A

Jaclynn Joslin,* Production Stage Manager

Kate Ocker,* Assistant Stage Manager

Setting: The Top o' the Hill Cafe, early summer 1955, in the piney woods of East Texas.

Please note: This production contains simulated smoking, flashing lights, gunshots, and water-based smoke and haze.

Sponsored by

Ron OJ Parson's residency
made possible by



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Joyce
Foundation

East Texas Hot Links is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com.

The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

*Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Costume design inspired by Christine Pascual's design for the 2016/17 production of *East Texas Hot Links* directed by Ron OJ Parson at Writers Theatre.

Cover art by Daniel Minter.

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Court Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Court Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American Theatre, the League of Resident Theatres, the Illinois Humanities Council, and the League of Chicago Theatres.

This project is partially supported by a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events. Court Theatre acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.



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CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

<i>Roy Moore</i>	Kelvin Roston Jr.*
<i>XL Dancer</i>	Juwan Lockett*
<i>Charlesetta Simpkins</i>	AnJi White*
<i>Columbus Frye</i>	Alfred H. Wilson*
<i>Adolph</i>	Willie B.
<i>Delmus Green</i>	David Dowd
<i>Buckshot</i>	Geno Walker
<i>Boochie Reed</i>	A.C. Smith*

Understudies:

Lewon Johns (*Roy Moore*)

Anthony Irons* (*Columbus Frye/Adolph*)

Jamaque Newberry (*Buckshot/Boochie Reed*)

Patrick Newson Jr. (*Delmus Green/XL Dancer*)

Marlene Slaughter (*Charlesetta Simpkins*)

*Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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COURT THEATRE

2024/25
SEASON

NOV/DEC 2024

FALSETTOS

Music and Lyrics by William Finn

Book by William Finn and James Lapine

Produced in partnership with TimeLine Theatre Company

Directed by Nick Bowling, TimeLine Associate Artistic Director



FEB/MAR 2025

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

By Lorraine Hansberry

Directed by Associate Artistic Director

Gabrielle Randle-Bent



WORLD PREMIERE

APR/MAY 2025

BERLIN

By Mickle Maher

Based on the graphic novel by Jason Lutes

Directed by Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director Charles Newell



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PRODUCTION CREW

Associate Director	Aaron Mays
Movement Consultant	Cristin Carole
Associate Casting Director	Celeste M. Cooper
Assistant Scenic Designer	Lindsay Mummert U.S.A.
Scenic Artists.....	Michael A.C. Besancon U.S.A., Sarah Lewis U.S.A.
Carpenter	Cordell Brown
Assistant Costume Designer	Ophena De La Rosa
Hair and Wig Design.....	Megan E. Pirtle
Interim Costume Shop Manager.....	Elle Erickson
Costume Shop Assistant	Jessica Donaldson
Draper/First Hand	Eric Guy
Tailor	Paul Chang Custom Tailors
Wardrobe Technician/Deck Crew	Sebastian Van Horn
Associate Lighting Designer	Ryan Burkle
Assistant Lighting Supervisor	Joel Zishuk
Electricians	Emily Brown, Ryan Burkle, Ann Huerta, Kenneth Martin, Dare Wedgeworth
Audio Engineer	Ian C. Weber
Floor Manager	Alex Umekubo



Scenic Artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E. Local USA829, AFL-CIO, CLC.

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"A MASTERPIECE" - CHICAGO TRIBUNE

AN ILIAD

BY LISA PETERSON & DENIS O'HARE
BASED ON HOMER'S *THE ILIAD*
DIRECTED BY CHARLES NEWELL
FEATURING TIMOTHY EDWARD KANE
June 4 – 29, 2025

court

A timely and gripping retelling of Homer's epic poem, *An Iliad* returns to Court's stage, illuminating the human cost of conflict with breathtaking urgency. **Timothy Edward Kane** reprises his role as The Poet.

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Subscribe to the 24/25 Season for discounted tickets to *An Iliad*.

LIFE IS A CONSTANT JOURNEY HOME

BY DIRECTOR RON OJ PARSON

When I arrived from New York in 1994, I had no idea what was ahead of me in the Chi. My friend, actor Stephen McKinley Henderson—who will be inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in November—was the one who first suggested I come to Chicago. Stephen had worked with the director Robert Falls at Wisdom Bridge Theatre, and he said the city had a nice vibe; Robert moved on to the Goodman in 1986.

Another friend, actor Alfred H. Wilson, had already moved here and was the first Black Marketing Director at Goodman Theatre. We knew each other from an improv group in Flint, Michigan—Henri Watkins, Alfred, and I were in a group called Optic Illusion at McCree Theatre (long before *In Living Color*). We knew that Chicago was the place for improv, but theatre is what we thrived on.

I didn't think I could break into Chicago, but Alfred convinced me and I came over. Alfred helped me audition for a play at Goodman—*I Am A Man* by Charles "Oyamo" Gordon (a friend from my New York days)—and low and behold, I got cast. Little did I know that that would be the start of something big: it kicked off my relationship with a thriving theatre community and led to Alfred and I founding the Onyx Theatre Ensemble.

Alfred had the idea for Onyx, but we didn't know where to begin. There were only a few Black theatres back then—Jackie Taylor's Black Ensemble Theater, of course; the Chicago Theatre Company, with Douglas Alan-Mann; Abena Joan Brown's eta Creative Arts Foundation, where I met actor and educator Runako Jahi, who got me my first directing job; and Reginald Lawrence's MPAACT. We liked Victory Gardens Theater and how diverse they were in the shows they cast, the theatres they worked with, and their productions (they were one of the first theatres I had the pleasure of working for, thanks to Dennis Zacek and Jaye Stewart). We liked how they were a professional theatre doing plays for and by all of Chicago, so

we decided to do something similar with Onyx. We became an Equity theatre pretty quickly, and we even played a role in the Chicago Area Theatre (CAT-N) Equity agreement. Onyx was new, but we weren't playing around.

So then we had to decide what show to start with. As luck would have it, I talked to my homeboy from western New York, playwright and actor Ruben Santiago-Hudson, and without hesitation, he suggested a play he had just been in at the Public Theater: *East Texas Hot Links* by Eugene Lee, who was a prominent actor and playwright for the Negro Ensemble Company, Inc. in New York at the time. Thus *East Texas* it was, and the rest is history. Onyx Theatre Ensemble was only around for about five years, and our final show was a co-production at the Goodman. We staged *Let Me Live* by Oyamo, a full-circle moment for me, given that I got my start in an Oyamo play at Goodman all those years ago.

When Onyx did *East Texas Hot Links* in 1994 and 1998, we were on the North Side and not that many people from the South Side got up to see it. We were a young company, people didn't know about Onyx or didn't know the play, and we didn't reach as many people as we would have liked. I have wanted to do this play on the South Side, where everyone can see it, for a long time. Finally, thirty years since that first production with Onyx, here we are. Wow! How time flies.

I have loved my journey in Chicago. At Court Theatre, my artistic home, I've directed nine of the ten plays in August Wilson's famous Century Cycle and I'm looking forward to staging the tenth. I've done *Wait Until Dark* (one of my favorites); *The First Breeze of Summer* by Leslie Lee (part of the Black Theatre Movement that I was involved in as a young director); classic plays like *Arsenic and Old Lace*; putting my little twist on *Waiting for Godot*; *Flyin' West* and *Blues for an Alabama Sky* by Pearl Cleage; and *Five Guys Named Moe*, co-directed with Miss Felicia P. Fields. But, of course, August Wilson has been my bread and butter; I have been blessed to be a part of 34 August productions throughout my life, having directed 32 of those 34. Thank you for letting me be myself again.

As I head into my 20th year at Court and as we go through our current leadership transition, I have to thank Charlie Newell for bringing me into the Court family. What I thought was a two-year commitment turned into twenty years of growing, learning, and getting to know the community. And thanks to Dawn Helsing, who showed me this could be a wise move. Thank you, Dawn.

Of course, thanks to the University of Chicago for supporting the Tony Award-winning work we do here. And finally, I want to thank the Court Theatre audience that supports us and has supported me as a director over the years. I hope you enjoy this rewind and celebration of this iconic classic play, *East Texas Hot Links* by my friend Eugene Lee.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the following:

James Byrd Jr., Amina Dickerson, Patricia Watkins, Gregory Hollimon, Michael Williams, Delroy Lindo, David Alan Grier, Reg E. Cathy, Ernest Perry Jr., Freeman Coffey, Marion McClinton, Martha Lavey, Paul Carter Harrison, Michelle Boone, Ellen Alberding, Alex and Anna, Ruben Santiago Hudson, Eugene Lee, Cleo Baker, John Fiedler, the Joyce Foundation, Defiant Theatre Company, Onyx Theatre Ensemble, Philip Van Lear, Magaly Colimon, Marsha Estell, Lydia Diamond, Craig Boyd, Silence (Trent Smith), Joe Foust, Nick Offerman, Jim Guy, Carol Woolfolk, Kathy Perkins, Jeffrey Sams, Cris Carole, Charles Michael Moore, David Johnson, Victor Cole, Lori Fong, Nadine Warner, Christine Pascual, and a special dedication to Jonathon Wilson: friend, colleague, confidant, and Buffalo Homeboy; and a special dedication to Larry Nance. Thank you to all those who helped put that first production of *East Texas Hot Links* together.

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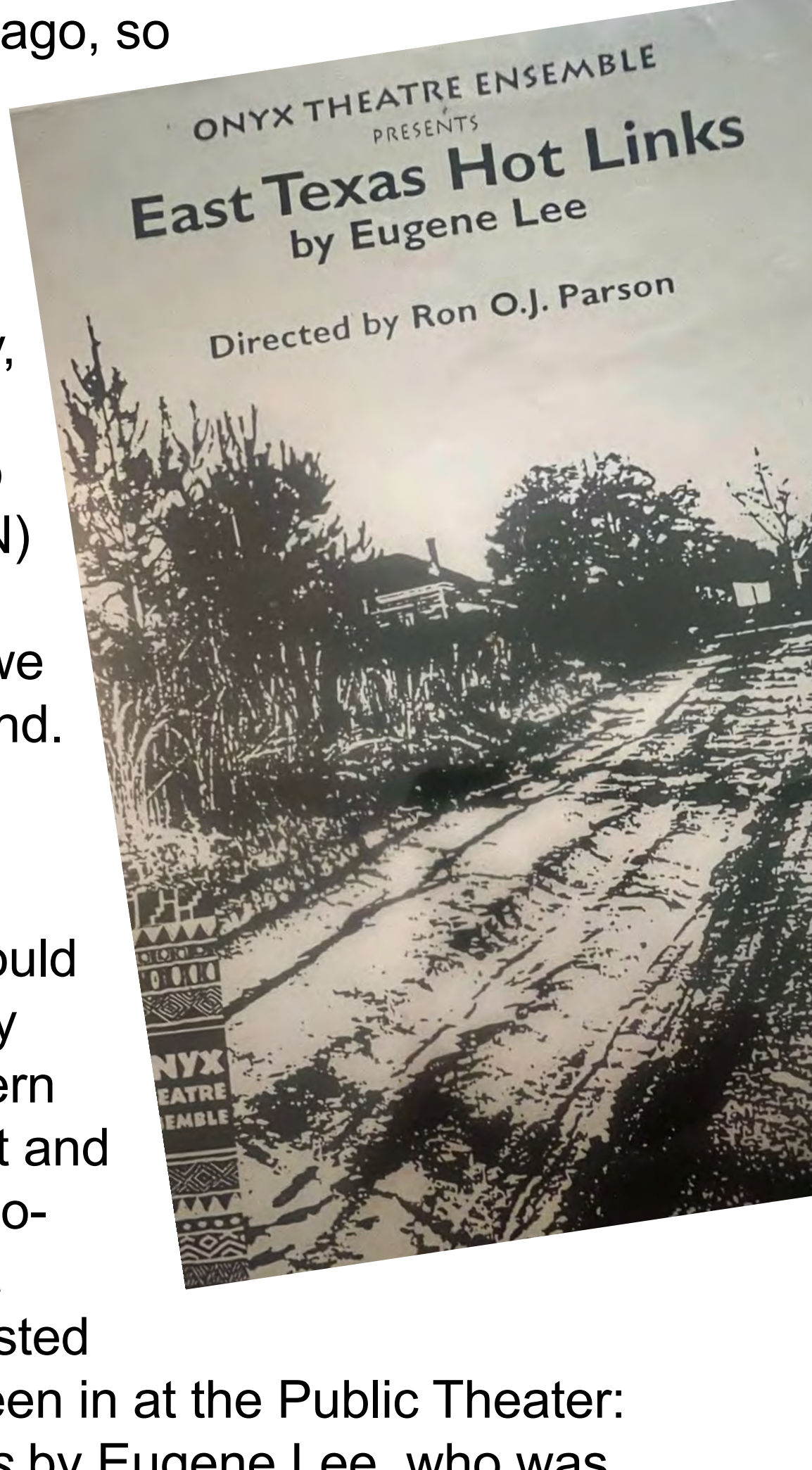
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Ron OJ Parson
www.ronojparson.net





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ODE TO JAMES BYRD JR.

In the midst of all this chaos
We live in today

The Injustice, The Killing, The Hate, The Life,
The Love

Some are chosen, some are claimed, some are
sacrificed.
Blamed....

Like The Burghers of Calais
We represent,

The lives, the people, souls lost...

Please... relent...

Let's stop with the Guns, for Chrissakes!!!

The killing, the hate, all the recklessness, the
endless debate
Please let's find a better way...

to communicate

Everywhere... the stakes...are too high...

Peace



Ron OJ

**This production of *East Texas Hot Links* is
dedicated to James Byrd Jr. (1949–1998).**

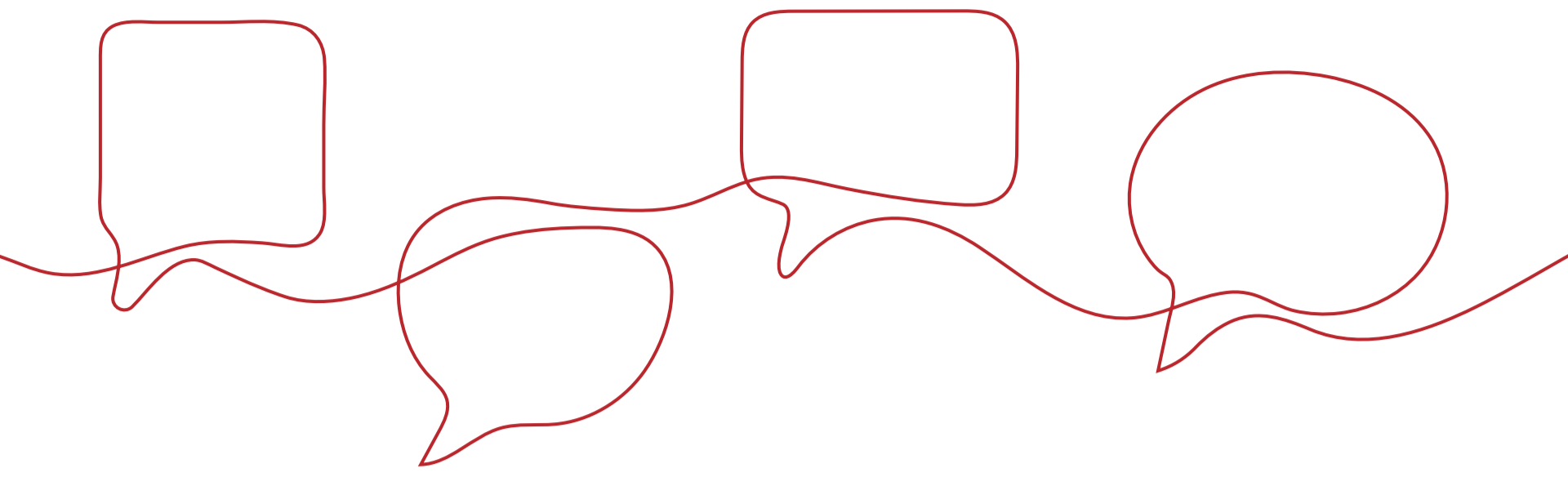
On June 7, 1998, Byrd—a Black man—was
brutally murdered by three white supremacists
in Jasper, Texas. He was viciously beaten
and dragged from a truck, and his body was
abandoned in front of a church. Byrd was 49.

Byrd was a father and a beloved member of his
community in East Texas. His lynching-by-dragging
led to the passing of the first hate crime law in
Texas and inspired hate crime legislation around
the country.

We mourn James Byrd Jr. and honor his memory.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

BY GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT,
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Often on stage, and always in life, there are no simple protagonists and antagonists. Sometimes we are both or neither, but we rarely know exactly where we stand while we are in the middle of things. Even when there's no clear-cut right or wrong, however, we can often identify justice and injustice.

That identification and acknowledgment is a crucial first step towards progress, so—with this production—we name the violence in *East Texas Hot Links* as a hate crime rooted in white supremacy.

We acknowledge that hate crimes were legally recognized as a distinct act of horrific violence only a short time ago, long after the action of this play.

Ron OJ Parson has dedicated this production to James Byrd Jr., a Black man who was lynched by white supremacists in Jasper, Texas in 1998. That same year, Matthew Shepard was brutally murdered in Laramie, Wyoming in a homophobic hate crime. In 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, expanding existing federal hate crime legislation.

Naming this legislation after both Byrd and Shepard speaks to the interconnectedness of oppression, the role of violence in its brutal enforcement, and the necessity of being united in our fights for liberation. This season, as we travel from the piney woods of East Texas; to New York City at the dawn of the AIDS epidemic; to redlined Chicago in the waning years of the Great Migration; and finally, to Germany during the rise of Nazism, we'd be remiss to ignore the connections between these stories.

Below are some links that continue the conversation in which *East Texas Hot Links* is situated, around hate crimes, domestic terrorism, and state-sanctioned violence. We will provide similar resources pertaining to each production throughout the season.

Here are some places to get started:

>Equal Justice Initiative

The Equal Justice Initiative is committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice, and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society.

>Southern Poverty Law Center

The SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people.

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Please reply by Friday, October 4.

All proceeds will support the productions on Court Theatre's stage.

If you have questions, please contact Cara Peterson,
assistant director of development, at cpeters2@uchicago.edu
or 773.834.5293.

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IN CONVERSATION

DIRECTOR RON OJ PARSON AND
PLAYWRIGHT EUGENE LEE



To prepare for this production, Resident Artist and Director Ron OJ Parson caught up with his good friend Eugene Lee, playwright of *East Texas Hot Links*. What followed was a conversation rich with history, creative insights, cultural references, and truth.

Read on to get a unique glimpse into the artistic process and hear from the people most deeply connected to *East Texas Hot Links*.

What was the process of writing *East Texas Hot Links*?

Eugene: When I wrote this play, I sat down to write an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. I have a lot of respect for Rod Serling. What he could do in half an hour—in one room, with compelling storytelling, and really compelling characters who aren't the same at the end—was amazing.

Ron: I can feel that, I can hear that. Doing your work, and August [Wilson], of course—you can feel the rhythm. You can hear the music.

Eugene: I've done all but a couple of August's plays as an actor, and I basically sing them. They're so poetic—everything you need is in the words. When you try to go against it, it's like going against iambic pentameter in Shakespeare. You can defy it, but it ain't gonna make much damn sense!

When I started writing, I was at dinner with my wife. I just said, "I'm going to write a play tonight." I needed a title, she was reading the paper, and the first word she saw was "restaurant." I started messing with that word, which led me to food, which led me to the food chain, which led to the play. The play is about how we feed off each other. That was the original inspiration.

White people always have this thing about not wanting to see "Black plays" because they feel like they're going to be the villain, and in this play, there are no white people. And that's on purpose. Because this is about us, for us, by us. The more I wrote, the more I realized that I was bridging a cultural gap. When white people came to see it, they wept—they wept in response to the truth that was coming out in a way they hadn't expected. People don't change until they get new information, and this play took on a whole different purpose.

Ron: The second time Onyx did the play in 1998, just before James Byrd Jr. was murdered, a guy came to the play and talked about how unrealistic the play was. And then the James Byrd incident happened that week. He actually came back to the play and said, "Yes, I see now. It's still happening."

Eugene: We're talking about lies and the truth. This play resonates a whole lot, even still today, because the truth has lost its place in life. The truth is the most humane and honorable route for anybody. East Texas is still East Texas, but it's where I learned the truth. It's a place that I love; it's the place I grew up, it's the place that shaped me. I think of East Texas as where I learned to bloom, so to speak.

"Some plays have something that gets in your soul, and this has always been one of those for me. I really appreciate that—you don't really find a lot of those. This is one."

How has your relationship to the play changed over time?

Eugene: I haven't touched it—it's like the Mona Lisa. There comes a point where you hang it on the wall and leave it to the Ron OJ Parsons of the world. Let it do what it does.

Ron: Some plays have something that gets in your soul, and this has always been one of those for me. I really appreciate that—you don't really find a lot of those. This is one.

Eugene: I've had people who, years after they've seen the play, wake up and say, "Man, I've been thinking about that play!"

Ron: Thirty years ago we did this play with Onyx, and people will still come up to me and say, "When are you going to do *East Texas*? When are you going to do it on the South Side?" Things happen when they happen; things don't *just* happen, things happen *just*. They come around when they're supposed to come around.

What is important to understand about *East Texas Hot Links*?

Eugene: There's love in this story. People make a sacrifice for a young boy, and that's the ultimate love. I always thought, ten years later, that that boy would be at the front of the civil rights movement because of what happened to him that night.

Ron: What I like is the way you infuse the humor in it, though, in the midst of chaos.

Eugene: You've got to do that, as a storyteller! You can't keep the pressure up for so long before people turn away. I can't deny August [Wilson]'s influence on everything I put on the page. He read this! He read my play! I'll never forget him sitting there: he said, "It's important that you let them talk. Get out of the way and let them park and bark"—as they say in musical theatre. It's Shakespearean, it's classical, in every sense. I often see characters in my plays the way I see royalty in Shakespeare's plays. You have to attack the language with the same ferocity. Every line of the play is meant to make something happen.

Ron: One of my favorite lines is when Charlesetta says, "You've got to *do* to change things"; which is a funny line, but it's said when things are getting serious. The humor is so important. It's like getting on a train, and the train is riding that track, and it's picking up speed, and it's going to crash, and you know it's going to get there, but the humor makes the ride more enjoyable because, once you're on the train, it's *moving*.

Eugene: It's a serious part of the process, to plot that last twenty percent of the play when it starts to pick up rhythmically. There aren't as many monologues, the dialogue is quicker, and that was the hardest part of the writing. The cast helped me build that in the process.

Ron: That's how I approach doing the play—letting it flow. Getting the right actors. I've done it with several different casts and it's always about finding new things to get the right spirit. I'll direct shows, and they open, and a lot of the time, I don't have much interest in going back and seeing them. But with *East Texas*, if I'm in the town, I like to come back and see it. It makes me feel like, *This is theatre. This is what theatre's supposed to be.*

Eugene: I make art to change the world. And we're guardians of the truth; the human condition.

Ron: Like when that guy came back and apologized after the James Byrd incident, which reminds me of a classic *Twilight Zone* episode that I love: "I Am the Night—Color Me Black." In the episode, it's dark all around and we're in a town where people are getting ready to hang a man who has been convicted of killing a racist. It's dark all around, they're waiting for the sun to come up—it never does—and at the end, there's a monologue about how it's so dark because of all the hate in the world. And, of course, Rod Serling comes in and names all these cities where it's staying dark, where there's still hate. There's so much hate in the world but my friend, [playwright] Oyamo, used to say that we're revolutionaries. Theatre is revolutionary. Change the world with theatre—that's what we're trying to do.



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THE WORLD OF *EAST TEXAS HOT LINKS*

BY KAMESHA KHAN, PRODUCTION DRAMATURG



Eugene Lee's *East Texas Hot Links* is a Pulitzer Prize-nominated play that examines the intricacies of Black rural life during the Jim Crow era—a time when racial segregation was the law of the land. The play is set in the summer of 1955 in the piney woods of East Texas—a region known for its thick forests. The action takes place in the Top o' the Hill Café, which serves as a sanctuary for Black men. This café creates space for community members to gather, converse, laugh, and find comfort while navigating daily trials and personal strife. Within these walls, Lee's richly drawn characters reveal their complexities as the audience gains insight into the sociopolitical and racial contexts that shape their lives.

The setting of this play is not merely a backdrop but an integral part of the storytelling. Because this play is about place as much as it is about race, it is essential that we consider the location in relationship to the action. East Texas has a long history of racial violence. Between the late 19th century and 1950, Texas witnessed nearly 500 lynchings. Approximately 75% of lynchings were carried out with assistance from law enforcement. Most of these lynchings and similar acts of terror took place in East Texas. An example is the Slocum Massacre. In 1910, Slocum, a town in East Texas, was filled with Black residents who owned businesses and farms. On July 29, 1910, mobs of heavily armed white supremacists went from house to house killing Black residents because of a rumored uprising. Homes and businesses were torched, children were killed, and the community was destroyed. Evidence suggests that as many as 100 Black residents were murdered. To fully comprehend the world within which the *East Texas Hot Links* characters live, we must acknowledge the pervasive racial violence that has historically defined this region.

The time wherein the play is set further contextualizes its exploration of racism, degeneration, and disenfranchisement. In 1954, the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declared segregation in education unconstitutional. That same year, the Armed Services announced the integration of all its branches. However, in 1955, East Texas remained segregated. In 1955, East Texas saw the continued enforcement of Jim Crow laws. In 1955, the world learned of the horrific violence that many Black Southerners experienced through the reporting of the brutal murder of Emmett Till. While Till's death mobilized Black communities across the nation, the road to equality in East Texas was met with fierce and often violent resistance. Eugene Lee's *East Texas Hot Links* captures the tension of this historical moment.

While *East Texas Hot Links* troubles America's past, it also reminds us that the past is ever-present. During a post-show discussion of a 1998 production of *East Texas Hot Links*, a patron remarked that this story no longer has relevance. A week later, James Byrd Jr. was dragged to his death by three white men in Jasper, Texas, which is in the Deep East Texas region. Byrd's death shocked the nation as echoes of the terror felt during Jim Crow could be heard. Like the unseen characters in this play, the perpetrators of this crime were affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan and other white nationalist organizations. This event, which occurred more than four decades after the setting of *East Texas Hot Links*, underscores the enduring nature of racial hatred and the continuous struggle for justice.

East Texas Hot Links is not solely a story of racial terror. It's also a play about a community of complicated people whose joy, resilience, and humanity shine through their lively banter. They dance. They joke. They foster meaningful relationships. As Columbus declares, "it's nice to have a Top o' the Hill to come to...to get above all the s**t in your life."

Eugene Lee's evocative storytelling, witty dialogue, and nuanced characterizations allow us to confront uncomfortable truths about America's past and present. Under Parson's direction, this production honors the legacy of those who have fought for justice and serves as a call to action for future generations.

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DOWN AT THE JUKE



“From the road, juke joints seem to be nothing more than woozy broken-down shacks, apparitions from a not-so-proud past defined by Jim Crow laws. Until the late fifties, if you were black and lived in the rural South, they were practically the only public places to meet and greet or just while away idle hours...”

– Joe Nick Patoski

In Eugene Lee’s *East Texas Hot Links*, place is just as important as people. The Top o’ the Hill Café in which this production is set is just as much a character as the individuals who frequent the establishment; all are vibrant, specific, and relatable. Paying homage to juke joints of the American South and the sense of community found therein, Top o’ the Hill is crucial to understanding *East Texas Hot Links*, the play, and East Texas, more generally.

Juke joints are informal bars (often shacks or structures made from existing buildings, tin, plywood, or other easily accessible materials) where patrons can unwind, relax, dance, drink, gamble, and connect. Juke joints were often found in rural, Black, and Southern communities; typically located off railroad tracks or backwoods roads; and originated in the time of slavery and sharecropping. They arose as a means for Black Southern communities to socialize and revel in each other’s company outside of the white gaze, forced labor, oppressive systems, or law enforcement. For this reason, juke joints were often kept secret to protect both the institutions and their regulars, and patrons were frequently locals who already knew each other. Full of energy, their decor was often colorful—albeit a bit haphazard (Christmas lights, paintings, advertisements, and party decorations were regular staples). They felt like home.

Juke joints were a place of joy, escapism, and freedom, just as the Top o’ the Hill Café is in *East Texas Hot Links*. The Top o’ the Hill Café is run by the graceful and indomitable Charlesetta Simpkins and, in her establishment, Lee’s characters unwind and trade friendly barbs. There’s an ease to their conversations. These people are family and the Top o’ the Hill Café is inextricable from the fabric of their lives.

By containing all of the action in one room, Eugene Lee keeps the focus squarely on the people of *East Texas* and their relational dynamics, making this play a riveting character study. Beyond that, it’s also a commemoration of Black life, community, joy, resilience, and history. Surrounded by colorful artwork and old advertisements with a jukebox playing in the background, Top o’ the Hill Café is a perfect setting for this homage.

Photo: Laborers outside of a juke joint, Belle Glade, Florida. Photographed by Marion Post Wolcott for the U.S. Farm Security Administration in 1944.

Beignet Done That!

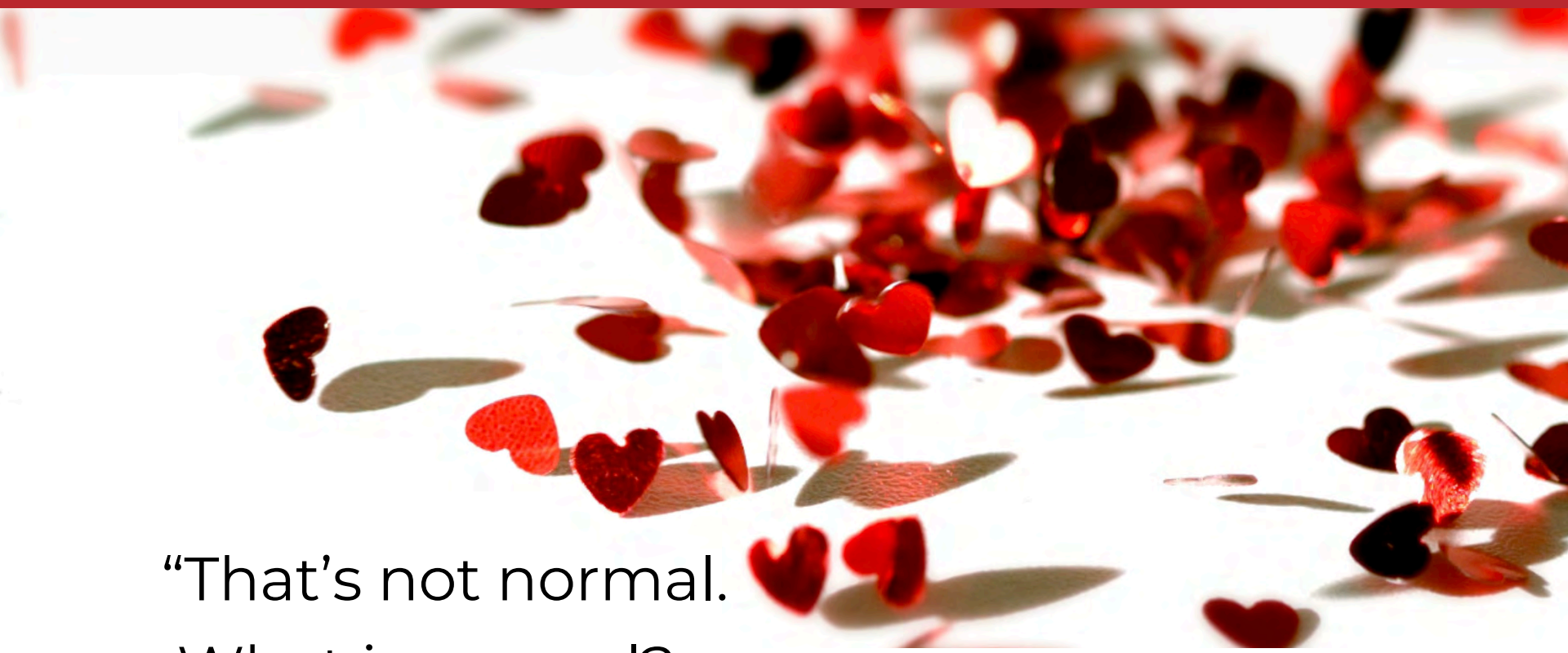
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UP NEXT—*FALSETTOS*



“That’s not normal.
What is normal?
I wouldn’t know.”

-Falsettos

Marvin has left his wife, Trina, for his male lover; Trina has married Marvin’s therapist; and their son, Jason, is grappling with his parents’ divorce and his looming bar mitzvah. It’s 1979 and everyone’s world has been upended and now they must explore what their new “normal” may hold. Welcome to ***Falsettos***, the second production of our **2024/25 season!**

Produced in partnership with **TimeLine Theatre Company** and directed by TimeLine Associate Artistic Director **Nick Bowling**, we’re proud to share this shimmering musical about family, identity, faith, and love.

“This is a show centered on Marvin, a man coming out of the closet in the late 1970s. The musical celebrates a time of adventure and self-expression, set against the sexual revolution, the disco era, and the very first days of the AIDS epidemic,” shares Nick. “In writing about Marvin, William Finn has created one of the very first stories celebrating a ‘normal’ gay life, which, of course, turns out to be equally flawed and fabulous.”

Falsettos is a humorous and heartbreaking web of ex-spouses, co-parents, new lovers, and the lesbians next door. Join us in Falsettoland.

***Falsettos* is on stage from November 8 - December 8. Subscriptions to the **2024/25 season** are on sale now, as are single tickets. Purchase **online** or by calling the Box Office at (773) 753-4472.**

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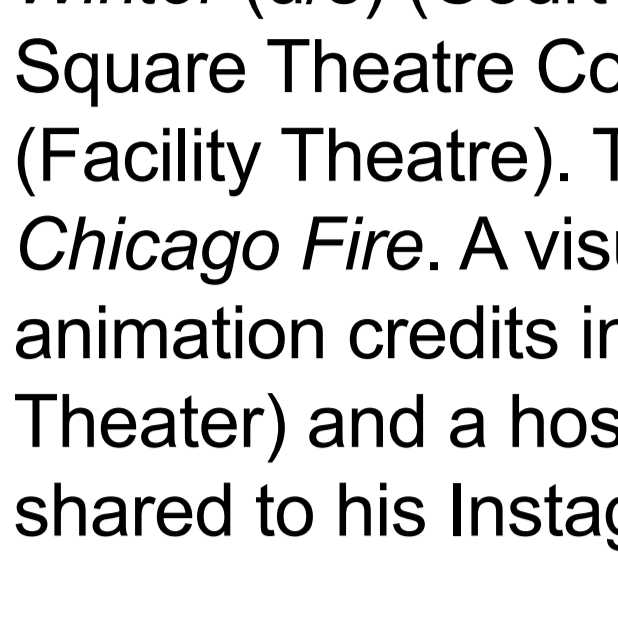
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CAST PROFILES



WILLIE B. (*Adolph*) is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, where he started his acting career at the Karamu House Theatre. Credits include: *Jitney*, *Elmina's Kitchen*, *Before It Hits Home*, and *A Soldier's Story* (Congo Square Theatre Company); *Wendall Greene*, *The Horn*, and "*Master Harold*" ...and the Boys (Steppenwolf Theatre); *East Texas Hot Links* and *Sty of the Blind Pig* (Onyx); *The State of Mississippi vs. Emmett Till* (Pegasus Theatre); *The Little Tommy Parker Celebrated Colored Minstrel Show* (Chicago Theatre Company); *East Texas Hot Links* (Writers Theatre). TV credits include *Angel Street*, *Early Edition*, and *Playboy Club*. Films include *Light It Up*, *Barbershop*, and *Dark*.



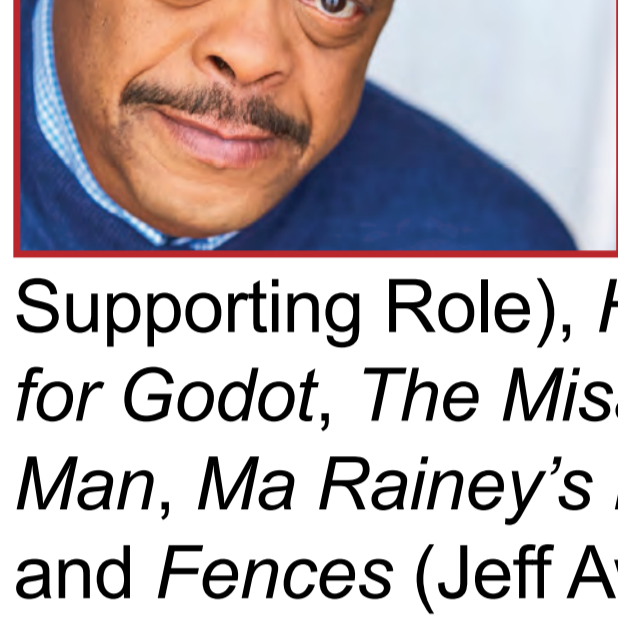
DAVID DOWD (*Delmus Green*) is thrilled to return to Court Theatre for *East Texas Hot Links*. Recent theater credits include: *Two Trains Running* (u/s), *The Lion in Winter* (u/s) (Court Theatre); *How Blood Go* (Congo Square Theatre Company); and *Phoebe in Winter* (Facility Theatre). TV credits: *Fargo*, *The Chi*, and *Chicago Fire*. A visual artist and animator, his recent animation credits include: *God's Mouth* (Walkabout Theater) and a host of still and animated works shared to his Instagram, @sockhead_the_raptor.



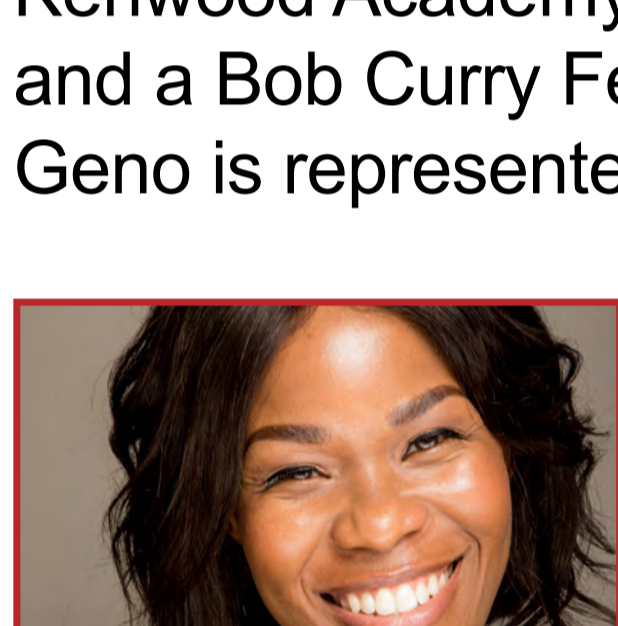
JUWAN LOCKETT (*XL Dancer*) is excited to return to Court Theatre for this production of *East Texas Hot Links*! Previous theater credits include: *Antigone* (Court Theatre); *Not About Nightingales* (Raven Theatre); *Black and Blue* (MPAACT). TV credits include: *The Bear*, *South Side*, and *Fargo*. A Kansas City, MO native, Juwan is a multi-faceted artist who makes music under the moniker ANAMLI (pronounced "anomaly"). Juwan is currently represented by Lily's Talent Agency. Enjoy the show and remember to #StealJoyOften (Instagram: @juwantheactor / @anamlimusic). James 1:2-4.



KELVIN ROSTON JR. (*Roy Moore*) is looking forward to being back at Court! Court Theatre credits: *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution* (Adolphus Carmichael/ Ensemble), *The Gospel at Colonus* (Oedipus), *Oedipus Rex* (Oedipus), *King Hedley II* (King Hedley), *Five Guys Named Moe* (Four-Eyed Moe), and many others. Recent credits include: August Wilson's *Fences* (Trinity Repertory Company); *Clue* (Mercury Theater); *The Color Purple* (MSMT); *The Wiz* (Fulton Theatre). Chicagoland: Congo Square Theatre Company, Paramount Theatre, Marriott Theatre, Goodman, ITC, eta, Writers Theatre, Black Ensemble Theater, TimeLine Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre. International: Orb (Tokyo, Japan) and Festival Hall (Osaka, Japan). Television: *Chicago Med*, *Chicago P.D.*, *South Side*. Film: *Get a Job*, *Princess Cyd*, *Breathing Room*. Awards: Jeff Award, three BTAA Awards, two Black Excellence Awards, NAMI Award. AEA, represented by Paonessa Talent (CHI) and Michael Moore Agency (NY).

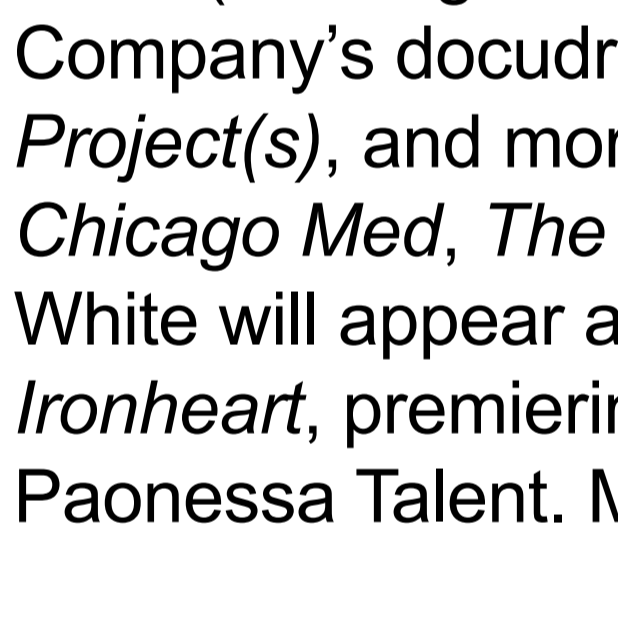


A.C. SMITH (*Boochie Reed*) was last seen at Court in *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Also at Court: *Two Trains Running*, *King Hedley II* (Jeff Award—Performer in a Supporting Role), *Harvey*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe*, *Jitney*, *Invisible Man*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson*, and *Fences* (Jeff Award—Performer in a Principal Role). A native of Chicago, Smith has performed at Victory Gardens, TimeLine Theatre, Writers Theatre, Steppenwolf, Goodman, Second City, and Chicago Shakespeare. Regional: Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, Portland Stage, Geva Theatre Center, Milwaukee Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and The Black Rep, where he has been a company member for 18 years (nine-time Woodie King, Jr. Award-winner). In addition, A.C. has done film, television, radio, commercials, and voice-overs, and he has appeared in *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines. He is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency.



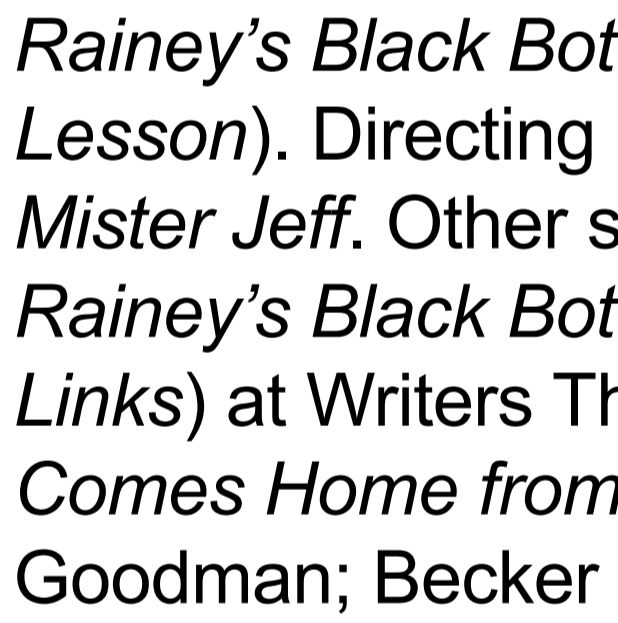
GENO WALKER (*Buckshot*) made his Court Theatre debut in *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and most recently was Assistant Director of *The Lion in Winter*.

Raised on the South Side of Chicago, Geno attended Kenwood Academy. A graduate of Oberlin College and a Bob Curry Fellow with Second City Chicago, Geno is represented by Gray Talent Group.



ANJI WHITE (*Charlesetta Simpkins*) hails from the South Side of Chicago. Anji gives all praise to God for constantly guiding her throughout her career.

White is beyond grateful to be welcomed back to Court Theatre working alongside an amazing cast, crew, and the wonderful director Ron OJ. She last appeared in *For Colored Girls* at Court Theatre, which won the Jeff Award for Best Ensemble. Other Chicago credits include *Sunset Baby* (Black Theatre Alliance Award—Best Actress, TimeLine Theatre), *Skeleton Crew* (Northlight Theatre), American Theater Company's docudrama of the world premiere of *The Project(s)*, and more. Selected TV/film credits include *Chicago Med*, *The Chi*, *61st Street*, *Fargo*, and more. White will appear as a series regular in Marvel's *Ironheart*, premiering in 2025. Represented by Paonessa Talent. Matthew 6:33.



ALFRED H. WILSON (*Columbus Frye*) is excited to return to Court Theatre. Previous roles at Court include *Holloway* (*Two Trains Running*), *Chorus* (*Agamemnon*), *Solly Two Kings* (*Gem of the Ocean*), *Estrogon* (*Waiting for Godot*), *Fielding* (*Jitney*), *Toledo* (*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*), and *Wining Boy* (*The Piano Lesson*).

Directing credits include *Mister James & Mister Jeff*. Other select roles include *Cutler* (*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*), *Columbus* (*East Texas Hot Links*) at Writers Theatre; *Oldest Old Man* (*Father Comes Home from the Wars, Parts 1, 2, & 3*) at Goodman; *Becker* (*Jitney*) at Westcoast Black Theatre; *Travis* (*The Etiquette of Vigilance*) at Steppenwolf; *Holloway* (*Two Trains Running*) at Geva Theatre; *Sam* ("*Master Harold*"...and the Boys) at TimeLine; *Memphis Lee* (*Two Trains Running*) at Pegasus Theatre (Jeff Award—Actor in a Principal Role). He is a co-founder of Onyx Theatre Ensemble and was formerly on staff at Goodman Theatre and Victory Gardens Theater.

ANTHONY IRONS (u/s *Columbus Frye*, *Adolph*) is thrilled to return to Court Theatre, where he last appeared as *Stokely Carmichael/Kwame Ture* in *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution* and *Lucky* in *Waiting for Godot*. Anthony is an ensemble member of Congo Square Theatre and Lookingglass Theatre, where he has performed in or directed over 20 productions. Other Chicago credits include Goodman Theatre, Shattered Globe Theatre, and The Second City. Film and television credits include *Chicago Med*, *South Side*, *Empire*, *Chicago Fire*, and *Let's Go to Prison*. He is the creator and director of *The BLACKSiDE*, Congo Square Theatre's YouTube comedy series. Anthony is proud to be represented by Stewart Talent.

LEWON JOHNS (u/s *Roy Moore*) is overjoyed to exist in creative spaces with his newfound Court Theatre and University of Chicago family. Chicago: *Clyde's* (Goodman Theatre); *Choir Boy* (Steppenwolf Theatre); *Sweat* (Paramount Theatre); *Home* (Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre); *Hoodoo Love*, *The Last Pair of Earlies* (Raven Theatre); *Mlima's Tale* (Griffin Theatre); *How A Boy Falls* (Northlight Theatre). Regional: *Les Misérables* (Theatre Memphis). Touring: *A Raisin in the Sun* (The Renaissance Project Atlanta). BTAA Harry Belafonte Award winner (Best Actor in an Ensemble). Television: *Chicago P.D.*, *NeXT*, *The Time Traveler's Wife*, *NFL Documentaries*. Education: Mississippi State University-BA, The Company Acting Studio-MCFA.

JAMAQUE NEWBERRY (u/s *Buckshot*, *Boochie Reed*) is excited to return to Court Theatre after understudying *The Island*. Other Chicago credits include: *Twelfth Night* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Party at the Pantheon* (Factory Theater); *Judy's Life's Work* (Definition Theatre). Regional credits include *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Brothers Size*, *Our Town*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *Sense and Sensibility* (American Players Theatre). Education MFA, Acting for Stage and Film; Northern Illinois University.

PATRICK NEWSON JR. (u/s *Delmus Green*, *XL Dancer*) is a Chicago-born, Jeff Award-winning actor. Chicago Credits include *Sweat* (Paramount Theatre); *Alaiyo* (Definition Theatre); *The October Storm* (Raven Theatre); *Tambo & Bones* (Refracted Theatre); *The Singularity Play* (Jackalope Theatre). TV/film credits include *The Chicago Code*, *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago Med*, *Shining Girls*, *The Chi*, *South Side*, and more. He is represented by Gray Talent Group.

MARLENE SLAUGHTER (u/s *Charlesetta Simpkins*) is a Houston native currently living in Chicago. She began her career in the arts by winning gold at the NAACP ACT-SO competition for Drama in 2015. She earned her BFA in Acting and Media Entertainment at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Before graduation, she secured professional representation with Gray Talent Group and her first two professional jobs, a commercial for Blue Cross Blue Shield and a cross-country tour with Montana Shakespeare in the Parks. Since then, she has appeared in television shows like *61st Street*; *Somebody, Somewhere*; *American Greed*; and numerous commercials for Project Makeover, Glassdoor, Red Robin, and more. She is so very inspired by this story and is extremely grateful to be a part of this cast!



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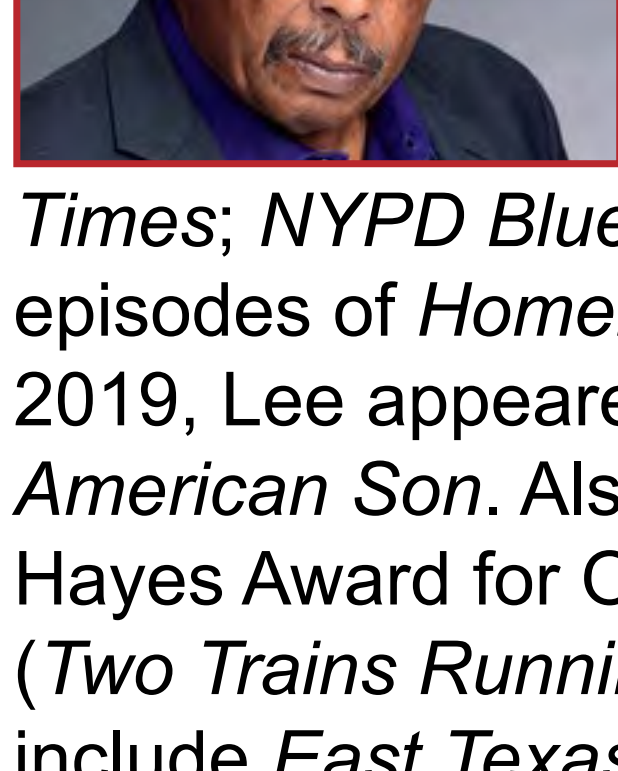
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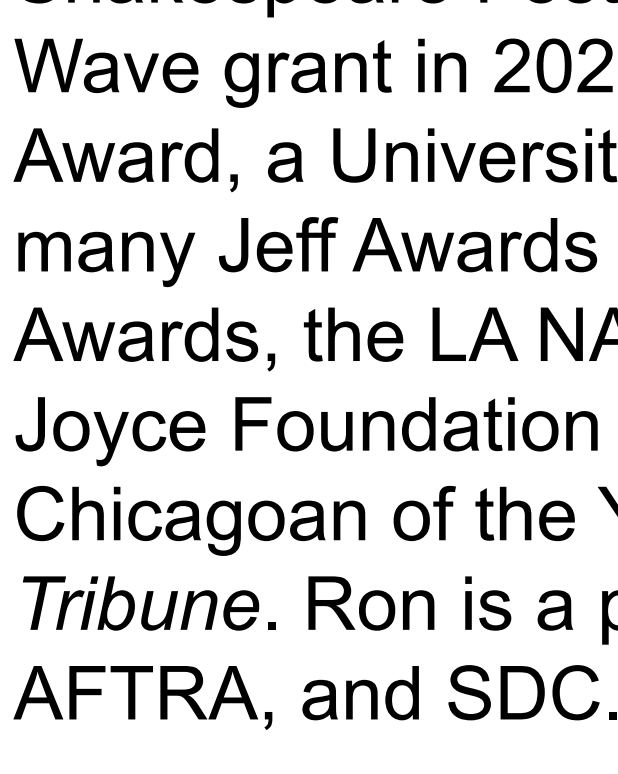
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ARTIST PROFILES



EUGENE LEE (*Playwright*) has appeared in over 200 television movies and series, including *The Women of Brewster Place* with Oprah Winfrey; *Dallas*; *Good Times*; *NYPD Blue*; *MacGyver*; and most recently, in episodes of *Homeland*, among many others. In 2019, Lee appeared in the Broadway production of *American Son*. Also, in 2019, he won the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Play (*Two Trains Running*, Arena Stage). Mr. Lee's plays include *East Texas Hot Links*, *Fear Itself*, *Somebody Called: A Tale of Two Preachers*, *Killingsworth*, *Lyn' Ass*, and the musical *Twist*. Lee is Artist-in-Residence and Artistic Director of the Black and Latino Playwrights Celebration at Texas State University, where he is also designated a Distinguished Alumnus. An anthology, *Truth Be Told: The Collected Plays by Eugene Lee* is forthcoming from BTIT Publishing in the fall of 2024 and will be available for purchase on Amazon and several sites. Seeking literary rep. Visit www.eugeneleeeonline.com.



RON OJ PARSON (*Director, Resident Artist*) hails from Buffalo, New York and is a graduate of the University of Michigan's Professional Theatre Program. He is a resident artist at the Tony Award-winning Court Theatre, and co-founder and former Artistic Director of Onyx Theatre Ensemble. Recent directing credits include *The Lion in Winter*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and *Two Trains Running* at Court Theatre; *Toni Stone* at Goodman; *Trouble in Mind* at TimeLine Theatre; *Relentless*, with both TimeLine and Goodman; and *The Reclamation of Madison Hemings* at Indiana Repertory Theatre. In Canada, Ron directed the world premiere of *Palmer Park*, by Joanna McClelland Glass, at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. Ron received a 3Arts Make a Wave grant in 2021, the 2022 Zelda Fichandler Award, a University of Chicago Diversity Award, many Jeff Awards and Black Theatre Alliance Awards, the LA NAACP Award for *Jitney*; he is a Joyce Foundation grantee, and was named Chicagoan of the Year for Theater by the *Chicago Tribune*. Ron is a proud member of AEA, SAG-AFTRA, and SDC. Visit www.ronojparson.net.

JACK MAGAW (*Scenic Design*) returns to Court Theatre having previously designed scenery for *Two Trains Running*, *Radio Golf*, and *Gem of the Ocean*, among many others. Recent Chicago and regional credits include *Fiddler on the Roof* (Drury Lane); the US premiere of *London Road* (Shattered Globe); the world premiere of *Relentless* (TimeLine and Goodman); *Nina Simone: Four Women* (South Coast Repertory); *I and You* (Peninsula Players); *Waitress* (Cape Playhouse); *Tick, Tick... Boom!* (Bucks County Playhouse); the world premiere of *How to Break* (Village Theatre); and *Porgy and Bess* (Music Theater Heritage). Jack is an Adjunct Professor of Design at The Theatre School at DePaul University and he resides in Chicago. Visit jackmagaw.com.

CHRISTINE PASCUAL (*Costume Design*) designed *The Lion In Winter*, *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Flyin' West* (Court Theatre); *Notes from the Field*, *Boulevard of Bold Dreams*, *Trouble in Mind*, *Relentless*, *Oslo* (TimeLine Theatre); *Twelfth Night* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *La Ruta* (Steppenwolf Theatre); *Lady in Denmark* (Goodman Theatre); *The Elaborate Entrance Of Chad Deity* (Second Stage Theatre); Regionally: *The Niceties* (Milwaukee Rep); *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Baltimore Stage); *Hard Cell* (Geva Theatre Center); *Simpatico* (McCarter Theatre). Additionally, she has designed at Victory Gardens, Northlight Theatre, Remy Bumppo, Teatro Vista, and Congo Square Theatre. Her portfolio is at christinepascual.carbonmade.com.

JANICE PYTEL (*Costume Design*) is excited to return to Court. Chicago credits include: *Spunk*, *Fences*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Court); *No Man's Land*, *The Qualms*, *Belleville*, *Slowgirl*, *Middletown* (Steppenwolf); *Mother House*, *The Cake*, *Dry Land*, and others (Rivendell); *Concerning Strange Devices*, *A Raisin in the Sun* (TimeLine); *The Long Red Road* (Goodman); *The Caretaker*, *The Detective's Wife*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and others (Writers). Broadway credits include *Dana H.*, *33 Variations*, and *I Am My Own Wife*. She has worked with Berkeley Rep, Milwaukee Rep, Kansas City Rep, Alliance, Centerstage, Geffen, Madison Rep, and The Alley Theatre, among others. She is proud to represent the Central Region on the USA 829 executive board and to teach Costume Design and Theatre Careers at Columbia College.

JASON LYNCH (*Lighting Design*) previously worked with Court Theatre on *The Island*. Off-Broadway: *You Are Here: An Evening with Solea Pfeiffer* (Audible Theater/Minetta Lane Theatre). Regional: Alley Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, City Theatre Company, Dallas Theater Center, Denver Center Theatre Company, George Street Playhouse, Geva Theatre Center, Goodman Theatre, Goodspeed Musicals, Huntington Theatre Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Northlight Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, The Old Globe, Trinity Repertory Company, among others. Lynch is represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE and The Gersh Agency. jasondlynch.com, @jasonlynch.design.

JOSH MCCAMMON (*Sound Design*) is excited to make his Court Theatre sound design debut. Josh has served as Court's Technical Director of Sound and Video since 2019 and assisted André Pluess last year on *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Other credits include assistant designs at Lookingglass, Steppenwolf, Arena Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, and Writers Theatre. Much love to Katie for all her endless love and support. Hello Workers.

ANDRÉ PLUSS (*Sound Design*) has designed over 30 productions at Court, including *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Two Trains Running*, *An Iliad*, *Man in the Ring*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Broadway credits include *Metamorphoses*, *I Am My Own Wife*, *33 Variations*, *The Minutes*, and *The Clean House* (Lincoln Center Theater). Chicago credits include composition and sound design for numerous productions at Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, About Face, and many others. Regional credits include multiple projects at Center Theatre Group, Seattle Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Cal Shakes, American Conservatory Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Guthrie Theater, and Arena. André is an ensemble member of Lookingglass Theatre Company.

KAMESHA KHAN (*Dramaturg*) is Chairperson of the Department of Communications, Media Arts, and Theatre at Chicago State University; a dramaturg; and an award-winning director. She is also Book Review Editor for *The Black Theatre Review*. She previously served as Education Director for Penumbra Theatre Company and Resident Dramaturg for eta Creative Arts Foundation. Recent dramaturgical credits include: *Some Sort of Saint* by Linda Bright-Clay and James Crumb (Bridge to Freedom/Definition Theatre), and *The Billboard* by Natalie Y. Moore (16th Street Theater). *Stand Up*, a musical whose book Khan co-authored, received the 2019 Black Theatre Alliance Award for Best Play (Musical or Revue).

SHERYL WILLIAMS (*Culture and Consent Consultant*) moved to Chicago from Phoenix, Arizona in 2016. She has been supporting schools and theaters across the city with Intimacy and Fight Designs since 2017. An Affiliate with Theatrical Intimacy Education, her Court credits include *Fen*, *Antigone*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution*. Chicagoland credits include *Obliteration* (The Gift Theatre); *Native Son* (Lifeline Theatre); *The Brightest Thing in the World* (About Face Theatre); *Silent Sky* (Citadel Theatre); and more. Visit iamsherylwilliams.com for more info.

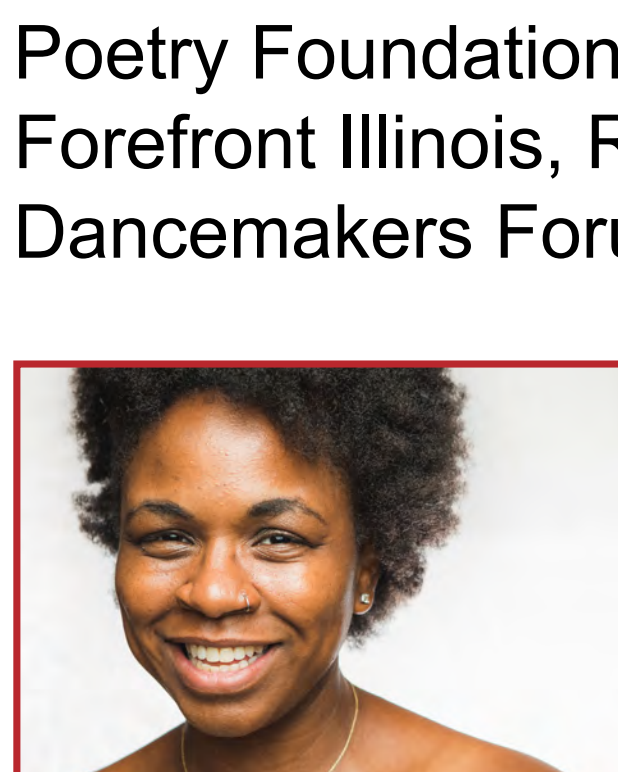
JIM GUY (*Special Effects Consultant and Firearms Coordinator*) is making his Court Theatre debut. He is proud to continue his long association with Ron Oj Parson, Jack Magaw, and Lara Musard with *East Texas Hot Links*. His most recent Chicago outing was as Props Designer for *The Porch on Windy Hill: a new play with old music* (Northlight Theatre). His work has appeared on and Off-Broadway, on tour, in print, on television, in museums, and on stages across the country. He has propped an estimated 600 plays, musicals, and operas. Jim was Properties Director at Milwaukee Rep for 24 seasons, from 1998 to 2022. As time and temperament allows, he now freelances, teaches (most notably bringing his Firearms Safety for Stage workshop to theaters and colleges around the country), consults, and serves as Membership Chair of the the Society of Props Managers (S*P*M), of which he served as president for 16 years. He was born in a log cabin. He never tells a lie.

JACLYNN JOSLIN (*Stage Manager*) is returning to Court Theatre after working on *The Lion in Winter*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*; *Two Trains Running*; *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*; *Oedipus Rex*; *The Adventures of Augie March*; *for colored girls*; *Photograph 51*; *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*; *All My Sons*; *Harvey*; *The Hard Problem*; and *Blues for an Alabama Sky*. Her other credits include *Little Bear Ridge Road*, *Purpose*, *No Man's Land*, *Last Night and the Night Before*, *Bald Sisters*, *King James*, *Bug*, *True West*, *Familiar*, *Guards at the Taj*, *BLKS*, *The Crucible*, *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *The Flick*, *East of Eden* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Continuity*, *The King of Hell's Palace* (Goodman Theatre); *Hard Times* (Lookingglass Theatre); *Roz and Ray* (Victory Gardens); *Linda Vista* (Center Theatre Group); *The Outgoing Tide*, *Oceanside*, *13 Things About Ed Carpolotti*, and *Year Zero* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre).

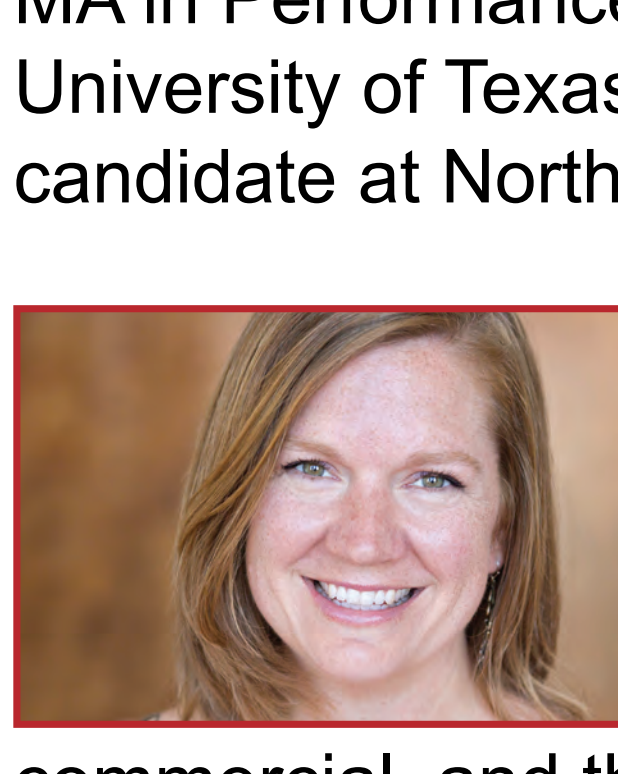
KATE OCKER (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be back at Court for this season. Regional credits include *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Antigone*, *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Fen*, *The Island*, *An Iliad*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis* (Court Theatre); *It Came From Outer Space*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *As You Like It* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Six Corners*, *BUDDY – The Buddy Holly Story*, and *The Spitfire Grill* (American Blues Theater); *Noises Off* (Asolo Rep); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Odd Couple*, and *An Inspector Calls* (Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma); and *Red* (Resident Ensemble Players).



ANGEL YSAGUIRRE (*Executive Director*) has been Court's Executive Director since 2018. Prior to this role, he served as Executive Director of Illinois Humanities. During his tenure there, the organization established a number of new programs demonstrating the contribution that the humanities can make in addressing today's most pressing challenges. Previously, he was the Director of Global Community Investing at Boeing and a Program Officer at the McCormick Tribune Foundation. He has served on the boards of the Poetry Foundation, Theatre Communications Group, Forefront Illinois, Restore Justice, and Chicago Dancemakers Forum.



GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT (*Associate Artistic Director*) is a mother, director, dramaturg, and scholar. Her directorial highlights include *Antigone*; *The Island*; and *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* (co-directed with Charles Newell) at Court Theatre; *1919* (Steppenwolf); and *The Year of Magical Thinking* (Remy Bumppo). She is a co-founder of the Civic Actor Studio, a leadership program of the University of Chicago's Office of Civic Engagement. She has a BA in Drama from Stanford University, an MA in Performance as Public Practice from the University of Texas at Austin, and is a PhD candidate at Northwestern University.



BECCA MCCRACKEN (*Director of Casting and Artist Cultivation*) has spent 19 years casting in Chicago, covering the Midwest market working on TV/film, commercial, and theatre projects. Becca is an Artis Award winner for her casting work at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and is a proud member of the Casting Society of America. She is committed to creating a casting space that empowers the artist and is focused on inclusivity and humanity. Thank you to Michael, James, Hayes, and Luna for their love and support.

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ABOUT COURT THEATRE

Winner of the 2022 Regional Theatre Tony Award, Court Theatre reimagines classic theatre to illuminate our current times. In residence at the University of Chicago and on Chicago's historic South Side, we engage our audiences with intimate and provocative experiences that inspire deeper exploration of the enduring questions that confront humanity and connect us as people.

Court Theatre defines classic theatre as texts from any culture, tradition, or era that resonate throughout time and speak to our present moment.

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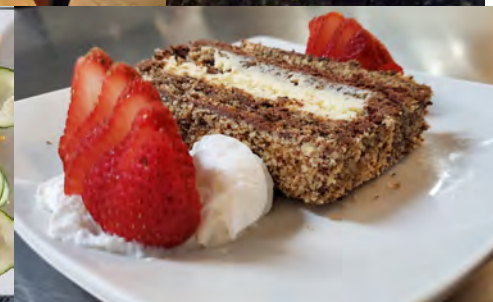


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