

THE OFFICIAL NEWSMAGAZINE OF  
**WRITERS THEATRE**

ISSUE FIFTY-FOUR  
**DEATH OF A STREETCAR  
NAMED VIRGINIA WOOLF:  
A PARODY**  
APRIL 2016

# THE BRIEF CHRONICLE



PICTURED: MICHAEL PEREZ, KAREN JAMES WODITSCH, JENNIFER ENGSTROM,  
JOHN HOOGENAKKER, AND MARC GRAREY. PHOTO BY SAVERIO TRUGLIA.



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## ISSUE FIFTY-FOUR: APRIL 2016

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**Michael Halberstam**

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Dear friends,

We seem to have been saying “Welcome” a lot lately. “Welcome to the Inaugural Season in our new building.” “Welcome to our new home.” Now it’s “Welcome to the first production in our intimate Gillian Theatre,” and soon it will be “Welcome to our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season!” It serves as a constant reminder of the immense step that we’ve just taken, and how thrilling the journey has been and continues to be. We’re delighted to have you with us throughout this experience, and hope that you’re enjoying our new home as much as we are!

In this edition of *The Brief Chronicle*, you’ll hear from the author of *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* and learn about his inspiration in creating this delicious piece of satire. You’ll learn how the fully staged version of the piece came to fruition, and we’ll fill in a bit of history about each of the four masterworks of American drama that lent characters and ideas to the parody.

You’ll meet the cast of *Death of a Streetcar*... and hear about their first experiences with their characters and with the original plays that introduced them. They’ll also reveal what they find most enjoyable about bringing those characters to life in this new iteration.

Finally, we’ll fill you in on the latest goings-on in our Education Department, and provide information about exciting engagement events—including this season’s edition of *From Page to Stage*, our partnership with North Shore libraries that offers a series of exciting events connected to *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody*. We hope that many of you will be able to take advantage of these opportunities to go deeper into the world of the play.

Above all, as we prepare for our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season, we want to recognize the importance of you—our supporters and audience—who both make the work possible and make it rewarding. It has truly been a joy to share this new building with you and to watch you discover its features and facilities as you help us bring it to life. It makes it clear that while this journey has been 25 years in the making, it has only just begun.

So truly, from the bottom of our hearts: you are most welcome here!

Yours Sincerely,

Michael

Kate

# STATE OF THE ART

By Michael Halberstam, Artistic Director

## In the immortal words of Monty Python, “... and now for something completely different!”

After the wonderfully gut-wrenching experience of Jordan Harrison's intelligent and stirring *Marjorie Prime* and the brilliant and intellectually challenging *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard, we thought you might enjoy some lighter fare to carry you into the summer.

When Stuart Carden was the Associate Artistic Director for Writers Theatre, he came to discuss a new script with me. He had been contacted by The Second City with regard to participating in a reading of a piece called *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf*. I laughed out loud at the title and asked him about it. He had looked at the script and thought it amusing but in need of development. I have always

had the highest regard for The Second City and had been particularly impressed with their recent forays into opera and dance in collaboration with Lyric Opera and Hubbard Street Dance, and so we both decided it was well worth the engagement.

Stuart and I collaborated on casting a reading, which we put together down at The Second City to see how the piece might work in the hands of first-rate artists. To our delight it held together remarkably well. We met with The Second City creatives afterward and offered a few thoughts, and Stuart met with lead writer Tim Sniffen, offering some very specific structural thoughts to create a more cohesive throughline. Within a few months Tim had a new draft for us, so we scheduled a second reading and invited a few friends. For the next hour and ten minutes we were treated to a delightful laughter-filled engagement sending up some of the American Theatre's

most significant literary icons. I was immediately interested in taking the piece to production but the big question was: could The Second City wait until we were in our new building for us to proceed? Fortunately the answer was 'yes' and we decided that it would be the perfect confection with which to inaugurate the smaller of our two venues.

Stuart and I were both attracted to the idea of co-directing. We felt as though there were strengths that we each could bring to the table and that together we would create a really dynamic staging. Our collaboration for the design process has been a testament to the regard and respect we have for each other. Furthermore, as we both had our hands full with other productions (Stuart has just directed *Butler* at Northlight Theatre and I have been working on *Arcadia* here at Writers), we were able to tag team appropriately and make sure that questions were being answered in a timely fashion. Most importantly, I think we've been learning from each other as we each observe the other's directing process. This continues to be a most gratifying collaboration.

As the leading voice in the creative team which put this delicious parody together, Tim Sniffen has focused on our iconic memories of the plays he satirizes. He has most directly borrowed from the movie versions, as they are almost certainly the most firmly burned into the collective consciousness of the average American theatre-going audience. What is perhaps most remarkable about his work is that although his evocations are clearly and obviously parodies, they are lovingly crafted and created with nothing but respect for the original source material. So whereas this entertainment is unquestionably parody, it will hopefully send you out to look at the originals again and perhaps spend an evening lovingly revisiting them either through the films or by looking for theatrical revivals of the same.

I am usually asked at some point what I want the audience's take away to be from the productions we stage. In this case, it is both the laughter and joy that good parody can inspire but also a desire to reacquaint yourself with these marvelous classics whenever and wherever possible. ■

# DEATH OF A STREETCAR NAMED VIRGINIA WOOLF: A PARODY

## A NOTE FROM TIM SNIFFEN

**It was the end of another long day at The Second City and we had just finished scripting all the jokes the actors would pretend to ‘improvise’ the following night.**

On my way out, I noticed light from under Kelly Leonard’s office door and stopped in; Kelly had fallen into another of his late night brainstorming sessions and I couldn’t resist taking part. After considering such concepts as *The Second City’s Guide to Emergency Rooms* and *Hubbard Street Rebooted: The Art of Getting Back Up*, Kelly asked a simple, compelling question: “What if the characters of classic

American theater... met?”

There is a meticulous, time honored process by which projects are assigned to writers at The Second City. If we can ever track it down, I’ll be fascinated to see what it says. In the meantime, I was assigned to this one. Leaving Kelly’s office, I said, “Hey, you might not want to leave that candle so close to the edge of your desk... you never know.” He ignored me.

First, it was back to the books. The greatest hits of American theatre came down from my shelves to be studied anew. Thankfully, Universal Studios had just opened their ‘Devastating World of American Theater’ theme park and I took copious notes while riding Tennessee Williams’ Emotional Roller Coaster and Plunge Into Depression: An Arthur Miller Log Flume Experience.

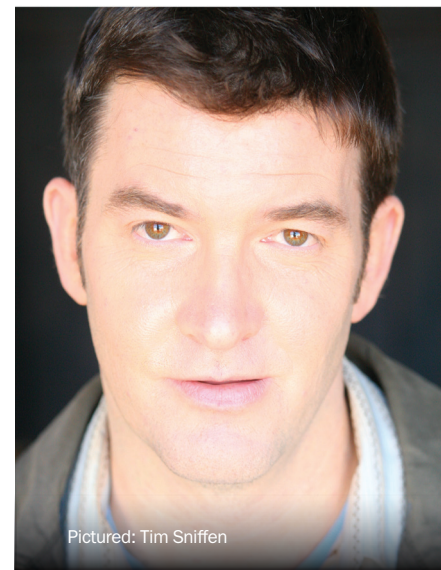
**“Hey, you might not want to leave that candle so close to the edge of your desk... you never know.” He ignored me.**

What amazes me is how these shows have insinuated themselves into our lives. Someone might not remember when they last saw *A Streetcar Named Desire*, if ever, but they can tell you all about Blanche DuBois. They’re a part of us now, a part of our common history and nostalgia, and that’s where this show dwells: with these lovely, complicated, timeless characters

**Hearing the show performed by the Writers’ cast at our first table read, I made two important realizations: One, they know what they’re doing. Two, I read everything in my head in an unnecessary Cockney accent.**

millling around in our collective psyche, it’s not too difficult to imagine them meeting up for a drink. Or twelve.

Researching and writing *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* was a wonderful education in itself—fun fact: did you know that, like spiders, you’re never more than eighty-feet from a high school production of *Our Town*?



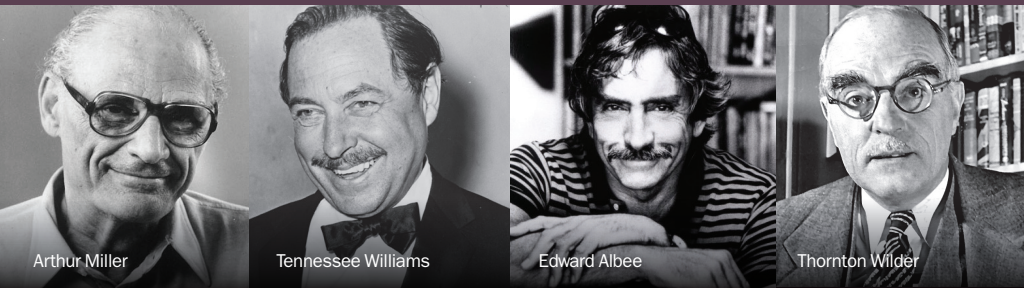
Pictured: Tim Sniffen

But to have Writers Theatre take an interest brought to the project a new level of excitement and authenticity. It also forced me to write a better ending than “...and eagles swooped down and carried them back to their homes or something.” Hearing the show performed by the Writers’ cast at our first table read, I made two important realizations: One, they know what they’re doing. Two, I read everything in my head in an unnecessary Cockney accent.

Welcome to the Gillian Theatre. I hope you find something familiar, and something new. To share a quote from Michael Halberstam, “If you screw this up, we’ll just knock the building down and start over.” ■

# A QUARTET OF AMERICAN CLASSICS: THE HISTORY BEHIND THE “PARODIED”

By **Bobby Kennedy**, Literary Manager and Dramaturg



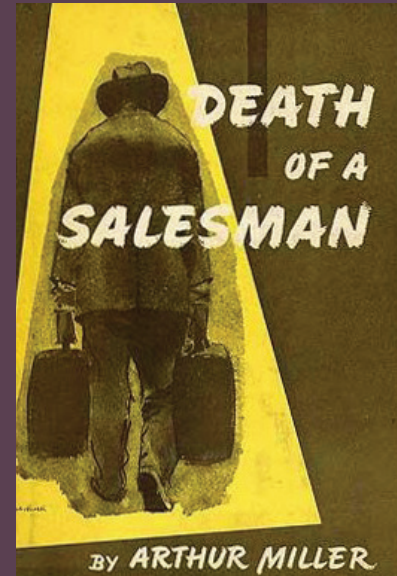
Arthur Miller

Tennessee Williams

Edward Albee

Thornton Wilder

No homework is required before seeing *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody*. The play succinctly and hilariously sums up the original material of the four component plays—*Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee, and *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder—for both experts and novices, distilling the plays down to their essences with a witty quip from our omniscient Stage Manager. What is important to remember—and the existence of the parody itself serves as an obvious reminder of this—is how famous these masterworks of American theatre have become. Let’s chart the journey to revered status for each of our four seminal works.



## *Death of a Salesman*

**Author:** Arthur Miller

**Year:** 1949

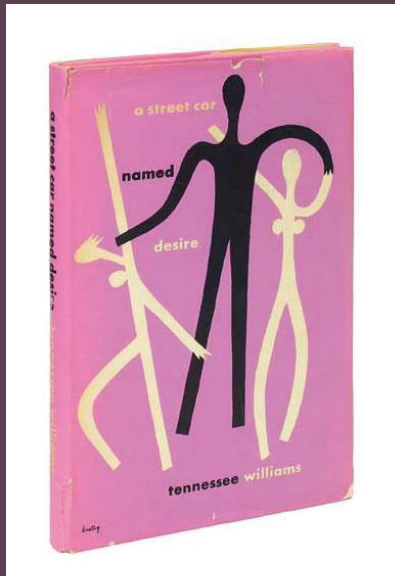
**Famous Lines:** “I’m the New England man. I’m vital in New England.” “Attention must be paid.” “You can’t eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a piece of fruit.” “After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive.”

Arthur Miller had put himself on the map with his first major play, *All My Sons*, in 1947. Following up a debut success can be daunting, but Miller’s second effort exceeded the very high expectations set for him. *Death of a Salesman*, with its story of American everyman Willy

Loman, was the perfect story for the times. As the surging U.S. economy readjusted to peacetime, modernization and technological advancement began to make certain professions and industries obsolete. The directness of the play’s title proclaimed the work’s importance to the moment and brought a profoundly affecting humanity to the collateral damage of an ever evolving American Dream.

The original Broadway production of *Death of a Salesman*, directed by the celebrated Elia Kazan and starring Lee J. Cobb (best remembered for his work in the films *Twelve Angry Men*, *On the Waterfront* and *The Exorcist*) as Willy Loman, was an immediate success. The production ran for 742 performances and won Tony Awards for Best Play, Best Director, Best Supporting Actor (Arthur Kennedy as Biff) and Best Scenic Design (Jo Mielziner). The play also won the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Other notable actors to play Willy include George C. Scott, Dustin Hoffman and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Chicago audiences got to see Robert Falls’s production starring Brian Dennehy as Willy at Goodman Theatre in 1999 before it transferred to Broadway and won four Tony Awards. Although there has never been a definitive cinematic version of the play, its constant presence on national stages, compounded by its universal inclusion in any class on modern literature or drama, cemented the play as one of the 20th century’s most important stories.



## **A Streetcar Named Desire**

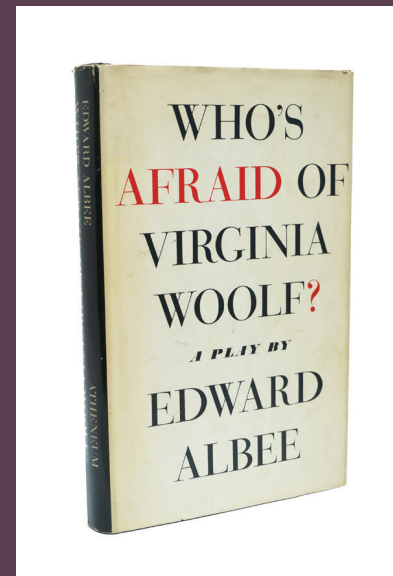
**Author:** Tennessee Williams

**Year:** 1947

**Famous Lines:** “They told me to take a street-car named Desire, and transfer to one called Cemeteries, and ride six blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields!” “Poker should not be played in a house with women.” “I’m not in anything I want to get out of.” “In the state of Louisiana we have the Napoleonic code.” “We’ve had this date with each other from the beginning.” “I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.”

Just like Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams’s first play *The Glass Menagerie* was a surprise success in 1944, and the playwright followed it up with an even grander play: *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The story of tarnished Southern belle Blanche DuBois and her clash with the brutish Stanley Kowalski also illustrated a change in American society—from traditional to a more modern, urban world. Williams’s skill at writing dialogue as beautifully resonant as poetry made the language of the play as unforgettable as the story.

Running for 855 performances on Broadway and then touring the country, the original production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (also directed by Elia Kazan) was a massive success, winning the 1948 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and a Best Actress Tony Award for Jessica Tandy (who played Blanche). Further lionizing the play was the iconic film adaptation from 1951, directed by Kazan. Marlon Brando (Stanley), Kim Hunter (Stella) and Karl Malden (Mitch), reprised their roles from the original production, joined by Vivien Leigh as Blanche. The film won 4 Oscars, with Leigh, Hunter and Malden taking home awards for their performances. WT audiences were treated to David Cromer’s sumptuous production of the play at WT in 2010, which Charles Isherwood of *The New York Times* called “the most uniformly well-acted production I’ve yet seen.”



## **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?**

**Author:** Edward Albee

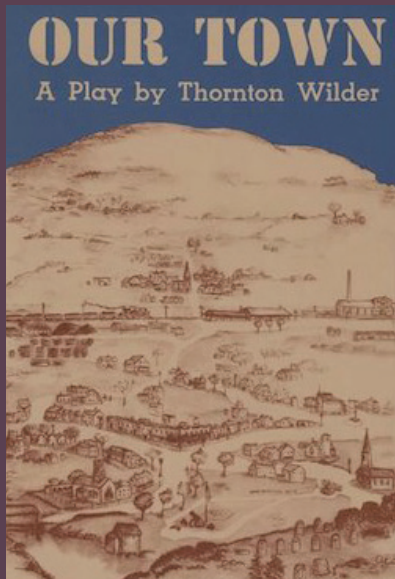
**Year:** 1962

**Famous Lines:** “I hope that was an empty bottle, George! You can’t afford to waste good liquor, not on YOUR salary!” “Dashed hopes and good intentions. Good, better, best, bested.” “George and Martha: sad sad sad.”

With the first full-length play of his career, Edward Albee became an overnight sensation. He was the first major American dramatist to blend some of the wordplay used by absurdist writers like Beckett and Ionesco into the realism of

mainstream American drama. Like Miller and Williams, Albee was also attacking the illusion of the mid-century American idyll. The freshness of Albee’s writing and his disregard for the traditional rules of what was acceptable to put on stage made the play an important early entry in the 1960s countercultural revolution that would continue to escalate as the decade continued.

The original Broadway production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* opened in 1962 and played for 669 performances, starring Arthur Hill and Uta Hagen as the infamous George and Martha. The play won the 1963 Tony Award for Best Play and was selected for the 1963 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, but the Pulitzer Advisory Board overruled the decision because of concerns about the play’s profanity and sexual themes. Instead, no Drama Award was given that year. Mike Nichols directed a film adaptation of the play released in 1966 that starred Hollywood power couple Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. The adaptation was a big success, winning Taylor an Oscar for her performance. Chicago audiences were able to see Steppenwolf Theatre Company’s 2010 production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Starring Tracy Letts and Amy Morton, before the production moved to Broadway in 2012. Letts won the Tony Award for Best Actor for his performance.



## Our Town

**Author:** Thornton Wilder

**Year:** 1938

**Famous Lines:** “This is the way we were: in our growing up and in our marrying and in our living and in our dying.” “People are meant to go through life two by two. ‘Tain’t natural to be lonesome.” “Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute?”

*Our Town* is the oldest of the four plays that make up our parody, and the only one not to have its name included in the title. However, the play’s groundbreaking

influence on American theatre cannot be denied. The conceit of having a Stage Manager narrate and guide the story of small-town life in Grover’s Corners, New Hampshire with only tables and chairs for the scenery renewed the emphasis of theatre on the words and the artists. The sophistication and honesty with which Wilder explored adulthood and death laid the groundwork for the increasingly emotionally complex works of Williams, Miller and Albee.

After out-of-town tryouts in Princeton and Boston that were met with little enthusiasm, *Our Town* found more success on Broadway. The production ran for 336 performances and won the 1938 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. With its universal appeal and relative ease to produce, Wilder’s play remains one of the most produced theatrical works each year. Too intrinsically theatrical to have the same appeal on screen that it does on stage, no definitive film adaptations exist. Writers Theatre opened its performance venue in the Woman’s Library Club in 2003 with *Our Town*, directed by William Brown, and David Cromer’s award-winning production of the play started in Chicago at The Hypocrites in 2008 before running for 648 performances off-Broadway. ■

# DIRECTORS’ PERSPECTIVES

Literary Manager and Dramaturg Bobby Kennedy asked co-directors Michael Halberstam and Stuart Carden about the collaborative process.



Michael Halberstam. Photo by Joe Mazza, brave lux.

**MH:** Okay, seriously on this one. Tim Sniffen keeps the laughs coming which is not always the case with comedic writers. He has also managed the unlikely task of taking something that sounds as though it might sustain for about 10 minutes and drawn it out to a very engaging and satisfying 70 minutes!

**BK:** What do you think Stuart’s favorite part is?

**MH:** Again, who is this Stuart?

**BK:** Years from now, when you’re telling your grandkids about this experience, what do you hope to be able to tell them about the time you co-directed a play at Writers Theatre with Stuart Carden?

**MH:** I’m gay so unless my fixed dog defies science and nature by procreating, I’m not anticipating this paradigm. Also, see above.

**Bobby Kennedy:** So you’re co-directing. What does that mean?

**Michael Halberstam:** It means I’ll have someone to get me my tea JUST the way I like it. And of course I will be teaching a lot.

**BK:** Are you sure that Stuart thinks it means the same thing?

**MH:** Who is Stuart?

**BK:** What is your favorite thing about *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody*?



Stuart Carden.

**Bobby Kennedy:** So you're co-directing. What does that mean?

**Stuart Carden:** That means that if this is a screaming flop it is Michael's fault and if it is a screaming success then it is ALL MINE!

**BK:** Are you sure that Michael thinks it means the same thing?

**SC:** I'm only right about what Michael thinks 43% of the time. So, 57% of me feels good about this.

**BK:** What is your favorite thing about *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody*?

**SC:** The Easter egg jokes for that rare bird, the theatre nerd. You know who you are. Also a favorite thing—that Writers Theatre, bastion of the classical theatre canon, is collaborating with the hilarious and irreverent Tim Sniffen and The Second City. I think Bob Dylan had this in mind when he wrote "The times they are a'changing." Okay, one more favorite thing, the opportunity for these six extraordinary actors, all of whom we've seen bring the "drama" have the chance to bring the unadulterated "funny."

**BK:** What do you think Michael's favorite part is?

**SC:** Co-directing with me. Oh, and the damp t-shirts.

**BK:** Years from now, when you're telling your grandkids about this experience, what do you hope to be able to tell them about the time you co-directed a play at Writers Theatre with Michael Halberstam?

**SC:** I'm not sure how that story to my 23 grandkids (hey—it's my hypothetical) begins but I hope that story ends with "... and that's how all of your middle names became 'Halberstam' and also why the first ever production in the brand new Gillian Theatre turned out to be the last."

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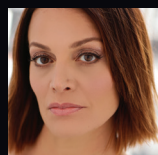


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# ACTORS AND CHARACTERS

The cast of *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* tells us about their first experience with their famous characters, and what they love about playing a parody version of these legends.



## Jennifer Engstrom (Blanche DuBois)

My introduction to Blanche DuBois would have been the Vivian Leigh film performance, though it was blasted out of my system once I started working on the play in 2010 (the Writers production helmed by David Cromer, in which I played Eunice and understudied Jeff-winning actress Natasha Lowe in the role of Blanche). It was then that the role became less mystifying and more approachable, and I identified quite strikingly

with her wants and wounds...

I have always thought that Blanche DuBois is hilarious. Grandeur in the face of utter humiliation is kinda my jam.

## Sean Fortunato (The Stage Manager)

I played Mr. Webb in *Our Town* in college and dated the woman who played Emily, my daughter. Hopefully audience members didn't sense anything extra during those comforting fatherly embraces.



I find the more I commit to the sincerity of The Stage Manager and try to play his text as honestly as possible, the more the ridiculousness of what's he's saying cracks me up. The text is so clever and funny, and I get to share the stage with incredibly skilled dramatic actors whose authenticity make them hilarious.



## Marc Grapey (Willy Loman)

I remember reading *Death of a Salesman* when I was still in high school. But my first real memory of the play is the Dustin Hoffman/John Malkovich production that was on Broadway. I remember seeing Malkovich come out of the stage door and walk down 46th Street in a purple beret.

My favorite part is telling people that I'm playing Willy Loman at Writers Theatre. I leave out the detail about the parody and all the other characters from other famous plays.

## John Hoogenakker (George)

I'm embarrassed to say it, but I saw the movie before I saw the play. As I recall, there were no cellphone interruptions. The first production I saw in a theatre was the one at Steppenwolf a few years back, with Tracy Letts, and I thought it was phenomenal. Despite the cellphone interruptions.



I love getting to make snide remarks between bites of scotch. In the play, I mean. As opposed to in life. I'm not like this in life. (Takes bite of scotch).



## Michael Perez (Stanley Kowalski)

Probably watching *A Streetcar Named Desire* in high school drama class or something. I don't remember exactly where it was but I remember being an awkward and chubby adolescent who didn't understand Stanley's sexuality, strength or primal nature; all foreign concepts to a young nerd.

What I love about this opportunity is that it's after his play; one notch past prime and perhaps one beer too many. The Stanley we know is still here but I can't wait to play the parts written in our version that have bubbled up after screaming "Stella!" a few too many times.

## Karen Janes Woditsch (Martha)

I remember seeing a picture from the film of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* in my book, *STARS!* The book was published in 1983 and I got it when it was new and I was a senior in high school! I know, I know, and you all thought I just graduated college! The picture was of Elizabeth Taylor collapsing into George Segal's arms, Sandy Dennis has her hands over her ears and Richard Burton has a look of supreme satisfaction as he says something horrible to her. I hadn't read the play or seen the movie at that point. But the picture was mesmerizing. My first impression was of emotional chaos. And yet I still had a moment of appreciating Taylor's nifty cigarette pants.



Martha is already a fairly big character in the dramatic version; so to make the comedy work I'm looking forward to see how much space I can take up with teased hair and enlarged breasts. Add lots of actual booze and you've got comedy gold! A BIGGER, LOUDER, FASTER, FUNNIER Martha. The Benny Hill School of Comedy. My alma mater. ■

# NEW WORK AT WRITERS THEATRE

By **Bobby Kennedy**, Literary Manager and Dramaturg



Pictured: Scott Parkinson in *Crime and Punishment*.  
Photo by Michael Brosilow.



Pictured: Mark L. Montgomery and Kate Fry in *The Letters*. Photo by Michael Brosilow.



Pictured: Barbara Robertson in *The Detective's Wife*.  
Photo by Michael Brosilow.



Pictured: Curtis Gillen, Dan Weschler, Ben Ferguson, Ryan Melia, Arya Shahi, Matt Nuernberger and Alex Falberg in *The Old Man and The Old Moon*. Photo by Liz Lauren.



Pictured: Kevin Gudahl, Alan Schmuckler, and Kate Fry in *A Minister's Wife*.  
Photo by Michael Brosilow.

## ***Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* is the 22<sup>nd</sup> world premiere Writers Theatre has produced in its 24 seasons of existence.**

In addition to these premieres, WT is also committed to providing playwrights the chance to continue refining their new work after it debuts, via developmental workshop opportunities and fully-staged second productions.

Many of the new works produced by WT have found continued success with multiple productions throughout the country, including WT world premieres such as Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus's adaptation of *Crime and Punishment*, Evan Smith's *The Savannah Disputation*, Keith Huff's *The Detective's Wife* and the musical *A Minister's Wife*, with a book by

Austin Pendleton, lyrics by Jan Levy Tranen and music by Joshua Schmidt, as well as further developed productions such as John W. Lowell's *The Letters*, Connor McPherson's *The Dance of Death* and PigPen Theatre Co.'s *The Old Man and The Old Moon*.

Writers Theatre remains committed to commissioning, developing and producing new plays, musicals and adaptations through its Literary Development Initiative, founded in 2004 thanks to the generosity of David and Mary Winton Green. Each season, the Theatre holds readings and workshops, both private and public, of a spectrum of new projects in various stages of development, tailoring the developmental process according to the needs of each work. The result is a consistently high quality of artistic output that presents new work to our audiences with the same confidence and sophistication inherent in our highly-regarded classical work, as we strive to make these new pieces the classics of the future. ■

# AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

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

## SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT

Are you curious about the world that surrounds your favorite plays? *Sunday Spotlight* is our exclusive series offering audiences access to the finest speakers, academics and cultural leaders. Each event extends the conversation on our stages by featuring an expert in an area connected to the play. Past audiences have pondered the future of artificial intelligence in *Marjorie Prime* with Northwestern University Associate Professor Douglas Downey and examined landscape architecture in relation to *Arcadia* with author and garden historian Cathy Jean Maloney.

Don't miss the next *Sunday Spotlight* for *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* on **June 19, 2016**.

## THE MAKING OF...

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes of the shows you love? *The Making of...* series offers audiences an insider view of what goes into creating each production at WT. Past events have explored the historical accuracy of the costume design in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, how a music director wrote new orchestrations for a live jazz combo on *Sweet Charity* and the way a background in clowning helped an actor execute stage violence in *The Dance of Death*. The current season has featured looks into the artistic approaches and acting careers of performers Mary Ann Thebus (*Marjorie Prime*), Scott Parkinson and Elizabeth Stenholt (*Arcadia*).

Don't miss the next edition of *The Making of...* series for *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* on **June 27, 2016**.



Pictured: Literary Manager Bobby Kennedy and Mary Ann Thebus at *The Making of... Marjorie Prime* event.

## POST-SHOW CONVERSATION: THE WORD

Join us after every Tuesday evening performance (excluding previews) of *Arcadia*, *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* and *Company* for a 15-minute discussion of the play, facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

## POST-SHOW CONVERSATION: THE ARTIST

Join us after every Wednesday evening performance (excluding previews) of every production in our 15/16 Season for a 15-minute talk-back featuring actors from the production, facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

## AUDIENCE EXCHANGE

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

## PRODUCTION SURVEY

As audience members, your feedback is invaluable to us. After you attend a production, watch your email inbox for a survey. We appreciate your taking the time to let us know about your experience and offer any suggestions for your next visit!

# FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

The Education Department's touring program reaches 8,000 students in 10<sup>th</sup> annual tour

Pictured: Caren Blackmore as Alaya in *The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights*. Photo by Joe Mazza, brave lux.

In January and February, Writers Theatre's Education Department staged the 10<sup>th</sup> annual tour of *The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights*. This one-woman show, written by Yolanda Androzzo, is an original commission of Writers Theatre and has been a cornerstone of the education programs since 2006. The story follows a Chicago student named Alaya who has overcome obstacles and yet is getting into fights and searching for meaning in school and life. As a result, her teacher tasks her with writing a project about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his legacy of nonviolence. While reticent at first, Alaya soon finds that history lives all around her in the Chicagoland area. She meets with individuals such as Mrs. Weinschenker, her art teacher who talks of connections to the Peace Movement and her family's Jewish heritage, her Puerto Rican poetry teacher David Hernandez who teaches her that "words can change the world" and even Rev. Jesse Jackson who chronicles his journey fighting for Civil Rights. From these individuals, and many others, Alaya finds her power is in her poetry and hip hop instead of her fists; she commits to turning "anger into action."

The original script was crafted through interviews with these real celebrated and unsung heroes of Civil Rights Movement history in Chicago and honors diverse voices and perspectives connected to this time. Recent and current events in the United States have given birth to a modern day civil rights movement in response to police brutality and a new focus on systemic racism and oppression. Our students are part of that national dialogue and are hearing and learning about these events and the efforts of groups like #blacklivesmatter to voice opposition. In response to the current moment we updated the script to mirror the lived experiences of our students. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour made connections to these events and featured Alaya finding her own voice in the current struggle.

The result was exhilarating. More than 8,000 students and teachers engaged in this year's program during 40 performances. There were many moments of connection between past and present and our collective responsibility to, as Alaya states, "fight the good fight." A teacher at Franklin Fine Arts School stated, "[My students] were

totally captivated. We had an incredibly lively discussion about the show and its themes afterwards." A student at Proviso West High School approached actress Caren Blackmore after the show in tears sharing that it deeply resonated with her as a young woman of color and referencing the words of poet Dr. Burroughs, featured in the show, "What shall I tell my children who are black..." Further making connections between history and the present, students in multiple schools passionately declared, "We need to put the guns down!"

In addition to schools, the program toured to community organizations including a standing room only opening at The Chicago History Museum, the Chicago Literacy Alliance, two juvenile detention centers and the Mercy Home for Boys and Girls serving homeless youth. At this closing performance adults in the audience shared wisdom about having participated in Martin Luther King Jr.'s Chicago Freedom Movement on the west side of the city and attending Emmet Till's funeral.

In countless ways and on countless occasions the program provided an arena for youth voices to question and make connections, to honor history, for intergenerational exchange and authentic conversations about the shared work remaining to build real equality in our communities, city and world. As one teacher said, "We aren't talking about this enough. Thank you for telling these stories and having these conversations." ■

GOOD HANDS  
*working together*  
CAN DO GREAT THINGS™



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GOOD HANDS

Allstate is a proud sponsor of  
**Writers Theatre's**  
*The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights*

# FROM PAGE TO STAGE

Writers Theatre and select North Shore libraries are proud to present the eleventh annual *From Page to Stage* series. This comprehensive series of special events, lectures, workshops, and performances are designed to enhance and enrich your appreciation of *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody*.

All events are FREE of charge and open to the public. Reservations are requested to secure your seat: RSVP online at [writerstheatre.org/fpts](http://writerstheatre.org/fpts) or by calling the Box Office at **847-242-6000**.

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## FROM PAGE TO STAGE KICKOFF

Monday, May 9 at 7pm

Hosted by the Glencoe Public Library at Writers Theatre  
325 Tudor Court, Glencoe  
[www.glencoepubliclibrary.org](http://www.glencoepubliclibrary.org)



Featuring: Co-director **Stuart Carden** and Co-creator and Writer **Tim Sniffen**

The director and co-creator/writer of *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* discuss the themes of the play, the process of its creation and the challenges of satirizing some of the greatest works in the American Theatre canon. Enjoy coffee and desserts following this annual literary event!

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## FILM SCREENING: A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Tuesday, May 10 at 6:30pm  
Hosted by the Wilmette Public Library  
1242 Wilmette Ave, Wilmette  
[www.wilmettelibrary.info](http://www.wilmettelibrary.info)



Featuring: **Michael Smith**, independent filmmaker, author and film studies instructor based in Chicago.

Join us for a screening of the classic film, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, followed by a discussion with filmmaker Michael Smith, author of the book *Flickering Empire: How Chicago Invented the U.S. Film Industry*.

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## LAUGHTER: THE BEST MEDICINE?

Thursday, May 12 at 7pm  
Hosted by the Deerfield Public Library  
920 Waukegan Rd., Deerfield  
[www.deerfieldlibrary.org](http://www.deerfieldlibrary.org)



Featuring: Clown, Nurse and Certified Laughter Leader, **Debra Joy Hart**

Learn how laughter helps your body stay healthy, keeps your mind sharp and helps you keep emotionally connected with other people—and yourself. Debra Joy Hart will lead attendees in laughter exercises, play-filled jocularly and mindful planned spontaneity while also tackling tough subjects such as when to laugh and when to cry.

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*From Page to Stage* is generously sponsored by  
**RANDY L. AND MELVIN R. BERLIN**

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## STANLEY VS. STANLEY

Monday, May 16 at 7pm  
Hosted by the Glenview Public Library  
1930 Glenview Rd., Glenview  
www.glenviewpl.org



Featuring: WT artists **Michael Perez** and **Matt Hawkins**

Stanley Kowalski from *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* (Actor Michael Perez) comes face to face with Stanley Kowalski from Writers Theatre's 2008 production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Actor Matt Hawkins), to discuss the difference in approach when creating a character from the original source text, as opposed to a new work that is satirizing the original.

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## TRIVIA NIGHT: THE AMERICAN THEATRICAL CANNON

Tuesday, May 24 at 7pm  
Hosted by the Highland Park Public Library  
494 Laurel Ave., Highland Park  
www.hplibrary.org



Featuring: **Chris Jones**, Chief Theatre Critic and a Sunday Culture Columnist of the *Chicago Tribune*.

*Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* is a mashup of four of the best-loved dramas in the American Theatrical Cannon. See how much you know about the source material in a lively round of theatre trivia, hosted by Chicago Tribune Theatre Critic Chris Jones.

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## THE ART OF NOT PLAYING BY THE RULES: PARODY, SATIRE AND MASH-UP

Monday, June 6 at 7pm  
Hosted by the Northbrook Public Library  
1201 Cedar Ln, Northbrook  
www.northbrook.info



Featuring: **Dr. Ben Golobuff**, Professor of English at Lake Forest College

Join us for an informative lecture that contextualizes *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody* by examining the rules and conventions of comedy, parody and satire, and exploring the emerging art and culture of "mash-ups."

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## PARODY AND IMPROV – THE BIRTH OF A NEW COMEDY

Thursday, June 9 at 7pm  
Hosted by the Skokie Public Library  
5215 Oakton St, Skokie  
www.skokieliibrary.info



Featuring: Presenters from **The Second City**

This energetic and enlightening presentation by The Second City includes an exploration of parody and discussion of how improvisation informs the choices performers make in creating a real person or character.

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*From Page to Stage* is generously sponsored by  
**RANDY L. AND MELVIN R. BERLIN**

# ANNOUNCING OUR 2016/17 SEASON

Our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season—the first completely in our new theatre center—will have six productions: four in the Nichols Theatre and two in the Gillian Theatre.

25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON SPONSOR

BMO  Harris Bank

## ***JULIUS CAESAR***

WRITTEN BY **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**  
DIRECTED AND ADAPTED BY **MICHAEL HALBERSTAM** AND **SCOTT PARKINSON**

**September 7 – October 23, 2016**  
Performed in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre

## ***THE SCENE***

WRITTEN BY **THERESA REBECK**  
DIRECTED BY **KIMBERLY SENIOR**

**February 22 – April 2, 2017**  
Performed in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre

## ***EAST TEXAS HOT LINKS***

WRITTEN BY **EUGENE LEE**  
DIRECTED BY **RON OJ PARSON**

**October 19, 2016 – January 22, 2017**  
Performed in the Gillian Theatre

## ***THE MYSTERY OF LOVE & SEX***

WRITTEN BY **BATHSHEBA DORAN**  
DIRECTED BY **MARTI LYONS**

**April 5 – July 9, 2017**  
Performed in the Gillian Theatre

IN COLLABORATION WITH ARS NOVA  
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB

## ***THE HUNTER AND THE BEAR***

WRITTEN BY **PIGPEN THEATRE CO.**  
DIRECTED BY **STUART CARDEN** AND **PIGPEN THEATRE CO.**

**December 7, 2016 – January 22, 2017**  
Performed in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre

## ***PARADE***

BOOK BY **ALFRED UHRY**  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY **JASON ROBERT BROWN**  
CO-CONCEIVED BY **HAROLD PRINCE**  
DIRECTED BY **GARY GRIFFIN**

**May 24 – July 9, 2017**  
Performed in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY! CALL THE BOX OFFICE AT 847-242-6000 OR VISIT WRITERSTHEATRE.ORG.**



# DEATH OF A STREETCAR NAMED VIRGINIA WOOLF: A PARODY

## APRIL

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
25	25	26	27 7:30	28 7:30	29 7:30	30 7:30

## MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 2:00	2	3 7:30	4 PRIVATE Event	5 PRIVATE Event	6 7:30	7 3:00/7:30
8 2:00/6:00	9	10 7:30 D	11 3:00/7:30 D	12 7:30	13 7:30	14 3:00/7:30
15 2:00	16	17 7:30 D	18 7:30 D	19 7:30	20 7:30	21 3:00/7:30
22 2:00/6:00	23	24 7:30 D	25 3:00/7:30 D	26 7:30	27 7:30	28 3:00/7:30
29 2:00	30	31 7:30 D				

## JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 7:30 D	2 7:30	3 7:30	4 3:00/7:30
5 2:00/6:00	6	7 7:30 D	8 3:00/7:30 D	9 7:30	10 7:30	11 3:00/7:30
12 2:00	13	14 7:30 D	15 7:30 D	16 7:30	17 7:30	18 3:00/7:30
19 2:00/6:00 S	20	21 7:30 D	22 3:00/7:30 D	23 7:30	24 7:30	25 3:00/7:30
26 2:00	27 M	28 7:30 D	29 7:30 D	30 7:30		

## JULY

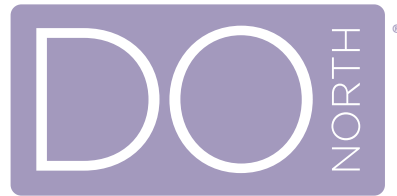
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10 2:00/6:00	11	12 7:30 D	13 7:30 D	14 7:30	15 7:30	16 3:00/7:30
17 2:00/6:00	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

■ Private Event  
D Post-Show Conversation

M *The Making of...*  
S *Sunday Spotlight*

# DO NORTH

Writers Theatre has come together with three of the North Shore's most acclaimed cultural attractions—Chicago Botanic Garden, Kohl Children's Museum and Ravinia Festival—to bring awareness of the rich artistic, cultural, community and family activities available in the area.



Subscribers of Writers Theatre are eligible for discounts and perks at our partner Do North organizations.

- **Ravinia:** two-for-one pavilion tickets on selected Chicago Symphony Orchestra concerts. Members of any Do North organization will also receive a 10% discount on their Ravinia Gifts purchases at the park.

For more information, please call **847-266-5100**.

- **Chicago Botanic Garden:** half-price parking (admission is already free) to members of its partner organizations.

For more information, please call **847-835-5440**.

- **Kohl Children's Museum:** two-for-one admissions after 1pm daily to members of other Do North institutions.

For more information, please call **847-832-6600**.

For a complete list of discounts and more information go to [donorth.org](http://donorth.org).



Artistic Director Michael Halberstam  
Executive Director Kathryn M. Lipuma

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For Tickets:  
[writerstheatre.org](http://writerstheatre.org)  
**847-242-6000**

Student tickets only \$20 (with valid student ID).

Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. Call 847-242-6014 for more details.