

DIALOGUE

The Online Magazine of South Coast Repertory

January 2010



'Catastrophe Expressed Lyrically'

Fences is the story of a former Negro Leagues star who ended up a garbage collector because Major League Baseball had no place for black players. But it's also a story of love, honor, beauty, betrayal, duty — all the notions and emotions that rule our lives. That's why August Wilson's play won the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award, and why it remains his most popular work.



Not Your Ordinary Muscial

A lost notebook. A trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A fight over a bottle of wine. All ordinary occurrences that add up to one extraordinary new musical from composer Adam Gwon. *Ordinary Days*, which makes its West Coast debut Jan. 3-24, intertwines the stories of four young New Yorkers looking for love, connections and a way to make their mark on the world.



Trouble, Turmoil and Tesseracts

SCR's own John Glore is the man behind a new stage adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's children's classic, *A Wrinkle in Time*. Is he feeling any pressure? In a word, yes. "So many people [have] told me that it was their favorite book as a child." But we're sure Meg, Charles Wallace, Calvin and the Mesdames Whatsit, Who and Which are in capable hands.



He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not

Jesus Hates Me, or so fears Ethan, a hapless former high-school football star living in the shadow of the "Blood of the Lamb" Miniature Golf Course, where a Wal-Mart mannequin transformed into Jesus stares down from a cross overlooking the 17th hole. Audiences loved this dramedy when it played the Chance Theater earlier this year, and now SCR is bringing that Chance production to the Nicholas Studio.

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WATCHING WILSON PLAY LIKE LISTENING TO THE BLUES



by Linda Sullivan Baity

Troy Maxson has spent his entire life trapped behind fences he cannot scale. He is a man at once proud and humiliated, hopeful and disillusioned, passionate and yet powerless to surmount the obstacles of racial prejudice, prison bars, family obligations and self-imposed emotional walls that block his way at every turn.

This middle-aged African-American garbage collector and legendary ex-player in the Negro baseball league is the beating heart of August Wilson's masterwork, *Fences*. As the drama's compelling central character, Troy Maxson (a character loosely based on the playwright's own stepfather) also embodies the inequalities and injustices confronting black Americans throughout the painful course of modern history.

Fences is set in 1957, in the small dirt front yard of the Maxson household, "an ancient two-story brick house set back off a small alley" in Pittsburgh's impoverished inner-city Hill District. The play opens with Troy and his friend Bono rehashing a recent incident at work when Troy made trouble by complaining that only whites were allowed to drive the garbage trucks. As the stories begin to unfold and family members are added to the mix, including Troy's wife, Rose, sons Cory and Lyons, and brother Gabriel, Maxson emerges as a seriously flawed, yet in many ways admirable, hero whose compelling personal struggle transcends the boundaries of race and time to exemplify the universal human yearning for dignity, acceptance and love in the face of seemingly insurmountable barricades.

Shortly after completing *Fences* in 1985, Wilson began to see that the three dramas he had written to date were actually the beginnings of an epic literary achievement that grew to include ten plays and is often dubbed the Century Cycle. As the ambitious project developed, Wilson began to deliberately weave his plays together with overlapping themes and characters. He told *The New York Times* in 2000, "I wanted to place this culture onstage in all its richness and fullness and to demonstrate

SEGERSTROM STAGE

Fences

by August Wilson
directed by Seret Scott
January 22 - February 21, 2010

One of the most powerful forces
in American theatre chronicles
the black experience in 1950s
America in this Pulitzer Prize winner.

Approximately two hours with one intermission.

Barbara & Bill Roberts and
Bank of America, Honorary Producers

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its ability to sustain us in all areas of human life and endeavor and through profound moments of our history in which the larger society had thought less of us than we have thought of ourselves."

Each of the ten plays is set in a different decade of the 20th century, and all but one take place in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, where Wilson was born in 1945. In his introduction to the recently published *August Wilson Century Cycle*, critic John Lahr focuses on the playwright's talent for transforming "historical tragedy into imaginative triumph. The blues are catastrophe expressed lyrically; so are Wilson's plays, which swing with the pulse of the African-American people, as they moved, over the decades, from property to personhood."

In decade order, Wilson's "Century Cycle" plays are:

- 1900s - *Gem of the Ocean* (written 2003)
- 1910s - *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (written 1984)
- 1920s - *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (written 1982)
- 1930s - *The Piano Lesson* - Pulitzer Prize (written 1986)
- 1940s - *Seven Guitars* (written 1995)
- 1950s - *Fences* - Pulitzer Prize (written 1985)
- 1960s - *Two Trains Running* (written 1990)
- 1970s - *Jitney* (written 1982)
- 1980s - *King Hedley II* (written 2001)
- 1990s - *Radio Golf* (written 2005)

Fences was initially presented as a staged reading at The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's 1983 National Playwrights Conference. It opened on April 30, 1985, at the Yale Repertory Theatre in a production directed by Lloyd Richards, and the following year, the Richards-helmed Broadway premiere won every major accolade, including the Tony Award for Best Play, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, the John Gassner Outer Critics' Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. That production, which featured James Earl Jones as Troy Maxson, ran for 525 performances and set a record for a non-musical Broadway production by grossing \$11 million in a single year.

SCR's dazzling cast for *Fences* features Charlie Robinson (Troy Maxson), Gregg Daniel (Jim Bono), Juanita Jennings (Rose), Brandon J. Dirden (Lyons), Baron Kelly (Gabriel), Larry Bates (Cory), Skye Whitebear and Sofya Ogunseitani (alternating as Raynell). Joining director Seret Scott's creative ensemble are Set Designer Shawn Motley, Costume Designer Dana Woods, Lighting Designer Lonnie Alcaraz and Sound Designer Michael Roth.

Previews for *Fences* begin January 22nd and performances continue through February 21st on Segerstrom Stage. [Theatre Discovery Project](#) performances on January 26, 27, 28, February 2, 3, and 4 feature standards-based activities designed to enhance the educational value for students. As space is limited for these special events, interested teachers should contact the Box Office (714.708.5555) for group reservations.

Fences' Extended Family



Charlie Robinson

Gregg Daniel

Juanita Jennings

TROY MAXSON - Charlie Robinson

Legendary Negro League Baseball player, now working as a garbage collector. Troy is a storyteller. He is at once jovial and loving, brash and overbearing. A complicated man embittered by the racism he has experienced throughout his life.

JIM BONO - Gregg Daniel

Troy's very good friend. The men met while in prison, and Bono, as he is known, has stayed with Troy through his legendary days in baseball and today works beside him as a garbage man. Like brothers, the two men love each other deeply.

ROSE - Juanita Jennings

Troy's wife. A strong, supportive woman who is fiercely protective of her husband and son. A loving presence who counterbalances Troy's ferocity for life, Rose mothers almost everyone around her. She is quiet and laughs easily. A gentle spirit.



Brandon J. Dirden

Baron Kelly

Larry Bates

LYONS - Brandon J. Dirden

Troy's eldest son from a previous relationship. Lyons is a musician who cannot seem to keep a job. He is full of laughter and uses his charming personality to quell his father's quick anger. A grown man, he lives with his girlfriend nearby.

GABRIEL - Baron Kelly

Troy's brother. After suffering severe head trauma in World War II, Gabriel is left with a childlike innocence and a deep sense of concern for his older brother. He believes with every fiber in his being that he is the archangel Gabriel.

CORY - Larry Bates

Troy and Rose's son. Cory is a natural athlete like his father, eager to prove his salt to the legendary Troy Maxon. He has been playing football, hoping to catch the eyes of college recruiters, offering him the educational opportunities his illiterate father never had.

RAYNELL - Skye Whitebear and Sofya Ogunseitan

Troy's daughter and youngest child from another relationship.

Character description reprinted from the excellent *Fences Study Guide* published by Penumbra Theatre Company in 2008

NOT YOUR ORDINARY MUSICAL

by John Glone

Warren: an aspiring artist who takes care of a more successful artist's cat while waiting to be discovered... Deb: a suburban girl who has come to the big city for grad school, although she doesn't much like the city and she doesn't much like grad school... Jason: who would just as soon flee this "hundred-story city," but stays because he's in love with one of its "hundred million" people... and Claire: the object of Jason's ardor, a young woman who isn't ready to commit to a future with Jason because she can't stop seeing shadows of the past.

...

These are the four characters in Adam Gwon's *Ordinary Days*, a new chamber musical having its West Coast premiere at South Coast Repertory. A young New Yorker himself, Gwon understands how easy it is to get lost in that city, especially when the contours of your own life haven't yet come into sharp focus. If you don't quite know who you are, or you don't quite know what you want, then New York City can be an especially unforgiving place. All four of Gwon's characters have begun to face that reality as *Ordinary Days* picks up their stories.



Adam Gwon's *Ordinary Days* makes specific reference to two paintings found in New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art, one is **Claude Monet's "Camille Monet in the Garden at Argenteuil."**

JULIANNE ARGYROS STAGE

Ordinary Days

by Adam Gwon
directed by Ethan McSweeney
January 3-24, 2010

Ordinary days become extraordinary
when four young New Yorkers
connect through a series of funny
—and fortuitous—events.

Approximately 80 minutes with no intermission.

Pam and Jim Muzzy, Honorary Producers

Although Warren and Deb have the briefest of chance encounters during the show's first song, they don't actually meet until much later. And although Jason and Claire have been a couple for about a year, they are beginning to notice a widening gulf opening between them, which makes them both feel lonelier than if they were actually alone. This means that a substantial portion of *Ordinary Days* is rendered in the form of solo songs sung out to us rather than to other characters in the play. Like a succession of confessions and soliloquies (intermixed with the occasional duo or quartet), their songs detail their disconnected lives and their individual dissatisfactions in a way that is too funny to be sad and too heartfelt to be dismissed.

And then their separate story lines begin to converge and intertwine. Warren, an inveterate collector of the flotsam of other people's lives, finds a notebook on the street, full of annotations and fragments compiled for someone's thesis. Discovering an email address inside the notebook, he contacts the owner to let her know that her work has been found, and to arrange a rendezvous at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Deb, who'd been in a panic at the loss of her irreplaceable notes, reluctantly agrees to the meeting and then immediately regrets it when she discovers that the rescuer of her lost work is, as far as she can tell, a kook. But once the connection is made, Deb finds that Warren isn't an easy guy to shake loose.

Meanwhile Jason and Claire have made the fateful decision to move in together, but this apparent step forward seems to have shaken their relationship to its foundation. Jason becomes increasingly frustrated at Claire's unwillingness to open her heart to him, and the rupture reaches a crisis state on the day they decide to drop into the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Although Gwon brings his four characters together in the museum at the midpoint of *Ordinary Days* — and they cross paths with one another while exploring the artwork — they still don't fully connect with one another in spite of their proximity. But seeds are planted. New brushstrokes are applied to the canvas of their lives, and by the end of the show — when the four young urbanites almost-sort-of meet again — their day at the Met proves to have altered the course of their lives in quiet but profound ways.

As its title suggests, *Ordinary Days* is an appreciation of the unspectacular. Life may consist mostly of ordinary days, but every ordinary day has its moments of beauty, grace, insight and serendipity. Deb, who is all about the "big picture" — her five-year plan promises a glorious outcome but it's a little fuzzy on the details — learns a valuable lesson from flaky Warren about how to take in the finer points of life and art: Slow down. Look carefully. Everyday things don't have to be plain. Plain doesn't have to be uninteresting.

And a world of feelings can be evoked by a single daub of red on a painting of an apple.



The second piece specifically mentioned in the musical: **Cézanne's "Still Life with Apples and a Pot of Primroses."** The show also makes more general reference to the works of Klimt, Dali, Manet, and Picasso, so if you've a mind to explore, the Met's homepage www.metmuseum.org will help get you started.

A Trip to a Museum Shapes a Musical



I was writing *Ordinary Days* during a fellowship I had at the Dramatists Guild, a program that offers young writers a forum in which to develop new work.

They would bring in guest artists to hear our work and talk to us about their own creative processes. One guest artist came in, and she said, whenever she got stuck, she would take a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and, without fail, something there would get her unstuck. So when I hit a wall about a third of the way into my first draft, I took her advice and went to the Met.

(She also said she wore a large hoop skirt to the museum so that the crowds of tourists would not invade her personal or creative space. Needless to say, I did not take her up on this part of the suggestion.)

Looking back at my notebook from this trip to the Met, there are a lot of notes, in smudgy pencil, that didn't make it into the show.... But that trip to the Met turned out to be a turning point in the putting-it-together of *Ordinary Days*, and, in the show, the characters actually spend some time at the Met as a direct result of that visit....

When I was at the Met that day, looking at this painting [*Camille Monet in the Garden at Argenteuil*, by Claude Monet] flipped a switch somewhere in my brain.... It's a pretty random Monet in a pretty random gallery at the Met. But there was something about it...

Praise from the *NY Times*

"*Ordinary Days* introduces a promising newcomer to our talent-hungry musical theater, the composer and lyricist Adam Gwon. Mr. Gwon writes crisp, fluid and often funny lyrics that reflect the racing minds of four New Yorkers on a nervous search for their immediate futures. *Ordinary Days*... captures with stinging clarity that uneasy moment in youth when doubts begin to cloud hopes for a future of unlimited possibility...."

"All four characters' lives intersect briefly, if momentarily, at the end of the show. Warren's frustration with his going-nowhere career inspires a spontaneous act that has an unforeseen impact on the course of Claire and Jason's relationship. But the two couples never interact, a sad-sweet comment on the anonymity of life in the city, where it is possible to change other people's fates without actually getting to meet them."

-- *New York Times*

Of course I noticed the great wonder that is Impressionism — a beautiful metaphor that's been noted by such great minds as Stephen Sondheim in *Sunday in the Park with George* not-quite-cohesive specks of paint as the garden around her. It was a picture where the person and the place were almost impossibly tangled. To me, that entanglement was the story of that painting.

— from a blog by Adam Gwon



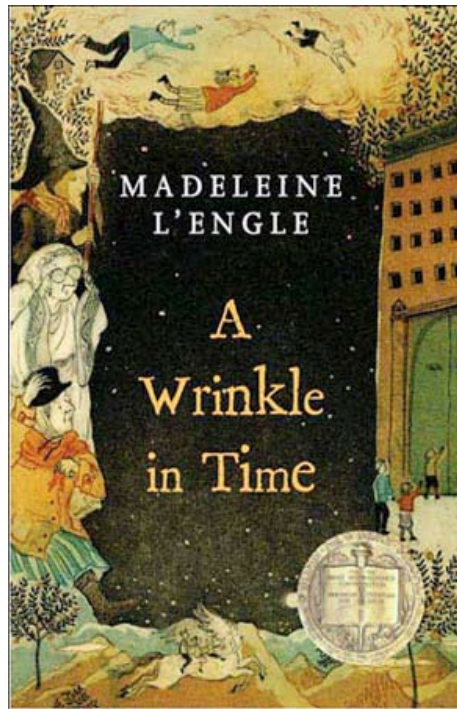
The cast of *Ordinary Days* from left to right, Nick Gabriel, Deborah S. Craig, Nancy Anderson and David Burnham.

TROUBLE, TURMOIL AND TESSERACTS

by Kimberly Colburn

It is a dark and stormy night. Meg huddles against the cold in her attic bedroom, mulling over her missing father, problems at school and wondering where her little brother, Charles Wallace, is. He often has an uncanny way of knowing what she's feeling. She heads downstairs to find him already making her some hot cocoa. Mrs. Whatsit, a mysterious friend of Charles Wallace's, appears and explains she got caught in a wicked downdraft and blown off course. Just before Mrs. Whatsit zips out again, she tells their mother Mrs. Murray that there *is* such a thing as a tesseract.

Mother gets very upset at the mention of tesseracts, so Charles Wallace and Meg head out to find Mrs. Whatsit for an explanation. They run into Calvin, an older boy from Meg's school who is going to the same place on a compulsion he had—and he turns out not to be the dumb jock Meg thought he was. When the three arrive at the old haunted house, the odd Mrs. Whatsit and her equally unearthly friends Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which sweep the children up and off on an adventure across space to rescue their father and defend all that is good in the universe.



Beloved children's classic *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeleine L'Engle, is adapted for the stage by SCR's own Associate Artistic Director John Glore (see sidebar, right). Glore streamlines the novel into a highly theatrical story while still retaining the feeling of the adored original. Seasoned Theatre for Young Audiences director Shelley Butler returns for her fourth production at SCR, after previously directing *Brand New Kid*, *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlotte's Web*. The cast of six hasn't been chosen yet, but they

About the Authors



Madeleine L'Engle (pronounced LENG-el) *A Wrinkle in Time* faced seemingly insurmountable odds to get published. Its main characters were children, yet the themes were seen as too adult for children and the situations too scary. L'Engle was rejected by 26 publishers before editors at Farrar, Straus & Giroux read it and enthusiastically accepted it. The book went on to win the John Newbery Medal as the best children's book of 1963 and has since had countless printings and sold millions of copies. L'Engle died in 2007 at the age of 88.

Although L'Engle was an Episcopalian and often wrote about spiritual or religious themes, she balked at being categorized, whether as a Christian writer or a children's writer. She crossed genre boundaries, liberally mixing quantum physics into theology and breaking down the once rigid line between adult and children's literature. She wrote "if I have something that is too difficult for adults to swallow, then I will write it in a book for children." She kept a sense of humor about her work—L'Engle once said she had a clause in her contract that her publisher had the rights to *A Wrinkle in Time* in perpetuity throughout the universe, but not on Andromeda.

L'Engle was inspired by Einstein's work and never saw science and faith as mutually exclusive. To her, "particle physics and quantum mechanics are extremely theological because they are dealing with the nature of being, so they are just as theological as a tome on morals." She read a book on Einstein where he was quoted as saying "Anyone who is not lost in rapturous awe at the power and glory of the mind behind the universe is as good as a burnt-out candle." L'Engle said she had found her theologian.

L'Engle received the Margaret A. Edwards Award from the Young Adult Library Services Association for lifetime achievement in 1998. She published 63 works, including novels, plays, and memoirs.

More information about L'Engle and her books can be found on her [official website](#).

certainly have their work cut out for them inhabiting the colorful characters in L'Engle's popular tale.

Previews of *A Wrinkle in Time* begin February 5 on the Julianne Argyros Stage, and performances continue through February 21. The Target Family Performance is February 13th and features an earlier curtain time of 11am and lower-priced tickets. With the generous support of our Corporate Honorary Producer, Emulex, SCR is proud to continue the tradition of offering free weekday matinée performances to Orange County schoolchildren. For more information on weekday school matinées, contact Janis Morrissette at 714-708-5549. To purchase tickets to *A Wrinkle in Time*, contact the box office at 714-708-5555.

ARGYROS STAGE

A Wrinkle in Time
adapted by **John Gore**
from the book by **Madeleine L'Engle**
directed by **Shelley Butler**
February 5-21, 2010

Travel through time and space on a
fantasy adventure filled with danger,
magic—and love!

Emulex, Honorary Producer

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John Gore

Playwright John Gore previously wrote *Wind of a Thousand Tales*, *Folktales Too*, *Rhubarb Jam* and *The Day After Evermore* for SCR's young audiences. He also adapted *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. All of his children's plays have gone on to success at other theatres across the country.

As SCR's Associate Artistic Director, Gore is responsible for programming the TYA series, and he often scouts children's literature for ideas. He read *A Wrinkle in Time* when he was young, and says he "rediscovered its magic with my daughter a few years ago." A theatrical adaptation that fit SCR's needs didn't exist, so he bravely decided to take a crack at it. "So many people have heard that I'm adapting *A Wrinkle in Time* and told me that it was their favorite book as a child. It's a fun project, but I have felt an increasing amount of pressure to do justice to the book." The result incorporates all of the heart and fantasy of the original, while making the story work for the stage.

Gore's other work includes *On the Jump* and *The Company of Heaven*. He has co-authored two adaptations of plays by Aristophanes with the performance trio Culture Clash, *The Birds* and *Peace*.

SCR TAKES A 'CHANCE'

For the first time in at least a decade, South Coast Repertory will play host to another theatre group when it presents the **Chance Theater**'s remounting of *Jesus Hates Me* Feb. 26-28 and March 5-7 in the Nicholas Studio.

Jesus Hates Me is a hilarious and provocative dramedy set at the "Blood of the Lamb" Miniature Golf Course in South Central Texas, where a Wal-Mart mannequin transformed into Jesus on the cross watches over the 17th hole. The play follows Ethan, an ex-high school football star desperate to find identity, sanity, faith and freedom. It covers one unpredictable week in Ethan's life as he tries to escape from his overzealous, bi-polar mother, a suicidal dishwasher, a pot-smoking cop and a beer-swillin' good ol' boy, not to mention the possible love of his life and, of course, the son of God.

The Chance first mounted Wayne Lemon's play last winter, and the *L.A. Times* praised the "detailed direction" of Chance Artistic Director Oanh Nguyen, the "superbly evocative set," "an impressive design effort...and the wonderful cast." The same cast and crew will be back for the production at SCR.

SCR's Producing Artistic Director David Emmes says this collaboration provides both theatres with an opportunity to expand their audiences and gives SCR's adventurous theatre-goers "a taste of something different." If successful, it could lead to further collaborations with other arts groups.

Tickets are \$35 and go on sale January 15 through SCR's box office. Performances run at 8 p.m. Feb. 26, 27, March 5 and 6, and at 2:30 p.m. Feb. 28 and March 7.



Ethan (Chance Dean) ponders what his life will become now that his dreams have been destroyed in *Jesus Hates Me*. Photo by Doug Catiller, True Image Studio.



Playwright Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa and director Bart DeLorenzo in rehearsal for the 2009 PPF reading of *Doctor Cerberus*.

Doctor Cerberus Awarded New Play Grant

12/08/09 • SCR's upcoming production of *Doctor Cerberus*, by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, has been awarded this year's new-play grant from The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation's Theatre Visions Fund.

The national Theatre Visions Program grant goes to only one production each year, so it's a particular honor that SCR has snagged it for the second time (the Foundation also awarded our production of *On The Jump* in 1999).

Half of the \$50,000 grant goes to support the production itself, \$10,000 goes directly

to the playwright and the rest will fund two new commissions. (SCR gets to choose which ones.)

We hear that this year's process was especially competitive and that it was Roberto's exemplary playwriting skills that put him over the top.

SCR Adds *The Language Archive* to the 2009-10 Season

11/12/09 • Julia Cho's *The Language Archive*, the story of a brilliant linguist who finds himself at a loss for words when he learns his wife is leaving him, will fill the final slot in South Coast Repertory's 2009-10 season.

The world premiere, which runs March 26 through April 25, 2010, on the Segerstrom Stage, was commissioned by New York's Roundabout Theatre Company and is being produced by special arrangement with the company. Mark Brokaw, a Roundabout Associate Artist, will direct.



Julia Cho.

"I think Mark is one of the leading directors in American theatre today," said SCR Producing Artistic Director David Emmes.

"And we have a long relationship with Julia Cho. It's been really exciting to see her deepening her talent."

Emmes said he knew he wanted to produce *The Language Archive* at SCR immediately after its reading at the Pacific Playwrights Festival last spring: "The play possesses a wonderful charm and displays a tremendous theatrical imagination."

The Language Archive tells the story of George, a man consumed with preserving and documenting the dying languages of far-flung cultures. Closer to home, though, language is failing him. He doesn't know what to say to his wife, Mary, to keep her from leaving him, and he is oblivious to the deep feelings his lab assistant, Emma, has for him.

This is Cho's second SCR production; her first was the 2007 world premiere of *The Piano Teacher*, about the lasting effects of childhood trauma and human beings' great capacity for denial. Brokaw just directed *After Miss Julie*, currently playing on Broadway with Sienna Miller. He has extensive on- and Off-Broadway credits, but this will mark his SCR directorial debut.

EDUCATION STATION - JANUARY 2010

Junior and Teen Players to Present *The Velveteen Rabbit* and *After Juliet*

The Junior and Teen Players are two groups of very excited young actors because Theatre Conservatory Director Hisa Takakuwa has announced the plays they will perform in the Nicholas Studio this spring—and they are wonderful selections.

The Junior Players will present *The Velveteen Rabbit*, based on the children's classic by Margery Williams, adapted for the stage by Thomas Olson (March 20-21 and 27-28); and the Teen Players will present Sharman MacDonal'd's *After Juliet* (May 29-30 and June 4, 5-6), the story of the Capulets and Montagues following the deaths of the young lovers.

The Players were chosen by audition to be part of their performance ensembles after at least two years of actor training. They will spend class time from now on working on their roles, under the direction of Mercy Vasquez (*The Velveteen Rabbit*) and Takakuwa (*After Juliet*).

According to Takakuwa, "We take it slowly during this process, not just rehearsing the plays but working on interpretation, character, script analysis—all of the things the students have studied during class time. It's an exciting process, which requires extra rehearsals as we get closer to the public performances. They're willing to devote more time because they are our most dedicated students—and, of course, getting onstage to perform is the highlight."

Junior Players are Brooke Boukather, Rachel Charny, Chelsea Davis, Ally Hickok, William Hopper, Christopher Huntley, Jaclyn Martin, Grace O'Brien, Jamie Ostmann, Karoline Ribak, Demie Santone and Juliet Weaver.

Teen Players are Nick Slimmer, Ellis Beardsley, Connor Dugard, Lauren Gardner, Valentina Gehley, Julia Jech, Julia Ostmann, Akshay Sharma, Rachel Teague, Max Weinberg and Elizabeth Wilson.



Teen Players Julia Ostmann and Akshay Sharma rehearse a scene in class.



Acting for the Camera teacher Jill Newton, left, gives students some pointers.

Come Inside this Winter for Adult Acting Classes

Orange County's chilly-rainy season usually occurs around the time SCR's Theatre Conservatory begins its winter session of acting classes for adults. New and continuing students step inside the Education Department's cozy classrooms, where they spend weeknights at play.

Well, some classes are more playful than others. For instance, Greg Atkins' *Beginning Improvisation* is way playful, while Adult Acting Program Director Karen Hensel's *Actors Workshop* is more serious, and other classes fall somewhere in between.

But they're all taught by working professionals and carefully developed according to students' needs: beginning levels are available for those who wish to build up communication skills or just overcome shyness, meet new people and gain a little spontaneity in their lives; on the other hand, serious students will be able to advance their training through progressively more intense sessions, and many of those who complete the advanced classes go on to SCR's Professional Acting Program, an eight-week summer session for career-minded actors.

In other words, there's something for everyone. And the good news is that students may now register online at SCR's website, where detailed information is available about each of the nine classes offered in the winter session (January 11-March 3, 2010). [Check it out.](#)

Calling All Pros

SCR's Professional Actor Training Program will hold its annual eight-week summer session June 7-July 31, 2010. Applications are available online, and auditions begin February 1, under the supervision of Director Karen Hensel, who accepts no more than 30 students to insure individualized training.

Professional actor training at SCR began in 1970 and has become nationally renowned as a crucial step in career preparation for serious acting students. Hensel has headed the program since 1986 and is a working actor, writer and teacher. She was seen most recently as Mrs. Fezziwig in *A Christmas Carol* and in the continuing role of Doris Collins in CBS' "The Young and the Restless."

Information about the Professional Actor Training Program is available [here](#), and the Education Department staff is available by phone during working hours to answer any questions potential students may have about the program at (714) 708-5549.



Professional Actor Training students Oscar Gubelman, Christopher Hyde, Elizabeth Nolan and Jaycob Hunter in the 2009 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

SOUTH COAST WINERY OFFER SUBSCRIBER SPECIAL

South Coast Winery, recognized as the "Best Winery in California" for the second consecutive year, offer SCR subscribers this special offer at its restaurant in Costa Mesa.

Just show your SCR ticket and get a two-course meal for just \$20. Choose soup or salad and either a mouth-watering tender beef filet or a tasty Scottish Salmon. Both come with plenty of delicious side items.



South Coast Winery is just around the corner from SCR at 3608 S. Bristol St. Call (714) 957-1857 or visit www.southcoastwinery.com for more information.

PHILANTHROPY - JANUARY, 2010

A Couple for the Ages

Barbara and Bill Roberts Underwrite 8th Play

Barbara and Bill Roberts, Honorary Producers of *Fences*, have led the way for supporters at South Coast Repertory for 25 years, as donors to all the major campaigns, subscribers to both stages and members of the Platinum Circle.

In the Honorary Producer arena, where they have underwritten six classic plays and one classic musical, they now add *Fences*, the Pulitzer Prize-winner from August Wilson, whose plays chronicled the black experience in America through the 20th century. But it was not just the play that convinced the Roberts' to step forward as underwriters. They are also fans of the director, Seret Scott, and the lead actor, Charlie Robinson, whose work they have enjoyed in the past.

Barbara is an SCR Emeritus Trustee and former Gala Chair. She and Bill plan to attend the traditional design presentation on the first day of rehearsal, and on First Night they will be SCR's guests at dinner with the director before the show.



Bill Roberts, Dennis Castellano, Barbara Roberts and Stefan Novinski at First Night of *A Little Night Music*, underwritten by the Roberts.

Nothing *Ordinary* about Muzzys



Jim Muzzy, director Bart DeLorenzo, Pam Muzzy at First Night of *Dead Man's Cell Phone*.

Pam and Jim Muzzy, Honorary Producers of *Ordinary Days*, are extra-ordinary at South Coast Repertory, where they have supported the theatre in just about every category.

For instance: 1) They were major donors to SCR's Next Stage Campaign, are members of the Platinum Circle, subscribers to both the Segerstrom and Argyros Stages, as well as Theatre for Young Audiences. 2) Last season, they hosted the Gala Patron Party at their home, and this season were table hosts at the "Nothing But Blue Skies" Gala. 3) They are enthusiastic Honorary Producers, having helped underwrite *Princess Marjorie*, *The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler*, two seasons of *La Posada Mágica* and last season's *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. By the way: 4.) Pam is an SCR Trustee and a member of the Gala Committee.

Why did the Muzzys choose to underwrite *Ordinary Days*? According to Pam, "We were intrigued by the fact that it was a musical and enjoyed the interaction of the characters and the message of the play. Also...I love New York!!!"

The Muzzys, along with their son Steve, were guests at the Design Presentation on the first day of rehearsal for *Ordinary Days*, and Pam later attended the initial "table read through" of the show. On First Night, January 8, they'll be fêted at dinner with the director and playwright and be acknowledged by the Artistic Directors in the pre-show curtain speech.

Hearst Gives \$75,000 for Education

South Coast Repertory has received a \$75,000 grant from The William Randolph Hearst Foundation to help underwrite the theatre's education and outreach programs this season. SCR has had a longstanding relationship with The Hearst Foundation, thanks to The Hearst Endowed Fund for Education and Outreach Programs.

Paul "Dino" Dinovitz, Executive Director of the Hearst Foundation, praised SCR's programs for children and youth.



High school students wait for a production to begin.

"This marks the Foundation's sixth grant to support SCR's educational outreach programs since 1991," Dinovitz said. "What sets South Coast Rep apart is the engaging quality of programs like MyStage, which encourage young people to integrate theater into their lives. In addition, their broad-based outreach efforts bring theater to underserved high school students throughout Orange County. Our Board members also admire the highly innovative direction and artistry of David Emmes and Martin Benson."

SCR Trustee Nancy Kelley Chairs 2010 Gala Ball

Plans for the 2010 South Coast Repertory Gala Ball are already underway, led by Trustee Nancy Kelley, who recently signed on as Chair of the annual fund-raising event. And what an event! For 32 years, the SCR Gala has led the way, putting the "fun" in fund-raising as it opens the social and theatrical season in Orange County.

The 2010 Gala is scheduled for September 11, 2010, and at this very early stage, Nancy is already busy putting together her committee, and settling on a venue. (This just in: The Gala will take place at the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach!) By the time Nancy and the 2010 Gala Committee meet, they'll be in full creative mode. And the accolades for Nancy have been coming in since the announcement that she will chair the Gala...

"I can't think of a better leader to get our imaginations soaring," said longtime Gala Committee member and former Chair Olivia Johnson. She was seconded (third-ed, fourth'd and fifth'd) by two-time Chair Bette Aitken, who said, "I'm very excited that Nancy will be our 2010 chair. She's a superstar and will do an incredible job...." ... former Chair Elaine Weinberg who added, "The Gala Committee is a group of imaginative, joyous friends—and Nancy is one of the most imaginative and joyous. The experience is always priceless!" ... and former Chair Dee Higby who summed up, "With Nancy in charge, I can't wait to begin!"



Nancy Kelley at the 2008 Gala Ball.

With that kind of support, anything's possible—and we can't wait to keep *Dialogue* readers up-to-date. As the news comes in, you'll find it online at www.scr.org.

A little background on Nancy: She joined the SCR Board in 2008, following in the footsteps of her husband, Kim, a nine-year Trustee, who retired that year. She's a longtime member of the Gala Committee and has co-chaired the Underwriting, Entertainment, Graphics and Decor committees. The Kelleys are members of the Platinum Circle of donors and First Nights subscribers to the Segerstrom and Argyros Stages, and most recently were Honorary Producers of *A Christmas Carol*.

Donor Profile: Rich Wordes and Amy Hitchcock

Richard S. Wordes, a commercial real estate lawyer by day, always enjoyed the theatre. But the special relationship he has with it now grew out of an adversity ten years ago.

"I never really participated in theatre, and then I did the CHOC Follies (Children's Hospital of Orange County's annual philanthropic performance)," Wordes said. "It was a tough time for me. I had been diagnosed with colon cancer, and I was going through chemotherapy. Rehearsals were absolutely a respite from all the tumult of my life. I used to look forward to going to the rehearsals and enjoy the people and the process."

He was so enthusiastic about the process that Wordes threw himself into more onstage experiences. He appeared in local community theatre productions. He took a musical theatre class at SCR with Teri Ralston (Madame Arnfeldt in SCR's *A Little Night Music*; Mrs. Nordstrom in the Broadway cast). He took a few more classes, and met his future wife, Amy Hitchcock, in one.

He also renewed his subscriptions to SCR after a few years of being on "hiatus." Now he and Hitchcock subscribe to both stages, spend all day—every day—at the Pacific Playwrights Festival weekend, and are donors at the Silver Circle level.



Amy Hitchcock and Rich Wordes

Wordes described his affection for SCR.

"I like the fact that you get adventurous new work combined with the occasional classic. It's nice to be at a theatre that's willing to take chances on new playwrights and new plays. And all of the productions are extremely high quality. I go to New York pretty regularly...I saw *Doubt* with Cherry Jones in New York, and while Cherry Jones' performance was beyond anything I've seen, the quality of the production was no better in New York than it was here."

Thumbnail:

Rich Wordes: Raised in Brooklyn, NY; in Orange County since 1980. Managing Partner at Wordes, Wilshin & Conner, LLP

Amy Hitchcock: Raised in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island; in Orange County since 1995. Teaches after-school theatre for children in the Laguna Beach School District.

Residence: San Juan Capistrano

Children: Two sons from Rich's first marriage

Favorite SCR Production: *Brooklyn Boy*, by Donald Margulies: "I am a great fan of the playwright and the casting for that play. Adam Arkin and Allan Miller were exceptional."

He's glad that David and Martin have: "...been doing musicals. That would have been my complaint a little while ago, but not now."

On why he donates to SCR: "I want to see theatre like this continue. I know from being involved in smaller theatres on the local level that it's very difficult to get people to appreciate what it can mean to your life. I happen to think theatre can bring some unique aspects to peoples' lives. And SCR has been doing it longer and better than anyone else in Orange County."

Rich's other talent: He can play just about any instrument with frets and strings — guitar, bass, banjo, ukulele and mandolin.