



For immediate use Feb. 22, 2007

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PLAYMAKERS REPERTORY COMPANY ANNOUNCES 2007-2008 SEASON

CHAPEL HILL – From the timeless appeal of star-crossed lovers in “Romeo and Juliet” to family tragedy with a Southern twist in “Crimes of the Heart,” PlayMakers Repertory Company will present a variety of offerings in 2007-2008.

Rounding out the troupe’s 32nd season, set to begin this fall, will be “Amadeus,” by Peter Shaffer; “Topdog/Underdog,” by Suzan-Lori Parks; and a holiday presentation of “The Little Prince” by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, adapted for the stage by Rick Cummins and John Scoullar.

PlayMakers, the professional theater company in residence at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is currently securing rights to another play in the main-stage season. Dates for that production will be Jan. 26 to Feb. 29, 2008.

Joseph Haj, the company’s producing artistic director, announced the main- and second-stage seasons during an open house on Feb. 22. Both are performed in UNC’s Center for Dramatic Art on Country Club Road, with main-stage productions in the Paul Green Theatre and the second-stage series, PRC², in the Elizabeth Price Kenan Theatre.

Based in UNC’s College of Arts and Sciences, PlayMakers, the Carolinas’ oldest resident professional theatre company, was recognized in 2003 as one of “America’s 50 best regional theatres” by the Drama League and one of “America’s leading theatre companies” by American Theatre magazine.

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Dates, directors and descriptions of the 2007-2008 main-stage plays are:

“Romeo and Juliet,” by William Shakespeare: Sept. 26 to Oct. 14, 2007

Shakespeare’s romantic tale of star-crossed lovers has timeless appeal. American theatre luminary Jon Jory will direct PlayMakers’ production. A champion of new writers and works, Jory was founding artistic director of the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, Conn. He then spent 30 years as producing director at Actors Theatre of Louisville, where he founded the Humana Festival of New American Plays in 1979.

A member of New York City’s Theatre Hall of Fame, Jory has received awards including the Shubert Foundation’s James N. Vaughn Memorial Award for Exceptional Achievement and Contribution to the Development of Professional Theatre; Carnegie Mellon’s Commitment to Playwriting Award; and a special Tony Award for Achievement in Regional Theatre. For more information, visit <http://www.playscripts.com/author.php3?authorid=495>.

“Crimes of the Heart,” by Beth Henley: Oct. 24 to Nov. 11, 2007

Mississippian Henley conjures Southern magic with an award-winner that was the first drama to receive the Pulitzer Prize before heading to Broadway. The prize, in 1981, made Henley the first female playwright to receive the award in 23 years. The same year, "Crimes" won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best new American play. It was adapted as a 1986 movie starring Diane Keaton, Jessica Lange and Sissy Spacek.

In "Crimes," Magrath sisters Lenny, Meg and Babe face tragedy with laughter and tears; ultimately, they affirm the healing power of family. For more information, visit http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/english/ms-writers/dir/henley_beth/.

"The Little Prince," by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, adapted by Rick Cummins and John Scoullar: Nov. 28 to Dec. 16, 2007

This faithful adaptation of Saint-Exupéry's magical classic is holiday entertainment for the family. When an aviator crashes in the Sahara, an ethereal Little Prince from another planet helps him see his world through the wonder of childlike eyes.

The character of the fox utters the essence of this Saint-Exupéry work: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." "The Little Prince" has been translated into more than 160 languages and has sold more than 50 million copies worldwide.

For more information, visit <http://www.westegg.com/exupery/>.

To Be Announced: Jan. 26 to Feb. 29, 2008
(in rotating repertory with "Topdog/Underdog")

"Topdog/Underdog," by Suzan-Lori Parks: Jan. 27 to March 2, 2008
(in rotating repertory)

Winner of the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, "Topdog/Underdog" takes a darkly comic look at the rivalry between two black brothers, Lincoln and Booth. Named by their parents as a perverse joke, the down-and-out siblings reveal raw emotions and a complicated relationship in this moving drama.

For more information, visit <http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~cybers/parks2.html>.

"Amadeus," by Peter Shaffer: April 2-20, 2008

PlayMakers producing artistic director Joseph Haj will direct this fictional story based on the relationship between Mozart and Vienna court composer Salieri. The brilliantly funny and sometimes tragic tale portrays Salieri as a man at war with his god. Living in the long shadow of Mozart's genius, Salieri cannot forgive his own mediocrity. Winner of the 1981 Tony Award for Best Play, "Amadeus" ran for more than 1,000 performances on Broadway. It subsequently was adapted into a 1984 film that won eight Academy Awards.

For more information, visit <http://www.ingecenter.org/interviews/PeterShaffertext.htm>.

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Dates, directors and descriptions of PRC², PlayMakers second-stage series in the Elizabeth Price Kenan Theatre, are:

"When The Bulbul Stopped Singing," by Raja Shehadeh; adapted by David Greig: Sept. 12-16, 2007

Based on the diaries of Palestinian human-rights lawyer Raja Shehadeh, "Bulbul" is a window into the experience of a Palestinian man living in Ramallah during the Israeli siege of 2002. JoAnne Akalaitis will direct PlayMakers' production; the company's producing artistic director,

Joseph Haj, will star in the one-man play.

Akalaitis recently directed Haj in a staged reading of the play at The Public Theatre in New York. Former artistic director of The Public Theatre and the New York Shakespeare Festival, Akalaitis is co-founder and former artistic director of the seminal avant-garde theatre troupe Mabou Mines in New York.

"2.5 Minute Ride," by Lisa Kron: Jan. 9-13, 2008

Playwright Kron will perform her celebrated one-woman show, a wry and humorous account of her trip with her father to Auschwitz, where his parents had lost their lives. Newsday called "Ride" "one of the most tender and discerning family tragicomedies in recent memory," and The New Yorker wrote, "Kron gets it: her personal story resonates with compassion for humanity. She pulls off the impossible."

"Witness To An Execution," by Mike Wiley: April 23-27, 2008

PlayMakers commissioned "Witness" in conjunction with UNC's choice of "The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions," by Sister Helen Prejean, as the summer reading book for new students enrolling next fall. Company member Kathy Hunter-Williams will direct the production.

A graduate of UNC's Professional Actor Training Program, Wiley garnered outstanding reviews for his play "Dar He: The Lynching Of Emmitt Till," which was on many Triangle 2006 Top 10 lists.

A variety of 2007-2008 subscriptions are now available, with discounts for students, seniors and youth. Call (919) 962-PLAY (7529) or visit <http://www.playmakersrep.org> for information.

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Photo URLs: http://www.unc.edu/news/pics/staff/haj_joseph.jpeg

Note: UNC's dramatic art department will join select institutions nationwide in presenting the world premier of seven new plays by Suzan-Lori Parks – author of next season's "Topdog/Underdog" – on Friday, Saturday and Sunday (Feb. 23, 24 and 26). For details, visit <http://www.unc.edu/news/briefs/2007/012307.html> and scroll to the last item.

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