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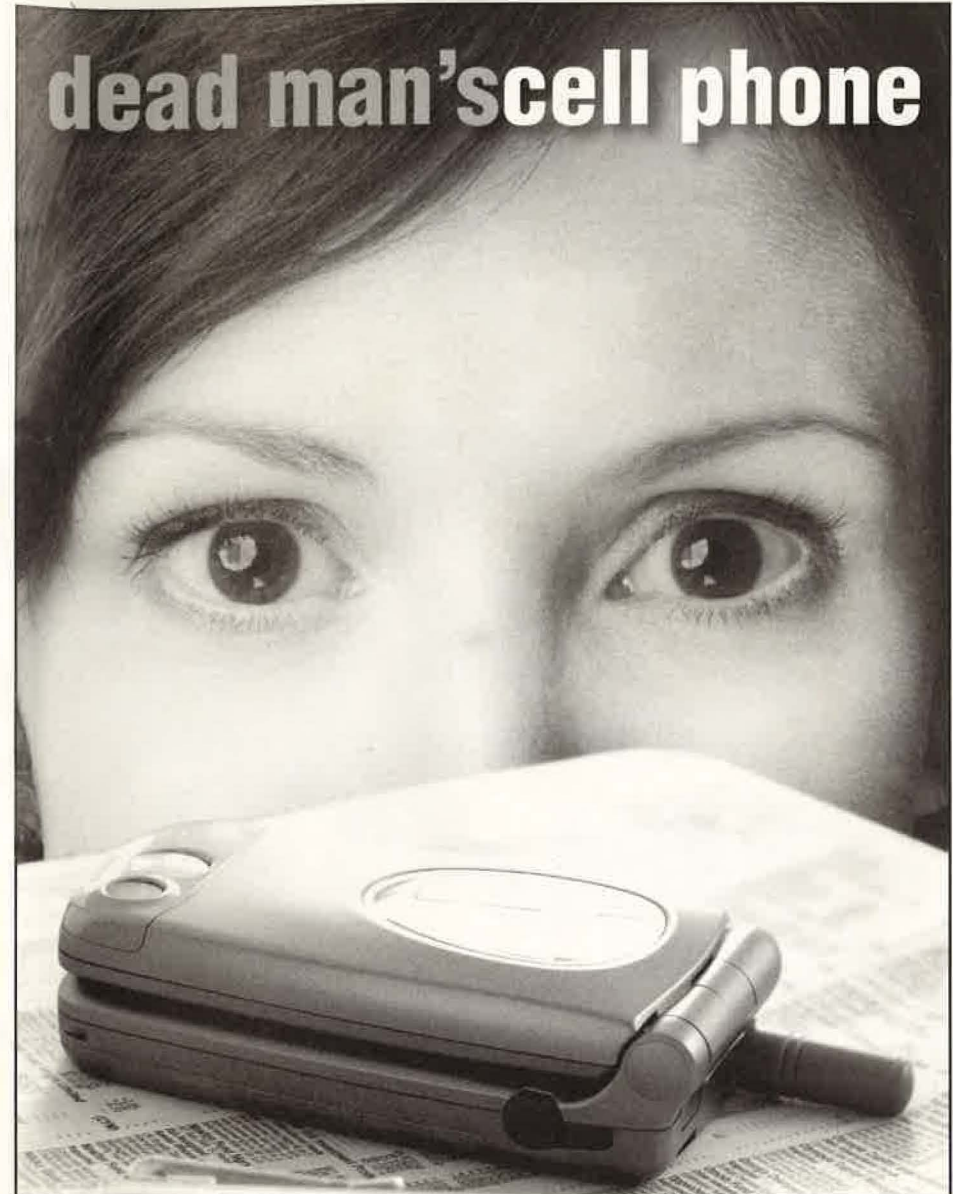
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## dead man's cell phone



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# dead man's cell phone

A new play by

**Sarah Ruhl**

Featuring

David Aaron Baker   Bill Camp   Kathleen Chalfant  
Carla Harting   Kelly Maurer   Mary-Louise Parker

Scenic and Costume Design  
G. W. Mercier

Lighting Design  
Brian H Scott

Soundscape  
Darron L West

Production Stage Manager  
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Casting  
Alaine Alldaffer  
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Directed by

**Anne Bogart**

*Dead Man's Cell Phone* was commissioned by Playwrights Horizons with funds provided by The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust.

This production has received generous support from the Eleanor Naylor Dana Charitable Trust.

Special thanks to The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust for supporting new plays at Playwrights Horizons.

*Dead Man's Cell Phone* was originally produced by Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company at the Aaron and Cecile Goldman Theatre in Washington, D.C.



## CAST

(in order of appearance)

Jean ..... MARY-LOUISE PARKER  
Gordon ..... BILL CAMP  
Mrs. Gottlieb ..... KATHLEEN CHALFANT  
The Other Woman ..... CARLA HARTING  
Hermia ..... KELLY MAURER  
Dwight ..... DAVID AARON BAKER

Production Stage Manager ..... ELIZABETH MOREAU  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... DANIELLE MONICA LONG

THERE WILL BE ONE 15-MINUTE INTERMISSION.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

**DAVID AARON BAKER** (*Dwight*) is making his debut at Playwrights Horizons. He's had the good fortune to work with many of our finest playwrights including A.R. Gurney, Christopher Durang, Neil Simon, Peter Shaffer, Jon Robin Baitz, Craig Lucas, N. Richard Nash, Rebecca Gilman and John Guare. He's also had the privilege to work under the guidance of many distinguished directors including Gerald Gutierrez, Nicholas Martin, Scott Ellis, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Doug Hughes, Joe Mantello, Michael Langham, David Esbjornson, Daniel Sullivan, Kathleen Marshall, Lynne

Meadow, Walter Bobbie, Kenny Leon, David Warren and Roger Rees. David attended Illinois State University, The University of Texas-Austin (B.F.A.) and is a graduate of The Juilliard School. He lives in Manhattan with his wife Ayelet and their two children.

**BILL CAMP** (*Gordon*). Broadway: *Coram Boy*, *Heartbreak House*, *Jackie: An American Life*, *The Seagull*, *St. Joan*. Off-Broadway: *Beckett Shorts*, *The Misanthrope*, *Homebody/Kabul* (Obie Award), *The Devils*, *Lydie Breeze*, *Gardenia* (NYTW); *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *Sore Throats*



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## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

(TFANA); *One Flea Spare*, *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Twelfth Night* (NYSF); *Cascando*, *Words and Music*, ...but the clouds (92nd St Y). Regional: ART, Mark Taper, Berkeley Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, Guthrie Theater, Hartford Stage, Long Wharf, Yale Rep, Huntington Theatre, Seattle Rep, Williamstown Theatre Festival. TV: "Law & Order," "L&O: Criminal Intent," "Joan of Arcadia," "The Great Gatsby," "Prince St.," "NY Undercover." Film: *The Tourist*, *Reservation Road*, *The Dying Gaul*, *Rounders*, *In and Out*, *Reversal of Fortune*. Member of Actors' Equity. Graduate of Juilliard Drama Division.

**KATHLEEN CHALFANT** (Mrs. Gottlieb). Broadway: *Angels in America* (Tony, Drama Desk nominations) *Racing Demon*. City Center Encores!: *Bloomer Girl*. Off-Broadway: *Wit* (Drama Desk, Obie, Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics awards), *A Hard Heart*, *Spalding Gray: Stories Left to Tell*, *Great Expectations*, *Guantanamo*, *The Last Letter*, Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads*, *Savannah Bay*, *Far Away*, *Nine Armenians* (Drama Desk nomination), *Twelve Dreams*, *Henry V* (Callaway Award), *True History and Real Adventures*. Other New York credits: *Iphigenia and Other Daughters*, *Endgame*, *The Party*, *Three Poets*. Regional: Yale Rep, Berkeley Rep, Long Wharf, Hartford Stage, Mark Taper, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Sundance Playwrights Lab, etc. Film: *The Last New Yorker*, *Murder and Murder*, *Bob Roberts*, *Five Corners*, *Jumpin' at the Boneyard*, *A Price Above Rubies*, *Perfect Stranger*, *Kinsey*, etc. TV: "Book of Daniel," "The People Speak," "The Guardian," "The Laramie Project," "Lackawanna Blues,"

"Benjamin Franklin," "A Death in the Family," "Law & Order," "Storm of the Century." Radio: *The Lion in Winter* with Alfred Molina.

**CARLA HARTING** (*The Other Woman*). New York: *Eurydice* (Second Stage), *Orson's Shadow* (Barrow Street), *Kid-Simple* (SPF), *Valparaiso* (Rude Mechanicals), *Jimmy Carter was a Democrat* (Clubbed Thumb, P.S.122, The Kitchen). Regional: Yale Rep, Seattle Rep, Humana Festival, Arena Stage, The Wilma, La Jolla Playhouse, South Coast Rep. Film/TV: *Never Forever*, "Law & Order," "Law & Order: CI."

**KELLY MAURER** (*Hermia*). Founding member, SITI Company, New York City (Anne Bogart, Artistic Director). Credits with them include *Radio Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *La Dispute*, *Hayfever*, *bobrauschenbergamerica*, *The Medium*, *Small Lives/Big Dreams*, *Culture of Desire*, *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Cabin Pressure*, among others. Broadway: *The Old Neighborhood*. Off-Broadway and international credits include productions at the Atlantic Theater Company, The Public Theater, The New York State Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, P.S.122, American Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Irish Life Theatre Festival, Theatre at Bobigny (Paris), the Toga International Theatre Festival (Japan) and the Edinburgh Festival (Scotland). She has toured with Tadashi Suzuki in the Suzuki Company of Toga's *Dionysus* and with director Robert Wilson in his production of *Persephone*.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

**MARY-LOUISE PARKER** (*Jean*). Broadway: *Proof* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics, Drama League, Lucille Lortel, Obie, T. Schreiber, *New York* magazine awards), *Reckless* (Tony nomination), *Prelude to a Kiss* (Tony, Drama Desk nominations; Theatre World, Clarence Derwent awards), *Bus Stop*. Off-Broadway: *How I Learned to Drive* (Obie, Lucille Lortel awards; Outer Critics Circle nomination), *Communicating Doors*, *Four Dogs and a Bone*, *The Art of Success*, *Babylon Gardens*, Co-founder: Edge Theater. Film: *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Grand Canyon*, *Boys on the Side*, *The Client*, *Naked in New York*, *Bullets Over Broadway*, *Longtime Companion*, *Pipe Dream*, *Red Dragon*, *Romance and Cigarettes*, *Saved!*, *The Five Senses* (Genie nomination) and others. TV: Golden Globe, Emmy, SAG nominee for "Weeds" for which she won a Golden Globe, Satellite Award; "Angels in America" (Golden Globe, Emmy awards; SAG nomination); "Robber Bride" (Emmy nomination, Gemini Award); "The West Wing" (Emmy nomination); "Sugartime"; "A Place for Annie"; "Saint Maybe"; and others. Her work is archived at the Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University and was honored for career achievement at the Philadelphia Film Festival.

**SARAH RUHL**'s (*Playwright*) plays include *The Clean House* (Susan Smith Blackburn Award, 2004; finalist for Pulitzer Prize, 2005), *Eurydice*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Demeter in the City* (nominated for an NAACP award), *Melancholy Play*, *Late: a cowboy song*, *Orlando* and *Passion Play* (Kennedy Center Fourth Forum Freedom

Award, Helen Hayes nomination). Her plays have been performed at Lincoln Center Theater, Second Stage, The Goodman Theatre, Cornerstone Theater, Arena Stage, the Wilma Theater, Woolly Mammoth, Yale Repertory Theatre, Madison Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the Piven Theatre Workshop in Chicago, among many other theatres across the country. Her plays have also been performed in England, Germany, Israel, Poland, New Zealand and Australia and have been translated into Spanish, Polish and Korean. Sarah received her M.F.A. from Brown University and is originally from Chicago. In 2003 she was the recipient of a Helen Merrill Award and a Whiting Writers' Award, and in 2006 was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship. Her work is published in an anthology from TCG. She is a member of New Dramatists and 13P.

**ANNE BOGART** (*Director*) is the Artistic Director of SITI Company, which she founded with Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki in 1992. She is a Professor at Columbia University where she runs the Graduate Directing Program. Recent works with SITI include *Who Do You Think You Are*; *Radio Macbeth*; *Hotel Cassiopeia*; *Death and the Ploughman*; *La Dispute*; *Score*; *bobrauschenbergamerica*; *Room*; *War of the Worlds*; *Cabin Pressure*; *The Radio Play*; *Alice's Adventures*; *Culture of Desire*; *Bob*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *Small Lives/Big Dreams*; *The Medium*; Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* and *Private Lives*; August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*; and Charles Mee's *Orestes*. Other recent productions: *Nicholas and Alexandra* (Los Angeles Opera), *Marina: A Captive*

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*Spirit* (American Opera Projects), *Lilith* and *Seven Deadly Sins* (New York City Opera). She is the author of three books: *A Director Prepares*, *The Viewpoints Book* and *And Then, You Act*.

**G. W. MERCIER** (*Scenic & Costume Designer*) is pleased to return to Playwrights where he designed *Wilder*. On Broadway, he designed *Juan Darien: A Carnival Mass* by Julie Taymor and Elliott Goldenthal (Tony nomination, scenery; two Drama Desk nominations, scenery and costumes). Off-Broadway: *The Miracle Brothers*; *Five Course Love*; *People Are Wrong*; *Eli's Comin'*; *Dream True* (Drama Desk nomination); *True History and Real Adventures*; *You Don't Miss the Water*; *The Waiting Room*; *Bed & Sofa* (Drama Desk nomination); *Por Knockers*; *The Party*; *Lady Bracknell's Confinement*; *Hannah, 1939*; *Urban Zulu Mambo*; *Catch Me if I Fall*; *Groundhog*; *The Red Sneaks*; *The New Americans*; *Winter Man*; *The Loman Family Picnic*; *The Tempest*; *Taming of the Shrew*; *Macbeth*; *Lemon Sky*; *Evening Sky*; *Judgement*. Mr. Mercier thrives on collaborating with amazing writers, composers, directors, partner designers and actors creating original work or making established shows seem new. He and his family live in Connecticut.

**BRIAN H SCOTT** (*Lighting Designer*). Most recently designed *Titus Andronicus* at The Court Theatre in Chicago. As a SITI Company member he designed lighting for *Radio Macbeth*, *Hotel Cassiopeia*, *Death and the Ploughman*, *bobrauschenbergamerica* (Henry Hewes Design Award 2004), *War of the Worlds Radio Play* and *systems/layers*. Others include *Hamlet*, *Richard II* and *Richard III* at Classic Stage Company; *Marina: A Captive Spirit* and *Darkling* with American Opera Projects; *Songs from an Unmade Bed* at NYTW; *The Importance of Being Earnest* at Arena Stage; *Macbeth* and *Death of a Salesman* in Baton Rouge, LA; and with Rude Mechanicals: *Method Gun*; *How Late it Was*; *How Late*; *Lipstick Traces*; *Matchplay*; *Cherrywood* and *Get Your War On*.

**DARRON L WEST** (*Sound Designer*). Sound Designer and company member of Anne Bogart's SITI Company. Broadway and Off-Broadway, his work for dance and theatre has been heard in over 400 productions all

over Manhattan as well as nationally and internationally. *Dead Man's Cell Phone* marks his 28th collaboration with Anne Bogart since 1989. Among numerous nominations, his accolades for sound design include the 2006 Lortel and AUDELCO awards, 2004 and 2005 Henry Hewes Design Awards, the Princess Grace Award, the *Village Voice* Obie Award and the *Entertainment Design* magazine EDDY Award. Former Resident Sound Designer for Actors Theatre of Louisville, his directing credits include *Kid-Simple* for the 2004 Humana New Play Festival, *Big Love* for Austin's Rude Mechs (Austin Critics Table Award for Best Director) and the national tours of SITI's *War of the Worlds Radio Play* and *Radio Macbeth*.

**ELIZABETH MOREAU** (*Production Stage Manager*). Most recently: *Doris to Darlene* at Playwrights. Elizabeth has worked with Anne Bogart for the past seven years as stage manager with SITI Company. With SITI: *Who Do You Think You Are*, *bobrauschenbergamerica*, *Hotel Cassiopeia*, *Bob*, *Room*, *Score*, *Death and the Ploughman*, *Radio Macbeth* and *systems/layers* (a collaboration with the band Rachel's), with performances of these pieces in New York City and around the world. Other credits include work with Berkeley Rep, Apparition Productions, New York Theatre Workshop, The Public, Classic Stage, Arena Stage, Lightbox, The Play Company and *Match-Play* with the Rude Mechs, based on Deborah Hay's dance *The Match*. Elizabeth is the Production Stage Manager and Artistic Associate for the O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference.

**DANIELLE MONICA LONG** (*Assistant Stage Manager*), a New Orleans native, is a graduate of NYU Tisch School of the Arts and Playwrights Horizons Theater School. She has worked as a stage manager at The Public Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville and the O'Neill Theater Center, as well as with several companies, including SITI Company, LightBox and 13P. Danielle has spent the past two summers as the Assistant Stage Manager of the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference.

**PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS** is a writer's theater dedicated to the support and development of contemporary American

## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

playwrights, composers and lyricists, and to the production of their new work. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Tim Sanford and Managing Director Leslie Marcus, Playwrights Horizons continues to encourage the new work of veteran writers while nurturing an emerging generation of theater artists. Writers are supported through every stage of their growth with a series of development programs: script and score evaluations, commissions, readings, musical theater workshops, Studio and Mainstage productions. In its 37 years, Playwrights Horizons has presented the work of over 375 writers and is the recipient of numerous awards and honors. Notable productions include four Pulitzer Prize winners: Doug Wright's *I Am My Own Wife* (2004 Tony Award, Best Play), Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles*, Alfred Uhry's *Driving Miss Daisy* and Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's *Sunday in the Park with George*, as well as Doug Wright, Scott Frankel and Michael Korie's *Grey Gardens* (three 2007 Tony Awards), Bruce Norris's *The Pain and the Itch*, Lynn Nottage's *Fabulation* (2005 Obie Award for

Playwriting), Craig Lucas' *Small Tragedy* (2004 Obie Award, Best American Play), Kenneth Lonergan's *Lobby Hero*, David Greenspan's *She Stoops to Comedy*, Kirsten Childs's *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin*, Richard Nelson and Shaun Davey's *James Joyce's The Dead*, William Finn's *March of the Falsettos* and *Falsettoland*, Christopher Durang's *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* and *Betty's Summer Vacation*, Richard Nelson's *Goodnight Children Everywhere* and *Franny's Way*, Jon Robin Baitz's *The Substance of Fire*, Scott McPherson's *Marvin's Room*, A.R. Gurney's *Later Life*, Adam Guettel and Tina Landau's *Floyd Collins* and Jeanine Tesori and Brian Crawley's *Violet*. Playwrights Horizons was founded in 1971 at the Clark Center Y by Robert Moss, before moving to 42nd Street where it has been instrumental in the revitalization of Theatre Row. André Bishop served as Artistic Director from 1981 to 1991, followed by Don Scardino, who served through 1995. Playwrights Horizons' auxiliary programs include the Playwrights Horizons Theater School,

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which is affiliated with NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and Ticket Central, a central box office that supports the Off-Broadway performing arts community.

Information in "Who's Who in the Cast" is provided by the production. Where opinions are expressed, they are those of the players, not necessarily those of PLAYBILL Magazine.

**OPENING NIGHT: MARCH 4, 2008**

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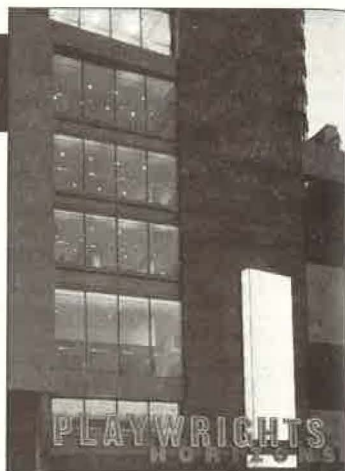
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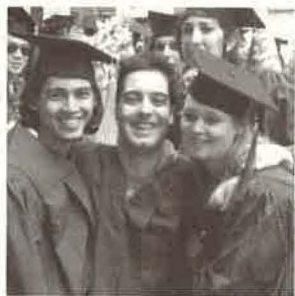
Thank you for coming to Playwrights Horizons. In a city rich with cultural offerings, Playwrights Horizons distinguishes itself by the quality of its work and the singular focus of its 37 year-old mission: to support and develop contemporary American playwrights and musical theater writers, and to produce their new work. Each year, six productions appear on our stages, all World, American, or New York premieres, one of which you have seen today. However, there is a great deal of activity going on behind the scenes with which you may not be familiar.



Christine Ebersole in *Grey Gardens* by Scott Frankel, Michael Korie, and Doug Wright, winner of three 2007 Tony Awards, including Best Actress and Best Featured Actress in a Musical. Photo: Joan Marcus

Each season, our **literary staff** receives and evaluates approximately 1,000 script submissions, conducts readings and workshops, and awards new writing commissions to writers of merit. We help to build a stronger base of support for writers, welcoming thousands of subscribers, patrons, and students to our productions, and strive to make theatergoing affordable for everyone through innovative **audience development programs**. Our five-story building provides an optimum environment for developing, producing, and attending new plays and musicals, featuring two theaters with advanced production technology, two rehearsal rooms, and increased audience amenities. The artistic, production, and administrative staff also has offices in this space, making Playwrights Horizons one of the few major Off-Broadway not-for-profit theater companies in New York City to house the majority of its activities under one roof.

In addition to our artistic programming, each year we welcome eight to ten aspiring theater professionals into our rigorous **Resident Internship Program** and train 200 undergraduate students through the **Playwrights Horizons Theater School**, in association with New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. We also provide low-cost ticketing services to hundreds of arts organizations in and around the city through our **Ticket Central** box office. Our institutional programs serve to create a strong infrastructure that will guarantee the continuing vitality of our theatrical community.



Graduation at PHTS. Photo: Helen Cook

When you purchase a ticket, become a subscriber, or make a donation, you are actively helping Playwrights Horizons sustain its important work with writers, students, and the community. Please come and see us again soon. For information on our programs, feel free to contact us at (212) 564-1235, or visit [www.playwrightshorizons.org](http://www.playwrightshorizons.org).



A.R. Gurney and Sigourney Weaver at the opening night of *Crazy Mary*. Photo: Mathieu Asselin

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# Turner's New Turn

Kathleen Turner switches roles, going behind the scenes as the director of a new production of Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart*

by Monty Arnold



aggie the Cat, the Martha of George 'n' Martha, a Mrs. Robinson on the make—can Lady Macbeth be far behind? Surely not—not if Kathleen Turner has her way, and Kathleen Turner usually has her way. “I have some real good



ideas for her,” she says of Lady M, whom she has been quietly boiling and bubbling about for a while. “Usually where my interest goes—when my antenna goes up—it happens. Yes, I’m probably going to do this. It will be a toughie, but the play hasn’t really been done well in a long time.”

Certainly, Lady Macbeth would have a place among the stainless-steel sculptures in The Turner Gallery of Strong Women. The three at the top of this article were already screen icons by the time Turner took them on.

“Most of my work onstage has been correcting Elizabeth Taylor’s performances,” she meows rather Maggie-the-Cattily. “Probably not a nice thing to say. *However . . .*”

Kidding, of course—kinda. Turner revels

in the bitchiness that generally accompanies a headstrong diva, playing that part to the hilt (and beyond) with a throaty theatricality that has clung to her since she toured her one-woman show on Tallulah Bankhead. This may be the role that’ll win her the Tony that has heretofore gone to her leading men—Charles Durning in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and Bill Irwin in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*—so perhaps it makes some sense to stay in perpetual rehearsal for her Bankhead beachhead.

“I would like to do more to originate roles, in terms of plays,” she grumbles grudgingly. “I’ve always loved the huge roles—the huge possibilities—and I wanted to do Martha for 30 years, but I want to create a lot more roles that would be taken up later by others.”

Her latest role is invisible, taking place entirely backstage behind the curtain, directing her first play—Beth Henley’s 1981 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Crimes of the Heart*. She stuck her big toe in with this last August at Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the waves of raves she generated reached Roundabout Theatre Company, which is opening it February 7 at its Laura Pels Theatre. Jennifer Dundas, Sarah Paulson and Lily Rabe continue to star as the three sisters Henley based on Chekhov’s—and shellacked with off-centered Southern Gothic humor—and Jessica Stone replaces Kali Rocha as their nosy, nasty cousin next door.

Roger Rees, who played Turner’s husband in Broadway’s 1995 *Indiscretions* (a.k.a. Jean Cocteau’s *Les Parents Terribles*), was the chief architect for her new career change, having spent most of his three-year reign as Williamstown’s artistic director talking her into making this switch at this place with this

play. “I was doing the national tour of *Virginia Woolf* when he made the announcement,” she recalls, “and, suddenly, the résumés started flooding in. We were getting all kinds of calls from actors who wanted to work with me, so that’s pretty thrilling. I kinda cast it on the road while I was traveling and everything.”

The play has a special resonance for her. “It’s about women, and I find there are emotions to women—the relationships of women, be they sisters or not—that are so much richer in many ways than the man-woman stuff. Male-female relationships tend to be clichéd. They’re either exceptional or terrible. You have a dialogue that’s already established. You don’t really have that much development in relationships with women, so that gives you the freedom to make it up. To add the fact that they’re sisters only gives me more ground.

“People say to me, ‘Is this your first time as a director?’ I say, ‘Yeah, for credit.’ I think, frankly, that every good actor directs a lot, whether he gets credit for it or not. Some directors have no idea what they are doing, so the actors take over to protect themselves.”

As a director “for credit,” Turner had to keep the actress inside quiet and in check. “I was worried about directing a lot of women because I thought, as intriguing as the prospect was, I might want to be that character, so I was terribly conscious of not putting



Turner onstage in (from top) *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Graduate* and *Indiscretions*

my own acting into theirs. You have six characters in this play. It’s like acting six characters, for me. It’s almost as if I was thinking as an actor through every character’s actions. Actors start out completely focused on their own characters—their needs, their indispensability to the script and to the action. It’s like having blinders on, and that’s good because you have to see everything in terms of what you as a character need. But, as you go out and become more experienced, you start to see other things as well and you must cater to them—I can support you here by doing this—and then grow into a cast member that’s interconnected.

“The logical step from that is to stand back after seeing what everyone else needs and giving them what they need. It’s a logical step to step back and see it from the outside.”

And *voilà!* says Turner, a director is born. She doesn’t think her unbroken record of indestructible damsels had anything to do with turning director. “Not really,” she says. “I think it has to do with just learning more. I don’t like women who don’t grow. Reading a script—film or stage, whatever—if you don’t learn something, then I’m not interested. You can fail. You can try, and you can fail. If you wait for someone to come rescue you, I’m not interested. I don’t do victims. I don’t think I *can*. I’d be pretending, not acting.” ♦



# TOUGH STUFF

**Brett C. Leonard's *Unconditional* takes an uncompromising look at racism and rage, love and betrayal in the lives of nine New Yorkers**

by Roger Maxwell

**Y**ou know they wouldn't let me go to school  
You know I couldn't read or write  
You know they gave me the mule  
Then they called me a fool...

You know they turned around and hung me  
Hung me from the tallest oak tree  
You talk about terror  
Talk about terror  
I've been terrorized all my days.

It was while listening to Willie King's "Terrorize" that the opening scene for a play came into the head of Brett C. Leonard: the image of one man preparing to lynch another. But the man with a noose around his neck is white, as is Leonard, who will turn 40 just a few days after his *Unconditional*, directed by Mark Wing-Davey, has its world premiere February 18 (previews begin February 7) as a LAByrinth Theater Company presentation at The Public Theater's LuEsther Hall.

"I just got that image listening to that song," says Leonard. "The depth of his—Willie King's—anger and lifelong frustration; the racism that affects everyone's life."

There was one other key to that shock-effect confrontation, in which the other man is black and full of rage at being ousted from his airline job three months short of age 50 and his pension.

"Three years ago I was on an airplane from Atlanta to New York and got talking with the young black woman sitting next to me. Her mother, who'd worked 25 years for the airlines, had not only been fired from her job just a few weeks short of her pension, but a noose had been placed at the mother's desk. Yeah," says

Leonard with gallows humor, "nooses are making a comeback."

He's well aware that as an opener "it's like sinking the boat at the beginning of *Titanic* and working backwards from there. I put my scenes on 3x5 cards and shuffle them around, so"—three weeks from opening night—"it could still change, but I figure this is the strongest way to grab an audience by the neck."

There are eight or nine other short, tough dramas within *Unconditional*—sex, money, a spot of murder, men and women black and white—but none you would want to take home to mother.

"I like all of them," says the man who dreamed them up. "I don't like their actions, but I like the people who are taking those actions."

Even the killer with the golf club? "Yeah, he's misunderstood."

Leonard, who started writing plays at UC San Diego and then went into "ten years of 'research'—lost years," started "writing seriously" when he reached New York in 2000. This is his second play for LAByrinth, of which he's been a member since 2003; the first was *Guinea Pig Solo*, Georg Buchner's intense 1836 searchlight on militarism, *Woyzeck*, transposed to the modern day.

Everybody at LAByrinth, from co-artistic directors John Ortiz, Philip Seymour Hoffman and John Gould Rubin on down, acts, writes and/or directs. Aspiring playwrights don't get commissions, but they do get workshops during the LAB's annual two-week "summer intensive." It was at the 2006 intensive at Bennington College that *Unconditional* first saw life. And what did Brett Leonard learn? "That there is underwriting and overwriting."



*Unconditional* playwright  
Brett C. Leonard

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**Ashley Brown**  
(Title role in  
*Mary Poppins*  
at the New Amsterdam  
Theatre) chooses  
**SAJU**,  
120 W. 44th Street,  
bet. 6th Ave. & B'way

The *chef de cuisine*, Hung Nguyen, was born and raised in Houston, Texas. The owner, a large, enthusiastic man named Philippe Bernard, was born in France. Together they have created this brick-walled French/Vietnamese restaurant in the heart of the theatre district.

And what is French/Vietnamese cuisine? "French technique with Vietnamese ingredients. We keep it mild," says Nguyen. "Very light, very sophisticated," says Bernard. "Less spicy than Thai, much more delicate than Chinese. You get all the different herbs, subdued and refined."

Bernard is also the proprietor of Osteria al Doge, a few steps west on this same block—the *doges* were the big shots in what was once the Republic of Venice—as well as two earlier *boîtes*: the Elysee Café on West 70th Street and Lezinc, down on Duane Street.

Here at Saju—named for Bernard's children, Sami and Justin—some of the most popular dishes are Vietnamese chicken soup, shrimp ravioli, grilled marinated pork loin, wok-sautéed beef filet, lemongrass tiger shrimp and roasted black cod. Banana spring roll and Pandan yucca cake lead the desserts. Breakfast, more French than Vietnamese, is available 7 to 11 A.M., every day of the week. On Saturdays and Sundays there is a *prix fixe* brunch, 11 A.M. to 3 P.M.

"You know," says Bernard, "first of all, I love this food." It's a love he'd love the world to share.

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**Jennifer Naimo**  
(Mary Delgado in  
*Jersey Boys*  
at the August Wilson  
Theatre) chooses  
**VICTOR'S CAFÉ**,  
236 W. 52nd Street,  
bet. B'way & 8th Ave.

Youth must be served, but it also serves Victor's Café. Natalia Zaldivar-Bonzon, the young woman who now runs the Cuban landmark founded 44 years ago by her grandfather, the late Victor del Corral, is all of 30. Joshua Sharkey, the chef who has come over from Café Gray on Columbus Circle, is 26. Together they have set out to, in Sharkey's words, "carry the feeling of Old Havana into new dishes, new flavors, new presentations" to go along with the much younger clientele of today.

To that end, the bar now offers full seating and a full menu, including some tasty new tapas.

Backstopping new entries like seared skate with puree of sweet plantains, or snapper and blue prawns with pomelo, or a fennel salad with sour orange vinaigrette, are Victor's traditional winners: *frijoles negros* (a rich black-bean potage), *croquetas corral* (smoked ham croquettes in Lulu's savory sauce) and *fritas cubanas con papitas a la Juliana* (mini hamburgers of ground prime sirloin and onions)—all climaxed, perhaps, by a *lechón asado al estilo del Puerto Boniato con moros y cristianos*, which is roast pig and then some. Dessert? How about *churros con tres salsas*, i.e., Cuban donuts and then some.

One more new touch: the Cuban Lounge, just to the right as you come in. It's a warm place to be.

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# A LIFE IN THE THEATRE

by Mervyn Rothstein

## Stage professionals look back at decades of devotion to their craft LIGHTING DESIGNER PAUL GALLO

“Lighting,” says Paul Gallo, is “very primal. It’s the most natural thing, more than we realize. When we’re born, the first thing we respond to is light. And when we get up and look outside and it’s a sunny day, we don’t feel the same as when it’s a dark day.”

Gallo has been creating those primal images and lighting up Broadway for 27 years. His many credits include *The House of Blue Leaves*, *Anything Goes*, *City of Angels*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Assassins*, *Crazy for You*, *Titanic*, *Three Days of Rain*, *Blackbird*, the revivals of *Gypsy* and *Dolls*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *The Sound of Music*, and this season’s *Mauritius*, *A Bronx Tale* and David Mamet’s *November*. He has received eight Tony nominations, the most recent for *Three Days of Rain* in 2006.



Paul Gallo

A Bronx native whose family moved to Washington Heights, Gallo became interested in theatre at an early age. “I remember going with my mom,” he says. “And my parents were ballroom dancers, so I was taken to their studio quite often. I was always around that environment.” At first, he wanted to be a performer—he acted in high school and went to Ithaca College on an acting scholarship.

“But that lasted six months. I spent the rest of my time in the shop. I found that my abilities were more applicable to design, specifically to lighting. Then one teacher told me I had talent, that he was going to help send me to the Yale School of Drama.”

It was the mid-1970s, and in his class were Meryl Streep, the playwright Christopher Durang and the designer William Ivey Long. “It

was a good time for theatre. There was room for newcomers. Within two or three years after graduating I was on Broadway.” He was 27–28, one of the youngest lighting designers. His first Broadway show was Albert Innaurato’s *Passione*, in 1980.

What is it Gallo loves about theatre? “It’s the magic. I’ve tried film and television, and they’re wonderful. But at the end of the day, the director would say, ‘That’s a wrap,’ and I’d feel cold. Because there was no applause. Maybe that’s what I love so much—the applause. You hear a response, you hear people say, ‘That was good.’”

It’s the live nature of lighting that he also finds most appealing. “The curtain goes up and there’s a certain sense of illusion, a suspension of disbelief. In the first few seconds, I need to take the audience away from their seats and say to them, ‘All right, you’re here, in this different world, now.’”

His goal “is to find a visual metaphor in lighting for what the playwright and director are trying to say. It starts with the script, and takes a lot of planning. But the final part has to be done live, onstage, during rehearsals, with the actors and the director all there. It can’t be done in advance. It’s the most intense. You walk in that first day, all the equipment is there, and you are designing in front of everyone. I love that pressure. I love that intensity.”

*November* is his 48th Broadway show. “If I reach No. 50, it will be a landmark. Fifty means something. It’s like hitting 500 home runs. It’s not the most, but it’s something.”

His ultimate goal is simpler. “It’s to keep working. My life is in the theatre, and I want to stay here.”

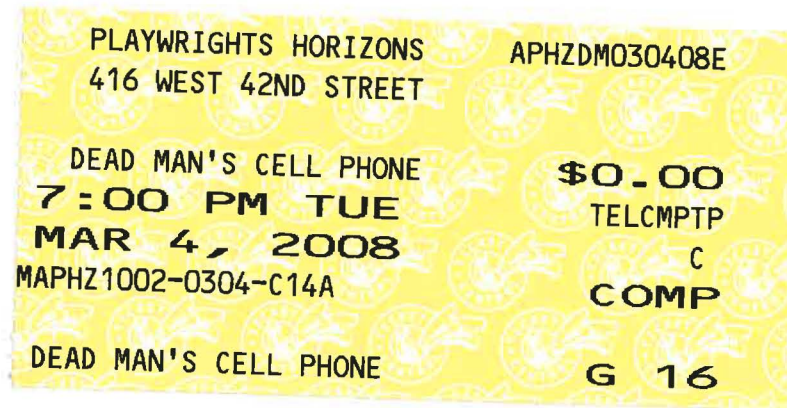
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## PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS

*The role of Gordon is now played  
by T. Ryder Smith.*

**T. RYDER SMITH** shared the 2007 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Ensemble for the three-actor *Lebensraum*. He last appeared at Playwrights Horizons in *She Stoops to Comedy*. Recent work includes Sarah Ruhl's *Passion Play* at The Goodman (playing Queen Elizabeth, Hitler and Reagan); the Classical Theatre of Harlem's *Waiting for Godot* in New Orleans, with artist/activist Paul Chan; and the world premiere of *In This Corner* (Old Globe). Additional NYC credits include the world premieres of Richard Foreman's *King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe* and *The Gods Are Pounding My Head*, plus *Thom Pain*, *Apparition*, *I Have Loved Strangers*, *Ambrosio*, *The Wooden Brecks* and *Undemeath the Lintel* (Soho Playhouse, Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Solo Performer). Regional theater credits include the world premieres of *Big Love*, *Compleat Female Stage Beauty* and *Lincolnesque* (Old Globe, 2006 Craig Noel Award for Lead Performance). TV: "Conviction," "Law & Order," "The Venture Brothers." T. was profiled in the September 2006 issue of *American Theatre*.