CROWNS REVISITED: AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT REGINA TAYLOR

THE AFRICAN ROOTS OF CROWNS

CONSTRUCTING CROWNS: AN INTERVIEW WITH MILLINER EIA RADASAVLJEVIC
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Why *Crowns*?

Although it’s difficult to believe, a full decade has passed since the premiere of Regina Taylor’s play *Crowns*, a joyous ode to African American women and the hats they don for Sunday church services. Adapted from the book by Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry, *Crowns* has since become one of the most widely produced plays in America and deservedly so; through personal narrative interspersed with soaring musical interludes, five women use their resplendent headwear as metaphors for their lives—their triumphs and joys, their setbacks and sorrows—all to connect with Yolanda, a teenager whose own personal tragedies threaten to derail her future before it even begins. Teeming with life and peopled with unforgettable characters, *Crowns* offers hope through a powerful sense of connection—among families, among generations and among all human beings.

But this 10th anniversary encore of *Crowns* is not just a remount of the original. Recognizing the vast cultural changes that have occurred in the past 10 years, Regina has used the poetry, music and dance of today’s urban youth in a powerful reinvestigation of the character of Yolanda and the cultural divide that separates her from the generations of her elders. Through new musical and dance sequences, as well as through poetry created by some of Chicago’s most eloquent teenaged writers, she has made the young Yolanda a seething, energetic product of the hip-hop generation and the powerful, often violent forces with which that generation must contend. And in an acknowledgement of her new-found home, Regina has placed the central character, Yolanda, in Chicago—specifically, the Englewood neighborhood—giving her story even greater resonance for Goodman audiences. Music and dance are now a significantly greater element of *Crowns*, with the gospel songs of the first version of the play now augmented by new songs, new orchestrations (played by a larger orchestra) and an expanded cast of some of our city’s most glorious performers, including such local legends as E. Faye Butler and Felicia Fields. These new elements, and the incomparable artists that Regina has assembled to bring them to life, are guaranteed to lift this new *Crowns* to even greater emotional and artistic heights.

Still, the heart of the play will always lie with those magnificent ladies and their magnificent hats—each one with a story, each reflecting the hopes and dreams and “hattitude” of its wearer. If you’ve ever worn your own “crown” (or even if you only wear hats to keep your head warm), I know that you’ll be seduced by the honesty, the musicality and the exuberant affirmation of Regina Taylor’s *Crowns*.

Robert Falls
Artistic Director
Crowns Revisited: An Interview with Playwright Regina Taylor

By Tanya Palmer

Over the course of her 18-year tenure as a member of the Goodman’s Artistic Collective, Regina Taylor has emerged as one of Chicago’s most visible and admired playwrights, consistently producing powerful and provocative works like The Trinity River Plays, Magnolia and The Dreams of Sarah Breedlove. But outside of Chicago, Taylor is perhaps best known for Crowns, a wildly popular gospel musical that she adapted in 2002 from a book of photographs of black women in church hats. To date, Crowns has become the most produced new American musical in the past decade.

Ten years after she launched the first production of Crowns, Taylor was invited to revisit the joyful musical in a new production this summer at the Goodman, her artistic home. Shortly before rehearsals began, we talked about her inspiration, her hats and the process of revisiting her best-known work.

Tanya Palmer: The source material for Crowns is a beautiful book of portraits and profiles by Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry, subtitled “Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats.” A book of photographs seems like a somewhat unexpected choice for dramatic adaptation. What made you decide to adapt this book for the stage, and how did you go about creating a theatrical language for it?

Regina Taylor: Emily Mann, the artistic director of the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey, gave me a call and said, “There’s this book that’s about to come out, called Crowns. I think you should take a look at it.” She sent me the book and immediately I responded. I was struck by the fact that I knew each and every one of these women even though I’d never met them. And it took me back to where I come from, which is Dallas, Texas; but the women in my family are all from parts of South Carolina. It was very exciting to think about bringing their stories to life on the stage starting with the tradition of wearing hats to church. Once you had a good job and were on your feet, you could afford the hat, the matching bag, the shoes. It was a statement of the tenacity of the individual spirit. How you wanted to be seen in this world was expressed through the hat. It didn’t matter whether you were a maid or a professor during the week, you were seen the way you wanted to be seen as this unique, special person on Sunday.

But it also contains the roots of the African tradition of adorning oneself for worship. It’s a tradition that survived the Middle Passage over the ocean, survived through slavery. I started thinking about tracking those traditions that crossed over oceans, from the wearing of hats to music: gospel music and spirituals. Spirituals were African tunes that were married to the poetry of the Bible, making them African American. I wanted to track that through, exploring the way the rhythms of Africa permeated American society through field hollers, through blues, jazz, spoken word and today through rap. You can also track it through movement—there’s the African tribal dance that you see very much in the ring shouts of the Gullah Islands off the coast of South Carolina, but you also track it through the Charleston and the Lindy Hop, through the Twist, through Krumping and other street dances of today. You can see all of those roots all the way through American society and certainly African American society. So the piece is very much about things that are passed down and what the next generation does with them.

When I first starting working on the play, over 10 years ago now, I was at my mother’s house telling her about my

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“At Target, we are committed to serving local communities where we do business,” said Laysha Ward, President, Community Relations, Target. “That’s why we are proud to partner with Goodman Theatre as we work to strengthen communities and enrich the lives of our guests and team members.”
research and what I was discovering, and she took me to her closet to show me her hats. Each hat had a story: a wedding, a funeral, a baptism—a marker in her life. Then she walked me back through them again and each hat had another story. I learned so much about my mother that day that I had never known before; all these memories cupped under the brim. That's what she passed down to me. For the opening night of the first production of Crowns at the McCarter Theatre I bought my first real hat, which was a large-brimmed hat with all these feathers. That became the same hat that I wore to my mother’s funeral. It was collecting stories; it’s lived with me and become part of my skin, part of my history. My mother gave me the story of her hats and that helped me to create Crowns.

“How you wanted to be seen in this world was expressed through the hat. It didn’t matter whether you were a maid or a professor during the week, you were seen the way you wanted to be seen as this unique, special person on Sunday.”

—Regina Taylor

in her history so that she can move forward with these spirits supporting her, guiding her. Down South she finds her roots so she that she can move back up North, back to her home.

TP: One of the things that interests me about the play is the way that you explore the fusion between Christian worship and traditional African spirituality—from the hats to the music and movement. How do you see that fusion playing out in the production?

RT: African Americans are always doing something rather African without our being conscious of it. The African has permeated all levels of our society, whether it’s in music, in fashion, in architecture or how we move through this world. The year 2011 was the hundredth anniversary of Romare Bearden’s birth and his work is an inspiration for this production. I wanted to start with Romare Bearden who is very much a collagist, taking this tapestry which is American society, and then layering it, stitching it, pasting it together, showing us American society through an African American’s perspective. So there’s kind of an homage to Romare Bearden in this play in that we’re collaging these dualities, African American dualities, on different levels. The set, designed by Maruti...
Evans, will be layered with projections; the production itself will be layered with song, dance, words. At certain points you’ll see what might be expected or familiar in terms of music, and movement too, and then we’ll layer on the African antecedent so that you see the roots juxtaposed against the American version that evolved from it. So you’ll hear something like “When the Saints Go Marching In,” then you strip it down to its African essence, so the ghosts of the African spirits that are always with us can poke through.

TP: You’re revisiting the play 10 years after its premiere and revising the book and the music. Can you talk about some of the changes you’re making for this production?

RT: We’re adding new music to the piece—traditional gospel as well as new original music and spoken word pieces commissioned for this production. But I’m also making some changes in the book as well. I recently moved to Chicago and I wanted Chicago to be a part of this story—there’s such a rich history here with the great migration of African American citizens with deep roots in the South. I really wanted to frame the piece around Yolanda, so in this incarnation she is from Englewood, the South Side—so when I return to it, I’m facing the devastation of her family with her brother being shot on the street. Chicago has one of the highest murder rates in the country and Englewood has the highest murder rate of all the neighborhoods in the city. So I thought that the story was very suited to start here. What happens when a family, a community is shattered?

The other thing I’m looking at now in returning to the piece, is the way that stories and storytelling connect us to our community. So as I am looking at the piece and how I present it on the stage, I’m also having dialogues with different parts of the Chicago community about the themes of the play. It’s why I’m working with Louder Than a Bomb, the Chicago-based youth spoken word and poetry festival, to touch base with the Yolandas in Chicago and provide them with an outlet for their voices. It’s why I’m working with Columbia College students to help develop the dance vocabulary for the piece alongside the fantastic Ms. Dianne McIntyre, the choreographer. It’s why I’m making connections with organizations like the Museum of Contemporary Art, and eta Creative Arts, so that the piece will live outside of the theater and speak to those different areas in Chicago as it’s living on the stage at the Goodman.

TP: Since its first production in 2002, Crowns has been produced all around the country, at large regional theaters, small theaters, community theaters and churches. Why do think it’s had such a strong following?

RT: I think there’s an authenticity to it that everybody can recognize and relate to. It has played across this country and to different types of audiences, and whether they’re black or white, older or younger, people from different backgrounds and religions can relate to it in different ways. Whether or not that’s through a fond memory of a cherished hat-wearing queen, it strikes a chord in terms of memory, history and community.
The African Roots of *Crowns*

By Tanya Palmer

Late in Regina Taylor’s *Crowns*, the character of Yolanda, a young woman struggling to understand who she is and where she came from, tells us, “The more I study Africa, the more I see that African Americans do very African things without ever knowing it.” *Crowns* is filled with these “African things”—from the music and movement that infuses the show, to the values and beliefs that its characters uphold and, of course, to the elaborate hats that give the musical its title.

Many cultures and religions have a tradition of covering the head. In Africa, the earliest evidence of headwear is found in Algeria and dates to the Neolithic period, between 11,000 and 3,000 BCE. Among the images etched onto the rocky walls of various prehistoric sites are depictions of archers and dancers wearing feathers, animal skins and horns on their heads. In sub-Saharan Africa, what one wears on one’s head communicates important information about gender, age, status in society, membership in an association, rank in an organization or affiliation with a deity. Headwear also has a strong spiritual significance: for the Yoruba peoples of southwestern Nigeria and the Republic of Benin, the head is considered the point through which the soul enters the human body. The Yoruba also believe that the physical head (*ori ode*) is no more than the outer shell of an inner, invisible head known as the *ori inu*, which is associated with personal destiny.

The most elaborate headwear is usually reserved for leadership—political or religious leaders and the social elites—while the lowest-ranking individuals on the social ladder may be denied the right to wear anything at all on their heads. For the African American women in *Crowns*, whose ancestors survived the Middle Passage and slavery, the act of wearing an elaborately decorated hat connects them to their African roots while simultaneously asserting their socioeconomic status here in America. As Wanda, one of the women in the play, tells us, “In my mother’s day, hats were a sign of status for black women. Once you got up on your feet and started working, you bought yourself a hat.”

**FEATURED SPONSOR:**

PwC

“PwC is proud to sponsor the return of *Crowns* at Goodman Theatre, and applauds the Goodman for its commitment to quality, diversity and community,” said Cherie Pioler, PwC Assurance Partner and a Goodman trustee. “We also salute the Goodman for their education and community programming, which brings a cultural treasure to so many.”
The reasons for wearing a hat, as we discover in *Crowns*, are as myriad as the hats themselves. But while the “hat queens” in the play may at times be driven by fashion, vanity or a desire to assert status, hat wearing is also a spiritual act—inextricably linked to worshipping God. As Wanda tells us, “When I get dressed to go to church, I’m going to meet the King, so I must look my best.” Two of the North Carolina churches described in the play—the Church of God in Christ and the Holy Trinity Church—are part of the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostalism is a charismatic religious movement that emerged in America at the turn of the twentieth century. The name is derived from the New Testament book The Acts of the Apostles, where on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descends on the followers of Christ, giving them spiritual gifts including the gifts of healing, prophecy and speaking in tongues. African American Pentecostalists trace their origins to the Azusa Street Revival, a Pentecostal revival meeting founded in Los Angeles in 1906 by African American preacher William Joseph Seymour. But many of the rituals, practices and beliefs associated with African American Pentecostalism can trace their roots further back to traditional African spirituality. In *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism*, author Estrelda Y. Alexander notes, “Pentecostalism… is as African as choral music and dance. Prayers for healing, speaking in tongues, and similar phenomena were a part of many traditional African religions long before the arrival of European missionaries.” One such tradition is the “ring shout,” an ecstatic dance most closely associated with the Gullah people of the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands. Recreated in *Crowns*, the ring shout is a fusion of counterclockwise dancer-like movement, call-and-response singing and percussive hand clapping and stick beating, and is clearly African in its origins.

The music in the play—which moves through time from field hollers to spirituals to blues, jazz and gospel to contemporary hip-hop—provides a snapshot of the remarkable contribution African Americans have made to the history of music in the United States, while also demonstrating how those musical forms can trace their roots back to African musical and cultural traditions. The field holler is perhaps the earliest form of African American music, originating in the early days of slavery. A kind of work song, it was used as a form of communication among black plantation workers in the South, and made use of call and response. In sub-Saharan Africa, call and response is linked not only to vocal and instrumental music, but is also a pervasive pattern of democratic participation—in public gatherings in the discussion of civic affairs and in religious rituals. Spirituals, made famous by African Americans in the South, also made use of call and response. As Taylor points out, “Spirituals were African tunes that were married to the poetry of the Bible, mak-
ing them African American.” The blues, which was born in the Mississippi Delta during the Civil War, also built on these same influences, but in this case the call-and-response pattern was between a singer and a guitar. Beginning in the late 1800s, jazz grew out of a combination of influences, including African American music, African rhythms, American band traditions and instruments, and European harmonies and forms. Black gospel music emerged during the “great migration” as more and more southern blacks moved to urban centers in the North and South after World War I. Chicago is the city most strongly associated with the development of black gospel. According to author Walter D. Best in his book Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952, “Black gospel is... deeply influenced by the cadences of the South and southern religion, but it was born in the city and its core reflects urbanization and modern life.” Finally, rap and hip-hop, the most contemporary form Taylor draws on in Crowns, is also deeply rooted in African oral tradition, in particular the Griots and Griottes of West Africa—who are storytellers, poets, praise singers and keepers of community history.

The other perhaps less obvious connection between Crowns and African cultural traditions is the importance placed on one generation passing down knowledge to the next. In Crowns, the teenaged Yolanda travels down South to live with her grandmother and learn about life through her grandmother’s eyes. This journey is what allows her to move forward in her own life. As religious studies scholar Robert Baum outlines in his entry on West African religions in the Encyclopedia of African and African American Religions, intergenerational dialogue is critical in West Africa, as religious thought is often expressed as much through recitation of oral traditions and informal discussions between elders and young people as it is through ceremonies and rituals. Many West African religions also worship the spirits of ancestors. Not everyone can become an ancestor—among the Yoruba and Diola, only people who led benevolent lives become ancestors. They then remain linked to their living descendants, able to offer them advice and assistance by appearing to them in dreams and visions.

**INDIVIDUAL SPONSORS FOR CROWNS**

Goodman Theatre would like to thank the following individuals for their support of Crowns:

- Bill and Linda Aylesworth
- Mr. and Mrs. James Grzenia
- Wayne and Margaret Janus
- Linda and Peter Krivkovich
- Linda and Mitchell Saranow
- Sara F. Szold
- Don and Rebecca Ford Terry Family Fund
- Kimbra and Mark Walter

Director’s Society Sponsors

Commitments as of June 5, 2012
As the “hat queens” of Crowns indoctrinate young Yolanda in the art of wearing a hat, they take it upon themselves to bring to life the myriad functions of headwear: flirtatious, bold or concealing, a hat, they teach Yolanda, has the power to transform a woman unlike any other garment.

It is precisely for this reason that milliner Eia Radosavljevic initially took up hat-making as a hobby when an earlier career as a ballet dancer in New York City came to a close. But that hobby turned into a career after Radosavljevic took on a course of study in millinery at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology in the late 1980s. Soon after, women on the streets of Manhattan began offering to buy her creations off the top of her head. A Chicago native, Radosavljevic returned to her home town in the mid-1990s and helped develop a curriculum in millinery at the School of the Art Institute that has since blossomed into six courses.

We talked recently about the history of hats, the power of putting one on and her perspective as a creator of the rarely seen beauties.

Lesley Gibson: You began making hats as a hobby when your ballet career was ending—why hats?

Eia Radosavljevic: There is something so special about hats; they really put some flair into daily existence that doesn’t quite seem to be there without. Putting on a hat, or even seeing someone in a hat, can sometimes lift you out of this day-to-day mundane thing we’re stuck in. I started making hats at the end of a 20 year period—very loosely the mid ‘60s to the mid ‘80s—when hats had pretty much disappeared and wearing a hat seemed so special and could really make every day feel important. It’s such a fundamental part of human existence to cover your head, to protect your head, but at the time I started we were emerging from this odd slice of history when it just wasn’t done.

LG: Why did hats disappear from mainstream fashion for so long?

ER: There were a few major contributors: In the ‘60s and ‘70s Detroit dropped the car roof—things got lower, more streamlined—so you couldn’t get into a car with a hat on your head, and it became harder to wear something with feathers sticking out of the top of it in a car. John F. Kennedy is credited with the demise of hats for men because he went bare-headed most of the time. And in the ‘70s and ‘80s hairspray made hair big and drew the attention to the hair rather than the hat. There was the whole movement of the ‘60s to get rid of any conventions that were imposed by society and no longer had a reason for being there. Before that, there really was a time when going out without a hat was not respectable. I started making hats in the late ‘80s, and they were even less visible then than they are now, which is pretty amazing, so when people ask if they’re coming back I say yes, they’re definitely coming back!

LG: Why are they coming back now?

ER: I think people miss them more than anything else. If you look at any old film or any period piece they’re full of hats, and this current generation’s parents didn’t wear hats, so to them it’s a new thing. It’s not like one of those things their mothers or grandmothers did so they don’t want to do it; it’s completely new.
LG: Why do you think hats are perceived differently than any other item of clothing?

ER: Wearing a hat can really affect your personality—it's an amazingly powerful garment. You can really choose what you want it to do: If you want it to separate you from people and keep you hidden, like a Greta Garbo effect, you can. Or if you want it to attract people to you or bring out some part of your personality—some really flamboyant aspect—a hat can do that, too. They can be incredibly powerful for chemo patients, because when you've lost your hair having a hat feels like it's a bit of yourself and can help very much; they're really powerful items.

LG: Is there a certain type of woman that can pull off a hat, or that comes to you looking for a hat, especially given that they're not part of mainstream fashion right now?

ER: For all the years I've been doing this I have not noticed any type of woman or any type of personality. Some of them are outgoing or eccentric, but others are very quiet and either want the hat to keep people away or to attract people to them. The only thing I can figure is that maybe what they have in common is they don't need to be followers. Maybe they're the kind of women that are not afraid of looking different.

LG: Would you say they have what the characters in Crowns call the right “hat-titude,” or a certain kind of boldness that enables them to confidently look different?

ER: Yes, but I think sometimes the hat is what gives the person that boldness. I've often seen very shy people—the meekest, quietest person—come over to me at trunk shows and try on different hats, and all of a sudden they'll find the right hat and just blossom under it. I don't know that it's the person as much as the hat meeting the right person, or maybe a combination of both.

LG: One of the central story lines in Crowns is that the character Yolanda is a young woman whose elders take it upon themselves to teach her how to select, wear and care for her hats. Do you think we've lost that tradition as a society?

ER: Yes, we have totally; absolutely. Some people have kept wearing hats all along but most haven't. The youth of today are a generation who really have nobody to learn about them from. I've noticed that at smaller sales events hats do really well, because there's somebody there to guide a customer on how to select and wear a hat, and say things like, “Try putting it on this way,” or, “Try wearing it with this color.” A friend of mine who has red hair tells a story of going to see Raymond Hudd, a famous Chicago milliner who just passed away last year, and she tells this great story of him—he was not shy with his opinions at all—convincing her that she should be wearing a red hat. She just always assumed that with her red hair she should not, and so she has the red hat that Raymond taught her to wear. And she looks great in it!

Throughout the run of Crowns, some of Chicago’s finest milliners will be showcasing and selling their wares in the coat check area of the Goodman Lobby. Visit GoodmanTheatre.org/Milliners for more information.

“John F. Kennedy is credited with the demise of hats for men because he went bare-headed most of the time.”

—Eia Radosavljevic

HONORING A COMMITMENT TO NEW WORK

Goodman Theatre is pleased to recognize The Davee Foundation for its outstanding commitment to new and reimagined work. Continuing the legacy of Ruth and Ken Davee, the foundation’s support has been instrumental in the development of several new plays and the commissioning of both early career and established playwrights.

During the 2011/2012 Season, the projects supported include New Stages Amplified, Cándido Tirado’s world premiere play, Fish Men, and the music and dance workshops for the newly revised production of Regina Taylor’s Crowns. Thanks to the support of The Davee Foundation, Crowns will continue to remain a vibrant fixture in the American theater.
A Decade of Crowns

In 2002, Regina Taylor’s gospel musical, Crowns, debuted at McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey. The dazzling production featured a cast of seven stellar musical theater actors belting out an infectious array of show-stopping spirituals and gospel songs accompanied by a pair of onstage percussionists, all while adorned in a collage of brilliantly colorful costumes. The show was an immediate hit: Princeton audiences were swept up in the play’s joyful music, its robust theatricality and the stirring stories of the characters, who were all based on real hat-wearing women. Crowns’ success in Princeton led to an off-Broadway transfer, which captivated a diverse array of New York theatergoers with its exuberance and authenticity. After taking in a performance, critic Bruce Weber of The New York Times noted, “You feel that you’ve been transported to someplace real and welcomed there.”

Crowns soon became a theatrical sensation, with touring productions and regional theater stagings popping up throughout the country. Over the next ten years it would become one of the most-produced musicals in America, and the single most performed musical of 2006. To date, Crowns has been staged in more than 40 theaters across the US, Canada and Puerto Rico, to a combined audience of more than one million people.

Crowns last appeared at the Goodman more than eight years ago, during the 2003/2004 Season. For this summer’s 10th anniversary production, playwright and director Regina Taylor sought to build upon her original vision to make a bigger, richer, more resonant revival. Now dubbed a “revisal” (both a revision and a revival), the 10th anniversary production will feature some of the same powerful performance pieces and touching tales as the original, but with a new, seven-piece orchestra, an amped-up set, additional musical pieces and a notable shift in the setting—Taylor has switched her main character’s place of origin from Brooklyn to the South Side’s Englewood neighborhood in a nod to her new home, Chicago. But at its core Crowns remains a timeless tale of the traditions passed on from one generation to another, and is sure to enchant audiences for decades to come!
ARTIST ENCOUNTER: CROWNS
Featuring Playwright and Director Regina Taylor
and Author Craig Marberry
July, 2012
Join us for an intimate discussion between Crows Playwright and Director Regina Taylor and Craig Marberry, author of the initial inspiration behind Ms. Taylor’s gospel musical, the book Crows: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats.
Stay tuned for more details; visit GoodmanTheatre.org for up-to-date ticketing information.

CONTEXT: THE SOUNDTRACK OF A MOVEMENT
Monday, July 23 | 7pm
Albert Theatre
It is impossible to think of any struggle for justice—especially the Civil Rights Movement—without calling to mind the sacred and secular music that underscored it. Join us for a tribute to the words and music of a movement passed down from one generation to another as we take a look back at the sounds that sustained the Civil Rights struggle through its setbacks and successes, and a look forward at the raps and rhythms of a new generation’s march toward justice and equality.
FREE; reservations required. Visit GoodmanTheatre.org or call 312.443.3800 to reserve your seats.

CROWNS AT THE CHICAGO GOSPEL MUSIC FESTIVAL
Thursday, June 21 | 6pm
Jay Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park
Goodman Theatre kicks off the 2012 Chicago Gospel Music Festival with a sneak peek of Crows. This one-night-only event will feature the cast of Regina Taylor’s gospel musical sensation plus the songs, dances—and fabulous hats—that appear in the play!
FREE; no reservations necessary.

LOBBY ACTIVITY: THE SOUNDS OF CROWNS!
Join us for a variety of pre-show events and activities during select performances of Crows. Local choirs will bring dazzling performances of soulful spirituals to the pre-theater festivities, while representatives from Young Chicago Authors (producers of Louder than a Bomb) will electrify theatergoers with powerful recitations of their own spoken-word poems right in the Goodman Lobby. In addition, local milliners will sell their original hat creations in the coat check area.
Visit GoodmanTheatre.org for more information.

PLAYBACK: CROWNS
Following each Wednesday and Thursday performance of Crows, Albert Theatre audiences are invited to attend free PlayBacks, post-show discussions with members of the artistic team.
FREE; no reservations necessary.

Honor Someone Special with a Crows Tribute
Take the opportunity to honor a loved one during Goodman Theatre’s revival production of Crows. A unique honor/memorial opportunity is available at the $250 gift level, and includes a script of Crows and recognition of your honoree throughout the run of the production. To learn more or to make your gift, please contact Scott Podraza at 312.443.3811 ext. 566 or ScottPodraza@GoodmanTheatre.org.
Continuing a Commitment to New Work: The 2011/2012 Season Playwrights Unit

From June 15 through 17, Goodman Subscribers were treated to free readings of plays by the dynamic, up-and-coming playwrights in the Goodman’s 2011/2012 Season Playwrights Unit. The Playwrights Unit is a group of four local writers who meet twice per month throughout the season to discuss their plays-in-progress, and their experience culminates every June with intimate concert readings of their work—readings that are open exclusively to Subscribers. We hope you had a chance to attend this year’s readings; information on next season’s playwrights and performances is coming this fall, so stay tuned!

THE SOLID SAND BELOW
By Martin Zimmerman
After Julian Flores narrowly escapes a prison sentence he lands in Iraq—where he’s anything but a model soldier. But when a close call with an IED leaves Julian forever altered, the adrenaline, clarity and intimacy of battle become something he can’t live without—even after he returns home.

Martin Zimmerman’s work has been produced or developed at The Kennedy Center, The Playwrights’ Center, the Alliance Theatre, The Gift Theatre Company and Red Tape Theatre, among others. He is a Carl Djerassi Playwriting Fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

FOR HER AS A PIANO
By Nambi E. Kelley
Weaving together the stories of three generations of women, For Her as a Piano examines the things that get passed down from mother to daughter—for better or for worse. Rendered through language and song with surprising humor and striking theatricality, this new play by Nambi E. Kelley is a stunning portrait of love and survival.

Nambi E. Kelley is a playwright and actress. Her plays have been produced and developed at Chicago Dramatists, Lifeline Theatre, La Ma Ma and the Singapore Arts Festival, among others.

A WORK OF ART
By Elaine Romero
When Sabrina lost her brother Kirk to the war in Vietnam the course of her life was changed forever. Now at a crossroads, she must do battle with her past and the ghosts that continue to haunt her. This achingly beautiful new work about the burdens that families carry is part of a trilogy of stories about the US at war.

Elaine Romero is the winner of the TCG/Pew National Theatre Artists in Residence Grant and the TCG/NEA Theatre Residency Program for Playwrights, and has had her plays presented at the Alley Theatre, New Theatre and Actors Theatre of Louisville, among others.

STUTTER
By Philip Dawkins
Rosemary leads a quiet, unassuming life teaching piano in a small Iowa town. But her world is turned upside down when she discovers she was involved in a terrible childhood injustice that happened not only to her, but to other vulnerable children. When she’s asked to join a class action lawsuit, Rosemary must decide where her responsibilities lie—and whether to let the past invade her present.

Philip Dawkins’ plays have been seen at About Face Theatre, Dog and Pony Theatre, Chicago Opera Vanguard and Steppenwolf’s First Look series, among others. His play The Homosexuals was nominated for a Jeff Award for Best New Work in 2011.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE ON SALE NOW FOR THE 2012/2013 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LIVE SPEAKER SERIES AT GOODMAN THEATRE

Special subscription prices available for Goodman Subscribers

National Geographic Live returns to Chicago this fall for four unforgettable nights at Goodman Theatre! Travel to remote corners of 40 African countries and observe rarely seen cultural customs with photographers Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher. Search the jungles of Central America with archaeologist Bill Saturno for extraordinary discoveries that offer a window into ancient Mayan life. Journey deep into the rain forests of New Guinea with photographer Tim Laman and ornithologist Ed Scholes to watch the secret lives, bizarre displays and dazzling courtship antics of the elusive birds of paradise. And dive with National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Enric Sala to coral paradises teeming with sharks, fish and dazzling marine life.

For special Subscriber pricing, call the Goodman Box Office at 312.443.3800.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LIVE!
GeNarrations Expands in 2012!

I went to their home and had dinner with them, a feast of every kind of Turkish dish lovingly prepared by Melda and her mom....She was anxious to talk about her new religious fervor and inquired about my faith as a Christian. Her husband encouraged me to come over any time.

A few days later, Melda’s mother knocked on my door. Although she spoke no English, she had learned three words just for me: “I love you,” she said, as she placed a beautiful scarf she had knit around my neck. “I love you, too,” I replied...

—An excerpt from “The Muslims Next Door,” by Barb Duncan.

The Goodman’s six-week GeNarrations program allows Chicago-area seniors to write and edit stories themed around a Goodman production, then hone their performative storytelling skills with the assistance of our talented teaching artists Bobby Biedrzycki, Julie Ganey, Meighan Gerachis, Deb Lewis and Diana Pando.

This winter, GeNarrations participants revealed extremely intimate, sometimes challenging and often revelatory experiences on the topic “Race and Social Inequality,” in an evening centered around the Goodman’s production of Race. Barb Duncan’s story focused on an unexpected and beautiful friendship that blossomed between her and a Muslim neighbor as both women came to know more about each other’s culture and religion. Represented in our dialogue around Race were seniors from The Center on Halsted, North Center Senior Center, Norwood Park Senior Center, Casa Maravilla and Renaissance Court at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Our first all-center workshop was hosted this February at the Goodman, allowing the seniors from each of our participating venues to meet and share their stories while advancing their performance skills. The day was filled with exercises and games that introduced the seniors to elements from the actors’ and writers’ toolkits, and created a new space for these seniors to interact not only with their stories but with one another. Following the workshop, participants shared a collective meal before viewing Race as a group. The skills acquired in the workshop were put to use on March 3, 2012, when all participating seniors met again at the Chicago Cultural Center to perform their stories for a standing-room-only public audience.

FEATuRED SPonSoR:
POLK BRoS. FoUNDATIoN

As a longstanding advocate of the Student Subscription Series, Polk Bros. Foundation has provided consistent and generous funding for nearly 25 years, helping the Goodman establish an award-winning program which serves as a model for arts education nationwide. Through professional development for teachers, the Student Subscription Series provides enhanced learning opportunities in the classroom that expose 2,500 Chicago public high school students each season to a wide range of artists and visions, strengthening academics and promoting understanding and appreciation for the diverse society in which we live.

Goodman Theatre thanks Polk Bros. Foundation for its dedication to making a positive difference in the lives of generations of Chicago students and for its long history of leadership support for the Student Subscription Series.
Le Cabaret Rouge: The 2012 Goodman Theatre Gala

Always the signature event of the season, the 2012 Goodman Theatre Gala, Le Cabaret Rouge, was held on Friday, May 11, at The Fairmont Chicago. Guests who attended the festive French affair were treated to a sumptuous dinner, an amazing performance by Tony Award winner Laura Benanti and dancing to The Bill Pollack Orchestra. Not only was it a spectacular evening, the event raised $800,000 for the Goodman’s Education and Community Engagement programs. The success of the evening is largely due to the leadership of the Gala Co-Chairs Denise Stefan Ginascol and Renee Tyree, Gala Corporate Chair Michael D. O’Halleran and Women’s Board President Joan Clifford. Much gratitude is owed to our Gala Sponsor Partners—Abbott, Sharon and Charles Angell, BMO Harris Bank, Joan and Robert Clifford, Ellen and Paul Gignilliat, Ruth Ann M. Gillis and Michael J. McGuinnis, Sondra and Denis Healy/Turtle Wax, Inc., Michael and Kay O’Halleran and Alice and John J. Sabl. Special thanks to American Airlines for its generous support of the World Travel Raffle.

Premiere Preview

On April 4, the Goodman treated 100 members of our exclusive Premiere Society, as well as a select group of our Celebrity level donors, to a sneak peek of the 2012/2013 Season in thanks for their generosity to the theater. Guests enjoyed cocktails and dinner at Club Petterino, followed by readings from four plays in the 12/13 Season: Tennessee Williams’ Sweet Bird of Youth, Jon Robin Baitz’s Other Desert Cities, Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage’s By the Way, Meet Vera Stark and Christopher Shinn’s Teddy Ferrara.

Donor support is vital to helping the Goodman fulfill its mission of being a theater for all. For more information about the Premiere Society, please contact Molly McKenzie at 312.443.3811 ext. 597 or MollyMcKenzie@GoodmanTheatre.org.

BELOW (left to right): Premiere Society members Karen and Donald Smith. Celebrity donors Gloria and Albert Pritchett. Steven and Women’s Board member Lorryne Weiss, with fellow member Frances and her husband Robert Del Boca. Photos by Julia Nash.
**Fish Men Opening Night**

On Monday, April 16, guests celebrated the opening of Cándido Tirado’s *Fish Men*, produced in association with Teatro Vista. Following cocktails and dinner at Petterino’s, attendees enjoyed the world premiere on the Owen stage. Special thanks to everyone whose support made this production possible: Owen Season Sponsor Sara Lee Foundation; Edgerton Foundation New American Plays Award; Contributing Sponsors Baxter and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois; Spanish Print Media Sponsor Hoy; Digital Media Sponsor Chicago Latino Network; Principal Support of Artistic Development and Diversity Initiatives The Joyce Foundation; Season Sponsors The Edith-Marie Appleton Foundation, Julie and Roger Baskes, Patricia Cox, Andrew “Flip” Filipowski and Melissa Oliver, Ruth Ann M. Gillis and Michael J. McGuinnis, Sondra and Denis Healy/Turtle Wax, Inc., Carol Prins and John H. Hart, Alice Rapoport and Michael Sachs/Sg2 and Merle Reskin; New Work Season Sponsors Julie and Roger Baskes, Lynn Hauser and Neil Ross, Cindy and Andrew H. Kalnow, Eva T. Losacco, Catherine Moully and LeRoy T. Carlson, Jr., Shaw Family Supporting Organization, Beth and Alan Singer, Orli and Bill Staley; and Student Subscription Series New Work Sponsors Harry and Marcy Harczak.

*deceased*

**The Iceman Cometh Opening Night**

The Goodman's new production of *The Iceman Cometh*, directed by Robert Falls and featuring Brian Dennehy and Nathan Lane, opened on Thursday, May 3. To celebrate, sponsors and guests enjoyed pre-show cocktails and dinner at Petterino’s followed by the performance. Thank you to our generous sponsors—Lead Corporate Sponsor, Allstate; Corporate Sponsor Partner Fifth Third Bank; Media Partner Chicago Tribune; Season Sponsors (listed above); Sponsor Partner Mr. and Mrs.* Stanley M. Frehling; Producer’s Circle Sponsors Joe and Palma Calabrese, Joan and Robert Clifford, Marcia S. Cohn, Paul Dykstra and Spark Cremin, Don and Rebecca Ford Terry Family Fund and Alice and John J. Sabl; and Event Sponsor Petterino’s.

*deceased*
The Taxman Cometh: Estate Planning Seminar

On May 8, the Spotlight Society Advisory Council hosted its Eighth Annual Estate Planning Seminar, entitled The Taxman Cometh. The event began as attendees enjoyed lunch along with an Iceman Cometh–themed estate planning presentation that included the tools and techniques needed to prepare their estate plans. Guests also learned about possible new estate tax laws and how these laws might affect them, after which a lively artistic conversation with The Iceman Cometh's Brian Dennehy concluded the event. The Estate Planning Seminar is an informative and fun event which is available each year to our Spotlight Society members, Subscribers and donors.

For information on the Spotlight Society, contact Kealie Williams at 312.443.3811 ext. 581 or KealieWilliams@GoodmanTheatre.org.

Fish Men Diversity Night

On April 24, 2012, the Goodman held its third diversity event of the season featuring Cándido Tirado's Fish Men, directed by Teatro Vista Artistic Director Edward Torres. This free event is a product of the Goodman's ongoing commitment to reflecting the diversity of our community in all areas of our organization and is designed to bring a new audience of culturally diverse individuals to our theater. More than 250 guests enjoyed a festive cocktail and appetizer reception at Club Petterino, in which Edward Torres discussed his work on Fish Men, a collaborative production that marked the second of three projects in a strategic partnership between Teatro Vista and the Goodman. This Diversity Night was a celebration of the two companies' commitment to bringing new Latino voices to the stage.

Goodman Theatre gratefully acknowledges each of the sponsors, including Diversity Initiatives Leader Charter One Bank; Diversity Initiative Partners Accenture, Allstate, Ernst & Young, Exelon Corporation, Fifth Third Bank, Loop Capital, Macy's, McDonald's Corporation, and Mesirow Financial and Event Sponsor UPS.

FEATuRED SPonSor: HOy

Hoy, a division of Chicago Tribune Media Group, teams up with Goodman Theatre to promote culturally specific programming that appeals to the Hispanic audience. As the leading Spanish-language newspaper, Hoy connects Chicagoland Hispanics with culture and issues they care about most. Hoy is grateful for this continued partnership and a proud sponsor of Cándido Tirado's Fish Men.
in 1976 from New York City and shortly thereafter attended our first Goodman production; it was still located on Columbus Drive where the Art Institute’s Modern Wing is now located.

With all the options in Chicago, why do you support Goodman Theatre?
We are deeply committed to supporting non-profit theater organizations, and the Goodman’s guiding principles of “quality, diversity and community” resonate with our values, and contributes to our city’s quality of life by reflecting Chicago’s diversity.

Is there a perk to donating that influences your giving, other than the tax deduction?
It is always a bonus to be invited to meet the actors and directors prior to a preview performance.

Do you support other arts and cultural organizations in Chicago?
We are strong supporters of Teatro Vista and its Artistic Director, Edward Torres; The Institute of Puerto Rican Art and Culture, Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, The Puerto Rican Arts Alliance and the National Museum of Mexican Art.

Which recent Goodman productions have been favorites? Why?
Although there are too many to mention, these are my most favorite: Lynn Nottage’s 

Mamet’s 

Ruined

david my most favorite: Lynn Nottage’s 

Although there are too many to mention, these are been favorites? why?

How would you describe the Goodman to others?
It’s a wonderful place to be lifted spiritually and to experience life in a microcosm.

GROUP DINING AT TRATTORIA NO.10
For a taste of Tuscany, try Trattoria No. 10, the recent recipient of the prestigious 2012 Michelin rating. Named “one of the Loop’s premier dining spots” by the Chicago Tribune, Trattoria No.10 offers intimate private dining areas for large groups of up to 250 at the restaurant as well as at their upstairs sister restaurant, Sopraffina Marketcafe. Groups are offered a wide array of menu options—including budget-friendly and gluten-free fare. Their specialty homemade ravioli is not to be missed!

For more information on group dining, contact Elisa Harmon at 312.984.0098 or Elisa@TrattoriaTen.com. Visit TrattoriaTen.com to view group dining menus.

PREFERRED CATERER:
TRUE CUISINE AND SWEET BABY RAY’S
Servicing both downtown and the suburbs, True Cuisine and Sweet Baby Ray’s is the product of a 2008 merger between two of Chicago’s favorite culinary companies. Dubbed the “best caterer in DuPage County” by West Suburban Living magazine, True Cuisine and Sweet Baby Ray’s is now a full-service custom catering company that accommodates everything from fun corporate barbecues and social events to upscale and elegant weddings.

For more information, contact 630.238.8261 or visit TrueCuisine.com or SBRCatering.com.

PREFERRED PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: CATCH THIRTY-FIVE
Dubbed “one of the classiest and most innovative seafood restaurants around” by the Chicago Sun-Times, Catch Thirty-Five offers seafood with a Thai twist, premium steaks, non-gluten fare and hearty options for vegetarians. Plus, Tuesday through Saturday evenings, patrons dine to the sounds of a live jazz trio. For an excellent value, try their popular three-course prix fixe menu for only $29.95 that includes a choice of soup or salad, one of six savory entrees plus a dessert. As always, present your Goodman tickets or ticket stub to have the cost of valet parking deducted from your dinner check.

Reservations are highly recommended; for more information call 312.346.3500. Catch Thirty-Five is located at 35 West Wacker Dr., on the first floor of the Leo Burnett Building. Catch35.com.
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SEASON OPENING BENEFIT
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SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH
BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
DIRECTED BY DAVID CROMER

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2012
5:00PM COCKTAILS AND DINNER, The Standard Club
8:00PM PERFORMANCE, Goodman Theatre
Cast party following the performance
TICKETS START AT $500.

For more information
contact Katie Frient at
KatieFrient@GoodmanTheatre.org
or 312.443.3811 ext. 586.

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