Welcome to American Blues Theater’s 32nd season “The Beat Goes On”. We proudly present the world premiere of Keith Huff’s *Six Corners* – winner of the esteemed Edgerton Foundation New Play Award.

Our Ensemble has long admired playwright Keith Huff’s work. Receiving the opportunity to produce the final play in his loosely based “Chicago police trilogy” is a distinct honor for our small theater. The other two plays *The Detective’s Wife* (premiered at Writers’ Theater) and *A Steady Rain* (premiered at Chicago Dramatists; Broadway premiere with Hugh Jackman and Daniel Craig) use strong characters’ perspectives to imprint the Chicago experience onto audiences.

It is Huff’s third play that is quintessentially Chicago in its architecture and complexity: you will find yourself at an intersection of ethics, emotion, and, if we do our jobs right, empathy. This play challenges one’s definition of justice.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Justice cannot be for one side alone - but must be for both.” Huff’s writing will activate your principles like a navigational system. What direction will you take? Perhaps a shortcut because you’ve traveled here before? Maybe the scenic route to see everything? Or will you reset in the middle?

It is no surprise theaters and producers across the United States have already inquired about this script – its content necessary; its vehicle essential for the important journey we as Americans must take.

- Gwendolyn Whiteside
PLAYWRIGHT’S NOTE

I'm absolutely thrilled to have landed the world-premiere of Six Corners at American Blues Theater. More than any other company in town, American Blues embraces and elevates the diverse, blue-collar Chicago theater aesthetic – exactly what is needed for this play.

Six Corners is the third in a loose Chicago cop trilogy that began with A Steady Rain, which premiered at Chicago Dramatists and magically landed on Broadway starring Daniel Craig and Hugh Jackman. A Steady Rain was followed by The Detective's Wife, which premiered at Writers Theater. I call these three plays a loose trilogy because I wrote the first drafts all around the same time – also because each takes a known cop genre (buddy cop story, murder mystery, and police procedural) and theatricalizes it. None of the same characters appear in the plays – they are simply (“loosely”) unified by place (Chicago) and subject matter (Chicago Cops). (I married into a Chicago Cop family, so I heard lots and lots of stories over the years!)

It’s a great privilege and an honor to be working with Peter DeFaria and Gary Griffin once again. DeFaria, as many know, co-starred in both the Chicago Dramatists and the Royal George productions of A Steady Rain (with Jeff Award Winner, Randy Steinmeyer), and Griffin directed the world premiere of The Detective's Wife (with Jeff Award Winner, Barbara Robertson). Having the co-star of the first play and the director of the second both working on the third is an accidental poetry that Blues Artistic Director Wendy Whiteside made happen and just seems right – an artistic coup.

Six Corners was inspired by a real-life event. One bitterly cold Chicago Christmas years ago, I heard a CTA employee at the Western Avenue el stop get shot -- “heard” because I heard the gunshot and the assailant fled just as I reached the top of the eastbound platform. The man who was shot fell down onto the tracks. Weirily, an eastbound train left the Rockwell station just then and was approaching. Without thinking, I jumped down onto the tracks (near the deadly third rail) and attempted to lift the man onto the platform. He was easily twice my size, so I couldn’t do it alone. There was a lone woman on the platform watching me – I barked at her to stop watching and to give me a hand. She did. We managed to lift the man onto the platform before the train pulled in. We walked him to the warming bench, turned the heat lamp on. The woman and I were covered in blood – the wounded man was drenched in it. While we waited for an ambulance to arrive, I saw the gunshot wound. It was in the side of the CTA employee’s head. He died before the ambulance got there, while we propped him up between us on that bench. The woman and I spent the rest of the evening upstairs at the Belmont and Western police station telling our stories over and over to two exhausted, world weary homicide detectives. They interviewed us separately, then swapped rooms and interviewed us again. I never learned the name of the CTA employee who died or the name of the woman I shamed into helping him. I did learn, however, that night how dependent our fragile criminal justice system is on storytelling. And that’s why this incident inspired this play.

-- Keith Huff
presents
the world premiere of

SIX CORNERS

by Keith Huff
directed by Gary Griffin+

Scenic Design................................................................. Joe Schermoly, U.S.A.
Lighting Design.............................................................. Alexander Ridgers
Costume Design ............................................................. Janice Pytel, U.S.A.
Original Music and Sound Design............................... Lindsay Jones*, U.S.A
Properties Design........................................................ Mary O’Dowd
Stage Management ............................................................ Kate Ocker^

Featuring
Brenda Barrie^, Manny Buckley*^, Peter DeFaria^,
Monica Orozco^, Lyric Sims, and Byron Glenn Willis^.

+ Member of Stage Directors & Choreographers Society
* Ensemble member of American Blues Theater
^ Member of Actors’Equity Association – the union of professional actors and stage managers

FEBRUARY 22 – MARCH 24, 2018 (previews Feb 16-21)

Six Corners is the recipient of the 2018 Edgerton Foundation New Play Award.

American Blues Theater
4809 N. Ravenswood Ave., Suite 221, Chicago, IL 60640
Phone: (773) 654-3103 AmericanBluesTheater.com

American Blues Theater is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group, Inc –
the national organization for nonprofit professional theaters, the League of Chicago Theaters,
Arts Alliance Illinois, and Lakeview Chamber of Commerce.

American Blues Theater operates under agreements between Producers’ Association of Chicago Area Theatres,
Actors’ Equity Association – the union of professional actors and stage managers,
Stage Directors & Choreographers Society, and United Scenic Artists of America, Local 829 – AFL-CIO.
TICKETS ON SALE NOW!
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COMING IN 2018!

The BUDDY HOLLY Story
As a courtesy to the actors and your fellow patrons, please turn off your phone before the performance. The taking of photographs and the use of any type of recording device are not allowed in the theater during the performance and is a violation of state and federal copyright laws. Digital media will be deleted and tape or film will be confiscated.

TIME AND PLACE

Now (winter) and several years earlier (spring).

Chicago District Police Headquarters at Belmont and Western & various areas around Six Corners (Milwaukee, Irving, & Cicero).

The primary action of the play takes place late one night.
The scenes with B.J. Lyles and Katie Yates take place one night several years earlier.

The performance runs 90 minutes without an intermission.
COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR SIX CORNERS

American Blues Theater believes it is an honor and duty to serve our community. We raise awareness of other non-profit organizations’ great causes through creative collaborations. We offer complimentary tickets to Chicago Public Schools, YMCA Metro of Chicago, and the Chicago Police Department. We proudly collaborate with YMCA Metro of Chicago and The Family Institute of Northwestern University. We continue our “Pink Previews” to donate proceeds to The Lynn Sage Foundation for breast cancer research. To enrich your experience, visit AmericanBluesTheater.com.

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BIOGRAPHIES

BRENDA BARRIE
(Amanda Brackett) is thrilled to be making her American Blues Theater debut. Select Chicago credits include United Flight 232 (The House Theatre of Chicago); The Downpour (Route 66 Theatre); Mother Road (Goodman Theatre); Middletown and Okay Bye (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), Julius Caesar and Elizabeth Rex (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); Memory, Aunt Dan and Lemon, How I Learned to Drive and Waiting for Lefty (Backstage Theatre Company); The Ruby Sunrise (Gift Theatre); Mrs. Caliban and Mariette in Ecstasy (Lifeline Theatre); A Streetcar Named Desire (Metropolis Performing Arts Center); Caravaggio (Silk Road Rising). She is a company member with the House Theatre, as well as Erasing the Distance, a non-profit company whose aim is to shed light on issues of mental health through theatre. Television credits include The Chicago Code, Chicago P.D. and Chicago Med. She received her BFA in Theatre from the University of Indianapolis and studied theatre at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland.
MANNY BUCKLEY
(Carter Hutch) is a proud Ensemble member of American Blues Theater. He was also seen in Looking Over the President’s Shoulder (Jeff Award Nomination - Best Solo Performance; Black Excellence Award) and Dutchman/TRANSit (Black Theatre Alliance Award Nomination) here at Blues. Elsewhere, Manny was recently in The Father at Studio Theatre in Washington, D.C. and In the Heat of the Night at Shattered Globe Theater. He originated the role of “Carson” in Hit the Wall, which sold out houses in Steppenwolf’s Garage Rep. His performance was heralded as one of the year’s best by the Chicago Tribune and The New Yorker magazine, earned him the “Best Actor Award” from the Chicago Reader and he received a Black Theater Alliance Award. Select Chicago credits include 1984 and Of Mice and Men (Steppenwolf Theatre), Dorian (House Theater) Southbridge (Chicago Dramatists), The Piano Teacher (Next Theatre), and Love’s Labor’s Lost (Chicago Shakespeare Theater). Manny was on national tour as “Satchel Paige” in the original production of The Satchel Paige Story. Mr. Buckley has performed at the Kennedy Center and in the English Language Theatre Festival in Bratislava, Slovakia. Film credits: Chicago Fire, Under Covers, Sugar, Pilgrim, and The Onion.

Last Rites of Joe May, Chicago Fire, Chicago P.D., Chicago Med, Chicago Justice, The Chicago Code, and Empire. He is represented by Grossman/Jack, he studies with Mary Ann Thebus, and he is married to Maria Stevens.

MONICA OROZCO
(Bernadette Perez) makes her American Blues Theater debut. Her most recent credits include Coriolanus with Chicago Shakespeare Project and Lottery Day as part of Goodman Theatre’s New Stages series. Other Chicago credits include Camino Real and The Cook (Goodman Theatre); Charm (Northlight Theatre at the Steppenwolf Garage - Jeff Award Nomination for Best Ensemble; Time Out Chicago Theatre Award Nominations for Best Supporting Actress, Best Ensemble); Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat and Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith (Silk Road Rising); and The Duchess of Malfi (Writers’ Theatre). Regional credits include A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Tantrum Theatre); Macbeth and Merchant of Venice (Utah Shakespeare Festival). Ms. Orozco holds an MFA from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

LYRIC SIMS (Katie Yates) is extremely honored to be joining the cast of Six Corners. She lives in the small suburb of Plano, IL with her family. She is in the third grade and her favorite subject is Math. Lyric acting career began at the tender age of 3, and thus far she has appeared in more than half a dozen commercials and voice-overs. In her past time she enjoys singing, dancing, gymnastics, playing dress-up, and swimming.

Peter Defaria
(Nick Moroni) is very happy and grateful to be back at American Blues Theater (Monsters II: Visiting Hours, 1992, dir. Carmen Roman). He has appeared at many other theaters including Chicago Dramatists (A Steady Rain, 2007, dir: Russ Tutterow). Television and Film: Public Enemies, The Dark Knight, The A-Team, and The Onion.

The New Yorker
BYRON GLENN WILLIS
(BJ Lyles) is excited to return to American Blues Theater, where he was last seen in the production of Hank Williams: Lost Highway as “TeeTot”. Other productions: Rent, Hair, Big River, and Civil War (Barn Theatre); Smokey Joes Café (TLTOTS); Alabama Story and The Full Monty (Peninsula Players Theatre); Little Shop of Horrors (Tantrum Theatre); Sister Act, Dreamgirls, Once On This Island, Treasure Island, and Finian’s Rainbow (Marriott Theatre); Porgy & Bess and Caroline or Change (Court Theatre); The Buddy Holly Story (Drury Lane Oakbrook Theatre); Dreamgirls (Fulton Theatre, Maine State Theatre, Arkansas Rep, and Alhambra Dinner Theatre); Congo Square’s Nativity (Goodman Theatre/Ruth Page Theatre); Dessa Rose (Apple Tree Theatre); Pullman Porter Blues and Purlie (Goodman Theatre/Pasadena Playhouse); Ragtime (Light Opera Works); The Jackie Wilson Story, Sensational Soulful 60’s, and Doo Wop Shoo Bop (Black Ensemble Theatre); Five Guys Named Moe (Drury Lane Evergreen Park); Nefertiti (Athenaum Theatre); Higher Ground (Human Race Theatre); and the European tour of Hair (Scala Theatre Co). TV/Film: Barbershop 2, R. Kelly’s Trapped In The Closet, Detroit 1-8-7, The Chicago Code, and Chicago P.D. He is a proud member of AEA, SAG-AFTRA, and Paonessa Talent.

KEITH HUFF (Playwright) is thrilled to be premiering Six Corners at one of his favorite Chicago theaters, American Blues, and to be working again with Gary Griffin (Director, The Detective’s Wife, Writers) and Peter DeFaria (“Joey” in the original Chicago production of A Steady Rain). Other notable theater productions include A Steady Rain (Broadway, with Hugh Jackman and Daniel Craig), Big Lake Big City (Lookingglass Theater, directed by David Schwimmer), and Pursued By Happiness (Steppenwolf). In TV, Keith has written for Mad Men (AMC), House of Cards (Netflix), American Crime (ABC), Full Circle (DirectTV), and Helix (SyFy) as well as pilots for Sony TV, Starz, DreamWorks, HBO, and DANJAQ Films. He is currently developing a limited series about Richard J. Daley with Bob Teitel (State Street Pictures) and Chicago’s own Mark Mitten, a limited series about Chandra Levy and Gary Condit with Lawrence Kasdan, and a cable series based on The Gangs of New York with Martin Scorsese.

GARY GRIFFIN (Director) directed the 1995 American Blues production of Keely and Du starring Kate Buddeke and James Leaming. He also directed the world premiere of Keith Huff’s The Detective’s Wife at Writers’ Theatre starring Barbara Robertson who received a Jeff Award for her performance. Recent Chicago credits include Fun Home and Hand to God at Victory Gardens, Red Velvet and King Charles III at Chicago Shakespeare, and Parade at Writers Theatre. On Broadway, Gary directed Honeymoon in Vegas, The Apple Tree, and The Color Purple. In London he directed Pacific Overtures at the Donmar Warehouse which received the Olivier Award for Outstanding Musical Production and an Olivier nomination for Best Director. He has directed seven productions for the Stratford Festival of Canada and three for the Lyric Opera Chicago. Gary was a proud company member of the Famous Door Theater as well as had the honor of directing at Court, Northlight, Marriott, Drury Lane, Apple Tree, Pegasus, and Body Politic theaters in Chicago. He has received 10 Joseph Jefferson awards for directing.
JOE SCHERMOLY (Scenic Design) is happy to be back at American Blues Theater working on this world premiere play, after designing The Columnist last year. Previous credits include Yasmina’s Necklace ( Goodman Theatre); Constellations (Steppenwolf Theatre); Hand to God and Samsara (Victory Gardens); Naperville, The Watson Intelligence, Mr. Burns, Seven Homeless Mammoths, and Completeness (Theatre Wit); Puff: Believe it or Not, Pirandello’s Henry IV, and Travesties (Remy Bumppo); American Idiot (The Hypocrites); Pocatello, Titanic, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Flare Path, Punk Rock, Port, and Constant Wife (Griffin); Lela & Co and Wastwater (Steep); Stupid Fucking Bird, Idomeneus, and The Ugly One (Sideshow); The Seafarer and Lay Me Down Softly (Irish Theatre of Chicago). Joe studied scenic design at Northwestern University, has received one Equity Jeff Award, two After Dark Awards, and five Jeff Nominations. www.joeschermoly.com

ALEXANDER RIDGERS (Lighting Design) is very excited to be working with this team on Six Corners and be making his American Blues Theater debut. Selected design credits include Violet with Griffin Theatre at the Den Theatre (Nov 2017); Rooming House with Lucky plush Productions (Steppenwolf 1700/Lookout Series – Nov 2017); Quixote: On the conquest of self at Writers Theatre (Oct 2017); Deathtrap at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre (Aug 2017); Ragtime with Griffin Theatre (May 2017); James and the Giant Peach at Drury Lane, Oakbrook (May 2017); Miranda at Indiana Repertory Theatre (April 2017); and Winterset with Griffin Theatre (Nov 2016). Alexander is based in Chicago, IL and has an MFA from Northwestern University, and a BA from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. For more information visit www.alexanderridgers.com

JANICE PYTEL (Costume Design) is designing her first show with American Blues Theater, and her seventh production with Gary Griffin. She has a special interest in new play development, and has designed costumes for world premieres by noted playwrights such as Bruce Norris, Moises Kauffman, as well as the Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize winning I Am My Own Wife by Doug Wright. Recent credits include Cal in Camo and Alias Grace (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble); The Book of Will (Northlight Theatre); Bootycandy (Windy City Playhouse); Queen, Hand to God, Hillary and Clinton, Cocked, and Never the Sinner (Victory Gardens); and Song from the Uproar (Chicago Fringe Opera). In Chicago, Janice has worked with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Chicago Opera Theater, Writers’ Theatre, About Face Theater, Lookingglass, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and others. She is a proud member of Rivendell Theatre Ensemble and United Scenic Artists, Local 829.

LINDSAY JONES (Original Music and Sound Design) is a proud Ensemble member at American Blues Theater. This year marks his 20th anniversary as a member and 25th production with Blues. Broadway: Bronx Bombers and A Time to Kill. Off-Broadway: Mankind and Bootycandy (Playwrights Horizons), Mr. Joy (LCT3), Kings and Dry Powder (Public Theater), Top Secret (NYTW), Feeding The Dragon and Discord (Primary Stages), and many others. Regional: Guthrie Theater, Hartford Stage, Alliance Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Old Globe, American Conservatory Theater, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Arena Stage, and many others. International: Stratford Shakespeare Festival (Canada) and Royal Shakespeare Company (England), as well as productions in Ireland, Austria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Scotland. Awards: seven Joseph
Jefferson Awards and 24 nominations, two Ovation Awards and three nominations, LA Drama Critics Circle Award, three Drama Desk Award nominations, two Helen Hayes nominations, 2 Barrymore nominations, and many others. Film scoring credits include Magnolia Pictures’ *The Brass Teapot* and HBO Films’ *A Note of Triumph* (2006 Academy Award, Best Documentary). www.lindsayjones.com

MARY O’DOWD (*Properties Design*) is honored to return to American Blues, having designed props for *This Wonderful Life* and *Beauty’s Daughter*. She has created props/set dressing for dozens of shows and received several Jeff nominations. Favorite project ever: *Bakersfield Mist* (TimeLine). Mary is a graduate of the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, NY and thanks Humanities professor Dr. Laury Magnus for her inspiration.

KATE OCKER (*Production Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be working at American Blues Theater for the first time! Past theaters she has worked at include Paramount Theatre, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Resident Ensembles Players, Great River Shakespeare Festival, and the Oklahoma City Ballet.

BREANA YOUNG (*Assistant Stage Manager*) graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago in the spring of 2017 with a BA in Theatre Design (concentration in Stage Management). While there, such stage managed shows such as *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Life’s a Dream*, and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. She had an internship (stage management) with Steppenwolf Theatre Company and has been working in theaters around the Chicago area since then.

SOMER BENSON (*Young Performer Supervisor*) most recently worked on *Disney’s The Little Mermaid* and *A Christmas Story* at Paramount Theatre as their Young Performer Supervisor. Her storytelling vessel as an actor and teacher, married with her extensive work in childcare, became the perfect fusion to work alongside young actors. She is grateful to join the crew for *Six Corners*.

LINDSAY BROWN (*Production Manager*) is a proud Montana native who is thrilled to be working with American Blues Theater for the first time. She has worked with Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Windy City Playhouse, Strawdog Theatre, Grandstreet Theatre, Merry-Go-Round Playhouse, Kokandy Productions, and is a member of BoHo Theatre. She is a lover of all things dinosaur and sends big love to her family near and far, especially to M, S & C!

ELYSE DOLAN (*Assistant Director*) is a proud Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater where she is also the Assistant Producer. At Blues she has directed several short plays in past *Ripped Festivals* and has been Assistant Director on a handful shows including *Little Shop of Horrors* (dir. Jonathan Berry) and *The Rainmaker* (dir. Ed Blatchford). Her directing work has been seen across Chicago at The New Colony, Broken Nose Theatre, Prop Thtr, Babes with Blades, Pride Films & Plays, Gorilla Tango Theatre, Three Cat Productions, and more. She has served as Assistant Director on productions at The New Colony, Raven Theatre, Oracle Theatre, 16th Street Theater, and Redtwist Theatre. Elyse holds a B.A. from Denison University.
ERIC BACKUS (Assistant Sound Designer) is a proud Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater! His work was heard recently in Beauty’s Daughter, and he previously worked on Blues’ award winning productions of Hank Williams: Lost Highway and Grounded. A Jeff-nominated sound designer and composer, recent credits include Anna Karenina and A Wrinkle in Time (Lifeline Theatre), Rose (Greenhouse Theatre), Becky Shaw (Windy City Playhouse), The Wolf at the End of the Block (Teatro Vista), and The Assembled Parties (Raven Theatre). Eric also designed the Off-Broadway and touring productions of SoloChicago Theatre’s Churchill, and the Chicago and LA productions of Thrones! A Musical Parody. To hear his music, please visit www.ericbackus.com.

RACHEL LAKE (Master Electrician) is thrilled to be returning to American Blues Theater! Recent Design works include: Yasmina’s Necklace (Goodman Theatre, Asst. Lighting Designer); The Last Days of Judas Iscariot (Eclectic Full Contact Theater); Gideon’s Knot (Eclectic Full Contact Theater); Lady X: The Musical (Hell in a Handbag); and Deep in the Heart of Tuna (New American Folk Theater). Recent Master Electrician credits include: It’s a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago! (American Blues Theater); This Wonderful Life (American Blues Theater); The Last Days of Judas Iscariot (University of Illinois in Chicago); The Heavens Are Hung in Black (Shattered Globe); Beauty’s Daughter (American Blues Theater); Cabaret (Theater at the Center, Asst. Master Electrician). She is a company member of Eclectic Full Contact Theater, a staff member at The Edge Theater, and an alumnus of West Virginia University.

GWENDOLYN WHITESIDE (Artistic Director) is a proud Ensemble member of American Blues Theater and has served as Artistic Director since 2010. Under her leadership, American Blues has nearly doubled the size of its Ensemble, added 32 Artistic Affiliates, and diversified its base of artists. She created the nationally-recognized annual Blue Ink Playwriting Award, Blueprint Development for new work, implemented community service into the company’s mission, and created the free arts education program The Lincoln Project for Chicago Public Schools which serves 3,000 students annually. She led American Blues through its 2009 rebirth and built the operational budget from zero to $1 million+ in seven years. Whiteside served numerous panels for the National Endowment for the Arts and sat on the national Board of Directors for Network of Ensemble Theaters. Currently she sits on the Board of Directors for The League of Chicago Theaters. She’s a graduate of Northwestern University (cum laude), The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (MFA), and a Kellogg Executive Scholar in Nonprofit management (Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University). She was nominated for “Chicagoan of the Year” in Chicago Magazine and named in Newcity’s annual Players list numerous times. In seven years, eight American Blues’ productions won or were nominated for production by the Joseph Jefferson Award committee. She’s received 13 Joseph Jefferson Awards, Citations, and nominations as an actress and Artistic Director. Her favorite performances include Jeff Award for Solo Performance (Grounded) and seven years as “Mary Bailey” (It’s a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!). She’s the recipient of two After Dark Awards and numerous Broadway World Chicago Awards and nominations. She directs the Joseph Jefferson Award nominated annual holiday production It’s a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!
ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

Winner of American Theater Wing's prestigious National Theatre Company Award, American Blues Theater is a premier arts organization with an intimate environment that patrons, artists, and all Chicagoans call home. American Blues Theater explores the American identity through the plays it produces and communities it serves. American Blues Theater follows three guiding values both on and off its stages – to be accessible, responsible, and true.

Our diverse and multi-generational artists have established the second oldest professional Equity Ensemble theater in Chicago. Our 35-member Ensemble has nearly 600 combined years of collaboration on stage. As of today, our theater and artists received 197 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and 35 Black Theater Alliance Awards. Our artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards, and numerous other accolades.

American Blues Theater is committed to developing the classic plays and musicals of tomorrow. Our new work development consists of a variety of programs – including world and regional premieres, the Blue Ink Playwriting Award, Blueprint commissions, and Ripped: the Living Newspaper Festival of new short-plays. More than half of our mainstage productions are world and Chicago premieres.

AMERICAN BLUES THEATER HISTORY

DEFINITION OF “ENSEMBLE”
An Ensemble theater is a group of individuals dedicated to collaborative creation and committed to consistently working together over years to develop a distinctive body of work and practices. Ensemble members, both artists and administrators, are empowered to help shape their theater’s artistic direction and organizational structure.

BUILT BY THE AMERICAN BLUES FAMILY
American Blues Theater was founded in July 1985 by a director, playwright, designer, and actor. The company dedicated itself to new and classic American plays. Richard Christiansen of the Chicago Tribune cited American Blues in his editorial “Chicago Theater Forges New Standards of Glory.” In August of 1993, the company leased a warehouse on Byron and Lincoln. In 38 days, James Leaming led a community-based 90+ volunteer crew to transform the space into an intimate 134-seat theater. From 1994-1997, the Ensemble was lauded with numerous Joseph Jefferson Awards and After Dark Awards.

LEADERSHIP FROM OUTSIDE THE ENSEMBLE
From 1997-2009, the company was led by Artistic Directors from outside of the Ensemble. Under the leadership of Brian Russell and Damon Kiely (’97-’07), the theater’s name changed to American Theater Company (ATC), the mission statement was revised, and the business expanded greatly. In 2008, under new management, the Ensemble theater practice was dismantled. After 18 months of talks with the new management, all four Founders and every Ensemble member prior to 2008 chose to leave the ATC organization in March 2009 citing “major administrative and artistic differences.”
BLUE SKIES AHEAD
The Ensemble reformed under its original name American Blues Theater. Founding Board members reconstituted the Board, giving tremendous support and guidance. Ensemble member Gwendolyn Whiteside became the Artistic Director. Whiteside ushered in the annual Blue Ink Playwriting Award, Blueprint Development, implemented community service into the company’s mission, and adapted the arts education program The Lincoln Project for Chicago Public Schools that serves 3,000 students annually.

“One of our favorites in Chicago!” – Dean Richards, WGN
“Ensemble founded one of Chicago’s most venerable off-loop theaters.” – Chris Jones, Chicago Tribune

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American Blues Theater Administrative office
4809 N. Ravenswood Ave, Suite 221 Chicago, IL 60640
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Feb 16-21  "Pink Previews" proceeds for breast cancer research
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Mar 1  College Night - snacks & meet the creative team
Mar 3  Discussion with a Public Defender
Mar 4  Discussion of play's themes with The Family Institute + Open-captioned performance
Mar 5  Industry Night - meet the creative team
Mar 11  Discussion with a representative of the CPD
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Mar 21  Meet the cast of Six Corners
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