Dear Court Theatre Family,

Welcome to Agatha Christie’s *The Mousetrap*! We’re so excited about Sean Graney’s return to Court as he puts his singular stamp on one of England’s most prolific writers. And with an all-star cast of Court favorites and new faces, we’re sure that this *Mousetrap* will be an exhilarating experience regardless of your familiarity with the piece.

*The Mousetrap* represents one of our first forays into a much-loved theatrical genre: the mystery. Whether you grew up reading classics by Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, or are prone to listening to hours of true crime podcasts like *Serial* and *My Favorite Murder*, or enjoy reading mysteries from local favorites like Sara Paretsky or Elizabeth Peters, you’re likely acquainted with the thrill of trying to solve a clever puzzle.

So synonymous is Christie’s name with the genre that you’d be hard pressed to find any “best of” list of mystery writers that doesn’t feature her. Of all her plays, *The Mousetrap* best exemplifies why Christie has become such a pillar of the genre. With its clever deployment of red herrings, twists, and turns, you’re likely to be as immersed in the craft of her storytelling as you are the story itself. Christie simultaneously taps into the fears of the era in a way that gives *Mousetrap* enduring poignancy at a time when the line between subjectivity and objectivity is becoming increasingly muddled.

Graney taps into this paranoia, highlighting the ways people become entrapped not only by social stereotypes and prevailing beliefs, but also by the lies we tell to ourselves, and about ourselves to others. The result of his work on this classic play is a fresh, unique take—one which eschews cliché in favor of the truth at the heart of Christie’s writing.

Do you have what it takes to solve the case?

Sincerely,

Charles Newell
*Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director*

Angel Ysaguirre
*Executive Director*

Court Theatre
Agatha Christie’s *The Mousetrap*

**Directed by SEAN GRANEY**

- **Scenic Design by Arnel Sancianco** U.S.A.
- **Costume Design by Alison Siple**
- **Lighting Design by Claire Chrzan**
- **Sound Design by Kevin O’Donnell**
- **Dialect Design by Eva Breneman**
- **Fight Choreography/Intimacy by Jaq Seifert**
- **Casting by Becca McCracken** C.S.A.
- **Derek Matson, Production Dramaturg**
- **Erin Albrecht,* Production Stage Manager**
- **Gabriella Welsh,* Stage Manager**

**SETTING:** The Great Hall at Monkswell Manor.

*The Mousetrap* is presented with one 15-minute intermission.

Be advised: Production contains water-based haze and strobe lighting effects.

*The Mousetrap* is sponsored by

**Neil Ross and Lynn Hauser**

KIRKLAND & ELLIS

*The Mousetrap* is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC, a Concord Theatricals Company.

Designers and Scenic Artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E. Local USA829, AFL-CIO,CLC. *Denotes a member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.
CAST

David Cerda* ................................................................. Mr. Paravicini
Kate Fry* ................................................................. Mollie Ralston
Allen Gilmore* ............................................................... Giles Ralston
Alex Goodrich* ........................................................ Christopher Wren
Erik Hellman* .......................................................... Detective Sergeant Trotter
Tina Muñoz Pandya ....................................................... Miss Casewell
Lyonel Reneau* ........................................................ Major Metcalf
Carolyn Ann Hoerdemann* ......................................... Mrs. Boyle

Understudies: Sheldon Brown (Giles/Paravicini/Metcalf), Arielle Leverett (Miss Casewell), Nathan Eric Slate (Wren/Trotter), Jess Nicole Thigpen (Mollie, Mrs. Boyle)

*Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Director ................................................................. Jaq Seifert
Assistant Scenic Designer .................................................. Jessie Baldinger
Scenic Artists ................................................................. Scott Gerwitz U.S.A., Julie Ruscitti U.S.A., Christina Rainwater U.S.A.
Properties Assistant .......................................................... Mele Ortiz
Carpenters ................................................................. Tony Cooper, Morgan Lemel, Kelly Lesniak, Alicia Obermeyer, Peter Sheehy, Miles Zable
Costume Shop Assistant ..................................................... Madeline Byrne
Stitcher ................................................................. Sierra Hughes
Wigs ................................................................. Christina Carlson
Assistant Lighting Designer .................................................. Madeline M. Scott
Assistant Master Electrician ................................................ Nils Fritjofson
Electricians ................................................................. Bucky Emmerling, Angelina Adams, Megan Turnquist, Arianna Brown, Jonah White, Shawn Cummings, Victoria Fox
Sound Assistant ............................................................. Shawn Cummings
Floor Manager .............................................................. Danny Fender
Scenery Intern .............................................................. Ethan Schondorf

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Court Theatre performs in the intimate Abelson Auditorium, made possible through a gift from Hope and Lester Abelson.

Cover photo of Kate Fry by Joe Mazza.

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Court Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Productions are made possible, in part, by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. Court Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American Theatre, the League of Resident Theatres, the Illinois Humanities Council, and the League of Chicago Theatres.
The origin of modern detective fiction is often attributed to Edgar Allan Poe’s story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” written in 1844 and Wilkie Collins’ 1868 novel *Moonstone*. The texts are also considered to be pinnacle references for all detective fiction that has followed. The tradition of basing mysteries off of real-life situations continued in the United States with Allan Pinkerton’s detective series, which took inspiration from the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. The organization, founded in Chicago, was once the largest private law enforcement entity and influenced countless other literary works, such as those of Arthur Conan Doyle, but is now more infamous for its role in the Homestead Strike of 1892. Pinkerton’s tales of intrigue and crime captured the public’s imagination and contributed to the rise of audience desire for sensationalist mystery fiction.

Murder mysteries continue to capture the public’s attention in various forms. In the nineteenth century, the dime novel dominated as an inexpensive and entertaining read. The city of Chicago began appearing with regularity in dime novels in the 1870s, serving as the backdrop for detective stories. In England, penny dreadfuls also featured sensational accounts focusing on the fictitious adventures of detectives and criminals alike. The cheap price of the stories, combined with steadily rising literacy rates and easy purchasing access to the publications, meant that they were
the perfect vehicles to popularize the already soaring genres of murder mystery and detective fiction.

Although the murder mystery is still a well-explored genre today, it did reach its zenith in the 1920s and 1930s. The Golden Age of the murder mystery genre gave rise to the fame of such authors as Agatha Christie, G.K. Chesterton, and Mary Roberts Rinehart. The “whodunnit” narrative thrived as audiences rushed to consume these scintillating stories, which always kept the identity of the criminal a secret until the end. In Christie’s *The Mousetrap*, some productions even include a message at the end of the play to request that the audience does not divulge the truth to anyone else who has not read or seen the play in order to further uphold the essence of the whodunnit. Nowadays, from children’s cartoons to theatrical productions, the hallmarks of the whodunnit genre continue to engross audiences.

Photo of Lyonel Reneau, Erik Hellman, Kate Fry, Allen Gilmore, Alex Goodrich, and David Cerda by Joe Mazza.

Carissa Villagomez, Court Theatre’s Marketing and Communications Intern, is a first year UChicago student who plans to study English Literature. In 2017, she was published in the student journal *Albricias*.
How to Design a Better Mousetrap

We spoke with scenic designer Arnel Sanciano and costume designer Alison Siple to learn more about their approach to tackling Agatha Christie’s famous play.

Printed in the published version of Agatha Christie’s The Mousetrap is the schematic of the original ground plan for the still-running West End production. Since its 1952 premiere, that iconic production has only changed sets twice: once in 1965, and again in 1999, although the mantelpiece clock has remained the same in all iterations. A quick Google image search returns hundreds of production photos of the play from around the world. Regardless of whether the production is being put on in a high school auditorium or a professional stage, it’s sometimes hard to tell where one production ends and another begins.

“All of these productions stick with the original ground plan because that’s what everyone says works,” comments Arnel Sancianco, the scenic designer. Especially when it comes to repeat audiences, that feeling of sameness can dampen some of the intrigue of Christie’s masterful plot. “When you change that up, suddenly I don’t know where anything is going to happen anymore,” Sancianco said.

In coming up with the scenic design for The Mousetrap, Sancianco and director Sean Graney explicitly set out to avoid showing audiences that staid simulacrum. There’s a larger-than-life feeling to this production’s environment, from the towering shelves and fireplace to the walls which dwarf doorways, transforming them from portcullises to mouseholes. Graney and Sancianco went through twenty-eight different color palettes before landing on the best fit for the play. They’ve also concealed other secrets throughout the design, including elaborate geometric patterns hidden in the wallpaper that give the feeling that Monkswell Manor itself is alive and breathing.
Pattern and color were two elements that costume designer Alison Siple aimed to highlight in her design work, too. Siple characterizes most productions of Mousetrap as “brown and tweed,” and deliberately set out to subvert these stereotypes with brightly-patterned clothing. She drew inspiration from the board game Clue and chose to give each character their own pattern or color as a way of further fleshing each role out.

“We’re going for mismatched in a way that looks stylish,” Siple explains. “Sean originally talked about wanting it to look like everyone got dressed up but is now deciding that maybe their outfit is a lot.” She adds, “It’s interesting to think about why people wear certain things and how these clothing choices help cover up our lies.”

What was the final guiding principle that proved important throughout the process of bringing Mousetrap to Court’s stage? Fun! Speaking about the play at first rehearsal, Graney shared that “anyone who says they don’t enjoy this play is lying.” To that end, all the artistic choices have been made to sweep you up in Christie’s suspenseful mystery, helping you see it for the first time all over again.

On the left: Mollie Ralston (Kate Fry) look 1: silhouette/shape of a 1950’s hostess/housewife, combo of floral (organic) and stripe (geometric) patterns, red as character’s color.

On the right: Quarter inch scale scenic model. Graney & Sancianco’s reinvention and re-imagination of Agatha Christie’s classic Monkswell Manor.
Henrik Ibsen’s

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

Sneak Peek
This March, Chaon Cross stars in Court’s staging of The Lady From the Sea, Henrik Ibsen’s mercurial play, which dissects issues of duty, marriage, and agency with raw emotion and disarming resonance.

Shana Cooper (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company) directs, injecting the text with a visceral physicality that thrillingly reflects and refracts Ibsen’s structure and characterization. Working with her frequent collaborator, choreographer Erika Chong Shuch, Cooper aims to make Ibsen’s play as physically and emotionally muscular as it is linguistically.

Cooper first worked on a staged reading of The Lady from the Sea at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival ten years ago. She describes Ibsen’s play as haunting her ever since then, and shares that,

My hope is that this play is an invitation to look at our own lives, life choices, and identities and maybe view this idea of cracking open questions about our spirituality or our identity as a real possibility.

Performances of The Lady from the Sea begin March 12, 2020. Tickets are available now online at CourtTheatre.org or by calling the Box Office at (773) 753-4472.

“What perennially strikes me about Ibsen is his raging modernity...Ibsen reminds us that structure is meaning and that there is a moral and aesthetic thrill in the moment of revelation.”

—The Guardian
A CLOSER LOOK
BEYOND GENDER AND GENRE

By Derek Matson,
Production Dramaturg

Agatha Christie’s *The Mousetrap* is the longest continuously running play in the history of commercial Western theater, having officially opened in London on November 25, 1952, in a production that, after over 28,000 performances, runs to this very day. Christie wrote her first version of the story on a BBC commission for a new radio play to honor the 80th birthday of King George VI’s mother, Queen Mary, in 1947. Titling it *Three Blind Mice*, she reworked the script into a novella, published in *Cosmopolitan* in 1948, then wrangled it back into a play, expanding it to its current length. Before it opened, she renamed it *The Mousetrap* in a winking reference to the play-within-a-play in *Hamlet*.

Box-office records for *The Mousetrap* have done little to secure Agatha Christie’s critical esteem. Her works, more often than not, have been written off as middlebrow or just for fun. Alison Light calls attention to the unusual intensity of this animus in her landmark book *Forever England* from 1991: “There is something about Agatha Christie... which seems to mark her out for an especially cold shoulder and the particularly gratuitous insult.” A decade later, Susan Rowland echoes Light’s observation in her book about British women writers of detective fiction, noting that, despite having “enchanted millions of readers,” there has been an “inverse relationship” between the enormous popularity of these women writers and the serious critical attention they’ve been given. Christie’s contributions to the theater are mostly elided in canonical histories and anthologies of the 20th-century British stage or are, at best, addressed with a perfunctory mention of her work. Theater scholarship would seem to either discount her as a populist interloper or apologize for her as not really a playwright. For their part, scholars of detective fiction who actually do take her writing more seriously tend to brush past her plays, waving them off as somewhat unseemly, embodied adaptations of novels that are really best read at home.

Even so, Christie’s achievements in the theater are monumental. She wrote more than 20 plays, and she is the only woman to have ever had three plays running simultaneously on London’s West End. *The Mousetrap* alone has been presented in 50 different countries and in 27 languages. Agatha Christie is, in the summation of theater producer Julius Green, “the most successful female playwright of all time.” Such accomplishments demand “more complex explanations than that people like a good yarn, or a neat puzzle,” to quote Christie scholar Gillian Gill. Denying that true artistry and literary excellence have played a role in Christie’s prodigious success is untenable. Like all
masterly playwrights, Christie was an astute observer of people, and she had an uncanny knack for hearing the specific, idiosyncratic ways that different people talked. She was a sophisticated chronicler of the rapidly changing world around her, and built into her stories are morally nuanced cultural commentaries.

The genre that she came to define, the English country house murder, in which staid, upper-middle-class comfort is shattered by violence and mayhem, offered Christie the perfect vehicle for tapping into social anxieties that circulated all around her, about class, desire, gender, nationhood, and justice. Devoted readers like cultural historian Jacques Barzun and poet W. H. Auden have held her stories up as classical parables that speak to deep-seated, inarticulate fears and yearnings of her readers and audiences. This ability of popular art to “tap into the collective unconscious,” Gill argues, is what makes stories like Christie’s so compelling to us, and so irresistible. The presumption that Christie’s worlds are straightforward or simplistic is a miscalculation that we perpetrate at the expense of our own enrichment. If Christie’s stories teach us anything at all, it’s not to trust appearances, and we’d do well to apply that same lesson to how we approach her mysteries, which comprise so much more than just cozy puzzles. Diligently and unassumingly, Christie used her art to needle away at tensions and sinister frustrations that underpinned her social fabric, and nowhere perhaps more so than in *The Mousetrap*. 

Agatha Christie at age 22, 1912.
If Christie’s stories teach us anything at all, it’s not to trust appearances, and we’d do well to apply that same lesson to how we approach her mysteries, which comprise so much more than just cozy puzzles.

The kernel for the story is an actual event that Christie lifted from the headlines of 1945. The previous summer, 12-year-old Dennis O’Neill and his brother Terence, were placed in the foster care of Reginald Gough and his wife Esther on their farm in a remote valley of Shropshire. Bank Farm was an expansive property that the O’Neill boys were forced to work. While there, the boys were only ever allotted two to three slices of bread to eat per day, and were whipped for the slightest infractions. Mr. Gough’s abuse of the children ultimately led to Dennis’ death, a case that made front-page news.

This tragedy deeply moved Christie, who set to work formulating the story that became The Mousetrap. The play offers a response to that harrowing event by laying bare the inadequacies of important institutions that Britons feared were collapsing around them. Marriage, the family, the judiciary, the police, the educational system—all are interrogated in some way by the people of the play, and the soundness of these systems is found to be deficient. It’s not merely out of comedic snobbishness that we hear Mrs. Boyle say, “This country has gone sadly downhill.” Certainly, many in the play’s opening night audience agreed, and Dennis’ death was seen as evidence that the country was in shambles.

At the same time, The Mousetrap implicates all of us in the breakdown of social safeguards and shared compassion that made the death of a child like Dennis possible. As we hear Detective Trotter say, “One might almost believe that you’re all guilty by the looks of you.” Christie designed her play to work on our sense of collective guilt—“We must have done something,” Mollie says—and she preys on our gnawing dread that the supports which failed the vulnerable before may yet fail them again, either because we’ve chosen to run away from our own complicity, or because we’ve turned our backs on it and willed ourselves to move on. In The Mousetrap, the dangers of our negligence are matched only by the dangers of our bias. Christie offers us ample room to indulge myopic assumptions about the people around us, only to pointedly turn those assumptions against us, and show us what heels we are for having made them in the first place.

To read an even more in-depth version of this article, visit CourtTheatre.org/blog

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DAVID CERDA (Mr. Paravicini) is the Artistic Director, resident playwright and co-founder of Hell in a Handbag Productions. Favorite roles with Handbag include Dorothy in *The Golden Girls: Lost Episodes* series, Suzanne Pleshette/Annie (*The Birds*), and Joan Crawford (*Christmas Dearest*). Cerda has worked as an actor with A Red Orchid Theatre (*Accidentally Like a Martyr*), A New Colony (*Psychonaut Librarians*) and The Facility (*The Ruse of Medusa*). He received a special Jeff Award in 2017 for his work with Hell in a Handbag, founded in 2002. Thank you, Christopher, Sean and the lovely cast and crew at Court.

KATE FRY (Mollie Ralston) is happy to return to Court, where she’s performed many times over the years. Recent credits include *The Belle of Amherst* and *Electra*. Other Chicago credits include work with Northlight (*Mother of the Maid*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Outside Mullingar*), Goodman (*The Winter’s Tale*, *Ah, Wilderness!*), Writers, productions with Chicago Shakespeare, Victory Gardens, Marriott, and Apple Tree Theatre. Outside Chicago, she has performed at Lincoln Center, Center Theatre Group in LA, the RSC in Stratford-Upon-Avon (Chicago Shakes’ production of *Henry IV*), and the McCarter Theatre Center. She is married to actor/teacher Timothy Edward Kane; they have two sons.

ALLEN GILMORE (Giles Ralston) is very happy to return to Court Theatre where he has appeared in *Scapin*, *Cyrano*, *Endgame*, *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, *Jitney*, *Seven Guitars*, *The Misanthrope*, *Man in the Ring*, and *Radio Golf*, among others. He has performed regionally at Yale Rep, Berkeley Rep, Kansas City Rep, Santa Cruz Shakespeare, Intiman Theatre, Seattle Rep, and The Shakespeare Theater among many others. Allen is a 2015 3Arts Prize recipient, a 2015 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow, a proud ensemble member of Congo Square Theatre Co, a US Army Infantry veteran, and the recipient of the 2019 Nicholas Rudall prize for his work in *Radio Golf*.

ALEX GOODRICH (Christopher Wren) is so pleased to be back at Court Theatre. Other shows at Court include *Photograph 51*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *One Man, Two Guvnors*. Other Chicago credits include shows at Chicago Shakespeare, Writers, Northlight, Marriott Theater, Royal George and Chicago Children’s Theatre. He loves his wife and two kids very much!

ERIK HELLMAN (Detective Sergeant Trotter) returns to Court where he was previously seen in *Harvey*; *One Man, Two Guvnors*; *The Misanthrope*; *Proof* (Jeff Nom.); *Comedy of Errors*; *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (Jeff Nom.); and *Arcadia* among others. Other recent credits include *Lindiwe*, *Familiar*, and *The Burn at Steppenwolf*, *Smart People* and *Marjorie Prime* at Writers Theatre; *Miss Bennet* (Jeff Nom.) and *Lost In Yonkers* at
Kirkland & Ellis is proud to sponsor Court Theatre and commends their work on the production of *The Mousetrap*.
TINA MUÑOZ PANDYA (Miss Casewell) is so excited to be making her Court debut! Chicago credits include Always...Patsy Cline (Firebrand Theatre); X-Marks the Spot (Chicago Children’s Theatre); The Aristophanesathon (The Hypocrites); Pinocchio and The Great and Terrible Wizard of Oz (The House Theatre of Chicago); The Tall Girls (Shattered Globe Theatre); and Octagon (Jackalope Theatre). Touring credits include: The Merry Wives of Windsor and Henry IV, Pt 1 (Montana Shakespeare in the Parks); and HMS Pinafore, The Pirates of Pензанс, and The Mikado (The Hypocrites). She is a proud graduate of the University of Michigan and the School at Steppenwolf, and is represented by Gray Talent Group.

LYONEL RENEAU (Major Metcalf) makes his Court Theatre debut! Lyonel is a graduate of School at Steppenwolf. Lyonel’s work spans the National and International Tour versions of Shrek and RENT. Some Credits: Ignition Festival - Reckoning: Furies from a New Queer Nation at Victory Gardens, RENT (Benny), WILD (Vin) Off-Off Broadway, Othello (Othello), Romeo and Juliet (Benvolio), and Matilda (Escapologist; Doctor). TV/Film:

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*Proven Innocent* (FOX) and *Empire* (FOX). Lyonel is repped by the team at Gray Talent Group. BFA Acting - Oklahoma City University. Love you mom. Follow him at @lyonelreneau.

**CAROLYN ANN HOERDEMANN** (*Mrs. Boyle*) is making her Court Theatre debut. She was last seen at American Players Theatre in *Macbeth*, *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur*, *A Doll’s House*, and *Twelfth Night*. Other credits include *Sweat* and *The Crucible* at Asolo Repertory, Goodman Theatre (*Camino Real, Measure for Measure, Feathers and Teeth*), the Steppenwolf Garage (*Venus*), Chicago Shakespeare, Door County Shakespeare, Trapdoor Theatre, Silk Road, European Repertory, and Chicago Children’s Theatre. Carolyn has been seen on *Chicago Fire* (NBC) and *Empire* (FOX) and the short films *Alien Brides* and *Home*, which she co-wrote. She is represented by Paonessa Talent.

**SHELDON BROWN** (Understudy) is a 2014 graduate of Acting at Emerson College in Boston. His previous Court Theatre credits are *Oedipus Rex* and *Man in the Ring*. Other credits include *This Bitter Earth, Time Is On Our Side* at About Face Theatre, *The Shipment* at Red Tape Theatre, 1980, or *Why I Voted for John Anderson* at Jackalope Theatre, *A Wonder In My Soul* at Victory Gardens, and more. He also has numerous credits in Boston including *The Grand Inquisitor*, directed by Peter Brook. Sheldon is also co-curator of Front Room Poetry, a monthly open mic series which aims to fill intimate spaces around the city with personal stories and soul bearing.
ARIELLE LEVERETT (Understudy) is thrilled to work with Court for the first time. She has appeared most recently as Montjoy/Michael Williams in Henry V at First Folio. Other Chicago credits include Southern Gothic (Windy City Playhouse), Ragtime (Griffin Theatre), Pericles and Richard III (Muse of Fire), and The Good Fight (Babes with Blades). She has also worked with Kentucky Shakespeare and Milwaukee Rep. Arielle is an ensemble member of Babes with Blades Theatre Company and PlayMakers Laboratory Theatre. Arielle has received an MFA in acting from Western Illinois University and is represented by Big Mouth Talent.

NATHAN ERIC SLATE (Understudy) is thrilled to be making his Court Theatre debut. He was previously seen in Linda at Steep Theatre. Mr. Slate has also worked with numerous other Chicago companies such as Rivendell, Jackalope, The Chicago Inclusion Project, Waltzing Mechanics, The Arc Theatre, Red Theater, Victory Gardens, American Blues Theater, First Floor Theater, Piven Theatre Workshop, and many more. He is a proud graduate of the School at Steppenwolf and is represented by Big Mouth Talent.

JESS THIGPEN (Understudy) appeared in Twelfth Night (Maria/Feste) at Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Oberon) at Blue Barn Omaha. NYC: No Candy at Signature Theatre Thesis Fest and Roundabout Theatre. Chicago: Educating Rita (Rita) at Citadel Theatre, and Support Group for Men at Goodman Theatre. International: Our Country’s Good (Liz Morden) at Tron Theatre Glasgow, All’s Well That Ends Well (Helena) at Globe Theatre London, and Comedy of Errors at Bard in the Botanics Glasgow. TV: Chicago Fire. Jess is a proud graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. She is a part time professor of theatre at Loyola University Chicago and represented by Paonessa Talent Chicago.

AGATHA CHRISTIE (Playwright, 1890–1976) was an English writer known for her 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections, particularly those revolving around her fictional detectives, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. Her plays include And Then There Were None, Murder on the Nile, Appointment with Death, The Hollow, Witness for the Prosecution, Spider’s Web, The Unexpected Guest, and Butter in a Lordly Dish, among others. After a hugely successful career, Ms. Christie died peacefully on 12 January 1976. You can read Agatha Christie’s own account of her life in An Autobiography, which was published in 1977.

SEAN GRANEY (Director) is happy to be back at Court for his fifth show. He currently lives in San Diego. He spent two decades in Chicago as Founder/Artistic Director of The Hypocrites where he directed over 100 plays. He’s most known for adapting Gilbert & Sullivan and All Our Tragic, a 12-hour adaptation combining the surviving Greek tragedies into a 12-hour play. He was a Creative Capital recipient, a participant in the TCG Career Development Program, and a Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard. His work has been seen at Berkeley Rep, Oregon Shakespeare, Actors Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare, Goodman, Court, Milwaukee Rep, and Steppenwolf, among others.

ARNEL SANCIANCO (Scenic Designer) returns to Court after winning the Jeff award for his design of Photograph 51. He studied Drama with Honors in Design at UC Irvine, and received his MFA in Scenic Design from Northwestern. Credits include The Nerd (Milwaukee Rep); A Doll’s House (Writers); The Color Purple (Drury Lane); Twelfth Night (American Players); Put Your House in Order (La Jolla); Lottery Day (Goodman); Landladies
To sleep perchance to dream

SOPHY Hyde Park and the Hyatt Place Chicago South are proud supporters of Court Theatre and University of Chicago.

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ALISON SIPLE (Costume Designer) returns to Court Theatre having previously designed The Mystery of Irma Vep. Recent projects include I Wanna Fucking Tear You Apart (Rivendell Theatre), Fantastic Mr. Fox (Emerald City Theatre) and Guards at the Taj (Milwaukee Repertory). Al is the recipient of a 2011 3Arts grant and is an artistic associate with Lookingglass Theatre Company and Steep Theatre. She is a graduate of Northwestern University. Visit alisonsiple.com.

CLAIRE CHRZAN (Lighting Designer) is thrilled to be back at Court Theatre after previously designing Radio Golf and Manual Cinema’s Frankenstein. Other recent credits include: New Stages Festival 2019 (Goodman); The Brothers Size (Steppenwolf Young Adults); Grey House, The Room, The Mutilated, and Evening at the Talk House (A Red Orchid); Yen, Suddenly Last Summer (Raven Theatre); Hamlet (The Gift); Fun Harmless Warmachine (The New Colony); We’re Gonna Die, Fear and Misery in the Third Reich (Haven); Caught (Sidshow); Dada Woof Papa Hot, Bull in a China Shop (About Face); Winning Works (2017-19; Joffrey Ballet’s Joffrey Academy). In her spare time, Claire is a facilitator with ABLE ensemble (Artists Breaking Limits & Expectations). Visit clairechrzandesigns.com.

KEVIN O’DONNELL (Sound Designer) is a musician, composer, and sound designer, and has worked at Court Theatre on Harvey, Water by the Spoonful, Angels in America, and Three Tall Women. His work in Chicago has earned him 23 Jeff Nominations and 10 Awards. In Chicago: Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, Northlight, Chicago Shakespeare, and others. Regionally: Seattle Rep, Olney Theatre Center, A.C.T., Kansas City Rep, The Arsh Center, Baltimore Center Stage, First Stage, Le Petite Theatre, Southern Rep, New Orleans Shakespeare Festival, The Signature Theatre, St. Anne’s Warehouse, Cherry Lane, and 59E59. As a musician, he’s recorded and/or performed with Andrew Bird, Nickel Creek, and others.

EVA BRENEMAN (Dialect Designer) has worked at Court on The Adventures of Augie March, Photograph 51, The Belle of Amherst, The Hard Problem, One Man, Two Guvnors, The Good Book, M. Butterfly, Skylight, Angels in America, The First Breeze of Summer, Carousel. Recent Chicago credits: Oslo (Timeline); Howards End (Remy Bumppo); Something Rotten (Marriott Lincolnshire); Twilight Bowl (Goodman). Regional: Things I Know to Be True (Milwaukee Rep); five seasons at American Repertory Theater; Love’s Labour’s Lost (Actors Theatre of Louisville); Around the World in 80 Days (Centerstage/ Kansas City Repertory) and The Woman in Black (National Tour). Eva is an associate artist at TimeLine Theatre Company.

JAQ SEIFERT (Assistant Director/Fight Choreographer/Intimacy Consultant) is thrilled to be working alongside such an amazing team in their first show as an assistant director. They are primarily an actor and fight choreographer, and have worked most recently at Chicago Shakespeare Theater as the Apothecary/Samson in Romeo and Juliet. Other acting credits include Marriott, First Folio, Oak Park Festival, and Redtwist. Fight choreography credits include Victory Gardens, Paramount, Theater Wit, and Teatro Vista, among others. Intimacy choreography credits include Theo Ubique, Oracle Productions, Victory Gardens, and Teatro Vista. They also run a production company, (sub)version productions, whose hit show The Buttcracker: A Nutcracker Burlesque just closed out their fourth season.
**DEREK MATSON** (*Production Dramaturg*) is delighted to return to Court Theatre after dramaturging last season’s production of *Photograph 51*. Other favorite Chicago productions include *United Flight 232* at The House Theatre and *columbinus* at American Theater Company. Derek studied acting at the Cours Florent in Paris. His translations of French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, German, and Catalan have been featured at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, and Cornell University, where he earned his M.A. in Performance Studies. Derek’s a former recipient of a Fulbright Assistantship to France and a Rotary Cultural Ambassadorial Scholarship to Russia.

**ERIN ALBRECHT** (*Production Stage Manager*) Previously at Court: *Oedipus Rex, King Hedley II, The Adventures of Augie March; For Colored Girls; Photograph 51; Frankenstein; Radio Golf; The Originalist; All My Sons; The Belle of Amherst; Five Guys Named Moe; Harvey; Blues for an Alabama Sky; Man in the Ring; One Man, Two Guvnors; Long Day’s Journey Into Night; Agamemnon; The Good Book; and Iphigenia in Aulis*. Erin has worked Off-Broadway, regionally, and toured throughout Europe. She holds a Bachelor of Music from The Catholic University of America and a MFA in Stage Management from Virginia Tech. She’s an adjunct instructor of Stage Management at The Theatre School at DePaul University.


**CHARLES NEWELL** (*Marilyn F. Vitale Artistic Director*) has been Artistic Director of Court Theatre since 1994, where he has directed over 50 productions. Recent Court highlights include *Oedipus Rex, The Adventures of Augie March; All My Sons; The Hard Problem; Man in the Ring; and Satchmo at the Waldorf*. Charlie has directed at Goodman, Guthrie Theater, Arena Stage, John Houseman’s The Acting Company, Lyric Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, Glimmerglass, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Awards received include the SDCF Zelda Fichandler Award, the TCG Alan Schneider Award, and the League of Chicago Theatres’ Artistic Achievement Award. Charlie has been nominated for 16 Jeff Awards, winning four times.

**ANGEL YSAGUIRRE** (*Executive Director*) most recently served as Executive Director of Illinois Humanities. During his tenure there, the organization established a number of new programs demonstrating the contribution that the humanities can make in addressing today’s most pressing challenges. Previously, he was the Director of Global Community Investing at The Boeing Company and a program officer at the McCormick Tribune Foundation. He has served on the boards of the Theatre Communications Group, Donors Forum of Chicago, the Illinois Center for the Book, Horizons Community Services, Blair Thomas and Company, and Next Theatre.
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NORA TITONE (Resident Dramaturg) is the author of the 19th-century theater history My Thoughts Be Bloody: The Bitter Rivalry of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth (Simon & Schuster, 2010). As a dramaturg and historical researcher, Titone has collaborated with a range of artists and scholars including playwright Anna Deavere Smith and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. She also contributed to projects at Arena Stage and DreamWorks Studios. Titone studied history at Harvard University and the University of California, Berkeley, and is represented by ICM Partners.

BECCA McCRACKEN (Casting Director) is a Chicago theatre fanatic. Casting credits include American Blues, Asolo Rep, Florida Studio, Infusion, Indiana Festival, Indiana Rep, Lyric Opera, Madison Rep, Milwaukee Rep, New Theatre, Paramount, Provision, Silk Road Rising, Syracuse Stage, Writers, Spamilton, Million Dollar Quartet, Old Jews Telling Jokes, Evil Dead: The Musical, Working, Dee Snyder’s Rock & Roll Christmas, and Mozart the Rock Opera. National Tours: How To Train Your Dragon, Peter Pan, and Sister Act. She is an Artios Award winner for her casting of the Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Carousel. Her casting career also spans into television, film, and commercial.
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Ma Qiusha, Wonderland: Black Square (detail), 2016.

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Dining Partners: Court patrons receive 10% off at Chant, Mesler, The Nile, Piccolo Mondo, and Seven Ten, and 12% off at Nella with their ticket stub on the night of the show. One discount per ticket. Not valid with other offers.

La Petite Folie offers a prix fixe menu for Court patrons.

The Promontory offers a wine pairing with each entree for Court patrons.

Beverage Partners

57th Street Wines
57th & Blackstone
wines57.com

Hotel Partners

sophyhotel.com

Premier Chocolatier

www.noirdebene.com

Premier Caterer

georgejewell.com