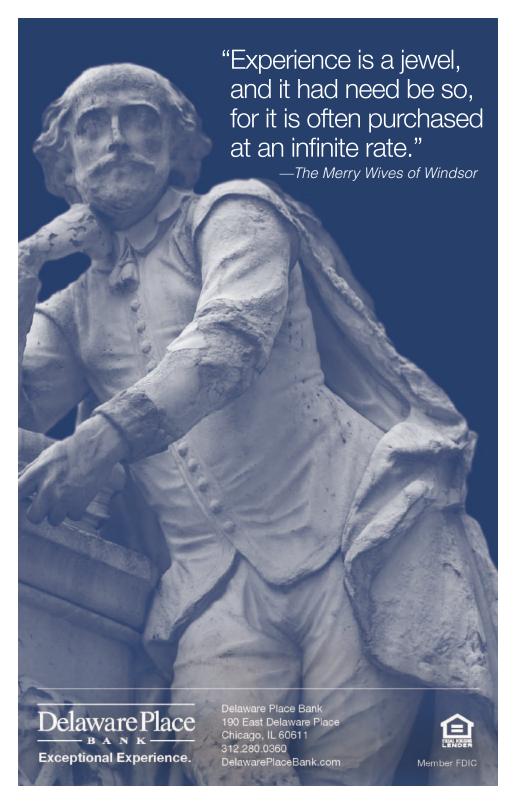


chicago shakespeare on navypier theater



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Chicago Shakespeare Theater 800 E. Grand on Navy Pier Chicago, Illinois 60611

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
CARL AND MARILYNN THOMA ENDOWED CHAIR:
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Criss Henderson

PICTURED: Dion Johnstone COVER PHOTO BY: Jeff Sciortino ABOVE PHOTO BY: joe mazza On the Boards
A selection of notable CST events, plays, and players

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A Scholar's Perspective

Part of the John W. and Jeanne M. Rowe Inquiry and Exploration Series



There's still so much to be excited about this season—including these sensational theatrical events and the chance to check out

CHICAGO'S MOST INNOVATIVE NEW VENUE.

The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare.



Q BROTHERS

written by Q Brothers Collective (GQ, JQ, Jax, and Pos) developed with Rick Boynton directed by GQ and JQ THROUGH DECEMBER 31 THE YARD AT **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE**

The holiday treat set to a bangin' beat is back, turning up the volume on Charles Dickens' classic.



RED by Lolita Chakrabarti directed by Gary Griffin THROUGH **JANUARY 21 CST'S COURTYARD**

A captivating history of the first black actor to appear on London's stage as Othello.



SHORT SHAKESPEARE!

SATURDAYS AT 11:00 A.M. & 2:00 P.M. **FEBRUARY 3-MARCH 10** THE YARD AT CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE

See all the hijinks and hilarity of Shakespeare's magical comedy—in this 75-minute abridged production.



SCHILLER'S

THEATER

in a new version by Peter Oswald directed by Jenn Thompson FEBRUARY 21-APRIL 15 **CST'S COURTYARD THEATER**

Queen Elizabeth I confronts her royal rival, Mary, Queen of Scots, in this electrifying drama.



by William Shakespeaare adapted & directed by Aaron Posner and Teller **APRIL 25-JUNE 24** THE YARD AT CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE

The creators of CST's sold-out The Tempest return with a magical take on "the Scottish play."



by Samuel Beckett

directed by Garry Hynes **MAY 23-JUNE 3 CST'S COURTYARD THEATER**

Ireland's most prestigious theater ensemble is back with a compelling new interpretation of Beckett's work.



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ComEd.





Welcome



DEAR FRIENDS.

We are thrilled to welcome you to Lolita Chakrabarti's highly acclaimed play, Red Velvet. Chronicling the true story of Ira Aldridge, this extraordinary theatrical journey introduces us to a pioneer of the theater, whose talent and tenacity will embolden generations of artists to come.

Director Gary Griffin's vision for Red Velvet optimizes the intimacy and theatricality of our Courtyard Theater, inviting audiences into the personal journey of Aldridge. His eminently talented cast, including Dion Johnstone in the lead role, has embraced the nuances of the world of Aldridge—everything from the specificity of teapot acting styles to the monumental complexities of nineteenth-century race relations in England. The resulting production is a haunting masterpiece that we are honored to share with you today.

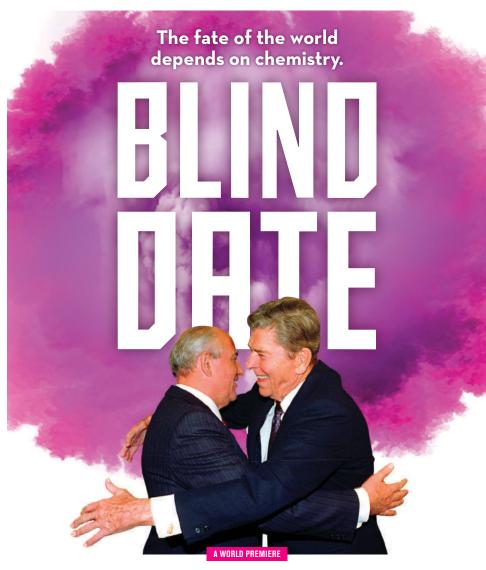
Shakespeare is more than the name on our marguee—his entrepreneurial spirit serves as our inspiration. During the month of December, our artistic home will also host the holiday favorite developed and premiered at Chicago Shakespeare in 2013, Q Brothers Christmas Carol. Presented this year in our state-of-the-imagination new third theater, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, the show remixes the Dickens classic as a hip-hop journey of redemption. Behind the scenes in our rehearsal hall, work will begin on our abridged production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Over the course of its winter run, this production will introduce tens of thousands of students to Shakespeare in performance.

Together, we have built a home for Shakespeare in Chicago as dynamic as the man himself. Thank you for joining us today!

Barbara Gaines Artistic Director Carl and Marilynn Thoma Endowed Chair



Steve Solomon Chair. Board of Directors



BY ROGELIO MARTINEZ DIRECTED BY ROBERT FALLS

Before Twitter, Tinder and Townhall.com, two of history's most enigmatic leaders—Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev—meet to halt the arms race. A crafty game of one-upmanship ensues, while their wives engage in a passive-aggressive tango over tea. "A fresh and funny talent" (*Backstage*), playwright Rogelio Martinez "finds new twists on old topics" (*Variety*) in this compulsively fascinating, slyly comic backstage glimpse of a 20th century landmark event.

JANUARY 20 - FEBRUARY 25

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About CST

A global theatrical force, Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) is known for vibrant productions that reflect Shakespeare's genius for storytelling, musicality of language, and empathy for the human condition. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Barbara Gaines and Executive Director Criss Henderson, Chicago Shakespeare has redefined what a great American Shakespeare theater can be—a company that, delighting in the unexpected, defies theatrical category. A Regional Tony Award-winning theater, CST produces acclaimed plays at its home on Navy Pier, throughout Chicago's schools and neighborhoods, and on stages around the world. In 2017, the Theater unveiled its third year-round venue, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, with an innovative design that changed the shape of theater-making. Together with the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater and the Thoma Theater Upstairs at Chicago Shakespeare, The Yard positions CST as the city's most versatile performing arts venue.

Chicago Shakespeare's year-round season features as many as twenty productions and 650 performances—including plays, musicals, world premieres, and visiting international presentations—to engage a broad, multigenerational audience of 225,000 community members. Recognized in 2014 in a White House ceremony hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama, CST's education programs support literacy and creativity for 40,000 students each year. Each summer, 30,000 family audiences welcome the free Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks tour into their neighborhoods across the far north, west, and south sides of the city. The Theater is the leading producer of international work in Chicago and, touring its own plays across North America and abroad to Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East, CST has garnered multiple accolades, including the prestigious Laurence Olivier Award. Emblematic of its role as a global theater, CST spearheaded Shakespeare 400 Chicago, a yearlong international arts and culture festival, which engaged an estimated 1.1 million people through 863 events at 231 locations across the city in 2016—all in celebration of Shakespeare's 400-year legacy.

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The Yard at Chicago
Shakespeare introduces
a new trend in theater
architecture to our city—
a dynamic design featuring
nine mobile audience "towers"
that can be arranged in a
wide variety of ways.

With each visit, you will come to "expect the unexpected" as the relationship between audience and actor is redefined by the vision of each production's creative team.

We look forward to welcoming you to...







encompassing our Courtyard Theater, Upstairs at Chicago Shakespeare, and newly added The Yard—will enable us to offer more productions, extend runs of successful shows, and greatly increase our service to students.





Live performance has an unmatched power to engage students in Shakespeare.

This winter, The Yard will transform into a thrust stage (much like our Courtyard Theater) for our abridged Shakespeare production—where the student audience surrounding the stage becomes part of the action.

NOW OPEN! See what's on stage at www.chicagoshakes.com/yard

photos by: Liz Lauren, James Steinkamp Photography, and Vito Palmisano





Join the generous community of civic and corporate leaders supporting this bold vision for Chicago Shakespeare. Your gift will provide capital funding for The Yard and safeguard the Theater's work on stage and in the community.

RED VELVET CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

On the Boards



Next up at Chicago Shakespeare is Schiller's Mary Stuart, a masterpiece exploring the power struggle between two extraordinary women: Queen Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots. Helming the production is another powerhouse, leading American director Jenn Thompson. Thompson served as co-artistic director of off-Broadway's The Actors Company Theatre (TACT) from 2011 to 2015. During her tenure. TACT was named "Company of the Year" by The Wall Street Journal. Staging Beth Henley's drama Abundance, Ms. Thompson won the 2015 Off Broadway Alliance Award, and the Associated Press proclaimed her direction to be "affecting, effective... touches the heart." Schiller's Mary Stuart. in a new version by Peter Oswald, will take the Courtyard Theater stage on February 21. Tickets are available online at www.chicagoshakes.com.



Barbara Gaines, Chicago Shakespeare's founder and artistic director, and the Carl and Marilynn Thoma Endowed Chair.will be featured among twenty prominent Chicago women in a mural on the Chicago Cultural Center's facade, between Washington and Randolph Streets. When asked about his inspiration for the piece, artist Kerry James Marshall shared. "My idea was to make a forest Mt. Rushmore, acknowledging the contribution of women who've worked to shape the cultural landscape of the city, past, and present." Other high-profile women highlighted in Marshall's 132 x 100foot mural include media mogul Oprah Winfrey and Pulitzer Prize-recipient and former Illinois poet laureate Gwendolyn Brooks. The mural also features Ruth Page. celebrated dancer and choreographer. and founder of the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, which was home to Chicago Shakespeare Theater until 1999.



Chicago Shakespeare has long connected our city to the world—importing over 1.000 artists from around the globe to our stages and exporting our own work to theaters and festivals across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Continuing this spirit of cultural exchange, the Theater recently welcomed visiting high school groups from China, France, and Germany throughout the run of Barbara Gaines's all-woman production of The Taming of the Shrew. With a new frame, penned by Second City writer Ron West, set in 1919 on the eye of the vote for women's suffrage in the United States, the production engaged the students with a distinctly American interpretation of Shakespeare's classic. Our education team was pleased to welcome these international visitors to our artistic home in the heart of Chicago.



Before starting rehearsals for Red Velvet, actor Dion Johnstone visited the Art Institute of Chicago to meet Ira Aldridge, in oil on canvas. Painted by English portraiture artist John Philip Simpson in 1827, the portrait featuring Aldridge is titled The Captive Slave. When first exhibited, this heroic image of a manacled man was a bold statement by the English artist at a time when the slave trade remained a deeply controversial moral and political issue. Six years later, Parliament would pass the Slavery Abolition Act, which subsequently prohibited the trading of slaves through the British colonies. For his painting, Simpson posed his subject with an expressive upward gaze, conveying a yearning for freedom in a work of art that spoke to its historical moment and, at the same time, transcended it-much as did Aldridge's groundbreaking portrayal of Othello on London's West End in 1833.

From left: Jenn Thompson; Kerry James Marshall's mural; Director of Education, Marilyn J Halperin, welcomes students to *The Taming of the Shrew*; Dion Johnstone vists *The Captive Slave* at the Art Institute of Chicago. photo by Michael Brosilow.

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A Conversation with the Director



Visit chicagoshakes.com to explore more ideas and stories behind the art on CST's stages.

RED VELVET

- BY LOLITA CHAKRABARTI
- DIRECTED BY GARY GRIFFIN
- COURTYARD THEATER
- DECEMBER 1, 2017-JANUARY 21, 2018
- **3**12.595.5600
- WWW.CHICAGOSHAKES.COM



Chicago Shakespeare Theater Associate Artistic Director Gary Griffin

s he and the *Red Velvet* cast A launched their rehearsal process, CST Associate Artistic **Director Gary Griffin met with** Chicago Shakespeare staff to discuss his thoughts about the play.

Many don't know the history of Ira Aldridge-even those of us who work in the theater.

I first heard of Ira Aldridge during a class in graduate school where we studied the history of acting and major actors of the past 500 years. Aldridge was regarded as a major nineteenth-century Shakespearean actor—and the first African American actor to play Othello. Reading Lolita Chakrabarti's play was the first I learned of the controversy surrounding his debut as Othello at Covent Garden in London. I was fascinated to discover that it was the authentic truth of his performance that caused so much discomfort. Many critics were opposed to his portrayal; most could not see past his race and the emotional force of his performance. He only played two performances in London and was dismissed. For the rest of his career he toured extensively and successfully but, except for a single appearance at the Lyceum, he never played London again. I am looking forward to sharing his story with our audiences because I believe it will have lasting power—and I would wish that they will never see Othello in the same way again.



These debates and the struggle to achieve progress have been ongoing for a very long time, and involve a timeless discussion of politics and art.

What about this story resonates with us right now?

Today's theater industry is engaged in challenging discussions regarding diversity and inclusion. What I find fascinating in the history that Lolita Chakrabarti has interwoven here is that these debates and the struggle to achieve progress have been ongoing for a very long time, and involve a timeless discussion of politics and art. It's compelling to watch these characters find themselves on different sides of the debate at different times.

Red Velvet takes place at the same time that England is debating the abolition of slavery. The actors have to pass

through protests in the streets in order to get into their theater. And there are wildly different political points of view among them, just as there are outside the theater doors. The discomfort with the subject of race makes introducing an African American Othello at this moment especially charged.

We believe that theater and the arts in general are progressive and will lead us through change. Red Velvet exposes the internal struggle that artists face. As the debate gets heated, sometimes one's true nature is revealed, and unconscious biases and fears are laid bare. Our country has been struggling with our desire for, and fear of, progressive change. I think this play provides a microcosm of our human struggle with race and entitlement and the question of our readiness to explore cultural change.

Do you think that a story like this one, based in history, lands differently?

I have recently directed several plays that are based on actual people. A common thread in their stories is the injustice and inhumanity that occurs when a person's race or sexuality becomes a symbol for a community's intolerance. The depth of a community's prejudice is exposed, and the fear of tolerance ignites violence. Learning about the actual stories. I feel a different level of responsibility to deliver a production that understands the challenges faced by each of the characters. There is much passionate debate in Red Velvet. I love debates on >>

stage because somehow in the theater I feel freer to explore more sides of an issue—especially the ones I most disagree with—and I love the challenge of finding three-dimensional life in characters I am normally offended by.

The depth of a community's prejudice is exposed, and the fear of tolerance ignites violence.

Ira Aldridge represented a radical change in theater practice—not only because of his skin but also in his style of performance.

Red Velvet provides us a window into nineteenth-century acting styles, when Aldridge's more progressive approach to Shakespeare comes into conflict with the approach by Edmund Kean's company of actors with whom he would play Othello. The general style was variations on what is known as "Teapot" acting, a name derived

from the physical look of the actor, with one hand on the waist and the other arm extended in proclamation. Teapot-style actors generally faced front and delivered their lines directly to the audience. They were very disciplined about accuracy with verse and poetry. Aldridge, by contrast, favored more interaction and physical contact. The physical violence Aldridge displayed was considered extreme and prevented the audience from the escapist experience they wanted in a night of theater. Over time Aldridge was celebrated for his power, but at first London audiences were shocked. We're still debating approaches to Shakespeare, both regarding the actors' delivery of the text and the degree to which directors and productions are concept-driven. The debates in Lolita's play I find fascinating—she imagines these artists' challenges in 1833 and, at the same time, discovers the timeless issues we are still discussing as we try to advance Shakespeare performance today.

What is it that has most surprised you about the script?

Lolita's creation of *Red Velvet* feels like a very personal one on many levels. I was aware that the play had originally starred her husband, Adrian Lester, an actor I greatly admire, and I was curious about her take on the story. As I read scene after scene and discovered the depth and complexity and passion in the writing, I became fascinated by what felt like such a fresh and modern take on this story. There was absolutely nothing separating us from the play's central story and debates. This was writing that was fearless. Through powerful language and vivid, complex characters, Lolita has created a world completely in sync with the classical theater in which they performed. I also love the intimacy and specificity she crafts with the female characters in Ira's life. There are several key scenes that explore these relationships—with actress Ellen Tree, his wife Margaret, the Polish journalist Halina, and Connie, a Jamaican maid who works at the theater. These moments are so powerful as they reveal Ira's insecurities—a man who has succeeded by being uncompromising—and his vulnerability. But they also reveal his love and respect for these women as equal partners, both on stage and off.



IT'S THE MAGIC

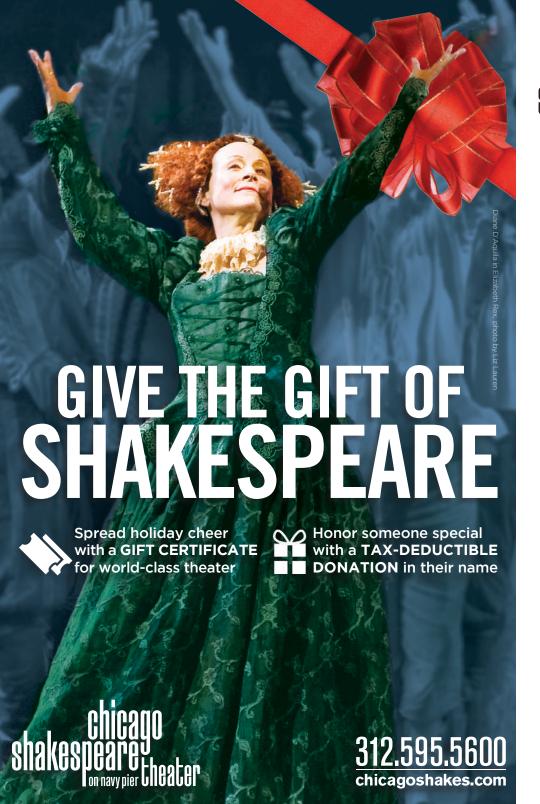
that went into making it happen.



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presents

RED VELVET

by LOLITA CHAKRABARTI

Scenic Design SCOTT M. DAVIS

Costume Design MARA BLUMENFELD

Lighting Design CHRISTINE BINDER

Sound Design CHRISTOPHER KRIZ Wig & Make-up Design RICHARD JARVIE

Original Music JENNY GIERING

Fight Choreographer DAVID WOOLLEY

Dialect Coach **EVA BRENEMAN**

Casting BOB MASON Production Stage Manager **DEBORAH ACKER**

directed by **GARY GRIFFIN**

Red Velvet received its world premiere at the Tricycle Theatre, London on October 11, 2012. The production was revived and opened at the Tricycle Theatre, London, on January 23, 2014 before making its American Premiere at St. Ann's Warehouse, New York on March 25, 2014.

Red Velvet is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

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Gayle and Glenn R. Tilles

Additional support provided by The Mary and Nick Babson Fund to Support Chicago Actors **ComEd** is the official lighting design sponsor of Chicago Shakespeare Theater.

Jenny Giering is the recipient of the Bob Tilles Music Chair, supported by the Gayle and Glenn R. Tilles Music Fund.

Welcome. If we can help accommodate you during your visit, please speak with our House Manager. Please note that flashing lights and haze may be used during this performance. Also, actors will make entrances and exits throughout the theater. For your safety, we ask that you keep aisles and doorways clear. We request that you refrain from taking any photography and other video or audio recordings of the production.

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Playgoer's Guide

THE STORY

The year is 1867. In a theater dressing room in Lodz, Poland, Ira Aldridge prepares to perform his King Lear when the intrusion of a young reporter, determined to get her story, forces the sixty-year-old actor to look back upon the defining moment of his career, more than thirty years before.

Riots erupt in London's streets as Parliament prepares to vote in 1833 on abolishing slavery throughout the British colonies. On the stage at Covent Garden's world-renowned Theatre Royal, Edmund Kean, the greatest classical actor of the age, plays Othello until one night he collapses onstage. Charles Kean, Edmund's son and "presumptive heir," anticipates stepping into his father's role. But the theater's manager, Pierre Laporte, proposes instead an outside actor who has played Othello to much acclaim throughout the provinces; moments later, Ira Aldridge enters the room to rehearse with his fellow cast members—sight unseen by all but Pierre. Aldridge's Othello is riveting, but the reactions from his company members and London's theater critics are as complex as they are divisive. And the choice made by a friend and colleague changes the course of Aldridge's life.

THE LIFE OF IRA ALDRIDGE

When Ira Frederick Aldridge was born, the son of free parents, in New York City in 1807, slavery was legal in the state of New York. His father was a straw merchant and lay preacher. At the age of thirteen, Ira began what was likely just two years of formal schooling at one of New York's African Free Schools, founded to educate the children of slaves and the city's free-born population. Among his jobs growing up, he ran errands for the English actor Henry Wallack. His father wanted his son to pursue a religious career, but Ira had discovered his passion for the theater. After performing at New York's African Grove Theatre, at seventeen he sailed to England in 1824 to seek roles unavailable to him in America. He was eighteen when he secured his first roles on London's stages performing in traditionally black roles, and married an Englishwoman named Margaret Gill. Two years later, Aldridge began his extensive touring career throughout the British provinces.

When Edmund Kean—the most renowned tragedian of his era—in 1833 collapsed onstage as he performed Othello, the twenty-five-year-old Aldridge was asked to step into the role he had played with much success in the provinces. But this time his platform was one of London's most prestigious theaters, the Royal Coburg in Covent Garden. Working alongside the great actors of London's stage, including Ellen Tree as Desdemona, it was the opportunity of a lifetime. Opinions differed widely among London's critics, but most reviews revealed their authors' racial prejudices, citing Aldridge's physical features, lack of intellectual understanding, unusual accent and pronunciation, and his interactions with white actors, as

reasons to condemn his performance as unworthy of the Convent Garden stage. The production was cancelled following Aldridge's first two performances.

Aldridge resumed his touring across England, and later launched his first continental tour in 1852, becoming one of the most renowned and celebrated actors of the nineteenth century. Aldridge was met with critical success across Europe, becoming one of the highest-paid actors in the world at the time. After his wife died in 1864, he married Amanda von Brandt, a Swedish woman and the mother of his three children.

Aldridge became known across the Continent for other great Shakespearean roles, as well, including Shylock, Macbeth and, in later years, King Lear. As was customary at the time, he played what were held as traditionally white roles in "whiteface." He was the first to perform Shakespeare in Serbia and in parts of Russia, where his performances were so powerful that they provoked uprisings, and led to several Shakespeare texts being banned entirely. Performing the role of Aaron, he restored one of Shakespeare's early works, *Titus Andronicus*, to the stage for the first time in 128 years. He was acclaimed for his performances in non-Shakespearean plays too, including *A Slave's Revenge*, *The Padlock*, *The Virginian Mummy*, *The Slave*, and *The Castle Slave*. In 1867, at the age of sixty and suffering from a lung infection, Ira Aldridge died in Lodz, Poland, where he was given a state funeral. He never returned to America after leaving his birthplace more than forty years before.







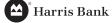
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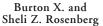
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Cast (in order of appearance)

Halina Casimir

Terence

Connie

Betty Lovell

Ira Aldridge

Bernard Ward

Henry Forester

Charles Kean

Ellen Tree

Pierre LaPorte

Margaret Aldridge

ANNIE PURCELL* JÜRGEN HOOPER*

RODERICK PEEPLES*

DION JOHNSTONE*

TIFFANY RENEE JOHNSON

BRI SUDIA*

RODERICK PEEPLES*

JÜRGEN HOOPER* MICHAEL HAYDEN*

CHAON CROSS*

GREG MATTHEW ANDERSON*

ANNIE PURCELL*

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance: Luke Daigle for Pierre LaPorte: Brandon Greenhouse for Ira Aldridge; Sasha Kostryko for Halina/Margaret Aldridge; Jeff Parker* for Bernard Ward/ Terence, Charles Kean; Andrew Rathgeber for Casimir/Henry Forester; Eliza Stoughton for Betty Lovell, Ellen Tree; and Candace Thomas for Connie.

Production Stage Manager

Stage Manager (beginning January 9)

Assistant Stage Manager

DEBORAH ACKER* KEVIN GREGORY DWYER*

SAMMY BROWN*

*denotes member of Actors' Equity Association.

Chicago Shakespeare productions are made possible in part by the Illinois Arts Council Agency and an IncentOvate Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

Chicago Shakespeare is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group, Inc., the national service organization of non-profit theaters; National Alliance for Musical Theatre; Shakespeare Theatre Association; Arts Alliance Illinois; the League of Chicago Theatres; and Ingenuity, Inc.

Profiles



GREG MATTHEW ANDERSON (Pierre LaPorte) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Other Chicago credits include: Twist Your Dickens, Rock 'n' Roll (Goodman

Theatre); Arcadia, Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf (Writers Theatre); The City of Conversation, The Mousetrap, Sense and Sensibility (Northlight Theatre); Sons of the Prophet, Oklahoma! (American Theater Company): Arcadia (Court Theatre); Power, The Best Man, Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Night and Day, The Importance of Being Earnest, Chesapeake, Northanger Abbey, Travesties, and Born Yesterday (Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, where he is a member of the core ensemble). Television credits include: Chicago P.D. Chicago Fire, Betrayal, The Playboy Club, Underemployed, The Chicago Code, Detroit 187, and the pilot Matadors. Film credits include: Transformers: Age of Extinction. The Middle Distance. Game Day, and Older Children. Mr. Anderson is a graduate of Duke University's Department of Theater Studies.



CHAON CROSS

(Ellen Tree) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: Celia in As You Like It, Sybil in Private Lives, Imogen in Cymbeline, Cressida

in Troilus and Cressida, Emilia in The Two Noble Kinsmen, and Bianca in The Taming of the Shrew. Other Chicago credits include: Macbeth (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Life Sucks, Brothers Karamazov (Lookingglass Theatre Company); The Hard Problem, One Man Two Guvnors, Proof, Uncle Vanya, The Glass Menagerie, Scapin, The Romance Cycle, Phèdre (Court Theatre); Cyrano (Court Theatre and Redmoon); Grace (Northlight Theatre); The Wheel, and The Cherry Orchard (Steppenwolf Theatre Company). Regional credits include Lady Windermere in Lady Windermere's Fan (Milwaukee Repertory Theater) and Elizabeth Bennett in Pride and Prejudice (The Cleveland Playhouse). She has also appeared in productions with

Frump Tucker, Shattered Globe Theatre, TimeLine Theatre Company, Theatre at the Center, First Folio Theatre, and TheatreHikes. Television credits include: *The Exorcist* (FOX), *Chicago Fire* (NBC), *Boss* (Starz), and *Detroit 1-8-7* (ABC). Film credits include *Widows* (2018) and *My Dog Skip* (Warner Bros). Before moving to Chicago, Ms. Cross toured the US and Canada for two years with American Shakespeare Center.



MICHAEL HAYDEN

(Charles Kean) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Broadway credits include: Billy Bigelow in the Royal National/Lincoln Center production of Carousel

(Olivier Award nominee); Oscar Rolfe in Judgment at Nuremberg (Tony Award nomination); Cliff in Cabaret (Studio 54); Prince Hal in *Henry IV Parts 1 & 2*, opposite Kevin Kline (Lincoln Center): and Festen (Music Box Theatre), directed by Jack O'Brien. Regional theater credits include: the title roles in Henry V and Richard II, performed in repertory (Shakespeare Theatre Company); Frank in Merrily We Roll Along (The Kennedy Center Sondheim Celebration): and Leontes in A Winter's Tale (The Guthrie Theater). Television credits include: Chris Docnovich in Murder One (ABC), and multiple guest-starring roles on Law & Order: SVU and Law & Order: Cl. Mr. Havden received an award for Best Actor from the American Film Institute for his portrayal of Billy in the independent film Charming Billy.



JÜRGEN HOOPER

(Casimir/Henry Forester) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: The Comedy of Errors, Amadeus, and Short Shakespeare! Romeo

and Juliet. Other Chicago credits include: Life and Limb, Huck Finn (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); Rabbit Hole (Goodman Theatre); Isaac's Eye, The Chosen (Writers Theatre); The Hard Problem (Court Theatre); The Dark at the Top of the Stairs (American Theatre Company); Paradise Lost (TimeLine Theatre Company); and What's Wrong with

Angry? (Circle Theatre—Non-Equity Jeff Award, Best Principal Actor). Broadway credits include Brighton Beach Memoirs. Regional credits include: The Mousetrap, The Game's Afoot (Indiana Repertory Theatre); The Game's Afoot (New Theatre); The Cherry Orchard (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); and Wannamaker's Pursuit (Arden Theatre). Film and television credits include: Chicago Med, Chicago Fire, Crisis (NBC), Suits (USA), and the film Game Day.



TIFFANY RENEE JOHNSON

(Connie) makes her Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Other Chicago credits include: Saint Joan (Poetic Forum Collective/ Greenhouse Theater):

the US premiere of truth and reconciliation (Sideshow Theatre Company); the world premiere of VANYA (or, "That's Life!") (Rasaka Theatre Company); Coming Home (Erasing the Distance); Hairspray (Drury Lane Theatre); and The Nativity (Congo Square Theatre). Regional credits include Race (Next Act Theatre) and The Bluest Eye (Environmental Theatre Space). Television credits include: APB, Embeds, Chicago P.D., and Chicago Fire. Ms. Johnson received her BFA in theatre from Howard University.



DION JOHNSTONE

(Ira Aldridge) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he appeared as Helicanus in Pericles and Marc Antony in Julius Caesar. Regional theater credits

include: Coriolanus in Coriolanus (Red Bull Theater, Off Broadway); Oberon/ Theseus in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare Theatre Company); and nine seasons with the Stratford Festival, with roles including: Othello in Othello, Aaron in Titus Andronicus, Caliban in The Tempest (opposite Christopher Plummer as Prospero), and Tom Robinson in To Kill a Mockingbird. Mr. Johnstone originated the role of Boromir in the world premiere of the musical The Lord of the Rings (Mirvish Productions). Film credits include: Underground Railroad: The William Still Story (PBS) and The X-Files: I Want to Believe. Television credits include: Ties That Bind (UPtv), Stargate SG-1

(Showtime), and Flashpoint (CTV). Mr. Johnstone received a BFA in acting from the University of Alberta and is a graduate of Stratford's Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre. www.dionjohnstone.com



RODERICK PEEPLES

(Terence/Bernard Ward) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: The Heir Apparent, Elizabeth Rex, Hamlet, Pacific

Overtures, The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Richard III, and Short Shakespeare! productions of Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet. Other Chicago credits include: Great Expectations (Silk Road Rising/ Remy Bumppo Theatre Company); The Price (TimeLine Theatre Company); An Inspector Calls, Heroes, The Voysey Inheritance (Remy Bumppo Theatre Company); Oedipus Complex (Goodman Theatre); Lonesome West, The Homecoming, Ghetto (Famous Door Theatre); and Morning Star (Steppenwolf Theatre Company). Regional credits include: Three Sisters, The Crucible, The Open Hand, The Threepenny Opera, Amadeus, Life of Galileo (Clarence Brown Theatre): Moby Dick (Syracuse Stage): Death of a Salesman, The Price, A Moon for the Misbegotten (Madison Repertory Theatre); as well as many roles with Utah Shakespeare Festival. Film credits include: Robert Altman's The Company, Road to Perdition, Novocaine, The Hudsucker Proxy, and Payback. Independent film credits include: Chat, Last Rites of Joe May, Under the City, and Ball in the House. Television credits include: Chicago Med (NBC), Prison Break (FOX), ER (NBC), What About Joan? (ABC), and Early Edition (CBS).



ANNIE PURCELL (Halina/ Margaret Aldridge) makes her Chicago debut at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Broadway credits include: The Coast of Utopia, Dividing the

Estate, and Awake and Sing!. Off-Broadway credits include: Fashions for Men (Mint Theater Company); Illusions (Baryshnikov Arts Center); and Twelfth Night (Fiasco

Theater). Regional credits include: Birthday Candles (Chautauqua Theater Company: New Play Workshop): Measure for Measure. As You Like It (Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, WSJ 2016 Best Performance); Start Down (Alliance Theatre); Awake and Sing! (Huntington Theatre Company); Partners (Actors Theatre/Humana); The Real Thing (Studio Theatre); Ed. Downloaded (Denver Center): Scorched. Endgame/Play (American Conservatory Theater); The Tosca Café (Theatre Calgary/ Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company); In the Next Room... (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis); Elektra (Getty Villa); Mary's Wedding (Portland Stage Company); The House in Hydesville (Geva Theatre Center); and Uncle Vanya (California Shakespeare Theater). Film and television credits include: The Private Lives of Pippa Lee, Louie, and The Black Donnellys. Ms. Purcell is a frequent performer at The 52nd Street Project.



BRI SUDIA (Betty Lovell) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: The Taming of the Shrew, Tug of War: Foreign Fire, The Tempest, Pericles, Road Show,

and the Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of Shakespeare's Greatest Hits. Other Chicago credits include: Wonderful Town (Jeff Award nomination), Ah, Wilderness! (Goodman Theatre); Sweeney Todd (Jeff Award nomination, Paramount Theatre); Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley, Shining Lives (Northlight Theatre); and Far from Heaven (Porchlight Music Theatre). Ms. Sudia holds an MFA in acting from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a degree in sign language interpreting for the deaf.



GARY GRIFFIN

(Director/Associate Artistic Director) has directed more than twenty productions at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, including: King Charles III, Road Show,

Gypsy, Sunday in the Park with George, Follies, As You Like It, Private Lives, Amadeus, Passion, A Flea in Her Ear, A Little Night Music, Pacific Overtures, The Herbal Bed, and the Short Shakespeare! productions of A Midsummer Night's Dream and Romeo and Juliet. Recent Chicago credits include: Fun Home, Hand to God. Never the Sinner (Victory Gardens Theater); and Parade (Writers Theatre). Broadway credits include: Honeymoon in Vegas, The Apple Tree, and The Color Purple. Off-Broadway directing credits include: seven productions for New York City Center Encores!, Saved, Beautiful Thing, and Parade in concert (Lincoln Center). Mr. Griffin has spent seven seasons at the Stratford Festival of Canada, where his credits include: West Side Story, Camelot, and Antony and Cleopatra. At the Lyric Opera of Chicago, his credits include: The Merry Widow. The Mikado, and Oklahoma. Recent regional credits include: Road Show (Signature Theatre); Fiddler on the Roof, Into the Woods (Muny, St. Louis): and Moonshine (Dallas Theater Center). Mr. Griffin has won ten Joseph Jefferson Awards for Directing.

LOLITA CHAKRABARTI (Playwright) is an award-winning actress and writer. She has worked extensively as an actress on stage and screen. Red Velvet is her debut play as a writer (Evening Standard Charles Wintour Award for Most Promising Playwright 2012; Critics Circle Award for Most Promising Playwright 2012; AWA Award for Arts and Culture 2013: WhatsOnStage nominations for London Newcomer of the Year and Best New Play 2012; Olivier Award nomination of Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre 2012). Red Velvet premiered in 2012 at the Tricycle Theatre, London, where it returned in 2014 before transferring to St. Ann's Warehouse, New York. She also wrote Last Seen - Joy for The Almeida Theatre and a five-part adaptation of The Goddess for BBC Radio 4. Ms. Chakrabarti runs Lesata Productions with Rosa Maggiora and Adrian Lester.

SCOTT M. DAVIS (Scenic Designer) has designed over twenty productions for Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Madagascar, Shakespeare in Love, Book of Joseph, King Charles III, Tug of War: Civil Strife and Foreign Fire, A Q Brothers' Christmas Carol, Ride the Cyclone, The Little Mermaid, Pericles, Road Show, Shrek the Musical, Othello: The Remix (CST and international tour), Cadre (at CST and on tour to South Africa, Edinburgh, and Vancouver), Beauty and the Beast, Murder for Two, and Short

Shakespeare! productions of Twelfth Night, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, and Macbeth, Other Chicago credits include productions with: Court Theatre, Paramount Theater, Steppenwolf Garage, Drury Lane Theatre, Marriott Theater, Northlight Theatre, and Windy City Playhouse. Off-Broadway credits include Ride the Cyclone (MCC Theater) and Othello: The Remix (Westside Theatre). Regional credits include productions with: Signature Theatre, Children's Theater Company, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Asolo Repertory Theatre, and Walnut Street Theatre. Mr. Davis is co-founder of the Chicago-based design firm Aether and Nyx. www.scottadamdavis.com

MARA BLUMENFELD (Costume Designer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare for her twelfth production, where her credits include: King Charles III, Road Show, Sunday in the Park with George (2002, 2012), A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, A Flea in Her Ear (Jeff Award), A Little Night Music, Pacific Overtures, and Short Shakespeare! productions of Romeo and Juliet (2003) and A Midsummer Night's Dream (2001-2003). Other Chicago credits include productions with: Goodman Theatre. Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Court Theatre, Writers Theatre, and Lookingglass Theatre Company (ensemble member), Her New York credits include: Metamorphoses (Circle in the Square Theatre, Second Stage Theater); The Glorious Ones (Lincoln Center); The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci (Second Stage Theater); Measure for Measure (Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival); and Homebody/ Kabul (Brooklyn Academy of Music). Opera credits include: Rusalka, Lucia di Lammermoor, and La Sonnambula (Metropolitan Opera); and The Merry Widow (Lyric Opera of Chicago). Ms. Blumenfeld is the recipient of four Joseph Jefferson Awards, and was honored as the 2012 recipient of the Michael Merritt Award.

CHRISTINE BINDER (Lighting Designer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: The Heir Apparent, Follies, Hecuba, and The Herbal Bed. Other Chicago credits include: Parade (Writers Theatre); Bright Half Life (About Face Theatre); 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Plantation (Lookingglass Theatre Company, upcoming); and productions with

Victory Gardens Theater, Court Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and Goodman Theatre. Her regional credits include: The Agitators (Geva Theatre Center, upcoming), and productions with Indiana Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Opera credits include: The Pearl Fishers (Tulsa Opera); and productions with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Opera Theater, San Francisco Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, New York City Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève, and Houston Grand Opera. Ms. Binder is the head of lighting design at The Theatre School at DePaul University.

CHRISTOPHER KRIZ (Sound Designer) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Chicago credits include: The Magic Play, Carlyle (Goodman Theatre); Constellations, Monster (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); Roz and Ray, Hand to God, The House That Will Not Stand (Victory Gardens Theater); Gem of the Ocean (Court Theatre); Paradise Blue, Sunset Baby (TimeLine Theatre Company); Born Yesterday, Pygmalion, The Life of Galileo (Remy Bumppo Theatre Company); Silent Sky, Captain Blood (First Folio Theatre); Pilgrims, A Life Extra Ordinary, Good for Otto (The Gift Theatre). The Columnist (American Blues Theatre); Bright Half Life, and The Temperamentals (About Face Theatre). Regional credits include: Roz and Ray (Seattle Repertory Theatre); Sticky Traps (Kansas City Repertory Theatre): and many summer seasons at Peninsula Players. Mr. Kriz has received fourteen Jeff Award nominations and three Jeff Awards, most recently winning for The Grapes of Wrath (The Gift Theatre Company). Recently, Lifeline Theatre produced Mr. Kriz's new musical, Soon I Will Be Invincible. www.christopherkriz.com

RICHARD JARVIE (Wig and Make-up Design) has designed wigs and make-up at Chicago Shakespeare Theater for: The Taming of the Shrew, Madagascar, Shakespeare in the Parks: Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare in Love, Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet, Love's Labor's Lost, King Charles III; the inaugural season of Chicago Shakespeare on Navy Pier; and many productions at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts. Mr. Jarvie spent twenty-eight years with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, eleven of them as the wig master and make-up designer.

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Other Chicago credits include productions with: Goodman Theatre, Court Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook, Regional and international credits include productions with: the Tom Patterson Theatre in Stratford, Ontario (supervisor of wigs and make-up); Guthrie Theater (wig master); Alliance Theatre; and McCarter Theatre. Opera credits include productions with: The Atlanta Opera, San Francisco Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Chicago Opera Theater, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and the Spoleto Festivals of Charleston, South Carolina, and Italy.

JENNY GIERING (Original Music) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: As You Like It (incidental score): Elizabeth Rex (incidental score): and current commission Summerland (book and lyrics by Sean Barry). Ms. Giering's current commissions also include Alice Bliss (book by Karen Hartman, lyrics by Adam Gwon, directed by Mark Brokaw) for Playwrights Horizons. Ms. Giering's scores include: The Mistress Cycle; Crossing Brooklyn (produced by the Transport Group - Kleban Award for best libretto); Alice Unwrapped (commissioned by Premieres, Inc); and Saint-Ex (2011 world premiere at Weston Playhouse Theater Company, Weston VT, Weston Playhouse New Musical Award, ASCAP/Dreamworks Musical Theater Workshop, Sundance's White Oak Workshop). Incidental scores include *The Tempest* (Shakespeare Theatre Company) and Silent Sky (Theaterworks/ Palo Alto). She is working on a one-woman show about her battle with chronic illness, called What We Leave Behind, which has received development support from Sundance Institute's Theatre Makers Residency and Rhinebeck Writers' Retreat. www.iennvaierina.com

DAVID WOOLLEY (Fight Choreographer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, Peter Pan, Henry V, Antony and Cleopatra, Cymbeline, King John, Troilus and Cressida, Macbeth, and Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream. Other Chicago credits include: Hand to God (Victory Gardens Theater): Feathers and Teeth (Goodman Theatre); and A Comedical Tragedy for Mister Punch (The House Theatre of Chicago). Off-Broadway credits include

The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity (Second Stage Theater) and Edmond (Provincetown Playhouse). Regional credits include: The Three Musketeers and Henry V (Utah Shakespeare Festival); The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity (Geffen Playhouse); God of Carnage, Norma and Wanda (Oakland Press Award), and Escanaba in da Moonlight (The Purple Rose Theatre Company). Mr. Woolley is a co-creator and performs as Guido in Dirk & Guido: the Swordsmen!, now in its twenty-eighth year. He is the recipient of two Joseph Jefferson Awards for fight direction. Mr. Woolley is an associate professor and stage combat coordinator at Columbia College Chicago. He is a member of the College of Fight Masters with the Society of American Fight Directors, and a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

EVA BRENEMAN (Dialect Coach) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: Shakespeare in Love, King Charles III, Tug of War: Foreign Fire and Civil Strife, Henry V, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Elizabeth Rex, and The Madness of George III. Recent Chicago credits include: In the Next Room, or the Vibrator Play, A Disappearing Number (TimeLine Theatre Company); The Importance of Being Earnest (Writers Theatre); The Belle of Amherst (Court Theatre); Yasmina's Necklace (Goodman Theatre); Hard Times (Lookingglass Theatre Company); The Compass (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); and By the Water (Northlight Theatre). Regional credits include: The Who and the What (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); three seasons at American Repertory Theater; Love's Labour's Lost (Actor's Theatre of Louisville); Around the World in 80 Days (Center Stage/Kansas City Repertory Theatre); and Mamma Mia! (national tour/ Las Vegas). Ms. Breneman is an associate artist at TimeLine Theatre Company. She received an MA from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and a BFA from NYU.

TYRONE PHILLIPS (Associate Director) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he appeared in King Charles III. Directing credits include: the critically acclaimed Byhalia, Mississippi (remounted to open the Steppenwolf 1700 Theatre); Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea (Illinois

Theatre); Dutchman (Definition Theatre Company); The MLK Project (Writers Theatre); Amuze Bash (Pavement Group); The Tempest, Lord of the Flies, Our Town, and We the People (Niles North Theatre). Assistant directing credits include: TREVOR the musical. Parade, and The Mystery of Love and Sex (Writers Theatre). Mr. Phillips is a graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He also studied abroad at Shakespeare's Globe and was an emerging professional resident at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, where he worked on Assassins, A Christmas Carol, A Raisin in the Sun. The Mountaintop, and Clybourne Park. Mr. Phillips was named one of the Chicago Tribune's "Hot New Faces of 2015" and Newcity's "Players 2016: The Fifty People Who Really Perform for Chicago." He is the founding artistic director of Chicago's Definition Theatre Company.

DEBORAH ACKER (Production Stage Manager) has stage managed the past twenty-eight seasons at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Other stage management credits include: Puttin' on the Ritz (National Jewish Theater): Six Degrees of Separation, Driving Miss Daisy, I'm Not Rappaport (Briar Street Theatre): The Nerd (Royal George Theatre); and A...Mv Name Is Alice (Ivanhoe Theatre). She has production managed extensively throughout Chicago, and has also provided lighting designs for: the Apollo Theatre, Candlelight Dinner Playhouse, Chicago Shakespeare Theater's Team Shakespeare, the Museum of Science and Industry. Some Like It Cole (tour), and Pump Boys and Dinettes in Branson, Missouri,

KEVIN GREGORY DWYER (Stage Manager, beginning January 9) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Q Brothers Christmas Carol, Madagascar, King Charles III, Othello, Amarillo, and Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet. Other Chicago credits include: This Is Our Youth, Leveling Up, Lord of the Flies, I'll Get You Back Again (Steppenwolf Theatre Company First Look 2015): and Dutchman/TRANSit (American Blues Theater). National tour credits include the first and second national tours of The Book of Mormon. Regional credits include: The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Coriolanus (Commonwealth Shakespeare

Company); Betrayal, Private Lives, Captors (Huntington Theatre Company); Shooting Star and The K of D, an urban legend (Adirondack Theatre Festival), Mr. Dwver received his BA in stage/production management from Emerson College.

SAMMY BROWN (Assistant Stage Manager) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: the Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks productions of Romeo and Juliet (stage manager) and Twelfth Night (assistant stage manager); The Book of Joseph (assistant stage manager); and Ride the Cyclone (running crew). Off-Broadway credits include Summer Valley Fair (Theatre 3, NYMF) and The Old Man and the Old Moon (The New Victory Theater). Regional credits include productions with: South Coast Repertory, Laguna Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Norwegian Cruise Line, and Mill Mountain Theatre, Mr. Brown received a BS in stage management from the University of Evansville and an MFA in drama from the University of California, Irvine.

BOB MASON (Artistic Associate/Casting Director) is in his eighteenth season as CST's casting director, where his credits include over one hundred productions and thirty-two plays in Shakespeare's canon. In addition to numerous productions with Barbara Gaines, other productions of note include: a host of Sondheim musicals directed by Gary Griffin; Rose Rage: Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3, directed by Edward Hall; and The Molière Comedies, directed by Brian Bedford. He recently directed and co-created Shakespeare Tonight! with Beckie Menzie, as part of CST's Shakespeare 400 Chicago festival. Prior to casting, Mr. Mason enjoyed a career as a Jeff Award-winning actor and singer, and has been a visiting educator for the School at Steppenwolf, Acting Studio Chicago, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Northwestern University.

RICK BOYNTON (Creative Producer) focuses on current and future artistic planning and production, as well as the development of all new plays, musicals and adaptations for CST. Projects include: The Book of Joseph. Ride the Cyclone (CST, MCC, upcoming at 5th Avenue/ ACT), Sense and Sensibility (CST, Old Globe), Cadre (co-director) (CST, Johannesburg, Grahamstown, Edinburgh,

Vancouver), Othello: The Remix (CST, London, Germany, Edinburgh, South Korea, New York), Funk It Up About Nothin' (CST, Edinburgh, Australian tour, London), A Flea in Her Ear (CST, Williamstown Theatre Festival), The Three Musketeers (CST, Boston, London), The Emperor's New Clothes, The Adventures of Pinocchio, Murder for Two (CST, New York), and The Feast: an intimate Tempest (in collaboration with Redmoon). Former artistic director of the Marriott Theatre and multiple Jeff Award-winning actor. he has starred in productions nationally, including CST's production of A Flea in Her Ear as Camille (Jeff Award, After Dark Award). As casting director/associate at Jane Alderman Casting, projects included: the television series Early Edition, Missing Persons, Untouchables and ER; the films While You Were Sleeping and Hoodlum, among others: and numerous national tours. Mr. Boynton has lectured at his alma mater Northwestern University, and is the former president of the board of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre.



BARBARA GAINES

(Artistic Director/Carl and Marilvnn Thoma Endowed Chair) founded Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where she has directed nearly fifty productions of

Shakespeare's plays. Honors include: the 2008 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre; the prestigious Honorary OBE (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in recognition of her contributions strengthening British-American cultural relations: and Joseph Jefferson Awards for Best Production (Hamlet, Cymbeline, King Lear and The Comedy of Errors), and for Best Director (Cymbeline, King Lear and The Comedy of Errors). Ms. Gaines has directed at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratfordon-Avon, Lyric Opera of Chicago and The Old Globe in San Diego. As the cornerstone production of Shakespeare 400 Chicago, the 2016 international celebration of Shakespeare's legacy, she created a world premiere Shakespeare history cycle, Tug of War, including the rarely staged Edward III. Ms. Gaines received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Birmingham (UK), the University Club of Chicago's Cultural Award, the Public Humanities Award from the Illinois Humanities Council.



CRISS HENDERSON

(Executive Director) has produced Chicago Shakespeare Theater's past twenty-eight seasons, and developed the citywide, yearlong celebration through

2016 of Shakespeare's legacy. Shakespeare 400 Chicago. Under his leadership, CST has become one of the nation's leading regional theaters and one of Chicago's most celebrated cultural organizations, honored with the 2008 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, as well as multiple Laurence Olivier and Joseph Jefferson Awards. Mr. Henderson has garnered multiple honors, including: the 2013 Cultural Innovation Award from the Chicago Innovation Awards; the Arts Administrator of the Year by Arts Management Magazine at the Kennedy Center and the Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Minister of Culture of France. He was named among the top 40 business people under the age of 40 in Crain's Chicago Business. He serves as president of the Producers' Association of Chicago-area Theaters and is director of the MFA/Arts Leadership Program, a two-year graduate-level curriculum in arts management training created through a joint partnership between Chicago Shakespeare Theater and The Theatre School at DePaul University.

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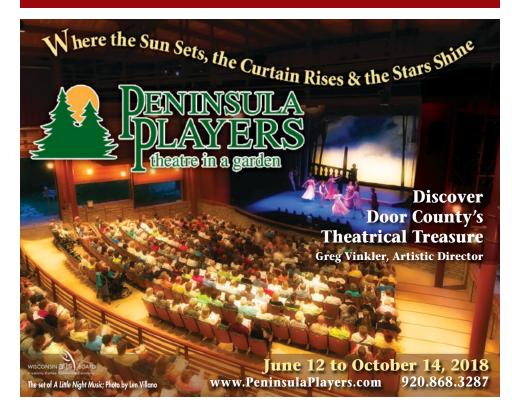


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Introduction

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RED VELVET

- BY LOLITA CHAKRABARTI
- DIRECTED BY GARY GRIFFIN
- COURTYARD THEATER
- DECEMBER 1, 2017– JANUARY 21, 2018
- **3**12.595.5600
- WWW.CHICAGOSHAKES.COM



Ayanna Thompson, George Washington University

©Ayanna Thompson, Introduction to Red Velvet by Lolita Chakrabarti, Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. In Lolita Chakrabarti's *Red Velvet*, Ira Aldridge muses that there is "something about velvet—a deep promise of what's to come, the sweat of others embedded in the pile. A crushed map of who was here folded in." Chakrabarti's play functions as the velvet for our collective memory, reminding us exactly who is folded into the history of Shakespearean performance. While many assume that the history of black actors performing Shakespearean roles began with Paul Robeson in the early twentieth century (including a recent exhibition at a well-established research library), Ira Aldridge beat Robeson to that claim by over 100 years. . . .

So why is Ira Aldridge's history largely forgotten? Why do we not have theatres named after him on Broadway and in the West End? Why aren't there any performing arts schools and/or major performance awards in his honor? Why has his story been a footnote for, instead of being part of the body of, the history of Shakespearean performance? Well, to begin, Aldridge's story does not fit easily within the familiar refrain that Shakespeare is for everyone. Aldridge's story, in fact, forces us to confront the fact that while we may want Shakespeare to be for everyone, all too often Shakespeare has been used as a gatekeeper; that is, a barrier used to exclude and subjugate people of color.

Aldridge moved to England at seventeen because there were no other opportunities to perform Shakespeare in New York. The African Grove Theatre had come upon hard times—including riots from white mobs who were protesting The Grove's 1822 production of *Richard III* because it was drawing audiences away from an all-white production of the same play—and black actors could not he hired by white companies in the US in the 1820s (remember, this was forty years *before* the start of the Civil War!).



While Aldridge hoped that Shakespeare would be his vehicle to success in London and then back again in New York, he was pushed to the British provinces and Eastern Europe because the major theatres in London were closed to him. Aldridge reached a level of fame and financial security that was virtually unknown to free blacks at the time, but he could not achieve this fame in New York or London; instead, he was a star in Warsaw, Kiev, and Moscow. While he was celebrated by European artists like Richard Wagner, Théophile Gautier, and Taras Shevchenko, he was also reviled and mocked by theatre critics in New York and London. In other words, Aldridge's story is not one of unqualified Shakespearean uplift. . . .

Shakespearean performance is never race neutral; it is always racialized.

If Aldridge's history does not fit so neatly into our typical narrative about Shakespeare as the universal up-lifter and door-opener, what can we recover if we are urged to remember it as Chakrabarti invites us to do through *Red Velvet*? First, Aldridge's history allows us to ponder how a Shakespearean

performance is a racialized performance. That is to say, *Red Velvet* reminds us through its many poignant moments that a Shakespearean performance is never race neutral; it is always racialized. While this is obvious when we hear the characters discuss Edmund Kean's "transformation" into Othello through the use of makeup ("a small ... physically ... challenged aging man, to see him become a warrior Moor ... is an art, isn't it?"), *Red Velvet* also offers more circumspect moments such as the debates about what counts as "natural" behavior and/or acting for the black American Aldridge.

Likewise, the play's conclusion, in which Aldridge applies whiteface makeup in order to play King Lear, allows us to ponder how racialized performances are always historically contingent. King Lear's race, after all, has no bearing on the play itself, and yet it did for Aldridge's nineteenth-century audience. Does it still for us today in the twenty-first century? Why are there so few black Hamlets and Lears? Or, to tackle the question from a different angle, why are there so many black witches in *Macbeth* and black Patrocluses in *Troilus and Cressida? Red Velvet* invites us to ponder what Shakespearean



glass ceilings have been handed down to us from previous generations and how many we have created for our own post-millennial generation. . . .

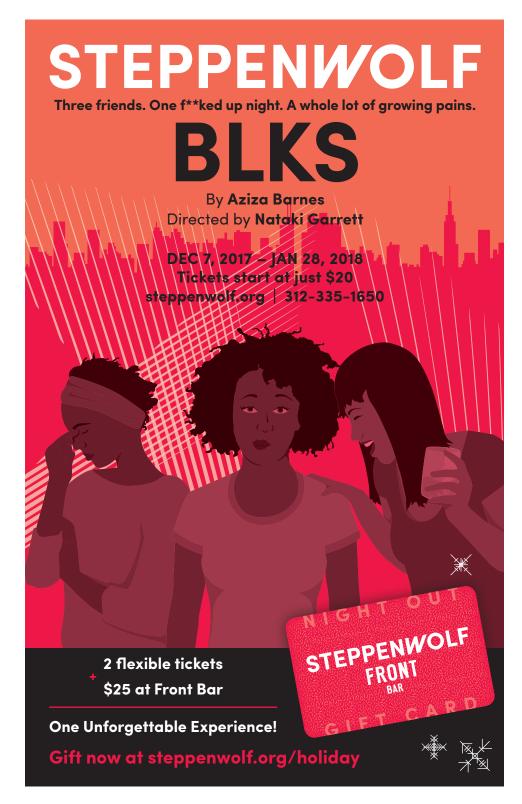
Red Velvet invites
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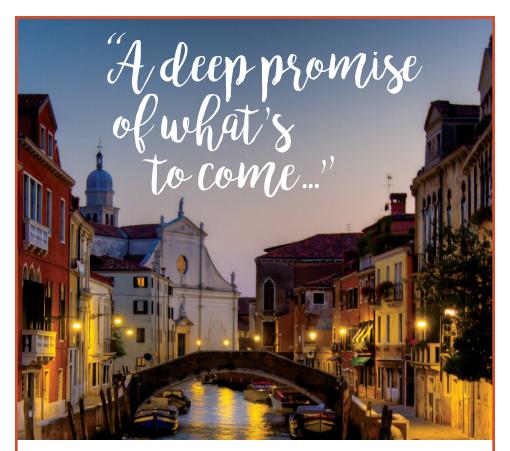
Chakrabarti's play allows us to interrogate our society's historical amnesia about the long history of black actors who have grappled with Shakespeare. I use the verb grappled because it has not always been an easy encounter. While Aldridge states, "That's the beauty of Shakespeare—he unnerves you," Chakrabarti allows us to experience how the presence of an actor of color can unnerve our notions of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's plays are strong, powerful, moving, and beautiful, but the presence of actors of color

in them can make them seem politicized. This is precisely what Charles Kean bemoans in *Red Velvet*; he wants theatre to be an art that allows one "to get away from reality." Frequently, political theatre is discussed as if it is the antithesis of aesthetic theatre: one is about politics, the other (higher and true form) art. As *Red Velvet*, the theatrical version of the "crushed map of who was folded" into our history of Shakespearean performance, reminds us, however, reality is never static but dynamic; and political theatre—one which enables discussions about history, collective memory, and selective amnesia—can be beautiful, moving, and Shakespearean. Here's to Chakrabarti for making that reality so compelling!

Copies of Lolita Chakrabarti's Red Velvet, with Ms. Thompson's introduction (exerpted here), are available for purchase in the Theater's lobby.





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