



AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE

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AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE ANNOUNCES ITS 2019 SEASON AND A NEW CORE COMPANY MEMBER

The Theatre will celebrate its 40th birthday with Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Gunderson & Wilson in the Hill Theatre

SPRING GREEN, WIS: American Players Theatre (APT) is excited to announce its 40th summer season, which will run June 8 to October 6, 2019. A ninth show will run late October to November in the Touchstone Theatre.

In APT's flagship outdoor amphitheater, William Shakespeare will start the season with two plays: *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*. Also playing on the Hill: *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith, August Wilson's *Fences* and Lauren Gunderson's charming comedy, *The Book of Will*.

The 200-seat indoor Touchstone Theatre will host *The Man of Destiny* by George Bernard Shaw, *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* by Tennessee Williams and Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. The fall production will be *A Doll's House, Part 2* by Lucas Hnath.

Artistic Director Brenda DeVita said, "We are very excited about the way this season has come together. It has all the elements that our artists excel in so beautifully. The Touchstone is crammed with great playwrights: Shaw, Tennessee Williams and Ibsen. On the Hill we have two of Shakespeare's most revered works and we've got a hilarious comedy of manners – all in the hands of wonderful directors. We are thrilled to be producing our first August Wilson play next season – his masterpiece, *Fences* – and Lauren Gunderson's *The Book of Will*, which is about the creation of Shakespeare's first folio and feels like it was written for us. As we delve into plays that are considerably newer than anything we've done on the Hill, we will continue to examine this constant conversation we're having about "what makes a classic?" And we're just so thrilled to dive in, and look forward to the joys and growth they'll bring to our company and our audience."

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The 2019 season schedule will be available in early January. Tickets will go on sale to returning patrons on March 4 at 7:00 am online at americanplayers.org, and at 10:00 am via the APT Box Office by phone at 608-588-2361.

Gavin Lawrence Joins the Core Company

In addition to a new season, APT has a new member of the Core Acting Company - Actor Gavin Lawrence, who first joined APT in 2016 (*The African Company Presents Richard III, Arcadia, An Ideal Husband*). Since then, Gavin has been featured as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Dr. Finache in *A Flea in Her Ear* and the *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* company, all in 2017. This past season Gavin played Zach in *Blood Knot*, Escalus in *Measure for Measure* and will be playing Sidney Webb in the upcoming production of *Engaging Shaw*.

In addition to his work at APT, Gavin has been seen Off- Broadway in *Pure Confidence* (AUDELCO AWARD Best Actor). Regional credits include Steppenwolf, Woolly Mammoth, Goodman, Arena Stage, Centerstage, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Denver Center Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Mixed Blood, Guthrie Theatre, Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, First Stage, Milwaukee Rep., Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Kansas City Rep., Florida Studio Theatre, and City Theatre, to name a few. Film and television work include, *Joe Somebody, Justice, Yonondio, Listen; Macbeth, Wine in the Wilderness, Newton's Apple*, and his independent film, *The Promise*. He recently completed his Fox/TCG Resident Actor Fellowship at Baltimore Center Stage

Brenda DeVita said, "Gavin is an extraordinary actor, and we couldn't be more thrilled that he's agreed to join our core company. He is such a leader. In every way. And he is very excited by, and very serious about, making this commitment. We are so, so honored that he's accepted."

Jonathan Smoots, seen this year as Captain Shotover in *Heartbreak House*, became Core Company Emeritus at the end of the 2018 season. This year, Jonathan celebrated his 29th summer with APT, and in 1980 he spoke the very first lines on the Hill Stage when he played Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

APT's Core Acting Company is: Tracy Michelle Arnold, Kelsey Brennan, Nate Burger, Sarah Day, David Daniel, Jim DeVita, Tim Gittings, Gavin Lawrence, Colleen Madden, Brian Mani, Melisa Pereyra, James Ridge and Marcus Truschinski. Jonathan Smoots joins Paul Bentzen in the Emeritus Company.

The 2019 Season, June 8 – October 6

ON THE HILL

Twelfth Night

By William Shakespeare

Directed by John Langs

Shakespeare revisits his favorite themes – twins, mistaken identity and just a little cross-dressing – in *Twelfth Night*. Mourning the loss of her brother, the lovely Olivia has vowed not to accept any suitors, much to the dismay of Duke Orsino, who is intent on wooing her. So intent that he enlists a castaway named Cesario to help him out. Cesario is, in fact, a young woman named Viola who has recently lost her twin brother in an accident at sea. Disguised as a young boy, she agrees to help Orsino win Olivia despite the fact that she herself has fallen for him. And despite *her* vow to remain alone, Olivia quickly develops some strong feelings of her own...for Cesario. Combine that with a subplot that finds the prim Malvolio (who is, surprise! In love with Olivia) locked in a basement by a group of tipsy fools, and you've got the makings of a great Shakespearean comedy. Featuring La Shawn Banks as Feste, Kelsey Brennan as Viola and David Daniel as Malvolio.

She Stoops to Conquer

By Oliver Goldsmith

Directed by Laura Gordon

Wealthy countryman Mr. Hardcastle is hoping to marry off his lovely daughter Kate to a rich suitor. They both set their sights on Charles Marlow, the son of a rich Londoner. When they receive further intelligence on Charles, they discover that he finds women of high society intimidating, and prefers the company of the serving class. So Kate hatches a plan to pose as a maid in hopes of putting Charles at ease and, eventually, marrying him. Of course, in restoration comedy, no scheme goes off as planned, and Kate's results in the kind of uproarious comedy that our company plays so perfectly. Featuring Sarah Day and Josh Krause.

Macbeth

By William Shakespeare

Directed by James DeVita

Our favorite Shakespearean super-villain couple makes their first visit to the Hill in 15 years. Fresh off a great military victory, brave Macbeth returns home to a new title, bestowed upon him by good King Duncan. But after a run-in with a trio of witches, Macbeth thinks he can do better than Thane of Cawdor. With support from his Lady, Macbeth decides that King of Scotland has a nice ring to it. So when Duncan pays a visit, blood begins to spill and it doesn't stop until the searing conclusion. One of the greatest plays in the Bard's arsenal. Featuring Melisa Pereyra as Lady Macbeth and Marcus Truschinski as Macbeth.

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August Wilson's Fences

By August Wilson

Directed by Ron OJ Parson

Troy Maxson is a man with a loving family, and soul full of bittersweet hope. He spends his days working as a garbage collector, Friday afternoons drinking with his friend Bono, and his nights in the arms of Rose, his loving wife of many years. Before Rose, Troy spent time in prison, where he developed a love for baseball, and he believes he could have been a professional if not for the color of his skin. As Troy ruminates on his past and his present, it begins to seem that his regrets may outweigh his happiness, even as his fortunes turn toward the better. A heart-wrenching look at a complex and flawed man, filled with exquisitely drawn characters and August Wilson's stunning poetry. Featuring Gavin Lawrence.

The Book of Will

By Lauren Gunderson

Directed by Tim Ocel

First, a bit of history: You may or may not know that William Shakespeare wrote his plays in pieces, never putting all the parts together until the actors were on stage, for fear of someone stealing his work. But who's to stop people from stealing it after he dies? This is the conundrum faced by the Bard's buddies in *Book of Will*. When a sub-par *Hamlet* rip-off hits a stage near the Globe Theatre, members of Shakespeare's acting troupe, the King's Men, are incensed. To try to put an end to the plagiarism and save Will's works for the ages, they hatch a plan to put it all down on paper, setting them off on a mad chase to find all the bits and pieces to create the First Folio. A funny, charming play about the battle to save a legacy, offering up excerpts of some of the Bard's most beloved writing. Featuring Tracy Michelle Arnold, Sarah Day, Jim DeVita, Colleen Madden, Melisa Pereyra and James Ridge.

IN THE TOUCHSTONE THEATRE

The Man of Destiny

By George Bernard Shaw

Directed by James Bohnen

Just after his victory at the Battle of Lodi, Napoleon Bonaparte is preparing to enjoy his lunch when a lieutenant arrives, telling him the important dispatches he'd been carrying were stolen. Enraged, Napoleon orders him to find the dispatches or be court martialed, when a woman appears with information about the theft. Napoleon is suspicious of her story, and the two embark on a battle of wits – and with Shaw in the byline, you know those wits are witty, indeed – as Napoleon attempts to save face, and the mysterious lady's motives rise to the surface. Featuring James Ridge and Cassia Thompson.

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A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur

By Tennessee Williams

Directed by Robynn Rodriguez

Dorothea shares a St. Louis efficiency with her friend Bodey. Though Bodey has a good heart, Dorothea looks down at her a bit, and is anxious to move out of the small apartment and into a more upscale place with Helena, a colleague with a bit of a haughty air. Dorothea thinks she needs a bigger place to entertain her beau, the principal at the school where she is a teacher, with whom she's recently struck up an affair. A frank and funny story about identity, friendship and aging, featuring a cast of brilliantly drawn female characters. Featuring Tracy Michelle Arnold and Colleen Madden.

A Doll's House

By Henrik Ibsen

Directed by Marti Lyons

2019 will mark the first Ibsen production at APT in 20 years, and we welcome him back with one of his best-known plays. Radical for its day – and ever after – *A Doll's House* gives us a look inside the nuclear family life of Nora and Torvold Helmer. They are well-to-do and, by appearance, happy, preparing to celebrate Christmas as the play begins. It doesn't take long for cracks to appear in the façade as blackmail, lies and love triangles begin to decay the foundations of the Helmer household, leading to a conclusion so shocking for its time that Ibsen was forced to provide an alternate ending. Featuring Kelsey Brennan.

Fall in the Touchstone:

A Doll's House, Part 2

By Lucas Hnath

Directed by Brenda DeVita

15 years after the events that took place in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, we return to the Helmer home to see all the things that have changed, and all the things that haven't. A fast-paced and contemporary sequel that answers all your questions. Featuring Jim DeVita, Sarah Day, Colleen Madden and Melisa Pereyra.

STILL TO COME IN 2018

***Engaging Shaw* begins October 25**

Kidding ourselves. As humans, it may be our greatest skill. That goes for academics and artists; rivals and lovers. And, as it turns out, famous philandering writers like this one, who wrote *Heartbreak House*. But self-deception often comes with a reckoning, and Shaw's comes in the form of Charlotte Payne-Townsend – a whirlwind of wit, beauty and her own notions about love and marriage, thank you very much. There's so much to swoon about, watching clever people fall in love, cheered on by their equally clever friends. It's sparkly fun with a spine of steel and a story immersed in real life. A perfect play for an autumn day. Featuring Tracy Michelle Arnold, Gavin Lawrence, Colleen Madden and James Ridge.

Tickets are on sale now at americanplayers.org or by calling 608-588-2361.

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Winter Words

APT's off-season play-reading series Winter Words – will return to the Touchstone Theatre January through March, 2019. APT will again offer four readings that explore plays that are of interest for future APT seasons. Dates and titles will be announced in December. Tickets will go on sale January 7, and are expected to sell out quickly.

About the Theatre

APT is a professional repertory theater devoted to the great and future classics. It was founded in 1979 and continues to be one of the most popular outdoor classical theaters in the nation.

The Theatre is located in Spring Green, Wis., on 110 acres of hilly woods and meadows above the Wisconsin River. The outdoor amphitheater is built within a natural hollow atop an oak-wooded hill. Under the dome of sky, 1,089 comfortably cushioned seats encircle three sides of the stage. In 2009, APT opened the 200-seat indoor Touchstone Theatre, offering a different type of play and experience

For more information, visit www.americanplayers.org

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