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Contact: Ben Thiem
Director of Member Services
League of Chicago Theatres
(312) 554-9800
ben@chicagoplays.com

CHICAGO THEATERS PRODUCE OVER 110 WORLD PREMIERES IN 2007-08

Chicago theater a center for new work

CHICAGO (June 4, 2008) – As the 2007-08 theater season draws to a close, Chicago's theater community is proving to be a national leader on the new play scene. According to the League of Chicago Theatres, during the 2007-08 season, from August 2007 through the end of June 2008, over 110 world premiere productions and adaptations will be produced on Chicago area stages by over 60 different companies.

Earlier this year, Chicago playwright Tracy Letts won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his acclaimed play *August: Osage County*, which premiered at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago in 2007 and is currently playing on Broadway in New York. Next Theatre in Evanston also made a splash in New York this season with their production of *The Adding Machine*, which premiered in Chicago last year and has received many awards including Obies and Lucille Lortel Awards.

Companies of all sizes and missions produced new work the past year, from the four outstanding Tony Award winning regional theatres, Steppenwolf, the Goodman, Chicago Shakespeare, and of course the new play-focused Victory Gardens Theater, to Chicago's many thriving storefront theatres including the side project, Dog & Pony Theatre, The House Theatre of Chicago and Silk Road Theatre Project.

The upcoming 2008-09 theater season in Chicago predicts to be equally successful with nearly 50 productions of new plays already announced, and many more expected as the launch of the fall theater season approaches.

Silk Road Theatre Project, a company that showcases playwrights of Asian, Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean backgrounds, has been a leader in developing new plays with diverse stories and perspectives. "World premiere productions are testimony to the fact that Chicago's theatre community is not afraid to take risks," said Jamil Khoury, artistic director of Silk Road Theatre Project. "I think the number of companies with a commitment to new work has increased exponentially these past few years, creating an environment that in many respects thrives on world premieres. It is our audiences' willingness to engage new works, and their openness to new stories that ultimately make Chicago the fertile theatre town that it is."

The League of Chicago Theatres (LCT) is an alliance of theaters which leverages its collective strength to promote, support and advocate for Chicago's theater industry locally, nationally and internationally. The League of Chicago Theatres Foundation (LCTF) is dedicated to enhancing the art of theater in the Chicago area through audience development and support services for theaters and theater professionals.



Playwright Brett Neveu, one of the most-produced writers in Chicago, had three productions this season alone, including a premiere at the Goodman. “The growing focus on new work by Chicago theatres shows that there are many here in town willing to take a chance on a new voice and a new perspective,” added Neveu. “Theatres here are beginning to understand play development more clearly and beginning to put what little money they have into commissioning new work. Writers getting paid to write is always an incentive for more writers to write and get paid, too.”

Chicago Dramatists has been a national leader in new play development and a driving force behind the recent surge of new work in Chicago. Their networks of playwrights compose many of the premieres all around the city. “Chicago has finally turned into a damn good town for playwrights,” confirmed Russ Tutterow, artistic director of Chicago Dramatists. “And that was quite the opposite as recently as fifteen years ago. Thirty years ago, when Chicago Dramatists was founded, Chicago was near-barren of new plays. At that time a “new play” was a play that had not yet played Chicago. The development of new work is in the hands of the playwright here.”

CHICAGO THEATER BY THE NUMBERS:

- More than **200** producing theater companies
- More than **5 million** theater-goers annually
- More than **800** total annual productions
- Average ticket price to a Chicago theater production is approximately **\$23**
- More than **115** total performance venues
- More than **64,000** total seats in Chicago area performance venues
- **4** Tony Awards for Regional Theatres (Chicago Shakes, Goodman, Steppenwolf, and Victory Gardens Theater)

THE LEAGUE OF CHICAGO THEATRES

Founded in 1979, the League is an alliance of theaters that leverages its collective strength to promote, support and advocate for Chicago's theater industry locally, nationally and internationally. Currently, the League serves a diverse membership of more than 190 theaters and theater companies, ranging from small storefront, non-union companies to major cultural centers with multi-million dollar facilities and productions.

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