

Theatre: Readings

Steppenwolf:

In January of 1974, in Highland Park, Illinois, Rick Argosh and Leslie Wilson approached their former high school classmate Gary Sinise about staging a production of Paul Zindel's *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little*. Sinise had recently graduated from high school, and Rick and Leslie had one semester remaining. Steppenwolf co-founders Jeff Perry and Gary Sinise had met and become friends at Highland Park High School. Jeff was then attending college at Illinois State University where he had met co-founder Terry Kinney.

Gary agreed to be in the production of *Miss Reardon*, and sought out a space where he, Rick and Leslie could produce the play. Through a family friend, Gary secured the rights to perform in a Unitarian church on Half Day Road in Deerfield, Illinois, and the trio staged the inaugural production of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. The name Steppenwolf came from the book by Herman Hesse, which Argosh was reading at the time.

Three more plays were produced under this first incarnation of Steppenwolf. *Grease*, which Sinise would produce, direct and act in; *The Glass Menagerie*, which Argosh directed with Sinise appearing as Tom; and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, also directed by Argosh, which was the first teaming of Terry Kinney, Jeff Perry and Gary Sinise, Steppenwolf's three founders. During this production, in June of 1974, Kinney, Perry, and Sinise decided that when Kinney and Perry finished college they would find a permanent space and start a professional resident ensemble theater company.

Steppenwolf incorporated as a non-profit in 1975, with an expanded ensemble that included Terry Kinney, Jeff Perry, Gary Sinise, H.E. Baccus, Nancy Evans, Moira Harris, John Malkovich, Laurie Metcalf and Alan Wilder. The company took up residence in the basement of a Catholic school in Highland Park in the summer of 1976 and produced its first season of plays. In 1980 the company moved from Highland Park to the city of Chicago and expanded the ensemble.

Over the course of the 1980s, the company continued to expand, producing plays that went on to receive national and international attention. In 1991, Steppenwolf built its current theater at 1650 North Halsted Street in Chicago. Steppenwolf has now grown into a company which includes forty-three ensemble members, whose strengths include acting, directing, playwriting, and textual adaptation. Now in its fourth decade as a professional theater company, Steppenwolf has received unprecedented national and international recognition, including a series of Tony Awards, and The National Medal of Arts. [Click here for a full timeline of notable, events, productions and awards at Steppenwolf.](#)

Goodman Theatre:

Goodman Theatre, recipient of the Special Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, is internationally recognized for its artists, productions and educational programs. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Robert Falls and Executive Director Roche Schulfer, the Goodman is committed to producing classic and contemporary works, giving full voice to a wide range of artists and visions.

Goodman Theatre was established in July 1922, by a gift of \$250,000 from William and Erna Goodman to the Art Institute of Chicago for the purpose of building a theater to memorialize their son, Kenneth Sawyer Goodman. Before his death at the age of 35 in the influenza epidemic of 1918, Kenneth Sawyer Goodman had written, published and produced a number of plays in non-commercial productions in Chicago, and had expressed his vision of an ideal theater, one that would combine professional training with the highest possible performance standards.

Four months after the gift was received, the Art Institute began construction of the new theater on the northeast corner of its property, at Monroe and Columbus Drive. They soon hired the theater's first artistic director, Thomas Woods Stevens, a former colleague of Kenneth Sawyer Goodman's and a noted educator who had established America's first theater degree-granting program at Carnegie Mellon University.

The new theater, encompassing a drama school and a professional acting company, opened its doors on October 20, 1925. Three of Goodman's one-act plays were presented at the theater's dedication ceremony. Two nights later the Goodman began its first regular season with John Galsworthy's *The Forest*. Stevens built the new theater's repertory with a mix of classics, contemporary hits and experimental and new plays, a formula that the theater has generally adhered to ever since.

Stevens led the Goodman for five years before resigning in 1930 over a dispute about the deficit the theater had accumulated. The Art Institute replaced him with Hubert Osbourne, a former student of Stevens', who ran the theater for a year until the Art Institute decided that the professional acting company would prove too costly to maintain. The professional acting company was disbanded, but the Art Institute kept the doors of the drama school open.

Maurice Gnesin, who Stevens hired during the 1929/1930 Season, stepped in as the new head of the Goodman School of Drama when Stevens resigned. A scholarly Russian, Gnesin ran the school for the next 27 years, aided by his colleague and fellow Russian, the actor David Itkin. The Goodman School built a formidable reputation over the following decades and graduated many stellar theater artists, including Karl Malden, Sam Wanamaker, Geraldine Page, Shelley Berman, Harvey Korman, José Quintero, Linda Hunt and Joe Mantegna. The school was also noted for its children's theater, run for many years by Charlotte Chorpenning, whose adaptations of children's stories made her the most produced playwright in Goodman Theatre history. Thousands of Chicagoans got their first taste of theater at the Goodman's weekend matinees.

In 1957 Maurice Gnesin passed away and David Itkin retired. The Art Institute offered the artistic directorship to John Reich, a native Austrian who had trained with legendary director Max Reinhardt. Reich accepted the position under the condition that the theater commit to re-establishing the professional acting company. Over the next decade, Reich slowly rebuilt the Goodman's subscribership, bringing in stars to lead casts of student actors and attracting new attention to the theater. In the fall of 1969, the Goodman opened the new season featuring the first fully professional acting company at the theater in nearly 40 years. But maintaining a resident company of professionals proved expensive and led to the largest deficits in the

theater's history. Two years later, the theater began hiring actors on a show-by-show basis. In 1972, John Reich was asked to resign. A new managing director, Ken Myers, brought in during Reich's last year to oversee the theater's business side and ran the theater for a year before resigning himself.

In 1973, William Woodman, a director with considerable experience in regional theaters, was appointed artistic director. Woodman saw the theater through a period of restructuring. In 1976, the Goodman separated itself from the Art Institute, incorporating as the Chicago Theatre Group, Inc, which allowed it to pursue fundraising independently. In 1978, the theater divested itself of the Goodman School, which was acquired by DePaul University. Woodman also instituted Stage 2, a venue for new work within the Goodman framework. Gregory Mosher, Woodman's assistant, and Roche Schulfer, a young business office assistant, were placed in charge of Stage 2, which became a proving ground for up-and-coming Chicago actors, directors and writers, one of whom was David Mamet, whose play *American Buffalo* premiered at Stage 2 in 1975.

After running the Goodman for five seasons, William Woodman resigned in 1978 and Gregory Mosher was appointed artistic director. A year later Roche Schulfer was appointed managing director. Mosher led the theater through the 1984/1985 Season, bringing much new work to the Goodman, including plays by Nobel Prize winners Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott, and new plays by American masters Edward Albee and Tennessee Williams, including Williams' last produced play, *A House Not Meant to Stand*. In 1985 Mosher left the Goodman to take over Lincoln Center Theater in New York City.

The Goodman replaced Mosher with Robert Falls, a young director who was a product of the off-Loop theater boom of the 1970s. Falls, who was born in downstate Illinois and grew up in the Chicago suburbs, left the University of Illinois and immediately began directing in Chicago. At the age of 23 he was appointed to lead Wisdom Bridge Theatre, where he stayed for eight years before being named the Goodman's artistic director. Falls brought with him to the Goodman two colleagues from the off-Loop theater scene, Frank Galati and Michael Maggio, to serve as associates, and a young director from New York, David Petrarca. In the 1990s Falls added to this "college" of directors, naming such theater artists as Mary Zimmerman, Chuck Smith, Henry Godinez and Regina Taylor to the Goodman's artistic staff. This group later expanded to include Brian Dennehy, Rebecca Gilman and Steve Scott, and is now known as the Goodman's Artistic Collective.

Highlights of Robert Falls' tenure at the Goodman have included dozens of world premieres and transfers of Goodman productions to other theaters. In his first season, Falls began his partnership with actor Brian Dennehy with the production of Bertolt Brecht's *Galileo*. Their work together since then includes *Death of a Salesman* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (both of which went on to Tony Award-winning presentations in New York), *Desire Under the Elms* and *Hughie*.

In the mid-1980s, concerned about the adequacy of its aging theater behind the Art Institute, the Goodman began to explore the possibility of a new facility. Led by Roche Schulfer and members of the Board of Trustees, the theater came to the conclusion that rebuilding on the site of the old theater was not a viable proposition and other locations in downtown Chicago were scouted. The City of Chicago, in the process of revitalizing the North Loop, urged the Goodman to consider the site of two old commercial theaters, the Selwyn and the Harris theaters, on North Dearborn Street. In the early 1990s the Goodman committed to building on the new site and fundraising efforts began. A major gift was received from Albert Ivar Goodman, a distant cousin of Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, and from his mother, Edith-Marie Appleton, which ensured that the theater would keep the Goodman name and allowed construction to begin. The new Goodman Theatre opened in December, 2000, with August Wilson's play, *King Hedley II*.

Other notable productions in the Goodman's recent history include Artistic Director Robert Falls' stagings of *The Iceman Cometh* starring Brian Dennehy, *The Night of the Iguana* with Cherry Jones and William Petersen, *The Young Man from Atlanta* starring Rip Torn and Shirley Knight and his reimagining of Chekhov's *The Seagull*; Frank Galati's world premiere of John Kander and Fred Ebb's musical *The Visit*, featuring a book by Terrence McNally and starring Chita Rivera; David Petrarca's world premiere production of *Marvin's Room*; Chuck Smith's acclaimed revivals of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *The Amen Corner*, as well the Chicago premieres of *The Good Negro* and *Race* under his direction; Mary Zimmerman's premiere productions of *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, *Journey to the West*, *The Odyssey* and the Philip Glass opera *Galileo Galilei*; the world premieres of Regina Taylor's *Drowning Crow* and *Oo-Bla-Dee*; the Chicago premieres of *Zoot Suit* and *Boleros for the Disenchanted*, both staged by Henry Godinez; all ten works in August Wilson's cycle of plays exploring the African American experience in the twentieth century, including the premiere productions of *Seven Guitars*, *King Hedley II* and *Gem of the Ocean*; the world premiere of Lynn Nottage's *Ruined* (also a Goodman commission); the world premiere of Sarah Ruhl's *Stage Kiss*; several premieres of David Mamet's plays, including *American Buffalo* and *A Life in the Theatre*; and premieres of Rebecca Gilman's plays *Spinning into Butter*, *Boy Gets Girl*, *Blue Surge*, *Dollhouse* and *A True History of the Johnstown Flood*.

Special events include the Goodman's annual holiday production of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, a Yuletide tradition for thousands of Chicago families, which celebrated its 34th production this season.

The Goodman's Department of Education and Community Engagement provides free programming for theaterlovers of all ages. The Student Subscription Series gives 2,700 Chicago public high school students a year the opportunity to attend free matinee performances and post-show discussions with actors, and provides copies of scripts, study guides, online resources and professional training seminars for teachers. Each summer, the General Theatre Studies program engages 14- to 19-year-old students from across Chicagoland in an intensive six-week theater training program, culminating in an original devised performance by the participants. Young women in their junior year of high school are eligible for the Cindy Bandle Young Critics program, a joint venture of the Goodman and the Association for Women Journalists, which provides training in theater criticism, mentoring from professional journalists and opportunities to interview stage stars like Carla Gugino and Brian Dennehy. Past participants in Goodman programs stay involved through the Youth Arts Council, acting as ambassadors for theater in their communities and schools. CONTEXT events engage our community in conversations and interactive experiences that both illuminate our productions and act as catalysts for deeper exploration. Using Goodman productions as a springboard, dramatic integration weekend seminars instruct teachers from across Chicago and across disciplines on how to use the arts to teach everything from science to English to history. In addition, the theater's internship program provides hands-on training for students, graduates and young professionals interested in careers in professional theater. The Goodman's newest program, GeNarrations, is a writing workshop for senior citizens. These six-week sessions are presented in collaboration with the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services and other community-based organizations.

In 2010, the Goodman celebrated 10 years in Chicago's North Loop Theatre District. Its anniversary season opened with Mary Zimmerman's new adaptation of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* and closed with David Henry Hwang's world-premiere comedy *Chinglish*, which subsequently enjoyed a Broadway run. Staying true to its roots, Goodman Theatre continues its mission to enrich the American theater by producing bold and varied seasons and providing an essential cultural contribution to a diverse and vibrant city.

Second City:

The Second City opened its doors on a snowy Chicago night in December of 1959. No one could have guessed that this small cabaret theatre would become the most influential and prolific comedy theatre in the world.

With its roots in the improvisational games of Viola Spolin, The Second City developed an entirely unique way of creating and performing comedy. Founded by Spolin's son, Paul Sills, along with Howard Alk and Bernie Sahlins, The Second City was experimental and unconventional in its approach to both theatre and comedy. At a time when mother-in-law jokes were more the fashion, The Second City railed against the conformist culture with scenes that spoke to a younger generation.

The Broadway success of Mike Nichols and Elaine May – members of The Second City's predecessor, The Compass Players – put attention on the fledgling company. Soon, alumni of The Second City – such as Alan Arkin, Barbara Harris, Robert Klein, David Steinberg and Fred Willard – began to cement the theatre's reputation for developing the finest comedic voices of each and every generation. With the debut of NBC's Saturday Night Live, populated by Second City Alums John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd and Gilda Radner, the theatre became internationally known for its ever increasing roster of comedy superstars.

Soon, Second City's sister-theatre in Canada developed its own sketch comedy series, SCTV, hailed as one of the greatest comedy series of all time and featuring an all-star cast that included Martin Short, Andrea Martin, Catherine O'Hara, John Candy, Eugene Levy, Dave Thomas, Joe Flaherty and Rick Moranis.

By the 1980's, The Second City had become much more than a small cabaret theatre on Chicago's north side. In the middle of the decade, The Second City would begin a new era as Second City Toronto proprietors Andrew Alexander and Len Stuart would buy out Bernie Sahlins' interest in The Second City Chicago and set in motion a new era of innovation for the company.

Today, The Second City continues to produce the premiere comic talent in the industry. From Mike Myers to Steve Carell, Stephen Colbert to Tina Fey – The Second City imprint is felt across every entertainment medium. Additionally, The Second City has grown well beyond a single stage to become a diversified entertainment company. Second City Training Centers in Chicago, Toronto and Los Angeles teach thousands of students every week; four touring companies perform Second City revues all over North America and abroad; Second City Communications has become an industry leader in bringing improv-based methodologies to the corporate sector; and Second City continues to create unique media in television, film and the digital realm.

Second City Facts

- Legendary comedy theatre with resident stages in Chicago, Toronto, and Touring Ensembles entertaining over 1,000,000 guests each year.
- Training ground for a host of famous alumni including John Belushi, Mike Myers, Bill Murray, Gilda Radner, John Candy, Catherine O'Hara, Tina Fey, Steve Carell, Stephen Colbert, and over 500 more.
- Winner of over 30 Joseph Jefferson Award nominations in Chicago and over 35 Dora Award nominations in Toronto honoring excellence in professional theatre.

- Four International Touring Companies traveling around the country and world including Austria, The Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, Singapore and Iraq.
- The largest training center for improvisation and acting in the country with 13,000 students a year at schools in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Toronto.
- Presents over 400 corporate engagements a year through Second City Communications, with a focus on live event support and entertainment as well as designing and facilitating workshops on team building, communication and presentation skills.
- Produced 185 television episodes of "SCTV" garnering an ACTRA award, two Emmy awards and over 13 Emmy Award nominations
- The exclusive provider of improvisational comedy revues for Norwegian Cruise Line, with six ships currently hosting Second City companies – performing to 14,000 passengers per week.
- Over \$100,000 given each year in charitable donations to community and social programs.
- Second City Education provides professional development training, in-class workshops and residencies, and performances to thousands of K-12 students, teachers and staff members each year.

Lookingglass Theatre:

History, Mission and Core Values

History

Lookingglass formed in 1988 when a group of ambitious college graduates created a process-driven theatre company and unique theatrical experience for the public. Our signature approach to developing plays involves long-term dedication to the development process, presenting work in a theatre with a configurable stage and seating that can change depending on the needs of the production. In 1992, the Lookingglass ensemble extended its vision to serve traditionally underserved populations by reaching out to Chicagoland's diverse constituency through the creation of our education and community programs department. To date, we have produced 50 world premieres and have received 42 Jefferson Awards and citations.

Lookingglass propels its unique artistic vision with three primary venues: the creation of new work through *gglassworks*, the staging of world premieres on the *Lookingglass Mainstage*, and the outreach of our *education and community* programs. Lookingglass' primary commitment is to produce new theatrical works. These bold, new works are created through the *gglassworks* program, run by Heidi Stillman, Director of Artistic Development and a founding ensemble member. Under Heidi's leadership, potential scripts receive considerable development through intensive workshops and readings. The significant amount of time and resources invested in *gglassworks* has an enduring impact on the sustainability of the company and on our status as a premiere institution for the development of original work.

Mission

"Oh my, how curious everything is!" --- Alice

Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There

When Alice walked through the looking glass, she walked into a world beyond imagination. She walked into a world more involving and intoxicating than any movie or circus, more thrilling than a high-speed chase, more frightening than a child's nightmare, and more beautiful than a thunderstorm on a hot summer night. She awoke with a new sense of herself in the world and her own power within it.

Reflected in Lewis Carroll's achievement is the mission of the Lookingglass Theatre Company. Through theatre, which invites, even demands, interaction with its audience, our goal is to fire the imagination with love, to celebrate the human capacity to taste and smell, weep and laugh, create and destroy, and wake up where we first fell --- changed, charged and empowered.

The Lookingglass Theatre Company combines a physical and improvisational rehearsal process centered on ensemble with training in theatre, dance, music, and the circus arts. We seek to redefine the limits of theatrical experience and to make theatre exhilarating, inspirational, and accessible to all.

Core Values

Collaboration

From the seminal, self-produced collegiate production of *Alice in Wonderland*, Lookingglass has always believed that the power of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Lookingglass sees immense value in group history and experience, a collective vision, the dynamics of teamwork and the importance of leadership within that collaborative construct. Each performance is a collaboration between artists, story and audience. Collaboration informs every aspect of how we produce theatre.

Transformation

Transformation is certainly at the core of all theatre and particularly vital to Lookingglass. Lookingglass uses visual metaphor, gesture and daring theatricality to create transcendent staging. Fiction and non-fiction are converted into stage pieces. Actors are often required to play multiple characters outside their traditional range. Even the newly-built theatre reflects the core value of transformation-- the infinitely flexible facility changes in configuration to best suit each new production. Transformation is reflected in the Lookingglass Mission Statement...*to change, charge and empower.*

Invention

Lookingglass seeks to redefine the limits of theatrical experience. The ensemble uses multi-disciplined arts training and an ambition for innovation to invent new ways to develop and tell stories.