

YUSEF: Professional theatre person. True! I trained at University of California, San Diego and Morehouse College. I am a member of Actors Equity Association and Screen Actors Guild. I've appeared in productions at Lincoln Center (Directors Lab), Playwrights Horizons, Classical Theatre of Harlem, Classic Stage Company, Alliance Theatre, Arena Stage, LaJolla Playhouse, Cincinnati Playhouse, Geva Theatre and others. I've also appeared in films and on television.

As Playwright, I've been a Lila Acheson Wallace Playwright Fellow and a Le Comte Du Nouy Prize recipient for excellence in playwriting at the Juilliard School. My plays include *Breakfast, Hookyjook, Aaron & Tekla, The House of Buddy Baines, It Takes a Village* and *Songs of My So-Called Masculinity*. I've been produced by Lincoln Center Directors Lab, Horse Trade Theater Group, Lark Roundtable, The Ford Foundation, and The Classical Theatre of Harlem, and I was nominated for an Arnold Weissberger (Williamstown). *Patent Leather Scars* is my debut as Producer. My first short film, *Ding Dong* was commissioned and produced by Raw Impressions Productions and screened in the NY short film festival, Ripfest #10. And right now, I'm attempting to publish my memoir, "Fight" and produce all of my plays. <http://www.yusefmiller.com/>

RACHEL: I know this question could stimulate a lengthy answer — but I am curious to hear your thoughts on how plays are being developed in America these days.

YUSEF: How about a short answer? This seems to be how the majority of good plays are being developed: readings, readings, readings. Huge artistic risks are taken each time - followed by few commitments to produce. And this seems to be how the majority of "other" plays are being developed - readings, readings, readings. If the artistic compromises can be made to suit the marketing strategy, and after the Grantor and the Institution have given birth to the yearly commission, the yearly commission then gives birth to the play.

RACHEL: So, are you saying the producing institutions are controlling too much of the artistic side in the process of producing a new play?

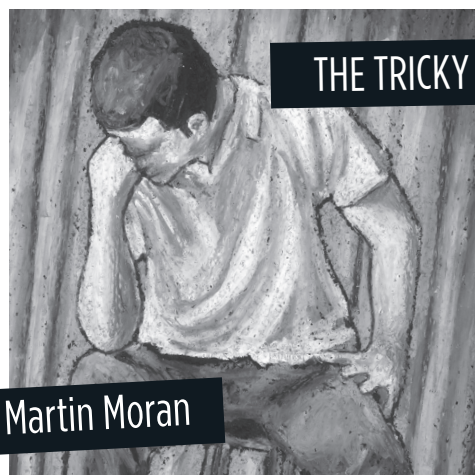
YUSEF: Sounds like this, doesn't it. Or perhaps now it takes a village to write a play. I just hope producing institutions return to being just scouts, courageous scouts, scouts willing to taking risks.

SUPPORT THE GIAC AFTER SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM BY PARTICIPATING IN A KTC MATCHING CHALLENGE.

The Kitchen Theatre Company recently received an anonymous gift of \$9,000 to be matched by June 30, 2011 in support of our new educational initiative. We have already received a gift of \$1,000 toward the match. Anyone interested in helping us with this exciting new program, please contact Lindsay Hahnes, Director of Marketing & Development at 607-272-0403 or by email at Lindsay@kitchentheatre.org

COMING UP NEXT AT THE KITCHEN THEATRE COMPANY...

March 13 - April 10



THE TRICKY PART

by Martin Moran

The Tricky Part is a true story in the hands of a master storyteller. In the tradition of Spaulding Gray, Marty Moran's The Tricky Part combines the immediacy and emotion of a real-life experience with the wisdom and thoughtfulness provided by the passage of time. Starring Carl Danielson and directed by Sara Lampert Hoover.

Four Tuesdays



AROUND THE KITCHEN TABLE

SPECIAL SERIES

Tuesday Night Conversations about theater, acting, play writing. Get an insider's view of what makes the KTC tick. Call Emerson at 607 272-0403 to reserve a place. **Tuesday, March 29, Tuesday, April 5, April 12 and April 19th.** A different conversation each Tuesday led by Rachel Lampert.



A Conversation from the Kitchen with Kitchen Theatre Company Artistic Director, Rachel Lampert

HOW'S IT GOING? A CANDID CONVERSATION

We are big on milestones and landmarks at the Kitchen, so halfway through every season we spend some time to take stock, have important and candid conversations to see where we are, and then make adjustments as needed. We wanted to share these same conversations with you, our closest friends. Here's a short list of the kind of topics we're talking about.

PERFORMANCES & PRODUCTIONS

We are very pleased with this season's productions from an artistic vantage point. It has been interesting learning how the new building functions in terms of set design, lighting design and sound design. We knew it would be different, but exactly how, we continue to discover. *Private Lives* was a big stretch for us scenically and we feel like we met the challenge. *Summers at Rock's Edge* let us know the acoustics worked for live music, and audiences told us they really enjoyed the mix of dance, movement, limited text and live music. *The Brothers Size* took us by storm with extraordinary performances of a deeply moving text. *The Santaland Diaries* was a wonderful reunion with actor Karl Gregory, and *Bed & Sofa* made it clear that singing is terrific in the new space. And the current production of *boom* that starts the second half of the season has pushed the scenic element once again. I am thrilled with the quality of the work, the inventiveness of the creative teams and the performances on stage.

On the business side, Steve is pleased with the ticket sales for the first half of the 2010-11 Season. All of the productions met the goals he set in the budget for subscribers and for single ticket sales. We don't know the final numbers on boom yet, but it is getting lots of buzz, and audiences have been leaving the theater engaged in lots of conversations. This is an important turn because even though the 2009-10 Season was artistically successful and popular (*Secret Order, First Day, Last Train to Nibroc, Precious Nonsense, In This Place...* and *Chesapeake*) and maintained subscriber levels, it had the lowest single ticket sales of any year in the last seven. So having such a successful current season (in terms of subscriber levels and single ticket sales) is a great confirmation of our decision to go ahead with the new building.

One of the overriding motivations of building and moving to the new space was to increase the number of seats with the expectation of increasing revenue by selling more tickets. The high numbers in both areas of ticket sales demonstrate that part of our strategic plan is working well.

The Newsletter of the Kitchen Theatre Company is Sponsored by



March 2011 Volume V, Number IV

ANNUAL FUND 2010-11

There have been so many "first-time" experiences for all of us at the Kitchen, we could write a book. It's old news that we had never undertaken anything as huge as a capital campaign and we had never built anything before this enormous endeavor. We are so grateful to everyone who helped make this new era of the Kitchen Theatre a reality. We also knew we would have to go through strenuous growing pains. During the 2009-10 Season we were totally focused on our Bold New Space Campaign. When an organization is in the midst of a capital campaign, the Annual Fund in support of our yearly operating budget often suffers. The Kitchen Theatre Company's Annual Fund for 2009-10 fell short of its goal by \$38K, and the 2010-11 Annual Fund (still in progress) has another \$50K to reach its goal. Even with our robust ticket sales, if we do not reach this critical goal, we will continue to have the same financial challenges facing all types of not-for-profits across the country—decreased operating revenue overall.

At this halfway point of our season, we are looking at various strategies for achieving our Annual Fund goal and keeping ticket sales high. Our upcoming 20th Anniversary Dance Party on Saturday, March 19 (in place of our yearly auction at this time of year) is planned to help close the financial gap as well.

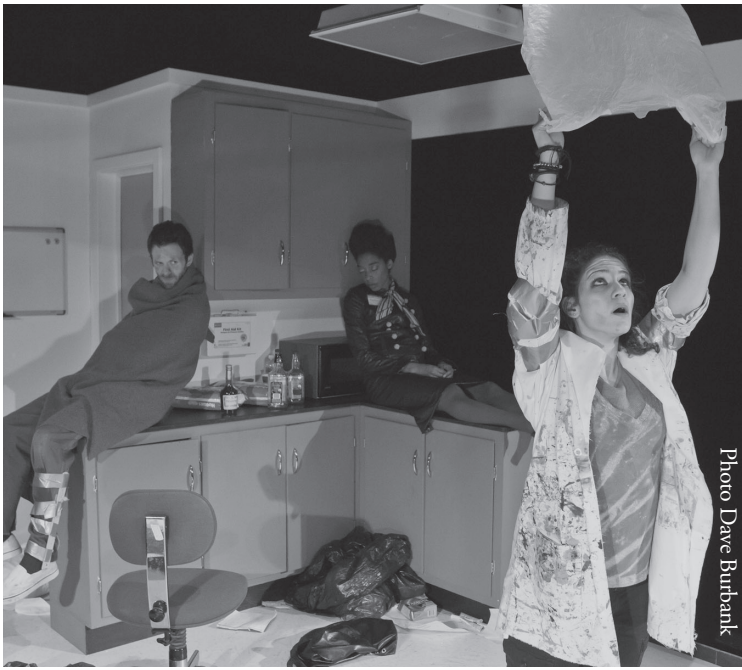
BOLD NEW SPACE: GREAT RESULTS BUT CONTINUING CHALLENGES

Great results: The Lobby has been improved with new furniture; we now have what we want. There is one more big improvement to come in the box office area. A new counter will be installed to sell and pick-up tickets. This will make it easier to interact with customers. Inner Lobby now has a new place to display actor photographs and comfortable furniture. The Theater now has all the seats, including removable ones for the first row, offering more flexibility for patrons with disabilities.

The Pride of Ownership Award we received from Rotary, and the use of the building by many community organizations for events have increased the Kitchen's visibility and added somewhat to our revenue stream. The lobby gallery has attracted visitors to see the artwork.

The heating and cooling system in the new building is saving us money by using 50% less energy than it would have had we not installed this system.

Parking has been easy for evening and Sunday matinee performances. Thursday matinee audiences have to use metered parking, but we have change on hand, and we keep the timing of the performances to work within the metered parking period.



Jimmy King, Ronica V. Reddick, and Alison Claire Scaramella in *boom*.

We now have two parking meters in the front of the theater that are designated for cars with Handicap Parking Stickers once a “helmet” is put on the meter daily. This is what the city worked out with us, so we can cover the meters at 2pm or 6pm on performance days and reserve them for patrons with appropriate stickers.

Continuing Challenges: What we are working on includes some roof leaks that will have to be attended to in the spring and adding better sound proofing to the back stage areas. And of course, we still need to complete the official Capital Campaign Recognition Signage project. Many of our friends gave us feedback on the listings with our temporary signage and those modifications and changes will be on view by the end of April.

THIRD FLOOR:

The biggest unfinished business in the new building is the third floor. The plan to bring all our activities under one roof has had to be postponed. There are several important reasons for this. The cost of the construction went over budget in the areas of HVAC and the entranceway. Our original plan for the front of the building had to be adjusted and the cost increase was significant. The challenge of the 2009-10 Annual Fund and lower single ticket sales in 2009-10 resulted in a deficit at year-end which impacts on the current year. These combined factors have caused us to postpone the Third Floor project.

OFFICE & REHEARSAL SPACE UPDATE:

Until the third floor is built, we must continue to rent space for rehearsal and offices. We are about to move our office and rehearsal space to a location much closer to the theater and at a lower rent than we are paying now. This will lower expenses for space, telephone and energy.

ADDRESSING THE ISSUES:

All of us at the Kitchen are aware how the present economic climate has put pressure on not-for-profits and on donors. The generosity

of this community is extraordinary. The successful completion of numerous capital projects by local not-for-profits even in these difficult times, demonstrates how philanthropic and committed the supporters of the arts and cultural organizations are in our area. We know everyone has stretched to support the Kitchen and other organizations. Nevertheless, here is the summary of my candid “conversation” in one sentence. The Kitchen Theatre Company is in the process of redoubling its efforts to raise additional funds during these challenging times, and there are several ideas below for your consideration.

The Annual Fund is moving into its Spring Initiative with a special boost. **To help us reach the remaining goal for our 2010-11 Annual Fund Campaign of \$50K, the Kitchen Theatre Company Board and several close friends have raised leadership gifts in the amount of \$25K to be matched by the end of our fiscal year June 30, 2011.**

Other funds that support the work of the Kitchen Theatre are:

Artistic Director’s Excellence Fund supports the bold artistic choices that make the Kitchen unique.

Name a Seat there are still chairs available for naming.

Percy Browning Fund for Original Music in the Kitchen supports the creation, recording and performance of live music in the Kitchen.

Dewey/Goetz Production Fund supports the design and construction area.

Lindsay Habnes, Director of Development & Marketing or Stephen Nunley, Managing Director are available to answer questions. They can be reached at the KTC office at 607 272-0403 or by email at Lindsay@kitchentheatre.org, or Stephen@kitchentheatre.org

KITCHEN ANNOUNCES PILOT PROJECT WITH GIAC AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM PLUS A CHALLENGE GIFT TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM

This fall 2010 the Kitchen initiated a pilot project by partnering with the GIAC After School Program to offer classes in movement and theater to a group of elementary students. The classes are modeled after classes and workshops taught by Rachel and Steve during their many years of touring the country and introducing dance, movement and theater to young people as part of residencies in communities as varied as Lawton, Oklahoma, Vancouver, Washington, Little Rock, Arkansas, and Portland, Oregon.

STEVE: Rachel, Lesley and I have constantly been in conversation about what the Kitchen can offer to young people in the Ithaca community. Our Family Fare series was developed to broaden our audience by creating original family-friendly works, primarily new musicals, performed by actors from our community of all ages. We have occasionally offered short series of classes or workshops

in everything from movement for actors, to writing a solo piece, to composer/lyricist how-to sessions – but nothing on-going.

LESLEY: This season we offered Summers At Rock’s Edge for general audiences and focused our energies on starting some classes for young people to test the waters. Our relationship with GIAC goes back many years, as we have regularly invited the After School Program to free performances sponsored by local companies and individuals; Cat’s Pajamas, Purity Ice Cream, Tompkins Trust Company, and Stevi & Alan Mittman have been past sponsors. We are now working with a lot of kids that we watched grow up over the years while attending our special events at the theater.

RACHEL: Lori Brewington, a teacher of the GIAC After School Program for elementary school students, kept asking after every performance, “How can my students get involved?” Well, we all thought the best way would be to teach some classes and get to know young actor/performers by working with them. And the

move to the new building, the new 10-play season schedule and support from Purity Ice Cream got the fall classes going. We started by working with fourteen 3rd, 4th and 5th graders who, after 10 weeks of classes, did an informal performance in the theater in late December 2010. Teachers for this first session included me, Steve, Lesley, Karl Gregory during the *Santalaland* run, Mack Exilus from *The Brothers Size* cast, and Meredith Conroy. We hoped to continue the program in the winter/spring. The plan was to have just the KTC staff as teachers, as our funding for guests had been completely used for the fall project. And then, an anonymous donor stepped up and offered us support to expand the program to include middle school GIAC After School kids! This additional funding allowed us to invite NYC-based veteran teaching artist Yusef Miller to join us for a series of two-week residencies this winter/spring. He’s a combination pied piper, inspiring teacher, and ball of energy. He’s been teaching both groups and also the teachers of the GIAC students. This is the kind of arts education I have been hoping the Kitchen Theatre could offer someday. See the interview below.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR RACHEL LAMPERT TALKS WITH GUEST TEACHING ARTIST YUSEF MILLER

RACHEL: Yusef, you have been in Ithaca for one two-week residency and are now in the middle of a second two-week residency to work with young people from GIAC’s After School program. How is it going? What kind of work are you doing with them? Have you set any specific goals? Give me the highlights.

YUSEF: I’m offering a Character Building Curriculum to the students — one I’ve had success with in NYC. The Kitchen has engaged them in body/kinesthetic learning, specifically guiding them in interpreting movement, rhythm, and space. A natural next step is guiding them in interpreting their ideas, perceptions, and text. And so, through exercises, I guide them in interpreting

1) the character of themselves 2) the character of their community 3) and the character(s) within a poem by Langston Hughes.

This two-week workshop is designed 1) for me to assess various dimensions of their capabilities 2) for the teachers and staff to assess the students’ learning curve 3) and for students to assess the capabilities of their imaginations. The workshop is process oriented.

RACHEL: You are working with the Lincoln Center Theater Open Stages High School Program, part of the Lincoln Center Institute that developed a model arts educational program more than 30 years ago. The initial program combined seeing a performance and having sessions with a teaching artist before and after seeing the performance. Is that still the model?

YUSEF: Yes, that is how it works. I facilitate four interactive sessions with high school Juniors per production - three pre-show, one post-show. I cover theme, plot, and language of each play. Teachers support the workshops by designing lesson plans and providing samples of student work. Our goal is to give the students the opportunity to make connections to their own lives.

RACHEL: You are also a professional theater person in addition to being a teaching artist. Please share a little about your work as a playwright and actor.



Guest teaching artist Yusef Miller