

**Chicago Avenue Project:****Sumthin' Fishy Goin' On!**

Monday, August 28, 7:00 p.m.  
 Tuesday, August 29, 4:30 & 7:00 p.m.

**Mainstage:****Bug**

By Tracy Letts  
 Directed by Stephen DiMenna  
 October 6-November 4  
 Wednesday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

**Late Nite Series**

- September 15 & 16 at 9:00 p.m.  
 with Reg e Gaines, Zell Miller, III  
 & Sandy Maria Esteves
- October 20 & 21 at 10:00 p.m.  
 with Djola Branner & Alva Rogers
- November 18 at 9:00 p.m.  
 with Toshi Reagon & Renita Martin

All performances at 3501 Chicago Av S.  
 For reservations, more information call  
 612-825-0459



3501 Chicago Avenue South  
 Minneapolis, MN 55407

**Company Updates: Who's In the House**

*Updates, Comings and Goings of the Pillsbury House Theatre Company,  
 Associate Company & Breaking Ice Company.*

**Faye M. Price** received the 2006 Catharine Lealtad Service to Society Award from Macalester College which is given to an alumnus or alumna of color who has used his or her education to distinguish themselves in service to community. **Brian Goranson** became the Artistic Director of Theatre L'Homme Dieu in Alexandria, Minnesota, where he directed *The Glass Menagerie*. **Stacey Parshall's** newest play, *Shipside*, was chosen as one of 12 new plays in Chicago Dramatist's Many Voices Project Festival in July. This festival brought together playwrights of color from across the country and gave them a forum to showcase their work in a staged reading series. **Blayn Lemke** is directing *Mrs. Man of God* for a performance on October 13th at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church. **Suzy Messerole** will attend the International Women's Playwriting Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia this November where she will present on *Draw Two Circles*, which she co-wrote with **Aamera Siddiqui**. **Payton J. Woodson** performed in an Actors Equity Showcase of *Riff Raff* in July in a production directed by **James A. Williams**.

PILLSBURY HOUSE THEATRE is a strategy of



3501 Chicago Avenue South  
 Minneapolis, MN • 55407  
 Box Office: 612-825-0459  
 www.pillsburyhousetheatre.org

**THE MISSION**

To create challenging theatre that inspires choice, change and connection.

**THE PROGRAMS****BREAKING ICE:**

A sociopolitical improvisational performance program that develops performances and workshops on tough issues.

**CHICAGO AVENUE PROJECT:**

A theatre mentoring program which brings together neighborhood youth with professional theatre artists to create original theatre.

**MAINSTAGE SEASON PLAYS:**

Professional, high quality and daring theatre productions that illuminate the differences that make each person unique and the similarities that bring people together.

**THE COMPANY**

- Faye M. Price  
 Co-Artistic Producing Director
- Noël Raymond  
 Co-Artistic Managing Director
- Heidi Hunter Batz  
 Director of Community Programs
- Stacey Parshall  
 Director of Chicago Avenue Project
- Suzy Messerole  
 Associate Programs Coordinator
- Payton J. Woodson  
 Theatre Operations Coordinator
- Anton Jones  
 Breaking Ice Company Manager
- Noah Bremer  
 Breaking Ice Company
- Ellen Fenster  
 Breaking Ice Company
- Kurt Mattsen  
 Breaking Ice Company

**HOUSE-KEEPING**

Fall Newsletter 2006

**A Banner Year for Breaking Ice**

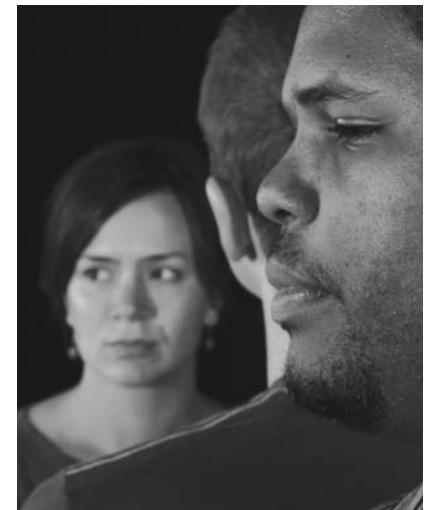
2006 HAS BEEN AN AMAZING YEAR FOR BREAKING ICE. Demand for the program has erupted this past year, making Breaking Ice's 10th year the busiest by far. *But what exactly is Breaking Ice?* Heidi Hunter Batz, director of the program, describes it this way. "Breaking Ice is fresh, funny and hard-hitting. It holds a mirror up to the society we live in and raises questions about real issues."

The custom created performances (and the facilitated dialogues that follow them) inspire people to talk to each other about their differences. For each new client, Breaking Ice creates an original performance. Batz explains, "We take the time to get to know them and their organizations. Because every relationship is different, every performance is unique." And exactly how does the creation of the unique performance happen? "Very carefully," replies Batz.

Each Breaking Ice performance has a director, who, along with 1-2 of the actors for a given performance, meets with a small group of individuals with the client organization. The content received during this meeting becomes the groundwork for the performance. "What makes Breaking Ice so compelling," says long-time actor/director Kurt Mattsen, "is that people are willing to be open to us about what they experience and witness in their workplace, school or community. Without the honesty of the individuals, Breaking Ice wouldn't be nearly as powerful." When rehearsals begin, actors create scenes through improvisation. The director has given the set-up, but no lines are scripted. The actors develop the characters and the heart of the scenes together.

There are some elements that carry over from performance to performance. Poetry is one of those elements. "Each of our actors has anywhere from 10 – 50 poems memorized for Breaking Ice – some of which they've written themselves," says Batz. The specific poems used depend on the themes for the performance, and because the show is improvisational, it can change up through the performance. "We find that poetry helps people hear with their heart, not just their head," explains Batz. She continues, "Sometime people expect to see a play, and Breaking Ice isn't a play, it's a collage of performance, poetry and scenes and we try to shake up any preconceived notions right away."

What is certain about Breaking Ice is that it is in hot demand right now. Batz attributes Breaking Ice's ability to handle the demand to the talented core of actors and directors who work with the program. She continues, "Perhaps what I am proudest of is our reputation among local theatre artists. They say it is not only a great place to work but a great place to grow, and that all of their art is touched by it." If you are interested in learning more about Breaking Ice, please contact Pillsbury House Theatre at 612-825-0459.



*Breaking Ice actors Ellen Fenster, Brent Doyle and Payton J. Woodson. Photo by Studiotobechi.*

## LATE NITE SERIES: New Work, New Disciplines, No Barriers

Join Pillsbury House Theatre this fall for its cutting-edge performance series, *Non-English Speaking Spoken Here: The Late Nite Series* (Late Nite for short).



### SEPTEMBER 15 & 16 AT 9:00 P.M.

Reg e Gaines delivers *Is Poetry Theatre?*, a performance/discussion on their similarities and how the wall which separates them is collapsing. Zell Miller, III (seen at PHT in his hugely successful production of *Evidence of Silence Broken*) performs sections of a new one man spoken word hip-hop theatre piece titled *B-Boy Bluez*. Nuyorican Poet Sandy Maria Esteves, who mixes Latina flava with old school metaphor, reads from her recent repertoire of poems.

### OCTOBER 20 & 21 AT 10:00 P.M.

Djola Branner performs from *sash & trim*, a semi-autobiographical recollection of an African-American father and the reconciliation of two myths: one of a loving singer/ songwriter: the other of a philandering absentee dad. Alva Rogers performs *What Remnants Remain*, a work-in-progress performance memoir.

### NOVEMBER 18 AT 9:00 P.M.

Get ready to rock with singer Toshi Reagon - whose music has been described as mixing folk, rock, funk and gospel and who has toured with Sweet Honey in the Rock, Ani DiFranco, Dar Williams and Lenny Kravitz. She is joined by performer Renita Martin - who has toured nationally with her performance pieces, including *5 Bottles in a 6 Pack*.



Singer Toshi Reagon. Photo courtesy of Toshi Reagon.

Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for students & free for 16 & under. Reservations recommended. Call 612-825-0459

Co-curated by seminal American theatre artist Laurie Carlos and local interdisciplinary artist e.g. bailey, Late Nite is a unique experience. Come before the show and mingle with the artists in a pre-performance dinner, stay after and talk about their work. Witness the beginnings of brand new performances, as artists from an array of disciplines including theatre, dance, hip-hop and poetry, come together in a fearless celebration of new voices and new art.

## “IF YOU DARE...”

FILMING IS ALMOST COMPLETE on “If You Dare,” a documentary on the Chicago Avenue Project. For the past year, executive producer/director Norah Shapiro and her crew have intimately followed the child participants, staff and mentors through rehearsals, retreats, classes and performances. Shapiro will likely conclude filming in September, and

then enter the post-production phase, which includes editing, sound design and sound mixing. She plans to develop an outreach component for the film, enter the film into festivals, aim for broadcast and go to DVD, through her production company, Flying Pieces Productions, and possible future co-producers or distributors.



Anton Jones mentors Betty Woods Reyes at the summer writing retreat. Photo courtesy of PHT.

Norah Shapiro is on the Advisory Board of Pillsbury House Theatre, and spent a decade on the Board of Directors for Pillsbury United Communities. After a 12 year career as a public defender, she turned to documentary work and has worked on several other documentaries in various capacities. “If You Dare” is her first feature length documentary. She says the inspiration for making the documentary was “a seed that germinated over the course of several years of attending Chicago Avenue Project productions and experiencing the overwhelming positive energy and joy that’s visceral in the theatre.” She emphasizes that it’s a larger story than being just about CAP, but about the power of arts to inspire young kids. “I believe that more of these kinds of stories need to be told and sharing the amazing work of the Chicago Avenue Project is a form of advocacy and a way to make change in the world.”

The August CAP production of *Somethin’ Fishy Goin’ On* will be the final one filmed for the documentary. It features original short plays written by youth. After a summer of playwriting classes, a writing retreat, and intense work with an adult mentor, the youth will see their plays performed by professional actors. *Somethin’ Fishy Goin’ On* performs Monday, August 28 at 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday, August 29 at 4:30 and 7:00 p.m. The performances are free and open to the public.

## GETTING TO KNOW STEPHEN DiMENNA

STEPHEN DiMENNA RETURNS TO PHT to direct the fall production of *Bug*, which opens October 6th. He has previously directed *Jesus Hopped the A Train* and *Bel Canto*. A New York based director and educator, DiMenna comes back to Minneapolis every year to direct a theatre workshop with residents of the Hennepin County Home School, which also performs at Pillsbury House Theatre. I interviewed DiMenna earlier this month about his career, the County Home School project and *Bug*.



Stephen DiMenna and Massimo. Photo courtesy of Stephen DiMenna

*You have two full careers — as an educator and a director — how does one feed the other? How do you see theatre impacting the lives of young people?*

I always say that we don’t find the theatre IT finds us. Usually it finds us if we’re lucky at an early age when we’re in school. And most of the time it finds us because of a committed, dedicated teacher. I had such a teacher in my life early on who introduced me to the theatre which became a place where I felt I belonged. Growing up as an only child with a single mother in Chicago that was incredibly important to me. So I guess I’ve always devoted a part of my career to teaching, and particularly to teaching young people with challenging life circumstances because I know how important it is to feel a part of a positive community when you’re young and how having a creative outlet and good role models can help a young person face and overcome some of those challenges.

*The County Home School Project began in 1991 when you still lived here. Now that you live in New York, what brings you back every year?*

I come back every year because it’s a program near to my heart...it’s enormously rewarding and enormously important. I have seen it change the lives of incarcerated young men and women when they re-enter the community. And though it’s a small program I believe very strongly that we can change our community one child at a time and there will always be a ripple that runs through that child’s life into adulthood if we’ve taught them valuable lessons early on.

*What kinds of plays are you attracted to as a director?*

I’m always, always drawn to stories about an underdog, or the everyman or woman, and I know that comes from my working class Italian immigrant family upbringing. I like plays where we can see a part of society most of us would choose not to look at if it crosses our path. In the theatre we make it cross our path so we can face what may be uncomfortable or disturbing and then reflect on it.

*Why did you want to direct Bug?*

*BUG* is a beautiful play – even though it’s devastatingly brutal – and that contradiction interests me. It has a poetry of its own that Tracy Letts the playwright has carved out so well. It’s the poetry of people stuck in a desolate place both physically and emotionally, and how they reach out to each other in the midst of their desperation and loneliness, hoping for a small ray of sunshine. These are stories rich in insight into the American psyche.

Interview by Suzy Messerole



In a seedy Oklahoma City motel room, the relationship between a divorced waitress with a fondness for cocaine and a soft spoken Gulf War drifter festers into paranoia, conspiracy theories and an infiltration of insects. *Please note that the play includes adult language and nudity.* The cast features **Chris Carlson, John Catron, Jodi A. Kellogg, Noël Raymond** and **Stephen Yoakam**. For more information, or to make a reservation, please call 612-825-0459.

**BUG PERFORMS OCTOBER 6 - NOVEMBER 4.**