

PARKS

WORLD
PREMIERE

By Harrison David Rivers

in collaboration with Robin P. Hickman-Winfield

Directed by Talvin Wilks

a portrait of a young artist

March 19-April 10, 2022

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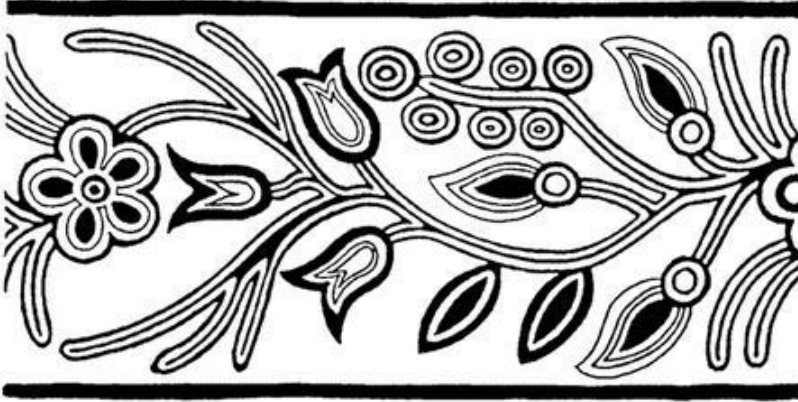
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Land Acknowledgment

History Theatre sits on the ancestral, traditional and contemporary land of the Dakota people, for whom the land holds historical, spiritual, and political significance. We recognize and honor the Dakota people, ancestors, and descendants, as well as the land itself, and all the sovereign Native nations in Minnesota and beyond. We recognize that this acknowledgement itself is not enough, and only serves as a first step towards decolonization.



FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The Journey: From Idea to the Stage

Several years ago, Robin Hickman-Winfield and I talked about creating a play about her Uncle Gordon. We had initially commissioned a playwright to tell his story, but after about a year, it became clear that this wasn't a perfect match.

We were both heartbroken.

Then, a few months later, while watching the final preview of History Theatre's production of *A CRACK IN THE SKY* by Harrison David Rivers (I was very impressed with his work), I stopped him at intermission and asked him if he would be interested in writing about Gordon Parks. Harrison leaped at the opportunity! The next day, I sat down with Robin and Harrison and the passion and love for this story just poured out between the two of them.

We had a match!!!

Harrison decided to focus on Gordon's journey to become an artist: his early days in St. Paul and Robin's passion for Gordon's book "A CHOICE OF WEAPONS," would play a major role in this show. Harrison went to work and created a very special narrative around those early days, and the powerful influence that his family and music had on his life and career path.

Thank you for joining us tonight and THANK YOU to our director Talvin Wilks and this company of designers and actors who will bring this story to life.

Ron Peluso

P.S. Your comments, questions, and feedback are always welcome!

PARKS

Written by

Harrison David Rivers

in collaboration with
Robin P. Hickman-Winfield

Directed by Talvin Wilks[†]

TIME/PLACE

1928-1938 Fort Scott, Kansas & St. Paul, Minnesota

THERE WILL BE ONE 15-MINUTE INTERMISSION

CAST

Parks Kevin Brown, Jr.*
Pigeon Man James A. Williams*
Ensemble Pearce Bunting*, Darius Dotch*,
..... Ivory Doublette*, Darrick Mosley*
..... Monica E Scott*, Mikell Sapp*
Music Director/Pianist Darnell Davis
Understudies Rex Isom Jr, Ian McCarthy,
..... Randy Schmeling*



National
New Play
Network



The Director is a member of the
STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

* denotes a Member of Actors' Equity Association

‡ denotes a Member of the Stage Directors and
Choreographers Society, Inc.

• denotes a Member of American Federation of Musicians
Local #3073

ARTISTIC/PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Talvin Wilks [†]
Playwright	Harrison David Rivers
Consultant	Robin P. Hickman-Winfield
Music Director	Darnell Davis
Scenic Designer	Seitu Jones
Video Designer	Kathy Maxwell
Lighting Designer	Merritt Rodriguez
Sound Designer	Dameun Strange
Costume Designer	Sarah Bahr
Props Designer	Abbee Warmboe
Choreographer	Leslie Parker
Special Photographer	Antonio Richardson
Artistic Director	Ron Peluso ^{*†}
Technical Director	Gunther Gullickson
Costume Manager	Becca Michelle
Dresser	Beth Desotelle, Lea Brucker
Producing and Directing Associate	Richard D. Thompson
Stage Manager	Lee Johnson
Assistant Stage Manager	Kyla Moloney
US Assistant Stage/Dresser	Miranda Shunkwiler
COVID Safety Manager	Peter Simmons
Production Manager	Wayne Hendricks*
Master Carpenter	Zachary Morgan
Master Electrician	Nick Walberg
Board Operator	Ashley Stock
Stage Electricians	Nick Fetting, Joel Gay, Aaron Phillips
Carpenters	Nick Barron, James Duncan, Brian Hesser
Closed Captioning, Open Captioner	Laura Wiebers



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FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

The story of an artist becoming

My grandmother introduced me to Mr. Parks.

I remember she said, “The two of you have a lot in common. You’re both artists, both Kansans and both Black.” We were flipping through a book of his photographs, gorgeous images of Black life. “Gordon Parks made a difference with his art,” she said. And then she’d smiled before adding, “And you will, too.”

He has been an inspiration to me ever since.

It has been an honor to work alongside History Theatre, alongside Ron and Laurie, and especially alongside Robin to tell this story – Mr. Parks’ story. The story of an artist becoming. The story of an artist realizing the power of his gift and choosing to use that power for good.

To expose truth and combat violence and injustice.
And to celebrate the beauty that is all around us - even in the darkest of times.

Mr. Parks picked up a camera instead of a gun.
It is my hope that we, artists or not, will all follow his example.

Harrison David Rivers

SPECIAL THANKS

Toree Alexandre, John Archie, Travante S. Baker, Ricardo Beaird, Terry Bellamy, Antonio Duke, AJ Friday, Steven Sean Garland, Darlene Hope, Dylan T. Jackson, Jamil Jude, Gavin Lawrence, Dwight Leslie, Bruce Linser, G. Michael McKitt, JuCoby Johnson, C. Michael Menge, Marcella Michelle, AnaSofía Villanueva, Lamont Walker II, Kevin West.



FROM THE COLLABORATOR

Managing Director Karen Mueller recently interviewed Robin Hickman-Winfield about her "Uncle Gordon," the groundbreaking photographer, writer, composer, activist and filmmaker Gordon Parks.

Can you share one or two memories about your Uncle Gordon?

When I was a child, Uncle Gordon would come and visit my grandmother at his sister Lilian's house. I have photographs of him and my grandmother and a photo of me holding his book. My mother took a photo of me as a baby holding *The Learning Tree*. He was my role model. I decided at a young age I wanted to do what he did. He was my uncle, he was my mentor, we became very close friends and confidants.

For his 90th birthday I gifted him that photo of me as a baby holding *The Learning Tree*. I put an inscription in a card, "Here I am Uncle Gordon at 6 months being a prodigy." He said, "I know that's right baby."

My last memory with him was in New York just before he died. He teared up and asked, what was going to happen to black boys. Today, I'd say, "Oh my goodness, in spite of all that's going on, Uncle Gordon, my young men and women are going to be a part of a play process where they can bear witness to the vision of possibilities, watching music directors, designers, musicians, actors. They will find hope. The scholars at your school will have their vision on display at the theater. Your life has not been in vain. I am your promise keeper, and I have joined with other promise keepers."

It's important what we are doing especially at a time when there's an effort to remove history from schools. Renown scholar and author Dr. John Henrique Clarke said, "Young black men and women need to see they were great in the past and know that they will be great in the future. Engaging them in learning Uncle Gordon's legacy and walking with them in his footsteps, inspires them to stand in their present greatness."

I needed a visionary artist who was going to understand my commitment to keeping a promise to my uncle as it relates to the transformative power of my uncle's work, as he connects to the lives of people, and what's going to happen to the lives of black boys, and that matters to Harrison.

Share some significant moments working with Harrison.

He (Gordon Parks) summoned me to come out to New York. He placed in front of me his photos, he said, “Baby here we are, we are the same blood.” He gave me all the instructions, no body can “out-Parks” me. I felt fortified.

My commitment to his legacy and my keeping a promise, this play is a part of that promise, a part of that legacy work. Being sure I connect with people who understand, why would Gordon Parks ask what’s going to happen to black boys? People who understand Gordon Parks worrying about the destiny of black boys. Why would that even matter to him?

To me, Harrison is an amazing visionary artist who came from Kansas, who grew up revering artists and the importance of Gordon Parks. This is a divine connection. He understands that I could bring and contribute something to HIS work and HIS vision because he respects my work and vision. I would say the same of Ron, and about Talvin. That’s why I believe we’re going to have something very powerful.

If you were to answer your uncle’s question “what’s going to happen to black boys...what would you say?

This play is so relevant. I’m excited for my scholars. The week before, these boys are talking about how there’s no hope because “we’re killing each other.” This is the hope they draw from so they can come out of it. They deserve an audience too.

When I saw the rehearsal, knowing the impact its going to have on my babies and people who don’t look like my babies. Oh my gosh.

If you had to say in three words what would the impact be?

Hope, healing, and vision. For everyone. Everyone beyond the young black men he was concerned about, we all need a new vision about the possibilities for humanity.

Robin P. Hickman-Winfield

SPECIAL THANKS

My Play list: Parks Family Ancestors, David Parks, Steven Winfield, Michael Newman, Kha’laun Phillips, Mario Sprouse.

Parks Legacy Scholar’s Exhibit: Jamie Tomlin, Antonio Richardson, Anura Si-Asar, Catherine Squires, Gordon Parks High School



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Capturing the life of Gordon Parks in any capacity is an impossibility.

Even Parks himself had to write three autobiographies to even attempt the task. As an archivist of his own life, he has left us with numerous reflections, contemplations, historical witnessings and brilliant reckonings. His artistry is a record of what is possible in this country, even in the wake of devastating challenges of poverty, violence, and gross prejudice. As Parks says, the young Gordon could have gone either way, a life of crime and living on the edge, or a life of the artist. I do not think that he would have ever not been an artist. As one learns more and more about his journey, you discover that even in the greatest moments of despair, his talent and polymathic ability, despite not finishing high school, creep into every moment and provide an important lifeline whether it's playing piano in a brothel or captivating a band leader while playing an original song on his break as a busboy. As a young man, Parks willed himself to be a photographer, inexperienced but inspired, he purchases his first camera and his first roll of film reveals the brilliance.

I stop here because the story we tell stops here. Our tale is about the becoming of a young artist, not the life of an artist. It is an imagined journey, part fever dream, part reflection, part memory. Not the whole story, but an inspired musing of the story. Harrison David Rivers has chosen the ascendancy journey before the ascent, the story of a young man to find truth and purpose in his struggles, at times homeless and starving but always striving to survive, he sees the beauty in everyday life and a simple magazine of photographs opens a window to a world, a lifeline. It's cliché to say that out of adversity comes possibility, but the realm of Black genius seems to uphold this truth, Baldwin, Hurston, Parks, [fill in the blank...], they create to save their lives. Art is the choice of weapon. And as Momma Parks says, "you always have a choice," and Momma Parks ain't never lied...

Talvin Wilks

SPECIAL THANKS

Kiku Loomis, Sonia Kufninec, Robin Hickman, Mario Sprouse, Antonio Richardson, Millie Reid-Rivera, Matt Lefebvre, the University of Minnesota Theatre Arts and Dance Department, my students in TH5182 Contemporary Black Drama and Dramaturgies, Kate Buis, all of my collaborators and those who supported me with great patience and love.



FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

Your support allows History Theatre to entertain, educate and engage.

Welcome to this performance of PARKS. It is a privilege to bring Harrison David River's story about the incredibly talented Gordon Parks to History Theatre.

This play, along with a wonderful exhibit produced at The Minnesota Museum of Art (The M) in 2020, are shining a spotlight on the accomplishments of famed *Life Magazine* photographer, ground-breaking filmmaker (SHAFT), musician and author (*The Learning Tree*, *A Choice of Weapons*). I had the personal honor of meeting the very gracious Mr. Parks over 30 years ago. It was my job to drive him around St. Paul . . . it was a truly memorable trip around our favorite town.

Today's production hopes to offer audiences insight into what shaped this young man who chose the lasting power of the photograph and the written word to survive. And in collaboration with Robin Hickman-Winfield, grandniece of Gordon Parks and her company Soul Touch Productions, we are excited to exhibit the works of young black men and women who have also picked up a camera and pen as PARKS scholars at Gordon Parks High School in Saint Paul. Their images and prose can be seen in our front lobby.

Your ongoing support of History Theatre allows us to "entertain, educate and engage." This project truly fulfills our mission! Thank you for being a part of the History Theatre community.

Karen Mueller

**To make a donation, visit
www.HistoryTheatre.com/donate
or call the Box Office at 651-292-4323.**

Thank you for your support!



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THANK YOU!



(above) Gordon Parks teenage years, late 1920s. Unknown photographer. (right) Gordon Parks' mother, Sarah, died in 1928 in Fort Scott, Kansas after a long illness. She was his "most influential confidante, role model, mentor, and advocate," and her death affected him enormously. James Vivien Dabbs Studio, Sara Parks, Fort Scott, Kansas, ca. 1890. The Gordon Parks Foundation.

Gordon Parks Timeline

1912

Gordon Roger Alexander Buchanan Parks, youngest of 15 children, is born to Sarah & Andrew Jackson Parks on Nov. 30 in Fort Scott, KS. He was stillborn and was revived by Dr. Gordon.

1919

Sarah Parks buys a piano on payments. Gordon teaches himself to play.

1928

Sarah Parks dies on May 9; Gordon was 16. He is sent to Mpls. to live with his sister, Maggie Lee and her husband.

His brother-in-law kicks him out of the house days before Christmas. He begins to ride the streetcars between Mpls and St. Paul to "pass time and keep warm". The owner of a pool hall in St. Paul he frequented for warmth offers him a job playing piano in a brothel.

1929

Gordon's father, brother Jack, and three older sisters, Lillian, Gladys and Cora, move to St. Paul. Gordon lives at a rooming house and takes a job at the Minnesota Club as a bellboy.

Gordon meets future wife, Sally Alvis. Gordon enrolls at Central High School to complete his education. When the market crashes that fall, he loses his job and has to quit school.

1930

Gordon lives with his sister, Cora, goes back to high school.

1931

Collapses while playing basketball and ends up in bed for many months. He quits high school for good.

As a busboy at the St. Paul Hotel and Hotel Lowry, Gordon began to meet people who played in big bands. His first composition "No Love" is played by the orchestra and broadcast on the radio.

1933

Goes to New York with a band but when he arrives the band has dissolved. Joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) planting trees and clearing campgrounds with the Federal Youth Employment Agency. Returned to St. Paul to marry Sally Alvis.

1935

While in Minnesota worked as a dining car waiter and porter on the Northern Pacific Railroad's Chicago to Seattle run. Son, Gordon Parks, Jr. born.

1937

Buys his first camera, a Voigtlander Brilliant, for \$12.50 at a pawnshop. Of that purchase, he once said, "I bought what was to become my weapon against poverty and racism." Parks still living in Minneapolis,

gets his film developed at an Eastman Kodak shop where he impresses the shopkeeper. As a result, they let him show his work on 5th Street in Minneapolis.

1939

Photographs for the *St Paul Spokesman-Recorder* and the *St Paul YWCA*.

1940

Hired by Mrs. Frank Murphy at Frank Murphy's women's clothing store in St. Paul to take fashion photographs.

Daughter, Toni Parks, was born.

1941

At the urging of boxer Joe Louis's wife, he moved to Chicago. He began to chronicle Chicago's South Side black ghetto and an exhibition of those photographs won him a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship for Photography. He chose to work with the Farm Security Administration (FSA) Department in Washington D.C.

1942

Farm Security Administration photographer, Washington, D.C.

1943

Correspondent for the Office of War Information. Covered the 332nd Fighter Group of all-black pilots.

1944

Son, David Parks, born.



Gordon Parks married his first wife, Sally Avis at her parents' home in Minneapolis. His brother Andrew performed the ceremony. Photographer unknown, Gordon Parks and Sally Avis, Courtship, Minneapolis, c. 1932



Young Gordon Parks (left). 1926

1944-49

Moved back to Harlem. Worked for *Vogue* doing freelance fashion.

1945

Hired by Standard Oil of New Jersey for the "Standard Oil Photography Project," taking pictures of small towns and industrial centers.

1947

First book, *Flash Photography*. The book explains how to use a flash camera.

1948

Book: *Camera Portraits: Techniques and Principles of Documentary Portraiture*. Book shows examples of how to achieve portraits of documentary quality and real distinction.

Hired by LIFE, Gordon was the first black photojournalist to work for the magazine. He was on staff until 1968, and a contributor until 1972.

1951

Completes two years in Paris bureau of *Life* magazine.

1954

Worked as a consultant on various Hollywood productions & later directed a series of documentaries commissioned by National Educational Television on black ghetto life.

1955

Composed first "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra."

1956

Piano Concerto performed in Venice.

1957

Gordon & wife Sally decide to divorce.

1959

Tours with Duke Ellington's band.

1960

Photographer of the Year Award from The American Society of Magazine Photos.

1962

Married Elizabeth Campbell Rollins (divorced 1973)

1963

The Learning Tree published. A semi-autobiographical book on growing up black in America.

1964

Film: *Flavio*. A day in the life of a 12-year-old Brazilian boy, one of a family of 10 living on a squalid, impoverished hillside across the bay from Rio de Janeiro who Gordon had brought to the world's attention through LIFE.

1966

Book: *A Choice of Weapons*. Tells the story of the obstacles he faced as a young adult and how he resisted taking up knives, guns and other weapons. Instead, he aimed a camera at America and captured the beauty and pain of a nation struggling with racial and economic injustices.

Received "Notable Book Award" from the American Library Association.

1967

Composed "Tree Symphony" Daughter, Leslie Parks, born.

1968

The Learning Tree movie written, directed and composed by Parks. Gordon was the first black to direct and produce a film for a major Hollywood studio.

Film: *Diary of a Harlem Family*.

Received Emmy Award. Civil unrest in the inner city. Short film.

Film: *The World of Pirie Thomas* (documentary).

Book: *Gordon Parks, A Poet and His Camera*. A collection of poems and photography.

1969

Film: *The Learning Tree*, opens in New York. It depicts the life of Newt Winger, a teenager growing up in Cherokee Flats, Kansas, in the 1920s, and chronicles his journey into manhood marked with tragic events. Based on Parks's 1963 semi-autobiographical novel of the same name.

1970

Book: *Born Black*. A compilation of essays, photographs.

1970-73

Essence magazine editorial director

1971

Film: *Shaft*. Cool black private eye John Shaft is hired by a crime lord to find and retrieve his kidnapped daughter.

"They say this cat Shaft is a bad mother.."

"Shut your mouth!"

"I'm just talking about Shaft!"

Books: *Whispers of Intimate Things*, *Born Black*, *In Love*. Combination of photography and poetry.

1972

Awarded the Spingarn Award from the NAACP.



Washington, D.C. Street corner, 7th Street and Florida Avenue, N.W. Photography by Gordon Parks. Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs

1973

Married Genevieve Young (divorced 1979).

1974

Film: The Super Cops. Based on the book *The Super Cops: The True Story of the Cops Called Batman and Robin* by L. H. Whittemore.

1975

Book: Moments Without Proper Names. Chronicles the social problems of his native Fort Scott, Kansas. With poetry and photography, he talks about poverty, corruption, bigotry, drug addiction, and death.

1976

Film: Leadbelly. Chronicles the life of folk singer Huddie Ledbetter.

1978

Book: Flavio. Photo essay on a family living in poverty in Brazil.

1979

Book: To Smile in Autumn. A memoir. *Film: Shaft 's Big Score.* Sequel to *Shaft*.

Gordon Parks Jr., dies in plane crash in Kenya

1981

Book: Shannon. A story set in New York early in the 20th century about a young woman who marries a poor man instead of a richer one.

1984

Inducted into NAACP Hall of Fame. *Film: Solomon Northup's Odyssey.* Made for TV movie based on the autobiography *Ten Years a Slave*

1986

Kansan of the Year.

1987

Film: Gordon Parks: Visions. Within his fleeting images are pictures of a nation, strong and weak, black and white, rich and poor, and the words of a man whose fascinating life journey achieved a unique personal vision.

Film: Moments Without Proper Names (PBS). blends Parks's striking photographs (spanning four decades) with newly shot footage of the artist, his own musical compositions.

1988

National Medal of the Arts presented by President Ronald Reagan.

1990

Book: Voices in the Mirror. A memoir. Ballet: Martin, premieres on Dr. King's birthday.

1994

Book: Arias in Silence. Series of images that combine still-life photographs with watercolor painting.

1995

Donates his archives of films, photographs and writings to the Library of Congress.

1996

Book: Glimpses Toward Infinity. Evocative images of objects found in nature arranged in imaginary landscapes painted by the artist himself - alongside his most recent poems.

2000

Gordon receives The Congress of Racial Equality Lifetime Achievement Award.

2002

Inducted into the International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum

2003

Book: The Sun Stalker. Biography on J. M. W. Turner.

2005

Book: A Hungry Heart. Gordon reflects on the people and events who shaped him.

2006

Gordon Parks passes away from cancer on March 7, 2006.

The Cast



JAMILA ANDERSON* **Ensemble**

Jamila is an artist and professional caregiver. Honored to be in *Parks*, this is her fifth History Theatre production! Other credits include: *Stewardess!*, *All The Way*, *Courting Harry*, and *These Shining Lives* (History Theatre); the Ivey Award-winning *Marcus, or the Secret of*

Sweet (Guthrie/PH+T); *Home, Angels in America: Millennium Approaches and Perestroika* (Pillsbury House + Theatre); *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin*, *Waiting to Be Invited* (Illusion Theatre); *By The Way Meet Vera Stark*, *Black Nativity* (Penumbra); *Romeo & Juliet*, *Nina Simone: Four Women* (Park Square). Jamila's musical endeavors earned her a #15 self-penned single on Billboard Hot 100. Now a resident of Aurora, CO, she is represented by the Wilhelmina Denver agency.



KEVIN BROWN, JR.* **Parks**

Kevin is hyped to be performing at History Theatre again and to be doing so with such a supportive group of individuals. You might have caught him earlier this season in *Not In Our Neighborhood!* and *Christmas of Swing*. Other recent credits include: *Smokey Joe's Cafe* (Ordway) and *Benny in In The Heights* (Adrienne Arsht Center). He

is a proud graduate of the University Of Miami BFA program. He would like to thank his parents, History Theatre and all those who helped him on this journey. Special thanks to Harrison David Rivers for writing the play and to Robin Hickman-Winfield who's been a blessing to collaborate with.



PEARCE BUNTING* **Ensemble**

Pearce is delighted to be back to work, to be doing that work at History Theatre and to be part of such an extraordinary ensemble and collaboration. Past shows at History Theatre include: *Radio Man*, *The Things They Carried*, *Dance 'Til You Drop*, *All The Way* and *The Great Society*. Pearce

has lived in the Twin Cities since 2010 and has also appeared at The Open Eye Figure Theatre, Theatre Novi Most, Ten Thousand Things, Theatre Latte Da, Park Square and CTC. He also hosts *Growing Up Naked*, a podcast with his child, Milo, an upfront and honest conversation between a 63 year old father and his 17 year old kid, available on podcast platforms everywhere.



DARNELL DAVIS **Music Director/Pianist**

Named one of *Essence Magazine's* "Top 15 Gospel Artists to watch for in 2014," Darnell Davis is a gospel performer, songwriter and producer. Davis, a 3x Grammy Award nominee, a Dove Award Nominee, and Stellar Award winner from Minneapolis, has written and produced for

the Legendary Pastor Shirley Caesar, The Sounds Of Blackness, Ricky Dillard, Stokely, Mint Condition, James Gear & Company, and Ann Nesby just to name a few. He has also been featured at The Lincoln Center in New York City In 2017 Davis and The Remnant released their fifth project "Live Again" which featured the Edwin Hawkins remake "Jesus I Love You" and the soulful "He Did It". In 2019 Davis released his first solo project "Another Part Of Me" which debut #13 on billboard charts and climbed to #7. In Aug 2020 Darnell Davis & The Remnant released their

latest project, "Psalms Of Revival". Which debut in the top 20 on the Nielsen Charts. Most recently Davis and The Remnant released their latest single "I Won't Give up/Change Your Situation" featuring Michael Lampkin and Angel Woods. Darnell Davis and The Remnant continue to revive and inspire people of varied cultures and backgrounds through song.



DARIUS DOTCH* **Ensemble**

Ivey Award-winning actor/hip-hop artist Darius is thrilled to return to History Theatre! Other History Theatre productions include: *A Civil War Christmas* and *Lombardi*. Recent credits include: *Skeleton Crew* (Yellow Tree Theater); *Pipeline and Detroit 67* (Penumbra); *A*

Raisin in the Sun and *The Color Purple* (Park Square Theatre); *Intimate Apparel* (Ten Thousand Things); *Bars and Measures* (Jungle Theatre); *Akeelah and the Bee* (Children's Theatre Company); *Colossal* (Mixed Blood Theatre); and *Marcus or the Secret of Sweet* (Ivey Award, Best Ensemble), *The Road Weeps the Well Runs Dry* and *Broke-ology* (Pillsbury House Theatre).



IVORY DOUBLETTE* **Ensemble**

Ivory is grateful to make her History Theatre debut with Parks. She has performed regionally with MainStreet Theatre in Rancho Cucamonga, CA; The Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire, IL; and locally with Frank Theater, Jungle Theater, Latté Da, Penumbra Theatre,

Ordway Center, Park Square Theatre, The Playwrights Center, History Comes to Life, Intermedia Arts, Children's Theatre Company, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres, Old Log Theatre, Nautilus Music-Theater, Interact Theater, and Illusion Theatre. Ivory has a Bachelors in Theatre Arts from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She is an AEA member. Is. 43:19.



DARRICK MOSLEY* **Ensemble**

Darrick is thrilled to be back on the History Theatre's stage. He has performed in History Theatre productions of *The Great Society*, *All The Way*, and *The Highwaymen*. A native of Mansfield, Louisiana, he attended the historic Grambling State University where he received a B.A. degree

in Speech & Theatre. He was recently seen in Pillsbury House Theatre's *What To Send Up When It Goes Down*. Some credits include: *Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Yellow Tree Theatre); *Jitney*, *The Ballad of Emmett Till* (Penumbra Theatre); *A Raisin in the Sun* (Park Square Theatre); *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Choir Boy* (Guthrie Theater); *P. Valley*, *Colossal* (Mixed Blood Theatre). He has appeared in numerous voice over projects, films and commercials. Up next: *A Raisin in the Sun* at Guthrie Theater. Darrick dedicates his performances to the loving memory of his grandmother, Pearl Brown.



MIKELL SAPP* **Ensemble**

Mikell is the 2015 Ivey Award winner for Emerging Artist from Phenix City, AL and a proud graduate of Alabama State University. He has been blessed to work at numerous theaters in the Twin Cities and at History Theatre in *A Crack in the Sky*. Recent productions include: *What*

To Send Up When It Goes Down (Pillsbury) and *Skeleton Crew* (Yellow Tree), *Broke-Ology* (Pillsbury); *The Ballad of Emmett Till* (Penumbra); *The Snowy Day* (Children's Theatre Company); *Pussy Valley* (Mixed Blood); *Hot Asian Doctor Husband* (Theater Mu) and many more. He is grateful for the opportunity to be doing this play, with this cast, in this theater, for all of you.



JAMES A. WILLIAMS*
Pigeon Man

James is thrilled to return to History Theatre, where he was last seen in *George Bonga: Black Voyager*. A founding member of Penumbra Theatre Company, James has been regular on Twin Cities stages for over four decades. He originated the role of Roosevelt Hicks on Broadway in

August Wilson's *Radio Golf*. Regionally, James has performed at Center Stage, The Goodman Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Mark Taper Forum, Seattle Rep, Syracuse Stage and Yale Repertory Theater. He's appeared Off Broadway in August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* and Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* He received an Ivey Award in 2015 for *Marcus or the Secret of Sweet* and in 2008 for his portrayal of Troy Maxson in *Fences*. A two-time *City Pages* Best Actor, he was named 2008 "Artist of the Year" by the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. James is a 2015 McKnight Fellow at the Playwright's Center, a 2015 Fox Acting Fellow and 2018 Ten Chimneys Fellow.

UNDERSTUDIES



REX ISOM JR
Ensemble (Understudy)

Rex is returning to History Theatre after his recent performances in the virtual production *Not in our Neighborhood!*, and several stage productions, including *A Great Society* and *The Highwaymen*. Rex was also Tom Robinson in *To Kill A Mockingbird* in 1997 and 1998. He

has performed at several Twin Cities' venues over the last 30 years, including Penumbra and CTC. He has also performed improvisation comedy for 25 years. He currently performs and is the Tech Director at Stevie Ray's Comedy Cabaret. You might see Rex in a commercial here or there as well. He's very proud to be a History Theatre recurring performer!



IAN MCCARTHY
Ensemble (Understudy)

Ian is an actor, writer, musician, and New Orleans native who has been establishing his roots in the Twin Cities since graduating from the U of M/Guthrie B.F.A. in 2019. He and his band, Dr. Goon and the Daily Tribune, draw on classical training to bring heightened theatricality

to their music. Through vivid storytelling, fueled by the voices of jazz and hip-hop, Dr. Goon speaks on themes of justice, love, loss, and the innumerable forms of medicine. Ian's primary drive as an artist is to upset the boundary between theatre and music, exploring the untapped frontiers of their intersection, and finding how each can inform and enrich the other.



RANDY SCHMELING*
Ensemble (Understudy)

Previous History Theatre credits include: *The Great Society*, *Lord Gordon Gordon*, *Orphan Train*, *Axel and His Dog*, 1968, *Working Boys Band*, *Hiding in the Open*, *Dirty Business* and *The Christmas Schooner*. Recent credits include: *Annie*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *White Christmas*,

Pirates of Penzance and *Damn Yankees* (Ordway Center); *A Night in Olympus* by Hatcher/Poling and *Only One Sophie* (Illusion Theater); *Baskerville* (Sidekick Theatre); *The Rocky Horror Show* (The Lab Theater); and *Urinetown* (Jungle Theater). Upcoming shows: *All Is Calm International Tour*.



MONICA E. SCOTT*
Ensemble (Understudy)

Monica was last seen making her debut at History Theatre in *Not For Sale*. She was a Company Member at CTC, performing in a few of her favorite productions *Once on This Island*, *Lion*, *Witch and Wardrobe* and Disney's *Aladdin, Jr.* She has also appeared on stage at several other theatres in

Minneapolis and in a short film, *Take Care of Yourself*. Monica is grateful for the love and support from family and friends.

The Creative Team

HARRISON DAVID RIVERS
Playwright

Harrison is an award-winning playwright, librettist and screenwriter based in St. Paul, Minnesota. His plays include *A Crack in the Sky* (History Theatre), *the bandaged place* (Playwrights' Center, Roundabout), *Where Storms Are Born* (Williamstown), *This Bitter Earth* (Playwrights' Center, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Penumbra, About Face, Theater Alliance, Richmond Triangle Players, The Road, InterAct, Theatre-Works Hartford), *When Last We Flew* (NYFringe, Diversionary, TheatreLAB, Real Live Arts, Out Front), *To Let Go and Fall* (Theater Latté Da) and we are continuous (Playwrights' Center, Williamstown). He's received commissions from Roundabout, Yale Rep, Transport Group, Penumbra, Theatre Latté Da, the Public Theater and La Jolla, among others. His television credits include Peacock's "One of Us is Lying" and "The Nevers" at HBO, where he is also adapting E. Lynn Harris' novel "Invisible Life". Harrison sits on the Board of Directors of The Movement Theatre Company and the Playwrights' Center. He is a graduate of Kenyon College and the Columbia School for the Arts.

TALVIN WILKS*
Director

Talvin is a playwright, director and dramaturg. Since 2014, some of his most acclaimed directorial work has been centered at Penumbra Theatre Company - *The Ballad of Emmett Till* and *Benevolence* by Ifa Bayeza, *This Bitter Earth* by Harrison David Rivers, *The Owl Answers* by Adrienne Kennedy and *The White Card* by Claudia Rankine. As a dramaturg he has collaborated on numerous award-winning projects with nationally renowned companies such as Ping Chong and Company, Bebe Miller Company, Urban Bush Women, Camille A. Brown and Dancers, and the stage adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* at the Apollo Theatre. Upcoming world premiere projects include directing *Cannabis! A Viper Vaudeville* by Baba Israel and PARKS by Harrison David Rivers, and dramaturgy for *Dreaming Zenile* by Somi Kakoma, *Haint Blu* with Urban Bush Women, and the Broadway bound for *colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf* directed and choreographed by Camille A. Brown. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Theatre Arts and Dance Department,

University of Minnesota/Twin Cities and is a 2020 recipient of the McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship.

SEITU JONES

Scenic Designer

Seitu is a multidisciplinary artist, advocate and maker based in St. Paul, Minnesota. Working between the arts and public spheres, Jones channels the spirit of radical social movements into experiences that foster critical conversations and nurture more just and vibrant communities from the soil up. He is recognized as a dynamic collaborator and a creative force for civic engagement.

KATHY MAXWELL

Video Designer

Kathy has designed video and lights for several Twin Cities' arts organizations including Penumbra Theatre, Mixed Blood Theatre, Open Eye Figure Theatre, Children's Theatre Company, History Theatre, the Ordway and the Guthrie Theatre. Recent design credits: *This Bitter Earth*, *Benevolence*, *Mamma Mia!* and *Ride the Cyclone*. She received her M.F.A in theatrical design from The University of Minnesota and her B.A. in theatre and dance from the University of Texas.

MERRITT RODRIGUEZ

Lighting Designer

Merritt is a Lighting Designer and Production Artist based in the Twin Cities. Working in theater, dance and live events, she enjoys collaborating to create environments for public discourse and celebration. Merritt is excited to return to the amazing History Theatre for her fifth production after the long global hiatus. She has enjoyed working with many fantastic companies across the Twin Cities, and her previous work locally has been seen on stages across the Twin Cities including History Theatre, Penumbra, The Cowles Center, The Ritz, The Southern Theater, The Tek Box, The Dowling Studio, Stages Theater, and Intermedia Arts.

DAMEUN STRANGE

Sound Designer

Dameun is a sound artist, multi-instrumentalist, and award winning composer whose conceptual works are focused on stories of the African diaspora, often exploring afro surrealist and afrofuturist themes. Dameun is compelled to express through sound and poetry, the beauty and resilience of the Black experience, digging into a pantheon of ancestors to tell stories of triumph, while connecting the past, present, and future. Dameun has worked with such artists as J. Otis Powell and Shá Cage and has been a featured performer on concerts celebrating the work of Thurston Moore and Henry Threadgill. He is a 2018 recipient of the ACF | Create Award and 2019 Jerome Hill Fellowship. Dameun is currently the Director of Community and Belonging at ACF and lives in Saint Paul, MN with his wife, Corina and son, Ezra. Like any good nerd, he enjoys a good sci-fi story and has a soft spot for anything related to astrophysics.

SARAH BAHR

Costume Designer

Sarah is a freelance Costume and Scenic Designer for theater, dance, and opera. She is thrilled to be making her History Theatre debut. Her past work has been featured with companies including the Minnesota Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Jungle Theater, Trademark Theater, Ten Thousand Things Theater, Mixed Blood Theater, Penumbra Theater, Guthrie Theater, and Vail Dance Festival. In addition to serving as Design Faculty at Augsburg University and the University of Minnesota, she advocates for creating space and meaningful mentorship opportunities for emerging

theater makers, along with equity among theater designers and technicians. She holds a Design and Technical Theatre MFA from the University of Minnesota, a Studio Art MA from New York University, and a Design and Technical Theatre BFA from University of Minnesota Duluth.

ABBEE WARMBOE

Properties Designer

Abbee is a freelance props designer based in Minneapolis. Having grown up in Minnesota she is happy to have made a career for herself here, working on over 200 productions with 38 different companies over the last decade. Previous work at History Theatre includes *Gloria: A Life*, *Lord Gordon Gordon*, *The Highwaymen*, *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*, among others. Recently, her work could be seen with Theater Latte Da, Penumbra, MN Opera, Mixed Blood, Old Log, Theater Mu, Pillsbury House, Ten Thousand Thing, among others. Abbee was a 2020-21 McKnight Theater Artist Fellow at the Playwrights' Center.

LESLIE PARKER

Choreographer

Leslie, a St. Paul Rondo native, is a dance artist with home art bases in Brooklyn, NY and in the Twin Cities. Her work was recently awarded by National Dance Project (2021) and National Performance Network Creation Fund (2020). She is an Outstanding Performance Bessie Award recipient and an inaugural Jerome Hill Foundation Artist Fellow (2019-2021). A few of her credits include choreographer for *Jimmy & Lorraine: A Musings* by Talvin Wilkes; *Collidescope 4.0 adventures in Pre and Post Racial America* by Ping Chong and Talvin Wilkes; and Penumbra Theatre's 45th production of *Black Nativity*. For more information go to www.leslieparkerdance.com

LAURA TOPHAM*

Stage Manager

Laura is excited to be back at History Theatre for her second production. Previously she was the stage manager for *Not For Sale*. Other stage management credits include over 20 productions with Park Square Theatre including *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Jefferson Township Sparkling Junior Talent Pageant*, *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Other credits include *Romeo and Juliet* with Collide Theatrical Dance Company, *Candide* and *Beautiful Thing* with Theatre Latte Da, and *Follies* with Artistry. Next up is *A Raisin in the Sun* at the Guthrie Theatre.

HALEY WALSH*

Stage Manager

Haley has stage managed at over a dozen theaters around the Twin Cities including Mixed Blood Theatre, Theater Mu, Pillsbury House Theatre, Park Square Theater, Minnesota Jewish Theatre (now Six Points), and Lyric Arts. This is her 16th show with History Theatre.

KYLA MOLONEY

Assistant Stage Manager

Kyla is thrilled to be back to History Theatre! History Theatre productions include *Teen Idol: The Bobby Vee Story*, *Orphan Train*, *Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*, and *Stewardess!* Theatre Latte Da: *All is Calm*, *Chicago*, and *To Let go and Fall*; Music Theatre Wichita: *Grease*; Theater Mu: *Today is My Birthday*; Park Square Theater: *Diary of Anne Frank*, *Sometimes There's Wine*, *Baskerville*, (and more); as well as production work with Artistry, CTC, CLIMB, Guthrie, Ordway, Penumbra, and Zephyr Theatre.

SPECIAL THANKS

Jungle Theater, Augsburg University Theater Department

* denotes a Member of Actors' Equity Association



RICK SERRA

MINNESOTA ARTISTS
INSPIRED BY GORDON PARKS
SEITU KEN JONES

**I was lucky enough to have met
Gordon Parks on several occasions
when he visited St. Paul.**

We all know Gordon Parks the great photographer, writer, poet, filmmaker, and composer, but seldom is anything written about him being the epitome of cool. While I still aspire to be a working and thriving artist, I wish I could be as cool as he was. I was

always in awe of his character and persona. There is a universal aesthetic of cool, hipness and grace that Gordon Parks maintained and everyone who met him experienced. A coolness that we would recognize as befitting an African prince or king. To overcome the challenging circumstances of his early life in Fort Scott and St. Paul he had to demonstrate and maintain the ability to be resilient, collected and forward thinking, all the foundation of the aesthetic of the cool. Whenever I met him or saw him, even in his tennis clothes he was cool. Many times with an ascot, tailored clothes, that fantastic mustache and that comportment, that was not a swagger. . . he exhibited extreme confidence. Gordon Parks sent Richard Roundtree, the original Shaft, not to a costume designer, but to Gordon's personal tailor to be fitted for the role. Richard Roundtree maintains that Gordon was the original Shaft. I still wish I could be that cool, but really wish that everyone could maintain that coolness and composure of Gordon Parks.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Seitu Jones has created over 40 large-scale public artworks. *Parks* is Seitu's first design for History Theatre. He is a company member of Penumbra Theater and working in the Twin Cities has created scenic designs and set elements for Pangea Theater, Guthrie Theater, Children's Theater, Frank Theater, 10,000 Things and Steppingstone Theater. Seitu was awarded a TCG designer Fellowship.

A 2013 Joyce Award, from Chicago's Joyce Foundation allowed Seitu to develop CREATE: The Community Meal, a dinner for 2,000 people at a table a half a mile long. Seitu is the recipient of the 2017 Distinguished Artist Award from the McKnight Foundation and his 2017 HeARTside Community Meal in Grand Rapids, MI was awarded the Grand Juried Prize for ArtPrize Nine.

A recently retired faculty member of Goddard College in Port Townsend, WA. Seitu has a BS in Landscape Design and a MLS in Environmental History.



MINNESOTA ARTISTS
INSPIRED BY GORDON PARKS
DANIEL PIERCE BERGIN

His geographical reach from his roots in Minnesota and the Midwest and then to DC, New York, and beyond, impacted generations and reverberates still. He made me, and all those who try to redefine the myths of Americanism, possible.

Through Gordon Parks eyes, which were extraordinary, we saw reality raw and unfiltered. He showed us the world as it is, not how we want it to be.

His perspective was inside out, rather than imposed. His life experiences enabled him to relate to those he photographed. He pictured an America that America did not want to see. He showed us who we are.

To achieve the heights he did, as a filmmaker, author, poet, musician, composer, and photographer, well, maybe the short answer is that he was a creative genius. A pioneering, *sui generis* artist, who made art that mattered. And matters still.

Gordon Parks life was intrinsically dramatic. His young life, chronicled in *The Learning Tree* and *A Choice of Weapons*, was full of highs and lows, wonder and weariness. Even before he shattered Hollywood's color line as its first Black director, Parks had worked his unique artistic alchemy in a particularly cinematic way.

His early photography offered character-based stories full of theatricality. His images presented layers of meaning, backstory, struggle and progress. The way his camera unflinchingly gazed on injustice, poverty, dirty cops, or strode side by side with Black revolutionaries and Black luminaries conveyed tragedy, redemption, and countless 'hero journeys.' All of that visual drama, along with his polished prose, made him a natural for the ultimate art, cinema. His films are few but manifold. And they remain a testament to his artistry but also his commitment to creating inclusive, equitable creative space.

It was the singular greatest moment of my work to interview him for my first documentary, *Literature & Life*, to hear his stories of family and be that close to his creative fire. His films, photography, and autobiographies have inspired me to continue to engage in what he called the ‘sweet labor’ of filmmaking and to do it in a way that furthers his belief in shining a light on those who live in the shadows and capturing beauty and humanity to inspire.

With so much drama in his nearly century long life, it is fitting that Gordon’s own story now comes to the stage. It’s also apt coda that this piece of theatre has been touched by talented creative disciples, including local family and artist-activists who are carrying on his legacy, wielding their own weapons of choice.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Daniel Pierce Bergin is a filmmaker whose work centers the power of people, place, and the past. The Twin Cities PBS Executive Producer is a winner of 20 regional Emmy Awards. His notable productions include *Jim Crow of the North*, *Lost Twin Cities 5*, *North Star: Minnesota’s Black Pioneers*; *Homeless Youth: Finding Home*, and *Out North: MNLGBTQ History*. His documentary *With Impunity: Men & Gender Violence* was named ‘Best Documentary of 2012’ by *Mpls/St. Paul Magazine*. In the 1990s, Daniel Bergin co-produced the ground breaking ‘Don’t Believe the Hype,’ tpt’s award winning youth media program.

The filmmaker’s narrative films have screened at the American Film Institute, KQED San Francisco’s Living Room Film Festival, the Martha’s Vineyard African American Film Festival, The Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival, The Chicago International Children’s Film Festival, and the Hollywood Black Film Festival.

The Minneapolis native and University of Minnesota graduate has served as a director on the boards of several community media organizations including FilmNorth and PollenMidwest. Daniel has been an adjunct instructor at St. Cloud State University and lectured and presented in countless classrooms and community settings. He has been recognized as a MN State Arts Board Fellow, a *City Pages* Artist of the Year, and was awarded a Bush Leadership Fellowship for his work in community media.



MINNESOTA ARTISTS
INSPIRED BY GORDON PARKS
WING YOUNG HUIE

One of the first photography books I ever purchased, in my twenties, was from Time-Life and eventually I collected 13 photo books in that series. I have them still. They were my first bible.

Through them I became better acquainted with Gordon's extraordinary photographic essays and his portraits of cultural figures such as Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. I also took special note of his hyphenated status: African-American. As a Chinese-American, born and raised in Duluth, it took me a while to understand just how much weight that little hyphen carried. Growing up, I had few realistic Asian role models who weren't kung fu stars.

I had made up my mind many times to become a photographic artist. Throughout my twenties, I pursued a freelance photography career but made most of my living as a bartender. I knew what I wanted but lacked the conviction to wholeheartedly pursue it. It wasn't until my mid-thirties, when I started photographing the diverse Frogtown neighborhood in St. Paul, the same streets where Gordon walked, that I finally felt I was fulfilling my destiny.

After two years of photographing the everyday realities of hundreds of Frogtown residents, I created a street installation of 173 photographs, all 11x14 inches that I had printed in my darkroom, pinned to blocks of Styrofoam protected only with shrink-wrapped film, exhibited on a grassy corner lot in Frogtown. This was the start of my career as an artist. The year was 1995.

Later that year, I was working on my book of the project, to be published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press, when someone at the Press suggested we ask Gordon Parks to endorse the book. Because Gordon was coming to the Twin Cities for a presentation at the Walker Art Center, and there was the possibility a meeting could be arranged.

The idea of asking this artistic polymath to write something complimentary about my initial photographic foray seemed a bit ludicrous. Here was a true giant. My life shared some interesting parallels with his photographic and personal odyssey, but it paled in comparison. But then, whose wouldn't?

Some of the more incidental coincidences: Gordon played semiprofessional basketball, a sport that has been a lifelong passion of mine, although I never made it past the B team in high school. He was an accomplished musician and composer, while I played the oboe in high school and quit after playing at my graduation ceremony because the school owned the instrument. He photographed for *Vogue* and I was an aspiring fashion photographer who occasionally bought copies of the magazine. And, more importantly, we are both self-taught photographers.

Finally, miraculously, my meeting with Gordon was arranged, and one of the highlights of my professional career was to sit next to him at a large dinner table with his family and friends at a restaurant in Minneapolis. He put me at ease immediately. Everything about him seemed indelible: his remarkable face, the stories he told in his gravelly velvet voice, his slightly mischievous tone. He exuded a sparkly presence and humanity that I have seldom witnessed since.

Several days later, as I waited in a long line with other well-wishers at another Gordon Parks event, this time at the Minnesota Historical Society, a staffer handed me a piece of paper and said, "Gordon says he hopes that this will do." On that piece of paper, in his handwriting, were these words: "Wing Young Huie's book *Frogtown* is a penetrating social document with an important message that serves Minnesota's history and that of our entire nation as well. It should be read and observed again and again."

Gordon, of course, could have been describing his own work. His geographical reach from his roots in Minnesota and the Midwest and then to DC, New York, and beyond, impacted generations and reverberates still. He made me, and all those who try to redefine the myths of Americanism, possible.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Celebrated photographer Wing Young Huie has captured the complex cultural realities of American society for over 40 years. His photos have been shown in international museums, but his best known works, *Lake Street USA* and the *University Avenue Project*, were epic public art projects that transformed Minneapolis and Saint Paul thoroughfares into six-mile photo galleries, reflecting the everyday lives of thousands of its citizens.

The *StarTribune* named him "Artist of the Year" in 2000 and in 2018 he was honored with the McKnight Distinguished Artist Award, the first photographer ever to receive the award in its 23-year history. His eighth and most personal book, *Chinese-ness: The Meanings of Identity and the Nature of Belonging* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, fall 2018) won a Minnesota Book Award and a Northeastern Minnesota Book Award.

It is in classrooms and non-arts venues where his work has been most impactful, as he's given over a thousand presentations to audiences of all kinds—including K-12 classrooms, colleges, museums, non-profits, corporations, and places of worship—showing the various ways he's photographically engaged thousands of strangers.



FROM THE EDUCATION MANAGER

Welcome to History Theatre for this wonderful production of PARKS. Taking a look at a great artist in his youth and adolescence is such a joy, and it reminds me of the power the arts can have on young lives. In the Education Department, working with youth is a cornerstone of what we do.

This spring we hope to be back in classrooms (fingers crossed) to continue ***Seats to Stage*** program in person. For over 10 years History Theatre has sent teaching artists into metropolitan area schools to encourage young people to think of their lives as stories worth telling, to see their everyday choices as part of the story they are writing. After 20 hours of classwork, these students will present their own experiences with students from other schools on the History Theatre stage.

The work is invariable moving, and the connections they make with each other are powerful. Hopefully we plant the seed that being the one to tell your own story holds great power. We'll keep you updated on how the program is going.

We also celebrated our long running partnership with Vail Place which marked its eighth annual presentation this February. Much like *Seats to Stage*, our work here is focused on highlighting the lived experience of the folks in the class. Everyone in the group at Vail Place lives with a mental health diagnosis, so the stories include some challenges they face that others may not immediately understand. This year we featured monologues, poems, essays, and songs that not only showcased the amazing creativity of the members but also served as a reminder that their lives and ours share many of the same joys and losses. Incredible work, as always.

Finally, I want to tell you about our ***Living Through History*** class which started almost two years ago as a response to the beginning of the pandemic. Open to anyone in our community (and that includes you!) This writing group tell stories of getting through hard times, celebrating great times, and also support each other by bearing witness. It has been a great balm since it began and shows no sign of letting up. We always welcome new members (space permitting), so if you're interested in joining, shoot me an email, and we can talk.

Thanks, as always, for being a supporter of the theater, and I look forward to seeing you again soon!

Paul de Cordova
pdecordova@historytheatre.com

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