LWRD

Lila Wallace-
Reader's Digest Fund

August 1996

Building Audiences

STORIES FROM AMERICA'S THEATERS

What Theaters are Learning About the Role of Programming in Attracting Audiences

- Turning Up the House Lights:
  A Fresh Look at its Audiences Guides Freedom Theatre's Choices
- Repertorio Español's Recipe for Success:
  A Pinch of Research and Lots of Old-Fashioned Intuition
- Balancing Images: The "Burden of Representation"
- Are They Ready for This?
  Playreading Series Nurture New Works and New Audiences

Evaluation Update

Resources

Building Audiences

STORIES FROM AMERICA'S THEATERS

In 1991, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund launched a $25 million initiative to help 42 nonprofit theaters around the country expand and diversify their audiences. *Building Audiences: Stories from America's Theaters* is designed to share lessons from the theaters taking part.

In this issue, theaters talk about strategies being used—from market research to free playreadings—to plan programming and select on-stage productions to attract audiences. As these stories reveal, no "magic bullet" works for everyone. Instead, theaters are responding to the tastes and interests of the people they've targeted through a variety of approaches.

What Theaters are Learning About The Role of Programming in Attracting Audiences

page 3 Turning Up the House Lights:
A Fresh Look at its Audiences Guides Freedom Theatre's Choices
After listening to what its audiences wanted, Freedom Theatre came up with plans for a new season. The result: ticket sales have never been better.

page 6 Repertorio Español's Recipe for Success:
A Pinch of Research and Lots of Old-Fashioned Intuition
Repertorio Español relies on a mix of demographic and product research, a history of service and artistic aesthetic to attract and hold on to audiences.

page 9 Balancing Images: The "Burden of Representation"
Theaters are finding that members of culturally specific groups they are trying to attract are particularly sensitive to how they are portrayed on stage, and what wins in the end are positive and balanced images. Alabama Shakespeare Festival, the Alliance Theatre Company and others describe how they're responding.

page 13 Are They Ready for This?
Playreading Series Nurture New Works and New Audiences
Free playreadings at Victory Gardens and Hartford Stage are helping the theaters give audiences a low-risk introduction and gauge reaction to what they're thinking about putting on stage.

page 17 Evaluation Update
To mine as many lessons as possible from its theater initiative, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund is underwriting an eight-year evaluation of the program. As part of its research, the evaluation team is focusing on the relationship between productions that appeal to target groups and the success of their overall audience building efforts.

page 18 Resources
Names and contact information for all theaters participating in the program.

Turning Up the House Lights

A Fresh Look at its Audiences Guides Freedom Theatre's Artistic Choices

Freedom Theatre listened carefully to what its audiences said they wanted and gave them a season they couldn't resist. The box office has never been busier. This African American theater took a hard look at the results of a community survey of Philadelphia audiences conducted for the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and set itself on a course to build a solid audience base before taking on any more artistic risks.

Philadelphia's Freedom Theatre has undergone great change in the three years since Walter Dallas was named artistic director. Construction is underway on a new 298-seat theater—three times the capacity of Freedom's current space—which is scheduled to be ready for the 1997-98 season. A new marketing and sales infrastructure was also forged to help Freedom build the audience it will need to support its new theater. That new administrative capability has brought change with it, too; and not just in the back office, but on stage.

When Jocelyn Russell joined Freedom Theatre as its new marketing director in early 1995, she found a report in her office on the Philadelphia Cultural Community Survey that AMS Planning & Research had conducted in 1993 as part of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund's evaluation of its theater program. She spent several days considering the results of the survey and their relevance to Freedom, one of the oldest African American theaters in the country. "This survey was like gold to me starting out as marketing director," Russell said, "because it was an attitude and usage study already done for us."

Dallas returned to the table resolved to stage work that would meet the interests of Freedom's target audience while maintaining his high standards of artistic quality.

The survey queried three main groups: African Americans who regularly attend cultural events, African Americans who don't attend and non-African Americans who regularly attend. It gathered demographic information on these people, then questioned them about their familiarity with Freedom and three other theaters in the city. The survey asked what kinds of events these people had attended at the theaters and their attitudes on available entertainment in Philadelphia.

What Russell found in the report was that Freedom's primary audience is 90 percent African American, 70 percent female, mostly single and over age 35, college educated, employed and relatively affluent. These people were quite specific about what they like. They said that when they go to the theater they want to see plays that are about them, and they want to be entertained and have fun. Plays featuring star talent and musicals appeal to them most. In the survey, they described themselves as sophisticated, moral and ethical, religious and very traditional. They appreciate plays they can bring friends, children and other family members to see.

As far as Russell could tell, this picture of Freedom's core audience did not fit the season in progress, and it showed in box office numbers. One of the plays, *Black Picture Show* by Bill Gunn, contained nudity and profanity. Others dealt with difficult subject matter, such as James Campbell's *Midnight Hour*, a one-man show about writer James Baldwin that touches on his rejection by the black civil rights movement because of his homosexuality. A new work by Sonia Sanchez was about her brother's absorption into New York's gay subculture and the spiraling AIDS epidemic.

In addition, Russell realized the theater was off course in its audience-development strategy. The five-year grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund was intended to help Freedom achieve its primary goal of broadening its African American audiences. Survey in hand, Russell discussed the

problem with the new director of constituent development, and it became clear to them that Freedom really needed to refocus its efforts to identify new audiences within the African American community.

Russell found herself with the difficult task of having to tell her colleagues that their program selections were off the mark in relation to the theater's primary audience. "I sat down with Walter Dallas and the senior management staff and we reviewed in painful detail the results of that survey," Russell recounted. "I think they had read it before, but not in the way I presented it: 'This study is telling us what the audience wants to see.'

"The challenge I presented the staff with—and I guess this is something all theaters can relate to—was that we could pack the box office with work that appeals to our mass audience and earn a lot of revenue or we could do more difficult work and have to rely on grants to survive. They, of course, wanted to know why we couldn't do both. After taking three or four days to absorb this new information, there was for the first time a big shift in the thinking about what kind of work was going to be put on in the future."

"Before, I was trying to put together a season for an audience I didn't know. I was doing theater I liked and guessing what the audience might like."

Dallas returned to the table resolved to stage work that would meet the interests of Freedom's target audience while also maintaining his high standards of artistic quality. He presented a blueprint for the 1995-96 season that seemed remarkably on target. The proposed season offered all the right ingredients—lots of music, humor, some star talent, shows about women and some family entertainment. The artistic and marketing staff was behind him, but the proof would be in the response of focus groups.

For the first time, under Russell's direction, Freedom test-marketed its season of four plays before going public with it. To determine how to accurately position the season for the target audience, Russell developed several concepts for each play in the form of print ad copy and presented it to two focus groups. The focus groups responded enthusiastically to the season and provided feedback that proved valuable in promoting each of the productions. Freedom was ready to unveil its new season.

The season opened in the fall with *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine*, a play by Norma Jean Darden in which the former fashion model tells stories from a cookbook she wrote inspired by her family. The show, which originated at New York's American Place Theater and was directed by Josh Broder, was performed in a cabaret setting. A meal from the cookbook was served during the show and audience members were given the chance to tell stories about cooking and their families, too. Although the production received mixed reviews, which was reflected by a somewhat sluggish box office, Russell said the audience loved the interactive aspect of the play.

Langston Hughes' *Black Nativity* was featured as the Christmas show and proved to be a blockbuster in revenue, publicity and audience response. This retelling of the nativity story from an African American cultural perspective is filled with gospel music and African drumming and dance. Russell describes it as "a huge spectacle, a fun and exhausting church experience of a play." The show had tremendous word-of-mouth appeal and played to capacity audiences. Although Freedom was not able to track repeat business, audience members expressed through letters to the theater and in conversations with staff a wish to return with other family members and friends during the three-and-a-half-week run.

Freedom's winter offering was also a hit. *Over Forty, a* cabaret musical about four African American single women who are over 40-years-old,

spoke straight to the hearts of both the target audience and the local theater critics. “It was the perfect combination of everything the research told us,” Russell exclaimed. “The audience had a grand old time. They ate and drank, laughed and sang.” The show was written by Celeste Walker of the Billie Holiday Theater in Brooklyn, where it had previously been produced; music and lyrics were by Weldon Irvine, and Marjorie Moon directed. The production subsequently moved to New York and enjoyed a successful run at the Billie Holiday Theater.

The season wrapped up with a revival of the hit Broadway musical *Purlie* by Ossie Davis. The play tapped memories of its core audience, many of whom may have traveled to New York as youngsters to see the original production. The show starred Clarice Taylor, best known as Grandma Huxtable on “The Cosby Show,” and it was directed by Walter Dallas.

Overall, the season was a smash success. Ticket sales doubled over the previous season and the theater operated at an average 70 percent capacity, compared to 55 percent last year.

Planning is underway for next season, and Russell insists that it will offer audiences “even more exciting” fare. *Black Nativity* will return as an annual event. The season opens with the *Pool Room*. A cabaret show from Chicago, *The Trial of One Short-Sighted Woman Versus Manny Louise and Safreeth Mae w*ill run in February. And Dallas has negotiated with Orion Pictures for the exclusive stage rights to *Cooley High*, a classic black movie from the ‘70s. But, according to Russell, these works will be tested with focus groups again like last season before making final plans.

From the artistic director’s chair

Walter Dallas Finds New Challenge to Creativity

Many artistic directors might balk at the marketing-driven approach to programming taken by Freedom Theatre. But Walter Dallas doesn’t find himself limited or compromised. In fact, the former head of the University of the Arts’ theater school says he’s found renewed gratification and a sense of relief in season planning.

“It really satisfies my producer’s hat,” Dallas said. “Before I was trying to put together a season for an audience I didn’t know. I was doing theater I liked and guessing what the audience might like. Now it’s not so much of a crap shoot. I know the parameters, and it’s forcing me to be creative in new ways.”

In addition to his work in Philadelphia, Dallas receives many invitations to direct all over the country. He says he enjoys the variety because each city presents its own unique creative challenges. “My audience in Philadelphia is somewhat narrower in its tastes than audiences in cities such as New York and Chicago, where I also do a lot of work.”

Upcoming projects include a stint at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, N.J., where he will direct a new work he discovered in residence last summer at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center. That play also will be produced at the Long Wharf Theater in New Haven, Conn. In addition, he will direct *Having Our Say* at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles and *Seeking the Genesis* at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre.

Freedom Theatre also gives him the opportunity to take artistic flight in two new series. FreedomFest is a festival of staged readings of new works and other plays Dallas is considering for production. It has featured works by such playwrights as Leslie Lee, Ntozake Shange and Sonia Sanchez. FreedomSpeaks provides a forum for audiences to hear playwrights, directors and other theater professionals talk about their work.

Repertorio Español's Recipe for Success

A Pinch of Research and Lots of Old-Fashioned Intuition

Repertorio Español's emphasis on demographic and product research, its 28-year history of leadership and a certain reliance on aesthetic instinct are the main ingredients of an approach to programming that has made this Spanish-language theater so successful in attracting and holding new audiences over the years. In planning its seasons, the theater understands that nationality-specific productions are the key to attracting Hispanic audiences and introducing them to the theater. Once the initial barrier has been broken down, new audiences are more likely to return and try something else—maybe even a play from another part of the Latino world.

Repertorio Español prides itself on taking artistic risks, and in the early 1980s it took one that turned out to be particularly important to its future. The theater staged some zarzuelas, Spanish operettas that were enjoying renewed popularity. The performances sold well, but not to the theater's mainstay Puerto Rican audience. Numerous Colombians turned out, confirming the theater's hunch that the demographics of Hispanic New York were changing. Puerto Ricans and Cubans were being joined in increasing numbers by their island neighbors from the Dominican Republic and by South and Central Americans.

> ***"All the market research and focus groups in the world won't help if you don't believe in a play. It doesn't mean not knowing your audiences, but they can't be the end-all decision makers. I think the theater and the community must have a dialogue, but you have to lead the community not just follow."***

Since then, Repertorio Español has kept a trained eye on the shifting demographics of Hispanic New York. It has succeeded in drawing audiences from the city's diverse Hispanic communities by mounting a wide range of Spanish-language productions that appeal to specific nationalities. The theater's audience comprises 20 nationalities and varying economic classes, educational backgrounds and political outlooks. "We've learned the only thing that unites the Hispanic community in New York is the Spanish language," said Robert Weber Federico, one of the theater's producers.

The 28-year-old repertory company, located in the Gramercy Park area of Manhattan, has a 144-seat theater that plays to 70 percent capacity 250 performances a year. Most of the works in the theater's current repertory have received rave reviews not only in the Spanish media, but in such mainstream press as *The New York Times, Daily News* and *Village Voice*. Now in the midst of a five-year grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund to attract new Latino immigrant audiences and English-speaking Hispanics, Repertorio Español has been mounting a variety of productions to increase the attendance of Argentine, Colombian and Dominican audiences, as well as second- and third-generation Cubans and Puerto Ricans. Its efforts in these areas have met with great success. By the end of the second year of the grant, the theater had increased its total audience by 17 percent over the 1993 baseline—more than half its goal for the grant period.

Repertorio Español has achieved these successes by using informal demographic and product research rather than formal market studies to learn what its audiences want. While staff members daily scour the business pages of *The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times* and *Crain's New York Business* hoping to glean information on changes and trends in the Hispanic market, the theater maintains a respectful distance in surveying its own audiences and avoids asking them culturally sensitive questions about income and education.

"The Hispanic community is often portrayed as being low-income and having little education,"

explained Federico. “It’s true a good part of our audience has less education and income than the typical New York theatergoer, but we don’t want to raise those questions in the theater.”

Nevertheless, Repertorio Español does not miss an opportunity to ask audience members and callers to the theater their nationality so it can keep track of who’s attending and whether it’s drawing the interest of target audiences. Audience members receive comment cards on which they’re asked their nationality, gender, profession, some questions about how they heard about the play and what attracted them to it. Management and administrative staff keep a watchful eye on the audiences too and make note of gender, age, race, nationality and, of course, the response to the work.

“Beyond that,” Federico said, “I think there’s a danger of doing too much market research. All the market research and focus groups in the world won’t help if you don’t believe in a play. It doesn’t mean not knowing your audiences, but they can’t be the end-all decision makers. I think the theater and the community must have a dialogue, but you have to lead the community not just follow.”

While Federico shuns the idea of conducting much formal market research, he and founding colleagues artistic director Rene Buch and executive producer Gilberto Zaldivar seem to take for granted an implicit understanding they’ve gained about their audiences from working together almost the entire life of Repertorio Español. They know that the experience of coming to the theater has to be enjoyable and unintimidating; audiences must feel comfortable sharing the experience with children and other family members; and stereotypes and vulgarities are unacceptable.

With those basic tenets in mind, Buch, Zaldivar and Federico begin planning a season by asking themselves, “Is there a potential audience we haven’t paid attention to?” At the outset of Repertorio Español’s Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund grant, when the theater felt it could expand its audiences among Argentines, Colombians and Dominicans, it tried to identify works that would appeal to those groups, while being artistically satisfying to the company. “We won’t do a play just to attract a target audience, but because we really want to do it and feel it’s something we can be proud of,” Federico stated.

Typically, the artistic staff does a considerable amount of informal “product” research before making any programming decisions. It immerses itself in the culture, history and theater traditions of the target nationality. Federico notes that while much has been written over the years on European and American theater, little has been published on Latin American theater traditions. So Repertorio Español’s research includes talking to artists, academics and theater companies from the country they’re interested in. Sometimes it involves travel to that country to see a work or meet a playwright or director.

Over the past two seasons, the theater has made several winning program selections to court its target audiences. It took three different approaches to selecting those works, which had a range of outcomes.

- Repertorio Español invited Jorge Ali Triana, an admired Colombian director, to mount a play of his choice. He selected *Innocent Erendira (La Candida Erendira)* by Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez, a work the theater had been interested in for a long time. Because of Márquez’s international renown, the play draws not only great numbers of Colombians, but a large crossover audience of other Hispanics and Anglo Americans. It’s likely to stay in the theater’s repertory for some time.

- A group of Argentine theater professionals visited Repertorio Español through the International Theater Institute and became very interested in arranging an exchange between the two countries. They suggested sending a company from Argentina to perform *The Old Servant (El Viejo Criado)*, a play by Roberto Cossa, whose work *The Grandmother (La Nonna)* had been an earlier hit at Repertorio Español. *La Nonna*, a hilarious social satire about a grandmother who eats the family out of house and home, became a long-running play for the theater, initially attracting

Argentines and then a large crossover audience. *The Old Servant*, by contrast, is extremely local in its subject matter and cultural references. It had a limited run of 14 performances and attracted a narrower audience than *La Nonna*, but it allowed Repertorio Español to deepen its inroads in New York's Argentine community and significantly increase that audience.

- The theater went to the School of Dominican Studies at City University of New York for help in researching the history of Dominican music. Repertorio Español used the research to develop a musical review called *Dominican Serenade* (*Serenata Dominicana*), highlighting older genres of Dominican music probably not known to younger generations of Dominicans. While the music of the Dominican Republic doesn't have the kind of international popularity that Cuban and Mexican music have, *Dominican Serenade* has been very effective in attracting the target audience of Dominicans, many of whom are attending theater for the first time. Repertorio Español considers this experience the "point of entry" for new audiences. They become familiar with the theater's location, how they can buy tickets and what's expected of them as audience members. "This makes it easier to come back the second time," said Federico.

There will be plenty to lure them back to Repertorio Español next season. The theater is presenting a very comical two-character production of *Don Quixote* (*Don Quijote y Sancho Panza*) from the Dominican Republic. It is also producing *African Stories* (*Cuentos Negros*), an original program of stories, music and dance from the African-based religions of the Caribbean. The work is drawn from the 1920s and '30s writings of Cuban anthropologist Lydia Cabrera and is expected to have crossover appeal with Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Venezuelans and Colombians, as well as Dominicans.

Because Federico, Buch and Zaldivar insist on following aesthetic instinct to a large degree and not allowing the audience to prescribe or dictate what it wants to see on stage, they readily admit they often don't know what will be the outcome of their choices. "Sometimes we're certain we have a surefire hit and no one comes," Federico muses. "Other times we'll be working on a play we all love, but can't help wondering, 'Who in the world would want to see this besides us?' and then we're pleasantly surprised when it touches our audience and does really well at the box office."

Federico insists that such unexpected surprises are the payoff for not making assumptions about the audience. Last year, Repertorio Español mounted a new production of the 17th-century Spanish classic *Life Is a Dream* (*La Vida es Sueno*) by Pedro Calderon de la Barca, a contemporary of Shakespeare. The play, which remains in the theater's repertory through this year, is about a prince imprisoned since birth by his father. The prince struggles to the throne through many tests of his wisdom and ability to rule. *Life Is a Dream* has become a hit with Repertorio Español's high school audiences, predominantly second- and third-generation Dominicans and Puerto Ricans whose primary language is English. "Even though the kids have a problem with the language and the poetry," explained Federico, "they eat it up because of the vibrancy of the production—more so than the people who come to see it because it's a classic and feel they should."

Federico believes *Life Is a Dream* has been so successful with young audiences because the production has a brio not usually found in stagings of classical plays. The production has been simplified, taken out of period costume, given a fast, rhythmic pace and cast with young actors whose delivery is immediate and heartfelt, not at all recited. When students are excited by what they see at Repertorio Español, they often talk about it at home and become a bridge to their parents—another unanticipated outcome of the theater's programming. The theater now offers free admission on weekends to young people when accompanied by paying parents.

"We find time and again that you can't underestimate your audience," Federico reflected.

Balancing Images

The "Burden of Representation"

In mounting work to attract new audiences, resident and community-based theaters are finding that members of culturally specific groups, such as African Americans and Latinos, are particularly sensitive to how they are portrayed on stage. Often feeling under-represented and misrepresented in the mass media, they want to see positive, more balanced images of themselves in the theater. Here are some of the many ways theaters are responding to what has been called the "burden of representation."

Alabama Shakespeare Festival is located in Montgomery, the birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement, where African Americans make up 43 percent of the city's population and 70 to 80 percent of the surrounding counties'. But, until about five years ago, African Americans accounted for just 1 percent of the theater's audiences.

> ***People want to see plays that are inspiring, uplifting and that represent them in a positive light... something they can feel proud about.***

All that changed dramatically once the theater implemented a plan in 1992 to strengthen its connection to African American communities. As the cornerstone of its audience-diversification campaign, the theater committed itself to presenting more work by and about African Americans, with at least one play by an African American in the mainstage season each year.

Through such offerings as *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Flyin' West*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* and several new works from its Southern Writers Project, Alabama Shakespeare Festival has steadily increased its African American audience to a year-round average of 10 percent. But earlier this year, in its fall-winter season, the campaign temporarily ran aground with the theater's production of *Five Guys Named Moe*, a revival of the light-hearted Broadway revue of the music of jazz great Louis Jordan.

The theater was stymied by the weak African American turn-out. "It was a good production," artistic director Kent Thompson, now in his seventh season with the theater, said. "It enjoyed great reviews and fabulous word of mouth in the African American community."

What went wrong? Thompson believes the show suffered because it didn't have the name recognition of a musical like *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Presented just five months earlier, that show did extremely well and drew an audience that was 50 percent African American. Time of year was also a problem, Thompson thought, with many people forced to tighten their belts after holiday spending. But most telling was an informal telephone survey conducted by staff of selected subscribers and regular groups. The show was reportedly a hit with those who saw it, but everyone questioned—including those who didn't attend—said they would have preferred seeing something more serious.

Further analysis revealed other issues. First, many respondents said *Five Guys Named Moe* followed too soon after *Ain't Misbehavin'*, the theater's last African American production. And during the same period the previous year, audiences had seen *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. People apparently had expected a play of substance this year—particularly because February is Black History Month. *Five Guys Named Moe* just didn't fit the bill, according to those surveyed. It was too frivolous. Even Thompson admitted, "It's a wonderful high-energy musical, but the book is pretty slim."

Balancing Riskier Work

Alabama Shakespeare Festival's recent experience is not unique as more and more theaters aim to diversify their audiences racially and ethnically. Kim

Euell, director of new play development at Hartford Stage, articulated the challenge well: "When you're only doing one or two plays a season about any group, you really become subject to what I call the 'burden of representation.' The people in that group become very concerned with what a play says about them because they know it's the only piece that's going to represent them for the whole season, for the whole year. They want to see something that's inspiring and uplifting and that presents them in a positive light. They want the kind of piece they can bring their children to and feel proud about."

As an example, Euell points to Hartford Stage's production earlier this season of Robert Alexander's *I Ain't Yo Uncle: The New Jack Revisionist Uncle Tom's Cabin* (see related article, page 13). This satirization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* blasts long-standing stereotypes of African Americans. Euell says the play, which addresses race relations in this country, did extremely well overall with the target audience and drew near capacity attendance. However, Euell added that *I Ain't Yo Uncle* resonated more for teens and young adults who could understand the playwright's satirical use of racial slurs than older theater-goers who were put off by some of the language.

"It's a very sophisticated piece," explained Euell. "Those who were ready to share it with their children got a lot out of it. Others found it tough to take."

Hartford Stage couldn't have presented such a controversial play any earlier, Euell added. "You really have to know the target audience," she said. "You have to bring them along and be sensitive to what their issues are and what they're ready for. We were able to do *I Ain't Yo Uncle* this season because we had presented a range of work by and about African Americans in previous seasons—plays like *Spunk*, *Pill Hill*, *From the Mississippi Delta* and *Bailey's Cafe*—as well as what we offered through Voices!, our free playreading series."

To balance its lineup, Hartford Stage chose a more accessible work for the second of its two selections that were targeted this season to African American audiences. *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, Pearl Cleage's new play, takes place during the Harlem Renaissance, the hey-day of the legendary Josephine Baker. Euell said the play had a broad appeal to families and brought back groups that decided to sit out *I Ain't Yo' Uncle* because of their discomfort with the stereotypes presented on stage, albeit satirically. In fact, *Blues for an Alabama Sky* was Hartford's highest grossing play, after *Romeo and Juliet*, in a season that broke all attendance records for the theater.

Interestingly, adds Euell, *Blues for an Alabama Sky* reinforces a message Hartford Stage has worked hard to convey to its audiences and that contributed to the success of *I Ain't Yo' Uncle*—that African American artists cannot be pigeon-holed. While Josephine Baker was a huge star in Europe, mainstream American audiences, accustomed to only seeing black women on stage in the roles of mammies and blues singers, rejected her.

"Many people tend to have limited expectations of what an African American play is," said Euell. "We try offer the full range of work by African American playwrights—from those that deal with traditional themes to the experimental and avant-garde as well as political satire or other work you might not expect."

Alabama Shakespeare Festival also has plans to further develop its African American audience this summer with the premiere of *Ain't Got Long to Stay Here*. Barry Scott's play based on the life and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., came out of the theater's Southern Writers' Project. The summer season features two other works the theater feels certain will appeal to African American audiences, even though they're not by African American writers: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, an adaptation of Harper Lee's classic novel about an Alabama lawyer defending an unjustly accused young black man, and Dennis Covington's *Lizard*, another product of the Southern Writers' Project that scored with audiences last year and returns to the Alabama Shakespeare Festival after a run at the Olympic Arts Festival.

To Ease The Burden, Look Beyond One Season

Like Alabama Shakespeare Festival, the Alliance Theatre Company in Atlanta, where the metropolitan-area population is 50 percent black, counted few African Americans in its audiences until Kenny Leon took over as artistic director in 1990. Leon, an African American, had been associate artistic director at the theater since 1988. His efforts to include more works by African American playwrights came at a price: The Alliance lost a full third of its healthy subscription base of 21,000.

Since then, the theater has had to work hard to create programs that will attract more African Americans to the theater as well as draw from its traditional audience—remaining true to Leon's vision of painting a broad canvas of the human experience. The Alliance has relied heavily on the canon of August Wilson and its collaborations with Atlanta native Pearl Cleage on such new works as *Flyin'* West, *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and, slated for next season, *Bourbon at the Border*. It has also mounted mainstage productions of *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Miss Evers' Boys*, *Once on this Island*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *From the Mississippi Delta* and *The Amen Corner*.

A truer test of a theater's commitment to balancing representation is not what happens in one season but over a period of years.

All the same, Curtis King, director of community relations, said, "There are always some people in the community who are counting. They may note, 'There are fewer plays this season than last season. What happened?' And there are those who only want a positive message put forth as it relates to the African American experience because they realize the impact the theater can have in shaping images."

King says that Leon and staff urge such patrons to look beyond any one season to see what the theater has done over the course of several years. "If you lay several seasons side by side, you can see a strong balance in what's presented," he explained.

Using a wider lens, King adds, also helps ease the burden of representation for the theater in its season planning. "Sometimes theaters find themselves in a peculiar situation of trying to get it all into one season, a balance of comedies, dramas, musicals, ethnic themes, age groups and so on. A truer test is a theater's commitment over a period of seasons."

The Alliance's on-stage offerings and its relentless efforts to communicate its vision to ticket buyers have helped cultivate a large and loyal following of African Americans, many of whom are season subscribers. In a few short years, The Alliance also has achieved something most other theaters still anxiously await—the crossover of its target audience. According to King, there are African Americans at every one of The Alliance's performances, confirmation that the theater's emphasis on subscriptions rather than single-ticket sales was the right strategy for the African American community.

The theater was particularly pleased with audience response to its production of Tony Kushner's two-part epic, *Angels in America*, directed by Leon in The Alliance's 1994-95 and 1995-96 seasons. With a probing look at politics, sexuality, racism and spirituality in American society, *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika* provided a rich meeting ground for both black and white audience members. "Since the play deals with so many facets of life, everyone could find a door into it," said King. "The Alliance's audiences have come to appreciate that we bring them open, honest and mature work that speaks to them and might even challenge them."

Community-Based Theaters Feel Burden, Too

The burden of representation is not only felt by resident theaters. Community-based theaters are faced with it, too. Robert Weber Federico, one of the producers at New York's Repertorio Español (see related article, page 6), said, "One thing we've noticed is that our audiences, which are 90 percent

Hispanic, are fed up with the images from TV and the movies that portray Hispanics as being downtrodden, marginal or criminal. Most Hispanics in the United States are hard working and law abiding, but the images they see in the media don't correspond with that. Repertorio Español tries to provide a haven for Hispanics so they won't be insulted."

The theater community needs to create an environment that encourages directors to produce plays based on their interest instead of color or cultural background.

Federico says the plays the theater presents provide positive images of Hispanics. "That doesn't mean they don't deal with problems," he explained. "They do, but they're resolved with intelligence and dignity. That gives the audience a basic sense of pride in coming to Repertorio Español."

The theater met with a surprising reaction, however, when it toured one of its plays in Miami. *Cafe con leche* by Gloria Gonzalez, which has been in the theater's repertory since 1984, is about a family of Cuban immigrants facing pressures to Americanize. In the play, the father and son end up in jail, but redeem themselves through education by earning their high-school-equivalency diplomas while incarcerated. Even though the family evolves over the course of *Cafe con leche*, and overcomes its problems, Cuban audiences in Miami were upset by the play. "The Cuban-American community would not tolerate any criticism of itself whatsoever," commented Federico.

Director Challenges Notion of "First Voice"

Sometimes the burden of representation is imparted not by audiences, but by the theater community. No one quarrels with Victory Gardens Theater's on-stage selections, but there are some in the theater community who are critical of how the Chicago theater produces them.

Victory Gardens (see related article, page 13) has presented work by African American playwrights since its founding in 1974 and helped nurture the careers of such noted resident writers as Charles Smith and Steve Carter. However, artistic director Dennis Zacek, who is white, has come under fire by segments of the theater community for directing plays by African Americans, including several works by Smith.

"There is a notion of 'first voice' in the American theater community," said Zacek, "which suggests that a play will not be as good as it can be if it's not directed and produced by someone of the culture depicted on stage.

"There are people who believe that African American work must be directed by African Americans, and I think that's dangerous. By extension, we could say only Jews can direct work by Jewish playwrights, only women can direct plays by women, and I can only direct work by Polish-Czech writers."

As part of Victory Gardens' current mainstage season, Zacek directed his third production of Smith's *Jelly Belly*. He had directed its original studio production at Victory Gardens and then set it for the New Federal Theater in New York, where it received glowing reviews. Zacek says Smith and the cast are very comfortable with him, even though black actors risk being called "Uncle Toms" for accepting roles at Victory Gardens.

Zacek has also been charged with taking work away from black directors. In response, he says the theater community needs to work to create an environment that encourages and provides opportunities for directors to produce plays based on their interest and not just because of their color or cultural backgrounds. There's no reason, he says, African Americans cannot direct plays about the black experience as well as works by Shakespeare, Chekhov and Ibsen. Similarly, he wants the freedom to direct the full range of theatrical work.

Are They Ready for This?

Playreading Series Nurture New Works and New Audiences

In seeking new audiences, many theaters have learned that in addition to mounting known works they must support the development of new plays that will appeal to potential ticket-buyers. In recent years, free playreading series and festivals have sprung up at theaters around the country as a way to test new scripts and find plays that can be developed and produced for the mainstage. But playreadings also give new audiences a low-risk introduction to theaters, and many of these programs are attracting a following of adventuresome new theatergoers.

Hartford Stage and Victory Gardens Theater have found great success with their long-running series of staged readings, Voices! and Night of Scenes, respectively. The series have enlivened the theaters' artistic and audience development efforts by:

- creating a testing ground for new scripts;
- building relationships with more playwrights, directors and actors;
- extending the number of relevant program offerings to target audiences;
- accelerating development of new work for the mainstage;
- offering new audiences a no-cost opportunity to check out the theater;
- including the audience in the excitement of a play's development; and
- preparing the audience to support diverse mainstage work.

Monday nights at Hartford Stage: A chance to hear new voices in playwrighting

Soon after Kim Euell joined Hartford Stage in 1993 as director of new play development, she found herself with a challenge. It was her job to help the resident theater identify work that would appeal to African Americans, an audience the theater is trying to reach. But some of the plays she suggested for development were rejected by the rest of the artistic staff because, she believed, her colleagues did not fully understand the scripts or their cultural context.

"I was convinced," said Euell, "that if only they could hear these scripts read aloud by professional actors and discussed by the playwrights, they would understand the plays and be more enthusiastic about them."

Euell went to work in designing Voices!, a series of staged readings that made its debut in the 1993-94 season. Now in its third season, Voices! has exceeded Euell's and Hartford Stage's expectations. A vital testing ground for new scripts, the series has been the source of two of this season's six mainstage works—Robert Alexander's controversial *I Ain't Yo' Uncle: New Jack Revisionist Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a box office success that drew considerable press attention, and Pearl Cleage's *Blues for An Alabama Sky*, a co-production with The Alliance Theatre Company in Atlanta.

I Ain't Yo' Uncle had, in fact, been rejected twice for production by Hartford Stage's artistic staff until it was read in the Voices! series in 1994 to an enthusiastically responsive audience of more than 400. As Euell suspected, reading the work before an audience brought out Alexander's funny satirization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a way her colleagues had difficulty gleaning from the written page.

Voices! has allowed Hartford Stage to develop relationships with established and up-and-coming African American and Hispanic playwrights from around the country, including such talents as Keith Glover, Migdalia Cruz, Talvin Wilks and Marion McClinton, to name a few. In selecting scripts for the series, Euell and the artistic staff look for plays

that explore topics relevant to the African American community, as well as works that represent a variety of genres.

The series has created excitement among the target audience, attracting a large following that also includes regular subscribers who are keenly interested in the development process. More than 300 people attend each of the free readings in the 489-seat theater. Seventy-five percent of the audience is African American, and 15-25 percent of the total audience is coming to Hartford Stage for the first time. For the past season, attendance at Voices! readings was up 20 percent over the prior year, even though there were only five events, compared to six a year earlier.

"Voices! has been an invaluable audience development tool," said Euell. "It provides a low-risk entry point into the theater for our target audience and motivates them to return as paying audience members. While the first tickets they buy will probably be for an African American play, our goal is to encourage them to experience the full range of work we offer."

"Voices! has helped us to attract new audiences and stimulate them to return."

The series has also helped prepare Hartford Stage's core audience for more challenging work. One of the theater's concerns about mounting *I Ain't Yo' Uncle* was that the *agit prop* play, which bluntly confronts stereotypes of African Americans, might be seen as an angry black play and offend the theater's traditional Caucasian audience. Those fears were allayed at the playreading, which non-African American audience members found compelling, too.

After each reading, Euell moderates a discussion between the audience and the playwright. A survey is also distributed that asks audience members what they thought of the reading and whether it met their expectations; how they heard about the Voices! series; whether they are or have been a subscriber or single-ticket buyer at Hartford Stage; and whether they would consider attending other readings in the series.

Euell says the series has a loyal following. "A lot of people are at every single reading, and intermission becomes quite a social event."

She claims that the audiences for Voices! are more diverse than mainstage audiences—not only in terms of race, but age and background. The series attracts groups, too. One vice president of a local bank brings diversity training groups to the series, where he hopes to increase inter-cultural understanding by encouraging trainees to "step into the shoes" of the characters on stage. A multi-cultural women's network meets occasionally at Voices! and then discusses that evening's play at a local coffee house.

Hartford Stage diligently promotes Voices! The theater mails the series flyer to targeted portions of its mailing list; it lists the series in all its mainstage programs and on lobby cards; and it publicizes the series to the Hartford media. Media coverage has been excellent, according to Euell, garnering in-depth features and regular listings in the press, interviews with playwrights on the radio, and special recognition for the series from the city's daily newspaper, the Hartford *Courant*.

But, in Euell's mind, word of mouth in the African American community has been most important in building an audience for the series. She recalled one Voices! enthusiast, a local mailman, who was even moved to give out flyers for the series to people on his postal route.

With Night of Scenes, Victory Gardens Theater quickly lowered barriers to new audiences

When Victory Gardens Theater introduced its series of staged readings, Night of Scenes, during the 1991-92 season, it marked a major shift in the theater's audience-development strategy. The theater, whose mission is to bring new work to the stage, particularly work by Chicago playwrights, had embarked on an effort to diversify

its audiences with more African American and Hispanic subscribers. To achieve this goal, the theater recognized it needed to make a long-term commitment to develop and produce more work by African American and Hispanic playwrights through its Playwright Development Program. Since that wouldn't result in mainstage work for several seasons, Victory Gardens decided to jump-start its audience-diversification effort with an aggressive telemarketing and direct-mail campaign to sell subscriptions to the target groups. But those traditional sales methods foundered.

> ***"Night of Scenes has been such a great audience development tool for us."***

Since its formation in 1974, Victory Gardens Theater has always produced work by African American playwrights, in recent years offering at least one African American work each season. Unfortunately, according to managing director John Walker, the theater's market research revealed that one or two productions a season were not enough to convert African American single-ticket buyers to subscribers; nor would it be enough to attract significant new audiences from the target groups. The research found that among target audiences, Victory Gardens was perceived as a white theater in a very white neighborhood—Chicago's North Side.

"We had to find a way to break through those perceived barriers, draw new audiences into the theater and accelerate the process of bringing new work by African American and Hispanic playwrights to the stage," said Walker. Night of Scenes, the brainchild of artistic associate Jaye Stewart, accomplished that for the theater.

Night of Scenes provides a low-risk introduction to Victory Gardens Theater for new audiences. The series offers free programs in which scenes from three plays by African American and Hispanic playwrights are given staged readings, followed by a discussion of the work with the playwright and a reception.

Some of the scenes are previews of plays from the mainstage season, included to whet the appetite of the audience to entice them to see the full production. Other Night of Scenes' selections are from scripts under consideration for production by the theater. With these, the playwright and the theater have a chance to test the work before an audience whose response is carefully weighed. In this way, the theater hopes new audiences will understand they play an important role in the development process and have a stake in the theater's on-stage offerings.

Dennis Zacek, artistic director of Victory Gardens Theater, attends all the Night of Scenes programs and gauges the audience response. "When you're producing new work all the time, as we are, it helps if a play already has a leg up," Walker said. "The plays from Night of Scenes that get developed are the ones that receive positive audience feedback."

Night of Scenes has been the launching pad for many successful mainstage and studio productions in the last several seasons. Often, the artistic staff looks to Night of Scenes audiences to affirm its decision to give a script a mainstage production, as in the case of Josefina Lopez's *Real Women Have Curves* and Gloria Bond Clunie's *North Star*. Other plays, such as Kay Osborne's *Wipe that Smile*, go on to lengthy runs in Victory Garden's 60-seat studio theater.

But at least one work from Night of Scenes has evolved from an incomplete script to a mainstage production. Jaye Stewart had written a single scene of *Get Ready*, a musical he conceived about a fictitious rhythm-and-blues group called the Doves, which, despite old grudges and many differences, is reunited by popular demand to make another recording.

"Everyone went nuts over that scene," said Walker, "so we urged Jaye to complete the script." *Get Ready* was well received in Victory Gardens' 1993-94 mainstage season and had subsequent

productions at ETA Theater in Chicago and at theaters in Houston and Indianapolis.

Now in its fifth season, Night of Scenes draws 100 to 150 people, mostly African American, for each program. Each season Victory Gardens offers several of the Night of Scenes programs at other sites, such as the DuSable Museum, which is more centrally located, and the Sutherland Community Arts Center on the South Side. Holding these productions in locations closer to Chicago's African American neighborhoods makes it easier for people to attend.

Like Hartford Stage, Victory Gardens holds a free drawing of tickets to the current mainstage production as a way to gather names and phone numbers of potential new subscribers. The theater's marketing staff then follows up with phone calls to offer a mini-subscription. The theater found it was much more successful in selling subscriptions of three plays of specific interest to the target audience, rather than the full season of five works. Ten percent of Night of Scenes audiences become subscribers—a far better sales rate than straight telemarketing or direct mail ever achieved for the theater.

Even though the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund grant that supported Night of Scenes for its first three seasons was completed in 1994, Victory Gardens Theater has kept the program alive by funding it from other sources.

"Night of Scenes has been such a great audience development tool for us," said Walker. "In the 1994-95 season, 17 percent of our mainstage audience was African American and Hispanic. This is up from 11 percent in 1992 and is close to the goal we set for diversifying our audiences."

Mining Lessons From the Theater Initiative

Theaters participating in the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund initiative are learning valuable lessons about audience development. To mine as much information as possible from its grants, the Fund has contracted for an eight-year evaluation of the theater program.

AMS Planning & Research is leading the evaluation. AMS and an interdisciplinary team of experts have been given the task of recording the efforts of grantees, assessing the effectiveness of their strategies to expand or diversify audiences and charting the institutional changes in these theaters.

The evaluation team began its data collection work in Spring 1992, gathering information from the theaters awarded grants in the first two grant rounds. In 1993, AMS began collecting data from third-round recipients.

In the analysis plan for their research, the evaluation team created a series of hypotheses. Central among these is that the presence and frequency of relevant programming have a correlation to audience diversification and/or expansion. Relevant programming comprises productions that are likely to have more appeal to audiences targeted under the grant than other plays performed during the season. From its interviews with theaters that received grants in 1991 and 1992, the evaluation team identified that relevant programming is a key factor in the success of a theater's project. The data suggests that the degree of a theater's commitment to relevant programming *before* receiving an award from the Fund reflects its readiness to address audience development issues during the grant period.

To test the effect of relevant programming on individual grant projects, researchers had to first establish what makes a play relevant. Using its research findings and suggestions from a representative sample of participating theaters, the following criteria were established: the work is written by a member of the targeted audience group; it is directed by a member of that group; it features a story depicting their lives; and the majority of cast members are from the target group. From its preliminary analysis, the evaluation team judged a play relevant if it met two or more of these criteria. A season was considered relevant if 25 percent or more of the works met the necessary criteria.

Because it is still early in the data collection process, it is not surprising that no trends connecting relevant programming to increases in audience size or composition have been found in those projects the team has been able to study so far. It also is impossible at this stage to draw conclusions, but the team did see a positive correlation between relevant programming and the ability of theaters to reduce operating and cumulative deficits.

Future analyses will integrate data from third-round grantees as well as additional information from first- and second-round theaters. The team also will examine its definition of relevant programming to see if any of the criteria should be weighed more heavily in these analyses. In addition, the relationship between relevant programming and changes in audience size and composition and the financial condition of the theater will continue to be examined in the future.

Resources: Contact information for theaters participating in the Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Fund initiative

Alabama Shakespeare Festival
State Theatre
One Festival Drive
Montgomery AL 36117-4605
(334) 271-5300
Kent Thompson
Artistic Director

Alliance Theatre Company
1280 Peachtree Street, NE
Atlanta GA 30309
(404) 733-4650
Curtis King
Director of Community Relations

American Music Theater Festival, Inc.
123 South Broad Street, Suite 1820
Philadelphia PA 19109
(215) 893-1570
Marjorie Sarnoff
Producing Director

Arena Stage
Sixth & Maine Avenue, SW
Washington DC 20024
(202) 554-9066
Stephen Richard
Executive Director

Berkeley Repertory Theatre
2025 Addison Street
Berkeley CA 94704
(510) 204-8901
Sharon Ott
Artistic Director

Bilingual Foundation of the Arts
421 North Avenue 19
Los Angeles CA 90031
(213) 225-4044
Margarita Galban
Artistic Director

Center Stage
700 North Calvert Street
Baltimore MD 21202
(410) 685-3200
Irene Lewis
Artistic Director

Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum
135 North Grand Avenue
Los Angeles CA 90012
(213) 628-2772
Luis Alfaro & Diane Rodriguez
Directors, Latino Theater Initiative

The Cleveland Play House
8500 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland OH 44106
(216) 795-7010
Dean Gladden
Managing Director

Crossroads Theatre Co.
Seven Livingston Avenue
New Brunswick NJ 08901
(908) 249-5581
Ricardo Khan
Artistic Director

Dell'Arte, Inc.
P.O. Box 816
Blue Lake CA 95525
(707) 668-5663
Michael Fields
Managing & Co-Artistic Director

El Teatro Campesino
P.O. Box 1240
San Juan Bautista CA 95045
(408) 623-2444
Luis Valdez
Artistic Director

Freedom Theatre
1346 North Broad Street
Philadelphia PA 19121
(215) 765-2793
Jocelyn Russell
Marketing Director

Goodman Theatre
200 South Columbus Drive
Chicago IL 60603
(312) 443-3811
Roche Schulfer
Producing Director

Guthrie Theater Foundation
725 Vineland Place
Minneapolis MN 55403
(612) 347-1100
Edward Martenson
Executive Director

Hartford Stage Company
50 Church Street
Hartford CT 06103
(203) 525-5601
Kim Euell
Director of New Play Development

Indiana Repertory Theatre
140 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis IN 46204
(317) 635-5277
Janet Allen
Artistic Director

INTAR Hispanic American Arts Center
420 West 42nd Street
New York NY 10036
(212) 695-6134
David Minton
Managing Director

Irish Arts Center
553 West 51st Street
New York NY 10019
(212) 757-3318
Marianne Delaney
Executive Director

Jomandi Productions, Inc.
1444 Mayson Street, NE
Atlanta GA 30324
(404) 876-6346
Marsha Jackson-Randolph
Co-Artistic/Managing Director

Manhattan Theatre Club, Inc.
453 West 16th Street
New York NY 10011
(212) 645-5590
Barry Grove
Managing Director

The Mixed Blood Theatre Company
1501 South Fourth Street
Minneapolis MN 55454
(612) 338-0937
Jack Reuler
Artistic Director

The National Theatre of the Deaf- CT
Five West Main Street
Chester CT 06412
(860) 526-4971
TTY: 526-4974
David Hays
Founder and Artistic Director

Oakland Ensemble Theatre
1428 Alice
Oakland CA 94612
(510) 763-7774
Zerita Dotson
Managing Director

Pan Asian Repertory Theatre
47 Great Jones Street
New York NY 10012
(212) 505-5655
Tisa Chang
Artistic/Producing Director

Penumbra Theatre Company
Martin Luther King Center
270 North Kent Street
St. Paul MN 55102
(612) 290-8683
Louis Bellamy
Artistic Director

The People's Light & Theatre Company
39 Conestoga Road
Malvern PA 19355-1798
(610) 647-1900
Gregory Rowe
Managing Director

Perseverance Theatre
914 Third Street
Douglas AK 99824
(907) 364-2421 Ext. 8
Molly Smith
Artistic Director

Pregones Theater
700 Grand Concourse
Bronx NY 10451
(718) 585-1202
Rosalba Rolon Director

Repertorio Español
138 East 27th Street
New York NY 10016
(212) 889-2850
Gilberto Zaldivar
Producer

Roadside Theater
306 Madison Street
Whitesburg KY 41858
(606) 633-0108
Dudley Cocke
Director

San Diego Repertory Theatre, Inc.
79 Horton Plaza
San Diego CA 92101
(619) 231-3586
Douglas Jacobs
Artistic Director

San Francisco Mime Troupe
855 Treat Avenue
San Francisco CA 94110
(415) 285-1717
Patrick Osbon
General Manager

Seattle Group Theatre
305 Harrison Street
Seattle WA 98109
(206) 441-9480
Jose Carrasquillo
Artistic Director

Second Stage Theatre, Inc.
P.O. Box 1807
Ansonia Station
New York NY 10023
(212) 787-8302
Carole Rothman
Artistic Director

Seven Stages, Inc.
1105 Euclid Avenue NE
Atlanta GA 30307
(404) 522-0911
Del Hamilton
Artistic Director

The Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger Library
301 East Capitol Street, SE
Washington DC 20003
(202) 547-3230
Michael Kahn
Artistic Director

St. Louis Black Repertory Company
634 North Grand Avenue, Suite 10F
St. Louis MO 63103
(314) 534-3807
Ronald Himes
Producing Director

Theater at Lime Kiln
P.O. Box 663
Lexington VA 24450
(540) 463-7088
Barry Mines
Artistic Director

Victory Gardens Theater
2257 North Lincoln
Chicago IL 60614
(312) 549-5788
Denis Zacek
Artistic Director

The Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund gratefully acknowledges the following for their help in shaping the content of this monograph and their advice on topics for future issues: Stephen Albert, managing director, Hartford Stage Company; Dudley Cocke, director, Roadside Theatre; Gordon Davidson, artistic director, Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum; Ron Himes, producing director, St. Louis Black Repertory Company; Sam Sweet, managing director, The Shakespeare Theater; Rosalba Rolon, director, Pregones Theater; Greg Rowe, managing director, People's Light and Theatre Company; and Kent Thompson, artistic director, Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

General Editors: Rory MacPherson and Bruce S. Trachtenberg, Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund;
Writer: Kristen Simone; *Design:* Chris Gorman Associates

Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund

Two Park Avenue, 23rd Floor
New York, NY 10016
Tel: 212 251-9800
Fax: 212 679-6990