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**A Noise Within, L.A.'s Acclaimed Classical Repertory Theatre, begins  
its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2016-2017 Season with**

## ***The American Dream***

**A Resident Artist Reading Festival**

**Friday July 22 – Sunday July 24, 2016**

A Noise Within (ANW), the acclaimed classical repertory theatre, presents the first of many 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season celebrations – *The American Dream* – a special weekend of staged readings of American plays, taking place on Friday, July 22, Saturday July 23, and Sunday July 24, 2016. All the readings are free to the community but reservations are required. Optional receptions and meals throughout the weekend are available for purchase at \$25/each.

The three day festival features six free staged readings of works from great American playwrights: *Broken Glass* by Arthur Miller directed by Alan Blumenfeld; *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* by Tony Kushner, directed by Apollo Dukakis; *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, directed by Suandra McClain; two Christopher Durang One-Acts (*The Actor's Nightmare*, directed by Abby Craden, and *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All To You*, directed by Stephanie Shroyer); and *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* by Tennessee Williams, directed by William Denis Hunt. All readings take place on the Redmond Stage or in the Lawrence Rehearsal Hall.

The festival begins with Arthur Miller's *Broken Glass* on Friday, July 22 at 7:00 pm, followed by a post-show reception and meal. Saturday, July 23 begins with *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*, at 2:00 pm, followed by a dinner break, then at 7pm – attendees can choose to see either the Durang One Acts or *27 Wagons*. Sunday, July 24 begins at 3PM with *A Raisin in the Sun* followed by a dinner break and then again at 7pm, audiences can enjoy either the Durang One Acts or *27 Wagons*.

The six plays are presented as an extension of *Words Within*, A Noise Within's popular ongoing annual series of free play readings by resident artists. Reservations are free and can be made online at <http://www.anoisewithin.org/theamericandream>.

Post-reading reception on Friday, July 22 or catered onsite dinner on Saturday, July 23 or Sunday, July 24 can each be purchased in advance on our onsite for \$25. Audience members who donate \$125 to A Noise Within prior to the event receive a full weekend pass to all the readings, events, and receptions.

### The Plays

#### **FRIDAY JULY 22 AT 7PM – *BROKEN GLASS* BY ARTHUR MILLER**

*A tender portrait of regular people struggling to connect with one another, it is a powerful and memorable theatrical experience that deals with identity, the roots of illness, and the effects of anti-Semitism, as well as the consequences of assimilation.*

**Broken Glass** is a 1994 play by Arthur Miller, focusing on a New York City couple in 1938, and set at the same time of Kristallnacht, in Nazi Germany. The play's title is derived from Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. It tells the story of Phillip and Sylvia Gellburg, a Jewish married couple living in Brooklyn; Phillip works on foreclosures at a mortgage bank. When Sylvia suddenly becomes paralyzed from the waist down after reading about the events of Kristallnacht in the newspaper, Phillip contacts Dr. Harry Hyman. Dr. Hyman believes Sylvia's paralysis is psychosomatic, and though he is not a psychiatrist, he begins to treat her. Throughout the play, Dr. Hyman learns more about the problems Sylvia is having in her personal life, particularly in her marriage. After an argument with his boss, Phillip suffers a heart attack at home and begins dying. He and Sylvia confront each other about their feelings. Before Phillip dies (although his death is not confirmed), his final words are "Sylvia, forgive me!" Upon his "death", Sylvia is cured of her paralysis.

**SATURDAY JULY 23 AT 2PM – ANGELS IN AMERICA, PART ONE: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES BY TONY KUSHNER**

*The visionary Tony Award®-winning and Pulitzer Prize-winning epic that looks at the 1990s AIDS crisis through a series of overlapping narratives: an unflinching and lushly poetic piece made infinitely accessible by the biting dark humor that balances it. (For mature audiences only – contains adult language and themes)*

**Angels in America, Part One** focuses on the stories of two troubled couples, one gay, one straight: "word processor" Louis Ironson and his lover Prior Walter, and Mormon lawyer Joe Pitt and his wife Harper. After Louis' grandmother's funeral, Prior tells Louis that he has contracted AIDS, and he panics. He tries to care for Prior but soon realizes he cannot stand the strain and fear. Meanwhile, Roy Cohn, Joe's right-wing, bigoted mentor and friend offers him a job in the Justice Department. But Harper, who is addicted to Valium and suffers anxiety and hallucinations, does not want to move to Washington. The two couples' fates quickly become intertwined: Joe stumbles upon Louis, and they strike up an unlikely friendship based in part on Louis' suspicion that Joe is gay. Harper and Prior also meet, in a fantastical mutual dream sequence in which Prior reveals to Harper that her husband is a closeted homosexual. Harper confronts Joe, who denies it but says he has struggled inwardly with the issue. Roy receives a different kind of surprise: At an appointment with his doctor Henry, he learns that he too has been diagnosed with AIDS.

Prior's illness and Harper's terrors both grow worse. Louis strays from Prior's bedside to seek anonymous sex in Central Park at night. As the days pass, Louis and Joe grow closer and the sexual tinge in their banter grows more and more obvious. Finally, Joe drunkenly telephones his mother Hannah in Salt Lake City to tell her that he is a homosexual; she makes plans to sell her house and come to New York to put things right. In a tense and climactic scene, Joe tells Harper about his feelings, and she screams at him to leave, while Louis tells Prior he is moving out.

Tormented by a voice, supernatural appearances, and by his anguish over Louis, Prior becomes increasingly desperate. Joe, equally distraught in his own way, tells Roy he cannot accept his offer; Roy explodes at him and calls him a "sissy." He then tells Joe about his greatest achievement, illegally intervening in the espionage trial of Ethel Rosenberg in the 1950s, guaranteeing her execution. When Joe leaves, the ghost of Ethel herself appears, having come to witness Roy's last days on earth. In the climax to Part One, Joe follows Louis to the park, accompanying him home for sex, while Prior's prophetic visions culminate in the appearance of an imposing and beautiful Angel, who crashes through the roof of his apartment and proclaims, "The Great Work begins."

**SUNDAY JULY 24 AT 3PM-- A RAISIN IN THE SUN BY LORRAINE HANSBERRY**

*Lorraine Hansberry's groundbreaking drama examines generational clashes, the civil rights movement, and feminism through the lens of an African-American family searching for the American Dream in suburban Chicago.*

***A Raisin in the Sun*** is a play by Lorraine Hansberry that debuted on Broadway in 1959. The title comes from the poem "Harlem" by Langston Hughes. The story tells a black family's experiences in the Washington Park Subdivision of Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood as they attempt to "better" themselves with an insurance payout from the death of their father. The New York Drama Critics' Circle named it the best play of 1959.

Walter and Ruth Younger, their son Travis, along with Walter's mother Lena (Mama) and Walter's sister Beneatha, live in poverty in a dilapidated two-bedroom apartment on Chicago's south side. Walter is barely making a living as a limousine driver. Though Ruth is content with their lot, Walter is not and desperately wishes to become wealthy. His plan is to invest in a liquor store in partnership with his street-smart acquaintances, Willy and Bobo. At the beginning of the play, Walter and Beneatha's father has recently died, and Mama is waiting for a life insurance check for \$10,000. Eventually Mama puts some of the money down on a new house, choosing an all-white neighborhood over a black one for the practical reason that it happens to be much cheaper. Later she relents and gives the rest of the money to Walter to invest with the provision that he set aside \$3,000 for Beneatha's education. Walter passes the money on to Willy's naive sidekick Bobo, who gives it to Willy, who absconds with it, depriving Walter and Beneatha of their dreams, though not the Youngers of their new home.

Meanwhile, Karl Lindner, a white representative of the neighborhood they plan to move to, makes a generous offer to buy them out. He wishes to avoid neighborhood tensions over interracial population, which to the three women's horror Walter prepares to accept as a solution to their financial setback.

While all this is going on, Beneatha's direction in life is being defined by two different men: Beneatha's wealthy and educated boyfriend George Murchison, and Joseph Asagai. George represents the "fully assimilated black man" who denies his African heritage with a "smarter than thou" attitude, which Beneatha finds disgusting, while he dismissively mocks Walter's lack of money and education. Asagai patiently teaches Beneatha about her African heritage; he gives her thoughtfully useful gifts from Africa, while pointing out she is unwittingly assimilating herself into white ways. She eventually accepts Asagai's point of view that things will get better --with a lot of effort, along with his proposal of marriage and his invitation to move with him to Nigeria to practice medicine.

For Walter, real wealth can only be attained by liberating himself from Joseph's culture, which he blames for his poverty, and by rising to George's level, wherein he sees his salvation. Walter redeems himself and his black pride at the end of the play by changing his mind and not accepting Lindner's buyout offer, stating that the family is proud of who they are and will try to be good neighbors. The play then closes with the family leaving for their new home, but with an uncertain future.

### Christopher Durang One Acts

*The Actor's Nightmare* – a short comic play involving an accountant named George Spelvin who is mistaken for an actor's understudy and forced to perform in a play for which he does not know any of his lines. *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* – A biting, irreverent and uproariously funny satire aims its barbs at organized religion and strikes home with hilarious results.

The dreams actors and performers often have in which they are about to go onstage and cannot remember their lines/rehearsal instructions inspired ***The Actor's Nightmare***. One day, a man finds himself inexplicably backstage at a play. When the stage manager Meg confronts him, it becomes apparent that he is the understudy for an actor named Edwin and as "Eddie" apparently broke both his legs, the man must perform in his stead. He is referred to as "George" throughout the play, despite his feeling that it is not his real name

(another actress refers to him as Stanley at one point as well) and cannot remember attending any rehearsals or being an actor at all (he instead believes that he is an accountant).

To make matters worse, he is unable to get a straight answer as to what the play is. An actress named Sarah tells him that it is a Noël Coward play (*Private Lives*) and then another actress Ellen tells him that it is a Samuel Beckett play called *Checkmate* (which seems to have elements of the plays *Endgame*, *Happy Days*, and *Waiting for Godot*). Literally forced on stage, George attempts to improvise his lines; however, the play inconsistently shifts between scenes from *Private Lives*, *Hamlet*, *Checkmate*, and *A Man for All Seasons*.

In the final part of the play (*A Man for All Seasons*), George is alarmed to learn that he is playing the part of Sir Thomas More—and the execution seems a bit too real for his liking. While attempting to convince himself that he is merely in a dream, George ends up theorizing that one can't dream of his own death and therefore he will wake up just before he is beheaded. He accepts the execution, but appears to really be dead during curtain call, much to the cast's confusion.

In ***Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You***, a nun named Sister Mary Ignatius explains to the audience the basic tenets of Catholicism. Her favorite student, seven-year-old Thomas, assists her. From time to time, she asks him catechism questions and gives him a cookie for every right answer. Halfway into her speech, four of her former students, Gary Sullivan, Diane Symonds, Philomena Rostovich, and Aloysius Benheim, enter dressed as St. Joseph, The Virgin Mary, and two halves of a camel. The four remind Sister that she had asked them to come in and perform the pageant they once performed in her class. After the pageant, it becomes apparent that the four have strayed from her teaching: Diane has had two abortions (the first one from a rape at age 18), Philomena is an unwed mother, Aloysius is an alcoholic who beats his wife and is thinking about suicide, and Gary is a homosexual.

They reveal that they were never asked to come in and merely wanted to embarrass Sister. They each have their own reason for hating her: Aloysius was refused bathroom privileges frequently and now has bladder problems; Philomena recalls being hit by Sister for being a poor student; Gary is there on behalf of his boyfriend Jeff; and Diane had believed Sister until her world came crashing down when her mother died of breast cancer and she was raped the same day.

Diane reveals that she has brought a gun to kill Sister, something that the other three did not know. Sister grabs a gun from behind her lectern and shoots Diane in self-defense. She also shoots Gary, proclaiming that she has sent him to heaven, since he went to confession earlier that day. She then points the gun at Aloysius, who needs to go to the bathroom, before handing it to Thomas to take a nap. The play ends with Thomas pointing the gun at Aloysius while explaining the perfections of God, Diane and Gary dead on the floor, and Sister asleep.

**Christopher Durang** is an American playwright known for works of outrageous and often absurd comedy. His work was especially popular in the 1980s, though his career seemed to get a second wind in the late 1990s. His play, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* won the Tony Award for Best Play in 2013. He is co-director of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at Juilliard.

**SATURDAY JULY 23 AND SUNDAY JULY 24 AT 7PM (PERFORMS AT THE SAME TIME AS DURANG ONE ACTS)**

***27 Wagons Full of Cotton*** is a 1946 one-act play that Williams referred to as "a Mississippi Delta comedy." In it, Jake, a middle-aged, shady cotton gin owner burns down the mill of Silva Vicarro, his rival in the cotton business. Then Vicarro, who knows what happened but cannot prove it, seeks revenge by seducing Jake's young, frail, delicate wife, Flora. Elia Kazan's controversial 1956 film "Baby Doll" was based on this play.

**About *A Noise Within***

A Noise Within, celebrating its 25th Anniversary during the 2016-2017 season, was recently named “one of the nation's premier classical repertory companies” by The Huffington Post, and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, CA. ANW’s award-winning resident company practices a rotating repertory model at their state-of-the-art, 283-seat performing space. This venue, established in 2011, has allowed ANW to expand its audience, surpassing its previous box office, subscription, and attendance records each year. In addition to producing world-class performances of classical theatre, the organization runs robust education programs committed to inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. Helmed by Producing Artistic Directors Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, who hold MFAs from San Francisco’s American Conservatory Theatre, A Noise Within truly delivers CLASSIC THEATRE, MODERN MAGIC.  
[www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org)

**Calendar Listing: The American Dream**

**Friday, July 22**

7pm

*Broken Glass* by Arthur Miller

**Saturday, July 23**

2pm

*Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* by Tony Kushner

7pm

*Durango* One Acts or *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* by Tennessee Williams

**Sunday, July 24**

3pm

*A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry

7pm

*Durango* One Acts or *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* by Tennessee Williams

All at A Noise Within, 3352 E Foothill Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91107

**Reservations and info:**

Reservations are free can be made online at <http://www.anoisewithin.org/theamericandream>

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