



2015-2016  
*Season*



## Press Release

UT Department of Theatre • 206 McClung Tower • Knoxville, TN 37996

For more information contact: Robin Conklin, Marketing & Communications Director  
[rconkli1@utk.edu](mailto:rconkli1@utk.edu) or 865-974-2497

For immediate release:

### *A Lesson Before Dying in the Carousel Theatre in February and March*

“A Lesson Before Dying,” an adaptation of the Ernest J. Gaines novel by Romulus Linney, will play in the CBT’s Carousel Theatre February 24 to March 13 with 7:30 pm and 2:00 pm performances. A Pay What You Wish Preview performance will be held Wednesday, February 24, a talk back with the actors will take place Sunday, March 6 following the matinee, and the Open Captioned performance is Sunday, March 13 at 2:00 pm.

The production is supported by a National Endowment for the Arts Art Works grant and the Mildred Haines and William Elijah Morris Lecture Endowment Fund. Media sponsors are WUOT, WUTK, the Knoxville News Sentinel, the Daily Beacon, and the Knoxville Mercury. Free and convenient parking is available in the McClung Tower Garage on Volunteer Boulevard for every performance.

The CBT is pleased to be partnering with the Knox County Public Library on a series of ancillary events associated with this production and part of The Big Read. A screening of “Say it Loud” will take place on Sunday, February 21 at 2:00 pm in the John Hodges Library Auditorium. On Thursday, February 23rd at 4:00 pm a Community Leaders Forum will take place at the Knox County Public Defender’s Community Law Office. On Wednesday, February 24 at 6:00 pm, “Spiritual Songs” the history of the Negro spiritual will take place in the Beck Cultural Center. The events are free and open to the public. More events and the accompanying information is available at <http://clarencebrowntheatre.com/a-lesson-before-dying-programs/>.

“A Lesson Before Dying” is set in a small Cajun community in the late 1940s. Jefferson, a young black man, is an unwitting party to a liquor store shoot out in which three men are killed; the only survivor, he is convicted of murder and sentenced to death. Grant Wiggins, who left his hometown for the university, has returned to the plantation school to teach. As he struggles with his decision whether to stay or escape to another state, his aunt and Jefferson's godmother persuade him to visit Jefferson in his cell and impart his learning and his pride to Jefferson before his death. In the end, the two men forge a bond as they both come to understand the simple heroism of resisting—and defying—the expected.

“This play is not a story of struggle. It is a story of facing ones’ demons and defeating them. It is a story of overcoming. It is a story of inspiration. It is a story of triumph,” said Director Andrea Dymond.

Andrea J. Dymond (Director) is thrilled to be at the CBT, again where she previously directed “Intimate Apparel.” A Chicago-based freelance director, specializing in new work, she was formerly Resident Director at Victory Gardens Theater, where she directed 11 productions including seven world premieres. She has directed at the Victory Gardens, Next, Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago as well as at the Village Theatre and Madison Repertory regionally. In addition, her experience includes research and production dramaturgy, directing at new works festivals nationally; serving as thesis play advisor for MFA playwrights at Carnegie Mellon; and, directing at NNPN’s MFA Playwrights Workshops at the Kennedy Center. She teaches directing, collaboration, text analysis, acting and new play development at Columbia College Chicago.

Visiting guest actor David Kortemeier (Sheriff Guidry) CBT credits include: “A Christmas Carol,” “The 39 Steps,” “Sweeney Todd,” “Moonlight & Magnolias,” “The Music Man,” “Man of La Mancha,” “Amadeus,” “Oedipus the King,” “Little Shop of Horrors,” and “Love’s Labour’s Lost.” His work also has been seen at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, the Great Lakes Theatre Festival in Cleveland, Drury Lane Theatre and Noble Fool Theatricals in Chicago and 13 seasons with the Illinois Shakespeare Festival in Bloomington. He holds an MFA in Acting from the University of Louisville.

A.C. Smith (Rev. Moses Ambrose) is a Joseph Jefferson Award winner and native of Chicago where he has performed at nearly all the major theatres. His home theatre is the Court Theatre where he has worked for the past eight years. When not in Chicago he can often be found performing at the St. Louis Black Repertory Company where he has been a member for over 21 years. He also has performed in regional theatres across the country, including, Portland Stage Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Milwaukee Rep., Kansas City Rep., Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and Geva Theatre to name a few. He understudied and performed the role of “Boy Willie” in the Broadway National Tour of “The Piano Lesson.” He also portrayed the title role in the New Federal Theatres production of “Jelly Belly” (Off Broadway) in which he received an Audelco Award nomination. He has appeared in many independent films and a few feature films, as well as radio, television, voice-overs, commercials and print work.

Trequon Tate (Grant) is a native of Starkville, Mississippi currently residing in Chicago. He holds a BFA from the University of Southern Mississippi and is an alumnus of the Emerging Professional Acting Residency program at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater. He has performed at such regional theaters as Hope Summer Repertory Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater, American Blues Theater, Emerald City Theatre/Broadway Playhouse, Fireside Theatre and Chicago Opera Theatre to name a few.

Celeste Williams (Miss Emma Glenn), a member of the Columbia College Chicago theatre faculty, is making her first appearance at the CBT. A Chicago-based actor, her representative theatre work includes productions at Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Court Theatre, Victory Gardens Theatre, Next Theatre, Writers’ Theatre, Northlight Theatre and Milwaukee Repertory where she was a member of the acting company. Her recent television work includes “Boss” and “Empire.”

UT Theatre graduate actors include Carléne Pochette (Vivian Baptiste) and Jude Carl Vincent (Jefferson) as well as undergraduate student actor Connor Hess (Paul Bonin).

The creative team for this production includes: Olivia Trees (Costume Designer); Maranda DeBusk (Lighting Designer); Mike Ponder (Sound Designer); and Henry Wilkinson (Scenic Designer). Also contributing to the production is professional guest, Ross Jackson (Stage Manager).

Previews for “A Lesson Before Dying” are Wednesday, February 24 and Thursday, February 25 followed by Opening Night Friday, February 26. The production runs through March 13. UT faculty/staff, senior citizens, veterans and students receive discounts. For tickets, call the Clarence Brown Theatre Box Office at 865-974-5161, Tickets Unlimited at 865-656-4444 or order online 24/7 at [www.clarencebrowntheatre.com](http://www.clarencebrowntheatre.com)

With a dual mission to train the next generation of theatre artists and to provide top quality professional theatre, the Clarence Brown Theatre at the University of Tennessee Knoxville is one of only 13 academic LORT (League of Resident Theatre) institutions in the nation. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic

Director Calvin MacLean and Managing Director David B. Byrd, the CBT season runs from August through May and features eight productions ranging from musicals to drama.

The CBT provides a cultural resource for both the university and the larger East Tennessee community and affirms diversity and inclusivity in all their forms.

The 2015/2016 remaining season productions include: “A Lesson Before Dying,” “The Open Hand,” and “South Pacific”. For more information or tickets, call the CBT Box Office at 865-974-5161 or visit us online at <http://clarencebrowtheatre.com/>. Stay connected to the Clarence Brown Theatre on Facebook (Clarence Brown Theatre), follow us on Twitter (@ClarenceBrown) and view Clarence Brown videos on YouTube (Clarence Bro).

###