

For Immediate Release:
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***Alice Childress’ “Trouble in Mind”
Opens Clarence Brown Theatre Spring Offerings***

Broadway, 1957. An integrated theatre company gathers to rehearse a new play—the one they hope will be the next big hit on the Great White Way. Against the backdrop of misperceptions and stereotypes within the company, veteran actress Wiletta Mayer grapples with the choice between a once in a lifetime chance to play the lead role in a Broadway show, and the cost of compromising her principles. Alice Childress’ Tony-nominated masterpiece “Trouble in Mind” will play on the Clarence Brown Theatre Mainstage February 8 – 26, 2023.

UT students see all performances for FREE. UT faculty/staff receive a 15% discount. For tickets, please visit <https://clarencebrowntheatre.com/plays/trouble-in-mind/>.

The Pay What You Can performance, where patrons can name their own price, will be held Wednesday, February 8. Behind the Scenes Sunday will take place Sunday, February 12 after the 2:00 pm matinee. A Talk Back will take place Sunday, February 19 following the matinee. Deaf Night @ the Theatre, where all patron interactions including the performance is interpreted in American Sign Language, will take place Tuesday, February 21 at 7:30 pm. The Open Captioned performance is Sunday, February 26 at 2:00 pm.

The production is sponsored by The Shubert Foundation, Inc, National Endowment for the Arts, Arts & Culture Alliance, Knox County Tourism Consortium, Knox County Tennessee, The Department of the Treasury, and the Tennessee Arts Commission. Media sponsors are Knoxville News Sentinel, WUOT, and WUTK. Free and convenient parking is available in the Upper Parking of McClung Tower Garage (G2) on Volunteer Boulevard.

Born in 1916 and raised during the Harlem Renaissance under the watchful eye of her maternal grandmother, Alice Childress grew up to become first an actress and then a playwright and novelist. A founding member of the American Negro Theatre, she wrote her first play, “Florence,” in 1949. The play was produced Off-Broadway in 1950. Childress became, in 1952, the first African American woman to see her play “Gold Through the Trees” professionally produced in New York.

In 1955, Childress’ play “Trouble in Mind” was a critical and popular success from the beginning of its run off-Broadway at the Greenwich Mews Theatre, and it immediately drew interest from producers for a Broadway transfer. In an ironic twist echoing the tribulations of the characters in the play itself, the producers wanted changes to the script to make it more palatable to a commercial audience. Childress refused to compromise her artistic vision, and the play never opened on Broadway, ending her chances of being the first African American woman playwright to have a work on Broadway. In 2021, she made her long-awaited Broadway debut when Roundabout Theatre Company produced “Trouble in Mind” at the American Airlines Theatre, receiving four Tony Award nominations.

Marti Gobel (Director) is a nationally recognized actor, director, and teaching artist. After graduating from UW-Whitewater in 2008 with a degree in Performance, Theatre, and Philosophy (with an emphasis in Religious Studies), she began a career in theatre, television, and film. From 2009-2015, she was the founding Producing Artistic Director of UPROOTED theatre. She is currently an adjunct professor at Marquette University, UW-Milwaukee, and Carthage College. She is a JF Kennedy Center trained Teaching Artist who worked closely with Master Educator, Randy Barron for 6 months developing her residency which is now offered through The Young Auditorium and The Overture Center. She currently serves as Artistic Consultant for Black Arts MKE. She will serve for a third term as a KCACTF adjudicator for Region III.

Selected regional theatre Acting credits include: Milwaukee Shakespeare, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, The Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Forward Theater, UPROOTED theatre, Next Act Theatre, and Theatre Lila. She plays an ongoing role as the Civil Rights suffragist, Ida B. Wells for the Kenosha Civil War Museum in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and is often featured in local and regional commercials and voice-overs. She appeared in the short film, "Spare Change," as well as the web-series "Gettin' Grown," and the feature film "Game Day" produced by Chicago Studio City. National television credits include NBC's "Chicago PD."

Selected professional Directing theatre credits include: Ten Chimneys Estate, Isitatha Theatre in South Africa, Duncan Entertainment Group, The Broadway Theatre Center, Young Auditorium & Milton House Museum, Tenth Street Theatre, Milwaukee, Marquette University, UPROOTED theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Forward Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, and Next Act Theatre.

The cast for the production includes: Shinnerrie Jackson (Wiletta Mayer); Tom Parkhill (Henry); Will Dorsey IV (John Nevins); Amberlin McCormick (Millie Davis); Rachel Darden (Judy Sears); Rico Bruce Wade (Sheldon Forrester); Joshua Peterson (Al Manners); Michael Najman (Eddie Fenton); and Terry Weber (Bill O'Wray). Understudies include: Joseph Corum (Eddie Fenton); Malik Baines (John Nevins), Kenneth Herring (Sheldon Forrester); Kisha Rockett (Wiletta Mayer); McKinley Merritt (Millie Davis), Linzy Monks (Judy Sears), and Steve Sherman (Al Manners, Bill O'Wray, Henry).

The creative team for this production includes: Christopher Pickart (Scenic Designer), Devario D. Simmons (Costume Designer); MJ Hromek (Assistant Costume Designer); Joshua J. Mullady (Lighting Designer); Joe Cerqua (Sound Designer and Composer); Amoirie Perteet (Assistant Sound Designer); Davion T. Brown (Voice Coach); Topaz Cooks (Stage Manager); Blake Julian (Stage Manager Assistant); and Mayson Knipp (Stage Manager Assistant).

With a dual mission to train the next generation of theatre artists and to provide top quality theatre, the Clarence Brown Theatre is a professional theater in residence at the University of Tennessee. Under the leadership of CBT Producing Artistic Director and UT Theatre Department Head, Kenneth Martin, and Managing Director, Tom Cervone, the CBT season runs from August through May and features six productions ranging from musicals to drama.

For more information or tickets, call the CBT Box Office at (865) 974-5161 or visit us online at <https://clarencebrowntheatre.com/plays/trouble-in-mind/>. 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).

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