



# THE GAZETTE

Publication of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre

Summer 2025

*60th Anniversary*  
CELEBRATION



WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS  
OF  
AUGUST WILSON

TRADITION. INSPIRATION. INNOVATION.



## 2025 Fellows Weekend Welcome from Dean Shannon

I am delighted to welcome you and your guests to this festive occasion! Whenever Fellows from across the nation convene in Washington, DC, for the annual Fellows Weekend and Investiture, there is cause for celebration! However, for this year, we are rolling out the red carpet for you as we celebrate and honor the 60th anniversary of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre! As we do so, we raise our glasses to toast the pioneering efforts of University of Texas drama professor F. Loren Winship, who, in August of 1965, carefully and persistently laid the groundwork for this revered sixty-year-old organization. As we celebrate, we also acknowledge the succession of visionary and committed leaders whose stewardship has sustained us over six decades!

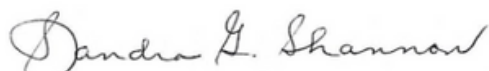
This year's 60th Anniversary celebration also pays tribute to the life and work of one of America's greatest playwrights: August Wilson. Our theme, Walking in the Footsteps of August Wilson: Tradition. Inspiration. Innovation, signals the impact that his epic American Century Cycle plays and his life's work continue to have upon the American theatre—on stage, in the classroom, or wherever theatre lovers gather. During this moment in our country's fraught and uncertain political landscape, I believe that August Wilson's footsteps would surely lead the American theatre community—indeed, all silenced and oppressed artists, arts educators, and arts organizations—to the path of resistance. Resistance, as many of you can attest, was in Wilson's DNA! As he famously wrote, "We who are capable of those noble pursuits should challenge the melancholy and barbaric, to bring the light of angelic grace, peace, prosperity and the unencumbered pursuit of happiness to the ground on which we all stand."

We are delighted to welcome our special guests for the gala who belong to a select group of extraordinarily accomplished individuals affectionately dubbed Wilsonian Warriors: Stephen McKinley Henderson, Phylicia Rashad, André De Shields, and Constanza Romero Wilson. In their own way, each has figured prominently in securing August Wilson's rich legacy. Later this evening, we will have an opportunity to learn more about these legends of stage and screen during "A Conversation with Wilsonian Warriors," to be moderated by Fellow and August Wilson Society President Michael Dinwiddie.

Planning for the 60th Anniversary Gala brought together a committed team of Fellows ably co-chaired by former Dean Gail Humphries and Bonnie Nelson Schwartz, who sought and welcomed the advice and assistance from former Dean Dan Carter, Dean-Elect David Grapes, Fellows Bonnie Fogel, Benny Sato Ambush, Michael Bobbitt, Michael D. Dinwiddie, and, of course, Dean Sandra Shannon. Special thanks to Administrative Assistant Kristy Simpson for the essential behind-the-scenes roles she played while preparing this special evening for you. Tonight is the shining culmination of all their efforts.

Although this evening is a highlight, exciting events are also scheduled for tomorrow when we will convene at the nearby Arena Stage at the Mead Center to formally induct one of our largest and most accomplished cohort of Fellows to be honored. This list includes Daniel Banks, André De Shields, Soyica Diggs Colbert, Kristoffer Diaz, J. Ellen Gainor, Gregg Henry, Robert Hupp, Joan Lipkin, David Milch, Caridad Svich, and Constanza Romero Wilson. Following the ceremony will be the annual Roger L. Stephens Address, to be delivered by acclaimed actor, educator, and Wilsonian Warrior Stephen McKinley Henderson. Sunday's program will be punctuated by an enlightening "Conversation With New Fellows," to be moderated by Fellow Harvey Young.

The mission of the College of Fellows is "to promote and encourage the highest standards of research, writing, and creativity in educational and professional theatre through honoring distinguished service and notable accomplishment by individuals of recognized national stature." Yet the College is equally committed to nurturing the next generation of leaders and forming key alliances—what Wilson referred to as "common ground"—with other national organizations in the field. Undoubtedly, the College of Fellows of 2025 stands on the shoulders of giants who came before us who invested untold amounts of their time, energy, intellect, and funds to secure the welfare of this organization. Your generous donations to the 60th Anniversary Gala fund will support our successful mentorship initiatives designed to support a new generation of theatre professionals; maintain internal operations; and sustain our annual Fellows programming and ensure that the College of Fellows endures for another 60 years!



Sandra G. Shannon, Dean  
College of Fellows of the American Theatre

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## **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2025 CLASS OF THE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS!**

**The distinguished artists, scholars, and industry leaders pictured  
here represent the best in American Theatre.**

**Join us in celebrating their accomplishments.**

## Welcome the Class of 2025



### Daniel Banks

Daniel Banks is a director, deviser, dance dramaturg, and community organizer. He is Co-Founder and Co-Curator of DNAWORKS, an arts and service organization co-founded in 2006 with Adam W. McKinney that is dedicated to dialogue and healing through the arts. Banks has directed, led workshops, and/or instigated projects in 39 states and 23 countries at venues that include the Belarussian National Drama Theatre, the New York City and Washington, DC Hip Hop Theatre Festivals, The Market Theater Lab (South Africa), McCarter Theatre Center, National Theatre of Uganda, the Oval House and Theatro Technis (UK), PlayMakers Rep, Playhouse Square, Dallas Theatre Center, ArtsEmerson, and The Public Theater.



### Soyica Diggs Colbert

Dr. Colbert is Interim Provost at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, where she is the Idol Family Professor of African American Studies and Performing Arts. Colbert's research spans the 19th through 21st centuries—from Harriet Tubman to Beyoncé and from poetics to performance. Colbert's *Radical Vision: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry* (2021) is lauded for the meticulous archival research that she put into this major addition to Hansberry Studies. Colbert has published articles and reviews on James Baldwin, Alice Childress, Toni Morrison, August Wilson, Lynn Nottage, Katori Hall, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Kanye West. She is also the author of *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance and the Stage* and *Black Movements: Performance and Cultural Politics*.



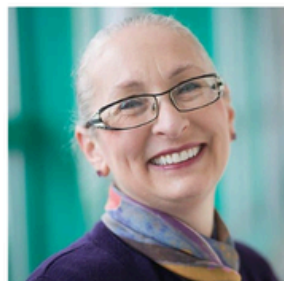
### André De Shields

André De Shields has distinguished himself as an actor, activist, educator and philanthropist. His legendary career has resulted in numerous accolades, including Doctor of Fine Arts honoris causa from his Alma Mater, the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He was a triple-crown winner of the 2019 awards season, garnering Tony, Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk and Grammy Awards for his universally acclaimed role as Hermes (messenger to the gods), in *Hadestown*. In addition to his work in television and film, De Shields is perennially known for his idiosyncratic, show-stopping performances in four legendary Broadway productions - *The Wiz*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Emmy Award), *Play On!* and *The Full Monty* - André De Shields has achieved the status of "Broadway Deity."



### Kristoffer Diaz

Kristoffer Diaz is a playwright, screenwriter, musical librettist, and educator. His musical *Hell's Kitchen* (created with Alicia Keys) was nominated for 13 Tony Awards, including Best Book, and is currently running on Broadway. His play *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, and has gone on to more than forty productions nationwide. Awards include the Guggenheim, Jerome, Van Lier, NYFA, and Gail Merrifield Papp Fellowships; New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award; and the Lucille Lortel, Equity Jeff, and OBIE Awards. He teaches at New York University and serves on the boards of both New Dramatists and the Dramatists Guild.



### J. Ellen Gainor

Professor in the Dept. of Performing and Media Arts at Cornell University, Prof. Gainor's publications include *Shaw's Daughters: Dramatic and Narrative Constructions of Gender* and *Susan Glaspell in Context: American Theater, Culture and Politics 1915-48*. Edited or co-edited works include *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* and *The Routledge Anthology of Women's Theatre Theory and Dramatic Criticism*. Honors include ATHE's 2017 Career Achievement Award, two Choice Awards for outstanding academic titles, and the 2023 George Freedley Memorial Special Jury Prize. She has served as ATHE's Vice President for Research and Publication and on the Executive Board of the International Susan Glaspell Society.



### Gregg Henry

Gregg Henry has been artistic director of the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival and the Kennedy Center Kenan Fellowship program since 2000. He has directed six productions for Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences. His most recent production work as a director has been seen at Theater J and Mosaic Theater Company. As producer of the MFA Playwrights' Workshop, in association with National New Play Network, he has supervised the developmental workshops of 115 new plays. In February 2025, Theatre Washington awarded him the Victor Shargai Leadership Award for service and creative leadership in the Washington DC community.



## Welcome the Class of 2025



### Robert Hupp

Now in his ninth season as the Artistic Director of Syracuse Stage, Robert has shepherded two original productions, *How to Dance in Ohio* and *Thoughts of a Colored Man*, to Broadway. Prior to Syracuse Stage, Robert spent seventeen seasons as the Producing Artistic Director of Arkansas Repertory Theatre in Little Rock. In New York City, Robert directed the American premieres of Glyn Maxwell's *The Lifeblood* and *Wolfpit* for the Phoenix Theatre Ensemble. He also served for nine seasons as the artistic director of the Obie Award-winning Jean Cocteau Repertory. In addition to his work in LORT theatre, Robert has held theatre faculty positions at several academic institutions and currently teaches in the Drama Department of Syracuse University.



### Joan Lipkin

Internationally recognized as a groundbreaking theatre artist, educator, and social activist working through a racial and gender justice lens, Joan is Producing Artistic Director of St. Louis's That Uppity Theatre. Known for devising, rapid response, short plays and voting rights, she also specializes in creating work with underrepresented populations. Her work has been featured on network television, NPR, BBC and in many publications - *American Theatre*, *Theatre Topics*, *New Theatre Quarterly*, and *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*. Some awards include Visionary, Ethical Humanist of the Year, Woman of Achievement, ATHE Leadership for Community-based Theatre and Civic Engagement, St. Louis Theater Circle Lifetime Achievement, and 2025 Margo Jones Medal.



### David Milch

Dr. Milch is a Renaissance man and an exceptional individual dedicated to the power and support of the arts. More than two decades ago, Dr. Milch established a foundation that would serve "tikkun olam" (healing the world) in two major areas: the use of arts for social impact ("Ars Veritas Initiative"); and youth mentorship to help fashion the leaders of tomorrow through the arts. His entire outlook is to focus on the arts, especially theatre, as a conduit for social justice and social change. His support has afforded multiple stage productions and films, both in the United States and abroad. His outlook is "Making Change by Changing the Story Through the Arts."



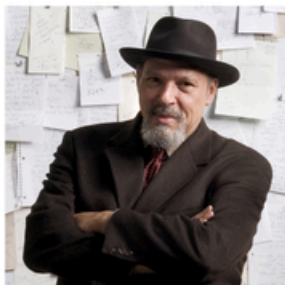
### Caridad Svich

Recipient of the 2012 OBIE for Lifetime Achievement, playwright (of 100+ plays), translator, editor, author, opera librettist, Caridad Svich is currently Artistic Director of New Play Development at the Lucille Lortel Theater in NYC, an editor at *Contemporary Theatre Review* (Routledge, UK) and Drama Editor at Asymptote literary translation journal. Other honors include a 2024 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, a 2023 Flora Roberts Award from The Dramatists Guild, a 2023 LATA Award for Distinguished Achievement in Adaptation, ATHE's 2018 Ellen Stewart Award for Career Achievement in Professional Theatre, and 2013 and 2003 National Latino Playwrights Awards.



### Constanza Romero Wilson

Constanza Romero-Wilson is August Wilson's widow and the Executive Director of the August Wilson Legacy LLC. She is a Tony-nominated costume designer for Wilson's *Fences* and *Gem of the Ocean* and has overseen countless productions of his ten-play American Century Cycle nationally and abroad. She served as Executive Producer for the recent Netflix film *The Piano Lesson*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Paramount's *Fences*, and the documentary *Giving Voice*. Romero holds an MFA in Design from the Yale School of Drama and lives in Seattle.



### August Wilson (April 27, 1945 - October 2, 2005)

Frederick August Kittel Jr., who later changed his name to August Wilson, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania's Hill District. The prolific and multiple award-winning American playwright is best known for a series of 10 plays, collectively called The American Century Cycle, which chronicle the suppressed history and cultural heritage of the African Americans through each decade of the 20th century. Plays in the series include *Fences* (1987) and *The Piano Lesson* (1990)—both earning him the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Other honors and awards include the 1999 Presidential Medal of Freedom for significant contributions to American society, culture, or national security; his 2006 induction into the American Theater Hall of Fame; and the 2025 posthumous honor of receiving the 2,799th star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



# MEET THE NEW FELLOWS

## Fellow Daniel Banks

Citation Heather Nathans

I am honored to nominate Daniel Banks, Co-Founder of DNAWorks, to the College of Fellows. I have witnessed firsthand the transformational power of his work on my campus and beyond. I have seen his dedication to supporting communities in complicated discussions about power, equity, and social justice make him a role model for scholars and artists of the American theatre.

Throughout his career, Banks has forged a unique role as a healer, a facilitator of dialogues across difference, and a scholar-artist who puts his ideals into practice. In 2013, Banks penned, "The Welcome Table: Casting for an Integrated Society." As he acknowledged in the introduction to the essay, the work grew out of a comparatively optimistic moment in US culture – on a national level with the reelection of Barack Obama, and more locally with the implementation of EEO guidelines in the Broadway League, and the launch of initiatives through AEA and TCG to support greater equity and accessibility in the theatre. In the intervening twelve years, much has changed in US culture, with bitter partisan divisions at the national level, the COVID-related collapse of so many familiar theatrical structures, and the crises that prompted declarations such as "We See You White American Theatre," and "Not in Our House."

Throughout all of these changes, Banks has persisted in creating theatre to bring audiences into conversation and communion. His company, DNAWorks, "takes seriously the plurality of [its] audiences," as he observed in a 2020 interview in *American Theatre Magazine*. In that interview, he also describes his commitment to creating, "theatre that contributes to the health and survival of a culture, a region, our species, our planet."

In addition to his numerous directorial projects over the past several years, Banks published the 2020 co-edited collection, *Casting a Movement: The Welcome Table Initiative*, which as one reviewer observed, "remaps the field," when "read alongside recent political, social and artistic developments, including the Black Lives Matter movement, theatre closures precipitated by COVID-19 and the political upheavals of the Trump presidency."

As an organization whose mission is to, "promote and encourage the highest standards of research, writing, and creativity in educational and professional theatre through honoring distinguished service and notable accomplishment by individuals of recognized national stature," the College of Fellows is truly fortunate to welcome Daniel to its community.

## Fellow Soyica Diggs Colbert

Citation Dr. Sandra Shannon

I am pleased to nominate Dr. Soyica Diggs Colbert for membership in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. Having witnessed the trajectory of her career over multiple decades and having seen evidence of the impact that her prolific and critically groundbreaking scholarship in African American theatre history and performance has had in redefining these fields, I can attest that Colbert is highly qualified to join our ranks and to make significant contributions to this organization.

Dr. Colbert is currently Interim Provost of Georgetown University in Washington, DC. She is the Idol Family Professor of African American Studies and Performing Arts and, most recently, served as Vice President for Interdisciplinary Initiatives in the Office of the Provost. Colbert's research interests span the 19th – 21st centuries from Harriet Tubman to Beyoncé and from poetics to performance. Yale University Press, publishers of Colbert's *Radical Vision: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry*, praises Colbert for her years of meticulous archival research that preceded this now well-received work.

Colbert narrates a life at the intersection of art and politics, arguing that for Hansberry the theater operated as a rehearsal room for her political and intellectual work.....Hansberry was deeply involved in the Black freedom struggle during the Cold War and in the early civil rights movement, and here Colbert shows us an artist's life with the background of the Greenwich Village art scene in the 1960s, the homophile movement, Black diasporic freedom movements, and third-wave feminism. Drawing from Hansberry's papers, speeches, and interviews, this book provides a new point of entry in the history of Black radicalism, and a new perspective on Black women in mid-twentieth-century political movements.

Colbert has also published articles and reviews on James Baldwin, Alice Childress, Toni Morrison, August Wilson, Lynn Nottage, Katori Hall, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Kanye West in *African American Review*, *Theater Journal*, *Boundary 2*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, and *Theater Topics*, and in the collections *Black Performance Theory*, *Contemporary African American Women Playwrights*, and *August Wilson: Completing the Cycle*. She is also the author of *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance and the Stage* and *Black Movements: Performance and Cultural Politics*. She edited the 2012 Black Performance special issue of *African American Review* and co-edited *The Psychic Hold of Slavery*.

# MEET THE NEW FELLOWS

## cont. Soyica Diggs Colbert

Colbert has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support a residency at the Schomburg Center, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Stanford University, Mellon Foundation, and the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Emory University. Colbert earned her bachelor's degree from Georgetown University and a master's and Ph.D. in English Literature from Rutgers University. She taught at Brown University, MIT, and Dartmouth before returning to her Georgetown alma mater. Colbert has likened her investments in researching, writing, publishing, and lecturing about Lorraine Hansberry and various topics related to American theatre as tantamount to "planting seeds." By all accounts, Colbert is at the height of planting season, and, based upon an impressive list of projects in play, the harvest will continue to be bountiful for years to come.

## Fellow André De Shields

### Citation by Kathryn Ervin

I am nominating Award winning performer and artist André De Shields for admission to the College of Fellows of The American Theatre.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, De Shields earned a BA in English Literature from University Wisconsin, Madison and an MA from the Gallatin School of Individualized Study of NYU. He is currently serving as an adjunct professor at Gallatin but has held teaching positions at Southern Methodist University and Michigan State University.

De Shields has had a career spanning over fifty-five years on the American stage. He began as an actor and has choreographed, written, composed, and adapted for the stage, film, and television. While his signature Broadway performances began with the title role in the 1975 production of *The Wiz*, his career included early work with Chicago's Organic Theatre and The Experimental Café LaMama. His body of work includes awards for *The Wiz*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *The Full Monty*, *Play On*, and *Hadestown*. He is the recipient of multiple awards, including The Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Circle, Tony Award, Obie Award, an Emmy Award, and a Grammy.

In his extraordinary career De Shields has worked on adaptations for young audiences, new plays, American classics (*Death of A Salesman*), masterpieces of the theatre (*Waiting for Godot*, *Dream On Monkey Mountain*) and Shakespeare's plays (*The Tempest* and *As You Like It*). His regional credits include performances at the Goodman Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, the Old Globe, Victory Gardens, Alliance Theatre, the Arena Stage, the Olivier Theatre on the West End and many others.

He has been a pioneer in creating larger than life characters on the American stage and especially inspiring roles for Black performers. Throughout his career he has supported scholarships and mentorships to support the next generation of artists in building their careers. His presence on stage and screen has fired the imagination of audience members as he brought to life real and illusory characters.

He has been an advocate lending his talent and voice to causes affecting the arts and the world community. He is a hardworking and dedicated professional who aspires to be the best and bring the best to our theatre. He is an excellent addition to the membership.

## Fellow Kristoffer Diaz

### Citation by Michael Dinwiddie

It is my great pleasure to write this letter of nomination on behalf of Mr. Kristoffer Diaz to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. An award-winning playwright, librettist, screenwriter, and educator, Kristoffer earned a BA from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, an MFA from NYU's Department of Dramatic Writing, and an MFA from Brooklyn College's Performing Arts Management program. He currently holds a dual appointment as an Associate Arts Professor in the Dramatic Writing Program at NYU Tisch and a Clinical Associate Professor in NYU's Gallatin School.

Kristoffer's play *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* won an Obie Award and was a Pulitzer Prize Finalist in 2008. *Chad Deity* also won the New American Play Award from the Edgerton Foundation and the National Latino Playwriting Award from the Arizona Theatre Company. His other plays include *Welcome to Arroyo's*, *The Unfortunates* and *Reggie Hoops*. His adaptation of the Disney film *Hercules* premiered in Central Park in 2019 as part of the Joseph Papp Public Theater's Public Works program with a cast of nearly 200.

*Hell's Kitchen*, with book by Kristoffer Diaz and music and lyrics by Alicia Keys, is slated for a 2024 Broadway debut at the Shubert Theatre following its successful sold-out off-Broadway run at the Public Theater. Numerous works have been produced, commissioned, and developed at the Goodman, Dallas Theater Center, Geffen Playhouse, ACT, Center Theatre Group, The Public Theater, Second Stage, Victory Gardens, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among others. Awards include the Guggenheim, Jerome, Van Lier, NYFA, and the Gail Merrifield Papp Fellowships.

# MEET THE NEW FELLOWS

## **cont. Kristoffer Diaz**

Other honors include The New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award; Lucille Lortel, Equity Jeff, the Shaw Ruddock Playwright Residency at the Donmar Warehouse, and the Future Aesthetics Artist Regrant, among others. As a screenwriter, Kristoffer has developed original television pilots for HBO and FX, written for the first season of Netflix's *GLOW*, and adapted the musical *Rent* for FOX.

An alumnus of New Dramatists who sits on that organization's Board of Directors, Kristoffer is a member of the Writers Guild of America East and serves as secretary of the Dramatists Guild Council. Luis Alfaro describes him as "in the truest sense a citizen artist" who "understands not only the business sense of the practice, but also its community impact. All of this while he continues to reach for artistic excellence." It is apparent that Kristoffer Diaz is a talented and visionary theatre artist/educator. I recommend him most highly.

## **Fellow J. Ellen Gainor**

### **Citation by Cheryl Black**

It is a distinct honor to nominate J. Ellen Gainor, currently Professor in the Department of Performing and Media Arts at Cornell University and a noted scholar of American and British theatre and women and theatre. At Cornell she has also served in a number of administrative positions, including Department Chair, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Director of Graduate Studies, and Acting Dean of Cornell's Graduate School. She is the author of groundbreaking, award winning books on playwrights G. B. Shaw and Susan Glaspell. Gainor is one of the handful of scholars responsible for the remarkable resurgence of interest in, and scholarship on, playwright Susan Glaspell, and it is in this capacity that I have had the privilege of working with her on numerous projects. Gainor is also the co-editor of the collection of Glaspell's complete works, a 2010 volume that included two previously unpublished (one completely unknown) works and the editor of *Susan Glaspell in Context* (2023), a collection of 30+ essays by leading, international scholars and artists, including the first scholarly analyses of six newly discovered short stories.

Gainor's significant contributions to women's theatre also include her edited collection of the major plays of Edwardian playwright Githa Sowerby, her pedagogy on female and feminist dramatic traditions, and her leadership roles in professional organizations like the International Susan Glaspell Society, the American Theatre and Drama Society, the Society for the Study of American Women Writers, ATHE's Women and Theatre Program, and her most recent co-edited work, *The Routledge Anthology of Women's Theatre Theory & Dramatic Criticism*.

As indispensable as Ellen's work has been within feminist/women's scholarship, she has made equally distinguished, interdisciplinary contributions with her edited *Imperialism and Theatre* (1995), her co-edited *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (2001), and her co-edited, three editions of *The Norton Anthology of Drama*, one of the most comprehensive and frequently utilized drama collections in the field. Subjects of her publications in journals and essay collections (in addition to the specializations listed above) include Quiara Alegria Hudes, Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, Jane Martin, Neil Simon, and Dance.

Gainor's contributions have been recognized by a number of our field's most prestigious awards, including, in 2017, ATHE's Career Achievement Award, in 2018 ATHE's Women and Theatre Programs Scholarship Award, two Choice Awards for outstanding academic titles, and fellowships from ACLS, ASTR/IFTR, and Cornell.

Her service to the field additionally includes serving as ATHE's Vice President for Research and Publication; serving on the Executive Boards of the International Susan Glaspell Society and the American Theatre and Drama Society, the editorial Boards of *Modern Drama* and *Theatre Survey*, the advisory boards of NYC's Mint Theatre and the Metropolitan Playhouse; and service on numerous committees for our leading professional organizations.

I have known, admired, and been profoundly influenced by Ellen Gainor for nearly three decades. She exemplifies the highest standards of professional achievement and personal integrity and has most definitely earned her place within the College of Fellows. I would be honored to serve alongside her.





# MEET THE NEW FELLOWS

## Fellow Gregg Henry

### Citation by Mark Bly

I have known Gregg Henry for twenty years as we have worked together closely on many projects including the Kennedy Center MFA Playwriting Workshops championing the work of hundreds of playwrights which he has led with Gary Garrison, the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, for which he is the Artistic Director, and the Kennedy Center/National New Play Network Playwriting and Dramaturgy Workshops, which we co-founded in 2011. This gifted artist, administrator, and mentor that I am nominating for the College of Fellows is nationally respected and has distinguished himself annually for decades primarily through his work as the Artistic Director for the KCACTF, a program that has given thousands of students yearly the opportunity to hone their artistic and administrative skills in a professional environment. He has become known through his travels as “The Johnny Appleseed” of our time, planting theatrical seeds for the next generation in universities as he tours to eight regional festivals around the country each year. Gregg believes in listening to the voices of emerging artists and challenging their mentors to evolve and create safe environments for learning their art forms, especially for underrepresented groups.

Over the past several decades I have witnessed Gregg create these safe environments leaving no one out of the dialogue by gender, race, or age, whether in the Kennedy Center playwriting workshops, the ever-evolving KCACTF, as the Director of the Kenan Performing Artists in Residence Program, or the Kennedy Center/National New Play Network Playwriting and Dramaturgy Workshops. We created the latter dramaturgy program in 2011 when there was a shortage of literary staff in theatres for budgetary reasons and a pressing need for graduating students to have the opportunity to be exposed to training with professional dramaturgs in a series of new play development workshop settings. Gregg Henry understood the need for such new play dramaturgy training long before anyone else and we have created internships with The O'Neill Center, New Harmony, and Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas. This is yet one more example of why I believe Gregg Henry stands out among so many of his contemporaries and deserves to be honored now by being selected for the upcoming Class of 2025 College of Fellows of American Theatre.



## Fellow Robert Hupp

### Citation by David Grapes

I have known Bob since 2001 when we began a series of highly successful co-productions between our two LORT theatres (TN Repertory Theatre and AR Repertory Theatre). We soon discovered that we not only shared a similar artistic aesthetic but were also both native “West Virginia boys.” Let me share some of the highlights of Bob’s remarkable contributions to the American Theatre.

Now in his eighth season as the Artistic Director of Syracuse Stage Bob’s Syracuse Stage directing credits include: *Our Town*, *Annapurna*, *Talley’s Folly*, *Amadeus*, *Noises Off*, *Next to Normal*, and *The Three Musketeers*. During his tenure as Artistic Director, Syracuse Stage has originated two productions, *How to Dance in Ohio* and *Thoughts of a Colored Man*, that have subsequently moved to Broadway. Prior to coming to central New York, Robert spent seventeen seasons as the Producing Artistic Director of Arkansas Repertory Theatre in Little Rock where he directed over 30 productions. While in Arkansas, Bob was named both Non-Profit Executive of the Year by the Arkansas Business Publishing Group, and Individual Artist of the Year by the Arkansas Arts Council.

In New York City, Bob directed the American premieres of Glyn Maxwell’s *The Lifeblood* and *Wolfpit* for the Phoenix Theatre Ensemble. He also served for nine seasons as the artistic director of the Obie Award-winning Jean Cocteau Repertory. At the Cocteau, Bob’s collaborative partnership with Eric Bentley led to new productions of plays by Buchner, Wedekind, and to a previously unproduced adaptation of Brecht’s *Mother Courage and Her Children* with a score by Darius Milhaud.

In addition to his work in the professional theatre, Bob has held academic theatre positions at Pennsylvania’s Dickinson College and, in Arkansas, at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and Hendrix College. He currently teaches in the Drama Department of Syracuse University.

His service work includes a term as Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Theatre Communications Group and serving on the funding panels for the New York State Council on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, the Theatre Communications Group, the New Jersey State Council of the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

An active member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Bob is a graduate of Dickinson College and received additional training at New York University and The National Shakespeare Company Conservatory.

# MEET THE NEW FELLOWS

## Fellow Joan Lipkin

### Citation by Dean Emeritus Robert Schanke

Internationally recognized as a groundbreaking theatre artist, educator, and social activist, for thirty-five years Joan Lipkin has been the founder and Producing Artistic Director of St. Louis's That Uppity Theatre. Joan works at the intersection of performance and civic engagement, creating events and dialogues about the most pressing issues of our time – climate change, voting advocacy, disability, racial justice, gender equality, LGBTQ+ experience, gun sense, reproductive choice, and immigration reform. She specializes in creating original work with underrepresented populations including people with disabilities, women with cancer, LGBT youth and adults, seniors, adolescent girls, college students and youth at risk.

Her play, *About That Chocolate Bar*, commissioned by Climate Change Theatre Action and published by The Arctic Cycle in Finding the Light has had almost 50 productions throughout the US and the world, including in New Zealand and several places in Europe.

Her work has been featured on network television, National Public Radio, and the BBC and has been presented in such theatres as the Old Vic, Lincoln Center, Bailiwick Repertory, the Globe, Provincetown Playhouse, and Phoenix Rising. It has been featured in many publications – *American Theatre*, *Theatre Topics*, *New Theatre Quarterly*, *The Dramatist Magazine*, and *The Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*. She is profiled in 50 Key Figures in Queer US Theatre, and her monologue "Dinner" was published last year by Smith & Kraus in *WE/US: Monologues for Gender Minority Characters*.

She has lectured and presented at Yale University, Princeton University, Trinity College/LaMama, Oklahoma State University, Auburn University, Davidson College, New York University, the University of London, Georgetown University, Southwestern University, University of Texas at Austin, Washington and Lee, Missouri School for the Blind, Women in Theatre, Association for Theatre in Higher Education, International Playback Symposium, International Society for Disability Studies, Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, and Creating Change.

Awards for her and her company include Visionary, Ethical Humanist of the Year, Woman of Achievement, ATHE Leadership for Community-based Theatre and Civic Engagement, St. Louis Theater Circle Lifetime Achievement, and 2025 Margo Jones Medal.

Joan Lipkin meets our criteria that nominees be of "acknowledged national stature."

## Fellow David Milch

### Citation by Dean Emerita Gail Humphries

It is my pleasure to nominate Dr. David M. Milch to the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. Dr. Milch is a Renaissance man and an exceptional individual dedicated to the power and support of the arts. I have known him for nearly two decades as a remarkable theatre philanthropist. He is a Harvard-trained physician with a wide array of interests in the area of life sciences and medical technology, but for our purposes is significantly an avid patron and visionary force for theater arts. Dr. Milch has participated in the production of such shows as *Avenue Q*, *In the Heights*, *West Side Story*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Night of the Iguana* and many others on Broadway. He recently founded and serves as President of the New York film-production company, MiLa Media, and is the executive producer of a number of documentary and feature films, including Avi Nesher's critically acclaimed drama *Past Life*, based on the family story of composer Ella Milch-Sheriff.

Dr. Milch is a visionary who values and expounds upon the arts in every way possible. He is a spokesperson through the Anti-Defamation League, various political entities and his exceptional foundation. His goal is to build a better future for all generations through the arts.

In 2010, Dr. Milch established a foundation that would serve "tikkun olam" (healing the world) in two major areas: the use of arts for social impact ("Ars Veritas Initiative"); and youth mentorship to help fashion the leaders of tomorrow through the arts. As a seed philanthropist, Dr. Milch has helped initiate and shape strategies for several new and visionary artistic initiatives, including "Lives Eliminated, Dreams Illuminated," a multi-media arts exhibit involving theatre, photography, the visual arts and music, honoring young women who perished during the Holocaust. He has sponsored multiple productions from the United States which have also been presented at various national and international venues such as the International Psychoanalytical Association annual conference in Prague with the musical production of "Signs of Life" – a testimonial to performing and visual artists who survived the Nazi transit camp of Terezin, through their art.

The Dr. David M. Milch Foundation has also been deeply involved in activities and support for helping youth navigate through current social and economic challenges through the arts. He was the recent recipient of the prestigious Sophie Gerson Healthy Youth Award for bridging inequity among children and reducing the cycle of poverty by bringing cultural, educational and after-school opportunities to underserved youth, improving the health of people of all ages.

His entire outlook is to focus on the arts, especially theatre, as a conduit for social justice and social change and his support has afforded multiple productions to that end, both in the United States and abroad. Dr. Milch has also been remarkably supportive of individual performing artists whose work embodies his outlook of "Making Change by Changing the Story Through the Arts."

# MEET THE NEW FELLOWS

## Fellow Caridad Svich

### Citation by Cheryl Black

It is a distinct privilege to nominate Caridad Svich for membership in the College of Fellows. After receiving a BFA from UNC-Charlotte (she won a national playwriting award for her first full-length play at the age of 18) and a MFA from UC-San Diego, she embarked on her illustrious career as an award-winning playwright, translator, editor, author, and activist. She has written 40+ full-length plays and translated 15+; she has authored, co-authored, edited or co-edited too many works to list, but including a landmark work on playwright Maria Irene Fornes – with whom Svich trained at INTAR (Conducting a Life, 1999), the anthology *Out of the Fringe: Contemporary Latina/Latino Theatre and Performance* (2000), *Theatre in Crisis? Performance Manifestos for a New Century*, UK/Palgrave Macmillan, (2002), *Trans-Global Readings: Crossing Theatrical Boundaries*, UK/Palgrave Macmillan, USA (2004), and most recently, *Toward a Future Theatre: Conversations During a Pandemic*, from Bloomsbury/Methuen Drama (2021). She is also a frequent contributor to scholarly journals and to the Howlround online platform, which amplifies "progressive and disruptive ideas about theatre."

Her plays have been produced in major cities across the United States, in Mexico, Costa Rica, the UK, Greece, Uruguay, Canada, Australia, and in colleges and universities nationwide. We were fortunate to produce two of her works at the University of Missouri during my time there – *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* (adapted from Lorca), and MU commissioned and premiered her original, poetic *Orphan Sea*. She was in residence for both productions, generously sharing her wisdom and insights with our students and faculty. Caridad has also had a distinguished career as a teacher and mentor. She has taught creative writing and playwriting at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, Primary Stages' Einhorn School of Performing Arts, Bard, Barnard, Bennington, Denison, Ohio State, ScriptWorks, UCSD, and Yale School of Drama.

Her progressive activism is manifest in her work and life in myriad ways, including her founding of NoPassport, an "unincorporated, artist-driven, grass-roots theatre alliance & press devoted to cross-cultural, Pan-American performance, theory, action, advocacy, and publication." No Passport held its first national conference in 2007, with a keynote by Fellow Jorge Huerta. That same year No Passport Press, which publishes playscripts, anthologies, theoretical works and translations that reflect either in form or content – "the hemispheric spirit," was launched.

Caridad's stature within our field is also revealed through the many prestigious awards, fellowships, grants, and residencies she has received, including a 2012 OBIE for Lifetime Achievement and 2013 and 2003 National Latino Playwrights Awards. She is an alumna playwright of New Dramatists and has received fellowships from Harvard/Radcliffe, NEA/TCG, PEW Charitable Trust, and California Arts Council. It is an honor to welcome her into our Fellowship.

## Fellow Constanza Romero Wilson

### Citation by Michael Dinwiddie

It is my great pleasure to write this letter of nomination on behalf of Ms. Constanza Romero. A Tony-nominated costume designer, a visual artist, and a movie producer, she earned her undergraduate degree at the University of California-Santa Cruz in set and costume design. She completed the Master of Fine Arts degree in costume design at the Yale School of Drama. She met August Wilson when she was tapped to do costume design for his play *The Piano Lesson*, which was to be premiered in Yale's Repertory Theater. In 1994, she and the playwright were married. When August Wilson died in 2005, Ms. Romero Wilson became the guardian of his legacy. As the Executor of the August Wilson Estate, she assumes total responsibility for vetting the myriad theatre companies around the world that desire to stage August Wilson's plays. Actor Denzel Washington has pledged to executive produce all 10 plays in Wilson's The American Century Cycle, a collection that chronicles a history of the Black American experience, with each of the works set in a different decade spanning the 20th century.

Ms. Romero Wilson serves as the artistic director of a museum-quality permanent exhibit of Wilson's life and legacy at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center in Pittsburgh. Intimately involved in the transformation of Wilson's childhood home in the Hill District of Pittsburgh into an artists' community center, she has also produced the award-winning films *Fences* and Netflix's 2020 Oscar-nominated *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Her Broadway costume design credits include *The Piano Lesson*, *Seven Guitars*, and *Gem of the Ocean*, among others.

Dedicated to protecting her late husband's vision, Ms. Romero-Wilson states that August Wilson's plays were focused on "teaching all us Americans about our racial history." She firmly believes, as August Wilson did, that "In order to understand where we are going as a nation, we need to learn from the great sacrifices our African American ancestors made to fight and survive the trauma of white supremacy, and combat now the ongoing forces of systemic racism."

Ms. Constanza Romero-Wilson is a true "Wilsonian Warrior." It is my hope that she will receive your most serious consideration for investiture into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.







## **Fellow August Wilson** **Inducted Posthumously** **Citation by Dr. Sandra Shannon**

One of the most influential and important voices in modern theatre, August Wilson, is best known for his ten-play magnum opus, *THE AMERICAN CENTURY CYCLE*, a breathtaking ten-play study of the African American struggle for cultural and economic preservation through the twentieth century. They include *Gem of the Ocean*; *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*; *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*; *The Piano Lesson*; *Seven Guitars*; *Fences*; *Two Trains Running*; *Jitney*; *King Hedley, II*; and *Radio Golf*.

Wilson set for himself a singular challenge that no other dramatist had attempted: to write one play for every decade of the twentieth century. In these plays, he honestly and lovingly brought to life what anthropologist John Gwaltney called the “drylongso” people, that is, ordinary (Black) folk who are not the drivers of history but who, despite their warts or shortcomings, simply want—in the face of sustained racial hostility, economic and political disadvantage—to fashion “a life of dignity and purpose.” Collectively, these masterpieces reflect Wilson’s own personal call for social and racial justice.

Wilson’s plays showcased the intelligent poetic genius of black blues speech and the rich lives of Africans in the New World: their frustrations, anger, resilience, expectations of justice, disappointments, and deprived opportunities promised them in the U.S. Constitution. He put his beloved people on a stage and made their lives central in his stories, palpable, and visible to all. He gave black folks a whole sense of themselves, and in doing so, gave the world a chance to understand and respect black life: their songs, aspirations, triumphs, contributions to the world, and their black cultural responses to life.

The list of coveted awards and accolades that Wilson has received over his stellar career is, by any measure, astounding and too many to share in this space. He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an alumnus of New Dramatists, and the recipient of Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, the Whiting Writers Award and a 2003 Heinz Award. From winning respective Pulitzer Prizes for *Fences* (1987) and *The Piano Lesson* (1990) to being honored with a succession of Honorary Degrees at universities across the United States and to being awarded the 2025 posthumous Star on the prestigious Hollywood Walk of Fame, Wilson leaves a huge mark on American theatre and huge shoes for young artists to stand in.

Yet, according to Wilson’s wife Constanza Romero Wilson, two of Wilson’s most cherished honors came in 1995 with his induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in 1999 upon receiving from President Bill Clinton the Presidential Medal of Freedom for “significant contributions to American society, culture, or national security.”

As Dean of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre and as an early August Wilson scholar who, from the start, was convinced of his genius, I consider his posthumous induction to be a well-deserved and full circle moment. So, today, on what would have been August Wilson’s 80th birthday, I salute his enormous contributions to the American theatre and all who continue to keep his legacy alive.





## The Roger L. Stevens Address

### "The Sands of Time are our Stepping Stones"

by Stephen McKinley Henderson

Dr. Shannon, distinguished members and inductees of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre, welcome guests, and fellow Wilsonians. I am grateful for yet another opportunity to confront my dread of public speaking. I only accept invitations to do this from people whom I respect, at notable milestones of worthy organizations, and this checks all the boxes. To avoid rambling off message into the many anecdotal laden corridors of my mind I will choose to read as best I can what I have to say. The Arena Stage is a landmark regional theatre, drenched in its own singular, illustrious production history. I must acknowledge the irony of delivering this Roger L. Stevens keynote address here rather than the national center for performing arts that will always be his legacy.

I met Mr. Stevens, briefly but memorably, in 1986. The management, staff and crew of the Eisenhower Theatre moved their annual Christmas Party a week earlier to celebrate with Hal Scott's cast of *A Raisin in the Sun* starring Esther Rolle and Delroy Lindo. Mr. Stevens congratulated our cast with a large ad in the Post announcing our production had broken several previous house records; Carol Channing in *Jerry's Girls*, Elizabeth Taylor in *Little Foxes*, and Dustin Hoffman in *Death of a Salesman*. I played Bobo, the smallest role in a great production of Lorraine Hansberry's masterpiece. Eight years later I was a proud director when we revived the St. Louis Black Repertory's production of Jeff Stetson's play, *The Meeting*, for The Imagination Celebration in the Terrace Theatre. The play depicts Martin Luther King and Malcolm X as fathers of daughters who have lost dolls when their homes were bombed. DEI restrictions would forbid that play in the Terrace today, but I am sure the financial advisors of the new chair and board members tell them diversity is good for their stock portfolios.

Most probably August Wilson's *King Hedley II* in 2001 and Kenny Leon's historic staged readings of the American Century Cycle in 2007 will remain my final appearances in the Eisenhower or The Theatre Lab. All these treasured memories of working at Kennedy Center are part of American Theatre history. The sands of time are our steppingstones. They fill the hourglass of decades as we stride from one achievement to the next. Because of playwrights and the theatres that produce them, footprints in the sands of time are not easily blown away. As Amiri Baraka wrote, "today is the history we must learn to desire." What we do in response to challenges outweigh the challenges. It was true for Sophocles. It was true for Athol Fugard, and it is true for Lynn Nottage.

I consider myself a revolutionary optimist regarding America and American Theatre. In the challenging times ahead of us, optimism is a revolutionary act. We must believe change is possible to affect it, and we cannot relinquish the hard progress that we have made. Certainly, if there had not been a White America and Black America, we would not need "Black Theatre." But there was and we do. We have Karamu House and Cleveland Playhouse; but we are welcome in each other's houses. And we are not going back.

I would like to share a few stories with you before I close.

## cont. Roger L. Stevens address

The first preview for *King Hedley II* at the Eisenhower Theatre lasted over three and a half hours. We got out of costumes, make-up and back yard dirt and had a measured, unflattering note session. When we exited the stage door on a cold March night it was five hours since the curtain rose on the first act. I was amazed at the number of audience members who greeted us. They were not seeking autographs as much as giving thanks. There was an older couple who had brought lawn chairs. It was not their first rodeo. When they rose to approach Leslie Uggams or Stokes, I cannot remember exactly who, but it was not me, the Potomac wind caught their chairs. I helped them. They thanked me later. I told them how surprised I was they were there after such a long evening. They said they always see August's plays out of town, particularly early previews. They wanted to hear the language before it was trimmed for Broadway. These were experienced Theatre lovers of poetic text who knew this was a special playwright.

In 2007 Kenny Leon was Artistic Director and Narda Alcorn was Production Stage Manager for staged readings of the entire 20th Century Cycle. They were presented in rotating repertory at Kennedy Center's Theatre Lab with sold out attendance. The weekday matinees were attended by high school students from everywhere. Some came and left on school buses and some on public transportation. I happened to ride a city bus with a dozen or so students who had seen me in three of the readings. One student approached me and asked if we were really reading or if we had the plays memorized and were just pretending to read. I told him I was more familiar with one of the plays than the others, but we are all really reading. He said, "and all'a yall can do that and walk around and dance and shit?" I said yes. He turned to a couple of other guys he had been sitting with and nodded. Another one came over. He said, "I know some girls who can read that good but not many dudes. That's like regular talk, but better, you know? I wish I could read that good."

I knew that a seed was planted. I gave him one of the scripts from my backpack. I could get another, but he needed this one right now for his bus ride home, and beyond.

August wrote a century of plays to combat centuries of inequity. The impact of his genius will last as long as Theatre exists. *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* is to *King Hedley II* as *Hamlet* is to *The Scottish Play* (you know the one I am talking about). We can celebrate the Bard of Avon on April 23rd and the Bard of Pittsburgh on April 27th. The revolutionary optimist in me tells me not to give up on any student and not to give up on America. There are enough truth loving citizens to keep democracy alive, no matter how high in office the liars rise.

## About Stephen McKinley Henderson



Stephen McKinley Henderson has worked on stages throughout the United States, abroad, on and Off-Broadway, in television and film. In 1996 he originated the role of Turnbo in August Wilson's *Jitney* in Pittsburgh and then went on to play the part multiple times around the country, including in a hugely successful Off-Broadway run that netted him a Drama Desk Award. In 2001, he played the role of Turnbo at the National Theatre in London where *Jitney* received the Olivier Award for Best Play. Since then, Henderson has appeared on Broadway multiple times, including in two August Wilson plays, *King Hedley II* and *Fences*, earning a Tony nomination for best supporting actor in the latter. During the 2010 season, he was also presented with the Richard Seff Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor from Actor's Equity Association. In 2021, Henderson received a Virtuoso Award from the Santa Barbara International Film Festival for his work in August Wilson's *Fences*, starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis. He received the OBIE and Lucille Lortel awards in the outstanding lead actor category for his work as Pops in Stephen Adley Guirgis' Pulitzer Prize winning play, *Between Riverside and Crazy*, for which he also received his second Tony nomination. He has also been honored with a Lucille Lortel Lifetime Achievement Award, a Drama Desk Harold Prince Award, an AUDELCO Lifetime Achievement Award, and The John Houseman Award from The Acting Company. On November 18, 2024, Henderson was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame at Broadway's Gershwin Theater.





## 60th Anniversary Gala celebrates The New August Wilson Fellowship: Recollections and Impressions

In the summer of 2023, I stopped in at the August Wilson House in Pittsburgh as I had for the past 10 years. We had transformed the dilapidated building in the Hill District of Pittsburgh into a vibrant contemporary art center bustling with creativity and full of promise.

In the backyard, a play was in rehearsal, and a call was out to find young people of color who could design, build, paint, stage, and bring the world of August Wilson's *Fences* to life. Rob Pfaffmann, the architect of the August Wilson House, sounded the alarm. "There is a dire shortage of young people of color in theatre production. Can you help us?"

Yes, we could! I returned to DC and gathered our forces: Dean Sandra Shannon, Gregg Henry of KCACTF, and Tiffani Gavin, Executive Director of the O'Neill Center for the Arts. Working together, the August Wilson Fellowship for Students of Color in Design and Theatre Technology was born.

On the evening of April 26, 2025, at our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala, we inaugurated the first endowed August Wilson Fellowship featuring Wilsonian Warriors André De Shields, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Phylicia Rashad, and Constanza Romero Wilson.

My dream had become a reality – we had created a living legacy for young people who will "Walk in the Footsteps of August Wilson."

**Bonnie Nelson Schwartz**  
Fellow and Gala co-chair





## 60th Anniversary Gala celebrates The New August Wilson Fellowship: Recollections and Impressions

The Cosmos Club was bustling on April 26 for the trifold celebrations of the College of Fellows 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of August Wilson's birthday, and the launch of the August Wilson Fellowship in Design. The air was abuzz with a mix of cheerful greetings and cultural vibrancy. You just need to read the responses from Gala Committee members and Deans Emeriti who were present along with nearly 100 Fellows and colleagues to understand the impact of the evening. The images capture the depth and beauty of the evening as we honored the past, celebrated the present and looked to the future of our organization. Those who gathered did so while mindful of the palpable challenges in our world yet strengthened by this community and the power of theatre.

Special gratitude is extended to the diligent and hard-working Gala Committee member – Committee Co-Chairs, Dean Emerita Gail Humphries and Board member, Bonnie Nelson Schwartz; Committee members Dean Sandra Shannon; Dean Emeritus Dan Carter; Board members Michael Dinwiddie; Dean Elect David Grapes; Fellows Michael Bobbitt; Bonnie Fogel; Benny Sato-Ambush -- and to the Fellows who supported the Gala in so many wonderful and different ways.

There are two exceptional memories for me that will be imprinted for years to come: the moment that André De Shields stepped off the stage and into the audience while singing "Believe in Yourself." It was exquisite to watch a consummate artist, and a new Fellow captivate all of us. The second highlight for me was working with the Howard University student ambassadors on the event. They were inordinately responsible and amazingly capable young undergraduates who demonstrated significant expertise. It was such a promise for the future to me to work with these undergraduate women.

~ **Dean Emerita Gail Humphries**

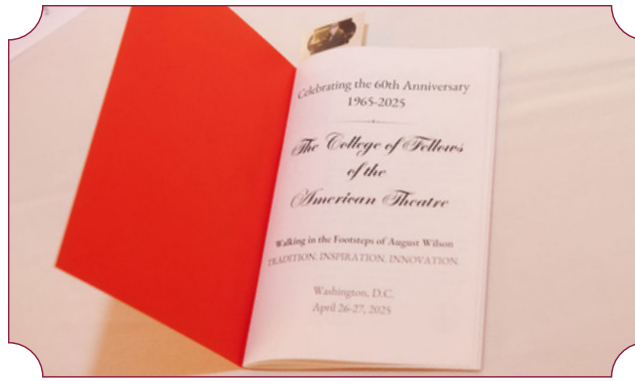
The highlight of the 60th Anniversary Gala of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre was witnessing living legends of Broadway transcend the room with their artistry. André De Shields electrified the space with a majestic, soul-stirring rendition of "Believe" from *The Wiz*—his presence alone sent chills through my body. Equally unforgettable was a fleeting, almost otherworldly moment: Phylicia Rashad, unprompted, became Aunt Esther from *Gem of the Ocean*, as if possessed by August Wilson's spirit, sparked by an anecdote about the costume design shared by his widow, Constanza Romero Wilson. It was haunting. It was magic.

~ **Fellow Michael Bobbitt, Gala Committee Member**





# 60th Anniversary Gala celebrates The New August Wilson Fellowship: Recollections and Impressions



The reveal about the inspiration for and creation of Aunt Esther's dress in *Gem of the Ocean*. That was the kind of "inside baseball" you hope for in an in-house discussion of this kind, and it was an incredible instance of what collaboration really means at the most fundamental and profound levels.

I spoke with Romello Huins (premiere August Wilson Fellowship recipient) after the event and told him to reach out to Steve Broadnax, a former student who became a colleague and a dear friend. He is a director who is having "his moment," and they need to be connected. In addition to working on Broadway and all over the country, Steve was just named Artistic Director of Arkansas Rep, and regularly he's in a position to hire scenic designers. I know he will love Romello's energy. I then introduced myself to Bob Hupp, who had been AD of the Rep and hired Steve to direct *Thoughts of a Colored Man* at Syracuse, which then moved to Broadway. I told him I was going to connect Steve and Romello, he was very excited and said he would also reach out to Steve. Since then, I've had a couple exchanges with Steve, and he is really looking forward to contacting Romello. Bonnie sent me Romello's contact info and application packet, which I forwarded on to Steve, and—as these things are meant to be—one of Romello's three references is Jarvis George, who got his MFA at Penn State under Steve... after going to Howard for U/G. How perfect is that? Making these connections is the kind of thing the Fellows are uniquely positioned to do.

~ Dean Emeritus Dan Carter

I was honored to share in reading part of the touching Orlin Corey Toast with my Fellow Deans as we celebrated 60 amazing years of the Fellows. To be in the presence of so many amazing artists and scholars was truly a privilege that I will never forget. To see so many friends and colleagues amongst the new class of Fellows was a highlight.

~Dean Emerita, Karen Berman

For me, the highlight of Saturday night was being in a room full of talented people, who were all focused on positive objectives. To support colleagues and champion theatre in America as a place where all people are welcome at the table and all voices are allowed to be heard. The evening felt like a warm hug after the excruciating turmoil of the last 100 days.

~ Dean Elect, David Grapes and Gala Committee Member

To the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Committee, the evening was the successful culmination of months of visionary planning. However, to the jubilant Fellows who gathered over food and drinks during the pre-Gala reception, magic seemed to enter the Cosmos Club, hover in the air over the elegant, jam-packed foyer, and follow them into the stately room where the program was held. After a quick run-through of the program in the main hall, I opened the doors to where a vibrant community of Fellows had already assembled, where tables heavily laden with all manner of hors d'oeuvres and desserts lined the area, where noted pianist Ricky Payton energized Fellows and their guests with a medley of jazz and blues tunes, and where Wilsonian Warriors Stephen McKinley Henderson, Phylicia Rashad, Constanza Romero, and André De Shields freely moved about, greeted Fellows, and posed for multiple photos.

~ Dean Emerita, Sandra Shannon





# FROM THE DEAN

David Grapes II becomes the 26th Dean of the College of Fellows

Remarks given by Dean Elect David Grapes II at the

Sunday morning Annual Business Meeting 4-27-25



Before I begin my official remarks, I would like to thank each of you in this room for this incredible honor. I am humbled by the opportunity to lead the College for the next two years. Last night, we walked in the glorious “Footsteps of August Wilson,” and it occurred to me, as I was socializing with all of you at the beautiful Cosmos Club last night, that on Monday morning I would be “walking in the footsteps” of the 25 remarkable College of Fellows Deans who have preceded me. Visionary leaders like Loren Winship, William McGraw, Orin Corey, Carole Brandt, Oscar Brockett, Felicia Londré, Robert Schanke, Karen Berman, Dan Carter, Gail Humphries, and of course our current Dean Sandra Shannon.

When I accepted the position of Dean Elect last year, I did not anticipate that I would become a “war time” Dean. But that’s where I find myself. Because make no mistake, the Arts are under attack on multiple fronts. And we find ourselves living and creating in a political landscape where the concepts of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in our once-democratic society are now being ridiculed by our own government as “crazy liberal propaganda.” Where our academic institutions are being blackmailed daily because they dare to promote free speech and student access. Where the leadership and programming of our beloved Kennedy Center is hijacked and then decimated for nothing more than a paltry photo opportunity.

So, what do we do? There were certainly many wonderful suggestions made at the Dynamic Dialogue Session on Saturday and I promise you that the Board and I will continue to address the critical issues you brought forward in the coming year.

Speaking for myself, I need every Fellow to ENGAGE with both me and the College in the coming year. The Board and I need you to facilitate our work, communicate your achievements and frustrations, and finally to donate freely of both your time and your financial resources to support of the College and its budget and mission, as we institute the new recommended annual dues (\$250.00) and create new fundraising initiatives.

## **So here is my call to action for you!**

Every Fellow in this room today is a dreamer, a visionary, and creator of theatre magic!

You are the ones who see the world, not for what it is, but for what it could be. The ones who scribble dialogue on restaurant napkins, build Shakespearian kingdoms from cardboard boxes, and breathe life into an empty stage. You know who you are. You’re the weird kids, who never stopped playing dress-up. The ones who cry in the wings and laugh in the dark. The ones who found a second home and an accepting family in the theatre. While the world spreads misinformation and sews the seeds of dissension, you tell stories that unite and seek the truth.

In the 1980s, Apple Computer dared to tell the world to: Think Different. It wasn’t just a slogan. I believe that Steve Jobs also meant it as a “call to arms.” A challenge to defy the ordinary. I believe that desire to question the status quo inhabits each of us as creative artists. Every time we break the fourth wall. Every time we rip up the script. Every time we dare to say, “What if?” or “What now?”

You don't just memorize lines and hit marks. You challenge ideas. You stir hearts. You hold a mirror up to society and sometimes... you even shatter it.

You are part of a sacred rebellion. You are the Picasso with a script. The Einstein with a spotlight. The Gandhi with a monologue. You see the world not just as it is, but as it could be—and you build that world on a stage or in a classroom with words, with movement, with breath, and with imagination.

While others color inside the lines, you write stage directions and character notes in the margins. While others ask “Why?”, you ask, “Why not?”

Theatre has always belonged to the bold. It belongs to the ones like you, who dare to take risks, to feel passionately, to fail gloriously, and then to rise again like a Phoenix.

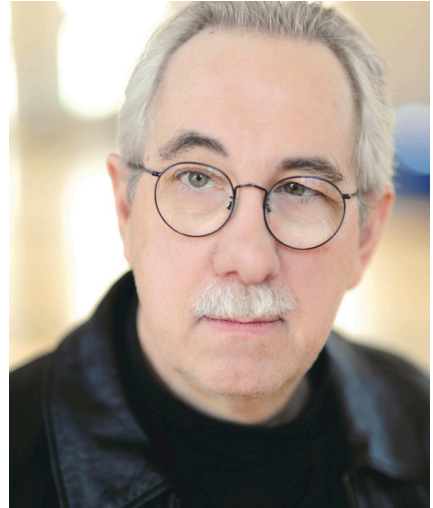
So today, and every day, I ask you—no, I implore you—to channel your inner Steve Jobs and think differently. ENGAGE. Create something wild! Make them laugh! Make them cry! Make them hear you! Make them see you! Make them think! Make them Question!

Because the stage is not just a place—it's a revolution in motion. And you? You're not just the storytellers, artists, actors, writers, or directors. You are the hope! The hope for a brighter, kinder, more diverse, and more inclusive future for the generations to come!

**So Please – ENGAGE and set the world on fire!**



David Grapes II, Dean



**Welcome Class of 2025**



# News and Announcements



## 2025/2026 College Dues are Due Now!

In an effort to stabilize the College's finances and create a guaranteed annual revenue stream, the College of Fellows Board has established annual dues of \$250 for each current Fellow. Dues revenue will support the expense of our annual Fellows Weekend including the investiture of new Fellows, website expenses, tax/accounting services, postage, and administrative expenses. 2025/2026

Dues are payable now and are good through June 2026.

### Payment Options Include:

- Wix:  
<https://www.thecollegeoffellows.org/annual-dues>
- PayPal:  
<https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/CollegeofFellows?>
- Zelle: 970-219-4352
- Check mailed to Kristy Simpson, Administrative Assistant

## Financial Report for 2025 As of June 1st

### Income

Restricted Donations \$7,000.00  
Unrestricted Donations \$25,650.00  
Dues \$850.00.00  
Investiture Brunch Fees \$9,900.00  
Gala Fees \$11,700.00

### Expenses

Operational/Administrative  
Fellows Weekend 2025 \$5,904.89  
Investiture Brunch \$11,798.60  
Administrative/Operational Expenses \$6,033.33  
60th Gala Expenses \$23,802.18\*  
Awards (Funded by Restricted Donations) \$20,000.00

### Banking

Bank of America \$14,321.60

### Investment

Merrill Lynch – Restricted Donations \$94,005.86  
Merrill Lynch – Unrestricted \$9,000.00

\* The 60th Gala was supported through a 2023 Donation of \$25,000 from Fellow Thomas Schumacher

**Note:** A full financial report for 2024 is available in the Member's Area of the College of Fellows Website

## Pay it Forward – Make a Transformational Gift Consider a Legacy Gift to the College of Fellows

You can name the College of Fellows in your estate plans. Your legacy gift will help ensure that The College remains vibrant, active, and financially solvent in the years to come. By supporting our mission through a bequest, trust, planned gift, or a IRA Charitable Distribution, you enable the College to invest and nurture the next generation of Fellows, support scholarships and fellowships for emerging artists, and allow the College to remain a vibrant cultural force in the national theatre conversation. Every legacy gift, no matter the size, helps secure a brighter future for the College. To learn more about how your generosity can create a powerful legacy, please contact [davidgrapes@yahoo.com](mailto:davidgrapes@yahoo.com). All donations to the College are tax-deductible as allowed by current federal tax laws.



# News and Announcements

## Call for Co-Editor for The Fellows at 60 Publication

Having been tasked with the job of compiling and editing the 60<sup>th</sup> year journal for the College of Fellows of American Theatre, I'm looking for someone with experience in publishing journals to help me to compile information suitable for the reunion edition (bios of those inducted, writing copy that summarizes the accomplishments of the Fellows this last decade, etc.). If you are interested in working alongside me to compile the 60<sup>th</sup> reunion journal, please email me at [mark.charney@ttu.edu](mailto:mark.charney@ttu.edu).

## The Board Welcomes Two New Board Members

In a June electronic vote, the Fellows approved two new Board members to serve three-year terms.



**Dan Carter**  
Dean Emeritus  
Invested 2008



**Robert Hupp**  
Invested 2025

## Save the Date for Fellows Weekend April 2026



The Class of 2026 will be inducted at the  
61st Annual Membership meeting  
April 10-12, 2026  
[The Curtis Hotel](#)  
Denver, Colorado

## Class of 2026 Nominees

Aaron Anderson  
Ifa Bayeza  
Craig Carnelia  
Michael Donovan

Reginald L. Douglas  
Micha Espinosa  
Patdro Harris  
Allen Lee Hughes

Anita Maynard-Losh



# Special Thanks

Dean Emerita Gail Humphries and Bonnie Nelson Swartz for Chairing the 60<sup>th</sup> Gala Committee  
Gala Committee Members Bennie Sato Ambush, Michael Bobbitt, Dean Emeritus Dan Carter, Michael  
Dinwiddie, Bonnie Fogel, Dean Elect David Grapes, Dean Sandra Shannon, and Kristy Simpson

Bonnie Nelson Schwartz for her work as founder of the new August Wilson Fellowship

The 25+ Donors who sponsored In Memoriam pages in the Gala Program

The Wilsonian Warriors: André De Shields, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Phylicia Rashad, and  
Constanza Romero Wilson

Michael Dinwiddie for serving as the moderator of Following in the Footsteps: A Fireside Chat with  
the Wilsonian Warriors

The Cosmos Club for hosting the 60th Anniversary Gala

Gala Stage Managers Laurie Mufson and Laura Schlachtmeyer

Howard University Students Katlin Dorsey, Esanga Eteni, Shayna Isaac

Gala pianists Rickey Payton, Sr., Mathis Picard

Greg Henry and the Kennedy Center Education Department and  
Tiffani Gavin CEO of the O'Neill Center

The August Wilson Society

FootPrints Photos and Lea Chang for the photography for Fellows Weekend

Fellows Edgar Dobie, Mollie Smith, and everyone at Arena Stage for hosting the  
Investiture Brunch on Sunday, April 27

Stephen McKinley Henderson for providing an inspiring Roger L. Steven's Address

RSVP Catering

The River Inn

Heather Nathans and Dean Elect David Grapes for facilitating the Dynamic Dialogue conversation on  
Saturday afternoon

Kristy Simpson for making order from the chaos



# 60th Anniversary Gala





# 2025 Fellows Photo Gallery



Derrel Todd - FootPrint Fotos



# 2025 Fellows Photo Gallery



Derrel Todd - FootPrint Fotos



# 2025 Fellows Photo Gallery



Additional Photos can be found at this link: [60<sup>th</sup> Gala Google Drive](#)