



*Professional Theaters in Residence*

**The Nora Theatre Company    Underground Railway Theater**

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**CENTRAL SQUARE THEATER, NEW HOME TO  
THE NORA THEATRE COMPANY AND UNDERGROUND RAILWAY THEATER,  
OPENS ITS DOORS IN JULY 2008, LAUNCHES INAUGURAL SEASON**

**CAMBRIDGE, MA.....Central Square Theater**, new home to **The Nora Theatre Company** and **Underground Railway Theater**, opens its doors to the public in July with plays, classes for children, and programs from two of Boston's most intriguing music/theater crossover artists: Stan Strickland and Deborah Henson-Conant. Located at **450 Massachusetts Avenue**, with two performance spaces – the black box Mainstage Theater with flexible seating for up to 200 and the smaller more intimate Studio Theater – this new theatrical arts center is made possible through the collaboration of the City of Cambridge and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A vibrant hub of theatrical, social, and educational activity, Central Square Theater will be a lively venue where artists and audiences come together to create theater vital to our communities.

**Mainstage Events:**

Beginning on July 24 and running through August 3 on the Central Square Theater Mainstage, Underground Railway Theater presents ***QED: An Evening with Richard Feynman***, brilliant and eccentric physicist and enthusiast of life, love, and Tuvan throat singing. Directed by Jon Lipsky, Peter Parnell's moving and funny play about scientific inquiry and the human spirit was previewed to sold out audiences as part of the Cambridge Science Festival this past April/May. ***QED*** is a production of the Catalyst Collaborative @ MIT (CC@MIT), a collaboration between Underground Railway Theater and MIT that fosters creative partnerships between theater artists and scientists to provide insight into the culture of science and the impact of science on society through compelling theater accessible to a broad audience. Post-performance conversations will be led by world-class scientists from MIT and Harvard, including some who knew Feynman personally. **The Press Opening for *QED* is Saturday, July 26 at 3 PM** with an opening reception following the performance.

Central Square Theater will also be a home for collaborations with other artists and artistic producers. Alternating performances during the run of ***QED*** will be ***Coming Up for Air – an AutoJAZZography***, conceived and performed by Greater Boston's Jazzman, Stan Strickland. Working together with Alliger Productions, Central Square Theater presents this critically acclaimed musical odyssey of soulful discovery which won two Elliot Norton Awards in its Boston debut in 2007 for "Outstanding Solo Performance" and "Outstanding Director, Small /Fringe Company." Written and directed by Jon Lipsky, ***Coming Up For Air*** will run from July 24 through August 9. **The Press Opening will be Saturday, July 26 at 7 pm** with an opening reception immediately following the performance.

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*Coming Up for Air* will also feature a uniquely special **Inclusive by Design** performance on the evening of Monday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 pm, in partnership with Very Special Arts of Massachusetts. ASL interpreters, live captioning, live audio description, and a performance painter will vividly bring the show to life for all, regardless of ability. Though this Inclusive by Design concept has been applied to musical concerts in the Commonwealth, this marks its first application to live theater.

In August, 2007 Grammy nominated performer/songwriter Deborah Henson-Conant debuts her one-woman show, *What the Hell are You Doing in the Waiting Room for Heaven?* In the world premiere of this transformational music-theater experience with harp and soul, auditions in the afterlife are required to get into Heaven, rather like in *American Idol*. Henson-Conant, known as the Hip Harpist, is sure to bring style and panache to Central Square Theater with performances (planned and unplanned) on the sidewalk and in the theater. **The Press opening for *What the Hell are You Doing in the Waiting Room for Heaven?* will be Wednesday, August 13 at 8pm** with an opening reception immediately following the performance.

Deborah Henson-Conant will also bring her unique and thoroughly outrageous **Burnt Food Museum** to Central Square Theater this summer. An improbable array of culinary catastrophes, the museum has been featured in the cover story for the January/February 1992 issue of "Annals of Improbable Research" (formerly called "Journal of Irreproducible Results"), and on NPR's "Weekend Edition", ABC's "The View", and the Food Network.

In the fall, The Nora Theatre Company speaks to the times with two works of politics and hilarity. From September 4 – 27, the company presents Nobel Prize winner Dario Fo's *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* Translated by Ron Jenkins, this farcical comedy about a housewives' revolt against out of control inflation looks at hypocrisy, injustice, and liberation with a healthy dose of hysterics thrown in for good measure. The Nora's Associate Director Daniel Gidron (IRNE nominee for Best Director, Small Theater for *Buried Child*) will be at the helm. **The Press Opening will be Sunday, September 7 at 3:00pm** with an opening reception following the performance.

For election season, the Boston area premiere of Jodi Rothe's sharp and funny play, *Martha Mitchell Calling*, runs from October 16 – November 8. Following successful runs at Shakespeare & Co, and in New York state and Florida, this production will be directed by Daniela Varon and features Annette Miller (Diana Vreeland in The Nora's *Full Gallop* and Elliot Norton Award winner, Best Solo Performance for *Golda*) as the feisty southern belle, Martha Mitchell, who clamors to be heard during the tumultuous times of the Watergate scandal. **The Press Opening will be Sunday, October 19 at 3:00pm** with an opening reception following the performance.

Post-performance conversations with actors, directors, and special guests will follow selected performances of both *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* and *Martha Mitchell Calling*.

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The winter holidays will see a revival of *Alice's Adventures Underground*, Underground Railway Theater's magical and lively adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. The fantastical designs of the set – made of hand-painted silks – and the outrageous puppets of all kinds – including shadows and giant figures – won an IRNE award when the play premiered in 1998. *Alice* also features original music by local stars Roger Miller (*Mission of Burma*) and Evan Harlan, and a cast that combines adult professionals with children from the community. URT Artistic Director Debra Wise plays an older Alice grappling with time, parenting, and rage. Alice's daughter offers her mother a chance to put parental frustration into perspective – and find a new lease on her relationship with her daughter – by allowing Alice to cross into the looking glass and re-enter childhood. The December dates for *Alice's Adventures Underground* will run through New Year's Eve.

The New Year begins with The Nora's production of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, and the return of Annette Miller to our stage. In a new translation by George Malko, written expressly for the company, this masterpiece of longing and clashing values will re-unite Annette Miller as Madame Ranyevskaya with director Daniel Gidron, the two of whom worked so successfully together on *Golda* at Shakespeare & Co and *Full Gallop*, both at The Nora and Shakespeare & Co. *The Cherry Orchard* will run from January 8 – February 1, 2009. **The Press Opening will be Sunday, January 11, 2009 at 3:00pm** with an opening reception following the performance.

Underground Railway Theater will present Bertolt Brecht's *The Life of Galileo* in April and May, timed to coincide with the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Cambridge Science Festival. Part of its Catalyst Collaborative @ MIT initiative, this unique version of Brecht's epic science theater classic will be adapted for a combined cast of actors and puppets.

Other titles under consideration by Underground Railway Theater for its first season in the Central Square Theater include *The Peasant Bible*, by Dario Fo (directed by Ron Jenkins, Fo scholar and translator, this late-night performance will run alongside The Nora's *We Won't Pay!*); *How Do You Spell Hope?*, by Melinda Lopez (based on true stories of people who overcame obstacles to learn to read and played on a set of giant pop-up books); a revival of *States of Grace* (inspired by the work of the beloved late activist author, Grace Paley); a revival of *Einstein's Dreams*, by Wes Savick (based on the best-selling novel by Alan Lightman, and fresh from sold-out performances at the May, 2008 World Science Festival); and *Marx in Soho*, by Howard Zinn.

Finishing up the season in June 2009, The Nora will present a title to be announced. The company is considering new work as well as area premieres for their final production of 2008-2009.

**Studio Theater events:**

The smaller, more intimate Studio Theater will house readings, late night performances, cabarets, and other projects. In October and November, Underground Railway Theater will launch the **Dream Theater Café**, an ongoing series being developed by Jon Lipsky and his theater students from Boston University



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as well as local professionals. The first Dream Theater Café performance will be *The Wild Place*, written by Susan Thompson, based on the dreams of a pregnant woman and performed cabaret-style.

During the Spring of 2009 on dates to be announced, The Nora Theatre Company will present its **New Plays at The Nora** series, a program designed to promote the development of new work by women playwrights in the Boston/New England area. In prior years, the company has presented readings of works by Rosanna Yamagiwa Alfaro, Laura Harrington, and Kate Snodgrass. Titles of plays to be read during the 2008-2009 season will be announced at a later date.

Throughout the season, Underground Railway Theater and the Catalyst Collaborative @ MIT will offer staged readings. Projected titles include CC@MIT's first commissioned play (*Frontier Theory*, about the politics of manned space exploration, by Rebekah Maggor working in collaboration with astronomer James Battat); *Twenty Minutes in the Space Between* (about global warming, by Jennifer Fawcett, winner of the 2007 American College Theater Science Plays Award); and *Operation Epsilon* (by Alan Brody, based on transcriptions of secretly-obtained conversations of German nuclear physicists under house arrest in England, after the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima).

The Studio Theater also serves as the rehearsal hall for productions and projects of both resident companies.

**Underground Railway Theater Education Programs and Performances for Youth and Families:**

In addition to mainstage productions and second stage projects, Central Square Theater will also house Underground Railway Theater's award-winning education program. The organization's innovative community and educational programs provide youth with firsthand experiences in theater practices and thinking through the arts, families with resources for entertainment and enrichment, and teachers with professional development opportunities.

**Curtain UP!** *Theater Intensives* are geared for 6-16 year-olds ready for an immersion experience in acting, playwriting, puppetry, and theater design. *Intensives* are offered during February and April school vacation weeks and during the summer. 2008's *Summer Intensive* are being offered from June 23-27 in collaboration with Beyond the 4th Wall at their space in the Central Square YWCA, before the opening of the Central Square Theater. Subsequent *Summer Intensives* will be held at Central Square Theater and will expand into sessions that will run the entire summer.

Also this summer, Underground Railway Theater will continue its participation in the Cambridge Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program. *Youth Underground* – Underground Railway Theater's young company charged with building community through theater – will perform an original work on tour to Cambridge neighborhoods; under consideration is a play by NYC teens based on interviews with soldiers returning from Iraq. Underground Railway Theater will also begin a monthly *Second Saturday Family Performance Series* featuring performances preceded by theater and puppetry workshops for children and their parents.

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In addition to serving Greater Boston at Central Square Theater, Underground Railway Theater continues to meet its education mission by engaging rich and unique partnerships with community organizations. Two partnerships this summer demonstrate the wide reach of URT's programming: URT will offer: July – August playbuilding classes for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade Black and Latino boys through the BELL for Boys program in Boston neighborhoods; and June-August workshops with the Kavli Young Astronomers Apprenticeship Program to help Boston teens create a play for their peers to deepen understanding of astronomy.

From August 11-15, Underground Railway Theater will offer at the Central Square Theater an institute for teachers of theater, science, and history: *Looking At The Life of Galileo - A History Play for Our Times* in association with the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the MIT Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research. Timed to mark the UN's declaration of 2009 as "The Year of Astronomy," this arts immersion institute will engage teachers with theater artists, scientists and historians in an interdisciplinary exploration of Bertolt Brecht's masterpiece, *The Life of Galileo*, in preparation for Underground Railway Theater's production of the play.

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