

NEW STAGE

Theatre

1100 Carlisle Street
Jackson, MS 39202
Phone (601) 948-3533

Mission

The mission of New Stage Theatre is to provide professional theatre of the highest quality for the people of Mississippi and the southeast.

New Stage is committed to producing important contemporary works and classics, selected for their artistic merit and their power to illuminate the human condition. Challenging new works in development are included through the Eudora Welty New Play Series named for the distinguished writer who helped found New Stage.

The theatre is dedicated to cultivating and educating a culturally diverse audience by gathering the finest available resources including playwrights, actors, directors, designers, technicians, administrators, trainees, and board members. Integral to the theatre's total effort, its education department maximizes its potential by offering artistic and technical internships, by mounting intern touring programs supported by teachers' materials for schools statewide, and by developing curricula for and teaching youth and adult classes.

Main Stage Productions

New Stage produces five plays each year in its subscription series, in addition to a Holiday show, an annual student matinee, and a kids-only show that features local area talent. Main stage productions range from master works to contemporary classics to new plays. All carry the mark of professional quality for which the theatre has long been recognized.

Original Work

New Stage founder Jane Reid Petty described the theatre's commitment to new work this way: "The artist comes first, and at New Stage Theatre, our energies are directed toward sustaining a vital environment in which artists can work together to achieve their finest moments on stage. Mississippi audiences are bred on the rich literary heritage of the state - William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Richard Wright - and they respond to the dramatic event that is rooted in the playwright's words and vision. Our emphasis on new work evolves from this heritage; therefore, our special programming of The Eudora Welty New Play Series provides the creative meeting of playwright and the performing artists that nurtures the art of the dramatist and the present and future vitality of the American theatre."

New Stage endeavors to include an original play in its subscription series every year. Additionally, the theatre has begun a second season called **Unframed at New Stage Theatre Series** featuring cutting-edge plays directed and performed by local artists.

History

New Stage Theatre was chartered as a nonprofit organization in 1965 and produced its initial season in the winter and spring of 1966. Founded by Jane Reid Petty and seven other charter board members, with the assistance of the American National Theatre Academy and Actors' Equity Association, the theatre has been dedicated to professional excellence in the dramatic arts since its inception.

Ivan Rider was the theatre's first artistic director and served in that capacity until 1979. A gifted professional, Rider established the high artistic production standards that remain the hallmark of New Stage programming today.

New Stage's first home was an adapted church at the corner of Gallatin and Hooker Streets. The full houses for its opening season were significant: they represented the city's first racially integrated theatre audience and playgoers' response to more intellectually stimulating theatre fare than had been previously available locally.

New Stage produced 13 seasons in the 150-seat church before moving to its present site in Belhaven in 1978. Built in 1963 for the Jackson Little Theatre, the 12,000 square foot structure includes the 364-seat Meyer Crystal Auditorium, and a flexible, smaller performing space, the Jimmy Hewes Room. The theatre also owns the three other structures on the site, two of which are used for actors' housing and one for offices. In 1997, the theatre complex was designated as the Jane Reid Petty Theatre Center in recognition of the New Stage founder's contributions to the development of professional theatre in Mississippi.

Now, more than 50 years later, New Stage produces a full professional season, including five main stage shows in the subscription series, a Holiday show, children's shows and selections in the Eudora Welty New Plays Series, named in honor of the internationally acclaimed writer, a lifetime member of the theatre's board of directors.

As a professional regional theatre, New Stage is committed to exploring new worlds of theatre, including challenging new works in development, important contemporary plays and classics selected for their artistic merit, their power to illuminate the human condition, and their impact on the community.

The Welty New Plays Series, established in 1984, has premiered scripts by Reynolds Price, Jim Lehrer, and native Mississippian Gary Grubbs. As founder Jane Reid Petty said when the Welty Series was initiated: "At New Stage, our energies are directed toward sustaining a vital environment in which artists can work together to achieve their finest moment onstage. Mississippi audiences are bred on the rich literary heritage of the state - William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Richard Wright, and they respond to the dramatic event that is rooted in the playwright's words and vision. Our emphasis on new work evolves from this heritage. The Eudora Welty New Plays Series provides the creative meeting of playwright and performing

artists that nurtures the art of the dramatist and the present and future vitality of the American theatre."

In 1989-1990, the theatre established a formal education department, created a professional internship program and hired an education director to coordinate the internship program, acting classes and day camps for students and to direct a touring program to take live drama to schools across Mississippi. New Stage received the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts in 1995 for its efforts to introduce tens of thousands of young Mississippians to live theatre.

A board of directors who comprise the only members of the corporation governs the theatre. Board members head committees which oversee the artistic and business operations of the theatre.

Programs of New Stage are made possible in part by a grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency; various other grants and foundation gifts; sponsorships; and individuals the business community.

Resolution

This resolution is dated July 24, 1997 and is signed by Barbara Austin, President- Board of Directors

Thirty-two years ago, a small group of Jacksonians began a journey to bring a new philosophy of theatre to Jackson. They took an old church building, named it New Stage and boldly proclaimed that "we have this hope" to offer Jackson professional theatre - to present the best in classical, contemporary drama and comedy, experimental theatre and original scripts.

The guiding force, the passion and the heart of that determination then and for the next 27 years was Jane Reid-Petty, whose extraordinary devotion and commitment made the hope a reality.

From the initial idea, Jane guided New Stage every step of the way - from first funding and searching for a professional director to the relentless drive toward full professionalism. She served as the theatre's first managing director, first benefactor, president of the board, fundraiser, playwright, actress, director, and always sparker, innovator, activator. By the time she accepted her first salary from New Stage in 1983, she had given the theatre 17 years of hard work and dedication.

She was the theatre's first producing director and then producing artistic director from 1983 - 1992. During those years, New Stage realized its most audacious dream. It became an Actors' Equity House, staffed with professionals backstage, on stage, and in the front office. Jane launched the Eudora Welty New Plays Series and under her leadership, the theatre began the corporate funding of individual plays, started the Arts in Education program, the intern program, and Shakespeare in Schools.

America has theatres named for directors, The Joseph Papp Theatre; for benefactors, The Vivian Beaumont; for actresses, the Helen Hayes; for playwrights, The Eugene O'Neill; for producers, the Shubert. The New Stage Theatre Board of Directors wishes to honor one who fits all these categories.

Now therefore let it be resolved that the buildings and property belonging to New Stage Theatre at 1100 Carlisle Street in Jackson, Mississippi, be designated as the Jane Reid-Petty Theatre Center to honor her vision, energy, commitment and accomplishment as director, benefactor, playwright, producer and actress.