



For Immediate Release:
October 8, 2007

Media Contact: Susan Hood
(203) 432-1574 or susan.hood@yale.edu

YALE REPERTORY THEATRE PRESENTS
TROUBLE IN MIND
A GROUNDBREAKING PLAY FROM NEGLECTED
AFRICAN AMERICAN DRAMATIST ALICE CHILDRESS
OCTOBER 26 TO NOVEMBER 17

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — *Trouble in Mind*, Alice Childress' drama of race, identity, and opportunity in the American theatre, will be produced by Yale Repertory Theatre (Artistic Director James Bundy and Managing Director Victoria Nolan) from October 26 to November 17. Opening night and press night are Thursday, November 1.

Irene Lewis, artistic director of Baltimore's CENTERSTAGE, directs Yale Repertory Theatre's first production by Childress, who is perhaps best known as author of the young adult novels *Rainbow Jordan* and *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But A Sandwich*. Heading the cast as Wiletta Mayer, the long-struggling African American actress ready for her shot at the big time is five-time Joseph Jefferson Award-winner E. Faye Butler. Also featured in the cast are Starla Benford, Tony-nominee Thomas Jefferson Byrd, Don Guillory, Daren Kelly, Garrett Neergaard, Laurence O'Dwyer, Kevin O'Rourke and Natalia Payne.

The creative team for *Trouble in Mind* includes set designer Michael Locher, costume designer Paul Carey, lighting designer Melissa Mizell, and sound designer David Budries.

Trouble in Mind, which had its premiere off-Broadway in 1955, is about a new Broadway play that has started rehearsals. The play-within-the-play, titled *Chaos in Belleville*, is an anti-lynching drama written by a white writer and set in the South. It marks the first opportunity for Wiletta Mayer, an African American actress who has spent years in parts beneath her intelligence and talent, to play a leading lady. As the company begins its work, Wiletta and the white director clash over her take on the role. Set along the fault lines of the early Civil Rights movement, *Trouble in Mind* offers a disturbing and disarmingly funny look at the half-truths we tell ourselves about race relations and progress in America.

Childress's drama was a critical and popular success from the beginning of its run Off-Broadway at the Greenwich Mews Theatre in 1955. Her first play to be presented outside the auspices of the American Negro Theatre in Harlem, it immediately drew the interest from producers seeking a Broadway run. But in an ironic twist echoing the tribulations of the characters in the play itself, the producers wanted changes to the script to make it more palatable to a commercial audience. Childress refused to compromise her artistic vision, and the play never



transferred, ending her chances of being the first African American woman playwright to have a work produced on Broadway. (Two years later that honor would go to Lorraine Hansberry for *A Raisin in the Sun*.) *Trouble in Mind* received a well-reviewed revival Off-Broadway in 1998 by the Negro Ensemble Company and was produced under the direction of Irene Lewis at Baltimore's CENTERSTAGE in February 2007.

Alice Childress (1916-1994) was an actress, director, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, essayist, and activist. Born Louise Henderson in Charleston, South Carolina, in October, 1916 (though some sources, probably beginning with Childress herself, claim it was 1920), Alice Childress was raised in Harlem by her grandmother Eliza, herself the daughter of a freed slave. A failed marriage to actor Alvin Childress, famous as one of the television stars of *Amos 'n' Andy*, provided her with her professional name. She was a founding member of the American Negro Theatre in Harlem, which staged her early plays *Florence* and *Just a Little Simple* (based on the famous Langston Hughes character). In 1965 Childress wrote *Wedding Band*, which had its first major staging in 1972 at the New York Shakespeare Festival in a production co-directed by Childress and Joseph Papp. Today, she is best known for her novel for youth, *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*, about a 13-year-old heroin addict. Childress herself wrote the screenplay for the 1978 film starring Cicely Tyson.

The season at Yale Rep continues with Molière's *Tartuffe or The Imposter* (November 26 - December 22, 2007), the world premiere of David Adjmi's *The Evildoers* (January 18 - February 9, 2008), Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance* (March 21 - April 12, 2008), and a sixth play to be announced (April 25 - May 17, 2008).

Single tickets range from \$35 to \$58. Please visit www.yalerep.org, call (203) 432-1234, or visit the box office. Yale Repertory Theatre is located at 1120 Chapel Street (at York Street), New Haven.

TROUBLE IN MIND

By Alice Childress; directed by Irene Lewis; sets by Michael Locher; costumes by Paul Carey; lighting by Melissa Mizell; sound design by David Budries. Presented by Yale Repertory Theatre, James Bundy, artistic director; Victoria Nolan, managing director. At Yale Repertory Theatre, 1120 Chapel Street (at York Street), New Haven, October 26 - November 17, 2007. (203) 432-1234. Tickets: \$35 to \$58.

[Performance schedule for *Trouble in Mind* follows.]



Performance Schedule

Fri, Oct 26 at 8pm
Sat, Oct 27 at 8pm
Mon, Oct 29 at 8pm
Tues, Oct 30 at 8pm
Wed, Oct 31 at 8pm
Thu, Nov 1 at 8pm: Opening Night
Fri, Nov 2 at 8pm
Sat, Nov 3 at 2pm: Talk Back
Sat, Nov 3 at 8pm
Tues, Nov 6 at 8pm: Talk Back
Wed, Nov 7 at 2pm: Senior Matinee
Wed, Nov 7 at 8pm
Thu, Nov 8 at 8pm: Talk Back
Fri, Nov 9 at 8pm
Sat, Nov 10 at 2pm: Open Captioned performance, Talk Back
Sat, Nov 10 at 8pm
Tues, Nov 13 at 8pm
Wed, Nov 14 at 8pm
Thu, Nov 15 at 8pm
Fri, Nov 16 at 8pm
Sat, Nov 17 at 2pm: Audio Described performance
Sat, Nov 17 at 8pm

#

Susan Hood
Senior Associate Director of Marketing and Communications
Yale Repertory Theatre / Yale School of Drama
P.O. Box 208244 / 222 York Street
New Haven, CT 06520-8224
Tel: 203.432.1574
Fax: 203.432.1550
susan.hood@yale.edu
www.yalerep.org
www.yale.edu/drama