

**N E W S R E L E A S E**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 20, 2005

**THE THEATRE SCHOOL NEW DIRECTORS SERIES PRESENTS FREE PERFORMANCES  
OF PAULA VOGEL'S *HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE*, DIRECTED BY BRANDY AUSTIN,  
FEBRUARY 24 – MARCH 5, 2006**

The New Directors Series of The Theatre School at DePaul University, featuring the work of advanced students in the school's M.F.A. Directing Program, presents ***HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE***, by Paula Vogel, directed by Brandy Austin. The play opens Friday, February 24 at 7:30 PM and runs through Sunday, March 5, 2006, at the Athenaeum Studio Three, 2936 N. Southport Ave., Chicago. Preview performances are February 22 and 23 at 7:30 PM. Performances are Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:30 PM and Sundays at 2 PM. Admission is FREE but reservations are recommended; call the Box Office at **(312) 922-1999**. For further information visit <http://theatreschool.depaul.edu>.

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning play, Paula Vogel takes us on a journey down the bumpy roads of rural Maryland to deliver a story of survival and forgiveness. In a series of flashbacks and flash-forwards, ***HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE*** chronicles the troubling relationship between a young girl and her uncle. Described by The New York Times as “a lovely, harrowing guide to the crippling persistence of one woman’s memories,” this play is recommended for mature audiences.

“Paula Vogel simply tells the truth, and she does so in a surprising and entertaining way, which is exactly what we’re trying to accomplish with our production,” says director Brandy Austin. “The play is real and yet imaginary, hilarious and yet frightening, and my hope is that our production expands that spectrum so every person in the audience could have a different experience.”

New Directors Series productions are directed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in Directing at The Theatre School.

Performances are at the Athenaeum Studio Three, 2936 N. Southport Ave., Chicago. Admission is FREE. Reservations are encouraged; call (312) 922-1999. The Athenaeum offers some street parking and is CTA accessible (Southport or Wellington El stops).

SPECIAL EVENT: A post-show discussion with the cast is scheduled on Thursday, March 2.

Production staff includes **Brandy Austin** (Director), **Courtney O’Neill** (Scenic Design), **Ariel Boroff** (Costume Design), **Brian Back** (Lighting Design), **Anne Kowalczyk** (Sound Design) and **Kelsey Lamm** (Stage Manager).

The cast includes **Shannon Altland** (Female Greek Chorus), **Casey Campbell** (Peck), **Emily Brooks** (Li'l Bit), **Sarah Pitard** (Teenage Greek Chorus) and **Rawson Vint** (Male Greek Chorus).

**Brandy Austin** (Director) received her B.A. in Theatre from Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn. Recently in Chicago, she served as Assistant Director at Steppenwolf Theatre on the Jeff Award-winning production of *THE PAIN AND THE ITCH*. She also served as Assistant Director at Northlight Theatre on the Chicago premiere of *PERMANENT COLLECTION*. Directing credits in Nashville include *NICE PEOPLE DANCING TO GOOD COUNTRY MUSIC* at Boiler Room Theatre, *ANTIGONE* at Belmont University and *ANYTHING GOES* at Lakewood Theatre Company. Television credits include James Gregory's *BEEF STEW FOR THE BRAIN* with Sony Entertainment and *JEFF ALLEN – A CHANGE OF HEART* with Zingara Inc. Austin has a strong interest in women's studies and has also worked with Stockyards Theatre Project in Chicago. Theatre School credits include *TAPE*, *LAPIN LAPIN* (Assistant Director), *LANGUAGE OF ANGELS*, *THE WAITING ROOM* and *SELF DEFENSE*. Highlights of her career have been her work with various country music artists on Nashville's Music Row and the time spent managing comedy tours in Honduras, Cuba and Puerto Rico, entertaining troops for the U.S. Department of Defense.

**Paula Vogel's** (Playwright) play ***HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE*** received the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Lortel, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and New York Drama Critics Awards for Best Play, as well as winning her second Obie Award. It has been produced all over the world and her screenplay has been in development for HBO. Vogel's other plays include *THE LONG CHRISTMAS RIDE HOME*, *THE MINEOLA TWINS*, *THE BALTIMORE WALTZ*, *HOT'N'THROBBING*, *DESDEMONA*, *AND BABY MAKES SEVEN* and *THE OLDEST PROFESSION*. Vogel won the Obie Award for Best Play in 1992, the Rhode Island Pell Award in the Arts, the Hull-Warriner Award, The Laura Pels Award, the Pew Charitable Trust Senior Award, a Guggenheim, an AT&T New Plays Award, the Fund for New American Plays, the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center Fellowship, several National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, the McKnight Fellowship, the Bunting Fellowship, and the Governor's Award for the Arts. She is the Adele Kellenberg Seaver Professor of Creative Writing at Brown University, where she directs the M.F.A. Playwriting Program.

The Theatre School at DePaul University, educates, trains and inspires students of theatre in a conservatory setting that is rigorous, disciplined, culturally diverse and that strives for the highest level of professional skill and artistry. A commitment to diversity and equality in education is central to the school's mission. As an integral part of the training, The Theatre School produces public programs and performances from a wide repertoire of classic, contemporary and original plays that challenge, entertain and stimulate the imagination. The school seeks to enhance the intellectual and cultural life of the university community, the city and the profession.