

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Theodore Ward Prize for African-American Playwrights Winner Announced

*The Theatre School at DePaul to Produce Award-Winning Play
as Part of The Theatre School Showcase Series*

Kara Lee Corthron has been named this year's winner of the Theodore Ward Prize for African-American Playwrights for her play *Like a Cow or An Elephant*. The Theatre School Showcase at DePaul University will present the show, which will be directed by Chuck Smith, to conclude its 2006-2007 season. The play will open on Friday, May 18 at 7:30 PM and will run through Sunday, May 27. For ticket information, call the Box Office at (312) 922-1999 or visit <http://theatreschool.depaul.edu>.

The prestigious Theodore Ward Prize – named for the African-American author, playwright and Chicagoan (1902-1983) – recognizes the outstanding individual accomplishments of African-American playwrights, as well as their importance to the shape and direction of American drama in our time. The annual playwriting contest is sponsored by Columbia College Chicago Theater Center, and winning plays are nationally renowned for holding a mirror up to a myriad of subject matter. The Theatre School is pleased to present a full production of this year's winning script.

Like a Cow or An Elephant is the story of Kreena, a woman around thirty years of age, who works a job as a janitor in an office building—a job she cherishes—and lives in a house with her eccentric, history-obsessed mother. Kreena's methodical, repetitive life is, in part, due to a mild developmental disability. Kreena also feels trapped by her mother's controlling influence. Despite the obstacles she must confront, which also include a brother in narcotics rehabilitation, a new co-worker invading the private sanctuary of her job, and a mysterious stranger with secrets, Kreena can't help but see the best in all people. In *Like a Cow or An Elephant*, Kreena must travel the difficult path from her safe shell to independence and self-actualization.

Kara Lee Corthron (*Playwright*) is a 2006 graduate of the Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Program at the Juilliard School. Her play, *Like a Cow or An Elephant*, was workshopped at ENVISION, Voice & Vision's

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summer lab/retreat, in 2005. *Like a Cow* . . . received a workshop production in February (2006) at Juilliard and a reading with Voice & Vision at MTC Studios in December of 2005. Kara is a nominee for the 2007 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. She is also the winner of the 2006 New Professional Theatre Writer's Award for her play *End-Zone Zephyr*, is a finalist for the New York Theatre Workshop Artists-of-Color Fellowship and is a semi-finalist for the P73 Fellowship. She is also a two-time recipient of the Lecomte du Nouy Foundation Award, is a two-time nominee for the Cherry Lane Mentor Project and received a Rodgers-Guettel Fellowship. Kara's most recent play, *Wild Black-Eyed Susans*, was developed in a lab reading at Juilliard and received readings in July with Circle East Repertory Theatre at SUNY, New Paltz and Ensemble Studio Theatre's Going to the River Festival. *Wild Black-Eyed Susans* was produced at Juilliard this past fall, directed by Valerie Curtis-Newton. Her one-act, *Cave Krewe*, was produced in October at Manhattan Theatre Source as part of Estrogenius 2006 and will be published in *Book of Estrogenius 2006* due to be released next year.

"I'm really excited to see this play get a true production in collaboration with the talented artists from the DePaul Theatre School," explains Kara, "and I feel honored and fortunate to be chosen as this year's winner of the Theodore Ward Prize. This will actually be my first non-workshop production of a full-length play and the idea that it will be performed in the gorgeous, historic Merle Reskin Theatre is also pretty amazing to me. I can't wait to come out to Chicago—it'll be my first trip there—next year to begin work on this production!"

Chuck Smith (*Director*) is a Goodman Theatre resident director, an artist-in-residence at Columbia College Chicago and an associate producer of Legacy Productions, a Chicago-based touring company. Goodman credits include the Chicago premiere of *Proof and The Story*; the world premieres of *By the Music of the Spheres* and *The Gift Horse*; James Baldwin's *The Amen Corner*, which transferred to Boston's Huntington Theatre where it won the IRNE (Independent Reviewers of New England) Award for best direction; Lynn Nottage's *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*; Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*; Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky*; August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*; the 1993 to 1995 productions of *A Christmas Carol*; *Vivisections from a Blown Mind* and *The Meeting*. He served as dramaturg for the Goodman production of August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*. At Columbia College, he is facilitator of the Theodore Ward playwriting contest and editor of the contest anthology *Seven Black Plays*. He is also a founding member of the Chicago Theatre Company, where he served as artistic director for four seasons. Mr. Smith is the proud recipient of the 1982 Paul Robeson Award and the 1997 award of merit presented by the Black Theatre Alliance of Chicago, and is currently a board member of Sullivan House, The League of Chicago Theatres and the African-American Arts Alliance of Chicago.

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Regular tickets are \$15 and student tickets are \$6 with valid ID. Group rates are available for 15 or more people. Seniors (over 60), DePaul employees/alumni and members of our community partners receive a discount (with ID). Preview tickets are \$10 or free to college students (with ID). Tickets are available online at www.ticketweb.com and www.hottix.org.

Performances are held at DePaul's historic Merle Reskin Theatre, 60 E. Balbo Drive (at Michigan), Chicago. Discount parking is available with coupons from the Box Office, and the theatre is accessible via CTA buses (3-King Drive, 29-State Street, 146-Michigan/Museums and others), and CTA El stops (Red – Harrison stop, Blue – LaSalle stop, Brown/Orange/Purple – Library stop).

The Theatre School at DePaul University educates, trains and inspires students of theatre in a conservatory setting that is rigorous, disciplined and culturally diverse, and that strives for the highest level of professional skill and artistry. 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. The school seeks to enhance the intellectual and cultural life of the university community, the city and the profession.

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