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steppenwolf's
**AUGUST:
OSAGE COUNTY**
A NEW PLAY BY TRACY LETTS
DIRECTED BY ANNA D. SHAPIRO
April 13-25
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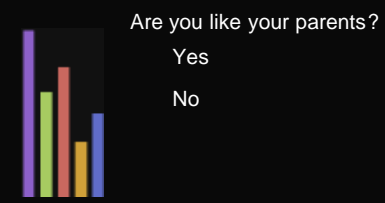
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SPOTLIGHT

THE MOST EXCITING NEW AMERICAN PLAY IS COMING TO CLEVELAND



Photo: Touring company of August: Osage County.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, "the most exciting new American play Broadway has seen in years," according to *The New York Times*, is coming to PlayhouseSquare as part of the KeyBank Broadway series April 13-25. Family drama will never be the same!

The New York Post finds the show "enormously entertaining!" And though T. S. Eliot said, "life is very long," spending time with the dysfunctional Weston family in **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY** goes quickly as you laugh in shock and horror at their behavior.

Joe Dziemianowicz of *The Daily News* has called **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY**, "a great big exhilarating gift for Broadway theatergoers. In this bracingly fresh, hugely ambitious and note-perfect

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Joe Dziemianowicz of *The Daily News* has called **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY**, "a great big exhilarating gift for Broadway theatergoers. In this bracingly fresh, hugely ambitious and note-perfect production, Tracy Letts lets fly so many original and diabolically funny ideas that he reinvigorates the family drama and brings it up to date."

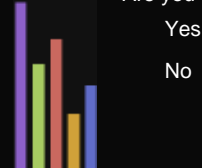
Awards

Winner of the 2008 Tony Award for Best Play and the **Pulitzer Prize for Drama**, **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY** also received Tony Awards for Best Actress and Best Featured Actress in a play, Best Direction and Best Scenic Design. It has a Theatre World Award and three Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding Play, Director of a Play and Actress in a Play.

New York Magazine Year-End Review asserts, "one of the best plays of the year. A flat out triumph. Letts has written a darkly funny and harrowing American family drama à la O'Neill."

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Time Magazine avows AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY to be one of the Top 10 theater performances of 2007.

"A play that will leave us laughing and wondering, shuddering and smiling, long after the house lights come back on. A grand, multi-generational train wreck that's practically Greek in its scale, yet given all the irresistible zing of domestic comedy," asserts Rob Kendt of *Newsday*.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY is "theater that continually keeps you hooked with shocks, surprises and delights. You will leave the...Theatre emotionally wrung out and exhausted from laughing, but you may still find yourself hungry for more," insists *The New York Times'* Christopher Isherwood.

Synopsis

Meet the Westons, a "beautiful screwed up family" according to *Entertainment Weekly*, from **Oklahoma** ruled by its women. From the moment the father, Beverly, an alcoholic, quotes John Berryman "the world is gradually becoming a place where I do not care to be anymore," all hell breaks loose.

One night, Beverly disappears. It is left to the women of the Weston family to deal with his absence and each other. These women are not warm and fuzzy. Mother, Violet, is addicted to drugs and has cancer of the mouth in more ways than one. She has no problem ripping everyone to shreds. Her daughters and her sister, lost in their own problems - adultery, suicide, racism, drug-addicted children, violence, incest and pedophilia - must face the cruelty of each other.

Part Eugene O'Neill tragedy, part black comedy, AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY will make you laugh one moment and wince in horror the next as the family's secrets, lies and malice are revealed.

Did You Know...

Playwright **Tracy Letts** grew up in Oklahoma and based parts of this Pulitzer Prize winning play on his mother's family?

His grandfather committed suicide.

Raised in poverty in Oklahoma, Letts' grandmother kept a diary when she was 13 years old that he read. "She was just a little kid, with little kid ideas and dreams," he told the *Sunday Times of London*. "And then I think about what she became as a result of her experiences."

His grandmother, a spiteful woman addicted to prescription drugs, spent time in psychiatric hospitals because she was psychologically or emotionally unbalanced.

Letts told the *Sunday Times*, "she was continually challenging for my family, especially for my mother, who was an only child. She wasn't aware of how bad she was when she was."

When Mr. Letts' mother read AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, she said, "I think you've been very kind to my mother."

For more information on the Broadway show go to:

www.augustonbroadway.com

For information on the film AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY go to: **Optioned Film Rights**

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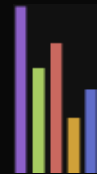
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Yes

No

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THE APPLE DOES NOT FALL TOO FAR FROM THE TREE



Photo: Clockwise from left: Estelle Parsons, Angelica Torn, Amy Warren & Shannon Cochran.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY introduces a family in crisis, on the verge of a total and complete meltdown. These people are not a warm, loving family who will stand by and help each other. This family is not filled with kindness and generosity. This is a family of vipers.

How did they get that way? Their parents, with addictions to alcohol and drugs, have lied to and cheated on each other for years. The children have been emotionally and mentally abused by their mother.

The **American Medical Association** definition of Emotional Abuse: "when a child is regularly threatened, yelled at, humiliated, ignored, blamed or otherwise emotionally mistreated. Emotional abuse is more than just verbal abuse. It is an attack on a child's emotional and social development, and is a basic threat to healthy human development."

Adults who were abused as children, according the **Mental Health Journal**, can face: "having a partner with a substance abuse problem; anxiety disorders; chronic head, face or pelvic pain; eating disorders; musculoskeletal complaints; depression; gastrointestinal distress or symptoms; asthma or other respiratory ailments; obesity, eating disorders; insomnia; panic; sexual dysfunction; substance abuse; suicidal ideation or behavior; pseudo-neurologic symptoms; unintended pregnancy; self-injury;

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and abuse their families."

What happens to children who are abused? What will they be like as adults? Will they become just like their parents? Does the apple not fall too far from the family tree? Look at what the Weston family says and decide.

Talking of her father, Ivy, the middle Weston daughter, realizes, "he never liked any of us, never had any special feeling of any kind for his children."

Violet, the matriarch of the Weston clan declares, "Y'know...if I ever called my mom a liar? She would have knocked my goddamn head off my shoulders...one of my dear mother's gentleman friends was attacking me with a claw hammer!...My momma was a nasty, mean old lady. I suppose that's where I get it from...I am a drug addict...Y'see these little blue babies? Try to get 'em away from me and I'll eat you alive."

The husband of the eldest Weston daughter, Barbara, tells his wife, "Violet really has a way of putting you in attack mode. You have such a rage for her you can't help dishing it in my direction...You get in this masochistic frame of mind that actually desires to be hurt."

Barbara, tells her daughter, Jean, "I don't care what else you do, where you go, how you screw up your life."

Barbara's husband says she treats her daughter Jean as "a buffer between you and the shrill insanity of your mother."

Karen, the youngest Weston daughter tells herself, "You punish yourself, you tell yourself, it's your fault," and realizes, "I've been really unhappy for most of my life."

Finally, Ivy tells her sisters, "Don't lay this sister thing on me now, all right. I don't buy it. I haven't bought it for a long time...I can't perpetuate these myths of family or sisterhood anymore. We're all just people, some of us accidentally connected by genetics, a random selection of cells. Nothing more."

Then she tells her mother and Barbara, "You're monsters...Picking the bones of the rest of us."

Barbara tells Ivy, "it wasn't me, it was Mom." To which her sister Ivy replies, "there's no difference."

Like mother, like daughter? The apple doesn't fall too far from the family tree.

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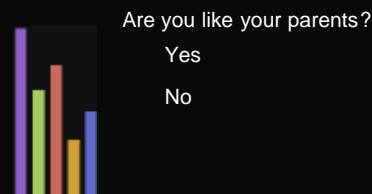
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O'NEILL or LETTS?



Photos: Angelica Torn & Stephen Riley Key.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY has been compared to Eugene O'Neill's classic family drama *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. Both plays received Tony Awards for best play and Pulitzer Prizes for drama: O'Neill in 1957 and Letts in 2008.

Tracy Letts, AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY's playwright, used some of the same character traits and themes that O'Neill used in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, such as a drug addicted mother, an alcoholic father, three siblings, financial issues, dysfunction, inability to communicate, use of drugs or alcohol to cope, failure to face reality and a disease that symbolizes the family.

Here are some quotes from *Long Day's Journey Into Night*...or are they from AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY? You be the judge.

1. "If you can't be good, you can at least be careful."
2. "All we can do is try to be resigned – again...Or be so drunk you can forget."
3. "One day you find yourself in hell!"
4. "The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too."
5. "I'm not blaming you, dear. How can you help it?"
6. "Well, what's wrong with being drunk?"

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7. "That's where I've got - nowhere. Where everyone lands in the end, even if more of the suckers won't admit it."
8. "Yes, forget! Forget everything and face nothing! It's a convenient philosophy"
9. "When you have the poison in you, you want to blame everyone but yourself!"
10. "To be rid of us, to forget we're alive! It's as if, in spite of loving us, she hated us!"
11. "Got to take revenge. On everyone else."
12. "Who wants to see life as it is...We are such stuff as manure is made on, so let's drink up and forget it."
13. "None of us can help the things life has done to us."
14. "Life is very long."
15. "Plop her in the nearest asylum and get on with the day."
16. "My wife takes pills and I drink."
17. "Try not to differentiate between night and day."
18. "Y'know, you'd have a lot more credibility, if you had any credibility."
19. "You are just dripping with envy over these."
20. "I'm not going to be held hostage in this room so you can attack me."
21. "At least do me the courtesy of recognizing when I'm demeaning you."
22. "Thank God we can't tell the future. We'd never get out of bed."
23. "Dissipation is actually much worse than cataclysm."
24. "I haven't wanted to live my unhappiness in full view of my family."
25. "Wouldn't we be better off, all of us, if we stopped lying about these things and told the truth?"
26. "This madhouse is my home."

ANSWERS:

Quotations 1-13 are from *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

Quotations 14-26 are from AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY.

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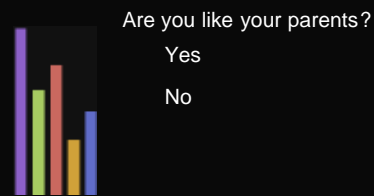
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Photo: From left: Libby George & Shannon Cochran.

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AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY was produced by **Steppenwolf**, a Chicago based theater company formed in 1974. The name comes from a novel by **Hermann Hesse**.

The mission of the company is to "advance the vitality and diversity of American theater by nurturing artists, encouraging repeatable creative relationships and contributing new works to the national canon."

The company began in Highland Park, Illinois in 1974, when several Highland Park High School classmates wanted to put on a production of *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little*. The production was a success and several shows later, some of the students were attending college at **Illinois State University**. **Terry Kinney**, **Jeff Perry** and Gary Sinise decided that after graduation, they would start a professional resident ensemble theater company.

A number of actors, known for their work in film and TV, including **Gary Sinise**, **John Malkovich**, **Joan Allen**, **John Mahoney**, **Martha Plimpton**, **Glenne Headly**, **Gary Cole**, **Kathryn Erbe** and **Laurie Metcalf**, began their careers as members of the Steppenwolf ensemble.

Steppenwolf has been honored with many awards including:

1988 **National Medal of Arts**, awarded by President Bill Clinton acknowledging Steppenwolf as "deserving of special recognition by reason of their

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outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support and availability of the arts in the United States"

- 1990 Tony Award for Best Play *The Grapes of Wrath*
- 2000 **Illinois Arts Legend Award** for significantly changing "the artistic and cultural lives of the people of Illinois"
- 2001 Best Revival of a Play for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Revival of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
Otto Rene Castello Award for Political Theatre
Drama League Unique Contribution to Theatre Award for an "indelible impact upon professional theatre in New York City."
- 2003 Equity Special Award for "leadership in earning national and international acclaim for the Chicago theatre scene"
- 2008 For **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY**: Tony Awards of Best Play, Best Actress and Best Featured Actress in a Best Direction and Best Scenic Design
Theatre World Award
Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding Play, Director of a Play, and Actress in a Play

Steppenwolf productions have graced stages not just in Chicago but in:

New York

True West, 1982
And a Nightingale Sang..., 1983
Balm in Gilead, 1984
Orphans, 1985
The Caretaker, 1986
Educating Rita, 1987
The Grapes of Wrath, 1990
The Song of Jacob Zulu, 1993
The Rise and Fall of Little Voice, 1994
Buried Child, 1996
Space, 1999
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, 2001
The Bluest Eye, 2004
AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, 2007

California

The Grapes of Wrath, 1989
Picasso at the Lapin Agile, 1994
Space, 1999

Washington, D.C.

Coyote Ugly, 1985
Streamers, 1985
Nomathemba (Hope), 1996

Colorado

Side Man, 2002

London

Orphans, 1986
The Grapes of Wrath, 1989
A Slip of the Tongue, 1992
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, 2000

Australia

Lydie Breeze, 1987
The Song of Jacob Zulu, 1993
Side Man, 2001

New Jersey

Nomathemba (Hope), 1996

Ireland

Side Man, 2000
Traffic's A Night in the Pub, 2000 and 2001
Frankie & Johnny in the Clair de Lune, 2004

For more information, visit www.steppenwolf.org. *Quotes are taken from this site.*
For a day in the life of Steppenwolf, visit their [YouTube site](#).

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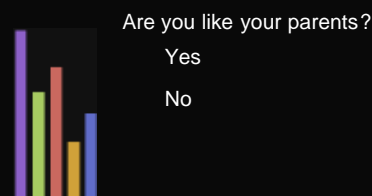
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TALKING WITH SHANNON COCHRAN

Buzz Extra spoke with Obie, Theatre World and Joseph Jefferson Award winner Shannon Cochran. Ms. Cochran is a versatile performer who has been seen in musicals and straight plays on stages in New York, London, Chicago and L.A. Her film credits include *The Ring*, *Star Trek: Nemesis* and *The Substance of Things Hoped For*. Her TV credits include appearances on *Numb3rs*, *The Office*, and *Law and Order: SVU*. A Steppenwolf veteran of many years, Shannon Cochran plays Barbara Fordham in *AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY*.



EXTRA: When did you catch the acting bug?

COCHRAN: When I went to *Wake Forest University*, I was going to be a French and English major. Once I wandered into the Theatre Department, and they started casting me in plays...the head of the department told me I was actually pretty talented at this, but that I should leave and go somewhere where I could be trained properly. And I could make more money if I could sing and dance. So I took his advice and went to [University of] *Cincinnati [College] Conservatory*.

EXTRA: The singing and dancing really worked out for you.

COCHRAN: It really has. Afterwards, I went to Chicago and it's such a huge theater town. There was musical theater and straight theater, and I could do both.

EXTRA: So, how did you *hook up with Steppenwolf*?

COCHRAN: When I was doing a musical in Chicago, a Steppenwolf member, Rondi Reed, was also in the musical, and said to me, "We're looking for someone to play the tap dance teacher in our production of *Stepping Out*," which is a straight play, but it has tap dancing in it. So, she cast me as the teacher. I got along well with them, and they liked what I did. I've done maybe 12 or 15 productions since then.

EXTRA: After Chicago?

COCHRAN: I went to L.A. for pilot (TV) season and would come back to do plays in Chicago, but eventually it made more sense to stay in L.A. I met my future husband on the set of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and he liked it there. I started staying longer and longer. I could still get some theater gigs in Chicago, but in L.A., I could teach and

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do whatever I wanted, yet be closer to the film and TV industry.

EXTRA: So you've done it all. Theater, film and TV?

COCHRAN: If you are going to stay in the business, I think you have to stick your hand into all those pies because it's a tough business, especially for women. In order to make a living at it, you've got to be doing all of the things...commercials, voice-overs...That's the economic reality of it. I'd love to do theater all the time, but it just doesn't pay well enough to do that.

EXTRA: Then, theater is your first love.

COCHRAN: It really is.

EXTRA: You worked with AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY author, Tracy Letts, before, right?

COCHRAN: Yes. He wrote a play, *Bug*, in which I originated the role of Agnes in both London and New York. Then he wrote another play, *Man From Nebraska*, that I originated the role of Pat Monday in for Steppenwolf. So, I've known Tracy for about 15 years.

EXTRA: What's the reaction of audiences to the characters in AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY?

COCHRAN: They see themselves or they see someone they believe they know from their own family. A lot of people come away saying, "you were eavesdropping on my family" or "my family is not as bad as I thought it was."

EXTRA: What do you think happens to your character, *Barbara*, after the play ends?

COCHRAN: I think she has to, as many women of that age do, figure out a new way of living. She has to figure out how to have a better and more honest relationship with her daughter...and go reinvent herself in the world as a person who's single. I don't think her mother has ruined her. I think she got out just in the nick of time. But if you'd ask Tracy (the author), he would probably say "I don't know." I think he likes you to make your own reality.

EXTRA: We read that you have a philosophy of keeping your eyes open and staying surprised at life. Do you still believe that?

COCHRAN: Isn't that what an actor does? Constantly look at people, observe people, see if you can find something that you can store in your vault that maybe you haven't seen before in terms of their behavior or the way they deal with their lives. You get to peer into the possibility of someone's life, but you don't actually have to live it. If you're not surprised at life you might miss something.

EXTRA: So do you feel, as Barbara says in the play, that you're running things now?

COCHRAN: I do feel in control of my life personally, but professionally it is a complete crapshoot, like being in Vegas. If I live in the 'what if' then I'd be totally depressed. If it's meant to be, something will come along.

EXTRA: Well, we're glad you're coming along here to Cleveland!

Photo: Shannon Cochran

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Want to find out even more about the show? Come get "buzzed" with host Joe Garry at the Broadway Buzz Pre-Show Talk! Join us one hour before the curtain of each performance of *AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY* in the Idea Center® at PlayhouseSquare.



The Idea Center is located just two doors west of the Allen Theatre at 1375 Euclid Avenue. You can enter the Idea Center quickly from the PlayhouseSquare parking garage by taking the elevator or stairs to Level 1. Exit through the red doors and cross at the crosswalk which will lead you directly into the rear entrance of the building. You also may enter the Idea Center from Euclid Avenue.

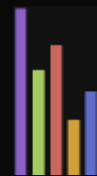
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