

# Inside:

## His Girl Friday



adapted by  
John Guare

from *The Front Page* by  
Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur  
and the Columbia Pictures film

SEPTEMBER 9 – OCTOBER 9, 2011

trinity **re**per**to**ry company

PROVIDENCE • RHODE ISLAND

# **Inside: *His Girl Friday***

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## From the Artistic Director, Curt Columbus

Welcome to the first show of our 2011-12 season: John Guare's stage version of the classic film *His Girl Friday*, performed by our resident acting company and young artists from our MFA program. This adaptation is an adaptation of an adaptation of one of the great works of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century American stage, *The Front Page*. The cadence of that sentence is purposeful in its construction, a play on the play of the play.

*The Front Page* was written by two former Chicago reporters, Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur. After its 1928 premiere, the play was a smash hit on Broadway, popular not only for its fast-paced dialogue, but also for its clear-eyed depiction of life in a seedy Chicago newsroom. Reporter Hildy Johnson tries to break free from the employ of his smooth-talking, manipulative publisher, Walter Burns. Hildy and Walter joust and cajole, all in the name of getting the headline, of scoring the exclusive story.

The film adaptation, *His Girl Friday*, epitomizes the lightning-quick screwball comedies of the late thirties and early forties. Directed by the great Howard Hawks and starring Cary Grant as Walter Burns and Rosalind Russell as Hildy Johnson, this movie was loaded with the same verbal fireworks and screwball situations of the original play; however, it upped the ante by adding the element of sexual tension between the two protagonists, now former husband and wife. Hawks's adaptation had it all – comedy, drama, AND romance. A hit when it was released, it's still considered one of the greatest movies of all time.

Guare's adaptation of that adaptation maintains the fast pace and furiously funny dialogue, as well as the central sexual tension of the movie. But as one of America's greatest playwrights, his play is much more than the sum of its parts. With that perfect balance of humor and pathos, church and circus, his plays (including *The House of Blue Leaves*, *Six Degrees of Separation*) are at once outrageously humorous and utterly lucid in their examination of the human condition. This *Girl Friday* examines America's tormented relationship with truth, justice, and the media. The issues speak to *our* moment – an out-of-control media that will do anything to get a story, a corrupt political bureaucracy that will do or say anything to keep power, a world situation that unhinges even the calmest of world leaders. Yet they are also set against the backdrop of autumn 1939, the eve of World War II, and in the midst of that era's economic crisis.

Guare has created a brilliant simultaneity – comedy/drama, historical/contemporary, adaptation of adaptation of original. We've added our own flair to the production, making the production a quick-change piece for 9 of our 11 actors, heightening the screwball swirl of the entire production. So enjoy any one of the many layers of this delicious *Girl Friday*, and I'll look forward to seeing you at the theater....

# About the authors

## Charles MacArthur and Ben Hecht

MacArthur and Hecht began their long partnership and earned critical acclaim with *The Front Page* (1928). This play was three times adapted for film, most notably as *His Girl Friday* (1940). Their other collaborations include *Twentieth Century*, *Jumbo*, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, and *Swan Song*. Their screenplays include *Crime Without Passion*, *The Scoundrel* (Academy Award), *Soak the Rich*, *Gunga Din*, and *Wuthering Heights*. MacArthur's solo screenplays include *The Sin of Madelon Claudet* (which featured an Academy Award-winning performance by his second wife, Helen Hayes), *Rasputin and the Empress*, and *The Senator Was Indiscreet*.

## John Guare

John Guare has written such plays as *House of Blue Leaves*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Landscape of the Body*, *A Few Stout Individuals*, *Four Baboons Adoring the Sun*, *A Free Man of Color*, and *Lydie Breeze*; the screenplay for Louis Malle's *Atlantic City*; and librettos for *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Sweet Smell of Success*. His adaptation of *His Girl Friday* premiered at London's National Theater. He has received Tony Awards and nominations, Academy Award nominations, Olivier and Drama Critics Circle Awards, the PEN/Laura Pels Master Dramatist Award, the Gold Medal in Drama from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Obie Award for sustained excellence.

It was the summer of 1927. In an apartment on Beekman Place, as far east on the east side of New York City as you can go before falling into the East River, Ben Hecht and Charlie MacArthur were writing a play. Both former Chicago newspapermen, they pieced together names and personalities of reporters and city officials they had known and compressed all the colorful events they could remember into one madcap night in the pressroom of Chicago's Criminal Courts Building.

The result, *The Front Page* (produced at Trinity Rep in 1983), would be an instant Broadway success. It is hailed by many as "the great American comedy." Besides countless revivals, the play has been adapted into four films, multiple teleplays and radio plays, and a musical. The most famous film adaptation is Howard Hawks' *His Girl Friday*, which changed the gender of one of the main characters from male to female. Hawks' version has enjoyed its own slew of film and radio adaptations, and, in 2003, a stage adaptation by John Guare, updated again for our 2011 production. How could one night in a Chicago pressroom inspire so many revivals and adaptations? The answer lies in the spirit of the press captured by those two men in the apartment

line of their play.

Walter Howey and Tommy O'Connor were not the only Chicago locals to make it into the play (in the forms of Walter Burns and Earl Williams). Most of the characters in *The Front Page* have names that are very close or even identical to living counterparts. Hildy Johnson, for example, was based on a larger than life reporter named John Hilding Johnson. After the play opened, Johnson was asked if he intended to sue Hecht and MacArthur for blatantly using his name, to which he replied, "Hell no. They've made me famous. I'm a bigger hero than I've ever been. Sue? Have you ever been in a pressroom?" Others were not so forgiving. Albert Baenziger, the model for prissy Bensinger, as well as Sheriff Peter Hoffman, the model for Sheriff Hartman, both reportedly considered lawsuits. But, on the whole, the reaction of Chicago newsmen was wildly positive. Jed Harris, who produced the first run on Broadway and then brought the show to Chicago, recalled the atmosphere at the Chicago opening: all the reporters portrayed in the play "turned up on the opening night in Chicago and simply wallowed in delight. When the curtain fell on the first act, the roar that rose from the audience sounded like the bellowing of a herd of wild animals

# Stage to Screen, Screen to Stage

By Rachel Carpmán

on Beekman Place, which touches the heart of how we deal with social and political events to this day.

Hecht and MacArthur each spent their salad days as reporters in Chicago. Hecht worked for the evening papers (the *Journal* and the *Daily News*) from 1910 to 1925 and MacArthur worked on the morning paper (the *Herald and Examiner*) from 1915 to 1924, so the two were acquaintances but not friends until they both moved to New York. Both missed Chicago terribly, and, as Hecht put it in his biography of MacArthur, "We met in the street one day and decided to write a play about Chicago newspaper days."

*The Front Page* centers on star reporter Hildebrand "Hildy" Johnson as he attempts to leave the newspaper world behind and get married, while his overbearing editor, Walter Burns, tries every way imaginable to trick, threaten, and forcibly restrain Hildy from leaving. At the same time, a convict named Earl Williams, set to hang for killing a policeman, escapes from the prison next door and drops into the news room, where Hildy conceals him in a roll-top desk until events can be resolved. Hecht and MacArthur based the play on two major real-life occurrences. The first was the sensational escape of a convict named Tommy O'Connor. Using a pistol allegedly smuggled in a pork chop sandwich, O'Connor and four other inmates escaped from Cook County Jail in December of 1921, resulting in a massive manhunt and a field day for the press. Unlike the convict in *The Front Page*, however, O'Connor was never apprehended. The other event was the "Damon and Pythias love affair" between MacArthur and his editor, Walter Howey, specifically the time Howey had MacArthur arrested aboard a train for stealing his watch. MacArthur and Hecht would use Howey's complaint to the police, "The son of a bitch stole my watch!" as the closing

panicked by a fire in a zoo."

Under the guidance of Harris and the direction of George S. Kaufman, who came up with the title, the play rocketed to success. The first film adaptation followed very quickly, opening in 1931 and produced by none other than Howard Hughes. The film starred Adolphe Menjou as Walter and a fresh-faced Pat O'Brien as Hildy. Though it was seen as a seminal journalism movie at the time, its success was nothing compared to that of the adaptation Howard Hawks would release in 1940, *His Girl Friday*.

The legend surrounding the famous gender swap in *His Girl Friday* was put forth by Hawks himself, though it is not substantiated by any other source. As Hawks tells the story, one night at dinner with a few guests, the subject of dialogue arose. Hawks posited that the best dialogue "in the world" came from Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur. "I had two copies of their play *The Front Page*. There was a girl there who was pretty good, and I said, 'Read the reporter's part, and I'll read the editor's part.' And in the middle of it, I said, 'My Lord, it's better with a girl reading it than the way it was!'" When Hawks called Hecht to ask his opinion on the gender switch, Hecht replied, "I wish we'd thought of that." Hawks, interestingly enough, believed that *The Front Page* was a love story between two men, and though he thought highly of the story and dialogue, "It was a lot easier for me to make a love story with a man and a girl and make some better scenes." So Hildebrand Johnson became Hildegard Johnson.

The new relationship between Hildy and Walter was further crafted by screenplay adapter Charles Lederer. Coincidentally, Lederer's aunt Marion Davies was the longtime mistress of William Randolph Hearst, who owned half of the newspapers



**FROM LEFT:** FORMER COMPANY MEMBERS PETER GERETY AS HILDY, HOWARD LONDON AS MR. PINCUS AND RICHARD KNEELAND AS WALTER BURNS (JACK McCULLOUGH IN THE BACKGROUND) IN TRINITY REP'S 1983 PRODUCTION OF *THE FRONT PAGE*, DIRECTED BY PHILIP MINOR WITH SET BY ROBERT D. SOULE, COSTUMES BY WILLIAM LANE AND LIGHTING BY JOHN CUSTER. PHOTO BY CONSTANCE BROWN.

in Chicago (including MacArthur's former paper, the *Herald and Examiner*). Lederer came up with the idea that Hildy was Walter's ex-wife, which, in Hawks' opinion, made "all the scenes much better and the characters more definite. Now we knew what we were talking about—two people who had been married and in love and divorced." The transformation of Hildy from a man to a woman expanded the scope of *The Front Page* from city politics to gender politics. The story became what Hawks called "a very curious and complex romantic comedy in which love is expressed through work and work is expressed as love." The result is a portrait of a dysfunctional yet equal partnership between a man and a woman that was quite ahead of its time.

While *His Girl Friday* introduced fascinating and forward-thinking gender relations to the story, it blurred the crisp details of the original script. Gone were the references to Chicago and to specific dates and events. The action jumped all over the unspecified city instead of remaining grounded in the pressroom. The new adaptation by John Guare is an excellent marriage of script and screenplay, keeping the best elements of both while adding new twists of its own. Guare has recentered the action in the pressroom of Chicago's

## The More Things Change...

As a play or film is adapted, things change from version to version. The last line of *The Front Page* is its most famous. Walter gives Hildy a gold watch inscribed, "To the best newspaperman I know," and then calls the police to arrest Hildy for robbery. He tells them, "The son of a bitch stole my watch!" The line supposedly originated with MacArthur's editor Walter Howey in an identical, real-life situation.

For the 1931 movie, the line was preserved, however the strong language was problematic. In the film, as Walter (Adolphe Menjou) phones in the "theft," he puts his elbow on a typewriter as he says "son of a..." The resulting noise covers the offending word.

By 1940, the line had to be cut completely because of the language and because Hawks felt that it had become a cliché. Screenwriter Morrie Ryskind came up with a scenario in which Hildy and Walter get married in the newsroom, and then start fighting the moment they say "I do." This scene was never shot, however, as a few days later, his idea had been stolen by another writer for a different picture. Ryskind came up with a new ending and kept it secret until filming was completed. In this ending, Hildy and Walter reconcile, and then learn of a strike in Albany. Leaving the pressroom, Walter says, "We're going to Albany, I wonder if Bruce can put us up?"

In Guare's adaptation, Walter's famous watch line is worked in earlier in the play. The ending turns out much as Ryskind originally envisioned it. Guare, however, comes up with a new last line for Walter: "Hildy! Homicide? Anytime. Divorce? Never."

## ...the More they Stay the Same

Other things, however, have remained virtually untouched from adaptation to adaptation. The scene in which Hildy and Mollie Malloy get Earl to hide in Bensinger's desk is almost identical in every version of the script.

Criminal Courts Building. Characters added for the film, such as Hildy's fiancé Bruce, remain intact, and scenes that take place in other locations (for example, the one in which Walter takes Bruce and Hildy out to lunch) are moved to the pressroom. The new specificity of time (August 31, 1939) expands the scope of the story yet again to include questions of patriotism and isolationism along with city and gender politics.

While every incarnation adds background elements and rearranges scenery, it is a testament to the strength of Hecht and MacArthur's original script that the basic plot remains intact. The heart of the story, the pressroom and the reporters, are essentially unchanged from version to version. Many are still recognizable as their real-life counterparts who worked with MacArthur in 1920s Chicago. Through these reporters, Hecht and MacArthur raised problems that continue to plague American media to this day: the tension between the need to sell papers and the obligation to report the truth, and the influence that journalists exert over politics and public opinion. The timelessness of this story allows for endless adaptation and reinterpretation, ensuring that the antics of the pressroom will remain relevant, and continue to be "the great American comedy."

## Playwright John Guare

**Emily Atkinson:** Have you always loved old movies? Were you a big moviegoer as a kid, and as an adult?

**John Guare:** Very much so. I still am. There are so few theaters that show old movies even in New York. I haven't been to a movie in a couple of years, but still — my wife and I, we just live for Turner Classic Movies, and we record everything.

**EA:** How did this adaptation begin?

**JG:** It was Nick Hytner's first season at the National Theatre, London. He wanted to open with a production of *Henry V* as it would have been covered by CNN, and he

**Trinity Rep's season opens with *His Girl Friday*, the rollicking adventures of colorful Chicago newsmen, local pols who'll hang a man to swing the election, and a headstrong career gal determined to marry the wrong guy, in John Guare's adaptation of the classic Howard Hawks film and *The Front Page*, the play that inspired it. Putting *His Girl Friday* on stage is no small undertaking, for the playwright or for Trinity Rep. In June, literary manager Emily Atkinson spoke with playwright John Guare and artistic director Curt Columbus, who directs *His Girl Friday*.**

## Director Curt Columbus

**Emily Atkinson:** *His Girl Friday* is a real success story in our season planning process... In the fall, we were talking over our favorite early twentieth century American comedies, and we came to *The Front Page* and stalled. We like *The Front Page*, but it's hard to love it in the shadow of *His Girl Friday*. It's not fair, really, to compare a 1927 play to Howard Hawks' 1940 movie, but we can't help it. Hawks changed one of the central pair from a man to a woman, and bang, Hollywood comedy magic. That, plus Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell.

**Curt Columbus:** Yes, *The Front Page* lacks the spark of a comedy

# SCREWBALL

had an idea for a companion piece: a comedy about the press. He asked if I'd consider taking *The Front Page* and *His Girl Friday* and marrying them: an absolutely fascinating proposition. The difficulty was, we couldn't get the rights until 90 days before rehearsals were scheduled to start. 90 days... and it's not a simple thing, not just a matter of changing one character's sex from male to female. There are big differences. For example, in *The Front Page* Walter Burns doesn't appear till the second act curtain — he's not in the first act at all. The movie, *His Girl Friday* begins with Hildy arriving to show off her new fiancé to Walter. Also there's the setting. In the movie, they go to Walter's office, out to lunch, to the jail. For our play, we wanted to keep *The Front Page*'s single focused setting: the criminal courthouse press room. The dynamics of *His Girl Friday* and the dynamics of *The Front Page* are completely opposite... I had to find the way. It was a fantastic diabolical problem.

It was a wonderful time, a wonderful team: Zoe Wanamaker and Alex Jennings, and Jack O'Brien directed. But because I'd only had 90 days, I felt there were some aspects of the storytelling I hadn't gotten to. Later, we did it at The Guthrie, with Courtney Vance and Angela Bassett, a fantastic production. I slimmed it, trimmed it and focused the script some more. I've had a number of offers to do the play. We've had plans for a few productions, done readings that were just thrilling, but something always came up... and every time, we have to get permission from so many different

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of that period, because it lacks a central romance. Aside from its well-built story, its sophistication, what comes to the fore is its politics, and when we read it again, we found its politics were creaky... racist... odd on some levels. We couldn't find our way in, our entrance point. The really great screwball comedies have a complicated impossible romantic relationship at their center.

**EA:** Impossible?

**CC:** Think about *Bringing up Baby!* *The Philadelphia Story* —

**EA:** Oh, sure, that opening minute of *The Philadelphia Story* shows us it's impossible, all right: We see that Tracy Lord and C.K. Dexter Haven have tried marriage and failed, failed spectacularly. And in *His Girl Friday*, when we learn Hildy and Walter have been married and divorced, it's the same proof.

**CC:** But in *The Front Page*, Hecht and MacArthur give us that can-do, roll-up-your-sleeves, Runyon-esque, American mindset: the truth will out, the little guy will win, all that. *His Girl Friday* gives us all of that, too, plus this really intriguing relationship at its center.

**EA:** Does Walter do it all because he wants to sell papers? Or swing the election? Or stick it to the Mayor and the Sheriff? Or because he loves Hildy and he'll do anything to get her back? So back in the fall, we sighed and wished there was a stage adaptation of *His Girl Friday*. Then [Trinity Rep's literary intern] Rachel Carpman discovered that John Guare had adapted it.

**CC:** It hasn't had a big New York production. It

*continued on page 9*

**Playwright John Guare** continued from page 7

people — the Charles MacArthur estate, the Ben Hecht estate, Columbia Pictures, the Newbury library... and of course *The Front Page* still has its own wonderful life all over the world.

**EA:** Did this quintessential American story with its rapid-fire pace play differently in London?

**JG:** No, no, in London, at the Guthrie, and at readings at Naked Angel and Roundabout, audiences loved it. That Hecht and MacArthur material feeds into everyone's sense of what life was like in the newspaper business. More than that, it *created* that sense, and then through the movie, in both countries. It's not that it's an American play that the English can't appreciate; *Our Town* is perceived differently in England. Always I've tried to honor that universality of the Hecht and MacArthur material. But *His Girl Friday* has been a loose tooth in my mouth. I loved working on it, and wanted to have another go at it.

I'm so happy that Curt wanted to produce it at Trinity Rep, where I haven't worked for so many years—I worked there several times during Adrian Hall's time, but there was kind of a blackout for a number of years.

(laughter) When I heard from Curt I was absolutely thrilled, because I love the company. Curt had this brilliant idea of double-casting, making it a real theatrical event, which just tickled me. It's difficult for theaters to produce a play like *His Girl Friday* in a world where four characters is a big cast. "Oh, a cast of 21, 22, 23... we can't even consider it." So when Curt came to talk with me about his idea, I said "Yes! Hurrah!" And Trinity Rep got the rights.

**EA:** Working on your adaptation, did you begin with *The Front Page* script or the *His Girl Friday* screenplay?

**JG:** Side by side. Always side by side.

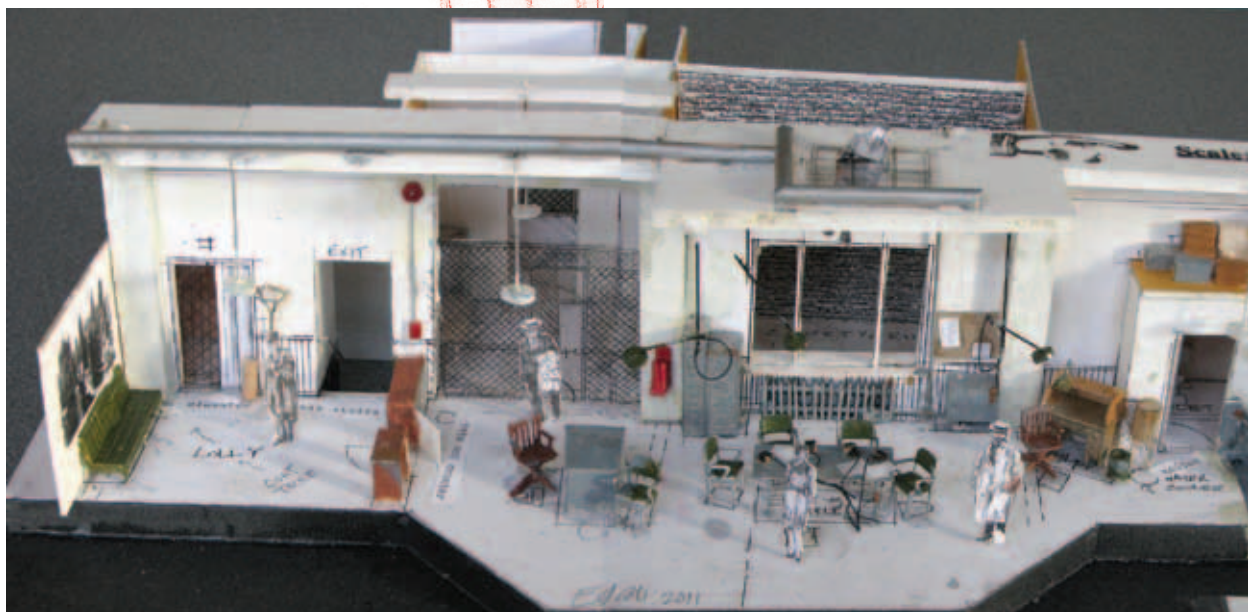
**EA:** How remarkable, to start and finish just 90 days before rehearsal!

**JG:** It was thrilling. You just live for a process like that. It was like being in the newspaper business, with that deadline looming. *The Front Page* was written about life in the early 1920s. The movie *His Girl Friday* was shot in the summer of 1939. I set this play on



the last day of August 1939, the day before Germany invaded Poland. America's isolationism will come to an end the next day. Most of the play is about people living life in the local news pages, and at the end, realizing there's a world outside. The local news will be pushed aside — the big news is Germany invades Poland. And the world will change. So without making it into a docudrama, I'm locating it in the life of 1939. FDR is President, the Depression has been grinding on for nearly ten years — as opposed to the 1920s, when the play was written, in the great prosperity of Calvin Coolidge. That's what I've been doing, hopefully artfully and subtly — that's what I love about being a playwright. That's what so fascinating and rewarding, yet a big challenge, and I hope I've met it — taking an existing piece of work that has its own perfection, and applying different dynamics to it.

*diamond cuff links*



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*I wish I discovered grey velvet*

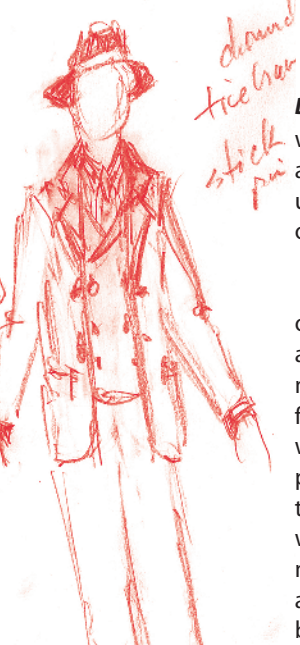
**EA:** Have you worked with the set designer Eugene Lee before?

**JG:** I never have, but I've admired his work for a long time, and happy to finally have the chance. I love talking with Curt about the play, and the set design is one example. In the British production, the press room was a place of honor. Now, the press room shows the contempt that the city government and politicians have for the reporters: it's up on the top floor, above the courtroom. I love the specificity, really examining where the play takes place.

**EA:** Yes, it's in your stage directions: "It's a room that's been carved out of existing space in this building that was a noble edifice fifty years before." Trinity Rep, built as a vaudeville theater in 1917, features plenty of offices carved out of existing space: like mine! We can't wait to welcome you back to our noble edifice.

**JG:** Thanks so much. I can't wait to get started.

*Model of the set for His Girl Friday by Eugene Lee; costume sketches by William Lane.*



**Director Curt Columbus** continued from page 7

was commissioned for the National Theatre in 2002, and then done only at the Guthrie in 2004, kept tightly under wraps. Three or four different people, estates, organizations own the rights.

**EA:** When we got the rights, it felt like a sign.

**CC:** Actually, the real sign came when I discovered our entrance point to the play, our way in — to make it a quick-change piece for nine of our eleven actors, in multiple roles. We knew the play was smart, political, funny, all the qualities we look for, and suddenly here was a way to ensure each actor has a really meaty part or parts. It's our kind of ensemble piece, not in the old-time Broadway way, with a cast of 26, actors waiting in the green room for their two minutes in the middle of Act 3. In January I sat down with John Guare at the Algonquin in New York (which couldn't have been more fitting, Hecht and MacArthur's old spot) and talked about this idea. It's not, as some might suggest, a way to economize. It celebrates actors' virtuosity. And, it creates a speeded-up screwball rhythm for the play, in a surprising way. Part of the audience's pleasure will be tracking who's playing whom, when: seeing an actor enter a scene as a young woman, though they'd swear they saw him a moment ago playing an old man.

**EA:** Guare liked this idea this right away. You came back from New York and told us he called it "swirl."

**CC:** Yes, it's inherently theatrical, without under-

mining the strengths of the play. It's reenergizing.

**EA:** Energy, speed. As a future member of the audience, I can see right away that that swirl = funny. Is screwball is the same as farce, only more fun?

**CC:** Farce implies a stylistic choice that feels a little distant, whereas screwball is definitely based in naturalistic human behavior. That's where it starts.

**EA:** John Guare's spending a few days with us in August — working with the company?

**CC:** He's refining some of the 1939 setting. It's funny, the more I read the play, thinking about some of John's ideas, I realize it comments on America's complicated relationship to war.

**EA:** And isolationism?

**CC:** Yes. It's great to have this play running at the same time as *Clybourne Park*. Bruce Norris has a complicated relationship to race in his play that's not always easy to swallow. John has a complicated relationship to war in his play that's not always easy to swallow.

**EA:** Whether we're history nerds or just interested in our parents' lives, our understanding of the pre-war years is colored by our understanding of wartime, when every family shared the burden. Yet there was so much debate in the late 1930s, 1940, 1941 — on politics, the economy, labor, all beginning to become global. Would Roosevelt's programs lead to socialism, or fascism? Charles Lindberg was impressed by Germany... Father Coughlin on the radio was huge...

**CC:** It was a complicated set of questions, until Pearl Harbor. This is one area of refinement for John. Without changing the story, his adaptation reflects this setting.

**EA:** He'll be responding to our company casting?

**CC:** Sure. Aside from Hildy and Walter, there are opportunities for pitching the secondary relationships differently, because of who's playing them.

**EA:** How about Eugene Lee's set design?

**CC:** Eugene responded immediately to our ideas. I used to live across the street from the Criminal Court building in Chicago, and that building had been repurposed again and again. John said that the mayor and city government have so little regard for the press corps that the press room is a repurposed space, shoved way up in the highest, hottest attic. Eugene said immediately, "There must have been skylights." That's the end of Act 1. And there'll be an interior courtyard — an air shaft, really — hallways, offices, rooms are visible through interior windows, with action happening on the other side. Those ideas support the quick changes. A character will be not-quite-visible just off stage; she's in another room in our minds' eye, but in reality the actor enters "from another place" playing another character, so we let ourselves get fooled, we go with it. Eugene has created all these different places: exit upstage off right, enter climbing stairs from the floor below: now we're convinced we're following a different character. It feels like there are 22, 23 different people on stage when there are only 11.

# His Girl Friday

adapted by **John Guare** from **The Front Page**

by **Ben Hecht** and **Charles MacArthur**

and **the Columbia Pictures film**

directed by **Curt Columbus**

*Eugene Lee, set design*

*William Lane, costume design*

*Michael Gottlieb, lighting design*

*Peter Hurowitz, sound design*

with resident acting company members **Stephen Berenson**,  
**Angela Brazil**, **Janice Duclos**, **Phyllis Kay**, **Brian McEleney**,  
**Fred Sullivan, Jr.**, and **Stephen Thorne**

associate artist **Richard Donelly**

and Brown/Trinity Rep actors **Philippe Bowgen '12**,  
**Brough Hansen '12** and **Lovell Holder '12**

September 9 – October 9, 2011 in the Chace Theater

## Chicago Neighborhoods



Maxwell Street, 1939

Chicago was a multi-ethnic patchwork. In 1939, the North Side was populated with Germans, while the Irish ran the South Side, along with the Italians on the North West side, Jews on the West Side, Bohemians on the South West Side, and the black community in a neighborhood known as Bronzeville. Chicago housed the largest population of Poles outside of Poland, and they lived up and down Division Street. These ethnic groups formed the largest catholic archdiocese in the country. In 1939 it was headed by George Cardinal Mundelein. Because of its size, the Catholic Church exerted a major influence on local and national affairs.

## The Great Depression

The Great Depression hit Chicago hard, and no community suffered more than the black community. Chicago was remarkably slow to recover, too. By 1939, industrial production across the nation had returned to 84% of its 1929 level, while the rate in Chicago had only bounced back to 77% of its previous glory.

One dollar in 1939 was equivalent to \$15.66 in 2011 dollars; Hildy's \$460 would be equal to \$7,201.60 today. The national average household income in 1939 was \$1,730.00.

## Chicago's Political Machine

By 1939, Chicago city politics were governed by what was known as the Chicago Political Machine. The mayor of *The Front Page* was based on William Hale Thompson, or "Big Bill." Before becoming mayor, Thompson was involved in the political machine of Republican Senator William Lorrimer, who was forced to leave the Senate after the *Chicago Tribune* broke a story about Lorrimer taking bribes. The *Tribune* aligned itself with another Republican faction, and developed a "rivalry of almost unequalled acrimony" with Thompson. By 1930, Thompson's name was banned from the pages of the *Tribune*, which only referred to him as "a former Republican mayor of Chicago." Thompson was first elected mayor in 1915 with heavy support from the city's black community. During the First World War, Thompson was very publicly anti-British, and his polarizing arguments won him the support of the large German, Austrian, and Irish populations. His noninterventionism also won him the support of the Hearst

papers, though no other newspaper supported his campaign for re-election. Problems with the school system and evidence of corruption in Thompson's office caused Thompson to stay out of the mayoral race in 1923, but he was back in 1927. Thompson gained a national reputation with his outspoken Anglophobia, and so he was a well-known figure on the national scene when *The Front Page* opened in 1928. Hecht and MacArthur were oddly prescient in their depiction of Thompson: he was forced out of office in 1931 because of a scandal involving Al Capone and the office of the City Sealer. On his ejection from office, the *Tribune* wrote,



Official logo of the AFC



Colonel Robert McCormick

*For Chicago Thompson has meant filth, corruption, obscenity, idiocy and bankruptcy.... He has given the city an international reputation for moronic buffoonery, barbaric crime, triumphant hoodlumism, unchecked graft, and a dejected citizenship. He nearly ruined the property and completely destroyed the pride of the city. He made Chicago a byword for the collapse of American civilization. In his attempt to continue this he excelled himself as a liar and defamer of character.*

## Isolationism and the Battle of the Two Colonels

Stanford Historian Thomas A. Bailey called Chicago "the capital of isolationism." And, if you look at the fact that William Hale Thompson sailed to reelection in the wake of WWI on a platform of Anglophilia, it's easy to understand why. In the lead-up to America's entrance into World War II, Chicago citizens were adamant and vocal in their opinions. The America First Committee (AFC) was formed in 1940 and was the "leading citizens' pressure group to oppose expanding American involvement in the war." On the other side was the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies (CDAAA), whose Chicago chapter included members such as politician Adlai Stevenson II and economist Paul H. Douglas.

The tensions were exemplified in the presses, in a standoff between the *Daily News* and the *Tribune*. Colonel Robert Rutherford McCormick, who cherished the Monroe Doctrine and hated FDR, headed the *Tribune*, which had the largest circulation of any standard-sized newspaper in America. William Franklin Knox, whose mentor was Theodore Roosevelt himself, published the *Daily News*. Though a bit disillusioned by FDR in 1939, Knox's paper was strongly anti-Nazi. Both

papers agreed that the US should keep to itself in 1939: the headline of the *Tribune* shortly after Europe went to war was "This is Not Our War," while the *Daily News* proclaimed, "WE MUST KEEP OUT." But unlike McCormick, Knox believed in military preparedness, and he eventually came around to FDR's foreign policy. But by 1940, the papers were at odds on the issue of America's involvement in the war. "The *Daily News* and the *Tribune* disagreed over the seriousness of the German menace, the wisdom of the administration's foreign policy, and the fundamental goal of that policy. The *Daily News* argued that Hitlerian Germany menaced American security and needed to be stopped. The *Tribune* held that Roosevelt was advocating unneutral [sic] and unnecessary action in a disguised but deliberate attempt to provoke full American participation in the fighting. Their differences soon spread off the editorial page and came to infuse the entire content of each newspaper." Knox himself was named FDR's secretary of the Navy in July of 1940.



Hearst Octopus Union Strike Fund Stamp

### **Labor, Labor Radio, and the Chicago Newspaper Guild Strike**

Unions dominated Chicago. The predominant force in Chicago's labor world was the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which had some 330,000 members, mostly teachers, builders, teamsters, and service workers. Behind the AFL was the Congress of Industrial Organizations, with 60,000 members who mostly worked in mass production industries (meat packing and steel, for example). The Chicago chapter of the AFL, known as the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) maintained a radio station called WCFL. When the *Chicago Times* was in financial straits, WCFL extended them a lenient contract, "as a means of making labor's voice heard in the city."

In the mid-1930s, new industrial unions were formed, and collectively called themselves the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO). The CIO and the AFL/CFL developed a major rift, and the more radical politics of the CIO forced the CFL to be more conservative. Both used the radio as a tool, but "unlike the AFL, which used radio primarily as a PR tool—a medium for demonstrating organized labor's responsible behavior—the CIO used radio as an organization tool and as a weapon against recalcitrant employers."

The American Newspaper Guild (ANG) was formed in 1933, and the Chicago Chapter, the Chicago Newspaper Guild (CNG), formed in 1936 and "gradually attracted writers at the principal metropolitan dailies." As mentioned above, the *Chicago Times* was a liberal paper and allowed the unions to negotiate their

contracts. The *Tribune* was staunchly anti-labor, and the unions made no progress on that front. Instead they concentrated their efforts on the two newspapers in the Hearst chain (or Hearst Octopus, as some called it), the *Chicago American* and the *Chicago Herald Examiner*. Hearst reacted by significantly cutting reporting jobs on those two papers between 1937 and 1938. As a result, 600 CNG members went on strike against the Hearst Empire in December of 1938. The battle lasted until 1940.

### **From The "Lonely Eagle": Charles Lindbergh's Involvement in WWII Politics** by Jim Bredemus

A native Minnesotan, Charles Augustus Lindbergh has been seen by some as the first worldwide hero. In May 1927 Lindbergh stood at the pinnacle of his career, having just successfully completed the first -ever solo trans-Atlantic flight, from New York to Paris. Only 14 years later, however, Lindbergh's star suddenly fell as many branded him as sympathetic to the Nazis and anti-Semitic because of his outspoken views against the U.S.' entry into World War II. In the words of one columnist Lindbergh had plummeted from "Public Hero No. 1" to "Public Enemy No. 1." Debate continues today as to whether Lindbergh was a "Nazi sympathizer" or whether he simply sought to keep America out of the war.

Lindbergh decided to move his family to Europe in 1935 after a stressful three-year ordeal involving the kidnapping and murder of his son and the ensuing trial. Lindbergh publicly expressed his frustration with the intrusive American media and what he saw as a breakdown of morals and justice that was consuming America.

Lindbergh initially removed to England, then, two years later, to France. Surprisingly, the U.S. government arranged Lindbergh's first experience with Nazi Germany. U.S. Army Major Truman Smith wanted to collect more information about German aviation capacities and technology, and he believed that because of Lindbergh's celebrity status, the Germans would be eager to show him their aviation accomplishments—thereby giving him access to sites that previously were inaccessible to Americans. Major Smith sent an invitation to Lindbergh in June of 1936 and the two agreed that Lindbergh would come to Berlin on 22 July 1936.

Lindbergh's nine-day trip was busy and filled with visits and meetings with German officials. General Erhard Milch and the German Ambassador to the U.S., Hans Dieckhoff, greeted Lindbergh upon arrival. During Lindbergh's military visits he toured Tempelhof airport and piloted a Junker 52, spent a day at the Junker works at Dessau and a day at the German research institute at

Adlershof. In addition, various social functions had been planned by the Nazis to allow Lindbergh to meet important Nazi officials...

The facilities and technology of the German Luftwaffe impressed Lindbergh. He also noted the work ethic of the German people, and exclaimed that there was "a spirit in Germany which I have not seen in any other country. There is certainly great ability, and I am inclined to think more intelligent leadership than is generally recognized. A person would have to be blind not to recognize that they have already built up tremendous strength." Lindbergh also was impressed by the good discipline, high morals, and restrained press that existed in Germany—things that he believed were lacking in the United States....

Although Lindbergh believed the German Luftwaffe was unstoppable in Europe, it is not clear to what degree he ever became a Nazi sympathizer per se. "I was far from being in accord with the philosophy, policy, and actions of the Nazi government," he later wrote. Clearly, to him the Soviet Union and communism posed a much greater threat to Europe and "Western Civilization" as he called it, and a strong Nazi Germany could protect Western Europe from the Russians...

By 1938 Lindbergh had become dissatisfied with Britain and France and had been looking to move... He and his wife found a house in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee, then returned to France to pack their things and retrieve their children. Just two weeks later, on 9-10 November 1938, the Nazis unleashed premeditated anti-Jewish riots across Germany; characterized by the destruction of Jewish businesses, homes and synagogues, the riots became known as Kristallnacht. After Lindbergh received word of this, he immediately cancelled his plans to move to Berlin.

Even after this event, Lindbergh still did not publicly condemn the Nazis or decide to return his medal. Lindbergh still hoped for a battle between Stalin and Hitler... Later in 1938, after the Munich Agreement, Lindbergh held the opinion that Hitler should simply be left alone.

After witnessing Kristallnacht and the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, Americans began to be more critical of Lindbergh and some journalists began to criticize his choice to not return his Nazi medal. Later, in late 1938 or early 1939, Lindbergh attempted to broker a deal for a joint Franco-German aircraft—although the plan was doomed to fail from the start. Lindbergh made his final trip to Berlin in January 1939, and soon after decided that since war was imminent, he should better return to the United States.

During the trip across the Atlantic by ship Lindbergh wrote in his diary an entry that now sheds some light onto his views on Jews, which he was careful not to share in public. His diary entry on 10 April 1939 reads "a few Jews add strength and character to our country, but too many create chaos. And we are getting too many. This present immigration will have a reaction." Not until his 1941 speech in Des Moines, Iowa did Lindbergh utter such words publicly.

After more than three years living outside the United States, Lindbergh sought to steer America away from joining a war in Europe... In September 1939, two weeks after the Nazi invasion of Poland, Lindbergh delivered a nationwide radio address urging the United States to stay out of the war. Lindbergh proclaimed that Nazi victory in Europe was certain and because of this America should stay out and deal with the consequences....

Although some Americans were suspicious of Lindbergh's Nazi connection, there was still overwhelming support for Lindbergh's non-interventionist views... Through the rest of 1939 and into 1940, Lindbergh continued to give non-intervention speeches and became increasingly critical of Roosevelt's policies, which favored the Allies. Meanwhile, a strong non-intervention organization called "America First" was growing throughout the country. The group had some 850,000 members, who represented all ages and political parties. Lindbergh joined the organization in October 1940 as an unpaid executive and immediately became the organization's most popular speaker.

With Lindbergh's increasingly public stance against American intervention into the war came increasing frustration and criticism from the Roosevelt administration... To the administration, Lindbergh and America First had become a primary enemy. In an April 1941 press conference, Roosevelt revealed that he believed Lindbergh was a "Copperhead," a term used to describe Northerners during the Civil War who believed the Confederacy could not be beaten and that the Union should broker a peace deal. Lindbergh was extremely offended by this comment and turned in his resignation as a Colonel of the Army Air Force. Meanwhile Roosevelt asked the FBI to put Lindbergh under surveillance, but after tapping his phones and following Lindbergh for months, the FBI found that Lindbergh was not involved in "subversive activities."

Lindbergh's popularity was completely ruined by a speech he made on 11 September 1941 in Des Moines/Iowa. In a speech titled "Who Are the Agitators?" Lindbergh publicly addressed for the first time the Jewish issue and shared some of his opinions: "Their greatest danger lies in [the Jews'] large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our Government. We cannot blame them for looking out for what they believe to be their interests, but we also must look out for ours."

With these words Lindbergh tarnished his reputation and credibility. Time wrote that "The American First Committee had touched the pitch of anti-Semitism and its fingers were tarred." Lindbergh made a few more big speeches for America First, but by now his reputation was tainted and many Americans had stopped following him.

On 7 December 1941 Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor, which resulted in the United States declaring war on Japan; in turn, Germany declared war on the United States. Because of the situation, American First was immediately disbanded and Lindbergh cancelled all future speeches. Lindbergh now fully threw his support behind the war effort and on 20 December offered his services to the Army Air Force. After his offer bounced around various military and executive offices, Lindbergh received word that he would not be allowed to join the Army Air Force. Pan-Am, United and Curtiss-Wright also turned down Lindbergh's services. He had now hit rock bottom, unable to find a job in the field he had pioneered and completely discredited by his anti-intervention stance.

After consulting at a Detroit bomber plant owned by Henry Ford, a like-minded isolationist, Lindbergh was eventually able to secure a position as a consultant for United Aircraft in 1944 and was sent to the South Pacific to help and train pilots with Corsair aircraft. In spite of his official civilian title, Lindbergh flew some 50 combat missions against the Japanese. Lindbergh also showed young pilots half his age tricks on how to conserve fuel and extend their flying range.

Even after the end of the war and exposure of the horrors of Nazi Germany, Lindbergh refused to reject his pre-war assessment of Nazi Germany. He also refused to return or destroy his Nazi medal. He did, however, speak of the misuse of power by the Nazis saying that "History is full of its misuse. There is no better example than Nazi Germany."

Although Lindbergh's non-intervention stance leading up to World War II severely damaged his reputation and hero persona, his active participation in the war made many Americans forget what had been said. After the war Lindbergh worked with the U.S. Air Force for a short time but eventually became very active in the worldwide conservation movement.

Although Lindbergh temporarily lost his hero status among Americans because of his trips to Germany and strong anti-war stance, most Americans were quick to forgive the man they affectionately still knew as the "Lone Eagle."

## **From “Different, Except in a Different Way: Marriage, Divorce, and Gender in the Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage”**

Heather Gilmour

*Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. 50, No 2 (Summer 1998)

Despite their partial conservatism, post-Victorian marriages were informed by a new valuation of individualism, personal satisfaction, and romance...

Contrary to popular fears at the time, the companionate marriage was not a revolt against the family or a complete jettisoning of Victorian ideals. In fact, marriage and family became more central. The companionate marriage represented an embellishment of the Victorian primacy of marriage and family with a new valuation of affection, friendship, and happiness. According to Arlene Skolnick, by upholding both high Victorian standards of the primacy of the family and new standards of more equitable and sexualized relationships between spouses, companionate marriages came to represent an impossible ideal. “Believing strongly in the companionate ideal constitutes the great expectations for marriage that set the stage for disillusion and divorce.”

Clearly, Hollywood’s romantic comedies are inflected with the values and problems of these several historical models of marriage. Like the Victorians, early post-Victorians, and proponents of the companionate marriage, romantic comedies uphold the primacy of the family—or couple (or couple plus dog). Although the couple is almost always childless, the man and woman are of utmost importance to each other and are in that sense a two-person family. The inevitability of the romantic coupling—and the hopeless unsuitability of other prospective mates—reflects historical ideals of matrimony.

Although the focus of the romantic comedy is on marriage, Victorian models are updated by invoking many of the ideals of the companionate marriage. Thus, the importance of the hierarchical, patriarchal family is deemphasized, as women and men are by and large on equal footing. Indeed, if anyone controls the narrative flow, it is the women. The romantic pairs are also equally empowered economically (or the women have more money than the men)—a liberatory gesture that evens the playing field. The women are not housewives, and they do not have children to tend to, which makes it possible to focus completely on the couple’s relationship and frees the women’s time and attention. The couples’ childlessness also reflects a historical moment when sex for its own sake (and not necessarily for procreation) was acceptable, contraception was becoming even more popular, and the rate of childbirth was falling.

One could view romantic comedies as instructional films, demonstrating the companionate notion that conflict is healthy and best worked out through

conversation. The constant verbal sparring of the romantic pair defines the genre. Not only is verbal conflict viewed as healthy but it is a reliable sign that the man and the woman are meant to be together. No interloper can hope to duplicate the couple's repartee; the languid Ralph Bellamy is cast as the unsuitable suitor in *His Girl Friday* (1940) and *The Awful Truth* (1937) precisely because he speaks too slowly...

**From "Screwball Comedies: Constructing Romance, Mystifying Marriage"** David R. Shumway  
*Cinema Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 1991)

The construction of romance as ideology in screwball comedies has to involve more...than the use of the triadic structure. Romance requires that we invest in the hope that a certain couple will achieve...bliss. In screwball comedies, this is done in part by casting. We cannot imagine Rosalind Russell in love with Ralph Bellamy in *His Girl Friday*. We want her to be with Cary Grant from the moment they meet in his office at the beginning of the film. These films always tell us early on who we are supposed to root for...

In addition to our attraction to a Grant, a Hepburn, or a Gable, we are also invited to participate in the growth of a verbal relationship between the two. Verbal exchanges function mainly to create a sense of attraction, an "electricity" that stems first from the claim made by the man on the woman and her resistance to it... In *His Girl Friday*, Grant's scheming to keep Rosalind Russell in town and at work for the newspaper serves the same purpose. The woman's response to this claim is to resist but not reject it. In *The Philadelphia Story*, for example, Tracy could simply have Dexter thrown out. The resistance by the woman to the man's claim upon her produces dialogue that is the verbal equivalent of foreplay, that is to say, teasing. I say foreplay, rather than seduction, because the result of the conversation is to increase desire on all sides without making the woman seem like a mere conquest. The male side of the dialogue, however, is an odd form of foreplay. Rather than speaking seductively, the males in screwball comedies typically scold, lecture, admonish, or preach. In the codes of the screwball comedy, what this tells us is that the man cares, but it also mimics rational persuasion, something that corresponds to the presumption that the woman must choose her mate.

In addition to its expression in verbal fireworks, romance is projected onto a pastoral vision of a place where the constraints and sins of civilization may be shed, and innocence renewed. It may be the island of Peter Warne's

dreams, the landscape of the Lord estate, or the honeymoon place to which Walter and Hildy are bound at the end of *His Girl Friday*. Romance depends not just on desire and affection, but also on isolation from the claims of everyday life. It is on this point that these romantic comedies come closest to fitting the usual definition of the prose romance — as distinguished from the novel—one of the features of which is a setting far removed from everyday life: the forest, the ocean, a desert island, etc. And yet in the Hollywood comedies I am discussing, most of the action takes place well within everyday settings. It is this purpose of each of these films to do what Cavell asserts only of *His Girl Friday*: to romanticize being at home, the everyday... Thus we are given a vision of a world elsewhere, but not the actual experience of such a locale, since the purpose of the vision is to make us see the everyday in rose-colored hue. What distinguishes the suburbs, be they near Philadelphia or in Connecticut, is not their exotica, their isolation—though the latter is part of their attraction—but rather the luxury, the wealth, they represent. Both *It Happened One Night* and *The Philadelphia Story* make it clear that married women must become little girls. Men, on the other hand, spend a lot of time being parental in these films...

Actually, however, it is less important that the woman take on any particular characteristics than that she submit to the man who will become her husband. Thus Rosalind Russell's Hildy certainly demonstrates ability and intelligence—even a kind of professional independence—but she must submit to Walter Burns. The women give unmistakable signs of their submission... Hildy following Walter Burns' orders allows all sorts of nasty things to happen to her fiancé and his mother.

*New York Times: July 23, 2011*

## **Hildy Johnson Would Have Happily Hacked**

By **JAMES WARREN**

*James Warren writes a column for the Chicago News Cooperative.*

If P. J. Powers mulls news-media ethics these days, he unavoidably focuses on reporters who see journalism as sport, with moral compasses buried as they lie, steal, cheat and bribe the police for information.

Alas, Mr. Powers, artistic director of the TimeLine Theatre, is thinking about 1920s Chicago journalism, not phone hacking by British reporters 90 years later. But it's a difference in degree, not kind.

"When I read what was going on with [Rupert Murdoch](#), I thought, 'Some things don't change,' " Mr. Powers said. "If you think this has come out of the blue, you've been asleep at the switch."

TimeLine recently produced a wonderful revival of "The Front Page," the 1928 Ben Hecht-Charles MacArthur classic set in a chaotic press room in the Criminal Courts Building adjacent to Cook County Jail. Mr. Powers played the charismatic and deceitful protagonist, the reporter Hildy Johnson, six years after portraying a corrupt journalist in TimeLine's production of "Pravda," a David Hare-Howard Brenton satire inspired by Mr. Murdoch that starred Sir Anthony Hopkins when it opened in 1985 in London.

Mr. Hecht started out as a "picture chaser" for The Chicago Daily Journal. That meant stealing photos from people's homes for often scandalous articles, said Martha Briggs, a curator at the Newberry Library, where Mr. Hecht's papers reside.

"When nobody was home, you'd run in and grab something and leave," she said.

Mr. Hecht's experiences inspired Hildy — played by Jack Lemmon, among others, in Hollywood knockoffs — who spends the \$260 meant for his wedding and honeymoon to bribe the assistant jail warden for details of a convicted criminal's escape. When Hildy stumbles into the miscreant, he locks him inside a desk rather than call the police as he plots with his editor on how to maximize scoops.

Mr. Powers was especially attuned to Mr. Murdoch's moral sinkhole after playing Andrew May, an initially idealistic reporter-editor in "Pravda" who morphs into an ethically wayward pawn of Lambert Le Roux, a Murdoch-inspired press baron first brought to life onstage by Mr. Hopkins.

There is a history of deception in the American news media, including prominent examples of reporters fabricating articles, stealing information, shilling for political and corporate interests, and impersonating everyone from police officers to mental patients.

In 1998, for instance, Michael Gallagher, a Cincinnati Enquirer reporter, pleaded guilty to hacking into voice mails at Chiquita Brands as part of an investigation alleging multiple company misdeeds at Central American plantations. But, as egregious as such cases are, it was not a reflection of systemic skulduggery.

For sure, deception can be justified if an overriding public interest is served and the deceit is the sole means to discern wrongdoing, said Robert Steele, a journalism ethics expert at DePauw University and the Poynter Institute who is consulting with National Public Radio as it re-examines its ethical standards in light of the recent, politically charged brouhahas there.

Historically, America's mostly college-educated journalist class is of relatively recent vintage. More unruly and colorful working-class reporters and editors were the norm until codes of ethics, a greater sense of professionalism and journalism schools arose or flourished.

But even when I got to The Chicago Sun-Times in the late 1970s, there was at least one reporter proficient in claiming to be a police officer to get information over the phone. The same reporter, now dead, also had an exterminating business with city contracts.

His sort might really feel emboldened in a blogger-infested culture that is mostly free of editors and ethical norms. As Mr. Steele noted, new technologies and economic instability lead many organizations to work in less professional ways. Mr. Powers said he heard from reporters attending TimeLine's revival about the pressure to have something, anything, online before competitors.

Throw in a popular culture, including cable television news, that often rewards being provocative, rather than being right, and one has an unavoidably growing risk of error and overstepping just as Mr. Hecht's feverish, corner-cutting press room is now an unavoidable 24/7 online reality.

And a key constituency may be getting a big pass amid the hand-wringing: consumers. Their cravings link Mr. Hecht's era to the TV- and Internet-dominated marketplace of Mr. Murdoch, the Rolls-Royce populist with a Gulfstream G550 jet.

If he had spied riches in owning The New York Review of Books or C-Span, he would have tried to buy them. He struck gold by discerning huge audiences who craved relentlessly embarrassing tales of the rich, powerful and famous — and clearly didn't care about the tactics used.

Hildy Johnson, who left his fiancée stranded at a train station, would feel so much at home.

# Themes and Questions for Discussion

## Truth and Media

At various times during *His Girl Friday*, one reporter's depiction of unfolding events is quite different from another reporter's version of the same events. There is rarely (if ever) a story with one unambiguous set of facts. For example, it is true that Earl Holub is a killer, but the truth is more complicated than it first appears. Journalism may further complicate the truth when journalists are not merely reporting facts but also taking a role in the creation of the story.

- Do truth and justice always go hand in hand? By the end of the play, has justice been served?
- Where is the line between reporting on a story and participating in it?
- Do the journalists in the play act in ways you would consider morally wrong, or are their actions justified by the pursuit of the story? How do the circumstances of the play compare to recent events, such as the allegations that news organizations owned by Rupert Murdoch were involved in phone hacking?
- How does the play speak to the role of the media in our society? How do people get their information and how do they interpret it? How is truth communicated through media?

## Gender

The newsroom is a man's world, reflecting women's lack of power in 1939 society. As the only female reporter, Hildy crosses the line into the male world—an anomaly that is highlighted by the fact that Walter refers to her as a "newspaperman." In fact, every woman who enters the newsroom experiences some type of dangerous threat to her life, suggesting that the domain of men is a perilous place for women.

- Do Hildy and Walter really get back together at the end? What are the things that compel Hildy to be with Walter? Why was she trying to choose Bruce instead?
- Is Hildy able to be a woman and a journalist, or does she have to choose? Are women able to be women in the workplace today?
- How do the characters of Mollie Malloy and Mrs. Baldwin contribute to the play's depiction of women?
- Is it possible to see *His Girl Friday* as a feminist play?

## **Stylized Comedy**

This is a screwball comedy, which calls for a stylized production. One of the most fun (and complicated!) production choices is the double-casting: having only 11 actors play over 20 roles. The casting was arranged with the purpose of creating interesting connections and contrast between different characters played by one actor. For example, Phyllis Kay plays the reporter Endicott and the prostitute Mollie Malloy, and Endicott is the reporter who talks about Mollie most often—usually expressing a negative opinion.

- How did the double-casting affect your experience of seeing the play?
- Did you notice any connections between different characters played by one actor?

# Hungry for More? Recommended reading and viewing

## Plays by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur

*The Front Page*, 1928  
*Twentieth Century*, 1932  
*Jumbo*, 1935  
*Ladies and Gentlemen*, 1939  
*Swan Song*, 1946

## Selected Films by Howard Hawks

*The Road to Glory* (1926) silent film with May McAvoy  
*Scarface* (1932) produced by Howard Hughes, starring Paul Muni, Ann Dvorak and Osgood Perkins  
*Twentieth Century* (1934) starring John Barrymore and Carole Lombard  
*Bringing Up Baby* (1938) starring Cary Grant and Katherine Hepburn  
*Ball of Fire* (1941) starring Gary Cooper and Barbara Stanwyck  
*To Have and Have Not* (1944) starring Humphrey Bogart, Walter Huston and Lauren Bacall  
*The Big Sleep* (1946) starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall  
*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) starring Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell  
*Rio Bravo* (1959) starring John Wayne, Dean Martin and Angie Dickinson

## Selected plays by John Guare

*The House of Blue Leaves*, 1971  
*Rich and Famous*, 1974  
*Bosoms and Neglect*, 1979  
*Gardenia*, 1982  
*Six Degrees of Separation*, 1990  
*Women and Water*, 1990  
*A Free Man of Color*, 2010

## Films based on *The Front Page*

*The Front Page* (1931) Produced by Howard Hughes, directed by Lewis Milestone, starring Adolphe Menjou and Pat O'Brien  
*His Girl Friday* (1940) Directed by Howard Hawks, starring Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell

*The Front Page* (1974) Directed by Billy Wilder, starring Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon

*Switching Channels* (1988) Directed by Ted Kotcheff, starring Burt Reynolds, Kathleen Turner, and Christopher Reeve

### **Further Reading**

Stanley Cavell, "Counterfeiting Happiness: His Girl Friday" in *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* pp. 161-187, Harvard University Press, 1984.

Ben Hecht, *Charlie: The Improbable Life and Times of Charles MacArthur*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957.

George Hilton, ed., *The Front Page: From Theater to Reality*. Hanover: Smith and Krause, 2002.

William MacAdams, *Ben Hecht: The Man Behind the Legend*. New York: Macmillan, 1990.

Joseph McBride, *Hawks on Hawks*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

Todd McCarthy, *Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood*. New York: Grove Press, 1997.

# tickets & dates times

## His Girl Friday • September 9 – October 9, 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	THURS.	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
SEPT. 4	5	6	7	8	9 \$ 7:30PM	10 7:30PM
11 7:30PM	12	13 7:30PM	14 7:30PM SOLD OUT	15 7:30PM	16 7:30PM	17 2PM 7:30PM
18 2PM 7:30PM	19	20 7:30PM	21 7:30PM	22 7:30PM	23 7:30PM	24 2PM 7:30PM
25 2PM 7:30PM	26	27 7:30PM	28 2PM 7:30PM	29 7:30PM	30 7:30PM	OCT. 1 7:30PM
2 2PM 7:30PM	3	4 7:30PM	5 <b>cc</b> 2PM 7:30PM	6 7:30PM	7 7:30PM	8 7:30PM
9 2PM 7:30PM	10	11	12	13	14	15

## Clybourne Park • October 14 – November 13, 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	THURS.	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
OCT. 9	10	11	12	13	14 \$ 7:30PM	15 7:30PM
16 7:30PM	17	18 7:30PM	19 7:30PM SOLD OUT	20 7:30PM	21 7:30PM	22 2PM 7:30PM
23 2PM 7:30PM	24	25 7:30PM	26 2PM 7:30PM	27 7:30PM	28 7:30PM	29 7:30PM
30 2PM 7:30PM	30	NOV. 1 7:30PM	2 7:30PM	3 7:30PM	4 7:30PM	5 2PM 7:30PM
6 2PM 7:30PM	7	8 7:30PM	9 <b>cc</b> 2PM 7:30PM	10 7:30PM	11 7:30PM	12 7:30PM
13 2PM 7:30PM	14	15	16	17	18	19

## A Christmas Carol • November 18 – December 30, 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	THURS.	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
NOV. 13	14	15	16	17	18 \$ 7:30PM	19 7:30PM
20 2PM	21	22 7:30PM SOLD OUT	23 7:30PM SOLD OUT	24 THANKSGIVING	25 7:30PM	26 2PM 7:30PM
27 ★ 12 5PM	28	29	30	DEC. 1 7:30PM	2 7:30PM	3 2PM 7:30PM
4 <b>cc</b> 12 5PM	5	6	7	8 7:30PM	9 7:30PM	10 2PM 7:30PM
11 12PM 5PM	12	13	14 7:30PM	15 7:30PM	16 7:30PM	17 2PM 7:30PM
18 12PM 5PM	19	20 7:30PM	21 7:30PM	22 7:30PM	23 7:30PM	24 12PM 5PM
25 CHRISTMAS	26 7:30PM	27 2PM 7:30PM	28 7:30PM	29 7:30PM	30 7:30PM	31

## It's a Wonderful Life • December 9–31, 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	THURS.	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
DEC. 4	5	6	7	8	9 \$ 7:30PM	10 7:30PM
11 2PM 7:30PM	12	13 7:30PM SOLD OUT	14 7:30PM	15 7:30PM	16 7:30PM	17 7:30PM
18 2PM 7:30PM	19	20 7:30PM	21 7:30PM	22 7:30PM	23 7:30PM	24 12PM 5PM
25 CHRISTMAS	26	27 7:30PM	28 2PM 7:30PM	29 7:30PM	30 7:30PM	31 12PM 5PM

### TICKETS for His Girl Friday, Clybourne Park, It's a Wonderful Life

PREVIEWS: First Fri., Sat., Tues. 7:30pm ..... \$15–\$32

Food for Thought 7:30pm ..... \$15–\$36

REGULAR: Wed. matinee 2pm ..... \$15–\$32

Sun.–Thurs. 7:30pm ..... \$15–\$56

Fri.–Sat. 7:30pm ..... \$15–\$66

Sat. & Sun. matinees 2pm ..... \$15–\$66

### TICKETS for A Christmas Carol

PREVIEWS: November 19–21 ..... \$26–32

NON-PEAK: November 26–28 ..... \$42–56

PEAK PERFS: December 2–31 ..... \$56–68

Children (14 & younger) ..... \$15

Twelfth row bench seats ..... \$15

**AN ADDITIONAL \$5.00** per ticket handling fee applies to phone and online orders.

**DISCOUNTS:** Call the box office about discounts for educators, military, police, firefighters, students, and seniors. Rush tickets (half price) are available at the box office two hours prior to show time.

**SUBSCRIBERS:** Save 20% on additional tickets with handling fees waived. Call (401) 351-4243.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Save 10% on tickets with handling fees waived. Call (401) 351-4242.

**GROUP DISCOUNTS:** call (401) 351-4242

**BOX OFFICE:** (401) 351-4242 • Fax: (401) 831-1612

Email: [boxoffice@trinityrep.com](mailto:boxoffice@trinityrep.com) or [subs@trinityrep.com](mailto:subs@trinityrep.com)

Walk-up hours: noon–8pm, Tuesday–Sunday

Phone hours: noon–8pm, Monday–Sunday

201 Washington St., Providence, RI 02903

Order online at [www.trinityrep.com](http://www.trinityrep.com)

**PRICES, TIMES AND DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE.** Tickets subject to availability.

**PROJECT DISCOVERY:** For reservations to student matinees, contact (401) 521-1100 x114 or [education@trinityrep.com](mailto:education@trinityrep.com).

**TALKBACKS:** Audience members are invited join us for a 20-minute discussion about issues raised by the play, held after every performance (excluding *A Christmas Carol* and *It's a Wonderful Life*).

### KEY TO CALENDARS

**\$ Pay What You Can:** limited number of tickets on sale 1 hour before curtain, limit 1 per person

**🍽️ Food for Thought** discussion with the artists following the performance

**cc** Open Captioning performance

★ ASL Performance

Preview performance

No performance



# trinity repertory company

Everything you need to know to enjoy your experience at Trinity Rep!

## Contact us

boxoffice@trinityrep.com  
201 Washington Street, Providence, RI 02903  
Walk-up hours: noon–8pm, Tuesday–Sunday  
Phone hours: noon–8pm, 7 days a week  
Order online at [www.trinityrep.com](http://www.trinityrep.com)  
Find us on Facebook: [facebook.com/trinityrepertorycompany](https://www.facebook.com/trinityrepertorycompany)  
Follow us on Twitter: [twitter.com/TrinityRep](https://twitter.com/TrinityRep)

## Frequently asked questions

### What time do performances start?

All evening performances begin at 7:30pm and all matinee performances at 2pm, except for *A Christmas Carol* and performances of *It's a Wonderful Life* on December 24 and 31. Please check your tickets.

### What is the policy for latecomers?

Trinity Rep performances begin on time. Audience members with special needs should arrive at the theater early to be seated with ease. Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the House Manager at the first available opportunity, and until then will be able to view video monitors in the lobby.

### When are talkbacks held?

Talkbacks are held after every performance (except *A Christmas Carol* and *It's a Wonderful Life*) and last about 20 minutes. Stay and share your thoughts!

### Is Trinity Rep handicapped accessible?

Trinity Rep is fully handicapped accessible, with elevator service to the Chace Theater on the second floor.

### What do you offer for the deaf and hard of hearing?

For our deaf and hard of hearing audience members, Trinity Rep offers assistive listening devices (headphones or loops), available through the reception desk, box office, or House Manager, as well as open captioned performances and subscriptions. Visit [www.trinityrep.com](http://www.trinityrep.com) for more information about open captioned performances.

### Will a show be cancelled due to bad weather?

Trinity Rep does not cancel performances or issue refunds due to inclement weather conditions. Performances are cancelled only at the discretion of management. In the unlikely event of a show cancellation patrons should call the theater, or check our website or local news stations.

### Is there a dress code?

No! A night at the theater can be as casual or as dressy as you'd like it to be.

### Interested in subscribing?

Call the box office at (401) 351-4242 to take advantage of the best seats and prices, as well as other benefits including flexible date exchanges, discounts on tickets for friends, prepaid discounted parking, discounts at some of Providence's finest restaurants and hotels, access to open rehearsals, and a free subscription to our magazine, *The Trinity Square*.

More questions? Call Kate Kataja at (401) 521-1100 ext. 172 or email [kkataja@trinityrep.com](mailto:kkataja@trinityrep.com)

## 2011–2012 Season

### His Girl Friday

Sep. 9 – Oct. 9, 2011

In the Chace Theater

adapted by John Guare from *The Front Page* by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur and the Columbia Pictures film  
directed by Curt Columbus

### Clybourne Park

Oct. 14 – Nov. 13, 2011

In the Dowling Theater

by Bruce Norris • directed by Brian Mertes

### A Christmas Carol

Nov. 18 – Dec. 30, 2011

In the Chace Theater

by Charles Dickens • adapted by Adrian Hall & Richard Cumming  
directed by Christopher Windom

presented by **Cardi's**  
FURNITURE  
[www.cardis.com](http://www.cardis.com)

supporting sponsor **Amica**  
AUTO HOME LIFE

### It's a Wonderful Life

Dec. 9 – 31, 2011

In the Dowling Theater

adapted by Joe Landry • directed by Tyler Dobrowsky

### The Merchant of Venice

Feb. 3 – March 11, 2012

In the Chace Theater

by William Shakespeare • directed by Curt Columbus

sponsored by **Taco** /  The White Family Foundation

### Sparrow Grass

Feb. 16 – May 13, 2012

In the Chace Theater • part of **Three by Three in Rep**

by Curt Columbus • directed by Brian McElenev

### Love Alone

Feb. 28 – May 27, 2012

In the Chace Theater • part of **Three by Three in Rep**

by Deborah Salem Smith • directed by Melissa Kievman

Recipient of Edgerton Foundation New American Plays Award

### The Mourners' Bench

March 7 – May 24, 2012

In the Chace Theater • part of **Three by Three in Rep**

by George Brant • directed by Michael Perlman

### Boeing Boeing

April 13 – May 13, 2012

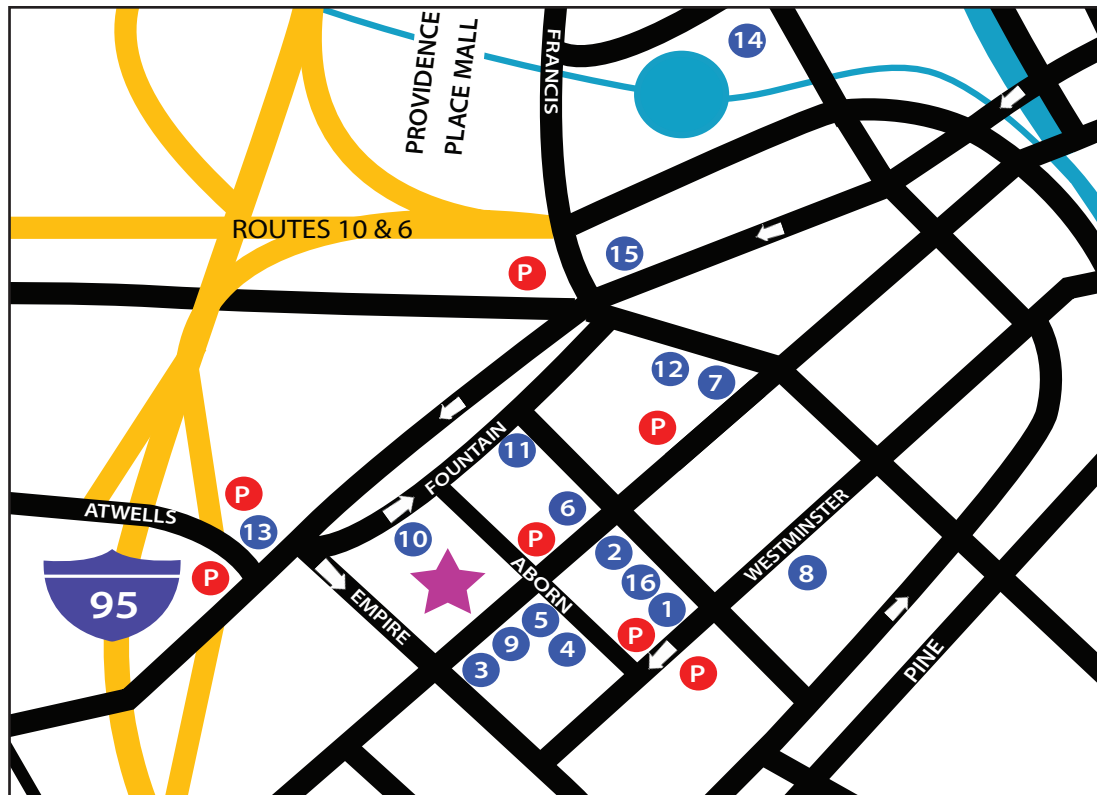
In the Chace Theater

by Marc Camoletti • translated by Beverley Cross & Francis Evans  
directed by Fred Sullivan, Jr.

season sponsored by



# Downtown Providence



 Trinity Rep

All parking and restaurants listed are within walking distance of the theater.

## Restaurants

Reservations are recommended for all restaurants.

- 1 **Aspire** \$\$  
311 Westminster St. • 521-3333
- 2 **Blake's Tavern** \*\$\$  
122 Washington St. • 274-1230
- 3 **Bravo Brasserie** \$\$  
123 Empire St. • 490-5112
- 4 **Cuban Revolution** \* \$\$  
50 Aborn St. • 331-8829
- 5 **Gracie's** \*\$\$\$\$  
194 Washington St. • 272-7811
- 6 **Local** 121 \$\$  
121 Washington St. • 274-2121
- 7 **McCormick & Schmick's** \$\$\$  
11 Dorrance St. • 351-4500
- 8 **Tazza Caffè** \* \$\$  
250 Westminster St. • 421-3300
- 9 **tini** \$\$\$  
200 Washington St. • 383-2400
- 10 **Trinity Brewhouse** \* \$\$  
186 Fountain St. • 453-2337
- 11 **Murphy's Deli** \$\$  
100 Fountain St. • 621-8467

## Hotels

- 12 **Providence Biltmore** \*  
11 Dorrance St. • 421-0700
- 13 **Hilton Providence** \*  
21 Atwells Ave. • 831-3900
- 14 **Courtyard Marriott**  
32 Exchange Terrace. • 272-1191
- 15 **The Westin Providence** \*  
1 West Exchange St. • 598-8000
- 16 **Hotel Providence**  
139 Matthewson Street • 861-8000

\* offers subscriber rewards discounts.

Visit [www.trinityrep.com](http://www.trinityrep.com) to learn about subscriber benefits.

## Directions to Trinity Rep

### From the south:

To reach the theater from the South, take 95 north to the Broadway exit (Exit 21) and bear right before the light as you come off the exit ramp. Continue through another light, where you will see the Hilton and the Dunkin Donuts Center on your left. The road curves to the right and at the next light (Fountain Street) you will see the Trinity Brewhouse and the back of the theater.

### From the north:

When coming from the north, take 95 South to the Atwells Avenue exit (Exit 21). Turn left at the light, and cross over 95. You will see the Hilton and the Dunkin Donuts Center on your left. The road curves to the right and at the next light (Fountain Street) you will see the Trinity Brewhouse and the back of the theater.

### From the east or west:

Take 195 to 95 north, and exit at the Broadway exit, exit 21, and bear right before the light as you come off the exit ramp. Continue through another light, where you will see the Hilton and the Dunkin Donuts Center on your left. The road curves to the right and at the next light (Fountain Street) you will see the Trinity Brewhouse and the back of the theater.

### From the northwest:

Take 146 south to route 95 south. Exit at the Atwells Avenue exit (Exit 21). Turn left at the light, and cross over 95. You will see the Hilton and Dunkin Donuts Center on your left. The road curves to the right and at the next light (Fountain Street) you will see the Trinity Brewhouse and the back of the theater.

## Parking

Patrons are advised to plan on arriving as early as possible to the theater in order to accommodate traffic and parking. This is especially important during the weekend performances, as there are multiple events occurring within the Downtown area. On weekends, parking is allowed on the street, but parking is always limited in downtown Providence. A parking garage is located next to the theater with entrances on both Fountain and Washington Streets.