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TWO RIVER THEATER LAUNCHES ITS 2012-2013 SEASON WITH *TOPDOG/UNDERDOG*

Ten years after winning the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Suzan-Lori Parks directs her own play – a mythic fable about brotherly love, family, and history – for the first time; real-life brothers Brandon J. Dirden and Jason Dirden star as Lincoln and Booth

Performances: Saturday, September 8 - Sunday, September 30, 2012 in the Rechnitz Theater
Opening: Friday, September 14, 2012 at 8pm

RED BANK, NJ— Two River Theater Company, under the leadership of Artistic Director John Dias and Managing Director Michael Hurst, launches its 2012-2013 Season with *Topdog/Underdog*, written and directed by **Suzan-Lori Parks**. Performances will begin in Two River's Rechnitz Theater, 21 Bridge Avenue, on **Saturday, September 8** and continue through **Sunday, September 30**. The opening night performance is **Friday, September 14 at 8pm**. Tickets are available from 732.345.1400 or www.trtc.org. This production is sponsored by desantis creative.

Topdog/Underdog is one of the most powerful dramas in the American theater. Acclaimed for its taut theatricality and surprising humor, the play tells the story of two brothers, Lincoln and Booth—names given to them as a joke by their father. This production will star real-life brothers **Brandon J. Dirden** (August Wilson's *Jitney* at Two River, Broadway's *Clybourne Park* and *Enron*) as Lincoln, and **Jason Dirden** (the 2010 Broadway revival of August Wilson's *Fences*) as Booth.

Each day, Lincoln puts on a top hat and a fake beard and goes to work in a seedy arcade, where tourists come for the chance to shoot Honest Abe. Booth is obsessed with a street con game, three-card monte. Striving for a better life, bound by their love for each other, they are haunted by their own pasts—and our country's history. *Topdog/Underdog* contains adult language and content and is recommended for mature audiences.

Says Artistic Director John Dias, "Suzan-Lori Parks is one of the greatest theater artists this country has produced. And her *Topdog/Underdog* is a masterpiece. The play both invites and challenges audiences to think about how we look at American history through the charged relationship of two brothers, played here by Brandon and Jason Dirden—two wonderful actors who are real-life brothers. I've known Suzan-Lori for many years, and I love her imagination and profound insight and skill, which is why I invited her to direct this play in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Pulitzer Prize."

Suzan-Lori Parks won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *Topdog/Underdog*, becoming the first African-American woman to do so. Her work is the subject of the PBS film *The Topdog Diaries*. Her plays include *The Book of Grace*, *Fucking A*, *In the Blood* (Pulitzer Prize finalist), *Venus* (Obie Award), and *The America Play*. She adapted the book of *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*, winner of the 2012 Tony Award for Best Musical Revival. In 2007, her project *365 Days/365 Plays* was produced in more than 700 theaters worldwide, creating one of the largest grassroots collaborations in theater history. A student of James Baldwin, with whom she credits the launch of her interest in playwriting, Parks is a MacArthur "Genius" Award recipient. She teaches at NYU, and is currently performing her experimental solo show, *Watch Me Work*, at The Public Theater, where she serves as Master Writer Chair.

The creative team for *Topdog/Underdog* includes Tony Award-winning scenic and lighting designer **Christopher Akerlind**; Tony-nominated costume designer **ESosa**, the runner-up on the 2010 season of *Project Runway*; sound designer **Brendan Connelly**; and fight director **Thomas Schall**. The casting is by **Heidi Griffiths** and the stage manager is **Amanda Michaels**. Visit www.trtc.org for complete biographies.

Ticket Information

New this season, Two River has introduced a limited number of \$20 tickets for every performance, with no restrictions on when or by whom the tickets can be purchased. Other tickets range from \$37 to \$65, with discounts available for groups, seniors, students, and patrons aged 30 and under. Tickets are available from 732.345.1400 or www.trtc.org.

Discussions and Events

Before Play: The life and work of Suzan-Lori Parks will be discussed in Two River's Before Play series, a free lecture that takes place in the lobby 45 minutes prior to the start of every performance. The Before Play series is sponsored by Zager Fuchs, PC.

Lobby Display: Audience will learn about throwing the cards and other sleight-of-hand tricks in a special interactive lobby display.

Post-Play Conversations: Discussions with the cast and a member of Two River's Artistic staff will take place on the following dates: **Wednesdays, September 19 at 7 pm** and **September 26 at 1pm**, and **Sunday, September 23 at 3pm**.

Accessibility

Two River Theater is fully wheelchair accessible and offers assisted-listening devices and large-print programs at every performance. **Audio-described performances** are scheduled for **Wednesday, September 26 at 1pm** and **Saturday, September 29 at 8pm**. Tickets to this performance are offered at the discounted rate of \$15 for patrons needing audio description. An **open-captioned performance** is scheduled for **Saturday, September 29 at 3pm**. Tickets to this performance are offered at the

discounted rate of \$15 for patrons needing open captions. To reserve wheelchair-accessible seating or tickets for a performance listed above, patrons should call 732.345.1400.

Calendar

Saturday, September 8 at 8pm
Sunday, September 9 at 3pm
Tuesday, September 11 at 8pm
Wednesday, September 12 at 7pm
Thursday, September 13 at 8pm
Friday, September 14 at 8pm (**Opening Night**)
Saturday, September 15 at 3pm and 8pm
Sunday, September 16 at 3pm
Wednesday, September 19 at 1pm and 7pm
Thursday, September 20 at 8pm
Friday, September 21 at 8pm
Saturday, September 22 at 3pm and 8pm
Sunday, September 23 at 3pm
Wednesday, September 26 at 1pm and 7pm
Thursday, September 27 at 8pm
Friday, September 28 at 8pm
Saturday, September 29 at 3pm and 8pm
Sunday, September 30 at 3pm

Sponsorship

Topdog/Underdog is sponsored by desantis creative. Opening nights for the 2012-2013 Season are sponsored by et al fine foods and Kristina Valdmaa Designs.

Two River Theater Company is supported in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a division within the Department of State and a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, The Hickory Foundation, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Stone Foundation of New Jersey, Monmouth University, Durso Wealth Management Group at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, OceanFirst Foundation, Springpoint Senior Living Foundation, and many other generous foundations, corporations and businesses.

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TWO RIVER THEATER COMPANY, under the leadership of Artistic Director John Dias and Managing Director Michael Hurst, is dedicated to producing great classics from the American and world stage, creating new plays and musicals for the American theater, and serving its diverse and multigenerational community through unique partnerships and education programs. Founded in 1994 by Joan and Dr. Robert M. Rechnitz, the theater supports the most exceptional and adventurous artists in the American theater and provides opportunities for its audiences to be part of the creative process. Two River Theater is a member of the League of Resident Theaters (LORT), Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the New Jersey Theatre Alliance, and ArtPride New Jersey, and has been designated a "Major Arts Institution" by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Visit TRTC.org.