THE COLOR PURPLE,
A GLORIOUS MUSICAL SAGA FEATURING A TERRIFIC, MULTI-TALENTED CAST,
OPENS IN MILWAUKEE REPERTORY THEATER’S QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE
SEPTEMBER 26, 2014

September 4, 2014 – [Milwaukee] – Milwaukee Repertory Theater’s 2014/15 Quadracci Powerhouse Season kicks off in grand style with an uplifting production of The Color Purple. This hit musical, based on Alice Walker’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, will be directed by Artistic Director Mark Clements, who reunites with the same creative team behind last season’s wildly successful hit production of Ragtime. This will be the fifth musical that Clements has directed at The Rep.

Called “inspirational” by The New York Times and “soaring and joyful” by Time Magazine, The Color Purple is an unforgettable story, spanning four decades, about a woman who triumphs over adversity and discovers her own unique voice in the world. With a joyous Grammy-nominated score featuring jazz, ragtime, gospel, and blues, The Color Purple captures the hearts of young and old, and reminds us that “it only takes a grain of love to make a mighty tree.” The Color Purple runs in the Quadracci Powerhouse from September 23 – November 2, 2014 and opens on Friday, September 26.

“We are thrilled to kick off our 2014/15 Season in the Quadracci Powerhouse with the award-winning musical The Color Purple and share it with Milwaukee audiences,” says Artistic Director Mark Clements. “The show has incredible music in it with a wonderful score performed by live musicians; and our production will feature a multi-talented cast of 27 actors. The Color Purple is an inspiring, epic story of a family, and a testament to the healing power of love and a celebration of life. The soul-stirring music, vivid characters, strong message of hope, women’s empowerment and the power of the human spirit, will make this what we believe will be an unforgettable experience at the theater.”

Clements added, “The Color Purple is a powerful story of redemption and we need to hear these stories, especially in these challenging times that we live in. My hope as a theater maker is that by offering this play to the Milwaukee community we can continue to have thought-provoking conversations with our audiences about the deeper themes explored in the play. We have many fascinating panel discussions scheduled around this production and we hope that our audiences will join us in these forums. I believe meaningful conversations around the work we do in the theater can be a first step in creating positive change in our community.”


*The Color Purple* is presented by **BMO Private Bank**. The Executive Producers for this production are **James E. and Mary K. Braza**, **Jackie Herd-Barber** and **Michael Barber**. The production is also receiving additional support provided by **City of Milwaukee Arts Board**, **Visit Milwaukee** and **Woo Connections**. The Media Sponsor for this production is **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** and the Media Partner is **Shepherd Express**. The Quadracci Powerhouse Season is sponsored by **H. Richard Quadracci Ewens** and **Emilio Cabrera** in memory of **Harry and Betty Quadracci**.

*The Color Purple* Tickets

Tickets for *The Color Purple* begin at $30.00. Single Tickets for all of Milwaukee Repertory Theater’s 2014/15 productions are now on sale and can be purchased online 24/7 at [www.MilwaukeeRep.com](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com), through The Rep’s Ticket Office by calling 414-224-9490 or in person at 108 E. Wells Street. Group tickets are also available for purchase by calling **Group Sales Manager Joy Surber** at 414-290-5340.


**CREATIVE TEAM**

**Mark Clements**, (Artistic Director/Director), began his tenure as The Rep’s Artistic Director with the 2010/11 Season. An award-winning international director whose work has appeared in over 100 major theaters throughout Europe and the U.S., recent directing projects at The Rep include: *The History of Invulnerability, End of the Rainbow, Ragtime, Clybourne Park, Assassins, Othello, Next to Normal, Death of a Salesman, Bombshells* and *Cabaret*. Other credits include: *Oliver!, Born Yesterday, Great Expectations, Les Misérables* and *Of Mice and Men* for Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia; *The Milliner* (Off-Broadway, World Premiere), CSC, New York; *My Fair Lady*, Copenhagen; *The Browning Version* at Derby Playhouse and *Blunt Speaking* at Chichester Festival Theatre UK/Lucille Lortel Theatre, New York; *Speaking in Tongues* at Roundabout Theatre Company; *Speaking in Tongues* at Hampstead Theatre, London and Creator/Director of *Soul Train*, West End, among others. Clements was an Associate Artistic Director for Moving Theatre Company and Associate Director for New End Theatre and New Players Theatre, both in London, Royal Theatre in Northampton and Torch Theatre in Wales and as Artistic Director of Derby Playhouse in the UK from 1992 to 2002. He serves on the National Advisory Board for the Lunt-Fontanne Fellowship Program at Ten Chimneys.

**Dan Kazemi** (Music Director), a Rep Associate Artist, is a composer, actor, music director, and educator. He returns to The Rep after having been the Musical Director for recent productions of *Ragtime, Forever Plaid, Blues*
in the Night, Assassins, Always . . . Patsy Cline, Next to Normal and Cabaret. Dan made his directorial debut at The Rep with this past spring’s production of Ain’t Misbehavin’. Kazemi recently orchestrated and musically directed the world premiere musical Tulipomania at the Arden Theatre Company.

Todd Edward Ivis (Scenic Designer), also a Rep Associate Artist, has designed scenery at The Rep for The History of Invisibility, Ragtime, Clybourne Park, Assassins, Next to Normal, as well as both scenery and costumes for Cabaret and Othello. Other regional theater credits include Les Misérables (Walnut Street Theatre); Into the Woods (5th Avenue Theatre); Bright Lights, Big City (Prince Music Theatre); Rent (Engeman Theater); The Happy Time (Signature Theatre); and Of Mice and Men, Godspell, Ain’t Misbehavin’, Oliver, Rent, Man of La Mancha, Hair, Tiny Dancer, The Thing About Men, Present Laughter, and Dreamgirls.

Alexander B. Tecom (Costume Designer) has been a Draper in The Rep’s Costume Shop for the past 16 seasons. Past designs for The Rep include: Ragtime, Assassins, Always . . . Patsy Cline, Next to Normal, Nobody Lonesome for Me, Liberace!, Route 66, and The Lady with All the Answers, among many others. Other design credits include: Barrymore, Memory House, Skin Tight, Syncopation, A Phoenix Too Frequent (Renaissance Theaterworks), The Tempest (Optimist Theatre) and Harley Davidson’s 100th Anniversary Tour. Other professional credits: Great Lakes Theater Festival, American Players Theatre, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, and The Santa Fe Opera. Alex received his MFA in Costume Design from University of Illinois.

Thomas C. Hase (Lighting Designer) is an international lighting designer known for dynamic design in opera, new theatrical productions, and avant-garde dance. His design for the Tony Award-winning revival of Company on Broadway received critical acclaim and was called “superb” by The New York Times. Hase has worked at many of the major opera houses in the United States including LA Opera, New York City Opera, BAM Next Wave Festival, Seattle Opera, Minnesota Opera, and The Dallas Opera, among others. He has also worked extensively at regional theaters throughout the United States. Most recently, Hase worked at Milwaukee Rep as the Lighting Designer for Lombardi (2011/12 Season). Concurrent with his many freelance projects, Hase is the resident lighting designer and director for the Cincinnati Opera Summer Festival.

Barry G. Funderburg (Sound Designer) returns to The Rep after designing many past productions including How the World Began, Othello, The 39 Steps, The Cherry Orchard, Pride and Prejudice, Armadale, Mary Stuart, and Work Song. Off-Broadway, Funderburg designed the critically-acclaimed New York premiere of Wittenberg at The Pearl Theatre Company. Regional theater credits include Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Utah Shakespeare Festival, including the recent regional premiere of Peter and the Starcatcher, and Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Center Stage (Baltimore), Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Peninsula Players, and American Players Theatre. Chicago credits include Next Theatre Company, Theatre at the Center, and Lookingglass Theatre Company. Funderburg has received four Chicago Equity Joseph Jefferson Award nominations, and the 1996 and 2008 Jeff Awards for Sound Design. His MFA in Sound Design is from Purdue University.

John Tanner (Music Supervisor), a Rep Associate Artist, is a composer, sound designer and one of the Principals of Tanner-Monagle Inc., a video and audio production and post-production house in Milwaukee, WI. His experience covers a broad range of work in scoring, arranging and music composition for television, documentaries, radio, industrial video, and theater. His music has won numerous awards, including Golden Reel Awards; Telly Awards; national, regional and local American Advertising Federation Awards, Silver Microphone Awards and Radio Amateurs of Canada Awards for retail advertising. Tanner garnered Gold and Platinum sales certifications for his album engineering work. His projects include scores for NBC, ABC, Lionsgate, and PBS. He has written original scores and designed sound for theatrical productions at Milwaukee Rep, Yale Repertory Theatre, American Players Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, First Stage, and many others.
Amy Hall Garner (Choreographer) began her dance journey in Huntsville, AL. She is a graduate of The Juilliard School where she worked with choreographers Paul Taylor, David Parsons, and Lar Lubovitch. Her theater and film credits include: Fosse, Contact, Thou Shalt Not, House of Flowers, Chita Rivera: The Dancer’s Life, Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular (Rockette), The Little Mermaid, and The Producers: The Movie (2005). As an instructor, Garner has taught and choreographed at Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School & Camp, American Ballet Theatre’s Summer Intensive, Broadway Dance Center, LaGuardia High School of the Performing Arts, and Rosie O’Donnell’s Marvel Arts Center. She is an adjunct instructor at New York University’s New Studio on Broadway at Tisch School of the Arts.

Natrea Blake (Assistant Choreographer) received her BFA in dance from The Juilliard School and graduated from the world famous High School for the Performing Arts (The Fame School). Blake has worked with choreographers such as Paul Taylor, Lar Lubovitch, Hans Van Manen, David Parsons, and Marguerite Derricks. She has assisted and reset the work of choreographer Darrell Grand Moultrie for the last 15 years at major institutions including: Atlanta Ballet, The Juilliard School, The Ailey School, Perry-Mansfield, Milwaukee Ballet, Dance For All (South Africa) and Beyonce’s The Mrs. Carter Show World Tour. In 2013, Natrea was commissioned to choreograph a new work for Tulsa Ballet’s second company. Recently, Blake opened her own school The L.N.D. Studio for the Arts in Westbury, NY.

Jill Walmsley Zager (Dialect Coach) returns to The Rep for The Color Purple after coaching The History of Invulnerability last season. Other Rep credits include The Whipping Man, End of the Rainbow, Noises Off, Ragtime, A Raisin In the Sun, Clybourne Park, Sense and Sensibility, A Christmas Carol, The Diary of Anne Frank, The Mountaintop, Assassins, To Kill a Mockingbird, Lombardi, Yellowman, Ten Chimneys, The 39 Steps, My Name Is Asher Lev, Laurel and Hardy, and Cabaret. Regionally, she has worked at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire, Apple Tree Theatre, Drury Lane Theatre & Conference Center, Drury Lane Water Tower, Utah Shakespeare Festival and Milwaukee Chamber Theatre. Zager earned her Masters Degrees at The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama (London) and Northwestern University.

Stephanie Klapper (New York Casting) returns to Milwaukee Rep to cast The Color Purple. Credits here include Ragtime, Ain’t Misbehavin’, Blues in the Night, The Mountaintop, Assassins, Next to Normal, The Bomb-itty of Errors, Cabaret and From My Hometown, among others. Selected Broadway credits include A Christmas Story, The Musical!, Dividing the Estate, and Bells are Ringing. Select Off-Broadway credits include Eve Ensler’s Emotional Creature, Harrison, Texas, RX, (Primary Stages/Resident Casting Director), Cactus Flower (Westside Arts Theatre), and Karen O’s Stop The Virgins (St. Anne’s Warehouse). Regional credits include Adirondack Theatre Festival, The Alley Theatre, Arena Stage, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Delaware Theatre Company, Hartford Stage Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, and Old Globe Theatre, among others. Klapper is a member of The Casting Society of America and The League of Professional Theatre Women.

JC Clementz (Casting Director) is The Rep’s Artistic Associate: Casting Director & Artistic Internship Program Director now entering his fourth season with Milwaukee Repertory Theater. Currently directing The Doyle and Debbie Show in The Rep’s Stackner Cabaret, Clementz also directed last season’s production of Forever Plaid, as well as several short plays over three seasons of Rep Lab. He also assistant directed Othello, To Kill a Mockingbird, A Christmas Carol, and Yellowman. He has traveled throughout Europe as the Assistant Stage Manager for New York Harlem Productions’ international tour of Porgy and Bess (director Baayork Lee), and spent four summers working at Perry-Mansfield in the mountains of Colorado. Clementz holds an MFA in Directing from Western Illinois University.
Jamie Cheatham (Fight Choreographer) is a nationally recognized Fight Director and Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD). Before moving to Wisconsin in 2003, he was based in New York City as a fight director, teacher, and actor. He is happy to return to The Rep after working on Noises Off, End of the Rainbow, and The History of Invulnerability last season. His fight work includes such theaters as the New York Shakespeare Festival, New York City Opera, Alley Theatre (TX), Actors Theatre of Louisville (KY), and Milwaukee Ballet. Cheatham is excited to be the new head of acting at Marquette University.

Philip Muehe (Assistant Director) is working with Milwaukee Rep for the first time. A native of Rochester, MN, Muehe made his professional directorial debut with Tigers Be Still at Commonweal Theatre Company. Other Commonweal credits include Stage Manager; Assistant Director for productions of The Memory of Water and The Last Night of Ballyhoo; and Director for a staged reading of Doubt. He holds a BFA in Musical Theatre from the University of North Dakota. Stage credits include Bud Frump in How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, Balladeer/Lee Harvey Oswald in Assassins, and Jamie in The Last 5 Years.

Sarah Hoffmann (Stage Manager) returns to Milwaukee Repertory Theater after stage managing The History of Invulnerability, Ragtime, A Raisin In the Sun, and six productions of A Christmas Carol. Elsewhere, she has spent time with American Players Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, American Folklore Theatre, Riverside Theatre in the Park (Iowa City, IA), and First Stage Children’s Theater where she was the Production Stage Manager for three years.

Jennifer Lynn Anderson (Assistant Stage Manager) returns to The Rep after working on last season’s production of Noises Off and From My Hometown during the 2011/12 Season. Previous credits include the Guthrie Theater, Skylight Music Theatre, Tuacahn Center for the Arts and Milwaukee Chamber Theatre.

Marguerite Frey and Audra Kuchling are the Stage Management Interns for this production.

KEY BIOGRAPHIES

Marsha Norman (book) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright for ’night, Mother and co-chair of the Playwrights Program at Juilliard. She won a Tony for The Secret Garden and received another nomination for The Color Purple. Her first play, Getting Out, received the John Gassner Playwriting Medallion, the Newsday Oppenheimer Award, and a citation from the American Theatre Critics Association. Published collections of her works include Four Plays and Collected Works of Marsha Norman, Vol. 1, and she published a novel, The Fortune Teller. She has also worked extensively in television and film, winning a Peabody Award for her work on In Treatment. She is a member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, a former advisory member of the Sewanee Writers’ Conference, and former vice president of The Dramatists Guild of America. She is a founder of the Lilly Awards and serves on the Independent Committee for Arts Policy. Other plays include The Laundromat, The Pool Hall, Loving Daniel Boone, Trudy Blue, and Last Dance.

Brenda Russell (Music and Lyrics) is a singer-songwriter from Ontario who has been involved with the music industry since the mid-1970s. She first learned to play piano while involved with a Toronto production of Hair. While composing for The Color Purple, Brenda also wrote, recorded and co-produced a solo album, Between the Sun and the Moon, released in 2004 on Dome Records. She co-wrote the song Justice of the Heart with Stevie Wonder for the Denzel Washington movie John Q. In 2012, Flo Rida sampled her song Piano in the Dark in his I Cry.

Allee Willis (Music and Lyrics) is a Detroit native who graduated from University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in journalism. She is a multi-disciplinary artist, making her mark in songwriting, multi-media art, directing,
and set design. In 1985, she won Grammy for Best Soundtrack for Beverly Hills Cop. Willis was nominated for a 1995 Emmy for writing ‘I’ll Be There for You, the theme from Friends. Her first gallery exhibition in 1985 was called “Wear the Right Clothes, Even at Home” and featured kinetic sculptures. She has an alter-ego called Bubbles the Artist.

Stephen Bray (Music and Lyrics) made his Broadway debut with The Color Purple. He attended Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. Working with Madonna, he wrote and produced many of her top-ten recordings, including Into the Groove and Express Yourself. Performing with Breakfast Club, he earned a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist and a top-ten single. He has composed and produced for multiplatinum artists including Gladys Knight and Kylie Minogue. Bray helped compose music for Beverly Hills Cop II, among other film and television credits. He has a record label called Soultone.

Alice Walker (novelist) is an African-American novelist, short-story writer, poet, essayist, and activist. Her most famous novel, The Color Purple, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in 1983. Walker’s creative vision is rooted in the economic hardship, racial terror, and folk wisdom of African-American life and culture, particularly in the rural South. Her writing explores multidimensional kinships among women and embraces the redemptive power of social and political revolution.

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**FACT SHEET**

**WHAT:** The Color Purple

**BOOK BY:** Marsha Norman

**MUSIC AND LYRICS BY:** Brenda Russell, Allee Willis, and Stephen Bray

**BASED ON:** The novel “The Color Purple” by Alice Walker

**DIRECTED BY:** Mark Clements

**THEATER:** Quadracci Powerhouse

**DATES:** September 23, 2014 – November 2, 2014

**DESCRIPTION:** Following the success of last year’s Ragtime, Mark Clements and his creative team reunite to bring you the hit musical based on Alice Walker’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. This glorious musical saga, spanning four decades, tells the unforgettable story of a woman who finds the strength to triumph over adversity and discover her own unique voice in the world. With a joyous Grammy-nominated score featuring jazz, ragtime, gospel, and blues, The Color Purple captures the hearts of young and old, and reminds us that “it only takes a grain of love to make a mighty tree.”

**TALKS AND EVENTS**

Rep In Depth – get an insider’s look at the production from cast member Carl Clemons-Hopkins with a discussion that begins 45 minutes prior to every performance.
Talkbacks – Friday, October 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31 – Join artistic staff and members of the cast in a post-show discussion.

Young Professionals Night – Thursday, September 25, 6pm – Quadracci Powerhouse Theater Lobby. Join us for a pre-show happy hour featuring live music and complimentary appetizers and beer. This event is free with ticket.

Panel Discussions following the 2pm performances – The Rep, in conjunction with The Color Purple Community Committee, presents a series of panel discussions around the themes of the show. Each panel will include local community experts moderated by a member of The Rep’s Artistic staff.

- September 28 – Moving North: Stories of the South in Milwaukee
- October 5 – Hell No! Standing Up Against Domestic Violence
- October 12 – Strong Black Women
- October 19 – Raising Awareness of Human Trafficking in Milwaukee
- October 26 – Family Stories
- November 2 – Alice Walker’s Use of Language in The Color Purple

For more information about the panel discussions, please visit www.MilwaukeeRep.com.

ACCESS SERVICES

Audio-Described Performance, Tuesday, September 30, 6:30pm – the show will be described for patrons who are blind or have low vision.

American Sign Language Interpreted Performance, Thursday, October 9, 7:30pm – the show will be signed for patrons who are deaf or have low hearing.

Captioned Theater Performance, Sunday, October 19, 2pm – the show will include captions.

PERFORMANCES:

Tuesday, 9/23/14 – 7:30pm – Preview/Pay What You Can
Wednesday, 9/24/14 – 7:30pm – Preview/Pay What You Can
Thursday, 9/25/14 – 6:00pm – Young Professionals Night/7:30pm – Preview
Friday, 9/26/14 – 8:00pm – Opening
Saturday, 9/27/14 – 4:00p.m/8:00pm
Sunday, 9/28/14 – 2:00pm/7:00pm
  Following 2:00pm performance, Panel Discussion: Moving North: Stories of the South in Milwaukee

Tuesday, 9/30/14 – 6:30pm –Early Bird/Audio-Description
Wednesday, 10/1/14 – 7:30pm
Thursday, 10/2/14 – 7:30pm
Friday, 10/3/14 – 8:00pm – Talkback
Saturday, 10/4/14 – 4:00p.m/8:00pm
Sunday, 10/5/14 – 2:00pm/7:00pm
  Following 2:00pm performance, Panel Discussion: Hell No! Standing Up Against Domestic Violence

Wednesday, 10/8/14 – 1:30pm – Bus Matinee/7:30pm
Thursday, 10/9/14 – 7:30pm – American Sign Language
Friday, 10/10/14 – 8:00pm – Talkback
Saturday, 10/11/14 – 4:00pm/8:00pm
Sunday, 10/12/14 – 2:00pm/7:00pm
   Following 2:00pm performance, Panel Discussion: Strong Black Women

Wednesday, 10/15/14 – 7:30pm
Thursday, 10/16/14 – 7:30pm
Friday, 10/17/14 – 8:00pm – Talkback
Saturday, 10/18/14 – 4:00pm/8:00pm
Sunday, 10/19/14 – 2:00pm – Captioned/7:00pm
   Following 2:00pm performance, Panel Discussion: Raising Awareness of Human Trafficking in Milwaukee

Wednesday, 10/22/14 – 1:30pm – Lunch Matinee/7:30 p.m.
Thursday, 10/23/14 – 7:30pm
Friday, 10/24/14 – 8:00pm – Talkback
Saturday, 10/25/14 – 4:00pm/8:00pm
Sunday, 10/26/14 – 2:00pm/7:00pm
   Following 2:00pm performance, Panel Discussion: Family Stories

Tuesday, 10/28/14 – 7:30pm
Wednesday, 10/29/14 – 7:30pm
Thursday, 10/30/14 – 7:30pm
Friday, 10/31/14 – 8:00pm – Talkback
Saturday, 11/1/14 – 4:00pm/8:00pm
Sunday, 11/2/14 – 2:00pm/7:00pm – Closing
   Following 2:00pm performance, Panel Discussion: Alice Walker’s Use of Language in The Color Purple

**TICKET PRICES:** Prices begin at $30.00.

**TICKETS/INFORMATION:** 414-224-9490 or buy tickets online at [www.MilwaukeeRep.com](http://www.MilwaukeeRep.com)

**TICKET OFFICE LOCATION:** 108 E. Wells Street in Milwaukee’s Downtown Theater District

**TICKET OFFICE HOURS:** Monday – Sunday, Noon – 6 pm*
   *On days with performances the Ticket Office will stay open until fifteen minutes after curtain.

Please note: The Rep’s Ticket Office will be closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day.

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Milwaukee Repertory Theater is a nationally-recognized company that presents compelling dramas, powerful classics, award-winning contemporary works, full-scale musicals, housed in its three unique performance venues – the Quadracci Powerhouse, Stiemke Studio and Stackner Cabaret. The Rep also produces an annual production of *A Christmas Carol* at the beautiful and historic Pabst Theater. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Mark Clements and Managing Director Chad Bauman, The Rep is committed to creating plays that are meaningful and relevant to the society we live in – plays that are challenging, visceral, and engage the community through the issues they explore, demonstrating how a theater deeply rooted in its locality can also enjoy a richly influential and resonant national voice.