

BACKSTORY



TESLA'S LETTERS



Your behind-the-scenes look at TimeLine productions

YESTERDAY'S STORIES.
TODAY'S TOPICS.

TimeLine
Theatre Company

a message



Dear Friends,

I have never been accused of being much of a “tech guy.” I’m not particularly handy with tools or wires and gadgets. I like my computer to do what I need it to do, and I expect my cell phone and iPod to function as needed.

But that’s the extent of my knowledge. I’ve never really looked into how things work or why things work, and I haven’t sought to learn more about the inventors who make my life easier. So the name Nikola Tesla meant nothing to me

prior to reading the play *Tesla’s Letters*. After reading it, I discovered he was responsible for many of the scientific breakthroughs I take for granted today.

I never needed that information before: The technology I use day-to-day worked, and that was enough for me. No questions asked.

In many ways, it is that type of complacency that is at the heart of Jeffrey Stanley’s play. Set in 1997, his story focuses on an American student named Daisy who is writing about the life and work of Tesla.

Daisy’s complacency isn’t exactly like mine, however. She knows everything about Tesla, idolizes him and has

chosen to write her dissertation about him. But like so many Americans in the 1990s — myself included — her complacency is related to a war raging halfway across the world, a war that was easier to overlook than to fully understand.

Perhaps naively, Daisy travels to Tesla’s homeland, the former Yugoslavia, to conduct research about her hero and gain access to his private letters. To her dismay, she finds herself in a world of danger and suffering she’d prefer to ignore. Surrounded by turmoil, she isn’t sure how or even if she should get involved. The easier choice is to focus on the work that brought her there and keep the ethnic

“She is confronted with a clear decision: Be passive about what she encounters or take an active role and make a difference.”

conflict at a distance. It’s someone else’s problem.

When I first read this puzzle-of-a-play, I was struck by its complexity and embarrassed by my lack of knowledge about Tesla and the conflict in the Balkans. At first the play seems focused on honoring a great scientist’s life, but it becomes clear that it’s equally focused on Daisy, a normal American who finds herself in an extraordinary circumstance. She is confronted with a clear decision: Be passive about what she encounters or take an active role and make a difference.

We are delighted to put this play in the hands of director Nick Bowling, a TimeLine founding Company member whose work through the years has been quite diverse. Perhaps the most similar trait is the theatricality and humanity he brings to the material. In style and tone, *Tesla’s Letters* couldn’t be more different from Nick’s three most recent productions for us — *Guantanamo*, *Fiorello!* and *The Children’s Hour* — but once again you’ll find a wealth of beauty, mystery and intrigue in his production.

It is my great hope you, too, are enlightened by

Daisy’s story. Through her, Jeffrey Stanley encourages us to stand up and notice the world around us, to awaken from a slumber of complacency.

He makes an important distinction: It is one thing to be a witness to history, but it is a far greater thing to be a participant in it and enact change, however small or big. We think that distinction is worth discussing, and we’re proud to share this play with you to get the conversation rolling.

Best wishes,

Special Events and Resources

the conversation

TimeLine hosts several opportunities for you to hear from TimeLine artists about their experiences, ask questions about and comment on the production and engage fellow audience members in conversation about the themes of the play. We hope you will join us for one or more during the run of *Tesla’s Letters*:

Sunday Scholars Series

Immediately following the performance on **Sunday, November 18**, TimeLine will host our Sunday Scholars Series. This one-hour panel discussion features experts talking about the themes and issues of the play. **Tickets are \$10; \$5 for TimeLine subscribers**; call the Box Office to order.

The panel is moderated by TimeLine Board member **Peter H. Kuntz**, managing director of programs and production for the Chicago Humanities Festival.

Visit our Web site at **timelinetheatre.com** to learn more about Sunday Scholars, including the final list of panelists and their biographies.

Post-Show Discussions

Stay after performances on **Thursdays, November 15 and 29** and **December 6** and **Sundays, November 25** and **December 2** for **free post-show discussions** moderated by a TimeLine Company member and featuring the production dramaturg and members of the cast.

Company Member Discussion

The heart of TimeLine is our seven Company members, who shape the artistic vision and choose the programming for the organization. Join them after the performance on **Sunday, December 9** for an informal discussion to hear more about how the Company

works and the process that brought *Tesla’s Letters* to TimeLine’s stage.

Other Resources

Don’t miss our **historical lobby displays** and **production study guide**, available for perusal in the lobby and via download at **timelinetheatre.com**.

Jeffrey Stanley's semi-autobiographical war-time drama *Tesla's Letters* premiered to rave reviews in New York in 1999 at The Ensemble Studio Theatre.

The script was published in 2000 by Samuel French, Inc., which named the play one of the 10 best dramas of 1999. The play received its European premiere at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland, United Kingdom, in August 2000, and its regional premiere at the Mill Mountain Theatre in Roanoke, Va., in January 2001. It has been produced by numerous theaters and read in college and high-school classrooms around the world.

Based on Stanley's experiences in Belgrade, where he traveled in 1997 to research the life of Serbian inventor Nikola Tesla, the play follows an American grad student who finds herself reluctantly drawn into the ethnic rivalries that caused the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Stanley's other plays include *Medicine, Man*, commissioned by the Mill Mountain Theatre; *Fishing with Tony and Joe*, commissioned by The Ensemble Studio Theatre; and *The Golden Horse-*

shoe: A Lecture on Tragedy, an autobiographical comedy that Stanley directed and in which he also performed.

He has been hired to write screenplays for several independent companies. He has been a guest writer in *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*, and he was a senior advisor for *The End That Does* (Equinox Books, 2006), produced by Boston University's Center for Millennial Studies.

***Tesla's Letters* was published in 2000 by Samuel French, Inc., which named the play one of the 10 best dramas of 1999.**

Stanley is also a theater director, with credits that include a New York revival of Sam Shepard's political comedy *The God of Hell*. He has been a resident of the artists' colony Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, New York, and a Copeland Fellow at Amherst College in Massachusetts.

His screenwriting awards include the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Screenplay Award, the New York Picture Company Award for Best Dramatic Screenplay,

the Tennessee National Screenwriting Competition, and the Laurel Entertainment Award for Screenwriting Excellence. His award-winning short film *Lady in a Box*, starring Sarita Choudhury, marked his film-directing debut.

Stanley holds a master of fine arts degree from the dramatic writing program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where he studied under playwright

David Ives. He also received his bachelor of fine arts degree from Tisch, in film and television production with a minor in cultural anthropology.

Stanley has taught at NYU, the Imaginary Academy summer film workshop in Istria, Croatia, sponsored by the Soros Foundation, and mediabistro.com, an online community that offers job postings and classes for those in the magazine, television, film, radio or publishing industry.

The Ottoman Empire

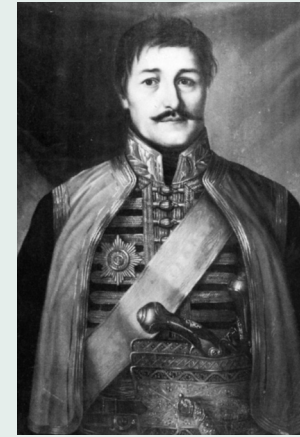
The Turkish Ottoman Empire seized areas of the Balkan Peninsula during the 15th Century. The Turks had been conquering parts of Europe since 1354, and after much turmoil, they gained control of Serbia in 1459 and held it for the next four centuries. Under the sultanate, many Serbs left their homelands of Kosovo and Serbia to move to other areas in the Balkan Peninsula, including parts of Croatia.

Serbia began retaining its autonomy with uprisings in 1804 and 1815.

The first uprising was led by a Serbian trader named Dorde Petrovic (also known as Karadzordze or "Black George") who, with Russian support, helped the Serbs fight against the Turks. But after Russia was threatened by a Napoleonic invasion, Serbia was left vulnerable. By 1813 Karadzordze and his followers were forced to retreat.

The second was led by Milos Obrenovic. This time, again with the support of Russia, the Serbs drove the Turks out of much of Serbia.

As a result of the uprisings and subsequent wars



Portrait of Karadzordze. (Museum of the 1804 Revolution in Topcider, Belgrade)

against the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Serbia was proclaimed in 1882.

Much of the time after the departure of the Turks was marked with dynastic rivalry between the Karadzordzevic and Obrenovic families.

The Balkan Peninsula, 1740. (Tito – A Pictorial Biography)



Yugoslavia statistics 1991

Population per republic:

- Serbia — 9,800,000
- Croatia — 4,800,000
- Bosnia — 4,400,000
- Macedonia — 2,000,000
- Slovenia — 1,700,000
- Montenegro — 584,000

Percentages of total Yugoslav population:

- Serbs — 36%
- Croats — 20%
- Muslim Slavs — 10%
- Albanians — 9%
- Slovenes — 8%
- Macedonian Slavs — 6%
- "Yugoslavs" (people who declined to declare themselves members of any specific ethnic group) — 3%
- Montenegrins — 2%
- Hungarians — 2%

Source: encarta.msn.com

World War I

In 1908, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire annexed Bosnia, and Serbia set out to attain Bosnia, where many Serbians lived. This led to the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. Russia, who had pledged continued support of Serbia, began to mobilize troops, which caused Germany, allied with Austria-Hungary, to threaten war on Russia.

In 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb, assassinated Austrian Archduke Franz

Ferdinand during a visit to Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital. This act is considered one of the main reasons for the outbreak of World War I.

Soon after war began, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire occupied Serbia. In 1918, thanks to a successful Allied offensive, the empire collapsed, and Serbian territories were liberated. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was formed; it was ruled by King Alexander.

At the time of its inception, Serbia was the dominant

republic in the new kingdom, and the most influential. Croats opposed the new nation from the start, and ethnic and religious tensions mounted. In 1929, in an attempt to unite the Serbs and Croats, the king abolished the constitution and renamed the country The Kingdom of Yugoslavia; his policies, however, were opposed by the Fascist leaders of the time and further alienated non-Serbs. He was assassinated in 1934 by a member of a Croatian separatist organization.



The Balkan Peninsula before World War I (Tito – A Pictorial Biography)

World War II

At the start of the 1940s, most of the countries surrounding Yugoslavia had signed agreements with either Germany or Italy.

Adolf Hitler was convinced that Yugoslavia also would join the Axis powers, but public demonstrations against Nazism sprang up throughout the kingdom. Hitler responded with force,

bombing Belgrade in 1941 and sending ground forces to invade Yugoslavia. After a brief period of fighting, Yugoslavia was conquered, and the newly formed Independent State of Croatia became a puppet regime to Nazi Germany.

Germany's intention was to have as few German troops as possible tied up in occupying a country, leaving policing to the locals, such as the Croats. Croatia set about a policy of "racial purification." Concentration camps were created for anti-fascists, communists, Serbs, Gypsies and Jews;

millions of men, women and children, mostly Serbs, were executed in these camps.

During the war, two organizations emerged to resist the Nazis: the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, a largely Serbian guerilla army, and the communist Partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito.

In 1944, the Germans had retreated from the Balkans, and much of what had been Yugoslavia had been liberated by Tito's partisans. By the end of the war, the communists had taken control.

On Nov. 29, 1945, the Federative People's Republic of

Yugoslavia was established as a communist state; it comprised the area of modern-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. Tito, seen as a national hero by the citizens, became the country's prime minister.

Yugoslavia was among the countries that suffered the greatest losses in World War II: 1,700,000 people (10.8 percent of the population) were killed, and national damages were estimated at 9.1 billion dollars according to the prices of the period (over 100 billion dollars by today's prices).



The Balkan Peninsula during World War II (Tito – A Pictorial Biography)

Yugoslavia statistics now

THE SIX INDEPENDENT NATIONS AFTER THE BREAK-UP OF YUGOSLAVIA

Croatia:

- Independence — June 25, 1991
- Capitol — Zagreb
- Population — 4,493,312 (July 2007 est.)
- Religions: Roman Catholic 87.8%, Orthodox 4.4%, other Christian 0.4%, Muslim 1.3%, other and unspecified 0.9%, none 5.2% (2001 census)
- Size — Slightly smaller than West Virginia

Slovenia:

- Independence — June 25, 1991
- Capitol — Ljubljana
- Population: 2,009,245 (July 2007 est.)
- Religions — Catholic 57.8%, Muslim 2.4%, Orthodox 2.3%, other Christian 0.9%, unaffiliated 3.5%, other or unspecified 23%, none 10.1% (2002 census)
- Size — Slightly smaller than New Jersey

Macedonia:

- Independence — Sept. 8, 1991
- Capitol — Skopje
- Population — 2,055,915 (July 2007 est.)
- Religions — Macedonian Orthodox 64.7%, Muslim 33.3%, other Christian 0.37%, other and unspecified 1.63% (2002 census)
- Size — Slightly larger than Vermont

CONTINUED ...



Josip Broz Tito

The Tito years

As Prime Minister, Tito solidified his control by purging the government of all non-communists: Tens of thousands who did not support communist ideals, mostly Serbs, were executed.

At first, the country followed a Soviet model, but in 1948 Tito chose to break from the Soviet Union, making him the first socialist leader to successfully defy Joseph Stalin's leadership. This rift with the Soviet Union brought Tito international recognition. He eventually created Titoism, his own brand of socialism.

Hugely popular, Tito was elected president in 1953.

The Balkan Peninsula, Tito's Yugoslavia, with (inset) the six republics and two provinces of Yugoslavia. (Tito – A Pictorial Biography)

In the almost 30 years of his presidency, Yugoslavia remained remarkably stable despite being a country with a complex ethnic mix.

Ethnic hostilities, however, weren't mended; Tito simply did not tolerate ethnic nationalism, and outspoken nationalists were arrested or killed.

In 1961, Yugoslavia became a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, along with India, Egypt and Indonesia. The movement promoted a policy of neutrality during the Cold War.

In 1963, the country was renamed The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and a new constitution was adopted, giving more power to its six republics, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. Each republic was given a

constitution, supreme court, parliament, president and prime minister.

In 1974, the constitution was changed again, naming Tito President for Life. It gave the six republics and the two Serbian provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, even more autonomy and voting power: Control of education, health care and housing would be exercised entirely by each republic or province. The republics also were granted the right to declare independence.

Tito's most remarkable achievement while president was being able to maintain unity in an ethnically diverse country with a long history of violence. His death in 1980 marked the beginning of rising ethnic tensions.



From Tito to the present

The Federation of Yugoslavia continued for almost 10 years after Tito's death with a collective presidency that consisted of representatives from the six republics and the two autonomous provinces within Serbia. In an effort to equalize them, the presidency rotated between the republics and provinces annually. This gave more power to the smaller republics and the provinces.

Serbia's displeasure toward the independent role assigned its provinces began during Tito's presidency and strengthened after his death.

In 1989, Slobodan Milosevic, a banking official from Belgrade, succeeded in a coup to become president of the Serbian Republic. His nationalist calls for Serbian domination led to the violent break up of Yugoslavia along ethnic and religious lines.

He cancelled the political autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Most of the other republics opposed Milosevic's stand on Kosovo, especially Slovenia and Croatia, and they responded by demanding further independence. This prompted

Albanians in Kosovo to want separation from Serbia.

In 1991 Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia declared independence. With 90 percent of its population ethnic Slovenians, Slovenia was able to break away with only brief fighting. However, Bosnia and Montenegro had Serbian inhabitants in greater percentages, and Milosevic intended to unite them all in one Serbian republic. (In 1992 the citizens of Montenegro voted to remain with Serbia, and the two republics formed The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).

As Croatia moved toward independence, Croatian Serbs protested. Croatia responded by evicting most of its Serbian population.

Croats and Serbs engaged in a civil war until a ceasefire was declared in 1992. In 1995 however, Croatia again waged a military campaign against Serbs living in Croatia. About 200,000 Serbs were forced to leave.

Bosnia was the most ethnically diverse republic. In 1992, Bosnian Serbs wishing to remain part of Milosevic's "Greater Serbia" declared themselves a separate entity. Bosnia found this to be illegal and

Yugoslavia statistics now

CONTINUED ...

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- Independence — March 3, 1992
- Capitol — Sarajevo
- Population — 4,552,198 (July 2007 est.)
- Religions — Muslim 40%, Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, other 14% (2002 census)
- Size — Slightly smaller than West Virginia

Montenegro:

- Independence — June 3, 2006
- Capitol — Podgorica
- Population — 684,736 (July 2007 est.)
- Religions: Orthodox, Muslim, Roman Catholic (breakdown unavailable)
- Size — Slightly smaller than Connecticut

Serbia:

- Independence — June 5, 2006
- Capitol — Belgrade
- Population — 10,150,265 (July 2007 est.)
- Religions — Serbian Orthodox 85%, Catholic 5.5%, Protestant 1.1%, Muslim 3.2%, unspecified 2.6%, other, unknown or atheist 2.6% (2002 census)
- Size — Slightly larger than South Carolina

Source: www.cia.gov

declared its independence from Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav Army now went to war in Bosnia. Much of the republic fell to the Serbs, which began its policy of ethnic cleansing.

It became clear to the United Nations that Serbia's aim was political domination and that this would be achieved by isolating ethnic groups, exterminating them if necessary. When images of starving prisoners in concentration camps came out of Bosnia, the world began to realize the full scope of the genocide.

In November 1995, U.S.-sponsored peace talks in Ohio resulted in the leaders of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina signing a peace treaty, the Dayton Peace Accords, ending the 3½-year war. It was

the bloodiest war in Europe since World War II: More than a million people died.

Bosnia was preserved as a single state, but was partitioned into two areas: A Muslim-Croat federation representing 51% of the country's territory and a Serb republic holding the remaining 49%.

In the province of Kosovo, meanwhile, a peaceful resistance movement by Albanian leaders failed and in 1997 an armed resistance emerged — the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). With the goal of securing independence from Serbia, the KLA began attacking Serbian policemen.

In 1998, Milosevic led a brutal military campaign against the KLA that included executing civilian non-combatants. His cam-

paign against Kosovo led to massacres and the expulsion of ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo. War broke out, and large numbers of Albanians were killed or forced to flee their homes.

These acts prompted NATO to bomb Serbia and Montenegro in 1999 after failed peace talks. The Serbian military was eventually forced to leave Kosovo later that year; since June 1999, the province has been governed by peace-keeping forces from NATO and Russia.

In 2000, uprisings began all across Serbia to bring down Milosevic, and he was forced to step down as president in 2000. Following a warrant for his arrest on charges of abuse of power and corruption, he surrendered to Yugoslav security forces in 2001. He was charged at The Hague for genocide in Bosnia and war crimes in Croatia and Kosovo — the first head of state to face an international war-crimes court. He died in 2006 before the end of his trial.

Yugoslavia was officially terminated as a country when Serbia and Montenegro, its two remaining republics, declared their independence in 2006.

Slobodan Milosevic



Nikola Tesla, holding a gas-filled wireless light bulb. ("Electrical Experimenter", February, 1919)

Nikola Tesla was born at the stroke of midnight during an electrical storm, July 10, 1856. His parents, who were Serbs, lived in Smiljan, a village in the province of Lika, Croatia, which was part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. His father was a Serbian Orthodox priest; his mother, though illiterate, was an inventor of household gadgets to help in her housework.

Tesla started inventing at age 4, creating a paddle-less water wheel out of a crude disc and a twig.

He studied engineering at the Technical University of Graz, Austria, and the University of Prague, but it was his fascination with electricity that drew him to his first job in 1881: an electrical engineer for the American Telephone Company in Budapest.

During this time, Tesla developed plans for an alternating-current (AC) induction motor that converted electrical power to mechanical power.

In 1882 he took a job with the Continental Edison Company in Paris. He continued working on his induction motor after hours. Finding little interest in his radical device in Europe, he moved to New York with only 4 cents in his pocket and went to work for Thomas Alva Edison.

Noting Tesla's aptitude, Edison challenged him to improve upon his own direct current (DC) electricity model — for a \$50,000 bonus.

Tesla believed the secret lay in alternating current, which changes direction 50 or 60 times per second, allowing it to travel over long distances. Edison's DC model was weak and required power stations to be placed every two miles.

Upon presenting his AC model to Edison, Edison acknowledged the improvement, but refused to give Tesla the \$50,000. When he asked for it, Edison replied, "Tesla, you don't understand our American humor." Outraged, Tesla left Edison's

company to start his own, where he would produce motors and generators for his alternating current.

Tesla garnered 40 patents for his inventions using AC power, and in 1888 he presented them in his first lecture, "A new system of motors and transformers of alternate currents."

After seeing the presentation, George Westinghouse, an inventor and industrialist, bought all Tesla's patents, believing AC power was the future of electricity.

In an effort to discredit Tesla, Edison spoke openly about the dangers of AC, at times publicly electrocuting cats and dogs to show the power of Tesla's current.

In 1893, Tesla and The Westinghouse Co. were commissioned to light the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, enabling them to show the world the wonder of AC power. Tesla's final victory for AC was won in 1895 with his design for the first hydroelectric power plant at Niagara Falls. He was then acknowledged by the world to be a hero, and the battle over electricity had been won.

AC still powers the world.

Tesla continued to make important discoveries with wireless electricity in Colorado Springs, where he built a laboratory in 1899. There, he created a powerful Tesla coil, which threw sparks that could be seen 10 miles away and transmitted electricity that lit 200 lights 25 miles away, without the use of wires. He also reported that, in discovering terrestrial stationary waves, he had received radio signals from another planet.

Pursuing his vision of worldwide wireless electricity, in 1901 he began constructing a tower on Long Island to transmit power without wires anywhere in the world. He envisioned being able to send communications and to power industries and transportations.

J.P. Morgan, the chief investor, eventually pulled

his funds when he realized the power would be free, saying, "If anyone can draw on the power, where do we put the meter?" The transmitting tower was never completed.

Tesla, who received several honorary degrees during his life, eventually held 700 patents. He is credited with the invention of the fluorescent light, laser beam, wireless communications, remote control, robotics and vertical take-off aircraft. Tesla's coil was used in the experimentation of X-rays, electrotherapy and wireless electric transmission; today, it is used in radio and television sets. Tesla was the first to demonstrate radio, although the inventor Guglielmo Marconi was later credited with the invention.

Tesla died in New York City on January 7, 1943.

Tesla's house and the church where he was born in Croatia.



In early October TimeLine welcomed Elizabeth K. Auman as the company's new Managing Director. She comes to TimeLine with 15 years of experience at Chicago's Victory Gardens Theater, 12 of them as General Manager. During her tenure she was a part of the senior management team that guided the theater through budget growth from \$1.2 million to \$3 million and an \$11.8 million capital campaign to purchase and renovate the historic Biograph Theater. We are delighted she is bringing her tremendous experience and skills to TimeLine to lead our company to new heights.

TimeLine Artistic Director PJ Powers (PJP) chatted with Elizabeth Auman (EA) about what led her to TimeLine and what excites her about her new position.

(PJP) How did you first get involved in the arts/theater?

(EA) I don't exactly remember. It always has been something that my family participated in. I remember my mom taking me to see shows when I was really little. My parents were teachers, and we always went to see the shows that their school was doing. My mother was an art teacher and always wanted to be an actress. She went to Catholic school her entire life and said the nuns would not let her become an actress. My dad is a writer, and my brother is a writer/artist/musician. Art of all kinds always has been part of my life. I think my brother started working on plays before I did because he could sing, and the middle school only did musicals.

In high school I started acting in plays but was also always interested in numbers and money. When



I started college I was an arts-management major for a while and then switched to a theater degree — I felt I would learn more about what it actually took to produce [a play] by being in theater classes as opposed to taking classes about insurance. When I graduated, I still really had no idea what all the potential job opportunities were in theater so I moved to Chicago and hoped for the best.

(PJP) Why did you choose Chicago?

(EA) I grew up in the Midwest, and Chicago was the only city I really knew. After I graduated, I moved here with a classmate. We had no idea what we were doing. She was a props designer and called a friend of ours who got us jobs at the Goodman, working on "A Christmas Carol." I was the child wrangler for the kids.

After that, I started working at Chicago Shakespeare part time, and a woman there got me another part-time job at Victory Gardens. During my first two years in Chicago I was working part time in four box offices. On more than one occasion I sold someone tickets to the wrong show at the wrong theater because I could not keep all the plays straight. Luckily, I've been able to make a living working in theater.

(PJP) Who have been your mentors during your career?

(EA) I have had several. John Walker, who was my first boss at Victory Gardens, really opened my eyes to all the job possibilities in theater. John let me work on so many things at Victory Gardens. If I wanted to work on marketing, we would figure out how to make that happen. When I wanted to move out of the box office, he worked with me to create a new position. When John left to produce movies, Marcie McVay continued to allow me to grow in my job and continually challenged me in my role as general manager. Criss Henderson at Chicago Shakespeare also has been a great mentor and friend. Criss is the person I call when I have exhausted

all avenues of trying to figure out a problem. He can talk me off a cliff faster than anyone else, and because of the tremendous growth and success Chicago Shakespeare has had, Criss has great perspective.

(PJP) So now you come from a well-established, Tony Award-winning theater to a smaller, emerging company, and you launch the next phase of your already extraordinary career with us, as we take TimeLine to the next level. What kinds of new challenges do you envision for yourself here?

(EA) They might be old challenges! When I started at Victory Gardens, the staff was very small, and it still is in comparison to the amount of programming they do. During the interview process with TimeLine, people kept mentioning having to take out the garbage. My response was that I had to clean the bathrooms

on the second floor of the Biograph the week before, so some things aren't that different. There are some things a Tony Award doesn't change. I haven't taken out the garbage yet at TimeLine, but I think I will be doing that in a few minutes — my coffee-cup tower is about to tumble over. In all honesty, I don't know what the brand-new challenges will be, but I'm excited to meet them. I've always been fascinated with the organizational growth process and navigating through the process. That is what I'm most looking forward to here. TimeLine is such a successful growth story, and I feel honored to be a part of the next chapter.

(PJP) What interests you most about TimeLine's work and mission?

(EA) Several things. I've always been fascinated by companies that can so creatively produce in smaller

“TimeLine is such a successful growth story, and I feel honored to be part of the next chapter.”

spaces. Space limitations can inspire some of the most extraordinary designs I have seen in Chicago. Artists at TimeLine are able to embrace the playing space and create an environment that is imaginative and functional. What I love about TimeLine's mission of producing stories inspired by history that connect with today's issues is that it is ever-changing. By connecting with the day's issues, what is relevant today is not necessarily what will be relevant five years from now.

(PJP) Victory Gardens is known for nurturing new artists through its commitment to original plays and for making theater spaces available for emerging companies to present their work. So you've had a pretty great vantage point to witness a lot of changes and new players in the Chicago theater scene over the years. What strikes you most about the city's

non-profit theater scene? What do successful artists and companies have in common?

(EA) What strikes me most is the continual growth. Although there have been companies that have dissolved, each has been replaced by several more companies. The joke at Victory Gardens 12 years ago was, if someone wanted to produce a show in the studio during the summer the only requirement was a checkbook. It is a much different story now; there is a 12-month theater season in Chicago. The artistically successful companies have an unwavering commitment to excellence on the stage. This unfortunately doesn't always mean the company runs as a viable business entity. What excites me the most about TimeLine is the commitment to excellence of art and business on equal levels.

BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

*Dramaturgy @
Historical Research
by Jason Harrington*

*Written by Jason Harrington, PJ Powers
and Lara Goetsch*

*Edited by Karen A. Callaway
and Lara Goetsch*

*Photography and Graphic
Design by Lara Goetsch*

*Tesla's Letters Cover
Photo by Ryan Robinson*

*Backstory is published
four times each season.*

*Pictured on front cover
(from left): Sound designer
Andrew Hansen; assistant
stage manager Joseph
Heaton, actor Janet Ulrich
Brooks and scenic designer
Collette Pollard; projections
designer Mike Tutaj;
director Nick Bowling
and stage manager John
Kearns; and costume
designer Lindsey Pate.*

*Pictured on back cover
(from left): Actor Janet
Ulrich Brooks; sound
designer Andrew Hansen
and projections designer
Mike Tutaj; actor Jason
Karasev; director Nick
Bowling; actors Tien
Doman and Joel Stanley
Huff; scenic designer
Collette Pollard, actor
Jason Karasev and assistant
director Bridget Dehl; and
actor Tien Doman.*

“I don't know what the new challenges will be, but I'm excited to meet them.”



November 10 - December 23 *previews 11/6 - 11/9*

CHICAGO PREMIERE

by **JEFFREY STANLEY**

directed by **NICK BOWLING**

Ideas about war and peace, the uses of science and the exercise of humanity reverberate in this witty, suspenseful, intellectual puzzle of a drama. An American student travels to the former Yugoslavia in 1997 to research the work of Nikola Tesla, the Croatian-born Serbian scientist who invented electricity as we use it today. But as she delves deeper into Tesla's life and homeland, she is soon forced to make a decision about whether to get involved with the unexpected world of turmoil and suffering around her.

Running Time

Tesla's Letters runs approximately two hours, including one intermission.

The Cast

(in alphabetical order)

Janet Ulrich Brooks: *Biljana*

Tien Doman: *Daisy*

Joel Stanley Huff: *Dragan*

Jason Karasev: *Zoran*

The Production Team

Collette Pollard:

Scenic Designer

Lindsey Pate:

Costume Designer

Diane D. Fairchild:

Lighting Designer

Andrew Hansen: *Original*

Music & Sound Designer

Mike Tutaj:

Projections Designer

Julia Eberhardt:

Props Designer

Jason Harrington:

Dramaturg

John Kearns:

Stage Manager

Seth Vermilyea:

Production Manager

Lara Goetsch:

Director of Marketing and Communications

PJ Powers: *Artistic Director*

Elizabeth K. Auman:

Managing Director

NOVEMBER 2007

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

DECEMBER 2007

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23						

- Regular Performance
- Preview Performance
- Opening #1 featuring post-show reception *Sold Out*
- Opening #2 featuring post-show reception *Sold Out*
- Post-Show Discussion with cast & production crew *Free*
- Sunday Scholars a one-hour post-show panel discussion with experts on the themes and issues of the play *Tickets \$10; \$5 for subscribers*
- Company Member Discussion post-show discussion with TimeLine's Company members *Free*

SHOW TIMES

PREVIEWS 8 PM

WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS 7:30 PM

FRIDAYS 8 PM

SATURDAYS 4 PM & 8 PM

SUNDAYS 2 PM

NOTE

No performance at 4 pm on Saturday 11/10

Additional performance on Friday 11/23 at 4 pm

**RESERVE YOUR
TICKETS NOW:
(773) 281-8463 x24**