

BACKSTORY



GORE VIDAL'S

# WEEKEND



Your behind-the-scenes look at TimeLine productions

YESTERDAY'S STORIES.  
TODAY'S TOPICS.

**TimeLine**  
Theatre Company

Dear Friends,

## Welcome to TimeLine's 2008-09 season!

We're proud to bring you a year filled with four provocative plays never seen in Chicago, tackling the themes of politics, race, art and education.

We begin our season with a comedy for our times, yet one that surprisingly was written 40 years ago — Gore Vidal's *Weekend*. I happily discovered this play at the library, and as a fan of Vidal's extensive body of work and a great admirer of his popular political

comedy *The Best Man*, I was surprised I had never heard of it.

I read it swiftly, laughing out loud throughout and growing increasingly stunned to be discovering it for the first time. After further digging, I learned *Weekend* premiered in 1968 quite triumphantly in Washington, D.C., only to transfer quite untriumphantly to Broadway for a very brief and unheralded run. But I could find no record of any significant professional production since 1968, including no Chicago productions, a fact later confirmed by Vidal.

Still astonished by the play's obscurity, I showed it to my TimeLine colleagues, who shared my enthusiasm and felt it was a great script for us. In March we launched our new TimePieces play-reading series with a reading of *Weekend*. There was uproarious laughter from the packed house, followed by a stimulating discussion about the play and its provocative — and very timely — themes.

It was clear that night that this play about the sport of politics deserved a wider audience, and there seemed no better time to deliver



**“This play about the sport of politics deserved a wider audience.”**

it than at the beginning of our 2008-09 season, as the country starts the final leg of the presidential election.

In a playwright's note in the published version of *Weekend*, Vidal mentions that producing organizations can choose to update political references to fit the times of the production. We never considered doing this because, as I think you'll see, the play works quite beautifully as a product of its time, and it doesn't take many lines to connect the dots to where we have and have not come as an electorate and society. You, too, may be surprised that this play was written not in recent months but at a very different tumultuous time in our nation's history.

Through his enormous body of work, Vidal has added much to our national conversation. He was there in the thick of it in 1968, and now through this 40-year-old play, his insight into the great and messy machine we call national politics comes back to life. In the witty poetry of

Vidal's characters we hope you will find humor, solace, recognition and inspiration for the political process that dominates the headlines and dinner conversations across the country today. In life and on stage, it certainly makes for great theater!

*Weekend* is a fitting launch for a year of stimulating evenings that will feature the Chicago premiere of Thomas Gibbons' *A House With No Walls*, the world premiere of Masha Obolensky's *Not Enough Air* and the much-anticipated Chicago premiere of Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*.

We're eager to share these plays with you, telling stories from a variety of perspectives and traversing myriad periods of history. During our 12th season at TimeLine, I look forward to hearing your thoughts about them and engaging in many fascinating conversations.

All the best,

## Special Events and Resources

# the conversation

At TimeLine we look forward to the chance to engage with our audience in conversations inspired by our productions. We hope you will join us for these special events during the run of *Weekend*:

### Sunday Scholars Series

After the show on **Sunday, Sept. 7** is our Sunday Scholars Series, a one-hour panel discussion featuring experts talking about the themes and issues of the play. Moderated by Time-

Line Board member Peter H. Kuntz, **admission to this event is free**. Visit our Web site at [timelinetheatre.com](http://timelinetheatre.com) to learn more.

### Company Member Discussion

The heart of TimeLine is our Company members, who shape the artistic vision and choose the programming. On **Sunday, Sept. 28**, join them for an informal post-show discussion about the process that brought *Weekend* to TimeLine's stage.

### Post-Show Discussions

On **Thursdays, Aug. 28, Sept. 4 and 11; Sundays, Sept. 14 and 21; and Wednesday, Sept. 24**, stay for **free post-show discussions** moderated by a TimeLine Company member and featuring members of the production staff and cast.

### Other Resources

**Historical lobby displays, a study guide** and much more are available online at [timelinetheatre.com](http://timelinetheatre.com).

## TIMELINE:

**Road to *Weekend* — Conflicts at home and abroad leading up to the events of the play**

### 1960

- **November 8** John F. Kennedy narrowly defeats Richard M. Nixon in the U.S. presidential election.
- **November 14** Amid violent protests, 6-year-old Ruby Bridges becomes the first student to desegregate New Orleans public elementary schools. Americans watch on television.

### 1961

- **January 20** President Kennedy is inaugurated as the 35th president. In his inaugural speech, he tells the nation, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."
- **April 17** With the full support and knowledge of the U.S. government, anti-Castro rebels armed with American weapons land near Cuba's Bay of Pigs with plans to take down the Cuban government. The rebels are quickly dispatched by the Cuban military, with many fatalities on both sides.
- **May 20** Freedom riders arriving in Montgomery, Ala., are abandoned by local police and beaten by white mobs. While speaking at a Montgomery church, Martin Luther King, Jr., and his followers are similarly attacked.
- **May 25** Kennedy sends hundreds of military "advisers" to train South-Vietnamese troops to fight against the Communist National Liberation Front, led by Ho Chi Minh.

## the playwright

Gore Vidal can only be described with the old-fashioned term “man of letters,” even though his body of work is resolutely contemporary. As an essayist, novelist, critic, political writer and playwright, he has served as an indefatigable chronicler of American culture for more than 60 years.

Eugene Vidal was born in 1925 to a wealthy and socially prominent New York family. His father, Eugene Luther Vidal, was an Army pilot and co-founder of three American airlines. His mother, Nina S. Gore, was a socialite and Broadway actress. His parents divorced in 1935.

Vidal was raised in Washington, D.C., where he became close to his maternal grandfather, Thomas Gore, a Democratic senator from Oklahoma. Their time together influenced him immensely: Sen. Gore’s staunch support of American isolationism and critical stance on imperialism later became bedrocks of Vidal’s political philosophy. Uncomfortable with the name Eugene since childhood, Vidal took Gore as his first name while a teenager, largely in honor of his grandfather.

Vidal graduated from Exeter Academy in 1943. With World War II raging, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves. He served in the Aleutian Islands as first mate on an Army freight ship. His three years of service (1943-1946) became the basis for his first novel, *Williwaw*.

A second novel, *The City and the Pillar*, sparked his first public controversy. The 1948 book’s shockingly candid depiction of gay life in New York outraged many, but the ensuing publicity only served to expose his writing to a wider audience.

More creative opportunities followed. He began writing for television and films in the early ’50s, while simultaneously penning pulp mysteries under the pseudonym Edgar Box and working as a literary critic. Vidal’s embrace of both high and low culture would become one of his trademarks.

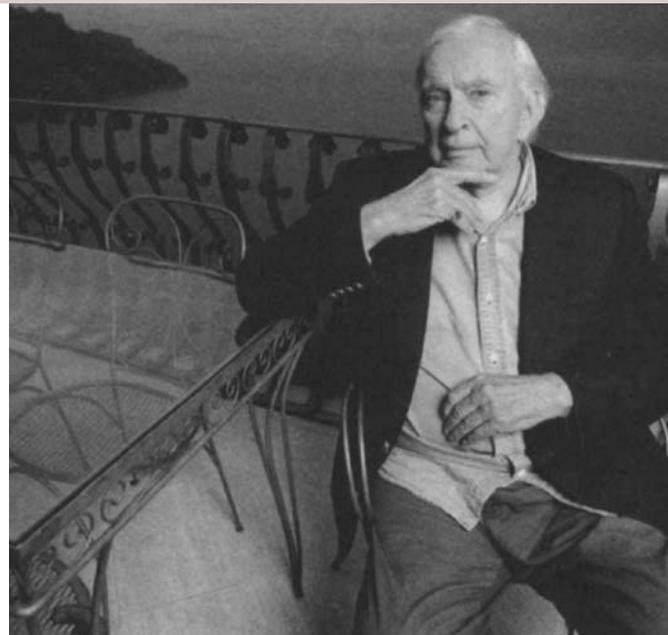
Vidal’s success in television propelled him into live theater. After completing the successful teleplay for *Visit to a Small Planet* in 1955, he was asked to adapt it for Broadway. He followed that with the 1960 political satire *The Best Man*, a knowing, witty critique of modern

political corruption that has become Vidal’s best-loved play. Also in 1960, incensed by America’s involvement in Vietnam, Vidal made an unsuccessful run for the U.S. Senate.

In 1962, Vidal published his first collection of essays, *Rocking the Boat*. The anthology, which brought together his book reviews and pieces of a far more political bent, cemented his reputation as an incisive commentator on American life and culture. He published three novels in the 1960s: *Julian* (1964), *Washington, D.C.* (1967) and *Myra Breckenridge* (1968).

In 1968 Vidal was hired as a political commentator on the year’s Republican and Democratic national conventions. As the representative of the political left, he was pitted against William F. Buckley, the *National Review* editor and die-hard conservative. Their on-air debates quickly devolved into a chaos that mirrored the political and social upheaval surrounding them.

Vidal’s close observation of the presidential nominating process during his commentator stint partially inspired him to write his second comic play focusing on



Gore Vidal, circa 2006. (Eamonn McCabe, Camera Press/Retna Ltd.)

**“Any American who is prepared to run for president should automatically, by definition, be disqualified from ever doing so.” — Gore Vidal**

American politics, *Weekend* (1968).

In the 1970s, ’80s and ’90s, Vidal continued writing prolifically. Further collections of his essays were joined by the novels *Burr* (1973), *Myron* (1974), *Kalki* (1978), *Duluth* (1983), *Live from Golgotha* (1992) and *The Smithsonian Institution* (1998), among others. He won the National Book Award for *United States*, his 1993 collection of essays.

In recent years, Vidal captured public interest with his published correspondence with Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, as well as his harsh attacks on the George W. Bush administration following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. He continues to write essays for periodicals, including *The Nation*, and published *Point to Point Navigation: A Memoir* in 2006. He remains a writer, speaker and a media commentator.

■ **August 25** Amid increasing violence in Vietnam, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announces that 76,500 military reservists have been ordered to active duty.

#### 1962

■ **April 3** All branches of the military, except the National Guard, are integrated.

■ **October** American spy planes on routine reconnaissance missions over Cuba return with photos of Soviet nuclear missiles pointed toward the U.S. After weeks of tense communications and negotiations, Kennedy persuades Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev to remove the weapons in exchange for the U.S. removal of similar missiles near the Soviet Union and a promise to never attempt to invade Cuba again.

#### 1963

■ **August 28** The March on Washington culminates in King’s delivery of his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

■ **June 11** After forcing Alabama governor and segregationist George Wallace to integrate the University of Alabama, Kennedy delivers a televised speech outlining his plan for civil-rights legislation that would later become the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act.

■ **November 22** Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas and Lyndon Johnson is sworn in as president.

#### 1964

■ **January 8** In Johnson’s first State of the Union address, he vows to end racial discrimination and poverty domestically while eliminating Communism abroad.

By 1968, 200,000 active U.S. troops were stationed in Vietnam. Another 20,000 had already been killed, while more than 30,000 had been removed from active duty or discharged due to serious injuries. In January, the Tet Offensive's multi-city attacks won a huge psychological victory for the Viet Cong, who terrified Americans when televised footage of their invasion of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon reached the airwaves. Just a month later, the My Lai massacre atrocities occurred,

which would further shock and divide the public.

While U.S. troops battled fatigue and struggled to keep morale high in the thick jungles, Americans back home faced a similar sense of exhaustion and gloom. Anti-war protest groups and peace activists were galvanized by an influx of new supporters as public support for the war faded. This nation-wide change in opinion coincided with the all-time lowest series of approval ratings for President Johnson, who was blamed

by many for the mounting number of deaths and the drawn-out fighting.

Largely as a result of his unsuccessful and unpopular Vietnam policies, Lyndon Johnson decided that being reelected to a second term not only would be unlikely but also harmful to the nation and the Democratic Party. In a televised speech on March 31, 1968, he shocked the country by announcing that he would not seek reelection, opening the contest for a new Democratic candidate.

## President Johnson, blamed by many for the mounting number of deaths and drawn-out fighting, received all-time low approval ratings.

Scores of anti-war protests and marches like this one occurred throughout the late 1960s. (Hulton/Archive)



American soldiers fight in the fields of Vietnam. (AP/World Wide Photos).

The Democratic candidates entered the '68 primary campaign armed with a variety of plans to end America's involvement in Vietnam. Hubert Humphrey was forced into the unpleasant role of public advocate for President Johnson in spite of his private aversion to his war policy. Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy waged attacks against the war that won them popular support but alienated many of their potential delegates as well as other influential politicians and donors. Long-simmering anger over the war finally boiled over at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. While party leaders inside the convention angrily argued, anti-war protesters outside were swept into riots triggered by the violent tactics of the Chicago police force. Humphrey eventually won

the nomination but his campaign was permanently marred by the frightening spectacle of the violence and chaos at the convention.

While the Democrats were embroiled in internal conflict, the Republican Party rallied behind Richard Nixon. Already a well-known public figure after his near-victory in the 1960 campaign against John F. Kennedy, Nixon had spent the ensuing years crafting a new public persona and he was ready to unleash it on the public in '68. Presenting himself as a more compassionate and thoughtful politician, Nixon capitalized on the flood of anti-war feelings with a vague but seductive plan to end the war quickly and victoriously. His stance on the war was a pivotal factor in his narrow victory.

- **May-June** Civil-rights activism reaches a fever pitch. Amid continued marches, protests and rallies, hundreds of students help southern blacks register to vote. Civil-rights activists are murdered, churches are bombed and set on fire, and hundreds of protesters are arrested and jailed. This period will later be known as "Freedom Summer."

- **July 2** Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act into law.

- **November 20** Johnson is elected president.

### 1965

- **January 20** Johnson is inaugurated. In his inaugural speech, he unveils plans for a Great Society of social equality and economic prosperity.

- **January 27** Defense Secretary Robert McNamara informs Johnson that limited military involvement in Vietnam is failing and recommends the president either escalate America's commitment or withdraw troops entirely.

- **May 11** Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act, making it possible for millions of blacks to vote safely for the first time.

- **June 8** 17,000 protesters attend an anti-war rally at Madison Square Garden in New York.

- **June 28** Johnson sends 50,000 more troops to Vietnam. The total number of soldiers committed to the war is now 125,000.

### 1966

- **January 12** In his State of the Union address, Johnson pledges to keep U.S. troops in Vietnam until Communist aggression is eliminated.

# The 1968 contest for president the election

**W**eekend was partially inspired by a remarkable period in U.S. politics: The contentious presidential election of 1968.

On March 31, President Johnson's surprise decision not to run for reelection unleashed chaos for both Democrats and Republicans. The loss of their incumbent candidate's electoral power dealt an unexpected blow to the Democrats: They would have to scramble to find the most competitive new candidate. Meanwhile, the Republicans were faced with an unexpected boon: Johnson's withdrawal, coupled with their majority in the Senate and a tidal shift in public opinion, could mean victory for the Republican candidate in November.

The Democratic Party quickly splintered into three factions. Working-class Catholic, black and other minority Democrats largely supported Sen. Robert F. Kennedy of New York. Traditional Democrats, led by labor union leaders and "Machine" bosses like Chicago's Mayor Richard J. Daley, supported Vice President Hubert Humphrey. Socially liberal and anti-war Democrats rallied behind Sen. Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota.

By early June, Humphrey was leading the delegate vote totals, with Kennedy second and McCarthy third. Kennedy won a crucial victory June 5 in the California primary, but heading to a victory celebration in a Los Angeles hotel, he was shot by a Palestinian militant. He died the next day.

In the wake of Kennedy's death, his supporters could not mobilize behind one candidate, so they split their votes between Humphrey, McCarthy and latecomer Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota. This split allowed Humphrey to gather the delegate votes necessary for nomination.

Meanwhile, George Wallace, the southern segregationist and former Alabama governor, was waging a presidential campaign for the American Independent Party. His candidacy siphoned votes from the mainstream candidates.

In the race for the Republican nomination, Richard M. Nixon quickly became the front-runner. Having run for president in 1960 against John F. Kennedy, losing by only the slimmest of margins, he was a well-known political personality. Nelson A. Rockefeller, the



Nixon celebrates victory in the 1968 presidential campaign. (Getty Images)

governor of New York, and Ronald Reagan, the movie star-turned-governor of California, were Nixon's most significant competitors. But neither could mobilize enough delegates to stop him: Nixon won the nomination on the convention's first ballot.

During the general election campaign, Nixon's promise to end the Vietnam War and his "law-and-order" pledge to halt urban riots and violent protests won support from voters.

In contrast, Humphrey's campaign was hurt by his link to the Johnson administration and the mismanagement of the Vietnam War.

In the end, the election was extremely close. Nixon's narrow lead in California, Illinois and Ohio guaranteed his victory by the smallest of margins, 1 percent of the popular vote.

## The Candidates: A Who's Who

### THE REPUBLICANS

**Richard Nixon** The vice president under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard Nixon narrowly lost the 1960 presidential campaign to John F. Kennedy. A former U.S. representative and senator of California, Nixon was a canny politician who based his 1968 campaign on an appeal to the so-called Silent Majority of voters, those exhausted by the chaos and discord of the civil-rights movement and anti-war protests. Promising a speedy, dignified victory in Vietnam, Nixon easily won his party's nomination and went on to a heated campaign against Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey. Nixon won the presidency with a mere 1 percent margin of victory in the popular vote.

**Nelson Rockefeller** New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller became a popular write-in candidate during the primary contests, largely as a result of his firm anti-war stance. Though he won a primary in Massachusetts, he failed to gain widespread national support and made a weak showing at the convention.

**Ronald Reagan** California Gov. Ronald Reagan, a former movie star, emerged late in the contest as Nixon's chief rival for the nomination. Although his constituency in California guaranteed him one of many important primary victories, he failed to muster sufficient delegates at the convention. Reagan unsuccessfully ran for president in 1976 but won the White House in 1980 and 1984.



Ronald Reagan (Bettmann)

### THE DEMOCRATS

**Hubert Humphrey** Vice President Hubert Humphrey quickly gained the support of many mainstream Democrats due to his position in the Johnson administration. Partially due to the splintering of support for other Democratic candidates, Humphrey won the nomination at the convention in Chicago. The events of the notoriously bloody and anarchic convention indelibly stained his campaign. Humphrey also fought unfavorable com-



Hubert Humphrey (right) with Lyndon Johnson. (Hulton/Archive)

■ **March 25** Simultaneous anti-war protests are staged in eight American cities. With U.S. casualties skyrocketing without significant military gains, millions will protest the war this year.

■ **June – September** Race riots erupt in several U.S. cities during the summer, including Chicago and San Francisco.

■ **October** Huey Newton and Bobby Seale form the Black Panther Party in Oakland, Calif.

### 1967

■ **February 13** After peace-treaty efforts fail, the U.S. resumes bombing in Vietnam.

■ **March 13** Sen. Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.) introduces the Equal Rights Amendment, designed to end gender discrimination.

■ **June 16** In *Loving v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that all state bans on interracial marriage are unconstitutional.

■ **July 23** A city-wide race riot begins in Detroit. It is the worst of the 14 race riots that occur throughout the country this summer.

■ **October 21** More than 50,000 anti-war activists demonstrate at the Lincoln Memorial and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

■ **November 16** The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommends that U.S. involvement in Vietnam be restricted and the conflict brought before the U.N. Security Council for resolution.

■ **December** NOW (The National Organization for Women) organizes protests in cities across the country, calling for equal rights for women.

1968



Eugene McCarthy at a campaign rally. (AP/World Wide Photos)

parisons with the unpopular president. He was forced to publicly support Johnson's deeply unpopular actions in Vietnam, though privately, he disagreed with almost all of Johnson's war decisions. By the time Humphrey publicly decried Johnson's tactics it was too late to win new support, and he lost to Republican candidate Richard Nixon.

**Eugene McCarthy** Eugene McCarthy, a liberal senator from Minnesota, won the hearts of many young people and peace activists with his anti-war stance. Aware of the national prejudice against the "hippies," "radicals" and "long-hairs" who formed McCarthy's constituency base, his staff launched a "Get Clean for Gene" campaign, which encouraged supporters to shave and cut their hair to improve McCarthy's public image.

In spite of his popularity with the New Left, he failed to win many minority votes and alienated more traditional Democratic voters with his social liberalism.

**Robert F. Kennedy** A scion of the Kennedy clan, Robert Kennedy capitalized on the strong public image he had cultivated as the U.S. attorney general in his brother's administration and as a current New York senator. Popular among union members, the working class and minorities, Kennedy also won new supporters when he announced his anti-war stance. With several important primary victories, Kennedy was gaining impressive ground in the contentious campaign. While celebrating a win in the California primary at a Los Angeles hotel, he was assassinated by an anti-Zionist Palestinian radical named Sirhan Sirhan. Kennedy's tragic death on June 6 threw his party into further disarray. Political analysts still debate whether the 1968 election would have turned out differently if he had lived.



Robert Kennedy moments before his assassination. (Bettmann)

**George McGovern** After Kennedy's death, Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota entered the contest largely due to the urging of Gloria Steinem, the well-known feminist activist. Hoping to win voters formerly committed to Kennedy, the anti-war veteran ended up taking support away from McCarthy. However, those votes were not enough to make McGovern a competitive candidate. Four years later, McGovern would win the Democratic presidential nomination but lose the election to incumbent Richard Nixon.

#### THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT PARTY



George Wallace campaign sign. (David J. and Janice L. Frent Collection)

**George Wallace** The former Alabama governor and infamous segregationist seized on the rapidly growing partisan divide in 1968 to launch his third-party campaign under the auspices of the American Independent Party. Wallace's popularity in the South led to surprising primary victories in the region and 46 Electoral College votes — he carried five Southern states. However, Wallace's controversial social stances were deeply distasteful to many voters, and he failed to gain a national following.

**At the beginning of rehearsals for *Weekend*, Artistic Director PJ Powers (PJP) chatted with director Damon Kiely (DK) about the show and his first experience directing at TimeLine.**



**(PJP)** When I first showed the script of *Weekend* to you, what were your first impressions?

**(DK)** I was surprised at how topical it was and wondered how Gore Vidal could have been so ahead of his time. I was mildly shocked that I hadn't heard of it before, because it was truly a page turner. In doing research, I've read Vidal's novel *Washington, D.C.*, and I found much the same thing: He knows how to keep a reader on the edge of his seat and wanting more.

**(PJP)** Now that you've lived with the script more, have your impressions changed?

**(DK)** Absolutely. It's really a play that keeps giving.

At first glance it's a funny, political play. The deeper you read, the more you see that he has a very deep understanding and love for human relations of all kinds — which is the essence of politics! He's turning over politics of all kinds: race, gender, national and family. The more we dig into the scenes, the more subtle layers we find. He's a gifted and overlooked playwright.

**(PJP)** Why do you think this play has been rarely (if ever) produced since 1968?

**(DK)** Well, I do think that it got clobbered by unfavorable comparisons to the movie *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. Sidney Poitier, Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy are hard to beat. Plus, looking at some of the reviews at the time, there was a very conservative reaction to the characters: No one wanted to see their politicians as such calculating figures. Also, the young son was singularly unpopular — I guess that was your generation gap at work. Finally, I think it was just too close to home. I don't think I'd want to see

- **NOTE** A detailed timeline of 1968, one of our nation's most turbulent and momentous years, is featured in our lobby display.
- **January 31** The North Vietnamese launch the Tet Offensive, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. In the aftermath, polls show that approval of the war and President Johnson are at an all-time low, persuading Johnson to replace the commander of the American forces and refuse requests for more troops.
- **February 18** 543 American troops are killed in the bloodiest week of the war thus far.
- **March 31** Faced with overwhelming condemnation from Congress, protesters and voters, Johnson announces in a nationally televised speech that he will begin peace negotiations in Vietnam and that he will not run for re-election.

**NOTE** Vidal sets the fictional events of *Weekend* on a non-existent Friday, Saturday and Sunday directly after Johnson's announcement that he will not seek reelection, but before Martin Luther King, Jr's assassination on April 4. Interestingly, the original draft of the play, as performed at its premiere at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C., in February 1968 and on Broadway in March 1968, was written before Johnson's announcement. However, at an undetermined later date, the playwright adjusted the script to include references to Johnson's decision.

a play about Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton today, but in 30 years ...

**(PJP)** In the published version of this play there is a note from Gore Vidal that says producers may choose to update references to fit the times in which it is produced. I found this surprising and didn't want to change a word, and I know that you also didn't seriously consider changing anything. Why do you think it still works now as a "period piece"?

**(DK)** Vidal crafted this so carefully in terms of the politics of the time that it just wouldn't work in the modern day. Also, in many

ways, it's easier to understand the political issues of today through the crucible of the past. Again, it's hard to make art or entertainment out of current events — I think we're still waiting for the first great 9/11 or Iraq war piece. There have been many attempts, and most have failed. That is what is so truly shocking about Vidal's work: He really got the interplay of politics in 1968, and yet so many of the issues in the play are at work today.

**(PJP)** In March you directed a reading of *Weekend* as part of our TimePieces play-reading series, and many audience members that night

felt as if the play had been written this year. Why does it seem so contemporary?

**(DK)** Vidal truly understands human relations, and those don't change. He deeply gets how families work, especially one as twisted as the MacGruders. Also, he knows how to build comedy out of situations rather than just punch lines — although he's got plenty of those. I also think it feels modern because so many forces that govern who we are as a country today were launched in the 1960s. That was when polling really started to take over. It was when conservatives and liberals were starting to battle

over the political landscape, and the parties were becoming more polarized. It was the first time there was a recognizable generation gap in the popular culture. Finally, as Obama has clearly stated, he stands on the shoulders of African-American politicians who battled in the 1960s.

**(PJP)** At the first rehearsal, you read the definition of the word "politics" and noted its dictionary definition is not at all what you think of today when the word is mentioned. Can you talk about that a bit?

**(DK)** The play is obviously about politics, and I'd told that to so many people that I thought I should look up the word to see what I was talking about. I was surprised that the first definition was one I think I'd learned in high school: basically that politics is governance of a country. The fifth definition down was the one we've become more familiar with: the complicated relations between people in a social group. I think we all



immediately think of the numbing minutiae of office politics. Now you hear the parties complain that legislation is tied up because of partisan politics. It's sad that the word has been corrupted. It may be part of the reason the U.S. Congress recently had an approval rating of 9 percent.

**(PJP)** You recently stepped down after five years as artistic director at American Theatre Company to take a teaching job at The Theatre School at DePaul University. How has that transition been? Also, what is it like working at TimeLine for the first time?

**(DK)** I loved working at American Theater Company, and in many ways it was my dream job. I truly never thought I'd leave there. My first reaction to finding out about the teaching job was to reject it. My dad is a professor — at the Law School of DePaul! — and I guess I couldn't face turning into

my father. But I have two kids, and, as you know, the life of an artistic director is tough on home life. Long story short, I decided to go after the job and have since figured out that my dad had it right all along. It's a great life, and I love working at The Theatre School.

Working at TimeLine has been great for many reasons. First of all, you can't turn around without hitting a DePaul Theatre School graduate, including several in the cast. We share the same work ethic, which is great. We all want to put the story first and leave fancy concepts behind. I also really believe strongly in TimeLine's mission, because I think too many people are politically apathetic today in part because they don't feel connected to the past. They only know about current events, if they know about them at all. Without the perspective of history, I don't think we can truly understand the age we live in. That's why it's great that TimeLine is doing this funny political play as we head into one of the most important elections in a generation.

Finally, the people at TimeLine care about artists. It's a pleasure.

*Opposite: Director Damon Kiely (right) discusses a scene with actors Joselyn Jones and André Teamer during rehearsals for Weekend.*

*Above: Kiely reviews the script with TimeLine Company member and cast member Juliet Hart.*



# Donor Appreciation Program & 2008-09 Events

## backstage

In order to help you stay more connected to the TimeLine experience, we are introducing BackStage, a new feature in *Backstory* magazine. BackStage is the place you can come to get information about upcoming events, our donor program and other exciting happenings at TimeLine Theatre. You will also find recaps of past events and profiles of the individuals and organizations that are making a difference at TimeLine.

### Introducing the new Donor Appreciation Program at TimeLine!

Donations are essential to fulfilling TimeLine's mission of presenting stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues. Nearly 40% of our annual budget comes from the generosity of individual donors — we couldn't do it without you!

Because our donors are such an important part of the TimeLine family, we have created a new array of benefits designed to give you even greater insider access to the art that make TimeLine so unique.

To make a donation please call Lindsey Becker at (773) 281-8463 x26, or visit us online at [timelinetheatre.com/donate](http://timelinetheatre.com/donate).

Recognition in donor listings  
 Invitation to private play reading event  
 Invitation to Stage Dessert on Stage  
 Invitation to the Donor Breakfast  
 Invitation to the History Makers event  
 History Makers networking line  
 Play poster signed by the cast  
 Invitations to Opening Night  
 Dine with the Artistic Director

HISTORY MAKERS SOCIETY	Recognition in donor listings	Invitation to private play reading event	Invitation to Stage Dessert on Stage	Invitation to the Donor Breakfast	Invitation to the History Makers event	History Makers networking line	Play poster signed by the cast	Invitations to Opening Night	Dine with the Artistic Director
<b>Innovators Circle \$10,000 +</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All 4	✓
<b>Visionary Circle \$5,000 - \$9,999</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All 4	
<b>Leadership Circle \$2,500 - \$4,999</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	One	
<b>Producers Circle \$1,000 - \$2,499</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
OTHER GIVING LEVELS									
\$500 - \$999	✓	✓	✓	✓					
\$250 - \$499	✓	✓	✓						
\$150 - \$249	✓	✓							
Up to \$149	✓								

TimeLine Theatre's full-time staff thanks you for your support and looks forward to welcoming you to a special event this season! From left: Development Manager Lindsey Becker, Artistic Director PJ Powers, Managing Director Elizabeth Auman and Director of Marketing and Communications Lara Goetsch. (Photo by Jennifer Girard Photography)



### 2008-09 Season Events Preview

Each season TimeLine offers our patrons many opportunities to go behind the scenes and gain insider access to the art on our stages. While some events are offered only to donors of a certain level, others are open the public.

#### The History Makers Event October 7, 2008

Invitation extended exclusively to donors giving \$1,000 or more.

This exclusive party was created to thank our most generous donors. Mingle with other TimeLine enthusiasts while enjoying premium wine and appetizers.

#### TimePieces November 11, 2008 May 12, 2009 June 16, 2009

Admission is free, and readings are open to the public.

Join us for the second installment of this popular play reading series. Play selection will be announced soon; check our Web site for details. Reservations are recommended; please call the TimeLine Box Office at (773) 281-8463.

#### Dessert on Stage December 3, 2008

Invitation extended exclusively to donors giving \$250 or more.

Join the cast of *A House with No Walls* onstage after the 7:30 pm performance for champagne and some

sweet treats. Donors who hold FlexPass subscriptions are encouraged to reserve tickets for this performance.

#### Play Reading Event February 10, 2009

Invitation extended exclusively to donors giving \$150 or more.

Be among the select few to experience the reading of a play under consideration for next season. TimeLine Company members will be on hand to answer your questions about the reading and the season selection.

#### Donor Breakfast May 31, 2009

Invitation extended exclusively to donors giving \$500 or more.

Guests are invited to join Artistic Director PJ Powers and Managing Director Elizabeth Auman as they discuss their vision for TimeLine Theatre. Pastries, juice and coffee will be served.

Dates and programming are subject to change.

Visit [timelinetheatre.com](http://timelinetheatre.com) for updated information, or call Lindsey Becker at (773) 281-8463 x26.

## BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

Dramaturgy @ Historical Research by Becky Perlman

Written by Becky Perlman, PJ Powers & Lindsey Becker

Edited by Karen A. Callaway and Lara Goetsch

Photography and Graphic Design by Lara Goetsch

Weekend Cover Photo by Ryan Robinson

Backstory is published four times each season.

Pictured on front cover (from left): Director Damon Kiely; set model by scenic designer Keith Pitts; actors Terry Hamilton, Penny Slusher, Mica Cole and Joe Sherman; actor Sean Nix; and costume designer Rachel Laritz.

Pictured on back cover (from left): Director Damon Kiely; actors Janet Ulrich Brooks and Tom McElroy; actors André Teamer and Ian Paul Custer; actors Mica Cole and Joe Sherman; actor Terry Hamilton; and actor Juliet Hart.

#### Our Mission:

TimeLine Theatre presents stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues.

Our collaborative artistic team produces provocative theatre that engages, educates, entertains and enlightens.



August 23 - October 12, 2008

previews 8/20 - 8/22

by **GORE VIDAL**

directed by **DAMON KIELY**

Written and set during the 1968 presidential campaign, *Weekend* is a witty comedy about a Republican Senator who is about to announce his candidacy for his party's nomination when his son arrives with shocking — and potentially politically damaging — news. Prejudice, blackmail, self-righteousness and opportunism become a potent mix as the candidate and his handlers conspire with well-calculated maneuvers to save the day.

### Running Time

Approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes, including one intermission.

### The Cast

(in order of appearance)

Sean Nix: *Roger*

Juliet Hart: *Miss Wilson*

Ian Paul Custer:  
Norris Blotner

Terry Hamilton:  
*Senator MacGruder*

Tom McElroy\*:

*Senator Andrews*

Janet Ulrich Brooks:

*Mrs. Andrews*

Penny Slusher\*:

*Estelle MacGruder*

Joe Sherman:

*Beany MacGruder*

Mica Cole: *Louise Hampton*

Joslyn Jones: *Mrs. Hampton*

André Teamer: *Dr. Hampton*

\* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

### The Production Team

Keith Pitts:

*Scenic Designer*

Rachel Laritz:

*Costume Designer*

Charles Cooper, U.S.A.:

*Lighting Designer*

Josh Horvath:

*Sound Designer*

Lara Musard:

*Props Designer*

Becky Perlman:

*Dramaturg*

Ana Espinosa:

*Stage Manager*

Joseph Heaton:

*Production Manager*

Those designers and scenic artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, IATSE Local 829, AFL-CIO.

### AUGUST 2008

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

### SEPTEMBER 2008

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	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

### OCTOBER 2008

SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12						

- Regular Performance
- Preview Performance
- Opening Night *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 *Free*
- Company Member Discussion a conversation with TimeLine's Company members *Free*

### SHOW TIMES

PREVIEWS 8 PM

OPENING NIGHT 7 PM

WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS 7:30 PM

FRIDAYS 8 PM

SATURDAYS 4 PM & 8 PM

SUNDAYS 2 PM

**(773) 281-8463 x24**