

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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2007 PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST *BULRUSHER* HIGHLIGHTS PILLSBURY HOUSE THEATRE'S 2008 SEASON

Obie Award Winner Marion McClinton Directs

Pillsbury House Theatre proudly announces its 2008 season, featuring two area premieres and a performance by the theatre's resident Breaking Ice Company. Local actor Samuel G. Roberson, Jr's play *Same Difference*, under the direction of Anton Jones, opens the season in February as a co-production with Illusion Theater. In March, PHT's Breaking Ice Company presents *Other*, a company created show, under the direction of Heidi Hunter Batz. Marion McClinton returns to Pillsbury House Theatre to direct Eisa Davis' evocative coming of age story *Bulrusher* in May. The season concludes in October with a play to be announced at a later date.

First time playwright Samuel G. Roberson, Jr's *Same Difference* was a sold out hit at the 2007 Minnesota Fringe Festival. In the play Anthony and Jahmal, two black men from very different backgrounds, are thrust together as college roommates. With incisive wit and engaging humor *Same Difference* exposes the stereotypes and expectations that the men have of each other as they struggle to make their way in the world and look to find common ground.

Same Difference is a co-production between Illusion Theater and Pillsbury House Theatre. It opens at Illusion on February 8 and runs through February 17. It continues its run at the Pillsbury House Theatre from February 20 through March 1, 2008. **Anton Jones**, who directed the play for the Fringe Festival will again direct the co-production, with James A. Williams serving as a creative advisor. **Samuel G. Roberson, Jr.** is a graduate of the Howard University BFA program with a concentration in Theatre Arts. He has served as an acting apprentice with the Children's Theatre Company and has also been awarded a 2007 Jerome Many Voices Residency through the Playwrights' Center. Anton Jones is a playwright, director, musician and theatre educator. He has directed for Climb Theatre, University of Iowa's Darwin Turner Action Theatre and History Theatre's Raw Stages. He directed his play *Tokens~n~Change: A Hip-Hop Drama* for the Illusion Theatre's Light's Up Workshop Series. Anton Jones received his MFA from the University of Iowa Playwright's Workshop in 2005 and was a recipient of a Jerome Many Voices Residency in 2006.

"This show is by far the best show I've seen at the Fringe Festival. Not just this year, but for the past several years..."

—Fringe Festival attendee

On March 28, 29, 31 and April 4 and 5, Pillsbury House Theatre's multi-racial, socio-political improvisational performance troupe, **Breaking Ice** will bring its provocative performance style to the mainstage using poetry, music, movement and scenes to examine how we construct and adapt our cultural identities in an increasingly diverse world. *Other* is an exploration of the ways we may confine ourselves by our self definitions. Are we really liberal if by checking the liberal box we are signing on to another group of oppressive values? Do we limit our growth potential by the boxes we check? And it asks

the question, when can we stop representing ourselves and just be ourselves. For more than 10 years, under the stewardship of **Heidi Hunter Batz**, Breaking Ice has brought artists from the Twin Cities community together to collaboratively create theatre for a vast array of audiences. In 2007, Breaking Ice performed across the country, inspiring dialogue around social issues in hospitals, universities, government agencies, conferences and corporations.

The season continues with **Eisa Davis'** drama ***Bulrusher***, directed by **Marion McClinton**. A finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *Bulrusher* is a coming-of-age story set in the isolated town of Boonville in the Redwood country north of San Francisco in 1955 where the residents have developed their own strange language to address subjects not considered socially acceptable. Abandoned on the river as an infant, a young African American woman, Bulrusher, develops the ability to read the future through water. But though she can see what will happen to others with painful accuracy, she remains a mystery to herself - until a stranger from Alabama arrives and opens her eyes to race, family and love.

Eisa Davis is a resident playwright at New Dramatists. She is also the winner of the Helen Merrill Award, the Whitfield Cook Award, the John Lippmann New Frontier Award, and has received fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, Cave Canem, and the Van Lier and Mellon Foundations. Her work has been developed by the Hip Hop Theater Festival, New York Theater Workshop, New York Stage and Film, LABYrinth Theater Company, the New Group, Soho Rep, the Flea, Rattlestick, the Cherry Lane, Portland Center Stage, Hartford Stage, Cleveland Playhouse, Seattle Rep, Yale University, Nuyorican Poets Café, the Schomburg Center for Black Research, and the Culture Project, among others. Marion McClinton returns to Pillsbury House Theatre following his critically acclaimed production of *Home* in the 2007 season. His Broadway productions include *Drowning Crow*, the revival of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *King Hedley II* (Tony nomination). His Off-Broadway credits include *Jitney* (Obie and Lortel Awards), *Roar*, *Talk* and *Breath, Boom*.

"Eisa Davis can't help herself, she's made giddy by language...she tickles the ears of her listeners..."
—New York Times

"...a lyrical poetic play with much nuance..."
— NYTheatre.com

The mainstage season concludes in October with a play to be announced at a later date. Pillsbury House Theatre's consistent commitment to new work has in the past led to productions of work such as *Hot Comb: Brandin' One Mark of Oppression*, *Jesus Hopped the A Train*, *Bug* and *LOW*.

CALENDAR INFORMATION

Shows open on Fridays and then run Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. with a 2:00 performance on Saturdays

Same Difference

By Samuel G. Roberson, Jr.

Directed by Anton Jones

Illusion Theater: February 8 – February 17, 2008

Pillsbury House Theatre: February 20 – March 1, 2008

□ *Other*

Written and performed by the Breaking Ice Company

Directed by Heidi Hunter Batz
March 28, 29, 31 & April 4, 5th 2008

Bulrusher

By Eisa Davis
Directed by Marion McClinton
May 16 – June 14, 2008

TBA

October 10 – November 8, 2008

Mainstage season tickets are \$18 Thursday – Saturday, Wednesday evenings are pay-what-you-can. For more information call 612-825-0459 or visit www.pillsburyhousetheatre.org. The theatre is located at 3501 Chicago