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N E W S

NAOMI WALLACE'S *THINGS OF DRY HOURS* DRAMATIZES VOLATILE CRUCIBLE OF RADICALISM, RELIGION AND MIXED RACE RELATIONSHIPS

"We are things of dry hours and the involuntary plan,
Grayed in, and gray. 'Dream' mate, a giddy sound, not strong
Like 'rent', 'feeding a wife', 'satisfying a man'." -- from Gwendolyn Brooks' "Kitchenette Building"

"There is always a knock at the door. And you know it's the knock at the door that you've been telling
yourself you haven't been waiting for all your life, that it's like yesterday's knock on the door, or the day
before. But this knock is different. Not by its sound but by the way it opens up a hole inside and you start
to cave in." -- from *Things of Dry Hours*

Praise for *Things of Dry Hours*:

"Flows with powerful drama...richness of flavor." -- *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE presents the **West Coast Premiere** of *Things of Dry Hours* by **Naomi Wallace**, one of the most stimulating writers for the stage today. The play, originally written in 2002, runs from January 18 through February 5, 2005 at the Newmark Theatre, 1111 SW Broadway at Main. Directed by PCS Artistic Director Chris Coleman, it previews Tuesday, January 18 – Thursday, January 20; opens Friday, January 21 and closes Saturday, February 5*. Tickets for Tuesday – Sunday performances range from \$15, 30 + under, to \$20 - \$55, general. Box office: 503-274-6588; general information: www.pcs.org. *Things of Dry Hours* is sponsored by **Ann Porter** and **Higgins Restaurant**.

Things of Dry Hours refers to poem by Gwendolyn Brooks about chasing dreams amidst the domesticity of onion fumes, ripening garbage and lukewarm water. That wry perspective informs the characters' warm and often bantering dialogue. The time is 1932; the place, Birmingham, Alabama; the setting, a rough, two-room cabin that is home to Tice Hogan (**Leon Addison Brown**), a black, Bible-believing member of the Communist party and his young, widowed, cynical daughter, Cali (**Karan Kendrick**). Then, in the dark of night, Corbin Teel (**Michael Laurence**), a white man unknown to the Hogans, knocks on the door demanding shelter from the law. That knock would bring foreboding to any black family in that time and place but it's even more threatening to the Hogans because of Tice's political activism. The Hogans resist, despite Corbin's political entreaties, until he turns the table, threatening to expose them if not admitted. With refuge secured by blackmail, Tice, Cali and Corbin then begin a dance of skepticism and belief as each tries to determine what the others' truly intend. Various levels of seduction, political and personal, come into play until the unexpected and transformative climax.

The play's muted palette, primarily of black, white and gray, punctuated by red, points up the symbolism of words and race that drive the action. The set's deliberate simplicity speaks to the characters' poverty as it exposes the political, moral and emotional complexity of their lives.

Naomi Wallace, whose works have been widely produced in Europe and inspired a 12-theater, six-week festival in Atlanta in Fall 2001, ranks with Tony Kushner, Robert O'Hara, Eve Ensler and Reggie Gaines

- more -

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among today's most socially conscious and powerful playwrights. Her plays deliberately look at history through the lens of contemporary awareness. Like radical historian Howard Zinn, she seeks to uncover little known or misinterpreted areas of the past in order to understand our culture's current shape and direction. She was inspired to write *Things of Dry Hours* by Robin D.G. Kelley's *Hammer and Hoe*, which explores the Communist movement in Alabama, where the party – unlike other areas of the country – was comprised largely of poor blacks. Wallace's interest in history and politics is central to the action and meaning of the play. At a panel discussion about her work in 2001, she said, "My interest is power and negotiations of power. You cannot have theatre if there are not questions of power, who has it, who doesn't and why."

Naomi Wallace (*Things of Dry Hours*), a Kentucky native, may be the most accomplished "emerging" playwright in America. *In the Heart of America* was published in *American Theatre* magazine and was awarded the 1995 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. It received its world premiere at the Bush Theatre in London and was subsequently produced at the Long Wharf Theater (New Haven, CT) and in Dortmund, Germany. Her frequently produced *One Flea Spare* was commissioned and produced by the Bush and seen there in October 1995. It received its American premiere at the Humana Festival and was awarded the 1996 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the 1996 Fellowship of Southern Writers Drama Award, the 1996 Kesselring Prize and the 1997 Obie Award for Best Play. It was produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival in March 1997 and is being made into a film by the producer of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*. *Slaughter City* was awarded the 1995 Mobil Prize and received its world premiere in January 1996 at the Royal Shakespeare Company. *The Trestle at Pope Creek* premiered at the 1998 Humana Festival; was produced in Spring 1999 by New York Theatre Workshop and, in Spring 2001, by the Edinburgh Theatre. The Oxford Stage Company produced the world premiere of her newest play, *The Inland Sea*, at London's National Theatre. Her work was the focus of a 12-theater, six-week Festival in Atlanta in Fall 2001. A collection of her plays, *In the Heart of America and Other Plays*, was published by Theatre Communications Group (2001). In 1999, she received a MacArthur Fellowship, popularly known as the genius grant.

Chris Coleman became artistic director of PORTLAND CENTER STAGE in May 2000. This is his thirteenth production for the theater. Later this winter, he will direct Allison Moore's *Hazard County* at the Humana Festival of New American Plays at the Actors Theatre of Louisville.

Tice Hogan	Leon Addison Brown	Director	Chris Coleman
Cali Hogan	Karan Kendrick	Set Designer	Russell Parkman
Corbin Teel	Michael Laurence	Lighting Designer	Daniel Ordower
All of actors and stage managers are Equity members.		Costume Designer	Jeff Cone
		Sound Designer	Jen Raynak
		Stage Manager	Mark Tynan
		Asst Stage Manager	Marcella Y. Crowson

The city's largest professional theater, **PORTLAND CENTER STAGE** is a resident company of the Portland Center for the Performing Arts and an affiliate of the League of Regional Theatres, Actors' Equity Association and Theatre Communications Group. PCS embarked on a period of dynamic change when its fourth artistic director, Chris Coleman, joined the theater in May 2000. With a new artistic vision that is vast, eclectic and committed to audience enrichment, PORTLAND CENTER STAGE dares to create theater that is as ravishing, complex and thought-provoking as our wildest dreams. Its 2004 – 2005 season continues with:

- *My Fair Lady*, Allan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, February 15 – March 12, 2005
- *O Lovely Glowworm, or Scenes of Great Beauty*, Glen Berger, March 22 – April 24, 2005

- more -

Naomi Wallace's *Things of Dry Hours*: Performances and Special Events
Portland Center Stage •Winningstad Theatre •1111 SW Broadway
Box Office: 503-274-6588 •Tickets: \$15 – 55 • www.pcs.org

Evenings 7 PM

Tuesdays Jan 18 (P), 25, Feb 1
Wednesdays Jan 19 (P), 26, Feb 2
Sundays Jan 23, 30

8 PM

Thursdays Jan 20 (P), 27, Feb 3
Fridays Jan 21 (O), 28, Feb 4
Saturdays Jan 22, 29

Matinées 2 PM

Sundays Jan 23, 30
Saturday Feb 5 (C)

Noon

Thursdays Jan 27, Feb 3
Friday Feb 4

(P) = Preview • (O) = Opens • (C) = Closes

Run time: 2 hours, 20 minutes with intermission

* **Please Note:** This production includes an unusual Friday matinée at Noon on February 4 and closes with the 8 PM performance on Saturday, February 5. The production also includes a brief glimpse of full male nudity.

Opening Night Celebration

Join Chris Coleman, the cast and crew for a post-performance reception with the rootsy North Mississippi blues grove of **Hillstomp**, food by **InOvations in Catering** and a cash bar. Rotunda

Girls Night Out

Tuesdays, January 25, February 1 5 PM South Park
 Wednesdays, January 26, February 2 1525 SW Park
 Women gather for early dinner at South Park followed by a 7 PM performance of Naomi Wallace's provocative *Things of Dry Hours*. \$45, **reservations required** • 503-274-6588.

Access Performances

Audio Described

Friday, January 28 8 PM

Sign Interpreted

Thursday, February 3 8 PM

In addition, large print programs and infra-red headphones are available from the coat room, free of charge.

Forum

Sunday, January 30 2 PM Third floor gallery
 Join us for a lively discussion immediately following the matinée.

Q&A

Thursdays, January 27, February 3 Noon Third floor Gallery
 Tuesday, February 1 7 PM
 Discuss the play in an open dialogue with members of the company, immediately following the performance.