Thurgood Press Book
New Repertory Theatre
June 2017

Johnny Lee Davenport in Thurgood. Photo by Andrew Brilliant/Brilliant Pictures.
Thank you for booking New Repertory Theatre’s production of Thurgood by George Stevens, Jr. Please review the following to help promote the production. If you have any questions, please contact New Rep’s Communications Director, Jaclyn, at jaclyndentino@newrep.org.

Production photos from the original performances may be found here. Please credit Andrew Brilliant/Brilliant Pictures.

[COMPANY NAME] Presents
New Repertory Theatre’s Production of

THURGOOD

by George Stevens, Jr.
directed by Benny Sato Ambush
featuring Johnny Lee Davenport

Thurgood spans Justice Thurgood Marshall’s impressive career as a lawyer, arguing such landmark cases as Brown v. Board of Education, and a remarkable tribute to Marshall’s enduring legacy as the first African-American to sit on the Supreme Court.

“Thurgood Marshall is the Civil Rights Movement's unsung hero. His nomination to the Supreme Court literally changed America. Looking to the future sometimes means revisiting the past. By doing this play, I hope to remind, maybe even forewarn people that the politics of our country and the laws governing our nation, based on the Constitution of the United States, apply to, and protect all Americans. Not just the rich, not just the privileged, and certainly not just the interests of certain individuals. Thurgood gives us hope and the assurance that one man can make a difference!”
- Actor Johnny Lee Davenport.

"Davenport has the kind of ineffable stage presence that can't be adequately described but needs to be experienced. - The Boston Globe

"As you watch this piece, and you understand what Thurgood Marshall did and what he experienced, you can't help but tie it to our times today." - WGBH's Jared Bowen

"Davenport delivers a commanding, compelling portrait… sharp and brilliant." - WBUR's The ARTery

"A tour de force." - Boston Arts Review
"A must see!" - The White Rhino Report
"A powerful reminder that one man can make a difference." - Broadway World
"Excellent entertainment." - On Boston Stages
"One of the great performances of the year." - Boston Post-Gazette

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**Artistic Bios**

**Johnny Lee Davenport** (Thurgood Marshall) New Repertory Theatre credits include The Whipping Man and A House with No Walls. Other area credits include The Unbleached American (Stoneham Theatre); It's A Wonderful Life: A Radio Play (Wheelock Family Theatre); Water by the Spoonful and Broke-ology/Elliot Norton Award, Best Actor (The Lyric Stage Company); Driving Miss Daisy and Master Harold...and the Boys (Gloucester Stage Company); and Invisible Man'Helen Hayes Award, Best Ensemble (Studio Theatre Washington, D.C. and The Huntington Theatre Company). Mr. Davenport has played more than 50 roles in 24 of Shakespeare’s plays including Richard III (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company); Pericles (Actors' Shakespeare Project); and Richard II (Shakespeare & Company). Film credits include Ted, The Fugitive, U.S. Marshals, and Ascendants. He was named Best Actor in Boston Magazine (2011). Mr. Davenport will be featured in New Rep’s production of Oleanna in the fall of 2017.

**Benny Sato Ambush** (Director) serves as Senior Distinguished Producing Director-In-Residence at Emerson Stage, the producing wing of the Department of Performing Arts at Emerson College. He returns to New Repertory Theatre after directing The Whipping Man. A professional SDC stage director, producer, former LORT Artistic Director, educator, consultant, NEA panelist and site evaluator, and published commentator, his prior artistic leadership experience includes Ensemble Theatre, American Conservatory Theater, Rites and Reason Theatre Company, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Florida Stage, and Theatre Virginia. He directed at all these theaters. He was Associate Artistic Director of Anna Deavere Smith's Institute on the Arts & Civic Dialogue at Harvard University. He has also directed for dozens of professional regional theatres, festivals, and universities. He has narrated the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, and has toured the former Soviet Union and Kenya via the United States Information Agency. He was Director of the Institute for Teledramatic Arts and Technology at...
California State University. He has taught at the North Carolina School of the Arts, American Theater Conservatory, California State University, Colorado College, Kenyatta University, Kenya, Contra Costa College, Brown University, University of California, University of North Carolina, and Florida Atlantic University. He has served on numerous regional and national boards, including Theatre Communications Group and is an active advocate of cultural equity, non-traditional casting, and pluralism in the American theater. His work has earned many awards throughout the country. Mr. Ambush earned his MFA in Directing from University of California, San Diego and his BA from Brown University.

**George Stevens, Jr. (Playwright)** is a writer, director, producer, playwright and author. As a writer, director, and producer, Stevens has earned many accolades, including 17 Emmys, two Peabody Awards for Meritorious Service to Broadcasting, the Humanitas Prize and eight awards from the Writers Guild of America, including the Paul Selvin Award for writing that embodies civil rights and liberties. In 2012 the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences voted to present Stevens with an Honorary Academy Award for “extraordinary distinction in lifetime achievement.” Stevens serves as Co-chairman of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities following his appointment by President Obama in 2009. Stevens is founder of the American Film Institute and during his tenure, more than 10,000 irreplaceable American films were preserved and catalogued to be enjoyed by future generations. In addition, he established the AFI's Center for Advanced Film Studies, which gained a reputation as the finest learning opportunity for young filmmakers. Stevens made his debut as a playwright in 2008 with *Thurgood*, which opened at the historic Booth Theater on Broadway. The play had an extended run starring Laurence Fishburne as Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. Fishburne received a Tony nomination and returned to the role in the summer of 2010 with runs at the Kennedy Center and the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles. *Thurgood* was filmed while at the Kennedy Center and shown on HBO in 2011. Stevens was executive producer of *The Thin Red Line*, which was nominated for seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture. He co-wrote and produced *The Murder of Mary Phagan*, starring Jack Lemmon, which received the Emmy for Outstanding Mini-Series. He wrote and directed *Separate But Equal* starring Sidney Poitier and Burt Lancaster which also won the Emmy for Outstanding Mini-Series. Stevens won two Emmys for the 1994 documentary, *George Stevens: D-Day to Berlin*, which depicted the wartime experiences of his
father, one of the most highly regarded directors of all time. He produced an acclaimed feature length film about his father, George Stevens: A Filmmaker’s Journey.

* Denotes member of Actors’ Equity Association (AEA)
** Member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

**THURGOOD** at a glance

Playwright: George Stevens, Jr.

Director: Benny Sato Ambush**

Cast: Johnny Lee Davenport* Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall

Production Team: Ryan Bates Scenic Designer
Bridget Doyle Lighting Designer
Dewey Dellay Sound Designer
Becca Freifeld* Stage Manager
Benjamin Finn Tour Coordinator

**About NEW REPERTORY THEATRE**

New Repertory Theatre is the award-winning, professional theatre company in residence at the Mosesian Center for the Arts in Watertown, MA. For over 30 years, New Rep has been a leader of self-produced theatre in greater Boston, producing contemporary and classic dramas, comedies, and musicals in both the 340-seat MainStage Theater and the 90-seat BlackBox Theater. Annually, New Rep serves over 40,000 patrons, including 2,000 season subscribers. In addition to its mainstage productions, New Rep produces Next Voices, a program dedicated to developing new plays with playwrights through staged readings and world premiere production. Under its Lifelong Enrichment Arts Programs (LEAP), New Rep also produces its Classic Repertory Company, Page To Stage, Insider Experiences, and Spotlight Symposium Series.

**New Rep’s Mission**
New Repertory Theatre produces plays that speak powerfully to the vital ideas of our time.

**What we do:**

- Through the passion and electricity of live theater performed to the highest standards of excellence, New Rep seeks to spark community conversations on crucial contemporary issues.

- Our work expands and challenges the human spirit of both artists and audiences. We present world premieres, contemporary plays and classic works in several intimate settings. Our productions are designed to be accessible to all. We are committed to education and enrichment for learners of all ages, with a special dedication to the creation of innovative in-school programming and outreach to underserved audiences. We embrace theater as the basis for enduring connections with our community and as a springboard for meaningful civic engagement.

- New Rep is an active advocate for the arts and a major voice in the national dialogue defining the role of theater in our culture.