

# TAPROOT THEATRE



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## TAPROOT THEATRE COMPANY CELEBRATES CLOSE OF 2008 SEASON OF DISCOVERY

**Taproot welcomes new season with three regional premieres,  
plus new development and marketing directors**

SEATTLE – March 20, 2009 – Taproot Theatre Company celebrates the close of its 2008 Season of Discovery and a successful start of 2009. On the Mainstage, Taproot served 29,728 ticketholders in 2008, from its dedicated subscribers to single-ticket holders—many of whom discovered Taproot Theatre for the first time. Kicking off its 2008 season was Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, which was given a free-spirited American 1960s twist. Next came a critically-acclaimed production of John Patrick Shanley’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Doubt, A Parable*, followed by Joe DiPietro’s *Over the River and Through the Woods*, which sparked an unusually high amount of response from inspired patrons. Then in the summer, director Karen Lund brought her bold vision to the large-scale Tony Award-winning musical *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, staging it in Taproot’s intimate space. In the fall, Taproot presented *Susan and God*—a 1930s Broadway hit that had faded into obscurity for decades before being revived off-Broadway in 2006. Taproot Theatre closed its final production of 2008, *The Christmas Foundling*, on December 27.

“We’re very proud of the plays we produced for our audiences in 2008, and pleased with the terrific response to each one,” said producing artistic director Scott Nolte. “Despite an economy in crisis and December’s snow storms, our artists were challenged, audiences turned out for each play and we all celebrated the stories on stage. And with the increasing need for student and senior discounts and pay-what-you-can shows, we’re exceptionally thankful for our generous donors who help us serve so many people.”

Plus, Nolte pointed out, “The enthusiasm for 2008’s season is already producing momentum for 2009, with current season ticket sales ahead of last year.”

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In addition to its regular performances, Taproot Theatre Company continued to educate students throughout the Puget Sound region with its student matinee program. Serving 1,182 students through eight student matinee performances in 2008, Taproot also provided educational materials to help students understand and appreciate the plays. Taproot Theatre also served 599 seniors through five senior matinees.

Off the Mainstage, Taproot Theatre's touring actors brought the joy and educational value of live theatre to 111,448 people in 98 cities. Out of those 337 performances, the Road Company performed 238 times at elementary and secondary schools throughout the Pacific Northwest, teaching youth important lessons about preventing bullying and treating others with respect. The Road Company traveled as far as the Yakima Valley, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Portland in 2008. One of the major successes was introducing a new play dealing with cyber bullying into its repertoire. *New Girl* by Josh Hornbeck is aimed at preventing cyber bullying by educating youth and showing them the tragic results that sending or posting an insulting or threatening message can have. All in all, Taproot's educational touring reached 96,688 people in 2008.

Taproot Theatre's Acting Studio had a successful year serving 1,750 students. It was able to offer almost \$8,500 in scholarships to over 40 students who could not otherwise afford to attend classes. Class offerings increased by 30%, with 45 onsite classes for children and adults, as well as various offsite classes and the church drama conference. Taproot's Acting Studio also continued to serve students through its residency program, which allows schools and other organizations to provide professional acting training to their students. Continuing its residency at Fairfax Hospital, a psychiatric hospital in Kirkland, an Acting Studio teacher taught two classes each week for kids and teens ages 4 to 17. The Acting Studio also began year-long residencies at James Madison Middle School in West Seattle and North Beach Elementary School in Ballard in the fall, and conducted a two-month residency at The Orion Center for the Right Brain.

Taproot Theatre saw a major increase in its contribution income in 2008, primarily because of the three-year grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust. That grant made it possible for Taproot to hire its first development director in four years. Taproot Theatre also lowered its mortgage obligation more than 25% in 2008 because of designated gifts through the Prologue Campaign, and increased its net assets and generated a net surplus for the fourth consecutive year.

Taproot's new development director, Darrell Johnson, was previously the district executive of the Boy Scouts of America in Wenatchee, and also previously worked at Tacoma Symphony Orchestra. In addition to hiring him, Taproot Theatre added a new marketing director to its ranks, to replace Margaret

Shultz, who left Taproot last spring. Nikki Visel joined the team in January 2009, coming from Restaurants Unlimited, where she was the marketing manager.

Looking forward to 2009, Taproot Theatre plunged right into the new season with a strong Mainstage offering with ***Gee's Bend***, the celebrated play by Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder. Through this regional premiere, Taproot made connections with the Northwest African American Museum, Greg Kucera Gallery, the Pacific Northwest African American Quilters Association, Tacoma Art Museum and the women of Gee's Bend, AL. Future productions this season include ***Tuesdays with Morrie***; the highly-theatrical adventure story ***Around the World in 80 Days***; ***Smoke on the Mountain Homecoming***—the third and final installment of the beloved Sanders family series; and ***Enchanted April***. Subscription sales for 2009 have already surpassed the 2008 total, and are well on their way toward reaching the goal.

Taproot Theatre is currently planning its annual Gala fundraiser. The event takes place on Saturday, April 18, at The Triple Door in downtown Seattle, and features Grant Goodeve as master of ceremonies.

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#### **ABOUT TAPROOT THEATRE COMPANY**

Taproot Theatre Company is a professional, non-profit theatre company with a multi-faceted production program. Founded in 1976, Taproot Theatre serves the Pacific Northwest with Mainstage Productions, Touring Productions and Acting Studio. Taproot exists to create theatre that explores the beauty and questions of life while bringing hope to our search for meaning. Taproot Theatre Company is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), Theatre Puget Sound (TPS), and the Greenwood-Phinney Chamber of Commerce.

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