



STAGGER LEE by the numb#rs

5 workshop performances	17 Creative Team Members	8 musicians playing Twenty-Three instruments
EIGHTEEN drafts of the SCRIPT	Cast Members 23	
Times WILL POWER Thought the Show Would Never Happen One	15 Production Team Members	Six the most instruments played by one person
# of hours spent in rehearsal between 500 the workshops and the production	9 Technical Crew Members	

Dallas Theater Center

ASSOCIATE PRODUCING PARTNER: JPMORGAN CHASE & CO. ASSISTANT PRODUCING PARTNER: Haynes and Boone, LLP

A PRESENTATION OF THE **Kimberley and Scott Sheffield Musical Theater Series**

SPECIAL FUNDING PROVIDED BY MEMBERS OF THE **Stagger Lee Society**

Stagger Lee was partially developed in workshops in collaboration with the Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas as a part of Will Powers' Meadows Prize residency.

Dallas Theater Center would like to recognize the generosity of our major corporate partners. PIONEER The Moody Foundation Neiman Marcus Pier 1® Target Southwest Securities, Inc.

Stay Connected @ [Facebook] [Twitter] [YouTube] [Instagram] [Pinterest]

TOP: Cast members in rehearsal for DTC's world premiere of *Stagger Lee*.

STAGGER LEE

A World Premiere Musical

BOOK AND LYRICS BY WILL POWER
MUSIC BY WILL POWER AND JUSTIN ELLINGTON
DIRECTED BY PATRICIA MCGREGOR

JAN. 21-FEB. 15 WYLY THEATRE

Stagger Lee brings popular African American folk characters to life and juxtaposes them with historical events, tracing the evolution of African American culture and music over the past 125 years.

In 1895, Billy, his beloved wife Delilah, Delilah's brother Johnny, and Johnny's girlfriend Frankie migrate from the oppressive Jim Crow South in search of new opportunities. The magical realism of the storytelling brings them to St. Louis in 1910, Harlem in 1930, Chicago in 1951, Oakland in 1973, Detroit in 1987, and a suburban community in the present day. The music that pulses through each time period serves as the backbeat of their story: jazz, big band, doo-wop, soul, R&B, and hip-hop.

Billy, Delilah, Johnny and Frankie are followed through time and space by the menacing Stagger Lee, a powerful figure who threatens their new lives in each new era and each new community. It is an aspirational tale about pursuing the American Dream while being chased by a haunting and relentless past.

Dallas Theater Center

the StudyGuide 2014 Season

WILL POWER is an award-winning playwright and performer. Power's body of work includes *Fetch Clay, Make Man*, which recently enjoyed a successful run Off-Broadway at the New York Theatre Workshop; *Steel Hammer* with SITI Company; *The Seven*; *Five Fingers of Funk!*; *Honey Bo and The Goldmine*; and two acclaimed solo shows, *The Gathering and Flow*, which toured over 70 cities in the U.S., Europe and Australia. Power's numerous awards include a United States Artist Prudential Fellowship, the TCG Peter Zeisler Memorial Award, a Jury Award for Best Theatre Performance at the HBO U.S. Comedy Arts Festival and the Trailblazer Award from The National Black Theater Network. His numerous film and television appearances include *The Colbert Report* (Comedy Central), and *Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason* (PBS).



Will Power
the Playwright

Power spent his early years as a key member in two critically acclaimed avant-garde music groups, *Midnight Voices* and the *Omar Sosa Sextet*, both with which Power recorded and toured extensively. More recently, Power has traveled on multiple occasions to teach theatre across the globe. Power was a guest of the U.S. State Department on five separate occasions, traveling to South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. On these trips and others, he taught community workshops in shantytowns, worked with poets in former regimes of the Soviet Union and lectured at various libraries, grammar schools and colleges. Power is currently on the faculty at SMU Meadows School of the Arts and is the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Playwright-in-Residence with Dallas Theater Center.

LYON, MISSISSIPPI, 1895 At the time this was no place for Billy and Delilah to make a home. From the state's severe economic depression, disenfranchisement of black voters, increasingly restrictive segregation laws and repeated incidents of racial violence, the characters had no choice but to look for equality elsewhere.

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, 1910 Although Billy and Delilah imagine the city as a beacon of racial equality, St. Louis in the early twentieth century faces serious economic decline, pro-segregation politics, and an infamously violent race riot.

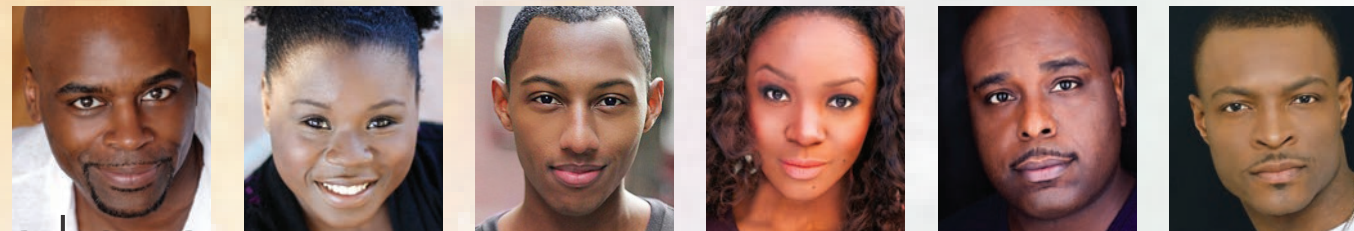
HARLEM, NEW YORK, 1930 As the characters move farther north, they find themselves in the midst of a social, cultural, and artistic boom known today as the Harlem Renaissance.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 1951 Billy and Delilah try to find a home in the South Side, an historically black Chicago neighborhood, as well as in Cicero, a wealthier, whiter suburb.

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 1973 Just a few years before Billy and Delilah arrived on the scene, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party, a revolutionary black nationalist group, in Oakland, California.

DETROIT, MICHIGAN, 1987 After decades of sky-high racial tension, in the 1970s and 1980s Detroit experienced a phenomenon known as "White Flight"—a large majority of white Detroit-natives abandoned the city.

the Characters



PICTURED ABOVE: CEDRIC NEAL, TIFFANY MANN, BRANDON GILL, SAYCON SENGBLOH, J. BERNARD CALLOWAY, and RICKY TRIPP.

WILLIAM "BILLY" LYONS: A young African American man who is constantly in search of a better life for his wife and three children. After escaping slavery in his home of Lyon, Mississippi, he moves his family to different cities in the United States in hopes of finding the "right" place to settle down and provide for his family. Sometimes, his darker side comes out when he's in the company of his dangerous friend, Stagger Lee. At his core, Billy is a hardworking man with a kind heart, who only wants the very best for his family and will do anything for them. **(Played by CEDRIC NEAL)**

DELILAH LYONS: Billy's wife. The mother of three children, Delilah is a woman desperately pursuing the American Dream – her own house where she can protect her beautiful family. After leaving her children in Mississippi, Delilah joins her husband in St. Louis to begin their search for a home in the North, in hopes of sending for her children when they finally find their footing. Delilah senses danger instantly and staves it off, which makes Stagger Lee, the most dangerous man of all, her greatest enemy. **(Played by TIFFANY MANN)**

JOHNNY: Delilah's brother. Like Billy, Johnny is looking to start a new life for his wife, Frankie, and the children they hope to have someday. However, he has a tendency to lash out violently, and forgets to be faithful to his wife when he's tempted to stray. **(Played by BRANDON GILL)**

BETTY HIGHTOWER (FRANKIE THEENA SUE): Frankie, originally from the South, changes her name to Betty Hightower when she moves to St. Louis in order to fit in with the aristocratic black culture that has developed there over the years. She's Delilah's best friend and remains Johnny's devoted wife, regardless of his actions. **(Played by SAYCON SENGBLOH)**

STAGGER LEE: A large, hulking man with violent tendencies, hailing from Billy's hometown of Lyon, Mississippi. All his life, Stagger Lee has been the man on top, and when he follows the Lyons family to St. Louis, Missouri, he can't help but search for ways to make his presence known. In whatever way he can, Stagger Lee uses his size, strength, and powers of intimidation to get what he wants. However, many in the community refer to him as a protective hero instead of a villain. **(Played by J. BERNARD CALLOWAY)**

LONG LOST JOHN: An ex-slave who escaped from prison and has never stopped running. Originally, he was a prisoner who escaped by wearing special shoes with a double heel, making strange marks in the mud and confusing catchers about which way he might have gone. Long Lost John, because he's escaping, is constantly on the run from those who might throw him back in jail. In *Stagger Lee*, he runs so fast that he actually crosses through time. **(Played by RICKY TRIPP)**

Watercolor map by Audrey DeFord.



the Journey of Stagger Lee