

A Brief History . . .

The Atlanta Municipal Theatre christened the Alliance Stage in October 1968 with an awe-inspiring production of **King Arthur**. After some initial restructuring, the theatre changed its name in 1970 to the Alliance Theatre Company. By the late 1970s, Artistic Director Fred Chappell and Managing Director Bernard Havard celebrated a period of artistic and financial growth including the World Premiere of Tennessee Williams' **Tiger Tail** and the presence of actors Richard Dreyfuss, Paul Winfield, Morgan Freeman and Jane Alexander.

In the 1980s, Edith Love served as managing director and Bob Farley was named artistic director. Artistic highlights included the World Premiere of Sandra Deer's **So Long on Lonely Street**, which moved to Broadway, and Alfred Uhry's **Driving Miss Daisy**, which ran for two years in the Hertz Stage and toured to Russia and China.

In 1989 Kenny Leon joined the Alliance staff as assistant director and in 1990 was tapped as artistic director. Leon made substantial changes during his tenure - diversifying the staff, the productions and the artists. As a result of his efforts, the African-American audience grew from less than 5% in 1990 to more than 25% today. The theatre produced several world premieres during this time including Pearl Cleage's **Blues for an Alabama Sky** and Alfred Uhry's **The Last Night of Ballyhoo**. The Alliance Theatre also experienced a tremendous increase in national prominence during Leon's tenure. National foundations including the Shubert Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund awarded significant funding to the Alliance.

The theatre celebrated its 30th anniversary in 1998-99 with the World Premiere of Elton John and Tim Rice's **Elaborate Lives: The Legend of Aida**, produced by special arrangement with Walt Disney Theatrical Productions. *Aida* opened on Broadway in the spring of 2000, and received the 2000 Tony Awards for Lead Actress in a Musical, Best Original Score, Lighting Design and Scenic Design.

In July 2000 after 11 years as artistic director, Leon resigned his position, leading to a national search for his replacement. In July 2001 Susan V. Booth began her tenure as the Alliance's artistic director. Arriving with a wealth of experience in directing, producing and new play development, Booth holds a firm commitment to the creation of new works for the American theatre, coupled with fresh explorations of classical works that impact our current time and place. In support of her belief that new literature demands new audiences, she supports an expansion of the Alliance's youth theatre programming with the addition of a teen-created theatre piece.

Since Booth's arrival, the theatre has produced several notable world premieres including adaptations of Carson McCullers' **The Heart is a Lonely Hunter** (2005) and Alice Walker's **The Color Purple** (2004), the latter opening on Broadway and garnering 11 Tony Award nominations. In 2004, the first annual Alliance Theatre National Graduate Playwriting Competition winner was produced on the Hertz Stage. The program was re-named the Kendeda Graduate Playwriting Competition in 2005 (based upon a gift to permanently fund the competition).

In 2007, the Alliance received the Regional Theatre Tony Award® for outstanding achievement and produced its 60th premiere production.