

# CREATIVETIME

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**CREATIVE TIME PRESENTS**  
**PAUL CHAN'S**  
***WAITING FOR GODOT IN NEW ORLEANS***  
**A PLAY IN TWO ACTS. A PROJECT IN THREE PARTS.**

**NOVEMBER 2 & 3, 2007 LOWER NINTH WARD**  
**NOVEMBER 9 & 10, 2007 GENTILLY**



Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans, May 2007. Image courtesy Creative Time

*Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! (Pause. Vehemently.) Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say?*

—*Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett

(September 25, 2007 New York, NY) Creative Time is pleased to announce the presentation of *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*, a project by Paul Chan, co-produced by Creative Time with curator Nato Thompson and The Classical Theatre of Harlem with director Christopher McElroen, featuring New Orleans born actor Wendell Pierce, and in collaboration with New Orleans' partners: University of New Orleans,

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Xavier University, Dillard University, NOCCA High School, Lusher High School, Frederic Douglass High School, John McDonough High School, Students at the Center, Neighborhood Story Project, The Porch, and Renaissance Project.

*Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* is a multi-faceted project including:

- free public performances of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*
- theater workshops, educational seminars, and community conversations and dinners
- a "shadow" fund
- a publication and a short film

The play will take place over two weekends in November in two neighborhoods — the middle of an intersection in the Lower Ninth Ward, and the front yard of an abandoned house in Gentilly. The production re-imagines the post-Katrina landscape of New Orleans as the setting for the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most emblematic story of waiting, and in doing so, illuminates the personal and political conditions facing the people of New Orleans and the evacuees in surrounding cities.

Paul Chan is currently in New Orleans teaching contemporary art seminars, open to the public, at Xavier University and The University of New Orleans for the fall semester. In October, members of The Classical Theatre of Harlem will be conducting acting workshops with high schools and community groups, and a series of potluck dinners and conversations, with the producers and cast, will be held in different neighborhoods. A "shadow" fund, matching the production budget dollar-for-dollar, will be given to local organizations for rebuilding efforts in neighborhoods where the play is presented.

Experimental and avant-garde filmmaker Cauleen Smith is creating a new short film in New Orleans - part fantasy, part documentation - as part of the *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* project. In addition, Creative Time Books will release *Waiting: a New Orleans Reader*, to be distributed with D.A.P., and host events with the artists in NYC in early spring 2008.

## BACKGROUND

For the past nine months, Paul Chan has worked with New Orleanian artists, activists, and organizers to formalize the shape of the play and broaden the social scope of the project. Visiting New Orleans for the first time in November 2006, the artist was struck by the disquieting stillness: no hammer sounds banging in the distance, no construction crews yelling to one another, no cranes visible on the skyline. His immediate response to the city was to imagine an outdoor performance of Samuel Beckett's legendary play, *Waiting for Godot*. "The longing for the new is a reminder of what is worth renewing. Seeing *Godot* embedded in the very fabric of the landscape of New Orleans was way of re-imagining the empty roads, the debris, and, above all, the bleak silence as more than the expression of mere collapse," stated Chan. This production continues the presentation of the play in politically charged environments, including San Quentin prison (1957), a performance directed by Susan Sontag in war-torn Sarajevo (1993), and Classical Theatre of Harlem's post-Katrina inspired production featuring New Orleans native Wendell Pierce in Harlem (2006).

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As an arts organization that for 33 years has enlivened public space in NYC and challenged the notion of what art can be, Creative Time immediately signed on to present this project in New Orleans and launch its national program. “We traveled with Paul Chan to lay the groundwork with the goal to involve and benefit the local community in all facets of the production. Meetings were held with neighborhood groups and individuals to listen to concerns, learn from their insights, and adapt planning with their challenging advice,” stated Anne Pasternak, President and Artistic Director, Creative Time. “More than a play, the work is a socially engaged performance at the heart of a national crisis,” added Nato Thompson, Curator and Producer, Creative Time.

## CAST

The cast features actors based in New Orleans, found through open auditions, working with actors from The Classical Theatre of Harlem who performed in the New York City presentation of *Waiting for Godot* in 2006. The character “Boy” will be played by 2 young local actors on different nights.

Cast: Wendell Pierce (Vladimir), J. Kyle Manzay (Estragon), T. Ryder Smith (Pozzo), Mark McLaughlin (Lucky), Tony Felix (Boy), Michael Pepp (Boy)

## PAUL CHAN

Working in a variety of mediums, Paul Chan has achieved international acclaim for his drawings, installations, and animated digital projections that incorporate philosophical reflections on politics, war, and life. Chan's work has been exhibited worldwide including recent solo exhibitions at: Serpentine Gallery, London (2007); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2007); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2005); UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2005). He has also worked with the Nobel peace prize nominated aid group Voices in the Wilderness (with whom he spent an unsanctioned month in Iraq) and designed The People's Guide to the Republican National Convention. Chan's work will be exhibited at the New Museum, New York, in spring 2008.

## CLASSICAL THEATRE OF HARLEM

Classical Theatre of Harlem (CTH), a nonprofit theatre company, was founded in 1999 by Christopher McElroen and Alfred Preisser. In each of its productions—which have included numerous works by Shakespeare, a new stage adaptation of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Melvin Van Peebles' *Ain't Supposed To Die A Natural Death* and Jean Genet's seminal political drama, *The Blacks: A Clown Show*—the Classical Theatre of Harlem is dedicated to producing theatre that truly reflects the diversity of ideas and racial tapestry of America. In 2006, CTH staged a post-Katrina production of *Waiting for Godot* hailed as “bracing and immediate ... A thrilling new *Godot* for our times” by TimeOut NY. Their long list of awards includes 5 OBIE Awards, 2 Lucille Lortel Awards, Drama Desk Award, Edwin Booth Award for Artistic Excellence, among many others.

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Creative Time launches its national public art program with *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*. Based in New York, the non-profit public arts organization, has presented innovative art for the past three decades. It works with artists and audiences to explore ideas that shape society to ensure that art remains a meaningful part of society, available and relevant to millions of people beyond differences of race, class, religion, or culture. Recent projects include *Tribute in Light*, which served as a gesture of hope and healing after 9/11; *Doug Aitken: Sleepwalkers*, a film projected on the Museum of Modern Art, NY; and *Who Cares*, a series of projects that explored art and social action.

## FUNDING

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