

# Radium:

## FROM MIRACLE CURE TO SILENT KILLER

In the early years of the 20th century, a New Jersey company developed a lucrative business selling bottles of radioactive water, promoting it as a tonic to bring consumers new vigor and energy. Radium was infused into candy, soda, and even facial creams. It was promoted as a cure for all sort of ills. And in a much more practical vein, paint containing radium made it possible to construct watches and clocks and dials that glowed in the dark. A new industry was born, and factories were set up in the Northeast, Canada, and the Midwest to meet the demand from civilian and military buyers for these modern marvels.

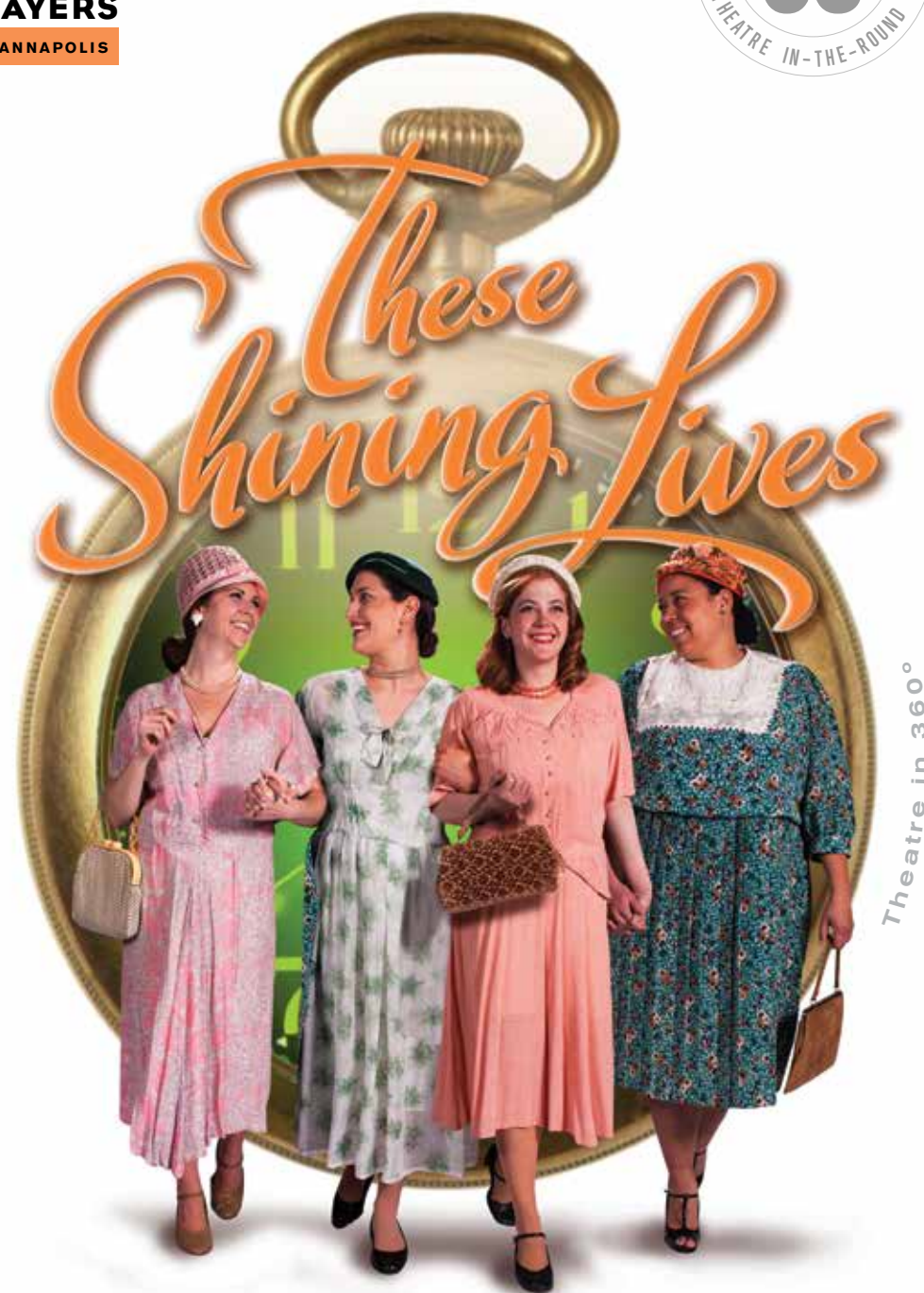
The factories included one in Ottawa, IL., established by the U.S. Radium Corporation, that is the site of Melanie Marnich's *These Shining Lives*, which she describes as a work of creative nonfiction inspired by real people and events. These plants made thousands of good-paying jobs available to women, who had few economic opportunities at the time. The job for the "radium girls," as they came to be known, was simple. They were given pots of radioluminescent paint and camel hair brushes to hand-paint clock and watch faces.

Borrowing a technique used for painting china dishes, the women were taught to dip the brush in the paint and then touch it to their tongues and lips to achieve a fine point. And with that one simple technique, a job that would have been dangerous anyway became deadly. Managers assured the women that the paint was harmless, shrugging off the fact that they often went home with glowing hands, teeth and lips. It isn't clear if the companies were aware of the extreme danger inherent in handling highly radioactive paint when the Ottawa plant opened in 1922. After all, radium was considered almost a cure-all for diseases. But warning signs came quickly as watch painters began to complain about pain, especially in the jaws, and as they began to lose teeth for no discernible reason.

About the time the Ottawa plant opened, a doctor hundreds of miles away in New Jersey detected serious bone decay in Grace Fryer, a bank teller who had worked previously at a radium dial plant. More and more women in New Jersey began to develop serious problems, but company officials adamantly denied that radium paint was the cause even as they strictly controlled radium exposure of their scientists and managers. First in New Jersey, led by Grace Flyer, and later in Illinois, Radium Girls waged long and difficult court battles against their employers. They eventually won, and courts in both states ordered redress for the victims, but the victory came too late for some, and the payments were minimal compensation for others whose lives had been destroyed.

As a result of the lawsuits and a growing scientific consensus that radium was fatal when ingested, factory owners initiated new practices to reduce radium exposure and protect workers. The legal settlements won by the Radium Girls are considered to be an important milestone in developing government programs to protect American workers. Scientists later developed phosphorescent paints and materials which glow harmlessly in the dark for a few hours. Children lying in their beds at night can gaze at glowing stars on their ceilings without fears of radium poisoning.

— TOM STUCKEY





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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I was reading some of H.L. Mencken's writings the other day. I had always heard about his brilliant literary career but never found the time to read his words. I came across this:

*We Americanos lie in the gutter of civilization, but all the while our eyes steal cautious glances at the stars.*

Our play today is one of these glances, a glance illuminating the gulf between our earthly selves and our celestial nature. As humans, we appear trapped by the passing of time, time that marches us to our death. Yet while here on earth, we are given every opportunity to discover our true nature, as Mencken did in his writing, revealing the timeless angel residing within each of us.

Catherine explains at the very beginning of our play that this tale is neither a tragedy nor a fairy tale. *"It's something else. We're something else."* It's a tale of human vulnerability and ultimate victory. There is suffering, for we are earthly creatures, naturally. But our suffering, our seeming succumbing to the undertow of time can never really destroy us. In death, our spirit simply retakes its place in the star-filled sky, or in the light glinting off the waves of a limitless sea. Our time here is brief, but is not without purpose. We are here to brighten the world, as Catherine does at the Radium Dial factory, one brush stroke of radium at a time.

Nature may appear cruel. Radium can kill us. But it can never destroy our shining lives.

— TERRY AVERILL

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ON WHAT'S GOING ON AT CP.



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Set/Floor Painting Designer.....Laurie Nolan  
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## COMING NEXT SEASON

The plays have been chosen, the directors selected, and Colonial Players is already making plans for our 66th season that begins next September. Keep an eye out for information about purchasing subscriptions for the 2014-15 season. In the meantime, here's a brief look at what is in store. For the first time, the Richard Wade-Dick Gessner version of *A Christmas Carol* will be part of the regular subscription season along with a second musical, *Ernest in Love*, which is based on Oscar Wilde's classic comedy, *The Importance of Being Ernest*. The slate includes two dramatic gems: Lillian Hellman's World War II drama, *Watch on the Rhine*; and the military courtroom drama, *A Few Good Men*. Rounding out the slate are three distinctly different comedies: *Rocket Man*, a play about one man's quest and its impact on his loved ones; *The Liar*, a comedy of errors set in Paris in 1643; and *Why Torture is Wrong and the People who Love Them*, a raucous and provocative satire about America's growing homeland "insecurity."

## TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS *(continued)*

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## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

**MELANIE MARNICH** is a playwright who also has extensive experience as a television producer and writer. She is best known for her work on the HBO drama *Big Love*, which earned her a nomination for a Writers Guild of America award in 2010. She also has been a writer and producer for *The Big C*, a Showtime television series. Seventeen of her plays have been produced in regional theaters across the United States and in England. *These Shining Lives*, which had its world premiere six years ago at Center Stage in Baltimore, was a finalist

for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and the Weissberger Award. Two of her plays, *Quake* and *Tallgrass Gothic*, were initially produced at Louisville's Humana Festival of New American Plays, and her adaptation of Katie Couric's book, *The Brand New Kid*, premiered at the Kennedy Center in 2006. Ms. Marnich's awards include two McKnight Advancement Grants, two Jerome Fellowships, and the Samuel Goldwyn Award. She is married to playwright Lee Blessing, whose plays *Two Rooms* and *Going to St. Ives* have been produced by Colonial Players.

## ABOUT OUR NEXT SHOW

A woman at an outdoor cafe impulsively picks up an incessantly ringing cell phone, only to discover that the man at the adjoining table has quietly died. Jean just as impulsively holds on to the phone and begins to take the dead man's calls from friends and family. In the offbeat comedy *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, playwright Sarah Ruhl takes a look at human isolation during a time when we all can be instantly connected to almost everyone we know. Ms. Ruhl's *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play* was a big hit with Colonial Players audiences last year, and she brings that same quirky sense of humor to *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. As Jean begins to answer Gordon's telephone, she slowly becomes involved in the lives of his friends and family, hoping to make them feel better and to portray Gordon's last minutes in

a favorable light. Along the way, as she learns about the dead man's many faults, Ms. Ruhl takes us into a swirling exploration of how little we may know about other people, even those we marry, work with, and befriend. *Variety* described the play as a "zany probe of the razor-thin line between life and death" and said the playwright "delivers a fresh and humorous look at the times we live in." *The Washington Post* reviewer had this to say about the play: "In her new oddball comedy, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, Sarah Ruhl is forever vital in her lyrical and biting takes on how we behave." The play wraps up the Colonial Players 2013-14 season and runs from June 13 through June 26. Tickets are available now at [thecolonialplayers.org](http://thecolonialplayers.org) or by calling 410-268-7373.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

We heard the scientist in France, Marie Curie, could not believe "the manner in which we worked" and how we tasted that pretty paint a hundred times a day. Now, even our crumbling bones will glow forever in the black earth.

— from the poem "Radium Girls"  
by Eleanor Swanson

The most important thing to remember about the characters you will see today is that they were real people, and their story was real. Though creative license has been used to imagine their conversations, the spine of the story is factual.

Orange, NJ. Waterbury, CT. Ottawa, IL.

Hundreds of women painted dials at clock factories in these towns in the 1920s and '30s. Women had recently gained the right to vote, and other new opportunities and freedoms were opening up for women all the time. It was an age of wonder, including a new substance – radium – that some people thought would be the greatest achievement of the century. Some of the women painted their fingernails or teeth with the glowing paint to amuse their friends and loved ones. It was funny. It was steady work. It was good money. It was folly. It was not long before strange health problems began cropping up among the dial painters.

A few weeks ago, the New York Times reported the death of Mae Keane, at 107 "perhaps the last living participant in a particularly dark moment in American industrial history." Mrs. Keane had worked one summer at the Waterbury Clock Company in 1924, but according to the Times, she didn't care for the taste and texture of the radium-tinged paint, and management was not happy with her apparent lack of skill: "After a

few months, she was gone. It was the summer of 1924. She was 18. Within two decades she had lost all her teeth."

Women who became ill from effects of radium poisoning sometimes lost not only their teeth but also their jawbones. They suffered from infections and cancer. And though Mrs. Keane lost her teeth and suffered through two bouts of cancer, she somehow managed to live on, most likely because her stint in the factory was so brief.

With her passing, it seems the Radium Girls, as they were dubbed, are all relegated to memory. But they continue to inspire. These women live on now not just in photographs and old newspaper clippings, but in poetry, in books, and in plays like this one.

*These Shining Lives* is not melodrama. It is not particularly polemical. The thrust of the piece is not about corporate greed, or labor reform, or the costs of pursuing – and achieving – the American Dream. Instead, it focuses on the relationships between Catherine and her husband, and among Catherine and her co-workers.

What I find most compelling about these characters is that no matter what other qualities they display, above all else they illuminate the strength of the human spirit to stick together, to persevere, and to prevail. We tell their story not as a call to action, but simply because these women are worth knowing, worth remembering, worth honoring.

Orange, NJ. Waterbury, CT. Ottawa, IL. Here's to all the Radium Girls – may their memories continue to shine brightly.

— CRAIG ALLEN MUMMEY

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

**CRAIG ALLEN MUMMEY** has been working in theater since 1991 and directing since 1997. At CP: *Lettice and Lovage*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Assassins*, *Arcadia*, *Rebecca*, *On Golden Pond*, *Rumors*. At Silver Spring Stage: *The Pillowman* (WATCH nomination for best play), *Blackbird* (Ruby Griffith Award), *The Goat or, Who Is Sylvia?* (WATCH Award, Ruby Griffith Award), *Dinner with Friends*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. Elsewhere: *The Glass Menagerie* (Ruby Griffith

Award, WATCH nomination), *The Heiress* (Ruby Griffith Award), *The Nerd*, *Marvin's Room* – all at Bowie Community Theatre; *Hair* – Kensington Arts Theatre; *Dancing at Lughnasa* – Quotidian Theatre. Craig has also been an actor, stage manager, and set designer, among other things. He has been active in management roles as well, having served on the boards at three different theaters, as well as WATCH. He dedicates this show to his sister and her daughters.



## THE CAST



### BEN CARR

(Tom Donohue)

Ben is excited to be back performing at Colonial Players. Some of his previous roles at CP include Biff Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, Mike Conner in *The Philadelphia Story*, Michael Wells in *Two Rooms*, and Hertel Daggett in *Dog Logic*. He has also performed at Standing O Productions in *Retreat From Moscow* and *Tracers* and at Dignity Players in *Stones in His Pocket*. He would like to thank Craig and the rest of the cast for making this such a wonderful experience. "Most importantly, I would like to tell my wife, Cassie, that I love you and thank you for giving me the greatest treasure of all...twice!"



### DAVID CARTER

(Mr. Reed, Radio Announcer, Son, Leonard Grossman)

Dave is excited to be back performing at Colonial Players after playing the villainous Julian earlier this season in *Communicating Doors* and stage managing last season's *Taking Steps*. He is proud to be a part of bringing the amazing story of *These Shining Lives* to the stage. He will also be involved as a director for the summer's One Act Play Festival. Most of his theater experience was on the West Coast, where he was involved with shows such as *Lend Me a Tenor*, *Oedipus*, and *Our Country's Good*. His training began with Citrus College and extended to The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Dave feels that most of what he brings to the stage comes from the people he has worked with in the theater as well as the great thing we call Life.



### JOSETTE DUBOIS

(Frances, Reporter 2)

Josette is pleased to be making her return to theater after a hiatus of more than two years. Previous credits on this stage include: *A Christmas Carol* (2006, 2007, and 2008), *Moon Over Buffalo* (Eileen), *The Game* (Life), *Trifles* (Mrs. Peters), *She Loves Me* (Customer), *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Emilie), *The Curious Savage* (Florence), and *Sonata* (Adult Beth). Other past credits include:

*Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Interpreter) and *Quilters* at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre, *The Crucible* (Abigail Williams) at Dignity Players, and *The Rocky Horror Show* (Phantom) with Factory Edge Theatre Works. Josette would like to thank her co-workers for covering her shifts during rehearsals and performances and her boyfriend for putting up with her many late nights.



### ERIC HUFFORD

(Dr. Rowntree, Company Doctor, Dr. Dalitsch, Tom Donohue (U/S))

Eric is happy to be back for his fifth production at Colonial Players. Previously, he has been seen as Leslie Bainbridge in *Taking Steps*, Thomas Jefferson in *1776*, Fred and Young Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, and as Sheriff Joe Sutter in *The Spitfire Grill*. He got his start in theater in high school and portrayed Tom in *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* in college. He reconnected with his love for theater portraying Pharaoh in Drama Learning Center's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and appearing as Daniel Beauxhomme in Red Branch Theatre's *Once on This Island*. He also portrayed Jesus in Opera AACC's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. "I'd like to give a big thank you to all of my friends who continually come out and support my performance, and to Sarah for always supporting me in everything I do."



### KRISSY MCGREGOR

(Charlotte, Reporter 1)

After a five-year performing hiatus, Krissy is pleased to be returning to the stage and making her debut with Colonial Players. She has previously performed with the Little Theatre of Alexandria in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Helena), *Into the Woods* (Lucinda), and *The Will Rogers Follies* (Ziegfeld's Favorite – WATCH nomination). She also enjoys directing and choreographing, having worked with 2nd Star Productions, Laurel Mill Playhouse, Little Theatre of Alexandria, Pensacola Little Theater, Pensacola Children's Chorus, Fort Walton Beach High School, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, and HB Woodlawn. She sends her love and gratitude to her husband, Scott, for supporting her in this time-consuming hobby.

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## THE STAFF (continued)



**BARBARA MARDER**  
(Producer)

Barbara has been associated with Colonial Players for more than 25 years. She has served on the board as Education/Special Projects Director and has been a member of a variety of committees, including Play Selection and Promising Playwrights Play Selection. She has also and been a play consultant for many short plays. Barbara directed last season's *Taking Steps*. Prior directing assignments for Colonial Players include *Splendour* and a full-length staged reading of the Promising Playwright winning script *Coal Creek*. Barbara retired as chairman of Performing Arts at Anne Arundel Community College, where she directed a wide variety of plays and musicals over a 35-year career. She served as an adjudicator for the American College Theatre Festival for many years, as a board member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, and as a theater panelist for the Maryland State Arts Council. Currently, she enjoys working part time as a standard patient and role player for local medical schools.



**LAURIE NOLAN**  
(Set Designer)

Laurie has been working on sets at Colonial Players since the late seventies, when she had the great pleasure to work with Beth and Dick Whaley on *Royal Gambit*. A favorite set was for *Road to Mecca*, which was about an artist. Most recently, she has designed sets at Dignity Players, including *Art*, and *Collected Stories*. Laurie enjoys the challenge of the more "abstract" sets that involve lots of painting and color. She owns Art Things, Inc. in West Annapolis, a business founded by her mother, Lydia, in 1966. Both parents were supporters of Colonial Players, so she caught the theater bug early.



**KEITH NORRIS**  
(Sound Designer)

Keith has produced and edited sound effects and tracks for the local theater circuit since 2005. His work has been experienced by audiences attending *Annie*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Damn Yankees*, *1776*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *A Christmas Story*, and *Jekyll and Hyde*. He is excited to be working with Colonial Players and such a dynamic and outstanding cast.



**BETH TERRANOVA**  
(Costume Designer)

Beth is pleased to be on her second costume outing with Craig Allen Mummey, having previously designed costumes for his production of *Lettice and Lovage*. Last year Beth was honored with two WATCH nominations for costume design for *Going to St. Ives* and *Cinderella Waltz*. Her costume designs have also been seen on the CP stage in *Moon Over Buffalo*, *Hauptmann*, *She Loves Me!*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Lion in Winter*, *The Diviners*, and just this past January in *Coyote on a Fence*. Most recently, Beth stage managed *Superior Donuts*, and directed *1776* for Colonial Players last year. Other work behind the scenes at CP includes producer, set designer, play consultant, and tech crew. An award-winning Director (*Hauptmann*) and award-nominated actor (*Two Rooms*), Beth is the current Production Director on the CP Board of Directors, produces the News and Cues newsletter, and serves CP as a Costume Consultant/Wardrobe Curator, Bylaws Committee Member, and WATCH Judge.



## THE CAST (continued)



**ARICIA SKIDMORE-WILLIAMS**

(*Pearl, Daughter, Judge*)

This is Aricia's second performance with Colonial Players, and she's thrilled to be back in the round!

Previously, she appeared in *In the Next Room*, *Or the Vibrator Play*, and she's excited to be taking on a very different role in *These Shining Lives*. Aricia resides in Baltimore, where she spends her free time doing puzzles, buying shoes, and entering unofficial dance-offs. She would like to thank Craig for giving her this opportunity and the cast and crew for making this another unforgettable experience. Aricia is forever grateful to her parents for being unwavering beams of support for all of her endeavors. She'd also like to thank her two brothers for being consistent rocks for her and her friends-especially her unofficial twin-for believing in her when she forgets to believe in herself. Enjoy the show!



**SARAH WADE**  
(*Catherine Donohue*)

Sarah is very pleased to be back on the CP stage after a brief run at Dignity Players as Lisa Morrison in *Collected Stories*.

Prior to that, she appeared in CP's *Annie* as Star to Be, *Communicating Doors* as Jessica Welles, and *Taking Steps* as Kitty. She also performed in the 2012 short play festival *Bits 'n' Pieces* as Ionesco in *The Shepherd's Chameleon* and The Girl in *Starcrossed*. She was also seen as the Widow Sowerberry/Bet in Compass Rose Theater's production of *Oliver!*, as well as sound designing their productions of *The Miracle Worker* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She sends tons of love to her family and friends and to Eric for always understanding that, "I can't, I have rehearsal." "Special thanks to Lois Evans and Carol Cohen, without whom I wouldn't be here."



## THE STAFF



**DANNY BROOKS**  
(Stage Manager)

Danny has performed in four Craig Mummey-directed productions, three here at CP (*Arcadia*, *Assassins*, and *Lettice and Lovage*), and is happy to be working with him again, this time in a different "role." He last stage managed CP's 2012 *Chapter Two*. "Break legs, cast."



**ALEX BRADY**  
(Lighting Designer)

Alex has been designing lighting locally in Annapolis and Baltimore since 2002. Over the last 15 years, he has worked with diverse companies such as Everyman Theater, the Annapolis Opera, and the AACC Dance Company. His recent lighting design credits include *Peter Pan* at St. Mary's High School, *Anything Goes* at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre, and *Flying by the Seat of Our Pants* with the AACC Dance Company. Alex is a proud alumni of the Graduate



**JOANN GIDOS**  
(Properties Designer and Set Decoration)

JoAnn is so very pleased to be working with Craig again. This theater season she has worked on *Bad Dates* at Bay Theater and *Look Homeward Angel* and *Romeo and Juliet* at Compass Rose Theater, and is helping with *39 Steps* at Dignity Players. She was one of five people nominated last season for a WATCH award for properties design for her work on the Colonial Players production of *Shipwrecked*.



THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.  
*presents*



*Written by*  
**MELANIE MARNICH**

*Directed by*  
**CRAIG ALLEN MUMMEY**

### THE CAST

*(in order of appearance)*

*Catherine Donohue*.....Sarah Wade  
*Frances, Reporter 2*.....Josette Dubois  
*Charlotte, Reporter 1*.....Krissy McGregor  
*Pearl, Daughter, Judge*.....Aricia Skidmore-Williams  
*Tom Donohue*.....Ben Carr  
*Mr. Reed, Radio Announcer,*  
*Son, Leonard Grossman*.....David Carter  
*Dr. Rowntree, Company Doctor, Dr. Dalitsch,*  
*Tom Donohue (U/S)*.....Eric Hufford

(The role of Tom Donohue will be played  
by Eric Hufford May 16, 17, 18)

### PLACE

Chicago and Ottawa, IL.  
Catherine and Tom's home, The Radium Dial work room,  
a courtroom, the shore of Lake Michigan.

### TIME

1920s and 1930s.

*These Shining Lives* received its world premier at Baltimore Center Stage  
on April 30, 2008, Irene Lewis, Artistic Director, Michael Ross, Managing Director.

It was developed at Baltimore Center Stage as part of their First Look Festival;  
The History Theatre in St. Paul, MN., as part of the Raw Stages Festival;  
Northlight Theatre in Skokie, IL.; Primary Stages as part of their Primetime Reading  
Series; and Theatre Works in Palo Alto, CA., as part of their New Works Festival.

It was commissioned by Northlight Theatre in Skokie, IL.  
Facts from the book *Deadly Glow* by Ross Mullner  
were used with permission of the author.

*These Shining Lives* will be performed without an intermission.

*Produced by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service Inc.*

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