



Courtesy of Archie Devore

Actor Jon Michael Hill (shown with Michael McKean) earned a 2010 Tony Award nomination for his Broadway performance in *Superior Donuts*.

## Versatile performer

Stage, screen and TV are elementary to fast-rising star Jon Michael Hill

It's a hot summer day in Chicago and hay fever—plus seven performances a week and a couple of gigs with his band—have gotten the best of actor **Jon Michael Hill, '07 FAA**. The Waukegan native speaks in a whispery rasp to protect his voice for the evening performance of *Constellations*, a two-character show in which he co-stars at Steppenwolf Theatre.

Hill is best known for portraying Detective Marcus Bell on CBS television's *Elementary*, starring Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu. During his two-month filming hiatus in New York City, however, the 31-year-old has come home to Chicago and the theater company that launched his career.

"Theater is my first love and my last love," says Hill, who garnered a 2010 Tony Award nomination for his Broadway performance in *Superior Donuts*. "The craft of doing the same play night in and night out and making it feel spontaneous is an undertaking I really enjoy. There's a new audience every night and there could be someone who's never been to a play before, someone you can inspire."

Television is challenging in a different way for Hill, who's in his fifth season of *Elementary*. "You don't

have much time with your scripts or to adjust to blocking and lighting before it's filmed—and then it's out there forever," he says.

Hill fell in love with acting as a first-grader, when a story he wrote about his brother was turned into a play. His high-school acting teacher encouraged him to attend a Northwestern

University summer theater program, where a professor said he had enough talent to make acting a career.

When his best friend applied to the University of Illinois, Hill did too; a *Hamlet* monologue helped him get accepted into the theater school, though he took other classes as backup. "I took 'Severe and Unusual Weather' and 'Introduction to Meteorology.' I figured if the acting thing didn't work out, I'd be a storm chaser."

After Hill's senior year at Illinois, he became the youngest member of the Steppenwolf ensemble, and since then he's maintained a near-ideal balance of roles in theater, television and movies.

"I'm not really good enough at anything else, plus I love acting," says the down-to-earth Hill. "It's all I really think about."

—Anne Stein

a screenwriter and filmmaker based in Urbana-Champaign.

**Philip Williams, '08 LAS**, has published *Thief in the Interior*, a collection of poetry. Williams also has authored two chapbooks of poetry, *Bruised Gospels* and *Burn*.

## 2010s

**Kate Stephens, '13 ENG**, has been named a Young Water Professional by *Water and Wastes Digest*, a national publication serving the water industry. Stephens is an engineer-in-training at Stanley Consultants, an engineering firm based in Minneapolis.

**Sakshi Srivastava, '15 ENG**, a graduate student in electrical engineering at Illinois, has successfully spearheaded a campaign to have a statue honoring women in engineering installed on the Illinois campus. A gift from Texas Instruments, the statue is located on the east side of the Micro and Nano-technology Laboratory.

**Ashley Taylor, '15 LAS**, is a sales and operations coordinator in event production for Savage Smyth, a creative event venue in Chicago. ■

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