The Covid Crisis has changed how we do theater. With our buildings shuttered, and our touring productions idle, we have put our heads together and put our artists back to work telling the stories that reflect the diverse and vibrant worlds of Black life.

Striving to be “nimble” in uncertain times, we have designed a program which will engage the listening community and allow for safe interaction, without sacrificing the quality arts experience.

In a podcast format MPAACT will stream the play of your choice for a communal listening event. Following the event, production members will “zoom” into a virtual venue for a lively “talk back” to assist in the exploration of the play and the issues therein. To encourage an inclusive community experience, each podcast is available for a duration that is tailored to your organizational needs. Ranging from days to months, podcast plays are a flexible format, ready to meet the new constraints of our modern reality.
MPAACT IS...

29  SEASONS OF EXCELLENCE
89  WORLD PREMIERE PRODUCTIONS
219  AWARD NOMINATIONS & HONORS
51  AWARDS OF RECOGNITION
19  ACCLAIMED PRODUCTION ARTISTS
16  PODCAST PLAYS
4  BOOKS ON BLACK THEATER
2  BROADWAY PRODUCED PLAYWRIGHTS

1  AMAZING CULTURAL INSTITUTION
WWW.MPAACT.ORG

LISTEN
Feral

A Blistering 90 Minutes.

Feral is Shepsu Aakhu's finest play yet, focusing on police shootings of young black men without merely reiterating what we hear nearly every night on the news.

This timely new play addresses the Black Lives Matter movement, what a task force recently dubbed the “systemic racism” of the Chicago Police Department, and how these things get depicted in the media. The considerable power of the play stems from the anger and heartbreak of the characters. This absorbing production features wrenching performances.
In case you need a reminder of just how insightful and powerful a writer Chicago's Shepsu Aakhu is, consider MPAACT's staging of his new play about the multiply conflicted allegiances of two African-American Chicago police officers in the immediate aftermath of the Laquan McDonald video release ...the script's intellectual rigor and visceral impact are unmistakable.

Davoe Sexton and Jayson Rabedeau patrol the notorious neighborhood on Chicago’s long-neglected south-east side. The area is known to locals as “Terror Town.” As veteran cops who “happen to be Black,” these men must navigate the streets, the policies of policing, and the deeply conflicted roles that they play in the lives of those that they are supposed to “serve and protect.” Set in 2016, these officers find themselves at ground zero when long-suppressed evidence surfaces (via the media) illuminating an officer involved shooting on the very streets that they patrol. Over the course of a single day Sexton and Rabedeau must confront the most corrosive questions that face African American officers. Are they Black? Are they Blue? Or are they a volatile mix of Black and Blue?
Mother of the Dark Water

Newcity

Gorgeous...
ninety minutes of pure, joyous black-girl worship.

Picture this Post
Black Goddess Magic

Mother of the Dark Water requires and commands your attention... Though it has many light and humorous moments, this is a serious look at what it means to be a black woman, not only in white America, but in Black America also.
Before playwright Lydia Diamond went to Broadway, she honed her voice in small theaters in Chicago. MPAACT, which first produced Diamond's *The Inside* way back in 1998, offers a sparkling, production featuring the award winning writer/performer in the role she originated.

It's a supercharged, hyper-literate and often very funny, underscoring the complexity and complications of life as a smart and sensitive black woman. Diamond's Emma may have the "independence of the invisible," but *The Inside* makes it painfully clear that it comes at a palpable cost.
STARTING OVER

Young lovers from an intolerant small town reunite years later in a major city. Their difficult past must be reconciled with an even more challenging present. One of them is transgender. Can love roll with the changes?

A spectacular storyline
riveting yet complicated love story
wonderful cast of actors!

Splash magazines
Highly Recommended

In style, Kelley's piece owes a partial debt to Ntozake Shange's classic choreo-poem "For Colored Girls..." There are also echoes of Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye," particularly in the way the wounded protagonist, Baby, is taken in by her playground girlfriends, Shadow and Brown.

...Kelley's play makes the unvarnished point that it does indeed take a village to rescue at-risk children.

Chicago Tribune

An imaginative nicely crafted pageant of transcendental beauty, like sunshine on broken glass.
Jules is an artist on the verge. But her traumatic past and her family’s “strange ways” steadily encroach upon her carefully constructed world, like Kudzu. Her work and relationships are threatened by the sudden arrival of her brother Red, a wild-eyed ex-con and a magnet for trouble. Theirs is a relationship sealed in blood and by blood. Can Jules ever repay her blood debt?
Dandelions

A NEW PLAY

King Davis is a recovering addict whose only legacy is the six-flat building in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Bronzeville (Chicago). Back taxes threaten to take the building, but King lost the respect of his mother years ago.

Wrestling with questions of rehabilitation and redemption, King struggles with his past, his present, and the man he wishes to someday become. This searing drama is about survival, loss, and redemption. Dandelions is about who gets to stay and who's weeded out.
An unflinching depiction of poverty isn’t often paired with genuine warmth. But MPAACT’s latest manages the neat trick of addressing the chaos surrounding black children in the aftermath of Chicago’s 1968 riots with bounce, honesty and delight. Adapted from the poetry of Orron Kenyatta, a public-school teacher and 12-year veteran of the spoken-word scene.

Highly Recommended
Resonant with Arthur Miller’s “The Crucible,”

**SPOKEN WORD** takes place in a small community dominated by hearsay, fear, outrage, and over-reaching authority figures. On the isolated campus of a Midwest university - sex, race, and gender, collide in an epic culture war. At the center of this genre-bending drama are two undergrads - one Persian, the other Black - trying to navigate their conflicted feelings, while social loyalties, family obligations, and administrative pressures encroach on their privacy with an oppressive need to know everything about their sexual encounter gone wrong.

In SPOKEN WORD everyone will have their say, and it all turns on a single word—never spoken.
OSIRIS KHEPERA’S
THE FAGTIONARY
Hooray for you!

Originally produced in MPAACT’s Solo Jams Series
We are pleased to reintroduce our audiences
to the artistry of Osiris Khepera

After the final show of her farewell tour, the
Internationally Renowned Drag Legend, Thee Countess, D'Lisha von Janksynsmurt, sits for tea
time with an unexpected stranger recounting tales
of yesteryear, yesterday, yes him too... While on the
journey Back Down Memory Lane, D'Lisha faces
some truths she might have forgotten (accidentally
on purpose) along the way. Through the stranger, we
discover A Queen, harkening back to a land before
time, living the realities of modernity, realizing who
she is before it's too late. Maybe.
Speaking in Tongues:
The Chronicles of Babel

MPAACT has consistently offered up an excellent and realistic portrayal of Black life in Chicago and America. Go see this play. You will learn what was most likely skipped in your civics class.

Aakhu's play, drawn from interviews with his extended family who were residents of Washington Park in the 1960s, 70's and '80s, offers a combination of sociological insight and personal anecdotes illuminating the complexity of project life. ...The vernacular in Aakhu's compelling play rings with defiant clarity.
Originally produced in MPAACT’s Solo Jams Series
We are pleased to reintroduce our audiences to the talents of Nevada Montgomery

At the intersection of her Black, queer, and female identities, Nevada Montgomery is looking for love. Lyrical confessions cross boundaries and blend the genres of storytelling and spoken word. Nevada lives at the intersection of hilarious and heartbreaking, vulnerability and brutal honesty. Through her we are reminded of just how fluid our identity and how absurd the human condition.
Idris Goodwin is pretty much a total badass.

In this MPAACT staging, we get 80 tight minutes of verbal and mental gymnastics that lead us into an increasingly grim portrait of "post-black America." Rich with allusions to pop culture, Goodwin's play provides a polemical feast with menu items covering such piquant topics as assimilation, professional jealousy and guilt over family members left behind.

An enthralling production. MPAACT’s Blackademics, part comedy, part metaphor-filled drama with a dash of the macabre, intrigues with fast-paced dialogue and craftily drawn scenarios covering a lot more than academia. Blackademics provokes as well as entertains.
By Association is chilling. ...this play is a potent examination of the issues immigrants, particularly Muslim-American immigrants, regularly face.

Aakhu provides lenses for examining the complexity of lives that are a mix of immigrant experience (especially African immigrant) and American. That mix is far more common on Chicago streets than on our stages. (The central character’s) passion as a woman desperately trying to save her family from a hell most of us can only imagine is resonant and affecting. As a portrait of what happens when citizenship fails to serve as a fail-safe defense, *By Association* has strong timely undertones.
The world was supposed to come to an end. For Alger, a man of deep faith (and his family), it did not. ...perhaps for them- that actually IS the apocalypse.

There are covenants that bind people together - man and woman, pastor and flock, humanity and divinity. Never the Milk & Honey explores the fall-out when those covenants are broken. Can faith ever be rebuilt?

Shepsu Aakhu casts a sympathetic, compassionate gaze on one of society's biggest collective punch lines: doomsday preachers. When the sun rises on the day after what was supposed to be the end of the world and the eye-rolling public moves on, it's easy to forget that fellow human beings, however misguided, have just had their understanding of the universe obliterated. Carla Stillwell's MPAACT production makes the gravity of that situation feel true in an isolated, claustrophobic Mississippi home. Unable to face his congregation or provide comfort to an ailing parishioner, a deeply shamed pastor (Darren Jones) cedes responsibilities to his wife (Renee Lockett). Lockett's performance resonates with pain and pity, then explodes with the sort of grief known only to those hurt by the ones they love the most. ... HIGHLY Recommended