

SHEPSU AAKHU'S

WARM

ON THE

COOLIN'

BOARD

DIRECTED BY LAUREN "LL" LUNDY

DEVELOPED BY

MPAACT'S PLAYWRIGHT'S LABORATORY



SEASON 32



MPAACT has been producing live theater for 32 seasons. It's an amazing achievement considering our modest beginnings. We have endured economic downturns, funding cycle armageddons, a pandemic, and so much more. Still, we treasure producing a full season of new work alongside extensive live and digital programming. One of the things we think about a fair bit, is how to get more of you to invest in our work here. Our industry is struggling more than usual - with theaters of all shapes and sizes closing their doors forever. We know that you value our work because you come to the theater, you read our newsletters, and you subscribe to our podcast plays and *Listen Magazine*. Your support is vital to our sustainability.

We have doubled down on our investment in artists - crafting art. From live production to digital audio, from touring programs to arts education—MPAACT continues to support a diverse community of artists and stakeholders with a unique voice, grounded in our cultures and our collective experiences.

Consider telling a friend, bringing them to a show, gifting them an audio subscription or donating to MPAACT below. In doing so, you'll help us continue to provide quality cultural art. Your contributions will help to ensure another spectacular season of world premiere work.



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32 SEASONS

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87 WORLD PREMIERES

105 STAGED PRODUCTIONS

4 PUBLISHED ANTHOLOGIES

290 HONORS & AWARDS

2 BROADWAY PRODUCED WRITERS

85 PODCAST PLAY TITLES

54 AWARDS OF RECOGNITION



is...

1 AMAZING CULTURAL INSTITUTION



CAST

(in alphabetical order)

Haven Sydney Denson.....	<i>Ensemble</i>
Don Fitzdarryl.....	<i>Carter</i>
Margo Harper.....	<i>Nailah</i>
Kendall Mallett.....	<i>Brian</i>
Rich Oliver.....	<i>Day</i>
Lena Simone.....	<i>Ensemble</i>
Melanie Victoria.....	<i>Penelope</i>
Brittany Davis.....	<i>Understudy</i>
Jelani Julyus.....	<i>Understudy</i>

SETTING

Roseland (far southeast side - Chicago), Alsip (IL), and places unknown
- Circa 2013.

ABOUT THE PLAY

For decades the New York City experience was the surrogate for the universal “urban” Black experience. As writers, we were encouraged to remove local “notes” from our plays such that they could exist “anywhere.” Harlem could be specific, but the rest of the Black experiences in northern cities, lost their specificity in the name of broader commercial appeal. In contrast, Chicago sits at the heart of the vast majority of the plays debuted at MPAACT. Most of our artists either live here or have spent a significant number of years in the area. It is not a requirement of our association, just a practical geographic reality.

August Wilson broke with convention when he put Pittsburgh (The Hill District) front and center in much of his “20th century cycle.” Because of August and others like him, we were finally able to see that New York can’t stand in for Pittsburgh, or Cleveland or St. Louis for that matter. Each city has such specific geography and history as to need to be grounded in their own unique “local” reality. The story of Roseland and Alsip (Burr Oak) could have been “set anywhere,” but they happened right here in Chicago. The truth is that this story - is a Chicago story. Here again we delight in the opportunity to introduce our audiences to the world - as lived in Chicago - by Shepsu - and so many like him.

WRITER’S NOTE

During the 22 years I have been a resident writer with MPAACT, I have had the pleasure and challenge of exploring various strands of my family history from the highlands of Ethiopia, the hill country of Mississippi, the lowlands (bottom) of southeast Texas and most in-depth - our continuing family experiment with the city of Chicago. It is an open secret that my plays are about *my people*. Not in some expansive "*we are all flowers in the same garden*" kind of way, but in that highly specific, highly personal "*we are all bound by blood, shared history, and shared trauma*" kind of way. Sometimes I think of my work like an epic story. In *Fascia* (2001) audiences were introduced to our multi-generational conversation on child-rearing and tradition. With *Speaking in Tongues: The Chronicles of Babel* (2011) we recorded the conversation on our three decades in the Chicago Housing Projects. At the end of that saga the hope and possibilities of the Roseland community (on Chicago's far south side) buoyed our family. *Warm on the Coolin' Board* joins this conversation 30 years after *Speaking in Tongues/Babel*. This is not a sequel, it’s just another story on our life in this great metropolis, and the continuing negotiations that we make in order to survive.

I want to thank my Aunt Ivone Pullen who contributed to this project with the same selflessness that she shared her stories in *Speaking in Tongues/Babel*. Thank you for your work and your spirit. You are deeply loved and deeply missed.

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

Some plays - you have to grow into. When I first started doing theatre I, like so many artists, looked to the text to shape my view of the play. I took the expression quite literally - “everything is right there on the page.” A decade later I have grown into a fullness of craft, and with the work of Shepsu Aakhu in particular, I have discovered that the shape of the play lays somewhere beyond the words. He crafts worlds where the subtext drives everything. If you only look to the spoken language, you may miss half the story. What is left unspoken - that’s where the magic is.

With *Warm on the Coolin' Board*, this deeply personal play - join me in feeling your way through this story... Let it sing you a song that warms your soul - like it has for me and this company of artists.

- Lauren “LL” Lundy

PROFILES



Haven Sydney Denson (*Ensemble*) is proud to be making her MPAACT debut. As a performer with 13+ years of stage experience, she has captivated audiences as Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* (Premier Theatre), and Dance Captain/Ensemble in *Gay Card* (Pride Arts), *Aztec Human Sacrifice* (City Lit) and *Let It Be Christmas* (Epic Theatre). Her training includes North Central College, where she received vocal, dance, and acting instruction and completed a theatre minor - and Deree College (Athens, Greece; the birthplace of theatre). Haven is immensely proud to be a part of this production and is eager to share this beautiful story. Learn more about her work at havensydneydenson.com, or on instagram @havensydneydenson.



Don Fitzdarryl (*Carter*) is making his joyous follow-up to his MPAACT debut with *Ezekiel's Wheel*. Acting credits include, *This Far By Faith* and *Eye of the Storm* (ETA), *The Other Cinderella*, *Message in the Music*, *All in Love is Fair*, *Nicholas Brothers*, *Crooners*, *The Marvin Gaye Story* (Black Ensemble), and *Bring Back the Beat* (Otherworld Theater). Don is the recipient of the Black Theatre Alliance Award as best leading actor for his portrayal of Bayard Rustin in *Eye of the Storm*, (ETA) in 2018. Don's most recent television credits include *61st Street* (AMC).



Margo Harper (*Nailah*) is a native of Chicago. She is a director, actress, playwright, drama instructor, screenwriter, songstress, songwriter, performance poet, radio DJ, puppeteer and children's minister. Margo taught drama for Carlow University Diversity Program and the Community College of Allegheny County. She also studied psychology, drama, and theater at the University of Pittsburgh.

Margo has appeared in TV shows and films. She is a member of the gospel group *Cliff Dubose and Divine*. She has participated in national tours and numerous theatrical productions including, *For Colored Girls...* (Wilksburg Theater, Pittsburgh, PA), *Shakin' The Mess Out of Misery* (Kuntu Rep., Pittsburgh, PA), *When A Women's Fed Up* (David Payton Productions, Charlotte, NC) *Amen Corner* (Actors of America), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Beverly Arts Center) *The Billboard* (16th Street) and *Daddy's Little Girl* (Black Butterfly). Margo recently had the privilege of participating in

Shed (Perceptions 3rd Annual BIPOC Play Festival). Margo has directed several productions including a recent production of *Jane* (Connective Theater).



Kendall Mallett (*Brian*) is a true storyteller out of Chicago who enjoys bringing his characters to life for the world to see. Kendall has spent time studying at Acting Studio Chicago and other institutes, and is always eager to learn more. Kendall recently performed in *Tad in the 5th City* (MPAACT) and a stage reading of *Coronary Artery* (Perceptions) and other short films and projects. Kendall is ecstatic and honored to be welcomed back by MPAACT. He is now working on ideas to combine acting with his love of poetry. Outside of the arts, Kendall is a personal trainer who offers online and in-person services for all ages and levels of fitness. If you'd like to inquire about services you can email him at Mallett2WallFitness@gmail.com or follow his artistic journey by following him on Instagram at KidwththeMallett.



Rich Oliver (*Day*) is a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul with his MFA. He is an actor and writer, currently working on his first full length play. He is originally from Miami and is a graduate of Florida A&M University.



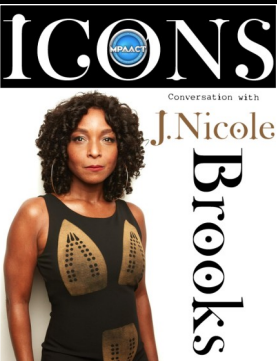
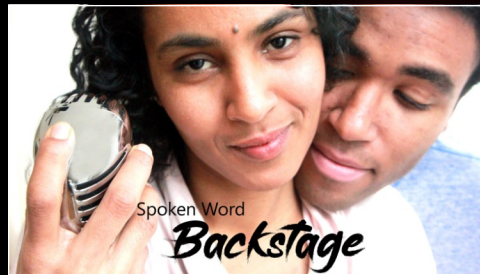
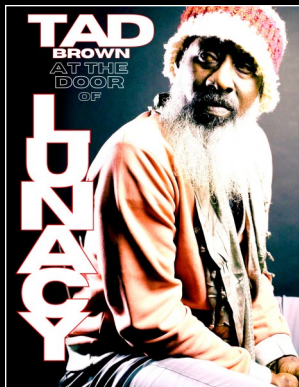
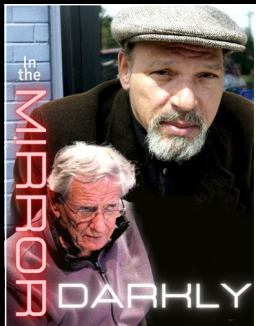
Lena Simone (*Ensemble*) is a Chicago based actor, singer, and performer. She recently returned from the UK after graduating with an MA from the University of Kent, where she worked with Bush Theatre as a part of their community engagement team and assisted with the direction of their youth company. Lena has previously worked with MPAACT on *Mother of the Dark Water* during their Nights Out in the Parks series, and is excited to be taking part in her first full production with the company. Lena was recently seen in *Twibard! A Twilight Musical Parody* (Otherworld Theatre). Other past credits include *1776* (Benjamin Franklin), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Chiffon), and *Voyeurs de Venus* (Saartje) among others. [@lena_simonexo](https://www.instagram.com/lena_simonexo)

POD CAST PLAYS

MPAACTPLAYS.COM

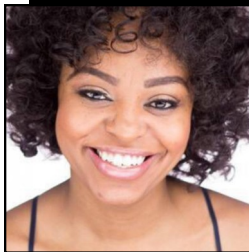
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AN AUDIO MULTIVERSE





Melanie Victoria (*Penelope*) is thrilled to return to MPAACT following her Jeff nominated turn in Tina Fakhrid-Deen's *Pulled Punches* and show-stopping performances in *Red Summer*. She is a Chicago native and has been performing since the tender age of three. She started out as one of the Pitts Players (Beverly Arts Center). She also attended Ben Vereen School of the Performing Arts and Columbia College.

Melanie has worked as a teaching artist for Marillac St. Vincent Family Services, and Eta Creative Arts Foundation. Over the years she has been seen in numerous productions with Black Ensemble where she is a Senior Ensemble Member. Her television credits include a reoccurring role on *Empire* (Fox) as Denise, *The Chi* (Showtime) and *Chicago Med* (NBC). Melanie would like to thank God for the gift, the entire MPAACT family for another amazing opportunity, and her family and friends for their ongoing love and support.



Brittany Davis (*Penelope u/s*) is a proud MPAACT member that has been acting in Chicago for over twenty years. A graduate of The Univ. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and an Evanston native, Brittany was a teaching artist in Chicago Public Schools for MPAACT, CAPE, and Chicago Improv. Brittany completed the Musical Improv Conservatory at Second City and has performed in numerous improv productions. She recently earned her Master's of Ed. from Northwestern Univ. Before the world

shut down, she performed in *Crowns* (MPAACT). Last season she played Bean in *Dandelions* (MPAACT) - her first drug addict! Brittany is excited to float in to this production. This performance is dedicated to Dr. Papa, Shirley, and Herman Sr. - for every production your front row seats are reserved in heaven and I am hoping you are proud of me.



Jelani Julyus (*Day u/s*) believes in the power of story to transform society. He possesses a unique ability to find the hope nestled at the heart of any story. He returns to MPAACT after playing Papa Daddy in *Tad in 5th City*. Recently, he originated the role of Larry in the world premiere of *In the Back/On the Floor* (Stage Left). He also performed as Guy (u/s) in *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Remy Bumpo). Jelani completed the ACADEMY at Black Box Acting Studio. He cannot express enough gratitude for the

opportunity to work with MPAACT, this incredible cast, and our exceptional creative team. Jelani is represented by 10 Management, and you can follow him @jelanijulyus on Instagram or at jelanijulyus.com. He dedicates his acting career to his children in hopes that they learn - it's never too late to pursue your dreams.

PRODUCTION



Lauren "LL" Lundy (*Director*) is a graduate from The Theatre School at DePaul University. Her MPAACT directing credits include *Ezekiel's Wheel*, *Spoken Word*, *Swamp Baby*, *Starting Over*, and *Blood Mural*. Continuing to advance her craft, LL has also helmed *Half Life* (Broken Nose - Bechdel Fest), *One Direction* (Black Lives, Black Words), *The Rocky Horror Picture Show Live!* (Underscore), *The Seventh Night* (MPAACT Summer Jams) *Songs I Don't Know* (MPAACT Signature Series), *The Sacred*

Mother Tongue (MPAACT Signature Series), *The Promotion* (Steep), and a workshop of *Evolve -Transformations* (Red Door/Portland, OR). During the pandemic LL expanded her work into audio media, where she helped launch MPAACT into the digital marketplace with PODCAST PLAYS. She had the joy of reimagining three of her signature shows for "the Audio Multiverse" - *Spoken Word*, *Swamp Baby* and *Starting Over*. ...To Shepsu, the cast, and extended MPAACT family—thank you for making yet another world with me. Childhood dreams do come true.



Shawn Wallace (*Composer*) returns to MPAACT on the heels of the premiere staging of *Red Summer*. A multi-talented musical artist in styles ranging from Gospel to Jazz to Hip-Hop and beyond; as keyboardist, Shawn has worked with luminary artists such as Common, Ice Cube, Little Brother, Bobby Brown, Dwele, Johnny Gill, Jon B., Bilal, Estelle, Julie Dexter, Erykah Badu, Rene Neufville, Rakim, Eric Roberson, and

Maggie Brown just to name a few. Arrangement and composition for theatre include Ifa Bayeza's *Amistad Voices* (Chicago Shakespeare) *Kid Zero* (Chicago Center for Performing Arts) and *Charleston Olio* (National Black Theatre Festival) Shepsu Aakhu's *Warm on the Cooling Board* (MPAACT 2014) and Carla Stillwell's *Lawd the CVS is Burning...a Gospel Musical Stage Play* (MPAACT 2015), *When Good Broccoli Goes Bad* (MPAACT), *Middle Passage* (Lifeline 2022) and *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery* (Pegasus 2017). Independent film score credits include *Severed Ties* (Showcase Productions/Lions Gate Films), *Puzzle Love* (Storybox Productions) and *Son of America* (Tanskin Productions/N'Spire Entertainment INC). Sound Design credits include *N* (GLP Productions 2019), *Single Black Female* and *Lady Day at Emmerson's Bar and Grill* (Congo Square 2018-2019), *Love Child* (Live Bait /Chicago Theatre Co.), and *Love Talk* (Chicago Theatre Company). Commercial credits include work for Jet Magazine, Mississippi Rick's Restaurant, Huffly Bicycles, Arby's and Sprint.



Shepsu Aakhu (*Playwright*) A founding member, has penned over 30 critically acclaimed world-premiere works for MPAACT. Among them are: *Ride or Die*; *Red Summer*; *Spoken Word*; *Black & Blue*; *Never the Milk & Honey*; *By Association*; and *Starting Over*. Shepsu is a 2-time recipient of the Ted Ward Prize (*Ten Square & Kivi Black*), an Artistic Fellow in Scriptworks (Illinois Arts Council - 2019 and 2004), a 7-time nominee for Best Original Work (BTAA) with awards for *The Abesha Conspiracy* and *Trouble The Water*. He is a 6-time nominee for the Joseph Jefferson Citation, with awards for Best New Work (*Speaking in Tongues/Babel*), and Original Music (*Kosi Dasa* and *Kivi Black*). *Cop Out!* and *Evolve* premiered for Red Door Theater (Portland, OR) in 2018 with writing credits shared by Shepsu and several noteworthy Chicago writers. Currently, Shepsu is in preproduction for the world premiere of *The Companion*, the stage adaptation of his epic feature length-film on the Namibian holocaust which is scheduled to debut in spring of 2025 (MPAACT) with an international cast.

Several of Shepsu's plays can be found in audio format with Podcast Plays (MPAACTPLAYS.COM) and in publications including *The BlaQ Market (Sakhu)* and *Seven Black Plays (Northwestern University Press)*. Independent film projects (feature-length and shorts) abound with longtime collaborator Mark Spencer (Masmedia) including the 2024 premiere of *One Thousand Negative Confessions*, adapted from the play of the same name. Content for television and film continues in development with producing partner J. David Shanks. Shepsu recently served as a writer for series television with AMC/Charter, and HBO.

In the world of digital print media, Shepsu serves as editor-in-chief and as a regular contributor for *Listen* magazine - the companion magazine for podcast plays (the audio multiverse). He is particularly relishing the opportunity for a full "geek-out," with interviews of luminaries in the arts scene - the *Icons* series.

To LL, my theater "ride or die," I'm glad you finally got that spirit play that you've been craving. Thanks for helping me provide a voice for my family on both sides of the great divide. To the cast, Shawn, and the production staff - thanks for making the impossible possible. For my wife Hiwoté, baby sister Nina, my boys (really men now) family, friends, and the other victims of my emotional fall-out. ...nothing without you. *San Bra Fie ...Remember the Remembering.*

Maryah Paige (*Production Stage Manager*) is a Chicago based stage manager and technician. They have worked on multiple shows ranging from plays with 5 actors to musicals with over 60. They have stage managed well known shows such as *Mamma Mia!*; *9 to 5*; *She Kills Monsters*; and *When We Were Young and Unafraid*. Currently, they are the General Manager at the building where you are currently enjoying this show! They hope you absorb and appreciate the story that showcases truth amongst many black cultures. All Love.

Aidan Lynn Smith (*Lighting Design*) is grateful to be back designing for MPAACT. His selected lighting credits include: *Blackademics*, *Ezekiel's Wheel*, *Ride or Die* (MPAACT), *The Birds*, *Escanaba in da Moonlight* (The Playhouse at White Lake), *A Happy Life*, *Medea* (Underground Theatre), and *Junie B. Jones The Musical* (ACWL). When Aidan isn't perched on a ladder deep in thought you can find him cooking or making ceramics. Aidan gives all his love to his partner, family, and friends. Check out more of his work at aidanlynnsmith.com

Jessica Kuehnau Wardell (*Set Design*) is a scenic and costume designer, teacher, and artist based in Chicago. As Artistic Associate with MPAACT since 2006, Jessica has designed countless productions including *Pulled Punches*, *Spoken Word*, *Speaking in Tongues* (BTA Award - Best Set Design), *Ghosts of Atwood* and *Ten Square*. Other recent Chicago credits include *Noises Off* (Windy City Playhouse); *End Game* (Hypocrites); *Lela & Company* (Steep), and *The African Company presents Richard III* (Oak Park Shakespeare Fest). Her designs have been seen internationally with the production *Reprise* commissioned for the National Theatre of Scotland's Home Away Festival and *Juliet: A Dialogue About Love* (Edinburgh Fringe Festival). Regionally, Jessica is currently designing immersive theatrical cocktail experiences across the country with Fever Originals, and her scenic design for the new TYA production *Jabari Dreams of Freedom* (First Woman Theatre) concluded its tour at The New Victory Theatre on 42nd Street in New York. Jessica holds an MFA in stage design from Northwestern University and is currently teaching and mentoring young theatre designers at The University of Chicago. jesskdesign.com

Shepsu Aakhu (*Tech Director*) has been a designer and T.D. with MPAACT for more than three decades. His most recent work was *Tad in 5th City* (2024 revival) *Blackademics* (2023 revival) *Dandelions*, *Ezekiel's Wheel*, *Ride or Die*, *Pulled Punches*, *Spoken Word*, *One 4 the Road* and *Swamp Baby*. His favorite designs for MPAACT include *Never the Milk and Honey*, *Swamp Baby*, *Tad in 5th City*, *Beneath A Dark Sky* (2008 revival), *MiLK* (2008 revival), and *Notes from the Bottletree*.

Evelyn Danner (*Costume Design*) is happy to be back with her MPAACT family having collaborated on more than a dozen previous productions. Other recent credits include August Wilson’s *Gem of the Ocean* (Goodman). Regional credit, 2022 production of *The Rainmaker* with Peninsula Players of Door County, Wisconsin. Chicago credits include *Don’t Make Me Over-In Tribute to Dionne Warwick* (Black Ensemble Theater), *Red Summer*, *Crowns*, *Swamp Baby*, *Quark*, *Divine Order of Becoming*, *Bodies*, *Warm on the Cooling Board*, *When Good Broccoli Goes Bad*, *Blackacademics*, *Sweet Home*, *Ten Square*, *Relative Hearsay*, *Milk*, *Trouble The Water*, *Bus Boyz* (Artist in Residence MPAACT) and film credit *The Gilded Six-Bits* (West Side Theater Guild).

Desta Sound (*Sound Design*) returns to MPAACT on the heels of a fabulous run with designs for the post-pandemic premieres of, *Pulled Punches*, *Red Summer*, *Ride or Die*, *Ezekiel’s Wheel*, *Dandelions* and most recently *Tad in 5th City* (revival). Anchored by Shepsu Aakhu, this design team continues to make MPAACT’s “sound” the most distinctive in the city. Most recently, Desta Sound has had the privilege of designing sound for many of the audio titles in MPAACT’s catalog of podcast plays. Sign-up and take a listen to the worlds that can be built entirely with sound and your imagination.

Caro Arana (*Props*) is incredibly excited to be working with MPAACT again following *Ezekiel’s Wheel*. Her selected credits are: *Always...Patsy Cline* (stage management at Raue Center for the Arts), *Seussical Kids and Jr.* (Charge Painter and Props Artisan), with experience Production Managing for both The Playhouse at White Lake and Western Michigan Univ. She would like to thank her friends, family, and partner for supporting her artistic endeavors.

THE SOUNDSCAPE

Shawn and Shepsu

The bond between Shawn Wallace and Shepsu Aakhu dates back to the founding of MPAACT. Once peer teacher and pupil, it is Shawn Wallace that crafted the unique “sound” of MPAACT at its inception. Shepsu’s life in sound design and as a musician began with studying the craft and care that Shawn brought to our work. In the decades that followed, Shawn and Shepsu have collaborated on intimate and epic works alike. From titles like *Spoken Word*, *Red Summer*, *Softly Blue* (Revival), and *Warm on the Coolin’ Board* we have witnessed the stunning breath of work that can only come from two artists working from a singular vision. The soundscape does not beg to be noticed, but rather exists as a catalyst, harnessing the director’s interpretation, the playwright’s intent, and the actor’s urgency, planting the emotional content deep within the core of the viewer. In the end we do not wish to be heard, we wish to be felt.

PRODUCTION STAFF

DirectorLauren “LL” Lundy
 Playwright.....Shepsu Aakhu
 Music Director/Arrangements.....Shawn Wallace
 Production Stage ManagerMaryah Paige
 Set Design.....Jessica Kuehnau Wardell
 Lighting Design.....Aidan Lynn Smith
 Sound Design.....Desta Sound
 Costume Design.....Evelyn Danner
 Properties.....Caro Arana
 Technical Director.....Shepsu Aakhu
 Production Photographers.....Abboyé Lawrence and Shepsu Aakhu
 Production Manager.....Lauren “LL” Lundy

MPAACT ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Executive Director/Producer.....Reginald Lawrence
 Managing Producer.....Lauren "LL" Lundy
 Literary Manager.....Tina Fakhrid-Deen
 Casting Director.....Nadia Pillay
 Graphic Design.....Shepsu Aakhu
 Information Technology.....Jelani Pitcher
 Web Design.....Clutch Lundy
 Marketing.....Joshua X. Miller & Tamarus Harvell
 Group Sales.....Lauren “LL” Lundy

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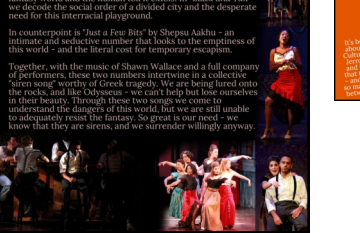
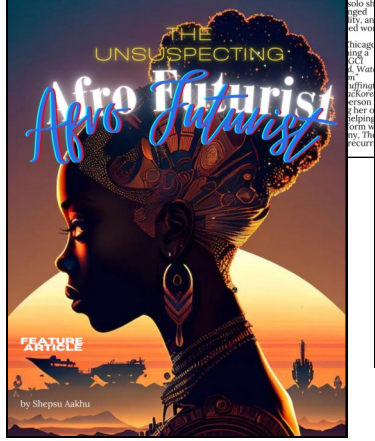
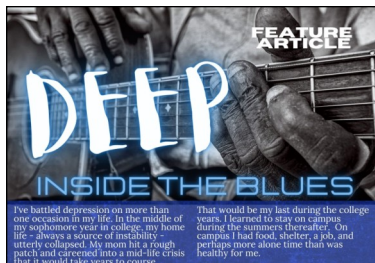
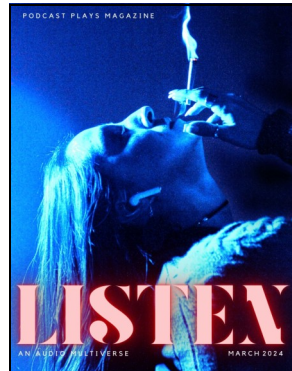
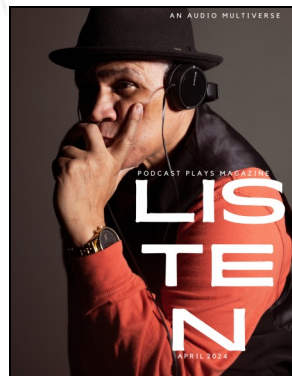
From live production to digital audio, from touring programs to arts education... MPAACT continues to support a diverse community of artists and stakeholders with a unique voice, grounded in our culture and our collective experiences. Your contributions will help to ensure another spectacular season of world premiere work. Thank you for making another season possible.



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LISTEN MAGAZINE



ronzeville and I were a slow burn. I was born on the mighty west side and spent my teen years on the northside. I came out south to visit family, but never lived full-time outside of visiting my mama for the summer when she lived on 47th and Lowe and when I lived with my auntie on 38th right after college while I tried to find a job. The northside never felt like home because the kids there were as an outsider. Either I got into fights for being the "dirty" west side girl or I was the "stuck up, weird" northside girl who wore thirties jeans instead of jeans, girtrades, and Coach belts. So I intentionally gave the Southside no love. I wasn't until college when I learned about almighty Bronzeville, and it's rich story.

id from the South to Bronzeville due to a burst with troubles. Beside in DePrest, Robert G. Quincy, Estelle, and many others G. Woodson even



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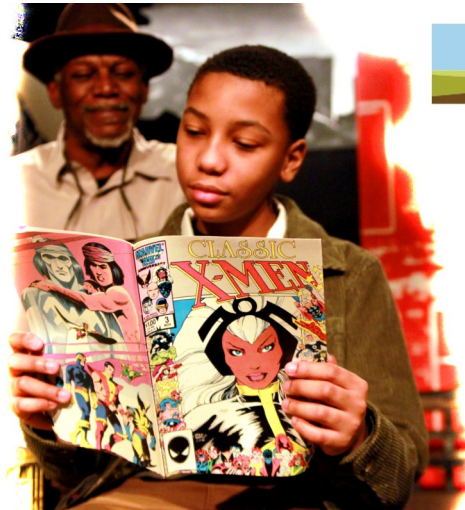
ARTFUL CONVERSATION

MISSION

The Ma'at Production Association of Afrikan Centered Theater (MPAACT) is a professional, not-for-profit theater association founded in 1990 at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Our mission is to develop, nurture, and sustain original Afrikan Centered Theater (ACT) as a multi-disciplinary art form of American Theater. ACT is a genre of artistic expression grounded in the many cultures and traditions of the Afrikan continent and its Diaspora. With a vision focused upon new works and collaborative art, MPAACT shall produce and educate with the goal of bringing forth an understanding and appreciation of Afrikan Centered Theater and its inter-related disciplines.

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SPECIAL THANKS

Hiwoté Tamrat, Hilal Tamrat, Shirley Carney, Efé McWorter, Dennis & Piedad Lundy, Razor Wintercastle, GBG INC, Julia Van Vliet, J. David Shanks, The Theater School at DePaul, Ael Diem, Ayla Donchin, the Ancestors, Louise Winters, Ivone Pullen, Daryl Sanders, Kelvin Sanders, Rebecca Cole, Christine Clark, Arturine Bowden and all of the generations laid to rest in Burr Oak Cemetery.



INDIVIDUAL GIVING



Tiffany Trent, Sean Neron, Miriam Ex, J. Shayne, Hiwoté Tamrat, Hilal Tamrat, Shirley Carney, Efé McWorter, Chuck Smith, Dennis & Piedad Lundy, Julia Van Vliet, Shariba Rivers, Reginald Lawrence, Yocab Abdi & Hillina Tamrat, Tina Fakhrid-Deen, Lauren Lundy, Marcus Lawrence, Yvonne and Jason Lee, Lana Rogachevskaya, Charls S. Hall & Henry Bachofer, Phil Kohlmetz, Nic Dimond, Jenny Ricciardi, Antonio Lyons, Bradley Harbaugh, Bubba Figueroa, Danielle Aquiline, Khari Yasmeen, Amy Blumenthal, Sandi Davenport Belushi, Shawn Kennedy, Tracy Fulce, Megan Klein, Lullit Getachew, Anthony Brown, Temple Payne, Kristen Hren, Monica Backmon, Tim Elliott, Jeffrey Gural, Alejandro Lugo, Rosy Lugo, Jacqueline Bischoff, Dennis Adams, Tom Shea, Lynn Dieter, Robert Watts, Rebecca Feiler, Keith Adkins, Bert Suarez, Robert Frankel, Chad Eric Bergman, Lori Arter, Fin Coe, Lindsey Hewitt, Marla Muse, Randy James, Billie Hearrell, David Goodloe, Mel Lundy-Day, Michael Russell, Marina Franklin, Sara Henderson, Penelope Walker, Felischa Marye, Sheril Tyre, Ruth Johnston, Jennifer Mubarak, David Mauroner, Elizabeth Betty Biza, Barbara Netchert, Carlita Lowe, Michelle Goodman, Eleanor Seaton, Michelle Campbell, Kimberly Evans Killion, Marcia Thompkins, Kofi Lomotey & Aama Nahuja, Stenovia Jordan & Stephanie Gold.



PODCAST PLAYS

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 Sound Engineer.....Mark Franklin
 Sound Editor.....Shepsu Aakhu
 Sound Design.....Desta Sound
 Subscription Services.....Lauren “LL” Lundy
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 Voice Talent.....The Company
 Content Producer.....Shepsu Aakhu

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Sean R. Neron*	Nadia Pillay	Eddie Jordan III	Caren Blackmore
Lauren Wells-Mann	Jelani Pitcher	Aum Mu Ra	Michaelyn Oby
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Deidre Searcy	Abboyé Lawrence		

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Lennal “Sati” Word Sharlet Webb Ron White

** Denotes Founding Member*



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 Principle Photographer.....Shepsu Aakhu
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 Copy Editor.....Tina Fakhrid-Deen
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 Feature Writer.....Michaelyn Oby
 Feature Writer.....Tina Fakhrid-Deen
 Feature WriterLauren Wells-Mann
 Feature Writer.....Joseph Giovanetti
 Feature Writer.....Carla Stillwell
 Models.....Our Subscribers

32 SEASONS

<i>Tad in 5th City</i>	Revival	2024
<i>Blackademics</i>	Revival	2023
<i>Dandelions</i>	World Premiere	2023
<i>Ezekiel's Wheel</i>	World Premiere	2023
<i>Ride or Die</i>	World Premiere	2022
<i>Red Summer</i>	Premiere Staging	2022
<i>Pulled Punches</i>	World Premiere	2022
<i>Podcast Plays</i>	Established	2021
<i>Spoken Word</i>	World Premiere	2020
<i>The Master Comic</i>	World Premiere	2019
<i>One 4 the Road</i>	World Premiere	2019
<i>Swamp Baby</i>	World Premiere	2019
<i>Black and Blue</i>	World Premiere	2018
<i>Blood Mural</i>	World Premiere	2018
<i>Mother of the Dark Water</i>	World Premiere	2018
<i>100 Acts of Resistance</i>	Established	2018
<i>Burf of a Nation</i>	World Premiere	2017
<i>Never the Milk & Honey</i>	World Premiere	2017
<i>By Association</i>	World Premiere	2017
<i>Starting Over</i>	World Premiere	2016
<i>Feral</i>	World Premiere	2016
<i>Upstate</i>	World Premiere	2016
<i>Lawd The CVS is Burnin'</i>	World Premiere	2015
<i>Divine Order of Becoming</i>	Revival	2015
<i>Softly Blue</i>	Revival	2015
<i>The Inside</i>	Revival	2014
<i>Without Trace</i>	World Premiere	2014
<i>Quark</i>	World Premiere	2014
<i>Signature Showcase Series</i>	Established	2014
<i>Summer Jams</i>	Established	2014
<i>Warm on the Coolin' Board</i>	World Premiere	2013
<i>When Good Broccoli Goes Bad</i>	World Premiere	2013
<i>Reality Check</i>	World Premiere	2013
<i>Leaves Trees Forest</i>	World Premiere	2013
<i>Blackademics</i>	World Premiere	2012
<i>Bodies</i>	World Premiere	2012
<i>Sweet Home</i>	World Premiere	2012

<i>Speaking in Tongues/ Babel</i>	World Premiere	2011
<i>A Brown Tale (Da-da Re...)</i>	World Premiere	2011
<i>The Last St on Sugar Hill</i>	World Premiere	2011
<i>Ghosts of Atwood</i>	World Premiere	2011
<i>Solo Jams</i>	Established	2011
<i>Dance Jam</i>	Established	2011
<i>Zulu Fits</i>	World Premiere	2010
<i>Film Jam</i>	Established	2010
<i>Sketch Jam</i>	Established	2010
<i>Tad in 5th City</i>	World Premiere	2010
<i>First Words</i>	World Premiere	2010
<i>Ten Square (w/Pegasus)</i>	World Premiere	2009
<i>Radical Hearsay...</i>	World Premiere	2009
<i>Stage Black</i>	World Premiere	2009
<i>No Experience Necessary</i>	World Premiere	2008
<i>BlaQ Market Monologues</i>	Established	2008
<i>She Calls Up The Sun</i>	Revival	2008
<i>Beneath A Dark Sky</i>	Revival	2008
<i>MiLK</i>	Revival	2007
<i>Trouble the Water</i>	World Premiere	2007
<i>Blaxploitation 2...</i>	World Premiere	2007
<i>Panther Burn</i>	World Premiere	2006
<i>Softly Blue</i>	World Premiere	2006
<i>Blaxploitation: The Remix</i>	World Premiere	2005
<i>Bus Boyz (w/Prop Thtr)</i>	World Premiere	2005
<i>The Divine Order of Becoming</i>	World Premiere	2005
<i>Relevant Hearsay...</i>	World Premiere	2004
<i>Notes from the Bottletree</i>	World Premiere	2004
<i>SOST</i>	World Premiere	2003
<i>Scorched Earth: Fertile Ground</i>	World Premiere	2003
<i>Kiwi Black</i>	World Premiere	2003
<i>Ekomo Akyede</i>	Established	2003
<i>She Calls up the Sun</i>	World Premiere	2002
<i>Defending Myself</i>	World Premiere	2002
<i>Mahalia & ME</i>	B-cast Premiere	2002
<i>Kosi Dasa</i>	World Premiere	2002
<i>Fascia</i>	World Premiere	2001
<i>The Alibi Transcripts</i>	Established	2001
<i>Urban Griot Project</i>	World Premiere	2001

<i>Tere-tocha-chew:</i>	World Premiere	2000
<i>Exoskeletal Blues</i>	World Premiere	2000
<i>The Glow of Reflected Light</i>	World Premiere	2000
<i>Within the Dream</i>	World Premiere	1999
<i>The Abesha Conspiracy</i>	World Premiere	1999
<i>Beneath A Dark Sky</i>	World Premiere	1998
<i>The Inside</i>	World Premiere	1998
<i>The Empire Festival</i>	World Premiere	1998
<i>The Scott Joplin Story</i>	B-cast Premiere	1998
<i>Piece-Meal Clan</i>	World Premiere	1997
<i>Tales from an Urban Empire</i>	World Premiere	1997
<i>The Underground Poetry Jam</i>	Established	1997
<i>Afrosynthesis</i>	World Premiere	1997
<i>Screams w/out Consciousness</i>	Wkshop Prod.	1997
<i>A Kwanzaa Carol</i>	World Premiere	1996
<i>Short Orders: One Acts Fest.</i>	Established	1996
<i>Girl to be Named Later</i>	World Premiere	1996
<i>Otherworld Lovers</i>	World Premiere	1996
<i>From Funk 2 Fusion</i>	World Premiere	1996
<i>MiLK</i>	World Premiere	1995
<i>Slices</i>	Established	1995
<i>A Night of Jazz Fusion</i>	World Premiere	1995
<i>Tales of the Kitalogo</i>	World Premiere	1994
<i>Vital Signs</i>	World Premiere	1994
<i>Continuum: Visions/Yetunde</i>	World Premiere	1993
<i>Restore the Rhythm</i>	World Premiere	1992

SUBMISSIONS

MPAACT is committed to the development of original works.

Unsolicited scripts are encouraged.

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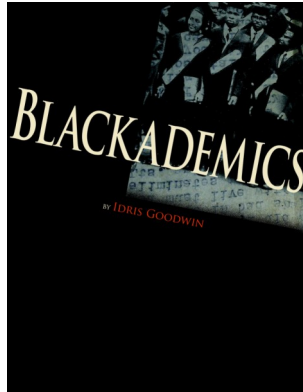


EVERY 7 YEARS



SEASON 32

REVIVALS

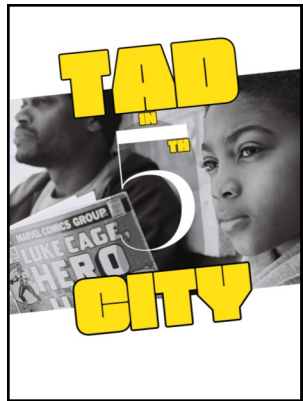


OCT. 6 – NOV. 19
2023

BLACKADEMICS

BY IDRIS GOODWIN / DIRECTED BY LAUREN WELLS-MANN

There's something strange about the trendy new restaurant in town. When Ann and Rachele meet there for dinner, there's already tension in the friendship they've built on their common experience navigating academia as black women: While Ann just got tenure at her tony liberal arts college, Rachele's struggling to find her place at the less prestigious state university. So at first it's easy to overlook odd things like the single water glass they're offered, or the mysterious server who keeps assigning points to their conversational gambits. But as the hunger sets in, the two professors find themselves the unknowing stars of an absurdist dinner theater performance of black plight. Somebody's got to get the first bite, after all. A sharp, surreal satire about who gets a place at the table.



JAN. 19 – MAR. 3
2024

TAD IN 5TH CITY

ADAPTED FROM THE WORKS OF ORRON KENYETTA MARSHALL / DIRECTED BY CARLA STILLWELL

After the assassination of Dr. King on April 4, 1968, violence erupted on Chicago's west side, consuming a 28-block stretch of West Madison Street. This traumatic moment changed the landscape of the city and an entire generation. That generation of young men and women "watched the genesis of the ghetto sphere" evolve. The ghetto of many of today's rappers imaginations grew out of this reality. Told through the eyes of 10-year-old Tad Brown, *Tad in 5th City* illuminates his daily life in the aftermath of those riots, chronicling Tad's journey as he navigates a post-rioting city amidst the effects of gang violence, poverty and addiction.



APRIL 19 – JUNE 2
2024

WARM ON THE COOLIN' BOARD

BY SHEPSU AAKHU / DIRECTED BY LAUREN "LL" LUNDY/ MUSIC BY SHAWN WALLACE

Everybody has a plan, and Day is no exception. He has a plan for his baby brother Brian. Trouble is - Brian is off plan. He's taking a break from college and picking up the family business, stripping the Roseland community to the bone. This decaying community is being pillaged by its own inhabitants, its politicians, and its few remaining businesses. As Day and Brian work to find their place in a community that is literally being picked clean, they struggle to come to grips with whether they are hastening the process, or part of the restoration.

SEASON 33



NEW WORK RETURNS



Zemi, an international grad student from Namibia carries the twin gift/burden of shared existence with her long deceased great grandmother. While struggling with her “gift” and the challenges of acculturating to American life, Zemi uncovers a dark secret in a university bone collection.

Worlds collide as Zemi harnesses the overlapping realities of her life and that of her “companion” to confront local and international authorities.



Wanda stands on the cusp of womanhood. Educated in the finest schools by successful Black parents she appears to be a well adjusted child of international adoption, but for Wanda the questions around her adoption have reached a tipping point. There are two mothers here... aching for the space that can only be filled by one child. On the eve of their daughter’s 18th birthday, two families collide over their choices, and the consequences that followed.