

## Press Contact

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## San Francisco's African-American Shakespeare Company Announces 2015/16 Season



Beginning with *Romeo and Juliet*—with two actual teenagers cast as the doomed lovers—the season then segues to their traditional holiday presentation of *Cinderella* before staging George C. Wolfe's contemporary, devastating and satirical masterpiece, *The Colored Museum* as their first play of the new year; *Antony and Cleopatra* follows in the spring to round out what Artistic Director L Peter Callender calls their “season of purpose”

*Romeo and Juliet* | October 17 – November 8 || *Cinderella* | December 5 – 20 ||  
*The Colored Museum* | February 13 – March 6 || *Antony and Cleopatra* | May 7 – 29 ||  
More information at [www.african-americanshakes.org](http://www.african-americanshakes.org)

**San Francisco CA, August 26 2015** – San Francisco's African-American Shakespeare Company follows up its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year with a season of work that artistic director L. Peter Callender calls “a season of purpose.” The four plays include two Shakespeare classics that each feature the two lead characters caught in the crosshairs of love and political/familial agendas and feuds. And while *Cinderella* is the company's traditional holiday gift to Bay Area audiences, George C. Wolfe's contemporary masterpiece *The Colored Museum* tackles thorny issues of race and history with its take no prisoners sharp satire in an era time-stamped and hash-tagged by the phrase *Black Lives Matter*.

“This company was founded to offer actors a space to craft their work, move into the professional lanes and thrive here in the Bay Area and nationally. Their lives matter! And that is why this is our season of purpose,” says Artistic Director, L. Peter Callender.

A first for the company is staging a work from George C. Wolfe, the famed playwright and Tony-award

winning African-American director. *The Colored Museum* premiered in 1986 and explores and satirizes themes and identity touchstones of African-American culture. Says Callender, “We are beyond excited to finally bring this play to our stage. My fundamental goal is to move the company forward in order to continually inspire cultural growth. The genius of Wolfe is in perfect, if perhaps unexpected sync, to our work with Shakespeare’s plays.

In a first this year, the African-American Shakespeare Company will be presenting a series of short outdoor weekend performances in conjunction with AfroSolo, SF Jazz, SF Ballet among others at the following locations:

- Fillmore Mini-Park Event (Fillmore between Golden Gate and Turk) on Friday, September 11; Friday, September 18; Friday, September 25; Friday, October 2; all from 5:30pm to 6:30pm
- Patricia's Green (at Hayes and Octavia) on Saturday, October 17 from 1pm to 3pm

More information on this "Cultural Corridor" event can be found [HERE](#)

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### **Romeo and Juliet**

**By:** William Shakespeare

**Starring:** Cast to be announced on Thursday, September 3

**Directed by:** Sherri Young and L. Peter Callender

**When:** Saturday and Sunday, October 17 – November 8, 2015

**Times:** Saturdays at 8pm; Sunday at 3pm

**Tickets:** \$15.00 - \$34.00

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1640576>

Shakespeare’s iconic story of young love, passion and innocence moves to the 1970s, a time when the world was changing culturally and socially. But undying love is beyond time and dances in the vivid imagination of youth then as now. In this update the African-American Shakespeare Company invites audiences to settle in and enjoy the funk and the bump in the smooth jive-talking era that provides the rhythm of this heart-stopping, soul-dizzying story.

Presented in partnership with the Oakland School for the Arts, this production will feature experienced teenage actors in the roles of the star-crossed but doomed lovers, who were found through an extensive auditioning process.

**Creative twists:** Set in the 1970s and starring Bay Area teenage actors in the two lead roles.

Also, a special preview of the play open to the public will be presented in conjunction with Litquake, San Francisco’s Literary Festival, when AASC opens their traditional Teacher's Night Out event on Friday, October 16 to include the general public. This special presentation is part of the 9-day festival that this year includes a bevy of literary luminaries including: Amy Tan, Tracey Stewart (wife of former Daily Show host, Jon Stewart with her new book *Do Unto Animals*) author and screenwriter Dennis Lehane (*Gone Girl Gone*) and Ali Liebegott, writer on the award-winning series, *Transparent* as well as Nigerian author Chris Abani and short story writer, Chinelo Okparanta among others. More information [HERE](#)

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### ***Cinderella***

**By:** African-American Shakespeare Company Members

**Directed by:** ShawnJ West

**When:** Friday, Saturday and Sunday December 5 – 20\*

**Times:** Friday at 8pm; Saturday at 3pm and 8pm; Sunday at 3pm

**Tickets:** \$15.00 - \$34.00

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1640782>

Once again and by popular demand, the holiday season sees the return of this heartwarming holiday show where Cinderella, a young, beautiful dreamer, toiling away as a lowly scullery maid to please her evil stepmother (and oddly masculine stepsisters) comes in contact with a Fairy Godmother who means BUSINESS. With a little bit of magic, Cinderella finds her Prince Charming and learns that anything—even miracles—are possible when you believe in yourself. This holiday treat for the entire family has been delighting audiences for over twelve years. Parents are encouraged to have their cameras at the ready because following the performance kids of all ages are invited to have their portraits taken with the cast and the Royal Couple.

**Creative twists:** Audience members will be invited to try on the slipper!

**Tickets:** \$15.00 - \$34.00

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1640782>

**\*Note:** *there are no performances on Saturday, December 12*

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### ***The Colored Museum***

**By:** George C. Wolfe

**Directed by:** Velina Brown, L. Peter Callender, Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe, and Michael Gene Sullivan

**When:** Saturday and Sunday February 13 – March 6, 2016

**Times:** Saturday at 3pm and 8pm; Sunday at 3pm

**Tickets:** \$15.00 - \$34.00

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1641586>

A poignant but prickly socially conscious, satirical comedy, *The Colored Museum* depicts black culture in America in ways especially relevant in today's world of "Black Lives Matter". Tony Award-winning playwright, George C. Wolfe, takes the audience on an "in-your-face" non-apologetic, "take no prisoners" satire that electrifies, unsettles, and delights audiences of all colors. *The Colored Museum* redefines ideas of what it means to be black in contemporary America as the various exhibits depict old and new stereotypes.

**Creative twists:** For the first time in the Bay Area, the AASC's "Fantastic Four" — four distinguished African-American directors, collaborate to bring the 12 vignettes to life.

“Mr. Wolfe is the kind of satirist...who takes no prisoners. The shackles of the past have been defied by Mr. Wolfe’s fearless humor, and it’s a most liberating revolt.” —*The New York Times*

“Brings forth a bold new voice that is bound to shake up blacks and whites with separate-but-equal impartiality. True satire.” —*Newsweek*

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### ***Antony and Cleopatra***

**By:** William Shakespeare

**Starring:** [L. Peter Callender](#); co-star to be announced

**Directed by:** Jon D. Tracy

**When:** Saturday and Sunday May 7 – 29, 2016

**Times:** Saturday at 8pm, Sunday at 3pm

**Tickets:** \$15.00 - \$34.00

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1642295>

To prevent war, a queen sets out to seduce the one man who can crumble her fragile empire. Shakespeare’s epic love story *Antony and Cleopatra* is set during the ancient days of the Roman Empire. Mark Antony has traded his power over an empire for the forbidden love of one woman, Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt. Jealousy, betrayal, death, and war cannot refute their undying love for each other. Starring award-winning actor, and AASC Artistic Director, L. Peter Callender in the title role of Mark Antony.

For more information on the season or The African-American Shakespeare Company go to [www.african-americanshakes.org](http://www.african-americanshakes.org)

High Res Photos Available from [liam@shaveandahaircut.biz](mailto:liam@shaveandahaircut.biz)

### **About the African-American Shakespeare Company**

The award-winning African-American Shakespeare Company (AASC) was established in 1994 by professional theater artists from the American Conservatory Theatre as an alternative answer to the “Color Blind Casting” initiative that began in the early 90s. While this initiative temporarily changed the diversity on stage, African-American Shakespeare Company noticed color blind casting was ignoring these artists’ rich cultural heritage and not making the most of their dynamic, cultural vibrancy that actors of color could bring to classical works. Moreover, “mainstream” classical theaters seem to lack the ability to truly attract diverse audiences. African-American Shakespeare Company inspired to highlight artist of color’s dynamic cultural vibrancy within classical productions.

African-American Shakespeare Company's work has received honorary acknowledgement from San Francisco's City and County's former Mayor Gavin Newsome (now serving as Lieutenant Governor); recently awarded The Paine Knickerbocker Award in 2014 for Outstanding Achievement for a Theater Company by the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle; and a Community Partner Award from University of San Francisco's Leo T. McCarthy Center for outstanding collaboration in providing quality Service-Learning program.

The African-American Shakespeare Company is funded in part by Shakespeare for a New Generation, a national program of the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest; San Francisco Arts Commission, Grants for the Arts, California Arts Council, The San Francisco Foundation, Columbia Foundation, Fleishhacker Foundation, Zellerbach Family Foundation, Macy's, The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, The Hewlett Foundation, University of San Francisco Engage Program, and Silicon Valley Foundation.

#### **About Sherri Young, Founder & Executive Director**

An M.F.A. graduate from the American Conservatory Theatre; and former Commissioner for the San Francisco Art Commission proudly serving for Mayor Gavin Newsom, Young founded The African-American Shakespeare in 1993 and has been its Executive Director since. She has directed sixteen productions, produced and executed four programs for the organization and speaks at various colleges, universities, and conferences across the nation. Young manages the approximately 60 company members and volunteers for the organization's programs. Some career highlights includes the creation of the company's signature holiday performance Cinderella, effectively building and stabilizing the organization over the past five years, increase audience attendance by 30%, and increase new funding support by foundations and individual donors within the past two years.

#### **About L Peter Callender, Artistic Director**

L. Peter Callender is a native of Trinidad, West Indies, and has worked professionally as an actor for over thirty years, more recently as a director and writer. He received his formal training in the theater at the Juilliard School in New York City; Webber/Douglas Academy in London, England; Mask Technique with Julie Taymor, and The Suzuki Technique with The Tadashi Suzuki Company in Toga-mura Japan. He has appeared on Broadway, off-Broadway, in regional theaters across the US, and has performed internationally in Japan, England and France. His New York Credits include: Tom/Jamaican Waiter in *Prelude to a Kiss* (Circle Rep. and at the Helen Hayes Theater on Broadway directed by Norman Rene); Off-Broadway; *Roscoe in Black Eagles* (directed by Ricardo Kahn at Manhattan Theater Club), *Casbeque in The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (directed by George C. Wolfe at the Public Theater); Caliban in *The Tempest* (directed by Julie Taymor at Classic Stage Company); Curio/Ensemble in *Twelfth Night* at the Delacorte Theater directed by Harold Guskin).

Currently, Mr. Callender is an associate artist at the California Shakespeare Theater– now in his 21st season. Some roles at CalShakes include: The title roles in *Julius Caesar* and *Cymbeline*, *Oberon in A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, Leonato in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Polixenes in *A Winter's Tale*, Navarre in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, Duke Solinus in *Comedy of Errors*, Laertes in *Hamlet*, Dukes Frederick and Senior in *As You Like It*, La Feu in *All's Well That ends Well*, Dr. Chasuable in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Vincent Crummels in *Nicholas Nickleby*, and Roebuck Ramsden in *Man and Superman*. He is also a Visiting Professor at Stanford University teaching Acting Shakespeare and Fundamentals of directing."

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