



**San Francisco's African-American Shakespeare Kicks Off 20th Year
With *The Tempest* Set in
Milan Circa 2020**



The groundbreaking theater company stages *The Tempest* for the first time since 2001 when it reimagines the play for contemporary audiences by placing the action on a floating island of debris in the Pacific where Prospero, the former CEO of SYCORAX—an industrial conglomerate based in Milan under investigation for dumping tons of garbage into the ocean and thus creating the island in the first place—has been banished; with daughter Miranda in tow and an application named Ariel built from reclaimed circuitry and other useful detritus, Prospero begins a campaign of holographic manifestations and manipulations of weather

Saturdays and Sundays, October 18 through November 9; Saturdays at 8pm, Sundays at 3pm; Buriel Clay Theatre; Tickets: \$15-\$34.00

<http://www.african-americanshakes.org/productions/the-tempest/>

September 15 2014, San Francisco – The African-American Shakespeare Company continues its tradition of “enhancing the classics with color” with an ambitious roster of plays to celebrate its 20th anniversary. Directed by Nancy Carlin and starring Michael Gene Sullivan as Prospero, *The Tempest* inaugurates the 2014/15 season and is the first production of the play by the company since 2001, a full 13 years ago.

The year is 2020. SYCORAX, the mother of all multi-product industrial conglomerates, based in Milan, is under investigation for dumping tons of waste into the Pacific. Into this disaster wades the company’s former CEO, Prospero who, perceived as a threat is banished to sea, only to wash up on an island in the middle of the floating debris field. With his daughter Miranda in tow, along with the single inhabitant of the island, Caliban, and an application/personal assistant he builds from reclaimed circuitry and other detritus, Prospero begins his campaign of holographic manifestations and manipulation of weather patterns to help settle the score.

According to African-American Shakespeare Company Artistic Director L. Peter Callender, the character of Ariel was a fascinating challenge, as Ariel is always a test of any director's



imagination. "Director Nancy Carlin and I have played several roles in TEMPEST in our careers and with the creation of SIRI and other smartphone technologies that border on magic, thought, wouldn't it be a novel way of presenting the character if she were the result of scavenged mobile technology? Because then Ariel can be anywhere: a voice emanating from here and there, a faint, scratchy signal, an image on a cracked screen or ... Prospero's mind ... it just opens so many possibilities."

The staging of the play also touches on topical environmental themes. "We set this production set on an island of garbage in the middle of the ocean," says Callender, "because there is such a place, several of them actually, these massive structures floating in our oceans. What if they are creating their own life forms? Could a Caliban be a result? We were interested in stretching our imaginations and the imaginations of our audiences, young and old."

High Res Photos Available [HERE](#)

Dates: October 18-November 9

Times: Saturday at 8pm; Sunday Matinee at 3pm

Location: Buriel Clay Theatre, African-American Art & Culture Complex, 762 Fulton Street, San Francisco

Tickets - \$15-\$34.00: <http://www.african-americanshakes.org/productions/the-tempest/>

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The Tempest will be followed by *Cinderella* which takes the baton for the holiday season starting on December 6 and runs through December 21.

The arrival of the New Year sees two world premieres:

First, the much-anticipated debut of *Xtigone*, a gritty new urban adaptation of the Greek classic from Chicago playwright, Nambi E. Kelley running from February 15 through March 8. *Xtigone* will be directed by Rhodessa Jones, whose reputation as a actress, teacher and director speaks for itself.

Followed by the last production of the season, *Isfahan*, a co-production with Golden Thread Productions based on Duke Ellington's 1963 tour of Iran. *Isfahan* will have an original score composed by Marcus Shelby and will run May 2 - May 24, 2015.

All of the African-American Shakespeare Company's productions are geared to re-present works culled from the classic repertoire—not only Shakespeare—into a different cultural context, while maintaining the integrity of the language. With that in mind, the company has produced over 68 productions over the last 20 years.. Among the most notable are:

- A Hip-Hop version of *Macbeth*



- *Twelfth Night* set in San Francisco's Jazz corridor
- *The Importance of Being Earnest* set in the Harlem Renaissance
- *Julius Caesar* taking place amid a West African feudal war
- *Medea*, complete with *Real Housewives of Atlanta*-inspired costuming and contemporary neocolonial home style set

***Cinderella*, written by The African-American Shakespeare Company**

Directed by [Margo Hall](#)

This classic production of *Cinderella* is a timeless tale brought to whimsical, magical life just in time for the holidays. This uplifting re-telling of the classic fairytale features all of the pageantry, hilarity, and charm of the original, but with a soulful twist, as Cinderella a young, beautiful dreamer, toils away as a lowly scullery maid for her evil stepmother and stepsisters. With the help of a fabulous Fairy Godmother who makes the magic happen, Cinderella finds her Prince Charming and learns that anything is possible, even miracles.

Dates: December 6-21, 2014

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

Location: Buriel Clay Theatre, African-American Art & Culture Complex, 762 Fulton Street, San Francisco

Tickets - \$15-\$34.00: <http://www.african-americanshakes.org/productions/cinderella/>

***Xtigone* written by Nambi E. Kelley; Music Composer: Tommy Shepherd**

Directed by Rhodessa Jones

World premiere of emerging Chicago playwright Nambi E. Kelley's contemporary urban adaptation of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone* is an impassioned response to the recent untimely deaths of children in her native city as a result of gang violence, which has risen sharply in the past several years. The production updates the conventions of ancient drama for our contemporary moment. Featuring a Hip-Hop score, ensemble singing, rhythmic movement, music will provide an urgent musical heartbeat to this stirring depiction of the immense human cost of violence in our cities and in our families.

For this production of *Xtigone* the African-American Shakespeare Company is partnering with the San Francisco City and County's Hall of Justice Transitional-Aged Youth Department and the Department of Children, Youth and Family Services. Approximately four to eight Transitional Youths aged 16–24 who have experienced incarceration will participate in the final development by providing content culled from their own life experiences to the playwright, directors and entire creative ensemble.

Rhodessa Jones' experience as founder of The Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women will be invaluable as the process of *Xtigone* coming to the stage unfolds.



Dates: February 14-March 8, 2015

Times: Saturday at 8pm; Sunday Matinee at 3pm

Location: Buriel Clay Theatre, African-American Art & Culture Complex, 762 Fulton Street, San Francisco

Tickets: \$15-\$34.00: <http://www.african-americanshakes.org/productions/xtigone/>

***Isfahan* by Torange Yeghiazarian with original music score from Marcus Shelby**

Directed by [Laura Hope](#); Dramaturgy by Nakissa Etemad

This world premiere is inspired by Duke Ellington Orchestra's 1963 tour of Iran and featuring music by Marcus Shelby, *Isfahan* imagines an unlikely friendship between an American jazz musician and an Iranian actress. As they travel together to Isfahan, "the most beautiful city in the world," Jazz inspires them to test the limits of freedom, creativity, and experimentation.

Co-produced with [Golden Thread Productions](#), the first American theatre company focused on the Middle East, *Isfahan* offers an alternative vision to today's political stalemate between the US and Iran. This production aims to shed light on a little-known historical moment when a uniquely American art form inspired generations of young Iranian musicians.

Isfahan will feature AASC Artistic Director L. Peter Callender and Golden Thread Artistic Associate Vida Ghahremani.

Dates: May 2-May 24, 2015

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

Location: Buriel Clay Theatre, African-American Art & Culture Complex, 762 Fulton Street, San Francisco

Tickets: \$15-\$34.00: <http://www.african-americanshakes.org/productions/isfahan/>

For more information on the season or The African-American Shakespeare Company go to www.african-americanshakes.org

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 also teaches Acting Shakespeare Level One — for adults — each fall for CalShakes.

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