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AFRICAN-AMERICAN
SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
"Envisioning the Classics With Color"



San Francisco's African-American Shakespeare Company Tackles An American Classic with *A Streetcar Named Desire*, March 4-18



From right to left: Khary Moye, Santoya Fields, Jemier Jenkins; Jemier Jenkins and Khary Moye; Khary Moye and Santoya Fields; Jemier Jenkins and Santoya Fields; photos by L. Peter Callender

The Pulitzer-winning play from Tennessee Williams will be directed by AASC Artistic Director L. Peter Callender who is encouraging his cast—as well as audiences—to leave their preconceived notions at the door so they may encounter the characters of this iconic play as new friends worth getting to know during a very turbulent time in American history, a time when money was often scarce and the relationship dynamics between men and women often oscillated at frequencies that would be considered unacceptable today

A Streetcar Named Desire, March 4-March 18 at Marines Memorial Theatre, 609, Sutter Street;

Tickets: \$35 <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3066498>

February 1, 2018, San Francisco— For the first time in its 23-year history, the African-American Shakespeare Company will present *A Streetcar Named Desire*. As is the company's custom, each season they choose one non-Shakespeare play from the canon of American classics. Tennessee Williams' *Streetcar* follows in the footsteps of the company's well-received 2017 production of August Wilson's *Jitney*, also staged at Marines Memorial.

According to scholar Philip C. Kolin, author of [Williams: Streetcar Named Desire \(Plays in Production\)](#), "A strong black presence has always inhabited *Streetcar*." In 2012, when the play with an all-black cast led by Blair Underwood began a run on Broadway, the director of that production,

Emily Mann, noted that Williams was a born Southerner, who had spent his life surrounded by black culture. "He understood human beings, period, and he understood New Orleans society. And you can't understand New Orleans and the South without understanding black people."

AASC Artistic Director L. Peter Callender who is directing this production wants audiences to leave their preconceived notions at the door, so that they may encounter Stella and Stanley, Blanche and Mitch, and Steve and Eunice as new friends worth getting to know, in what he calls "an iconic play filled with truly unforgettable characters. The play has great resonance, and we will play it with no apologies. It was a very turbulent time in American history—people were not making much money and lived tenuous lives. Life was difficult and could be cruel. That said, depending on the kindness of strangers has always been a dicey strategy. This all plays out over the course of the production."

Among other things, *Streetcar* makes personal the issues of sexual violence being vividly brought to the forefront with the #metoo movement, revealing the dynamics of male power within the context of class and race, and how it can take the form of sexual violence against women. The play is filled with the kind of emotional turmoil that the works of Tennessee Williams was noted for, at a time when the relationship dynamics often oscillated at frequencies that would be considered unacceptable today. "This presents staging the play some 70 years later challenging," says Callender, "but it's important to be truthful to the source material."

What: African-American Shakespeare Company Presents *A Streetcar Named Desire*

When: March 4-18; opens

Where: Marines Memorial Theatre

Tickets: \$35.00 <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3066498>

Schedule of performances

Sunday March 4 at 3pm

Saturday, March 10 at 8pm

Sunday, March 11 at 3pm

Saturday, March 17 at 8pm

Sunday, March 18 at 3pm

The cast for *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Blanche DuBois: Jemier Jenkins

Stanley Kowalski: Khary Moye

Stella Kowalski: Santoya Fields

Mitch: Fred Pitts

Eunice: Kim Saunders

Steve: ShawnJ West

Pablo: Jarrett Holley
Doctor / Ensemble: Nathaniel Andalis
Neighbor / Nurse: Jan Hunter

Directed by: L. Peter Callender
High-Res Images: [HERE](#)

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 the dynamic cultural vibrancy that actors of color could bring to classical works—a vibrancy that African-American Shakespeare Company aspired to highlight. Moreover, “mainstream” classical theaters seem to lack the ability to truly attract diverse audiences.

African-American Shakespeare Company's work has received honorary acknowledgement from San Francisco City and County's former Mayor Gavin Newsom (now serving as Lieutenant Governor); was 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 include

the creation of the company's signature holiday performance *Cinderella*, effectively building and stabilizing the organization over the past five years; increasing audience attendance by 30%; and increasing new funding support by foundations and individual donors within the past two years.

About L Peter Callender, Artistic Director

In addition to being Artistic Director of AASC, L. Peter Callender has been a Visiting Professor of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Stanford University, teaching Acting Shakespeare and Fundamentals of Directing. He was also a teaching artist at Waterfront Conservatory Theater in Berkeley, and, for over 20 years, has been an Associate Artist at California Shakespeare Theater. He is an award-winning director, both in the Bay Area, where he has directed for AASC and the Aurora, and at American Stage Theater in St Petersburg, FL where he just opened *A Raisin in the Sun*. He is also an award-winning actor, performing in over 25 Shakespeare plays throughout his career, and voted "Mentor of the Year" and "Most Valuable Player in the Bay Area Theater Scene" by Robert Hurwitt (formerly) of the SF Chronicle! Callender has performed On and Off-Broadway, and in over 15 regional theaters across the country, including NY Shakespeare Festival, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Syracuse Stage, Milwaukee Rep, Pennsylvania Stage Company, American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Rep, Marin Theater Company and Aurora Theater Company. Some favorite roles: Simon in *The Whipping Man*, Richard in *Richard III*, Sam in *Master Harold ... and the Boys*, Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, Antony in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Mr. M in *My Children! My Africa!* Walter in *Swimmers*, Robert Mugabe in *Breakfast With Mugabe*, Sterling North in *Permanent Collection*, Dr Treves in *The Elephant Man*, Tom/Jamaican Waiter in *Prelude to a Kiss* (Broadway), Caliban in *The Tempest* (directed by Julie Taymor) and several others. More information on his work and career can be seen on his website: www.lpetercallender.com.

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