



media contact:
Gary Carr, Rising Moon Public Relations
(925) 672-8717
carrpool@pacbell.net

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY CONTINUES 19TH SEASON
WITH "MEDEA", EURIPIDES' TRAGIC TALE OF
LOVE, BETRAYAL, AND VENGEANCE
March 8-30, 2014**

SAN FRANCISCO (FEBRUARY XX, 2014) - LOVE. BETRAYAL. VENGEANCE. **African-American Shakespeare Company** continues its 19th season with **MEDEA**, Euripides' infamous tragedy about a jilted wife exacting the ultimate revenge on a cheating husband. **Dawn Monique Williams**, a veteran of staging the classics, directs, with **Leontyne Mbele-Mbong** in the title role. **MEDEA** plays Saturdays and Sundays, **March 8 through May 30** (*press opening: May 8*) at the Buriel Clay Theater at the African American Art and Culture Complex, 762 Fulton Street (at Webster) in San Francisco. For tickets (\$12.50-37.50) and more information, call 1-800-838-3006 or visit African-AmericanShakes.org.

MEDEA is one of the great plays in Western literature and a classic Greek tragedy. Euripides takes us to the knife-edge of passion and madness. After a long series of trials and adventures, Greek hero Jason has abandoned his wife, Medea, along with their two children, in the hopes of advancing his station by marrying the daughter of King Creon. Jason's abandonment of his family crushes Medea, driving her to override her maternal instincts, curse the existence of their two children, and carry out an unimaginable quest for justice.

CAST OF THE AASC PRODUCTION OF MEDEA	PRODUCTION TEAM
Medea: Leontyne Mbele-Mbong Tutor: Elizabeth Strong Nurse: Cathleen Riddley* Chorus: Danielle Doyle, Cathleen Riddley*, and Shani Harris-Bagwell Kreon/Aigeus: Dwight Dean Mahabir Children: Gabriel Reader and Amir Glenn Jason: Khary Moye	Director: Dawn Monique Williams Production Manager: Gregg Hood Stage Manager: Cheryle Honerlah Set Designer/Carpenter: Bert van Aalsburg Costume Designer: Courtney Flores

*Member of Actors Equity Association

Director Dawn Monique Williams’ 10-year Relationship with MEDEA

“As an undergrad theatre major, I read several of the ancient Greek tragedies. I understood the plays very well in their academic context – historical fictive narratives on the construction of a patriarchal Greek society – but it was their tribal markings that evoked my visceral response. Rich with song and dance, the voice of the community is what I heard in these plays: collected stories, shared history, heated debate, and invocation of gods. These plays changed my relationship to theatre and Euripides’ *Medea*, in particular, unlocked my sense of theatricality. That was over a decade ago, and here I am revisiting this big, messy, impossible classic with renewed vigor.

Perhaps it was the fact that I was a new mother at the time I first directed the play, but Medea’s inconsolable grief permeated my psyche. I saw a play about postpartum depression, I saw Susan Smith, Andrea Evans. I wondered the big unanswerable question, “what would drive a mother to “such horrible acts?” I still wonder that now. I’m still in the trenches with this play and would probably unearth something new and revelatory if I directed it again every decade of my life. Right now I understand grief differently than when I was 23. I understand parenting differently. Grief is unreasonable. Loneliness, isolation, alienation don’t result in logical behavior. And truthfully, this play is less about parents and children, and more about neglect and punishment. It is a play about love. About sacrifice, betrayal, the importance of community, belonging, and the near impossibility of a human heart surviving unscathed.

I imagine we all agree that we could not do what Medea does, but I suspect we have all felt what Medea feels. That’s what keeps this play heartbreakingly alive.”

Dawn Monique Williams is the 2013 Phil Killian Directing Fellow at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. She has directed a wide range of plays including the recent English premiere of Gracia Morales’ *NN12*, along with *As You Like It*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *My California*, *Sleepy*, *In the Blood*, *The Price of Madness*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Children of Eden*, *The Burial at Thebes*, *Medea*, *Trojan Women*, and *La Ronde*. Her international directing credits include Edinburgh Festival Fringe productions of *Scapin the Cheat* (2006), *Anna Bella Eema* (2008), and *The Tempest* (2010). Dawn has worked with Impact Theatre, Woman’s Will, New World Theatre, California Conservatory Theatre, and has assisted at leading regional theatres: OSF, Hartford Stage, TheatreWorks, Cal Shakes, and Shakespeare & Co. She is a Drama League Directing Alum and a Drama League Fellow. She holds an MA in Drama from San Francisco State University, and an MFA in Directing from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY PRESENTS “MEDEA”

Leontyne Mbele-Mbong (Medea)

Ms. Mbele-Mbong is a favorite with African-American Shakespeare Company. She was last seen at AASC as Mistress Ford in *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Prior to that she appeared as Ruth, in *A Raisin in the Sun*. This season she will be playing the title role in *Medea* and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Other Bay Area favorites include Rose, *Fences*; Kate, *Sylvia* (Altarena Playhouse); Andromache, *Andromache*; Telemakas, *Penelope's Odyssey* (Central Works); Paquette, *Candide*; Belinda Treherne, *Engaged* (Lamplighters Music Theatre); Buckingham, *Richard III*; Orsino, *Twelfth Night*; Lady M and others, *Macbeth* (Woman's Will); *World Music* (TheatreFIRST); Mayme, *Intimate Apparel* (Solano College—ARTY Award, best supporting actress); *The Road Weeps*, *The Well Runs Dry* (American Conservatory Theatre's First Look.)

African-American Shakespeare Company was introduced in 1994 to open the realm of classic theater to a diverse audience, and provide an opportunity and place for actors of color to hone their skills and talent in mastering some of the world's greatest classical roles. The company produces plays from the classical theater canon, including the works of William Shakespeare, as well as classic and contemporary works from American and international playwrights, that are lively, entertaining, and relevant.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

MEDEA. African-American Shakespeare Company stages Euripides' infamous Greek tragedy about a jilted wife exacting the ultimate revenge on a cheating husband. **Dawn Monique Williams** directs, with **Leontyne Mbele-Mbong** in the title role. **MEDEA** plays Saturdays and Sundays, March 8-30 at the Buriel Clay Theater at the African American Art and Culture Complex, 762 Fulton Street (at Webster) in San Francisco. Opens Saturday March 8 at 8:00 pm. Plays Saturdays, March 15, 22, 29 at 8:00 p.m. Sundays, March 9, 16, 23, 30 at 3:00 p.m. African-American Shakespeare Co. Buriel Clay Theater, 762 Fulton Street (at Webster), San Francisco. For tickets (\$12.50-37.50), call 1-800-838-3006 or visit www.African-AmericanShakes.org.

SHOWS: **Opening: Saturday, March 8, 8:00 p.m. (also press opening)**
Sunday, Mar 9th, 3pm
Saturday, Mar 15th, 8pm
Sunday, Mar 16th, 3pm
Saturday, Mar 22nd, 8pm
Sunday, Mar 23rd, 3pm
Saturday, Mar 29th, 8pm
Sunday, Mar 30th, 3pm

WHERE: Buriel Clay Theater at the African American Art and Culture Complex
762 Fulton Street (at Webster), San Francisco, CA 94102

762 Fulton Street • San Francisco, CA 94102 • Phone/ Fax: (415) 762-2071
www.African-AmericanShakes.org

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TICKETS: For tickets (\$12.50–\$37.50) and information, the public can call **1-800-838-3006** or visit **www.African-AmericanShakes.org**

COMING UP AT AASC

May 3-25 – William Shakespeare’s **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**. Celebrating the joy of love and the power of redemption, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING chronicles the clever banter and sincere affection of two pairs of lovers. African-American Shakespeare Company Artistic Director L. Peter Callender directs a modern take on this Bard classic, including a tribute to the music of Ella Fitzgerald. With **Dwight Dean Mahabir, Leontyne Mbele-Mbong, Dedrick Weathersby, and B. Chico Purdiman**.

As part of their outreach to public schools in the Bay Area, **African-American Shakespeare Company** provides free student matinee performances for all their productions.

African-American Shakespeare Company is funded in part by The Columbia Foundation; Creative Work Fund; The Zellerbach Family Fund; Grants for the Arts/SF Hotel Tax Fund; The San Francisco Foundation; The California Arts Council, a state agency; The National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; and Shakespeare for a New Generation, a national program of the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest.