



AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

presents **KARANI MARCIA LESLIE JOHNSON'S**

THE TRIAL

of **ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN vs.**
Mammy Louise and *Safreeta Mae*

directed by **SHERRI YOUNG**

Feb 15–Mar 1

Taube Atrium Theater
401 Van Ness Avenue, 4th Floor
San Francisco

african-americanshakes.org

#TheTrialAASC

 **bartable**



IMITATION
of
LIFE

CARMEN JONES

GONE WITH
THE WIND

LOVE &
HIP HOP



AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

YEARS of ENVISIONING THE CLASSICS WITH COLOR 1994-2019

About the Company

African-American Shakespeare Company was established in 1994 to open the realm of classic theatre 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. We do this by producing work from the canon of classical theatre—including Shakespeare and great American and world playwrights—that is lively, entertaining, and relevant.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

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african-americanshakes.org
415.762.2071



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Special Thank You: Harbor Court Hotel, Devin A. Cunningham, and

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Director's Note


Looking back at my youth, there was such a need to fit in and belong. I remember one day wearing afro-puffs in South Lake Tahoe and a little white girl younger than I pointed at my hair and said, “Mom, her hair looks funny.” My problem was that I had no idea who she was talking about so I looked around to see the girl with the funny hair only to realize it was me. So much of my childhood, I tried to fly under the radar. Not be too brash, too outspoken, too this — and sometimes too black.

Which is why when my mother would go out of her way to point out all of those things that made us black from our clothes, to our music, and even the friends we had chosen — there was hurt in our mother eyes when I chose to veer away from this in a stance of wanting to not be an “other”.

I never understood the need to seek out our history, learn about my family members, and develop that black pride. Waving a flag of your blackness seemed redundant as I carry it wherever I go... it never leaves me.

Now as an adult, I understand what she was really trying to create was a foundation and roots to build strong women. She wanted us to be proud and fierce and to never forget from where we came because so many people in this world will tell your own story and will always get it wrong. So we have kings and queens among us who have forgotten themselves.

Through the strength of connecting our history and culture, the process of inheriting this pride and understanding of the people was designed to withstand any wind, storm, or threat. I see now, my mother was giving



me the strength so that no one was able to knock me down — because the roots were so deep, so strong, and filled with fortitude that her children would never allow an “other” to dictate who I am, or what I could be.

“The Trial” is a remnant of my mother’s message and I would play the role of Victoria Dryer: “why do I have to know this stuff?” I can now cringe at my words I use to think or say out loud when my mother made attempts to push me in the direction of embracing my culture.

What we both needed to learn is that those roots are so strong there was never any need to force the connection, because when enough growth happens and you realize your history, learn from the people around you, and really see them — you become connected. We become stronger.

This play is a dedication for those who have not found the strength of their connection; and for those who have been reaching out to connect with our lost community.



— Sherri Young



Who's Who

Cast

Victoria Dryer _____	Desiree Rogers
The Prosecutor _____	Ashley Raggs
The Defense _____	Brittany Nicole Sims
Safreeta Mae _____	Zoe Hodge
Mammy Louise _____	Juanita Harris
The Judge _____	Clara McDaniel
Bailiff+ _____	Devin A. Cunningham

Production Team

Director _____	Sherri Young
Production Manager _____	Leontyne Mbele-Mbong
Stage Manager _____	Devin Parker Sullivan
Lighting & Video Designer _____	Kevin Myrick
Sound Designer _____	Barry Despenza
Costume Designer _____	Corrida Carr
Production Assistant _____	Bex Brzostoski

Run time: Approximately 2 hours with one 15 minute intermission
Photography and videography of the performance is prohibited.

Meet the Cast



Devin A. Cunningham

BAILIFF+

Devin A. Cunningham is an actor and singer from Oakland, CA and he is excited to work with African-American Shakespeare Company. Devin studied acting on California's central coast at PCPA—Professional Actor Training Program. Devin made his debut with AASC in their original production of “Cinderella” in the role of Shaniqua, the stepsister. Other credits include: Lord Mayor/Lord Grey, “Richard III;” Officer Lockstock, “Urinetown the Musical;” Ensemble, “Cinderella;” Ensemble, “The Pirates of Penzance.”



Juanita Harris

MAMMY LOUISE

Juanita Harris is a musician/vocalist/actor who has been actively entertaining audiences around the Bay Area and internationally. A native of Sunnyvale, she is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music and excels in myriad genres such as Jazz, R&B, Musical Theater, Gospel, Rock and Roll, and Opera. She was voted “Best Jazz Singer” by KDFC’s Best of the Bay in 2018 and 2019 and has been nominated twice for Theater Bay Area Awards in 2017 for “Roar of the Greasepaint, Smell of the Crowd” and in 2018 for “The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler”. She travels internationally to Austria and Germany to perform for UNICEF in many of the concerts and fundraisers they host around Europe. She is a vocal coach, Director, Vocal and Music Director and has appeared onstage numerous times in Musicals and Straight Plays throughout the Bay Area.



Zoe Hodge

SAFREETA MAE

Zoe Hodge is a native Bay Area performer and is absolutely ecstatic to be making her African-American Shakespeare Company debut in “The Trial.” Zoe recently graduated with a BFA in Acting from the Academy of Art University (AAU) and has been working in theaters all across the Bay Area. Some recent favorite roles include Detention Kid in “Hairspray” at Bay Area Musicals, Vanessa in “In The Heights” at AAU, Naomi in “She Persisted” at Bay Area Children’s Theater and a Swing in the regional premier of

“Groundhog Day” at San Francisco Playhouse. Zoe has a deep love and passion for theatre and performing arts and is so thankful that you are here supporting theatre today! She also wants to thank her friends and family for their unwavering love and support.



Clara McDaniel

THE JUDGE

Clara “Clarae” McDaniel is a singer, actress, and a proud San Francisco native who has shared her many talents since childhood. Clara has performed solo concerts for churches and other audiences throughout the Bay Area. She is once again very

excited to be returning to the African-American Shakespeare Company to be featured in “The Trial”. Clara studied acting and voice at City College of San Francisco, The Knox Performing Arts at Contra Costa College, Jazz with the School of the Get Down, and Shakespeare Workshop offered through the African-American Shakespeare Company. Some of her work includes the movie “The Rapture”, performances “Your Arms To Short To Box With God,” “Gethsemane Park,” “Waiting to be Invited,” “Ain’t MisBehavin’,” “The Eubie Blake Review,” “The Bluest Eye,” “Black & Blue,” “Black Nativity” at Lorraine Hansberry Theatre; “Cinderella,” “The Colored Museum” at the African-American Shakespeare Company; “Queenie Pie” at Oakland Opera; “The Tie That Binds” and “A Little Piece of God,” at Bayview Opera House. Clara is the Mother of 3 and Grandmother of 5! She is also a Paraprofessional with the San Francisco Unified School District with a passion for children with special needs, and for the arts. She attends Destiny Christian Fellowship, Fremont, CA. She would like to thank her family and friends for their continued prayers and support!

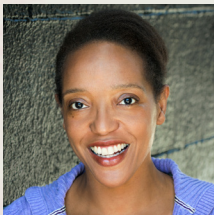


Ashley Raggs

THE PROSECUTOR

Ashley Raggs is a an actress and San Francisco native. She graduated from San Francisco School of the Arts. There, she studied movement and ethnic dance, playwriting, voice and speech, Shakespeare, directing, periods and styles, script

analysis, theatrical literature, Commedia dell’arte, Alexander Technique and Noh Theatre. She won 2nd place in the SF School of The Arts Shakespeare competition in 2007 and 2008. Some of her theatre credits include; “Murder in The First” on TNT, “Chance” on Hulu, “Helen’s Last Love”, and her latest movie “X” has premiered in Manchester, Milan, Berlin, and various places in the US. You can follow the movie “X” at everybodylovesx.com

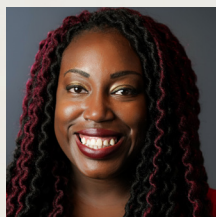


Desiree Rodgers

VICTORIA DRYER

Desiree Rodgers is happy to be back at African-American Shakespeare Company for a second time. She Loves doing work that entertains and educates. She recently got that opportunity playing Deborah in Jordan Tannahills “Late Company”

& Susan in Tim Pinkenys “Still At Risk” at New Conservatory Theater Center, Deborah Lacks in Lauren Gunderson & Geetha Reedy’s “Hela” with TheatreFIRST, Alberta Hunter in Jewelle Gomez’s “Leaving The Blues” at New Conservatory Theater Center , Siara in Patricia Milton’s “Enemies Foreign & Domestic” with CentralWorks, Myra in Ira Levin’s “Deathtrap” with Theater Rhinoceros, 3 characters in Jewelle Gomez’s “Waiting For Giovanni” at NCTC, understudying 3 roles in Naomi Wallace’s “The Liquid Plain” at OSF Ashland & playing 6 Characters in Ed Decker & Robert Leone’s” Rights Of Passage” at NCTC.



Brittany Nicole Sims

THE DEFENSE

Brittany Nicole Sims is an actress and Bay Area Native from San Leandro, CA and is thrilled to be working with African-American Shakespeare Company (AASC) again. Brittany was recently the Fairy Godmother in AASC's 2019 production of "Cinderella" and Lady In Green in "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf." Brittany received her B.A. in Theater Arts from Sacramento State University. Brittany has had the pleasure of working with All Terrain Theater, Inferno Theater, Those Women Productions, The SF Olympians Festival, Playwrights Center of SF, Ubuntu Theater, The Exit Theater, Custom Made Theater, B8 Theater, and 6th Street Playhouse. Brittany would like to thank her family and friends for all their love and support, especially her mom, sister and grandma.



Meet the Production Team



Sherri Young

DIRECTOR

Sherri Young is an M.F.A. graduate from the American Conservatory Theatre; and former Commissioner for the San Francisco Arts Commission proudly serving for Mayor Gavin Newsom. She founded the African-American Shakespeare Company in 1994 and has been its Executive Director ever since. Sherri has directed over 16 productions; produced and executed four programs for the organization; and speaks at various colleges, universities, and conferences across the nation. She manages approximately 60 company members and volunteers for the organization's programs. Some career highlights includes creating 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.



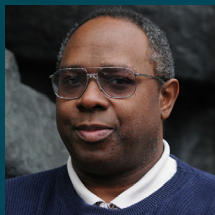
Leontyne Mbele-Mbong

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Leontyne Mbele-Mbong is in her fourth season with the African-American Shakespeare Company as Production Manager. She is the founder of CogentOAK, a virtual admin business that provides administrative assistance. Prior to starting her own business, Leontyne worked for 10 years at an engineering consultant firm, working her way from temporary receptionist to business development coordinator. The customer service skills she learned in her first

job as travel agent fresh out of college, she now puts to use at the American Conservatory Theater box office, and at various theaters across the city where she can be seen working front of house. The over-arching theme of this patchwork is assisting people with just what they need to do what they desire hassle-free—be it seeing a show or working on the aspect of the budding business they love. She even creates websites! Check hers out at www.cogentoak.com.





Kevin Myrick

LIGHTING & VIDEO DESIGNER

Kevin Myrick has worked in theatre since 1968 as a theatrical designer, technical director and multimedia artist. He studied technical theatre at San Francisco State University, and has most recently designed for the African-American Shakespeare Company (“Othello” and “Macbeth”), TheatreFirst (“The Last Sermon of Sister Imani”), Lorraine Hansberry Theatre Company (“Urban Retreat”), Throckmorton Theatre (Ragtime) and Youth Musical Theatre Company (“A Man of No Importance”).



Barry Despenza

SOUND DESIGNER

Barry Olusegun-Noble Despenza is a Sound Designer, Composer + Filmmaker, from Chicago IL based in Los Angeles. Barry received his BFA from San Francisco Art Institute and also composes for experimental film and sound installations. Barry has worked with Cutting Ball Theatre, Ubuntu, Bay Area Musicals and excited to continue his sonic chops with African-American Shakespeare Company.



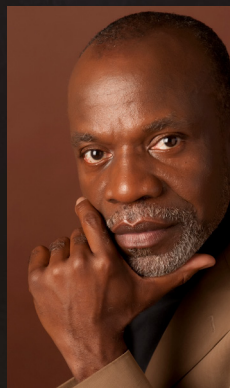
Bex Brzostoski

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Bex Brzostoski is a student at the University of San Francisco, double majoring in English and Performing Arts and Social Justice (PASJ). They compiled the dramaturgy for this show, made certain props, and helped wherever was needed. When not working for the African-American Shakespeare Company, they are working for the Palace Theater or the ASUSF College Players.



Message from the Artistic Director



Theater **REVIVES!** Theater **INFORMS!**
Theater **RESPONDS!** Theater **ENTERTAINS!**
Theater **ENLIGHTENS!**

As we gather for an evening or afternoon of story-telling (a tradition that goes back for centuries among all races, and religions), our hearts become connected: we are in total synchronization with our fellow listeners. Theater **CONNECTS!** We overcome our individual and group differences and participate in a unified common experience. Theater **UNITES!**

For over 25 years, **AFRICAN-AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY** has led the way in diversifying Bay Area stages and audiences: offering artists of all ages and an opportunity to live their dreams, while providing our audiences with fresh new looks at Shakespeare, and American and European Classics, with Color! Inspired by your generous support over the past 25 years, AASC has been awarded the Paine Knickerbocker Award in 2014, for Outstanding Achievement by the San Francisco Bay Area Critics Circle; a Community Partner Award, from University of San Francisco's Leo T. McCarthy Center, for Outstanding Collaboration in providing Service-Learning Programs; won 6 Broadway World Regional Awards in 2019; won Best Live Theater in 2018 by San Francisco Magazine; and, most recently, received a Certificate of Honor from the City and County of San Francisco for "tireless dedication in serving and uplifting our communities". Theater **REWARDS!**

DONATE NOW!

Give to the company that gives back to the community.
Give to the company that has helped to hone the craft of actors from the Bay to Broadway!
Give to the company whose mission is dedicated to diversity and inclusion.
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Thank you for your Support!

— L. Peter Callender

A handwritten signature in white ink, which appears to read "L. Peter Callender". The signature is stylized and fluid, with the first name being the most prominent.

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