

RINGPLAY PRODUCTIONS ANNOUNCES THE  
**15TH ANNUAL THEATRE FESTIVAL**



HONOURING  
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE BAHAMAS' INDEPENDENCE

**SEPTEMBER 18TH — OCTOBER 7TH, 2023**

  
**SHAKESPEARE**  
IN PARADISE  
*a theatre festival for Nassau and the world*



# WELCOME

## SHAKESPEARE IN PARADISE CELEBRATES ITS 15TH FESTIVAL.

People say you're not really an established entity unless you've been going for three years. Well, I guess Shakespeare in Paradise has been established five times over!

### **Welcome to our fifteenth festival.**

In 2008, we had this crazy idea that The Bahamas could produce an annual international Shakespeare festival.

In 2009, we made that idea come true. Shakespeare in Paradise presented its first festival. Back then, we didn't have a theatre home. We produced plays throughout Nassau: at the NAGB, Graycliff, Nirvana, the Hub, the Marley Resort, and the Dundas. Since that year, we have put on productions in other spaces too: at COB, Hillside House, the Bahamas Historical Society, the Current. Our tagline, *a theatre festival for Nassau and the world*, was for real.

In 2014, we inherited a theatre. Not that the Dundas *belongs* to any of the people who inhabit it and who use it. It's a not-for-profit trust established in 1940 as a civic centre and repurposed in 1970 as a theatre for the performing arts. The Dundas is blessed with a grand historic

building in spacious grounds, which gives us plenty of potential for growth—and grow we have. The very theatre we have been using all year, in fact, is part of that growth: the Philip A. Burrows Black Box, established in 2014, home of *Short Tales*. In good years, we have two working theatres in the festival. In future years, we hope to have three.

And we still have crazy ideas. *You Can Lead a Horse to Water* is the tail end of one of them: A Year of Bahamian Theatre, which has presented one play a month since October 2022. We made it! We survived, *and* we thrived!

*As You Like It* is the beginning of another one: that we can take Shakespeare's works, put them in the hands of young Bahamians, and come up with new visions and new ways of telling the old stories that speak to twenty-first century postcolonial archipelagos.

*Short Tales* is a third: we came up with a way to develop new Bahamian playwrights, directors and actors on an annual basis, and now we're looking to expand that to help

develop new Bahamian editors too, working with UB's School of English to edit and publish the anthologies of the plays.

And finally the fourth: that a Bahamian from Shakespeare in Paradise can become the president of a global Shakespeare organization, the Shakespeare Theatre Association. Through our connection with STA, we are pleased to present Debra Ann Byrd in her one-woman work, *Becoming Othello: A Black Girl's Journey*. In keeping with our roots, this will be at the NAGB and at the Current, in the ECCHO Gallery.

### **The festival come already!**

Thanks for being here!

Nicolette Bethel 2023



## SHAKESPEARE IN PARADISE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Nicolette Bethel**  
Festival Director, President

**Philip A. Burrows**  
Artistic Director, Vice-President

**Delores Adderley**  
Treasurer

**Marcel T. Sherman**  
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**Erin T. McKinney**  
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Front of House Manager

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PR and Marketing

**Jovanna Hepburn**  
Director of Acting Company

**Anthony Roberts**  
Resident Director

**Festival Assistants:**  
renee caesar  
Dorian McKenzie

**Graphic Design  
& Poster Art Direction**  
Julia P. Ames

Photo: The Winston V. Saunders Theatreat  
at the Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts

*To contribute to the reopening of the  
Winston V. Saunders Main Stage Theatre,  
go to: [www.dundascentre.org/contribute](http://www.dundascentre.org/contribute)*



COURTESY LINDA HUBER

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# SHAKESPEARE IN PARADISE



Designed to expose locals and visitors to the best in World, Caribbean, African, and African American theatre, Shakespeare in Paradise celebrates theatre in all its forms, not just Shakespeare.

**Shakespeare in Paradise** was conceived by Ringplay Productions for the following purposes:

**Celebration and development of Bahamian theatre.** The Bahamian tradition of theatre is a long and robust one. Shakespeare in Paradise is designed to celebrate the best of the past while developing a brighter, stronger future.

**Education & exposure.** We're committed to exposing Bahamian audiences to a range of productions from classical theatre traditions around the world. We hold the Festival during the academic year to offer specifically tailored educational packages to local and international schoolchildren. We also offer workshops and special performances in schools and for school audiences.

**Community outreach.** Shakespeare in Paradise offers opportunities to individuals in the cultural community who have limited outlets for their training. Through volunteer activity and productive partnerships, the

Festival expands this sector of the Bahamian cultural community.

**Historic preservation/City of Nassau development.** Nassau has unique architectural and landscape qualities that provide the ideal backdrop for various productions. By taking the Festival into these spaces around the city, we hope to highlight those special features of Nassau and support their preservation for future generations.

**Enhancement of the Bahamian tourist product.** Tourism is changing. Tourists are seeking more varied experiences. Shakespeare in Paradise enhances the Bahamian tourist product by providing a festival for theatre-goers and tourists alike.

**Economic development.** Economists now know that culture is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy. Shakespeare in Paradise aims to build capacity in the Bahamian cultural industries, provide visitors with a different experience, and open up new markets to The Bahamas.

# RINGPLAY THEATRE

Ringplay Productions, the parent company of Shakespeare in Paradise, is a repertory theatre company as well as a production company whose mission is to further the development of the arts in The Bahamas by presenting the best in national, regional and world theatre. It was first imagined in the summer of 1998, but as several of its members lived abroad at the time, it was not until the spring of 2001 that Ringplay unveiled its first production: a revised and updated version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, presented at the College of The Bahamas during its Colour of Harmony Festival.

In 2014 Ringplay took on the job of managing the Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts. Its first task was the creation of the Philip A. Burrows Black Box Theatre, which has become a desired space for both intimate and experimental productions.

We will continue to offer high-quality classical, experimental and modern works (both local and international) to Bahamian audiences. We invite anyone interested in finding out more about our company to email us, or to check us out at our website.

## **RINGPLAY PRODUCTIONS' EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS:**

**Philip A. Burrows** President  
Artistic & Resident Director

**Nicolette Bethel**  
Vice President & Resident Director

**Delores Adderley**  
Treasurer, Manager & Box Office

**Erin T. McKinney**  
Associate Artistic & Resident Director

**Claudette Allens**  
Front of House & Costumes

**Marcel T. Sherman**  
Productions Manager

**Anthony "Skeebo" Roberts**  
Resident Director

**Patrice Francis**  
Communications

**Jovanna Hepburn**  
Head of Acting Company

**Sammie Bethell**  
Member at Large

## **BOARD MEMBERS EMERITI:**

**David Jonathan Burrows**

**Carrie Collins**



**Email:**

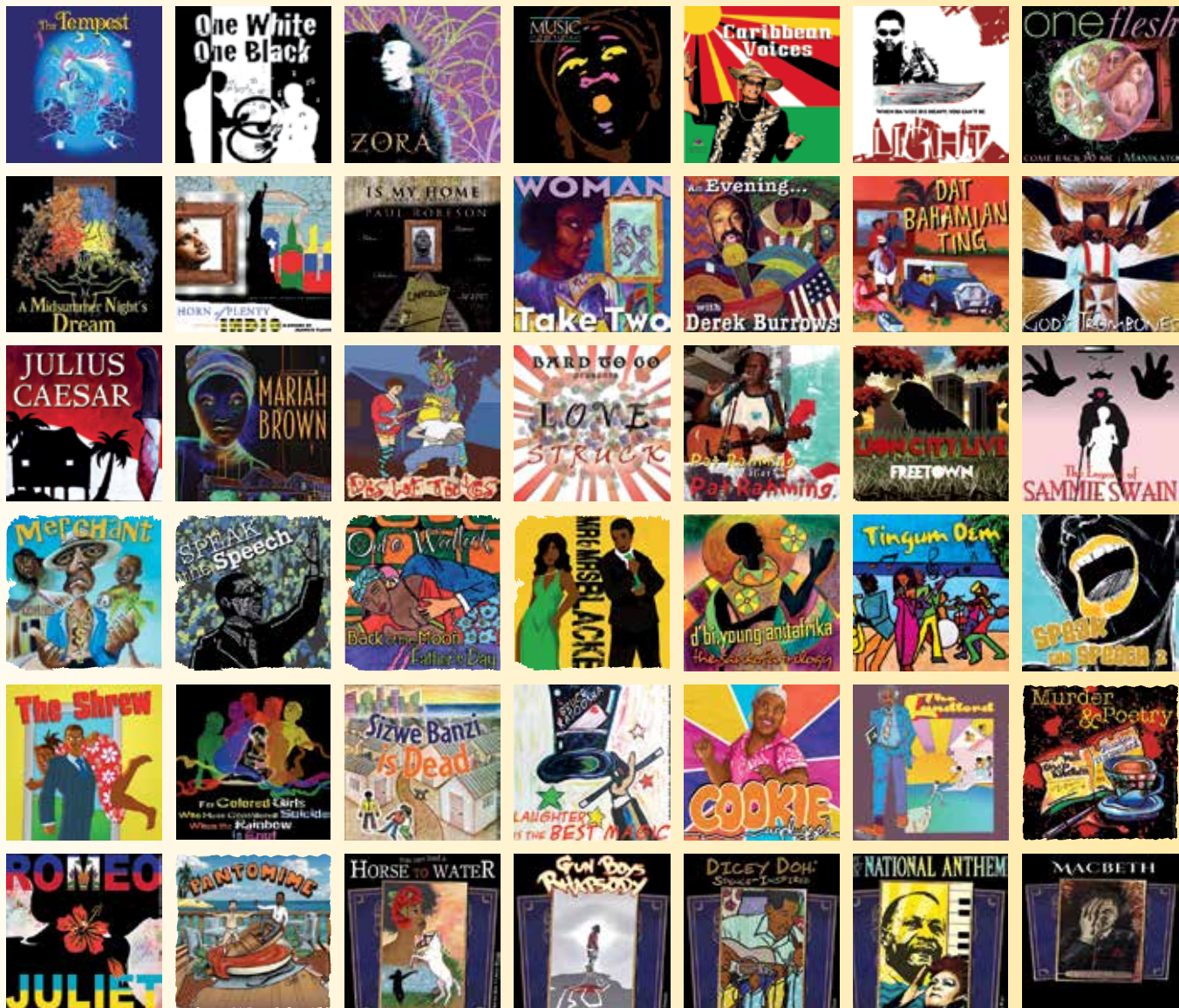
[ringplayproductions@gmail.com](mailto:ringplayproductions@gmail.com)

**Snailmail:**

P.O. Box 55-5144  
Nassau, Bahamas

**[www.ringplay.org](http://www.ringplay.org)**

# 15 YEARS OF SHOW POSTERS • 2009-2023





# 33 POSTER ARTISTS



**2009** Jace McKinney (The Tempest, One White One Black), Lindsay Braynen (Zora), Trevaughn Neely (Music of The Bahamas), Reuno Pratt (Caribbean Voices), Jonathan Murray (Light), Amy Salter (Love in Two Acts).

**2010** Lindsay Braynen (Midsummer Night's Dream), Reuno Pratt (Horn of Plenty/Indio and The World is My Home: Paul Robeson), Jeffrey Meris (Woman Take Two), Bernard Petit (An Evening with Derek Burrows), Charlthorne Strachan (Dat Bahamian Ting), Matthew Wildgoose (God's Trombones), Julia Ames (One Flesh).

**2011** Khia Poitier (Julius Caesar), Kachelle Knowles (Mariah Brown), Rashad Ferguson (Dis We Tings), Reuno Pratt (Bard To Go), Charlthorne Strachan (Evening with Pat Rahming).

**2012** Matthew Wildgoose (Merchant), Reuno Pratt (Lion City Live), Kachelle Knowles (Sammie Swain), Zyandric Jones (Speak the Speech), June Collie (Out o' Wedlock), Lindsay Braynen (Mr. & Mrs. Blacke).

**2013** Stephen Catalano (The Shrew), Bernard Petit (d'bi.young Anitafrika), June Collie (Tingum Dem), Lindsay Braynen (Speak the Speech).

**2014** Jalan Harris (Romeo and Juliet), Lindsay Braynen (for colored girls...), Bernard Petit (Sizwe Banzi is Dead), Elkino Dames (Bruce Katooska: Laughter is the Best Magic).

**2015** Liam Burrows (Twelfth Night), Lindsay Braynen (Cookie Unplugged), Rashad Ferguson (The Landlord), Nowe Harris-Smith (Murder & Poetry), Kareem Williams (Pantomime).

**2016** Tammy Ali-Burrows (Macbeth), Christina Wong (You Can Lead a Horse to Water), Rashad Ferguson (Gun Boys Rhapsody), June Collie (Dicey Doh), Bernard Petit (National Anthem).

**2017** Jason Taylor (Othello), Theo McClain (Once On This Island, Small Axe), June Collie (From A Yardie to a Yankee), Lindsay Braynen (Derek Burrows Storyteller), Julia Ames (Wonder of Will: This is Your Afterlife).

**2018** June Collie (Much Ado About Nothing), Eddie Minnis (Der Real Ting), Kachelle Knowles (Short Tales).

**2019** Justin Moultrie (Measure for Measure), Kareem Williams (Ain't Misbehavin'), Maz Joachin (Old Story Time), Dylan Miles (Short Tales)

**2020** No productions were held, because of Covid-19.

**2021** Julia Ames (Love's Labour's Lost).

**2022** Julia Ames (Richard III), Maz Joachin (First Comes Mourning), Kenel Augustin (Short Tales)

**2023** Julia Ames (As You Like It), June Collie (Becoming Othello—A Black Girl's Journey), Maz Joachin (Short Tales).

# FESTIVAL T-SHIRTS

Theatre is a collaborative art form, not limited to performance. The Young Artists' Programme of Shakespeare in Paradise has given art students and young professional artists the opportunity to hone their craft and to expand their portfolios while at the same time promoting Shakespeare in Paradise by branding the festival with their vibrant, unique images.

Over the years, from 2009-2023, 33 artists have created posters for 63 shows for Shakespeare in Paradise.

This year's posters were created by June Collie: *Becoming Othello - A Black Girl's Journey*; Maz Joachin: *Short Tales* and Julia Ames: *As You Like It*. *You Can Lead A Horse to Water* was created for the San Francisco production in 1984 and updated to 2023 by Julia Ames and Philip A. Burrows.

**JUNE COLLIE** is a multi-media artist and owner of the Sixty 2 Sixty Art Gallery in downtown Nassau. Renowned for her unapologetically sensual figures, she pairs images of the female body with landscape and patterns to create sumptuous compositions. A graduate of the College of the Bahamas, Collie received her Associate Degree under the tutelage of John Cox and Sue Bennett Williams. Collie's work explores themes of family and

Black womanhood, informed by a Caribbean upbringing. She has widely exhibited her art and her work is in many private collections of those several art galleries including The Current at Baha Mar and The CAB Gallery. Her poster for *Becoming Othello —A Black Girl's Journey* is her sixth poster for Shakespeare in Paradise. She can be reached at [junecollie@gmail.com](mailto:junecollie@gmail.com).

**MAZ JOACHIN** is a storyboard artist and cartoonist. He expresses himself by storytelling through comic books and animation. He is the author and illustrator of *The Walkers* and *Kalyspo Kid* and two comic book series, *Canyon* and *Supernova*.. He is the director of the *Streetlight Animation Studios* and produced the animation, *Nassau Rock*. This year's poster for *Short Tales* is his third for Shakespeare in Paradise. Maz Joachin can be reached at [maz.joachin@gmail.com](mailto:maz.joachin@gmail.com)

**JULIA AMES** is a graphic designer and illustrator, who has worked with Shakespeare in Paradise since 2009, designing festival books, brochures, t-shirts and posters. As the poster art director, she has sought out and worked with Bahamian artists to create images for the festival shows. *As You Like It* is her fifth show poster for the festival. She can be reached at [julia@amz-design.com](mailto:julia@amz-design.com).



# BOX OFFICE, TICKETS & VENUES

## BOX OFFICE

The Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts  
103 Mackey Street,  
south of Madeira St  
Call: 393-3728 / 394-7179  
Open: Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm

## TICKETS

Tickets: \$35

Purchase tickets in person at the **Box Office** at the Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts. Or, visit our website to purchase on Eventbrite:



## FOLLOW US

[www.shakespeareInParadise.org](http://www.shakespeareInParadise.org)

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ShakespeareInParadise](https://www.facebook.com/ShakespeareInParadise)

instagram:  
[@shakespeareinparadise](https://www.instagram.com/shakespeareinparadise)

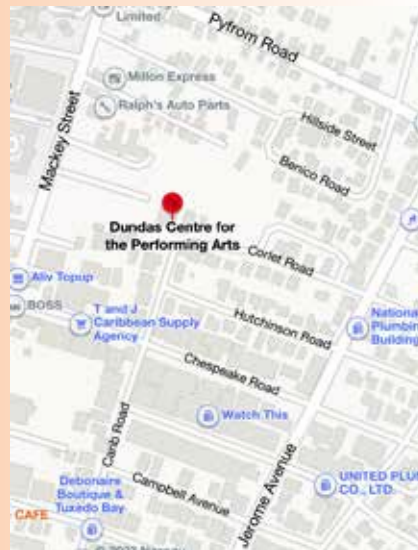
## VENUES

The Philip A. Burrows  
Black Box Theatre

The Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts 103 Mackey Street, south of Madeira St.

Fiona's Theatre  
National Art Gallery  
of The Bahamas,  
Villa Doyle  
West and West Hill Streets

The Current: ECCHO Gallery,  
Grand Hyatt, Baha Mar,  
1 Baha Mar Blvd. Cable Beach





As You Like It

# AS YOU LIKE IT

**Wednesday, September 20, 8 p.m.**

**Friday, September 22, 8 p.m.**

**Saturday, September 23, 8 p.m.**

**Monday, September 25, 8 p.m.**

**Tuesday, September 26, 8 p.m.**

**Thursday, September 28, 8 p.m.**

## **Philip A. Burrows Black Box**

Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts

Written by **William Shakespeare**

Dramaturged by **Sarah Burnett**

Directed by **Sarah Burnett**

Assisted by **Erin T. Knowles**

*The script has been spiced with narrative interludes to increase the fun!*

## **CAST**

ORLANDO • **Devantai 'Devion' Sterling**

ROSALIND • **Jasmine Anderson**

OLIVER, CORIN, FIRST LORD TO DUKE SENIOR, FIRST LORD TO DUKE FREDERICK & SIR OLIVER MARTEXT  
• **Earl Francis**

ADAM & WILLIAM • **Kevin Sturruup**

CELIA • **Valicia Rolle**

TOUCHSTONE • **Sony Jean-Jacques**

DUKE FREDERICK & DUKE SENIOR • **Suhayla Hepburn**

CHARLES & SILVIUS & LE BEAU • **Gabriel Decius**

JAQUES • **Atreaeu 'Trae' Davis**

PHOEBE • **Tanricka Lightbourne/Taina Johnson**

AUDREY • **Taina Johnson/Janine Ferguson**

HYMEN • **TBA**

## **CREW**

Stage Manager • **Tyrecho Bonaby**

Crew • **Sofiyya Smith & Lesa Delancy**

Lighting & Sound • **Joshua Haeward II**

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*All the world's a stage.*

— *AS YOU LIKE IT*, ACT 2 SCENE 7

## **As You Like It—a super short summary**

“All brothers hate each other for some reason.”

“Rosalind dresses up as a boy and convinces her crush to hit on her while she’s a boy.”

“Everyone is married by a Greek god.”

## **Read the longer summary here:**

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/shakespeares-plays/as-you-like-it/>



## VENUES

Philip A. Burrows  
BLACK BOX  
THEATRE

The Dundas  
Centre for the  
Performing Arts

Fiona's Theatre  
National Art  
Gallery of The  
Bahamas

The Current:  
ECCHO Gallery  
at  
Baha Mar



September 18  
through  
October 7

MON • SEP 18

Short Tales  
8 p.m.  
PAB BLACK BOX

TUE • SEP 19

Short Tales  
8 p.m.  
PAB BLACK BOX

MON • SEP 25

As You Like It  
8 p.m.  
PAB BLACK BOX

TUE • SEP 26

As You Like It  
8 p.m.  
PAB BLACK BOX

MON • OCT 2

You Can Lead A Horse  
To Water  
8 p.m.  
PAB BLACK BOX

TUE • OCT 3

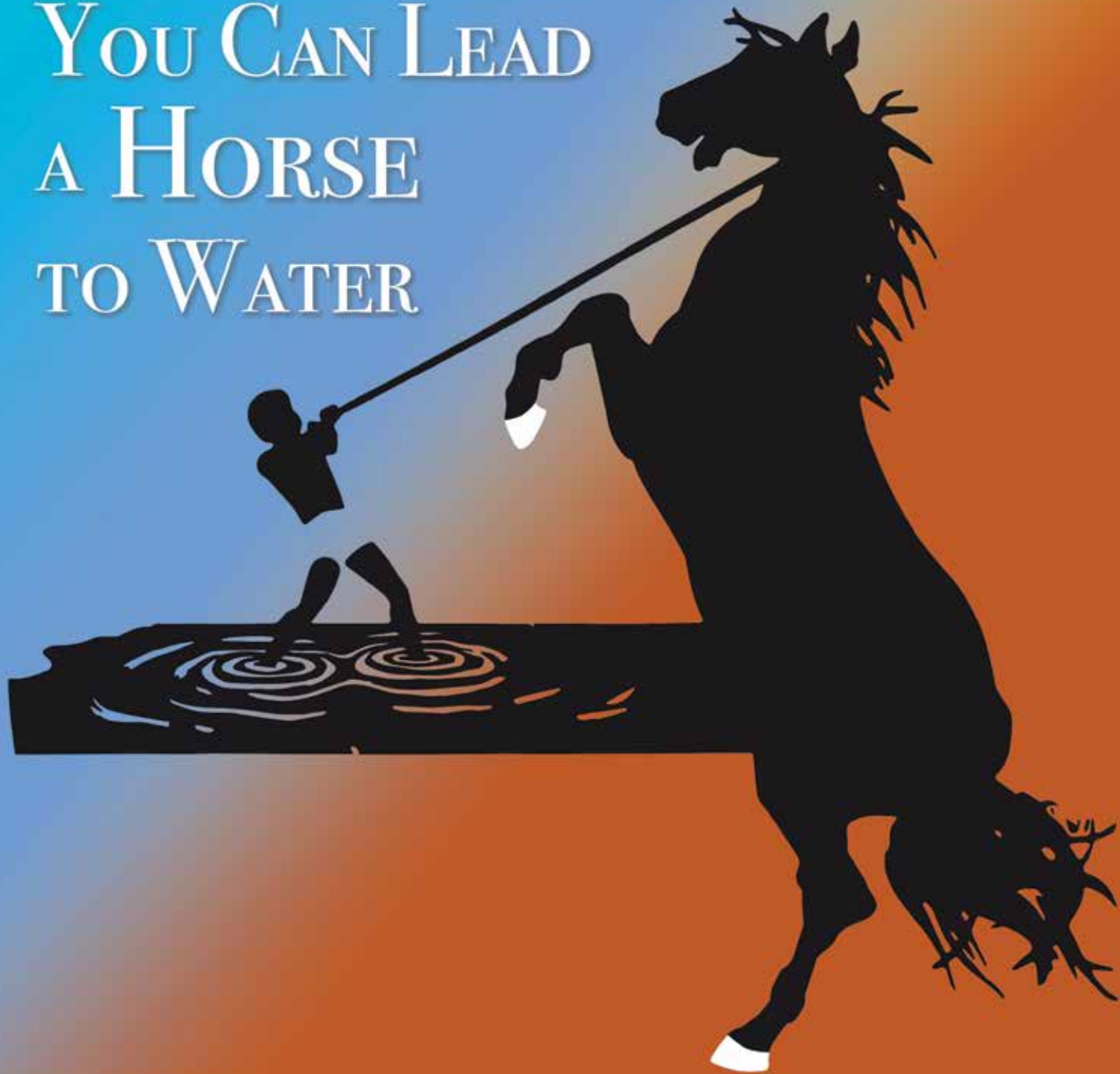
Becoming Othello  
— A Black Girl's Journey  
8 p.m. | NAGB

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You Can Lead A Horse  
To Water  
8 p.m. | PAB BLACK BOX

<b>WED • SEP 20</b>	<b>THU • SEP 21</b>	<b>FRI • SEP 22</b>	<b>SAT • SEP 23</b>
<p><b>As You Like It</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>Short Tales</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>As You Like It</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>As You Like It</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>
<b>WED • SEP 27</b>	<b>THU • SEP 28</b>	<b>FRI • SEP 29</b>	<b>SAT • SEP 30</b>
<p><b>Short Tales</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>As You Like It</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>Short Tales</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>Short Tales</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>
<b>WED • OCT 4</b>	<b>THU • OCT 5</b>	<b>FRI • OCT 6</b>	<b>SAT • OCT 7</b>
<p><b>You Can Lead A Horse To Water</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>Becoming Othello — A Black Girl’s Journey</b> 8 p.m.   ECCHO Gallery</p> <hr/> <p><b>You Can Lead A Horse To Water</b> 8 p.m.   <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>You Can Lead A Horse To Water</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>	<p><b>You Can Lead A Horse To Water</b> 8 p.m. <b>PAB BLACK BOX</b></p>

YOU CAN LEAD  
A HORSE  
TO WATER





# YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER

**Monday, October 2, 8 p.m.**

**Tuesday, October 3, 8 p.m.**

**Wednesday, October 4, 8 p.m.**

**Thursday, October 5, 8 p.m.**

**Friday, October 6, 8 p.m.**

**Saturday, October 7, 8 p.m.**

## **Philip A. Burrows Black Box**

Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts

by **Winston V. Saunders**

Music and Rhythms

by **Cleophas R. E. Adderley Jr.**

Directed by **Philip A. Burrows**

Assisted by **Marcel T. Sherman**

Musical Direction by **Adrian Archer**

Fight Choreography by **Ian Borden**

## **CAST**

(In order of speaking)

JUDGE • **Gregory Deane**

LAWYER • **Kayleaser Deveaux-Isaacs**

SON • **Kentario McKenzie**

MOTHER • **Valene Rolle**

SIS ONE • **Gari Rigby**

SIS TWO • **Bailey Bostwick**

NEIGHBOUR • **Rose Barrett**

OTHER • **Candaelyn 'Candi' Rigby**

LOVER ONE • **Robert Farquharson**

TEACHER • **Toni Rigby**

CLERK/LOVER TWO/POLICEMAN • **Garrad Rigby**

MAGISTRATE • **Randel Johnson**

WITNESS • **Arthellia Isaacs**

WIFE • **Alyson Estwick**

BOSS • **Al Culmer**

BOSS'S WIFE • **Bonny Byfield**

LOVER THREE • **Scott Adderley**

SOCIAL WORKER • **Candace Bostwick**

LOVER FOUR • **Percy Blyden**

BOSS'S SON • **Javan Davis**

OLD FOOL • **Nirico Musgrove**

## **CREW**

Set Construction • **Robert Bingham**

Lighting Design • **Philip A. Burrows**

Light Operation • **Joshua Haeward II**

Costume Consultant • **Claudette Allens**

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Christ Church Cathedral

St. George's Anglican Church

# ABOUT YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER

A play by Winston V. Saunders with music and rhythms by Cleophas R.E. Adderley Jr., *You Can Lead a Horse to Water* is the most critically acclaimed work in the history of Bahamian theatre. It premiered in Nassau in 1983 at the Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts to rave reviews, and was presented to a Freeport audience shortly after its Nassau run.

In 1984 the play had a successful six-week engagement at the Julian Theatre in San Francisco with an all-star American cast. A revival was staged at the Dundas in 1988, and again in 1991 prior to its being presented that summer at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Fourteen years passed before the play would be produced again. In November 2005, Philip A. Burrows was invited to serve as a guest director at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and he directed a production of *Horse* with colour-blind casting. Once again, it was a critical success. The following year, Ringplay Productions revived it again for local audiences after a fifteen-year absence from the Bahamian stage. It opened at the Dundas in July 2006, and in September 2006 travelled to Trinidad and Tobago for CARIFESTA IX.

In 2016 it was produced for the Shakespeare in Paradise Festival.

Ringplay Productions will again present this masterwork during the Shakespeare in Paradise Theatre Festival as the final production in our

**Year of Bahamian Theatre.** This production is being directed by Philip A. Burrows, who has directed all previous productions of this work. Marcel T. Sherman will be assisting. Once again, Adrian Archer serves as Musical Director.

Here's what people had to say about *You Can Lead A Horse To Water* between 1983 and 1991:

"...a play that leaps out and grabs you by the throat... It comes at you from all directions..."

– *The Tribune*, 1983

"...one is surprised at the theatrical daring by which this intense drama is interspersed by comic episodes. Not just a light relief to break the tension, but sustained comedy."

– *The Nassau Guardian*, 1983

"...this story of Caribbean poverty, desperation, indolence and matricide is told in a swirling narrative frame by a trial."

– *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1984

"Moving look at life's pain in the balmy Bahamas."

– *The Tribune* (Oakland, California), 1984

"...powerful, emotionally charged drama that thrusts its protagonist inexorably into his final act of matricide."

– *Delaria & Strobe* (San Francisco, California), 1984

"In both style and content Saunders' drama reflects cultures as ancient as the Greeks and as contemporary as tomorrow's headlines, with echoes of Brechtian Epic Theater along the way."

– *The Potrero View* (San Francisco, California), 1984

“Part social realism, part story theater, part Greek tragedy with choral commentary, “You Can Lead A Horse To Water” is above all a theatrical incantation – magic and fire and the marvel of the moment”

– *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1984

“...intense and wonderfully theatrical and some of it is richly comical.”

– *San Francisco Examiner*, 1984

“...draws its title from the first line of a familiar, tired aphorism which is transformed in the hands of Bahamian playwright Winston Saunders, into an evocative metaphor for the struggle between an aspiring, idealistic young man and the mother he attempts to forcibly shape to his preconceived plans.”

– *The Bay City News Service* (San Francisco, California), 1984

“Bahamian values are impressively explored...”

– *The List* (Edinburgh, Scotland), 1991

“...steeped in Bahamian culture and is deservedly one of the highlights of this year’s Fringe.”

– *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh, Scotland), 1991

“...is a brilliant example of the assimilation and appropriation of the Greek model by a Bahamian artist to produce something Bahamian.”

– **Anthony Dahl** (Historical Introduction to the Literature of The Bahamas), 1995



Poster artwork by Christina Wong, created for the 2016 Shakespeare in Paradise theatre festival.

# Becoming Othello

-A Black Girl's Journey



# BECOMING OTHELLO

## – A BLACK GIRL’S JOURNEY

**Tuesday October 3, NAGB, 8 p.m.**

**Thursday October 5, ECCHO Gallery, 8 p.m.**

*(See page nine for more venue information.)*

*The critically acclaimed one-woman international production*

Written & performed by **Debra Ann Byrd**

Directed by **Tina Packer**

Assistant Director **Martin Jason Asprey**

Movement Director **Dyane Harvey-Salaam**

Sound Design **David D. Wright**

Costume Design **Gail Cooper-Hect**

**CONTENT:** *A gun / sound of gunshots fired during this play.*

### **ABOUT BECOMING OTHELLO...**

Classical actress and producer Debra Ann Byrd undertook a remarkable journey to take on the role of Othello—which she first performed in her native Harlem. The actress recently recorded her experiences on becoming ‘The Moor of Venice’ as writer-in-residence at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Inspired in 2000, by actor Charles Dutton when he performed at the Playing Shakespeare workshop with John Barton, Debra Ann dreamed that she too would one day play the role of Othello. Roll on 13 years and she finally got her wish.

Debra Ann is currently working on a documentary feature film and a small volume memoir which includes research from the Birthplace Trust, the Folger Shakespeare Library and Columbia University Archives.

Today’s performance of *BECOMING OTHELLO: A Black Girl’s Journey* is a living memoir about a young woman’s trials and triumphs with race and the classics, her memorable experiences growing up in East Harlem and her gender flipped journey on the road to becoming Shakespeare’s noble, flawed general Othello.

This one woman theatrical journey is complete with moving songs and lyrical language from Langston Hughes, Martin Luther King, Jr., James Baldwin, Frederick Douglass, Toni Morrison, William Shakespeare, Harriet Tubman and the King James Bible.

# PLAYING AGAINST OBLIVION: A YEAR OF BAHAMIAN THEATRE

by Nicolette Bethel

This year, the Shakespeare in Paradise theatre festival company has been commemorating fifty years of Bahamian independence by producing **A Year of Bahamian Theatre**—one play per month by a different Bahamian playwright.

The goal of the Year has been to celebrate the range and depth of Bahamian theatre. In true repertory style, Shakespeare in Paradise has mounted thirteen productions, a new one every month. The year began in October 2022, when Shakespeare in Paradise festival premiered the newest Bahamian work, *First Comes Mourning*, and it ends in October 2023 with a production of the greatest Bahamian play, *You Can Lead a Horse to Water*, a modern Greek tragedy about a matricide. **A Year of Bahamian Theatre** reached back to the majority rule and independence era to find the plays and the playwrights that we wanted to highlight for the year. Each decade of the independence era is represented.

In The Bahamas, theatre has been recorded for over three hundred years. Claire Belgrave tells us that during the 1720s, mention is made of a satirical play put on by pirates, and one hundred years later the traveller Adela Hart attended a theatrical event in Nassau. One hundred and twenty years after that, the first organised amateur theatre company, The Little Theatre, presented its first public performance—of James Montgomery's *Nothing But the Truth*, on July 28, 1939.

“Theater is the essential artform of democracy,” says Oskar Eustis; “...truth comes from the collision of different ideas and the emotional muscle of empathy are the necessary tools of democratic citizenship.”<sup>1</sup> But the reality with which most Bahamians grew up prior to 1973 was that theatre was an instrument of segregation. The same Little Theatre established in 1939 was exclusively white: white performers, a whites-only venue, white audiences. The democracy of theatre—its empathy, its collision of different ideas—did not touch the majority of us.

Indeed, the modern history of our islands is a tale of

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Oskar Eustis, “Why Theater is Essential to Democracy”. Filmed April 2018, TED Conference, Vancouver, B.C., Canada. <https://live.stanford.edu/2020-digital-season/oskar-eustis-why-theater-essential-democracy>

genocide, enslavement, colonization, and inequality. In the 1960s, much changed. The decades after the second world war saw the dismantling of all European empires. Independence for former colonies was the order of the day. Locally, black Bahamians were clamouring for equal rights. In 1967, the first black majority government was elected, and Independence followed close behind. Just before midnight on July 9, 1973, the Union Jack was lowered, and the Bahamian flag was hoisted. At midnight, we were a new nation.

This occasion was momentous, and it was marked by the flourishing of Bahamian theatre. Many of the playwrights we honour in our Year of Bahamian Theatre were writing during this time: Susan Wallace, Jeanne Thompson, Telcine Turner, P. Anthony White, James Catalyn, Patrick Rahming and Winston Saunders drew upon the experience of collectively finding our feet as a people. These were the Eugene O’Neills, Arthur Millers, Thornton Wilders and Tennessee Williamses of our canon. It is on their work, as playwrights, actors, directors and producers, on which our theatrical tradition is founded.

The playwrights who came after, from the independence generation itself—Michael Pintard, Ian Strachan, and Nicolette Bethel—brought a critical lens to the independence project, challenging the nation to honour its promise to its citizens and seek true democracy across the board. And then there’s the celebration of our musical heritage, of our cultural bonds. E. Clement Bethel, Philip Burrows, J. Ben Hepburn and Patrice Francis. Yes. Our theatre tradition is something to be celebrated.

So why did we embark on such an ambitious project—especially given that the producers and performers are all volunteers who have other jobs? One play a month for thirteen months is no joke, even for professional companies with full-time employees. What possessed us?

I can’t honestly say. But after discussing it with other producers, it comes down to three main reasons:

1) *We had to.* We are aging. Our culture is a heavily oral culture. What isn’t experienced, what isn’t passed down

person to person, is almost invariably lost. Several of the plays we mounted are works I myself had heard about but never seen. Many of our actors hadn't even heard about them.

2) *We have a vibrant Bahamian tradition of theatre*—which most of our audiences and most of our performers do not know about. Six of the playwrights are already dead, three are elderly, and the remainder are middle-aged or older. It was important to produce classic Bahamian plays so that younger audience members and actors could have them as part of their living memories.

3) The Bahamian theatre tradition is *good*. It is *strong*. It is worth celebrating, building on, and sharing with the world. Producing these works has reinforced our collective sense of self, helped us look at who we were and who we wanted to be, and given us a measure by which we can evaluate where we are now.

What did we learn in the process? A whole lot of things we didn't know before. We appointed an executive producer who managed budgets, liaised with directors, and fed the casts who were working otherwise for free. We assembled a team of volunteers who helped research, interview and generate blurbs on each writer. We published a new programme every month which gave audiences and casts information about each play—historical context, biographies, the works. Our box office cultivated regular attendees, offered discounts and multi-show vouchers, and welcomed returning audiences hungry to see what each month would bring.

Here are some of the highlights from the Year.

1. Our thirteen productions presented sixteen plays by fifteen authors, featuring fourteen separate directors.
2. We presented at least one play from every decade since majority rule and independence.
3. We acknowledged the range and variety of Bahamian plays. We've presented one musical, three plays with music, five comedies, two family dramas, one spoken word performance, one period piece. The plays covered politics, love, infidelity, prejudice, hate, gambling, and murder. Two of the plays were inspired by the same court case of a son who killed his mother. *Vicious Circle* and *You Can Lead a Horse to Water* tell the same story from very different angles.
4. We found out where the sweet spots were. Most of our plays were written between 1967 and 1989, in the 20 years straddling independence—a golden age of creative activity.

And what did we achieve?

1. We introduced our company of actors—most under the age of forty—to the Bahamian theatrical tradition that flourished before they were born.
2. We expanded our directors' pool from four to fourteen!! Individuals who cut their teeth on *Short Tales* were given longer plays to work with. And we welcomed some veterans who back to work with us too.
3. We started a buzz among audiences. We weren't the only ones impressed with the range and quality of Bahamian works for the stage. Audiences are clamouring for the same from next year! (...Help!!)
4. We are earning our way out of our financial hole. We don't get corporate or government support. We survive off ticket receipts, programme ads, what grants may come, and donations. We make our overhead by not paying personnel; we do this for love and for food. This year, we earned enough money to begin a few of the much-needed post-COVID repairs.
5. We crowdfunded. Our Year of Bahamian Theatre not only earned money through tickets, it raised some \$60,000 through face-to-face contributions, sales of merchandise, and outright begging. Our audiences, who are small but enthusiastic, drop their change or even more into our donation box as they exit. The amount we need is three times the amount raised—but this time last year we had no money at all, so we're counting the win.

Let's return to Oskar Eustis, to his views about theatre, and ours. Theatre is the essential artform of democracy. By putting the history of the independent Bahamas on stage, by mounting productions which tackled social issues from the late 1960s to now, each through its own contemporary lens, we have learned more about our nation than currently exists in books. The Year of Bahamian Theatre has achieved what we wanted it to—and much, much more. Our new actors and directors have more confidence and more pride in what they're doing and why they're doing it. Even if some may leave our country to make theatre their living, they'll go with the knowledge that the tradition from which they come is no less majestic than any tradition in which they find themselves. And they may also have the inspiration to return—to continue to build that tradition by becoming our Bahamian Chekhovs, Shaws, Hansberrys, Mirandas, and Shakespeares.

# Short Tales





# SHORT TALES

TEN NEW PLAYS. EIGHT WRITERS. TEN DIRECTORS. ONE EVENING.

**Monday, September 18, 8 p.m.**

**Tuesday, September 19, 8 p.m.**

**Monday, September 21, 8 p.m.**

**Wednesday, September 27, 8 p.m.**

**Friday, September 29, 8 p.m.**

**Saturday, September 30, 8 p.m.**

## **Philip A. Burrows Black Box**

Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts

Directed by **Nicolette Bethel,**  
**renee caesar & Dorian McKenzie**

## **CREW**

Stage managers • **Tremis Moss & Tela Duncombe**

Assisted by **Tyrecho Bonaby, Walnut Cepoudy,**  
**Dorian McKenzie, Edward T. Knowles,**  
**Jordan Neilly, renee caesar, Deon Simms,**  
**Jeremie Johnson, Cast**

Lighting Design • **Nicolette Bethel,**  
**Joshua Haeward II, Ayoka Seyour, Directors**

Sound Design • **Nicolette Bethel, renee caesar,**  
**Joshua Haeward II, T Boy Ilienus, Directors**

Lighting Operation • **Ayoka Seymour**

Sound Operation • **T Boy Ilienus**

Costumes • **renee caesar, Cast**

Window • **Robert Bingham**

## **ACT I**

### **Titular**

By **J. Ben Hepburn**

Directed by **Christine Wilson**

MINISTER • **Jason Evans / T-Day**

THAMES WEECH • **Anya Lockhart**

FLASH DAWKINS • **Nicole Musgrove-McIntosh**

### **Steady Baby**

By **Inderia Reebea Greene**

Directed by **Dorian McKenzie**

MARTIN • **Edward W. Knowles / Brentwood Burrows**

DEBBIE • **Arlett Johnson / Samiah Rutherford**

### **Salt Beef**

By **J. Ben Hepburn & Patrice Francis**

Directed by **L. Terez Davis**

JACE • **Devonté Sands**

GRAMMY • **Jamell Dawkins**

JENNA • **Nicole Musgrove-McIntosh**

### **Some Po Chillun**

By **Arthellia Isaacs**

Directed by **Nicolette Bethel**

MOMMA • **Shireen Seymour**

SARABELLA • **Nicolette Fountain**

THELMALETTA • **Crystal Strachan**

### **Auntie Gladys Comes Home**

By **Deon Simms**

Directed by **Dion Johnson**

BURGLAR • **Jordan Neilly**

BLIND MAN • **Edward W. Knowles**

—INTERMISSION—

### **The Rope of Hope**

By **J. Ben Hepburn & Patrice Francis**

Directed by **Salem**

LAURA • **Nicole Musgrove-McIntosh /**  
**Erika Pierre-Hanna**

ACE • **Devonté Sands / T-Day**  
MARY • **Julie Ritchie-Bingham / Erika Pierre-Hanna**

### **Small Talk**

By **Valicia Rolle**

Directed by **A. Felicity Darville**

Cynthia • **Arlett Johnson / Samiah Rutherford**

Johnny • **Edward W. Knowles / Brentwood Burrows**

### **Inside Your Head**

By **Tyler Newbold-Chisholm**

Directed by **Samiah Rutherford**

Theo • **T-Day**

Doubt • **Nicole Musgrove-McIntosh**

Reason • **Emari Gaitor**

### **The Promotion**

By **Gail Hanna**

Directed by **Stephen Smith**

ADRIKA • **Tahlia Peterson**

MR. HAYES • **Jordan Neilly**

MARK • **Kwame Hanna**

### **Don't Eat the Soup**

By **Arthellia Isaacs**

Directed by **renee caesar**

MAMA • **Nicole Musgrove-McIntosh**

JUNIOR • **Dominick Stubbs**

PETUNIA • **Julie Ritchie-Bingham**

CAMEO • **T-Day**

### **INCIDENTAL MUSIC**

**The Swing Solicitors**

featuring **Ronnie Butler Jr.**

**The Karel Roessingh Trio**

## **ABOUT SHORT TALES**

At its inception, part of Shakespeare in Paradise's mission was to develop new works and new talent for Bahamian theatre. Short Tales was created in 2018 as part of that endeavour.

Short Tales is an evening of new plays by novice authors, directed by early-career directors. The directors work with Shakespeare in Paradise resident directors, learning the process of preparing an original piece for the stage. Writers' work is workshopped collaboratively—the Short Tales company incorporates a mixture of veteran and novice actors, directors, and tech and stage crew. Short Tales is showcased in the Philip A. Burrows Black Box at the Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts in Nassau, Bahamas, and since 2018, the Short Tales premiere has opened the festival.

Every January, a call goes out for short plays to be submitted for inclusion in the evening. Bahamian writers send scripts which are read blind by a cadre of five to nine readers from various backgrounds: actors, resident and artistic directors, university professors, and producers. Each script is given a yes/no/maybe by each reader, and each response is scored. Scores are added up and the top scorers comprise the shortlist. The final production is selected from that shortlist according to the demands of crafting an evening, and to feature the widest possible spread of new writers. Plays that don't make the cut are not necessarily plays that are undeserving—they may just not be right for the evening imagined.

**This year, our 2023** call for submissions generated thirty-one plays from twenty authors. Of these, ten plays by eight authors were selected. Join us in celebrating their talent! Do please enjoy!!



THE PRESENT AND FORMER EXECUTIVE MEMBERS  
OF SHAKESPEARE IN PARADISE

PHILIP A. BURROWS

DELORES ADDERLEY, CLAUDETTE ALLENS ERIN T. KNOWLES-McKINNEY, CARRIE COLLINS,  
MARCEL T. SHERMAN, PATRICE FRANCIS ANTHONY "SKEEBO" ROBERTS,

JOVANNA HEPBURN, TAYTE ADDERLEY, DAVID JONATHAN BURROWS,

MANNY KNOWLES AND SAMMIE BATHELL

WISH TO

*Congratulate*

NICOLETTE BETHEL

ON HER APPOINTMENT AS

PRESIDENT

OF THE

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE ASSOCIATION

STA  
SHAKESPEARE  
Theatre Association

**AS YOU LIKE IT  
YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER  
BECOMING OTHELLO—A BLACK GIRL'S JOURNEY  
SHORT TALES**



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