

AN OCTOROON Casting Complete, Dates Set For On Fountain Theatre Outdoor Stage

Judith Moreland directs Jacobs-Jenkins's outrageous deconstruction of a moustache-twirling melodrama by 19th century playwright Dion Boucicault.

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Casting is complete and rehearsals begin this week for the Los Angeles premiere of a radical, incendiary and subversively funny Obie award-winning play by MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant" recipient **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**.

Performances of An Octoroon will inaugurate the new outdoor stage at **The Fountain Theatre** on June 18. Performances will continue through Sept. 19, with four public previews set for June 11, June 12, June 13 and June 16, and a special press preview on June 17.

Judith Moreland directs Jacobs-Jenkins's outrageous deconstruction of a moustache-twirling melodrama by 19th century playwright **Dion Boucicault**. **Matthew Hancock** (LADCC, Stage Raw and Ovation award-winner for Hit the Wall at the L.A. LGBT Center, previously seen at the Fountain in Between Riverside and Crazy, Hype Man, The Brothers Size, I and You) stars as a modern-day Black playwright struggling to find his voice among a chorus of people telling him what he should and should not be writing. He decides to adapt his favorite play, Boucicault's The Octoroon, an 1859 melodrama about illicit interracial love.

The Black playwright quickly realizes that getting White, male actors of today to play evil slave owners will not be easy... so, he decides to play the White male roles himself -in whiteface. What ensues is an upside down, topsy-turvy world where race and morality are challenged, mocked and savagely intensified. A highly stylized, theatrical, melodramatic reality is created to tell the story of an octoroon woman (a person who is one-eighth Black) and her quest for identity and love.

The cast includes **Rob Nagle** (Human Interest Story at the Fountain, The Judas Kiss at Boston Court) as Boucicault; Hazel Lozano (America Adjacent at the Skylight, Othello at Griot Theatre) as the production assistant; Mara Klein (The Judas Kiss at Boston Court, Sucker Punch at Coeurage) as the octoroon, Zoe; and **Vanessa Claire Stewart** (Louis & Keely: Live at the Sahara at the Geffen, Finks at Rogue Machine) as Dora, a rich Southern belle in love with the plantation owner (who is also played by Hancock). Meanwhile, **Leea Ayers** (BLKS at Steppenwolf, Incendiary at **The Goodman Theatre**), **Kacie Rogers** (NAACP award-winner for No Place to be Somebody at Robey Theatre Company and An Accident at Griot Theatre Company; The Heal at Getty Villa) and **Pam Trotter** (And Her Hair Went With Her at the Fountain, national tour of The Color Purple) portray three startlingly modern slave women.

An Octoroon brutally satirizes racial stereotypes in a funny and profoundly tragic whirlwind of images and dialogue that forces audiences to look at, laugh at, and be shattered by America's racist history.

"The more you experience this play, the more it turns into something else," says Moreland. "It's an extraordinary piece of theater - hilarious, but also shocking, profound, moving... and designed to provoke and offend. We have a terrific group of actors who are completely game and up for the challenge. It's a celebration of how theater can both move you and change lives."

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellows Program, commonly but unofficially known as the "Genius Grant," awards no strings attached cash prizes to individuals who demonstrate "extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction." The website described Jacobs-Jenkins as "a playwright [who draws] from a range of contemporary and historical theatrical genres to engage frankly with complicated issues around identity, family, class and race. Many of Jacobs-Jenkins's plays use a historical lens to satirize and comment on modern culture, particularly the ways in which race and class are negotiated in both private and public settings. Although the provocation of his audience is purposeful, Jacobs-Jenkins's creation of unsettling, shocking, often confrontational moments is not gratuitous; these elements are of a piece with the world he has established on stage and in the service of the story he is telling."

The Fountain Theatre creative team includes scenic designer Frederica Nascimento, lighting designer **Derrick McDaniel**, sound designer Marc Antonio Pritchett, video designer Nicholas E. Santiago, costume designer **Naila Aladdin Sanders**; prop master **Michael Allen** Angel; choreographer Annie Yee; fight director Jen Albert; and dramaturg Dr. Daphnie Sicré. The production stage manager is Emily Lehrer, assistant stage manager is Deena Tovar, and production manager for the Fountain's outdoor stage is Shawna Voragen. **Stephen Sachs** and **Simon Levy** co-produce for **The Fountain Theatre**, and the associate producer is James Bennett. Barbara Herman and Susan Stockel are executive producers.

The Fountain's outdoor stage is made possible, in part, by the generous support of Karen Kondazian, Barbara Herman, the Vladimir and Araxia Buckhantz Foundation, Rabbi Anne Brener, Carrie Chassin and Jochen Haber, Miles and **Joni Benickes**, and the Phillips-Gerla Family.

The Fountain Theatre is one of the most successful intimate theaters in Los Angeles, providing a creative home for multi-ethnic theater and dance artists. The Fountain has won hundreds of awards, and Fountain projects have been seen across the U.S. and internationally.

An Octoroon runs June 18 through Sept.19, with performances on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays at 7 p.m., except Saturday, June 19, which will be at 5 p.m. and will be followed by a special Juneteenth event, and July 30 through Aug. 2 and Aug. 27 through Aug. 30 which will be dark. Four preview performances will take place on June 11, June 12, June 13 and June 16 at 7 p.m. There will be one press preview on Thursday, June 17 at 7 p.m. Tickets range from \$25-\$45; Pay-What-You-Want seating is available every Monday night in addition to regular seating (subject to availability).