



Dive into the Lost Stories of America's Black artists in
ACT's Highly Anticipated World Premiere

HISTORY OF THEATRE: ABOUT, BY, FOR, AND NEAR

Written by Reginald André Jackson

Directed by Valerie Curtis-Newton

Complete cast and creative team announced; tickets on sale now.

SEATTLE, WA (January 12, 2023) — With 2023 comes ACT's 47th World Premiere play, *History of Theatre: About, By, For, and Near*, a boldly theatrical, thought-provoking exploration of the lives of those who've paved the way for the American theatre we have today. Written by local actor-playwright and ACT Core Company member **Reginald André Jackson** and staged by beloved local director **Valerie Curtis-Newton**, *History of Theatre: About, By, For, and Near* brings to life the real, but ignored or forgotten, stories of Black theatre artists. The play weaves these stories together, putting them into their rightful place as integral parts of the American theatre tapestry, while examining the work still to come. *History of Theatre* will open for previews on January 28 (opening and media invite night February 2); tickets are on sale now at ACTtheatre.org or by calling the ACT Box Office at (206) 292-7676.

Travel back in time – 200 years to be precise – with your host, Sister Blacknall, and see our ancestral artists come to vivid life, ensuring that this time, they will be remembered. **Reginald André Jackson's** wildly original play challenges the stories we've been told about who makes theatre, and who it is for, creating a spellbinding evening that is both illuminating and inspiring. *History Of Theatre: About, By, For, and Near* takes audiences on a journey from 1820 to the mid-1930s, through the lens of a contemporary artist making their way in our very own Seattle theatre scene. Witness the forgotten impact of The Rabbit's Foot founder Pat Chapelle, who created the first all-Black touring vaudeville troupe in 1900, the boundary-breaking actors Ira Aldridge and Rose McClendon, and members of Seattle's own Negro Repertory Company.

ACT Artistic Director John Langs said, "In June 2020, we were in the middle of the pandemic working on a digital presentation for our audience, when our country erupted. As fate would have it, ACT was sharing space with Reginald André Jackson, just as the theatre industry was absorbing the wakeup call of 'We See You, White American Theatre' and others who were standing up for change. A vital conversation began about how we, as artists and makers of theatre, might respond. Reginald was inspired to explore the stories of unsung Black heroes of the stage – those whose stories had been whitewashed or erased. He found that Seattle had a unique part in this story. So, by asserting Black artists' rightful place as integral parts of American theatre history with this play, he's created opportunities to speak frankly about the challenges of the present. Through this lens, the idea of the *History of Theatre: About, By, For and Near* project was born and has become a story ACT is proud to see on its stage."

Playwright Reginald André Jackson shares, "It's important to me that these stories be told because as a society and an industry, we're still dealing with cultural issues that are 200 years old. My hope is that

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this play provides some enlightenment for audiences – perhaps inspires them to feel empowered to address inequities in their communities. For certain, I hope that people within this industry ask themselves, ‘why didn’t I know this?’ and motivates them to consider what can be done to effect change and grow the concept of what we can become.”

Director Valerie Curtis-Newton said, “We’ve had wave upon wave, generation after generation of black artists in the Northwest trying to carve out our place and our space in a predominantly white city. And that makes what we do that much more difficult and that much more significant. I think that I’m most interested in people becoming truly aware of the contribution of Black theater artists to the American theater: a legacy that is writers, producers, directors, as well as actors.”

History of Theatre: About, By, For and Near will run January 28-February 12, 2023 at ACT Theatre. Single tickets are on sale now at ACTtheatre.org or by calling the ACT Box Office at (206) 292-7676.

MEET THE CAST

History of Theatre is an ensemble piece with each of the actors portraying a variety of historical and modern figures. The production will feature performances from **Reginald André Jackson, Tracy Michelle Hughes, Dedra D. Woods, Be Russell, Arlando Smith, R. Hamilton Wright, Amy Thone,** and **Malcolm J. West**. Understudies for this production include **Alexandria J. Henderson** and **Anne Allgood**.

The creative team features playwright **Reginald André Jackson**, director **Valerie Curtis-Newton**, movement by **Donald Byrd**, scenic design by **Jennifer Zeyl**, costume design by **Cathy Hunt**, lighting design by **Robert J. Aguilar**, sound design by **Larry Fowler**, projection design by **Juniper Shuey**, dramaturg **Martine Kei Green-Rogers**, stage management by **Ruth Eitemiller**, assistant stage management by **Hazel Rose Gibson**, dialect coach **Amani Dorn**, and production assistant **Noah Sarkowsky**.

ABOUT REGINALD ANDRÉ JACKSON (Playwright)

Jackson is a Seattle actor/playwright and ACT Core Company member who appeared in *Sweat, Romeo and Juliet, The Crucible, and Fathers & Sons*. He has also worked at Arena Stage, The Shakespeare Theatre, 5th Avenue, Seattle Children’s Theatre, Intiman, Lake Tahoe Shakespeare, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Artist’s Repertory Theatre, Village Theatre, and more. He received a 2018 Gregory Award for his performance as Wolf in Seattle Repertory Theatre’s production of *Two Trains Running*. And was awarded the 2010 American Alliance of Theatre and Education Award in the category of adaptation, for his stage version of the Christopher Paul Curtis novel *Bud, Not Buddy*. Jackson is also proud to have been selected as a 2019 Lunt Fontanne 10 Chimneys Fellow. He most recently played *Macbeth*, for Seattle Shakespeare Company.

ABOUT VALERIE CURTIS-NEWTON (Director)

Currently the Head of Directing at the University of Washington School of Drama, Valerie also serves as the Founding Artistic Director for The Hansberry Project, a professional African American theatre lab. She has worked with professional theatres across the country including: The Guthrie Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Seattle Rep, Playmakers Repertory Company, Actors’ Theatre of Louisville,

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Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Intiman Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, The Mark Taper Forum, New York Theatre Workshop, and Southern Repertory Theatre among others.

FOR EDITORS/PRODUCERS

WHAT:

History of Theatre: About, By, For, and Near

From ACT Core Company writer and artist Reginald André Jackson in collaboration with The Hansberry Project and director Valerie Curtis-Newton comes the world premiere production, ***History of Theatre: About, By, For, and Near***. Jackson delves into the journey and rich legacy of his artistic ancestors, from the early days of enslavement through the ensuing 200 years, in a theatrical exploration with profound insights. The show traces the brilliance, perseverance, and artistry of our theatrical forebears, restoring and highlighting forgotten and unsung artists to their rightful place in history.

WHERE:

**ACT Theatre
700 Union St, Seattle**

WHEN:

January 28-February 12, 2023

Performance times: Tuesday–Saturday at 7:30pm
Select Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00pm
Sunday evenings at 7:00pm

Key Dates

- Previews: January 28-29 and January 31-February 1
- Tix for Teachers – January 29 at 7:30 pm
- Opening and Press Invite Night: February 2 at 7:30pm
- TeenACT – February 4 at 2:00pm
- Post-Show Discussion – February 7 immediately following the performance
- Audio Description - February 11 at 2:00pm
- ASL Interpreted - February 12 at 2:00pm (ASL section is in the CTR-R side of Falls – Rows B to E)

As this is a world premiere, run time will be available at acttheatre.org closer to the start of performances. There will be one intermission.

TICKETS:

Tickets start at \$39. We are proud to offer a range of ticket prices for all our plays, including pay what you choose tickets for each performance, making theatre affordable for everyone.

To purchase tickets, visit <https://acttheatre.org>

PHOTOS/VIDEO:

For available photography and video, please visit the [online press room here >>](#)

CONNECT ON SOCIAL:

acttheatre.org

Facebook - /ACTtheatre

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Instagram - @ACTtheatre
#HistoryofTheatreACT

ABOUT ACT - A CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

Steadfast in its dedication to producing work that sparks an authentic curiosity about the human condition, ACT produces bold, audacious works of contemporary theatre from its home in Seattle. Over the last 55 years, ACT has been the voice of contemporary theatre in the Pacific Northwest, presenting necessary and relevant works on current themes and producing more than 300 plays and musicals. *History of Theatre* is ACT's 47th world premiere, and is part of the 2022-23 season. Led by Artistic Director John Langs and Managing Director Anita Shah, ACT is a theatre where artistic ambition and civic engagement unite around the mission to nurture theatre-makers of the next generation.

ACT is here to challenge how stories are told.

Thank you to our Theatre and Season Sponsors: 4Culture, ArtsFund, National Endowment for the Arts, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, The Shubert Foundation, Nesholm Family Foundation, and Katharyn Alvord Gerlich.

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