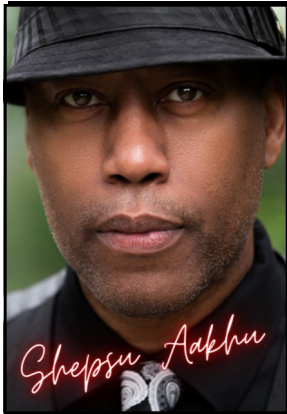


# BLACKKADEMICS

BY IDRIS GOODWIN





MPAACT has been producing live theater for 32 seasons. It's an amazing achievement considering our modest beginnings. We have endured economic downturns, funding cycle armageddons, a pandemic and so much more. Still, we treasure producing a full season of new work alongside extensive live and digital programming.

One of the things we think about a fair bit, is how to get more of you to invest in our work here. Our industry is struggling more than usual - with theaters of all shapes and sizes closing their doors forever. We know that you value our work because you come to the theater, you read our newsletters, and you subscribe to our podcast plays and *Listen magazine*. *Your support is vital to our sustainability.*

More than that, you are vital to our cultural work. You support the art and the art-makers. Our industry is at an inflection point. Economic forces are undermining the relevance of what we do as artists. At MPAACT we think that human introspection - humans grappling with humanity - humans feeling and thinking our way through our lives, experiences and history - should not go the way of the dodo bird.

Our stories, in our voice, whether that be live performance, podcast plays, or publication is MPAACT's contribution to the culture conversation. EVERYTHING HERE IS REAL. The stories, the voices, the talent. This is FHBH storytelling.. (For Humans By Humans).

We have doubled down on our investment in the artists - crafting art. We believe in the value of our culture and the human experience.

If you value that..Tell a friend, bring them to a show, gift them a subscription, help us continue to provide quality and conversation about culture, art and the human experience.

Big Love.

Shepsu Aakhu



# CAST

Ren Moore ..... *Rachelle*  
Jessica F. Morrison ..... *Ann*  
Chloe Belongilot..... *Georgia*  
Jamie Dillon Grossman ..... *Georgia*

# SETTING

A trendy new restaurant in America's heartland or that uncomfortable space in Black reality where nothing is simple as it seems.

# ABOUT THE PLAY

MPAACT introduced the world to the brutal satire of Blackademics more than a decade ago. In the intervening years the relevance of this master work by Idris Goodwin has only deepened. As the DEI culture wars sweep universities and the nation at-large, we need to center the conversation on the people who pioneer "white spaces" in the name of diversity. It's been more than a decade since the premiere—but the question remains... Has the situation changed?

# THE SOUNDSCAPE

*Original Music, Samples & Effects*

MPAACT endeavors to create a lush soundscape textured with new compositions and electronic elements. Improvisational in nature, our collaboration generates a versatile blend of sophisticated accompaniment which grows and changes with each performance. This approach to *sound* liberates the medium from its more traditional role of selected songs, buzzers and whistles, thereby allowing the soundscape to exist as both character and thematic carrier. Often this is an exercise in subtlety. The soundscape does not beg to be noticed, but rather exists as a catalyst, harnessing the director's interpretation, the playwright's intent, and the actor's urgency, planting the emotional content deep within the core of the viewer. In the end we do not wish to be heard, we wish to be felt.

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*"But you know that a king is only a man/ With flesh and bones, he bleeds just like you do/ He said 'where does that leave you'/ And do you belong? I do, I do" - Solange Knowles, Weary (A Seat at the Table)*

This piece is for every Black woman who never felt "good" enough." Who felt like they were "too good." Who felt like they had to shrink...either on the account of others or on their own accord.

This is for the Black women that take up too much space. Keep stretching and spreading, sis. We see you. Your double consciousness...it's tough but you get to be both.

I dedicate this show to my mom. Helen Shockley-Wells. The first Blackademic in my life. Mommy, thank you for not allowing me to shrink, EVER.

*-Lauren Wells-Mann*

# PODCAST CAST PLAYS

# JOIN IN

CLICK HERE



## PODCAST PLAYS

NEW RELEASES AND REMASTERS

WHAT YOU LOVE  
EASIER TO FIND

## BACKSTAGE

INSIGHTS  
FROM INSIDERS

## ICONS

LEGACY ARTISTS

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

# AN AUDIO MULTIVERSE FOR HUMANS BY HUMANS

# PROFILES



**Ren Moore** (*Rachelle*), a native of Philadelphia is an actress, voice over artist and theater educator. She has written and directed plays for children within her church and community. She also is a *virtual actor* for a STEM based program, The Incredible. Extremely thankful to be on stage Ren thanks MPAACT, Lauren Wells-Man, and the \*A\* Team. :)



**Jessica F. Morrison** (*Ann*) is a South Side Chicago native and excited to launch her professional career at MPAACT! She holds an MFA in Acting from the Theatre School at DePaul ('19) and is passionate about exploring the expansiveness of the human voice. Jessica is a well-loved multi-instrumentalist, poet, business strategist, and digital creator. Be on the lookout for more exciting appearances on-stage and on-screen. She's just getting started. | i believe in you | HeavenlyAfroArtist.com @JayaFeM.Official



**Chloe Belongilot** (*Georgia*) is an actress and teaching artist represented by Big Mouth Talent. *Blackademics* marks Chloe's third production with MPAACT, previous ones including *Red Summer* and *Half Life* (podcast play). Outside of MPAACT, she has been in Chicago productions such as Timeline Theatre's *Trouble In Mind*, Porchlight's *New Faces Sing Broadway*, and Young People's Theatre's *Don't Let The Pigeon Drive the Bus*. She is also an active facilitator with the ABLE Ensemble and founder of

DoReMi Club Chicago. Chloe is thankful to have the opportunity to help bring this story to the stage.



**Jamie Dillon Grossman** (*Georgia*) is thrilled to be making her Chicago theatre debut at MPAACT with this incredible cast and crew! Jamie made her Off-Broadway Debut in *Assistants: The Musical* at the Players Theatre in 2019. Past credits include: *Fantom Pholktales* with PigPen Theatre Company on *Virgin Voyages* (Olive), *Rock of Ages* (Regina), *West Side Story* (Anybodys), *Titanic* (Bellboy), and *Alien Vs. Musical* (Tracy).

Next up, Jamie will be performing in *The Polar Express Train Ride Show!* Representation: Gray Talent Group Instagram: [@jamiegmoney](https://www.instagram.com/jamiegmoney)

# PRODUCTION



**Lauren Wells-Mann** (*Director*) is an actor, director, dancer, choreographer and arts educator. As a proud company member with MPAACT, she has had the pleasure of directing: *Dandelions* (Jeff recommended), *Pulled Punches* (Black Excellence and AAAA Nominee for Best Production and Best Director), *Mother of the Dark Water* (Jeff Nominee for Best Ensemble, Black Excellence Nominee for Best Production and Best Director), *By Association* (Black

Excellence Nominee for Best Production) and various podcast plays. Assistant Director credits include: *Upstate* by Aaron Todd Douglass, directed by Carla Stillwell and *Crowns* by Regina Taylor, directed by Chuck Smith.

Mrs. Wells-Mann holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theater/Acting (Columbia College Chicago) and a Master's degree in Secondary Education (Univ. of Phoenix). She began her professional acting career with Eta Creative Arts Foundation. It was here that Lauren worked with esteemed directors Ilesa Duncan, Kemati Porter, Runako Jahi and Cheryl Lynn Bruce. She has also performed with Lookingglass, Black Ensemble, MPAACT, Harlem Theater Company, Healthworks, and Victory Gardens.

Lauren directed and choreographed for Eta's summer program, *Chicago on the Nile* for 3 years, *Black Lives Black Words* - Chicago, 20% Theater Co., Perceptions Theatre and Griot Theatre Collective. Lauren attributes her directing prowess to the tutelage of Darcelle Williams, Cheryl Frazier and Carla Stillwell. In addition to these accolades, Lauren has been coaching competitive acting and speech events for the Illinois High School Association for 19 years and she is the Theatre Department Head at The Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts). Under her direction, students have won numerous state and national championships in various acting and public speaking activities. Lauren Wells-Mann believes in the power of the arts and the importance of BIPOC artists having autonomy over their own narratives. It is a mission to which she is deeply committed.



**Idris Goodwin** (*playwright*) is an award winning storyteller of stage, audio, screen and page. Currently serving as Artistic Director of Seattle Children’s Theater, Idris writes, directs, programs and/or produces relevant content for multi-generational audiences. Goodwin is the author of over 75 dynamic and diverse original plays. Committed to access and impact, his work is widely produced across the country by professional, community and academic institutions alike. His storytelling prowess extends to creating original content for Nickelodeon, HBO Def Poetry, and the Discovery Channel. His first picture book, *'Your House is Not Just A House,'* is forthcoming on Clarion/Harper Collins 2024. Prior to Seattle, Goodwin served as Executive Director of The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College and StageOne Family Theatre in Louisville, Kentucky. As Board President of Theater For Young Audiences/USA and a member of the Children’s Theater Foundation Association, Goodwin champions the essential role of the performing arts in society. Find him at [www.idrisgoodwin.com](http://www.idrisgoodwin.com) and on across all the socials.

**Shawn Wallace** (*Composer, Sound Design*) returns to MPAACT on the heels of the premiere staging of *Red Summer*. A multi-talented musical artist in styles ranging from Gospel to Jazz to Hip-Hop and beyond; as keyboardist, Shawn has worked with luminary artists such as Common, Ice Cube, Little Brother, Bobby Brown, Dwele, Johnny Gill, Jon B., Bilal, Estelle, Julie Dexter, Erykah Badu, Rene Neufville, Rakim, Eric Roberson, and Maggie Brown just to name a few. Arrangement and composition for theatre include Ifa Bayeza’s *Amistad Voices* (Chicago Shakespeare) *Kid Zero* (Chicago Center for Performing Arts) and *Charleston Olio* (National Black Theatre Festival) Shepsu Aakhu’s *Warm on the Cooling Board* (MPAACT 2014) and Carla Stillwell’s *Lamd the CVS is Burning...a Gospel Musical Stage Play* (MPAACT 2015), *When Good Broccoli Goes Bad* (MPAACT), *Middle Passage* (Lifeline 2022) and *Shakin’ the Mess Outta Misery* (Pegasus 2017). Independent film score credits include *Severed Ties* (Showcase Productions/Lions Gate Films), *Puzzle Love* (Storybox Productions) and *Son of America* (Tanskin Productions/N’Spire Entertainment INC). Sound Design credits include *N* (GLP Productions 2019), *Single Black Female* and *Lady Day at Emmerson’s Bar and Grill* (Congo Square 2018-2019), *Love Child* (Live Bait / Chicago Theatre Company), and *Love Talk* (Chicago Theatre Company). Commercial credits include work for Jet Magazine, Mississippi Rick’s Restaurant, Huffu Bicycles, Arby’s and Sprint.



**Ashley Coney** (*Production Stage Manager*) hails from Louisville, KY where she graduated from the Youth Performing Arts School (YPAS). Passionate about the arts, In 2009 Ashley earned her BA in Theatre with a concentration in Acting from Point Park Univ. She knew CHITOWN was her town, so she relocated and soon found her first gig as a *Summer on the Nile* drama teacher at ETA. Ashley has performed in various shows around the city and has discovered a calling for the technical side of things. She most recently stage managed the premieres of *Ezekiel’s Wheel*, *Ride or Die* and *Pulled Punches* (MPAACT) and *The Billboard* (GLady/ 16TH Street Theater), a Jeff award recipient. Ashley would like to thank the cast and production staff for their amazing talent!

**Aidan Lynn Smith** (*Lighting Design*) is thrilled to be back designing for MPAACT. His selected lighting credits include: *Ezekiel’s Wheel* and *Ride or Die* (MPAACT), *The Birds* (Playhouse at White Lake), *As You Like It* (Wayne State University), *Medea* (Underground Theatre), and *Junie B. Jones The Musical* (ACWL). Aidan gives his love and thanks to the cast/crew, family, friends, and boyfriend.

**Lauren “LL” Lundy** (*Costume Design*) began working with MPAACT several seasons ago with *Quark*. She has directed, designed, stage managed, costumed, programmed and painted on a lifetime of shows in her near decade with the company. The titles change, the stories change, venues even... but the joy and the sense of family—never. Sometimes we call her “LL” but of late her new moniker is “CLUTCH.” You can guess why... because she always comes through with what you need—when you need it most.. *Clutch* fell in love with the company and has been attached to MPAACT ever since. Good times...

**Shepsu Aakhu** (*Set Design/Tech Director*) has been a designer and T.D. with MPAACT for more than three decades. His most recent work was *Dandelions*, *Ezekiel’s Wheel*, *Ride or Die*, *Pulled Punches Spoken Word*, *One 4 the Road* and *Swamp Baby*. His favorite designs for MPAACT include *Never the Milk and Honey*, *Swamp Baby*, *Tad in 5th City*, *Beneath A Dark Sky* (2008 revival), *MiLK* (2008 revival), and *Notes from the Bottletree*.





# THE COMPANY

Shepsu Aakhu*	Shariba Rivers	Danjuma Gaskin	Ashley Coney
Sean R. Neron*	Nadia Pillay	Eddie Jordan III	Caren Blackmore
Lauren Wells-Mann	Jelani Pitcher	Aum Mu Ra	Michaelyn Oby
Lauren "LL" Lundy	Tina Fakhrid-Deen	Tamarus Harvell	Joshua X. Miller
Brittany Davis	Renee Lockett	Vada Briceno	Melanie McCullough
Leonard House	André Teamer	Jared Gooding	

## EMERITUS

Daryl Charisse	Georges Blaise*	Mark Franklin	Shawn Wallace*
Carl Barnett*	William S. Carroll*	Nambi E. Kelley	

## ARTISTIC ASSOCIATES

Chuck Smith	Razor Wintercastle	Casey Deirs	Lisa J. Willingham
Andrea J. Dymond	Jessica Wardell	Runako Jahi	Evelyn Danner
Deidre Searcy	Abboyé Lawrence		

## ANGELS

Lennal "Sati" Word   Sharlet Webb   Ron White

*\* Denotes Founding Member*

# PRODUCTION STAFF

Director .....	Lauren Wells-Mann
Playwright.....	Idris Goodwin
Production Stage Manager .....	Ashley Coney
Set Design.....	Shepsu Aakhu
Lighting Design.....	Aidan Lynn Smith
Sound Design.....	Shawn Wallace
Costume Design.....	Lauren "LL" Lundy
ASM/Properties.....	MPAACT
Technical Director.....	Shepsu Aakhu
Production Manager.....	Lauren "LL" Lundy
Production Photographer.....	Abboyé Lawrence



# LISTEN MAGAZINE STAFF

Editor-in-Chief .....	Shepsu Aakhu
Associate Editor.....	Caren Blackmore
Principle Photographer.....	Abboyé Lawrence
Principle Photographer.....	Shepsu Aakhu
Copy Editor.....	Shariba Rivers
Copy Editor.....	Lauren "LL" Lundy
Copy Editor.....	Tina Fakhrid-Deen
Design/Layout.....	Shepsu Aakhu
Feature Writer.....	Michaelyn Oby
Feature Writer.....	Tina Fakhrid-Deen
Feature Writer .....	Lauren Wells-Mann
Models.....	Our Subscribers
Subscription Services.....	Lauren "LL" Lundy
Platform Management.....	Jelani Pitcher



# SPECIAL THANKS

The Ancestors, Idris Goodwin, Hiwoté Tamrat, Hilal Tamrat, Shirley Carney, Efé McWorter, Dennis & Piedad Lundy, Razor Wintercastle, The Greenhouse Staff, The Theatre School at DePaul Univ., Dean Corrin, GBG INC, Julia Van Vliet, J. David Shanks, The Logan Center CPL, Chicago Park District, (Angelique Grandone, Sidney Lewis Tony Santiago, Quenna Barrett) Erica Watson (R.I.P.) Veronda Carey, Austin Lyke, Aidan Lynn Smith and Ayla Donchin



# INDIVIDUAL GIVING

Kay Kretzschmar, Tijuana Gray, Vada Briceno, Tiffany Trent, Leonard House, Gloria Bond Clunie, Earl A. Fox, Duriel E. Harris, David Goodloe, Sean Neron, Mark Franklin, Kimberley Crutcher, Robert Watts, S. Mauroner, Penelope Walker, Miriam Ex, J. Shayne, Hiwoté Tamrat, Hilal Tamrat, Shirley Carney, Efé McWorter, Chuck Smith, Dennis & Piedad Lundy, Dean Corrin, Julia Van Vliet, Nambi E. Kelley, J. David Shanks, Shariba Rivers, Reginald Lawrence, Yocab Abdi & Hillina Tamrat, Robin Houston, Tina Fakhrid-Deen, Lauren Lundy, Deidre Searcy, Pat Spaulding, Marcus Lawrence, Rene Margaret Field, Mardra Johnson Thomas, Sean Groves, Carol Fields, Fin Coe, Rory Zacher, Yomileigh Abdi, Sabona Abdi, Danjuma Gaskin, and Teresa Colón.



# FOUNDATION SUPPORT

MPAACT is supported in part by the generous support of:



# MISSION

The Ma'at Production Association of Afrikan Centered Theater (MPAACT) is a professional, not-for-profit theater association founded in 1990 at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Our mission is to develop, nurture, and sustain original Afrikan Centered Theater (ACT) as a multi-disciplinary art form of American Theater. ACT is a genre of artistic expression grounded in the many cultures and traditions of the Afrikan continent and its Diaspora. With a vision focused upon new works and collaborative art, MPAACT shall produce and educate with the goal of bringing forth an understanding and appreciation of Afrikan Centered Theater and its inter-related disciplines.

# MPAACT ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Executive Director/Producer.....Reginald Lawrence  
 Managing Producer.....Lauren "LL" Lundy  
 Literary Manager.....Tina Fakhrid-Deen  
 Casting Director.....Nadia Pillay  
 Graphic Design.....Shepsu Aakhu  
 Information Technology.....Jelani Pitcher  
 Web Design.....Clutch Lundy  
 Marketing.....Joshua X. Miller & Tamarus Harvell  
 Group Sales.....Lauren "LL" Lundy  
 Associate Producer/Listen Magazine.....Caren Blackmore

# SUPPORT MPAACT

From live production to digital audio, from touring programs to arts education... MPAACT continues to support a diverse community of artists and stakeholders with a unique voice, grounded in our culture and our collective experiences. Your contributions will help to ensure another spectacular season of world premiere work. Thank you for making another season possible.



**DONATE  
HERE**

# 32 SEASONS

<i>Dandelions</i>	World Premiere	2023
<i>Ezekiel's Wheel</i>	World Premiere	2023
<i>Ride or Die</i>	World Premiere	2022
<i>Red Summer</i>	Premiere Staging	2022
<i>Pulled Punches</i>	World Premiere	2022
<i>Podcast Plays</i>	Established	2021
<i>Spoken Word</i>	World Premiere	2020
<i>The Master Comic</i>	World Premiere	2019
<i>One 4 the Road</i>	World Premiere	2019
<i>Swamp Baby</i>	World Premiere	2019
<i>Black and Blue</i>	World Premiere	2018
<i>Blood Mural</i>	World Premiere	2018
<i>Mother of the Dark Water</i>	World Premiere	2018
<i>100 Acts of Resistance</i>	Established	2018
<i>Burf of a Nation</i>	World Premiere	2017
<i>Never the Milk &amp; Honey</i>	World Premiere	2017
<i>By Association</i>	World Premiere	2017
<i>Starting Over</i>	World Premiere	2016
<i>Feral</i>	World Premiere	2016
<i>Upstate</i>	World Premiere	2016
<i>Lawd The CVS is Burnin'</i>	World Premiere	2015
<i>Divine Order of Becoming</i>	Revival	2015
<i>Softly Blue</i>	Revival	2015
<i>The Inside</i>	Revival	2014
<i>Without Trace</i>	World Premiere	2014
<i>Quark</i>	World Premiere	2014
<i>Signature Showcase Series</i>	Established	2014
<i>Summer Jams</i>	Established	2014
<i>Warm on the Coolin' Board</i>	World Premiere	2013
<i>When Good Broccoli Goes Bad</i>	World Premiere	2013
<i>Reality Check</i>	World Premiere	2013
<i>Leaves Trees Forest</i>	World Premiere	2013
<i>Blackademics</i>	World Premiere	2012
<i>Bodies</i>	World Premiere	2012
<i>Sweet Home</i>	World Premiere	2012
<i>Extended Jams</i>	Established	2012

<i>Speaking in Tongues/ Babel</i>	World Premiere	2011
<i>A Brown Tale (Da-da Re...)</i>	World Premiere	2011
<i>The Last St on Sugar Hill</i>	World Premiere	2011
<i>Ghosts of Atwood</i>	World Premiere	2011
<i>Solo Jams</i>	Established	2011
<i>Dance Jam</i>	Established	2011
<i>Zulu Fits</i>	World Premiere	2010
<i>Film Jam</i>	Established	2010
<i>Sketch Jam</i>	Established	2010
<i>Tad in 5<sup>th</sup> City</i>	World Premiere	2010
<i>First Words</i>	World Premiere	2010
<i>Ten Square (w/Pegasus)</i>	World Premiere	2009
<i>Radical Hearsay...</i>	World Premiere	2009
<i>Stage Black</i>	World Premiere	2009
<i>No Experience Necessary</i>	World Premiere	2008
<i>BlaQ Market Monologues</i>	Established	2008
<i>She Calls Up The Sun</i>	Revival	2008
<i>Beneath A Dark Sky</i>	Revival	2008
<i>MiLK</i>	Revival	2007
<i>Trouble the Water</i>	World Premiere	2007
<i>Blaxploitation 2...</i>	World Premiere	2007
<i>Panther Burn</i>	World Premiere	2006
<i>Softly Blue</i>	World Premiere	2006
<i>Blaxploitation: The Remix</i>	World Premiere	2005
<i>Bus Boyz (w/Prop Thtr)</i>	World Premiere	2005
<i>The Divine Order of Becoming</i>	World Premiere	2005
<i>Relevant Hearsay...</i>	World Premiere	2004
<i>Notes from the Bottletree</i>	World Premiere	2004
<i>SOST</i>	World Premiere	2003
<i>Scorched Earth: Fertile Ground</i>	World Premiere	2003
<i>Kiwi Black</i>	World Premiere	2003
<i>Ekomo Akyede</i>	Established	2003
<i>She Calls up the Sun</i>	World Premiere	2002
<i>Defending Myself</i>	World Premiere	2002
<i>Mahalia &amp; ME</i>	B-cast Premiere	2002
<i>Kosi Dasa</i>	World Premiere	2002
<i>Fascia</i>	World Premiere	2001
<i>The Alibi Transcripts</i>	Established	2001
<i>Urban Griot Project</i>	World Premiere	2001

<i>Tere-tocha-chew:</i>	World Premiere	2000
<i>Exoskeletal Blues</i>	World Premiere	2000
<i>The Glow of Reflected Light</i>	World Premiere	2000
<i>Within the Dream</i>	World Premiere	1999
<i>The Abesha Conspiracy</i>	World Premiere	1999
<i>Beneath A Dark Sky</i>	World Premiere	1998
<i>The Inside</i>	World Premiere	1998
<i>The Empire Festival</i>	World Premiere	1998
<i>The Scott Joplin Story</i>	B-cast Premiere	1998
<i>Piece-Meal Clan</i>	World Premiere	1997
<i>Tales from an Urban Empire</i>	World Premiere	1997
<i>The Underground Poetry Jam</i>	Established	1997
<i>Afrosynthesis</i>	World Premiere	1997
<i>Screams w/out Consciousness</i>	Wkshop Prod.	1997
<i>A Kwanzaa Carol</i>	World Premiere	1996
<i>Short Orders: One Acts Fest.</i>	Established	1996
<i>Girl to be Named Later</i>	World Premiere	1996
<i>Otherworld Lovers</i>	World Premiere	1996
<i>From Funk 2 Fusion</i>	World Premiere	1996
<i>MiLK</i>	World Premiere	1995
<i>Slices</i>	Established	1995
<i>A Night of Jazz Fusion</i>	World Premiere	1995
<i>Tales of the Kitalogo</i>	World Premiere	1994
<i>Vital Signs</i>	World Premiere	1994
<i>Continuum: Visions/Yetunde</i>	World Premiere	1993
<i>Restore the Rhythm</i>	World Premiere	1992

## SUBMISSIONS

MPAACT is committed to the development of original works.

Unsolicited scripts are encouraged.

P.O. Box 10039 - Chicago, IL 60610 - (661) 373-3089

[WWW.MPAACT.ORG](http://WWW.MPAACT.ORG)



# EVERY 7 YEARS



# SEASON 32

REVIVALS

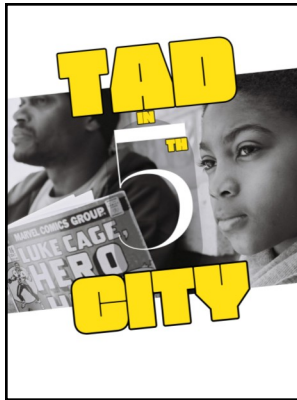


OCT. 6 – NOV. 19  
2023

## BLACKADEMICS

BY IDRIS GOODWIN / DIRECTED BY LAUREN WELLS-MANN

There's something strange about the trendy new restaurant in town. When Ann and Rachelle meet there for dinner, there's already tension in the friendship they've built on their common experience navigating academia as black women: While Ann just got tenure at her tony liberal arts college, Rachelle's struggling to find her place at the less prestigious state university. So at first it's easy to overlook odd things like the single water glass they're offered, or the mysterious server who keeps assigning points to their conversational gambits. But as the hunger sets in, the two professors find themselves the unknowing stars of an absurdist dinner theater performance of black plight. Somebody's got to get the first bite, after all. A sharp, surreal satire about who gets a place at the table.



JAN. 19 – MAR. 3  
2024

## TAD IN 5TH CITY

ADAPTED FROM THE WORKS OF ORRON KENYETTA MARSHALL / DIRECTED BY CARLA STILLWELL

After the assassination of Dr. King on April 4, 1968, violence erupted on Chicago's west side, consuming a 28-block stretch of West Madison Street. This traumatic moment changed the landscape of the city and an entire generation. That generation of young men and women "watched the genesis of the ghetto sphere" evolve. The ghetto of many of today's rappers imaginations grew out of this reality. Told through the eyes of 10-year-old Tad Brown, *Tad in 5th City* illuminates his daily life in the aftermath of those riots, chronicling Tad's journey as he navigates a post-rioting city amidst the effects of gang violence, poverty and addiction.



APRIL 19 – JUNE 2  
2024

## WARM ON THE COOLIN' BOARD

BY SHEPSU AAKHU / DIRECTED BY LAUREN "LL" LUNDY/ MUSIC BY SHAWN WALLACE

Everybody has a plan, and Day is no exception. He has a plan for his baby brother Brian. Trouble is - Brian is off plan. He's taking a break from college and picking up the family business, stripping the Roseland community to the bone. This decaying community is being pillaged by its own inhabitants, its politicians, and its few remaining businesses. As Day and Brian work to find their place in a community that is literally being picked clean, they struggle to come to grips with whether they are hastening the process, or part of the restoration.