

2012-2013 Season

BODY AWARENESS

By Annie Baker

August 25–September 23

Press Night: Wed, August 29 at 7:30 pm

OUR CLASS

By Tadeusz Stobodzianek

October 10–November 4

Press Night: Mon, October 15 at 7:30 pm

WOODY SEZ

By David M. Lutken with Nick Corley

November 8–December 2

Press Night: Sun, November 11, at 7:30 pm

VOICES FROM A CHANGING MIDDLE EAST FESTIVAL:

APPLES FROM THE DESERT

By Savyon Liebrecht

December 15–January 6

Press Night: Tues, December 18 at 7:30 pm

BOGED:

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

By Boaz Gaon and Nir Erez

Based on the play by Henrik Ibsen

January 12–February 3

At Georgetown University's Gonda Theatre

Press Night: Tues, January 15 at 7:30 pm

RACE

By David Mamet

February 6–March 17

Press Night: Sun, February 10 at 7:30 pm

ANDY AND THE SHADOWS

By Ari Roth

April 3–May 5

Press Night: Wed, April 10 at 7:30 pm

THE HAMPTON YEARS

By Jacqueline E. Lawton

May 29–June 30

Press Night: Mon, June 3 at 7:30 pm

Theater J

Washington DCJCC

1529 16th Street NW

Aaron & Cecile Goldman Theater

Tickets: (800) 494-8497

Info: (202) 777-3230

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theaterj.org



THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *THE HAMPTON YEARS* TAKES ROOT AT THEATER J'S LOCALLY GROWN FESTIVAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, April 10, 2013

CONTACT: Grace Overbeke/(202) [777-3230](tel:777-3230)/grace@theaterj.org

PRESS NIGHT: Wednesday, April 10 at 7:30 pm

(Washington, DC)—Theater J continues its second annual **Locally Grown: Community Supported Art Festival** with *The Hampton Years* (May 29-June 30).

This breakthrough premiere explores the development of great African-American artists John Biggers and Samella Lewis under the tutelage of Austrian Jewish refugee painter and educator, Viktor Lowenfeld. Focusing on the pivotal years at Hampton Institute, Virginia during WWII, this richly researched tapestry of African American luminaries like Elizabeth Catlett and Charles White reveals the dreams and travails of young artists in a still segregated society. The piece also examines the impact of World War II on a Jewish immigrant finding shelter in the US, and his controversial influence in shaping the careers of African American students.

The Hampton Years structurally parallels Viktor Lowenfeld's stages of artistic development. As the first movement begins, Austrian refugees Viktor (Sasha Olinick) and his wife Margaret (Sarah Douglas) decide to move to Hampton, Virginia to create an art department at The Hampton Institute, a vocational school for black students. Though the University President has qualms about encouraging black students to become artists, Lowenfeld finds a talented young protégé in the young painter John Biggers (Julian Elijah Martinez). As Biggers's talent develops, so does the art department, bringing in new students like the fiery young Samella Lewis (Crashonda Edwards) and black professors like famed artists Charles White (David Lamont Wilson) and Elizabeth Catlett (Lolita Marie). Amidst the terrors of World War II in Europe and Jim Crow laws in America, the small community of artists share a complex survivors' bond, and a vision of art as a means to "reflect the truth of society whether or not society is ready to face it." In this passionate new play, Lawton creates a world where paintings and sculptures come to life to grapple with their creators, and the quest to make art is as political as it is personal.

The Hampton Years was commissioned and developed by Theater J as part of the Locally Grown: Community Supported Art festival. Speaking on the play's development since the festival, playwright **Jacqueline E. Lawton** remarks "Having this level of investment and commitment at the early stages of the writing process has been invigorating. Since the first reading in January of 2012, *The Hampton Years* has received new play development workshops and readings at the Kennedy Center's Page-to-Stage Festival and also as part of Theater J's Tea@2 Beyond the Stage series. Each time the play has grown in terms of plot and character development. It's been an enriching and rewarding process. I'm appreciative of Theater J for championing local playwrights and for believing in me as a playwright. I can hardly wait to start rehearsals to see the culmination of our efforts come to life on stage."

Jacqueline E. Lawton was named one of 30 of the nation's leading black playwrights by Arena Stage's American Voices New Play Institute. Her plays include: *Anna K*, *Blood-bound and Tongue-tied*, *Deep Belly Beautiful*, *The Devil's Sweet Water*, *Ira Aldridge: the African Roscius*, *Lions of Industry*, *Mothers of*

Invention, *Love Brothers Serenade* (2013 semi-finalist for the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference), *Mad Breed* and *Our Man Beverly Snow*. She participated in the Kennedy Center's Playwrights' Intensive

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(2002) and *World Interplay* (2003). Ms. Lawton is a member of the Dramatist Guild of America and a 2012 TCG Young Leaders of Color award recipient. She is also a National New Play Network (NNPN) Playwright Alumna, a member of the Round House Theatre Artist's Round Table, and a member of Arena Stage's Playwright's Arena.

"It's been wonderful to have a playwright as present as Jacqueline has been through pre-production" says Shirley Serotsky, Associate Artistic Director of Theater J and long-time collaborator of Jacqueline E. Lawton. Ms. Serotsky, who will be directing *The Hampton Years*, remarks, "This play has encouraged me to think about art and identity, and how those two concepts are linked, in really interesting and exciting ways. It's forced me to ask some difficult questions of myself, as an artist within a culturally specific theater...my questions of identity are not automatically the same as [Jacqueline E. Lawton's] questions of identity; and also that these conversations are really important for us to have, even when they're difficult. *Especially* when they're difficult."

***The Hampton Years* is the fifth full production Shirley Serotsky has directed at Theater J.** Her other directing credits at Theater J include the *The History of Invulnerability* (2012); *The Moscows of Nantucket* (2011); *Mikveh* (2010) which received two Helen Hayes Nominations for Best Actress; and *The Rise and Fall of Annie Hall* (2009) which received a Helen Hayes Nomination for Best New Play. Regionally, she has directed a 21/24 Lab Workshop presentation of *The Break* (Signature Theatre); *Working: The Musical* (Keegan Theatre); *Blood Wedding* (Constellation Theatre); *Birds of a Feather* (which won the 2012 Charles MacArthur Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding New Play) and *A Man, a Wife and His Hat* at The Hub Theatre; *Juno and the Paycock* (Washington Shakespeare Company); and a staged reading of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* for the NEA New Play Development Festival at Arena Stage. She has also directed at Theatre Alliance, the Source Festival, Forum Theatre, Catalyst Theater (where she was a company member), the New York Musical Theatre Festival, the CapFringe Festival and the Humana Festival of New Plays. In 2008, she was nominated for the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Director for Rorschach Theatre's production of *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot*.

Ms. Serotsky leads a talented team of actors. Coming to the production after his autumn appearance in Theater J's *Our Class* is **Sasha Olinick**, playing the role of Viktor Lowenfeld, an Austrian professor at Hampton University. Olinick's other recent credits include the role of Mozart in Round House Theatre's production of *Amadeus* and Hetchman in The Hub Theatre's *A Man, His Wife, and His Hat*, directed by Shirley Serotsky. Playing Margaret, Viktor's insightful wife, will be **Sarah Douglas**. A graduate of the American Repertory Theatre Institute for Acting, Ms. Douglas most recently appeared as Lydia in The Hub Theatre's production of *Big Love*. This performance will be her Theater J debut. Also making their Theater J debuts are **Julian Elijah Martinez**, **David Lamont Wilson**, **Colin Smith** and **Edward Christian**. **Julian Elijah Martinez** recently earned praise for his "powerful" (*Washington Post*) performance as Private Reeves in Forum Theatre's *9 Circles*. He is a longtime actor at the Chesapeake Bay Company, where he recently performed in *Romeo and Juliet*. Other recent credits include *Locomotion* at The Kennedy Center and *Hamlet* at the Orlando Shakespeare Theatre. Also a prolific theater sound designer, **David Lamont Wilson** recently garnered accolades for his acting talent in Factory 449's production of *Magnificent Waste*. **Colin Smith** comes to Theater J after a busy year at Keegan Theatre, where in addition to performing in *The Crucible*, *12 Angry Men* and *August: Osage County* (Helen Hayes Award Nomination, Outstanding Ensemble), he also directed *Laughter on the 22nd Floor*. **Edward Christian** comes to Theater J after appearing in last season's *The Language Archive* at Forum Theatre and *The Taming of The Shrew* at the Folger Theatre. The cast is completed by returning Theater J artists **Crashonda Edwards** and **Lolita Marie**. Ms. Edwards will be familiar to Theater J audiences for her sterling performance as Susan in this season's production of *Race*. Ms. Edwards trained at the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy for Classical Acting. There, her remarkable performances as Marianna in *All's Well that Ends Well* and Castabella in *The Atheist's Tragedy* established her as a bright young talent. **Lolita Marie** was last seen by Theater J audiences as Uneeq in *Something You Did*. She has also appeared in Constellation Theatre's *Blood Wedding*, directed by Shirley Serotsky.

Creating the pastoral campus of Hampton University will be the design team of **Scenic Designer Robbie Hayes** (*The History of Invulnerability*, *The Moscows of Nantucket*), **Lighting Designer Harold F. Burgess**, **Costume Designer Debra Kim Sivigny** (*The History of Invulnerability*, *The Moscows of Nantucket*), **Sound Designer Matthew Nielson** (*The History of Invulnerability*, *The Whipping Man*) and **Properties Master Timothy Jerome Jones**.

***The Hampton Years* runs May 29–June 30, 2013 at Theater J in the Washington DCJCC's Aaron & Cecile Goldman Theater. Press night is Monday, June 3 at 7:30 pm. Performances on Saturday, June 1 at 8:00 pm and Sunday, June 2 at 7:30 pm are \$30 previews. Performances on Wednesday, May 29, and Thursday, May 30 at 7:30 pm are pay-what-you-can previews. Performances on June 9, 16 and 23 and 30 are \$35 Sunday night specials. There will be a special noon matinee on Friday, June 14, and 3:00 Saturday matinees on June 22 and 29 at 3:00. All tickets for the Saturday matinees must be purchased in advance. Tickets are available starting at \$35 at theaterj.org or (800) 494-8497.**

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THE HAMPTON YEARS FACT SHEET

WRITTEN BY: Jacqueline E. Lawton

DIRECTED BY: Shirley Serotsky

SCENIC DESIGNER: Robbie Hayes

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Harold F. Burgess

COSTUME DESIGNER: Debra Kim Sivigny

SOUND DESIGNER: Matthew Nielson

PROPERTIES DESIGNER: Timothy Jerome Jones

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER: Karen Currie

DRAMATURG: Otis Cortez Ramsey-Zoe

FEATURING: Edward Christian, Sarah Douglas, Crashonda Edwards, Lolita Marie, Julian Elijah Martinez, Sasha Olinick, Colin Smith and David Lamont Wilson

PRESS NIGHT: Monday, June 3 at 7:30 pm

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE: May 29-June 30, 2013

Regular Schedule: Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 pm, Saturdays at 8:00 pm, Sundays at 3:00 and 7:30 pm

\$30 Previews: Saturday, June 1 at 8:00 pm and Sunday, June 2 at 7:30 pm

Pay-What-You-Can Previews: Wednesday, May 29 and Thursday, May 30 at 7:30 pm

Special Matinees: Friday, June 14 at 12:00 pm and Saturday, June 22 and June 29 at 3:00 pm

ALL PLAYS, DATES, AND THEATRES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

THEATER J INFORMATION:

LOCATION: The Washington DC Jewish Community Center's Aaron & Cecile Goldman Theater at 1529 16th Street NW in Washington, DC, 4 blocks east of Dupont Circle.

PARKING & METRO: Limited parking in the Washington DCJCC lot; additional parking available at Colonial Parking, 1616 P Street NW; limited street parking. Dupont Circle Station RED line.

TICKETS: \$35-\$75

Box Office Tickets (800) 494-8497 or boxofficetickets.com.

For discounts for groups of 10+ call (202) 777-3214 or email molly@theaterj.org

Theater J is handicapped accessible and offers assisted listening devices for interested patrons.

High resolution digital images are available upon request. More information about this production is available at (202) 777-3230 or theaterj.org.

Theater J, a program of the Washington DCJCC, produces thought-provoking, publicly engaged, personal, passionate and entertaining plays and musicals that celebrate the distinctive urban voice and social vision that are part of the Jewish cultural legacy. Acclaimed as one of the nation's premiere playwrights theaters, Theater J presents cutting edge contemporary work alongside spirited revivals and is a nurturing home for the development and production of new work by major writers and emerging artists exploring many of the pressing moral and political issues of our time. Dedicated first to a pursuit of artistic excellence, Theater J takes its dialogues beyond the stage, offering an array of innovative public discussion forums and outreach programs which explore the theatrical, psychological and social elements of our art. We frequently partner with those of other faiths and communities, stressing the importance of interchange among a great variety of people wishing to take part in frank, humane conversations about conflict and culture.