







January 12 through February 19

theater works

### **SUNSET BABY** is inspired by a few important things:

- 1. A picture my father took of me as a little girl (the picture described in the play is it)
- 2. All the Black activists throughout time that have shaped the world in which I live, and
- 3. Tupac Shakur one of the most complex and brilliant hip hop artists there ever was.
- The inspiration behind the pic my father took is self-explanatory. I'm a knock off of the ol' man and this is a homage to him.
- 2. The Black activists of the past this is different. I am grateful for their contributions to the freedoms that I enjoy, and yet I stand in recognition of their complicated struggles. I find their layers intriguing. How do you build a world and a home at the same time? What gets lost in the struggle? These are the questions that spark my play.
- 3. And finally, Tupac Shakur this is most important. He would've been in his forties now were he not a victim of gun violence in 1996. I was always moved by his deeply thoughtful yet contradictory music. One minute he'd be an intelligent orator breaking down the povertymentality of a lost generation, and the next he'd be the contributor to a violent generational abyss. How can my generation be so brilliant and so self-destructive at the same time?

This is the question that guides my play. It is not a blame game. It is not about discrediting a movement or a people. It is about untreated wounds between generations, and the hope for healing. It is about love.

That is all...

Dominique Morisseau





### BY **DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU** DIRECTED BY **REGINALD L. DOUGLAS**<sup>+</sup>

### THE CAST

(in order of appearence)

Kenyatta	TONY TODD*
Nina	BRITTANY BELLIZEARE*
Damon	CARLTON BYRD*

An apartment in Brooklyn - East New York. Present day.

Set Design	ALEXANDER WOODWARD
Costume Design	KAREN PERRY
Lighting Design	ROB DENTON
Sound Design	JULIAN EVANS

Casting Production Manager Stage Manager LAURA STANCZYK CASTING BRIDGET SULLIVAN KATE J. CUDWORTH\*

Cover design by WondriskaRusso Photo by Lanny Nagler Make-up by Tainted Inc.

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 $^{\scriptscriptstyle \dagger}$  Member of SDC, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

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TheaterWorks is celebrating its 31st season as a non-profit, professional theater company. Founded in 1985.

SUNSET BABY is the 2nd production of the 2016-2017 Season.

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"I wish I knew how it would feel to be free. I wish I could break all the chains holding me. I wish I could say all the things that I should say. Say 'em loud, say 'em clear for the whole round world to hear." — **Nina Simone** 

"A play is a blueprint of an event: a way of creating and rewriting history...because so much of African-American history has been unrecorded, dismembered, washed out, one of my tasks as a playwright is to locate the ancestral burial ground, dig for bones, find bones, hear the bones sing, write it down." — Suzan-Lori Parks

The quotes above have been my guiding inspirations for this production. In the spirit of Suzan-Lori's urgent mandate to African-American artists, Dominique's play is a vibrant act of artistic activism where she recreates and rewrites the narrative of urban Black America as she knows it. She erases the trite and tired history of racial (mis)representation in our country and instead paints a vivid and honest portrait of Black life in all of its specificity and complexity. Using her pen like a sword, Dominique writes Black men and women that are able to overcome a world of No and instead thrive in a world of Yes. She digs up the bones of revolution and allows century-long battle cries of pride and resilience to sing anew. Dominique flips the script of the stereotypes of the thug, ho, crack mother, and deadbeat dad, replacing these reductive archetypes with three-dimensional human characters full of hope, humor, flaws, desires, dreams. As a result, SUNSET BABY is an honest reflection of our world as it is and as it should be. It is far more than just theater that entertains, it is theater that enlightens and enlivens.

Directing this show in these last few trying months in American culture has made it oh so clear just how important this play is and how necessary it is for artists, and audiences, to declare, celebrate, and share their story. In a world that feels especially eager and poised to erase my existence and that of millions of Ninas and Damons and Kenyattas, what a privilege and pleasure it has been to use my craft and creativity to profess that I Am Here, My Black Life Matters, and My Dreams Are Real. I dedicate this production to all of the Sunset Babies of the world - from Connecticut to New York to London to Africa and beyond. I hope that this production inspires you to live in a world that feels truly free, to break the chains of despair and discrimination, to say what you want loudly and clearly for the whole world to hear.

- Reginald L. Douglas, Director

# WHO



**BRITTANY BELLIZEARE** (Nina) is making her **TheaterWorks** debut. She appeared in the world premiere of *The Last Tiger in Haiti* as Rose (La Jolla Playhouse/Berkeley Repertory); as Camae in *The Mountaintop* (Northern Stage); Ruby in *Seven Guitars* (Two River Theatre); in the Educational touring show *Sunjata Kamalenya* 

(McCarter Theater); and the one-act musical *Archy & Mehitabel* (The Yard). She has participated in various festivals in NYC including The NY Fringe and Harlem 9's 48 Hours in Harlem as well as performed at The Cell, Gallery Players in Brooklyn and The Public Theater. Her TV credits include: *Eye Candy* (MTV); *The Knick* (Cinemax); *Facing Trauma* (Discovery Health); and *Carol's Daughter - Do It Yourself* (HSN). Brittany received her M.F.A from The New School for Drama and her B.S. in Mathematics from Spelman College. Visit www.brittanybellizeare.com. For Dad!



**CARLTON BYRD** (Damon) is making his **TheaterWorks** debut. Regional: *Bad Apples* (ACT Seattle); *Jass* (New Harmony Project); *Used to Was/Maybe Did* (Center Theatre Group); *Antebellum* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre); *Romeo & Juliet* (Classical Theater of Harlem); *Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death* (Classical Theater of Harlem); and

The Bacchae (International Theater Festival). Television: Castle (ABC), Major Crimes (TNT), Blue Bloods (CBS), Law & Order (NBC). Film: Life of a King, Woodlawn, Holding Patterns. Carlton is honored to have studied with Maggie Flanigan at New York's Maggie Flanigan Studio (Meisner). He is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts (Lee Strasberg Institute, Experimental Theater Wing) and a recipient of the Ron Howard Foundation Scholarship.



**TONY TODD** (Kenyatta) is a former member of The Artist Collective and is proud to return to Hartford. He is making his **TheaterWorks** debut. Other recent theater includes *Ghost in the House*, the one man play about the late great boxer Jack Johnson and the world premiere of *The Black Odyssey* at the Denver Center

Theatre. Tony is proud to have been in *Fences* at the Geva Theatre Center; *Captains Tiger* at the La Jolla Playhouse, Manhattan Theater Club, and The Kennedy Center (for which he received a Helen Hayes nomination); *Zooman & the Sign* at Second Stage; *Home* and *Playboy of the West Indies* at Crossroads; *Les Blancs* at Arena Stage, Huntington and Seattle Rep; *No Place To Be Somebody* at The Matrix Theatre Co. He originated the role of King Hedley 2nd, at Pittsburgh Public, Huntington and Seattle Rep. Tony trained at Eugene O'Neill Theater Center and Trinity Rep Conservatory. He recently starred in the hit series *The Flash* as the sinister



character Zoom, in the HBO series *Room 104*, and in the Freeform series *Dead of Summer.* Tony's Film and TV work includes, *Platoon, Lean On Me, Night of the Living Dead, The Crow, Candyman, Frankenstein, Sushi Girl, Transformers Prime, Final Destination (1,3,4,5), Le Secret, Star Trek: The Next Generation, Deep Space Nine,* and *Voyager, The Rock, Bird, The Man From Earth, Changing the Game, Hatchet 1&2, Chuck, Hawaii 5-0, Criminal Minds, Law & Order, Homicide, NYPD Blue, X-Files, Call of Duty: Black Ops 2, Black Fox, 24, True Women,* to name a few. Upcoming films include *Drive Me to Vegas or Mars, From Jennifer, West of Hell* and *Requiem* among others. Presently he is finishing his screenplay *Providence.* Tony is proud of his daughter, Ariana and his son Alex and dedicates all art to their growth. @tonytodd54

DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU (Playwright) is an alumna of the Public Theater Emerging Writer's Group, Women's Project Lab, and Lark Playwrights Workshop. Credits include: Skeleton Crew (Sundance, Lark Barebones, Atlantic Theater Company, Scott Rudin); Paradise Blue (Williamstown Theatre Festival), Detroit '67 (Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem/NBT); Blood At The Root (Penn State), Sunset Baby (Gate Theater, LAByrinth Theatre); Follow Me To Nellie's (O'Neill, Premier Stages). Her 3-play cycle, The Detroit Project includes Detroit '67, Paradise Blue and Skeleton Crew. She's produced original works for the Hip Hop Theater Festival, American Theatre of Harlem, and her play Blood at the Root has toured South Africa, Scotland, Australia and the U.S., garnering her The Graham F. Smith Peace Foundation Award. Dominique has been commissioned by Steppenwolf, Women's Project, South Coast Rep, People's Light and Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Penumbra Theatre, and she currently serves as Executive Story Editor on the Showtime series Shameless. Awards: Stavis Playwriting Award, two-time NAACP Image Award, Spirit of Detroit Award, U of M Emerging Leader Award, Weissberger Award, PoNY Fellowship, Sky-Cooper New American Play Prize, TEER Spirit Trailblazer Award, The Steinberg Playwright Award, The Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama, and the Obie Collaboration Award.



**REGINALD L. DOUGLAS** (Director) is making his **TheaterWorks** debut. He is the Artistic Producer of City Theatre Company in Pittsburgh, a leading center for the development and production of bold new plays. At City, Reginald line-produces and directs in the theater's six-show season; line-produces and directs in the theater's

annual Momentum Festival of New Plays; directs City's annual Young Playwrights Festival; oversees casting operations and artistic initiatives; administers City's Directing Observership program for local emerging directors; and builds community and artistic partnerships both locally and nationally. In addition to his career at City, Reginald directs extensively throughout the country, having worked at venues including the Eugene O'Neill Center, Playwrights Center, McCarter, Luna Stage, Harlem Stage, Wild Project, Signature Center, Drama League, Rattlestick, and many others. Reginald has received fellowships from New York Theater Workshop and the Lark; was a member of the Actors Studio's Playwrights and Directors Unit; has assistant directed on Broadway, Off-Broadway, and regionally; and served on the selection committees for the Jerome New York Fellowship, Jerome Many Voices Fellowships, the O'Neill's National Playwrights Conference, and the Pittsburgh Foundation's 2015 Carol R. Brown Creative Achievement Awards and 2016 Pittsburgh Region Artists Program. He has lectured in directing at Point Park University and the National Theatre Institute. Reginald is a proud graduate of Georgetown University and a member of SDC. www.reginalddouglas.com



**ROB RUGGIERO** (Producing Artistic Director) has been a part of **TheaterWorks** artistic leadership for 23 years. He has directed over 50 shows, including *Relativity*, *Sex with Strangers, Third, Good People, Christmas on the Rocks, Annapurna, The Other Place* and *Time Stands Still.* Rob has earned national recognition for his work

on plays and musicals. His Broadway credits include Looped (starring Valerie Harper in a Tony-nominated performance) and High (starring Kathleen Turner). Off-Broadway, he conceived and directed the original musical revue entitled Make Me a Song: The Music of William Finn (Nominated for the Drama Desk and the Outer Critics Circle Awards). Rob conceived and directed the world premiere musical portrait of Ella Fitzgerald entitled Ella, which was seen on more than 24 regional theater stages from 2005-2010 before beginning a National Tour. His work has received multiple awards and recognition here in Connecticut, as well as in other cities around the United States. Rob most recently directed La Cage aux Folles, his ninth collaboration with Goodspeed Musicals where he also directed highly successful productions of Fiddler on the Roof (Connecticut Critic's Circle Award for Best Direction), The Most Happy Fella (Connecticut Critic's Circle Award for Best Direction), Carousel (Broadway World Award), Annie Get Your Gun, Camelot, Big River, 1776 and a new adaptation of Show Boat (Connecticut Critic's Circle Award for Best Direction). This new version is now being licensed by the Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization. www.robruggiero.com

**ALEXANDER WOODWARD** (Set Design) is thrilled to be making his **TheaterWorks** debut. Recent credits include *Ugly Lies the Bone* (Alliance), *The Moors* at Yale Rep which received a Connecticut Critics Circle Nomination for Outstanding Scenic Design, and the world premiere of *Orpheus...* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). Other credits include *The Children, Don Juan, Othello* (Yale); *Fingers & Toes* (New York and Florida); *Once Five Years Pass, Dixon* 



Family Album, Schmoozy Togetherness (Williamstown Theatre Festival); 13 Things About Ed Carpolotti (59E59); 1940's Radio Hour (Cortland Repertory Theatre); What I Thought I Knew, and the world premiere of Waiting for Spring (Kitchen Theatre Company); Oblomov (Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater); And a Child Shall Lead (HERE Arts Center); over a dozen shows with Yale Cabaret, as well as numerous assistant and associate credits in New York and across the country including the Tony-nominated designs for Bullets Over Broadway, A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder, The Assembled Parties, and Present Laughter. MFA Yale School of Drama. Donald M. Oenslager fellow and a proud member of United Scenic Artists Local 829 and Wingspace Theatrical Design.

KAREN PERRY (Costume Design) is making her TheaterWorks debut. Regional Credits include The Lion In Winter (Guthrie Theatre); Black Bottom Blues, Trouble in Mind, and August Wilson's Ma Rainey, Jitney, Two Trains Running and Seven Guitars (Two Rivers Theatre). Other credits include: The Happiest Song Plays Last (Second Stage); Dreamgirls, Clybourne Park, A Raisin in the Sun (Dallas Theater Center); Stop, Reset and The Piano Lesson (Signature); Joe Turner's Come and Gone dir. Phylicia Rashad, (Mark Taper); the 10th Anniversary production of Crowns, written and dir. by Regina Taylor (Goodman); Pearl Cleage's Blues for an Alabama Sky, dir. Sheldon Epps (Pasadena Playhouse); Regina Taylor's Trinity River Plays, dir. McSweeny (Dallas Theater Center, Goodman); The Brother/Sister Plays by Tarell McCraney, dir. Tina Landau (The Public) and Robert O'Hara (McCarter); Having Our Say, written and dir. by Emily Mann (McCarter); and *Resurrection* by Daniel Beatty (Arena). Honors include: three NAACP Image Awards (Joe Turner, Blues for Alabama Sky, Rosa Parks Story), six AUDELCO Awards, Chicago's Ira Aldridge Award, Ovation TV Theatre Award 2013, the 2007 San Diego Theatre Critics Circle Award, the 2006 "Woodie" Award, the 2005 National Black Theatre Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award; as well as Henry Hewes and Lortel nominations. Select film/TV credits include: Gregory Hines Show, Saturday Night Live, and The Brother from Another Planet by director John Sayles.

**ROB DENTON** (Lighting Designer) is thrilled to be back for his third show at TheaterWorks; last season he lit Buyer & Cellar and The Call. Rob's recent design credits include Erma Bombeck: At Wit's End (Arena Stage); War of the Roses (Delaware Theatre Company); Blue-Sky Boys (Capital Repertory Theatre); Mary Stuart (Folger Theatre); Disney's The Little Mermaid (Arkansas Repertory Theatre); 42nd Street, Young Frankenstein, Fiddler on the Roof and Into the Woods (The Muny); A Christmas Carol and All The Way (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis); Die Fledermaus (New Orleans Opera); Simply Sondheim (Signature Theatre); and Hansel and Gretel and The Mikado (Memphis Opera). Some of his upcoming designs include Thoroughly Modern Millie (Goodspeed Musicals), Assisted Loving (Capital Repertory Theatre) and The Barber of Seville (Opera San Antonio). www.rdentex.com

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# WHO

JULIAN EVANS (Sound Design) is making his TheaterWorks debut. Julian is a Brooklyn-based sound designer, providing mixes for theatre and cinema. Building off a background in classical trumpet and music theory, his designs and mixes are informed by a heightened awareness of dynamics, tone, and rhythm. Off-Broadway: Tick, Tick... BOOM!, John & Jen, Phoenix Rising (Theatre Row); I Like it Like That! (Pregones Theater); Soulographie (La MaMa); Touch, The Good Girl, In the Summer Pavilion (59E59). Off-off Broadway: Two Intimate (Abingdon Theater); The Golden Year (WorkShop Theater); Hard Times (The Cell); Paradox of the Urban Cliché (Wild Project), Trouble, Crazy, Just Like Me (NYMF); Clown Play, Barcode: The Musical, Prophet in Pink (FringeNYC); Parade, A Man of No Importance (Gallery Players). Regional: The End of War (Virginia Repertory Theatre); Lines in the Dust, Tilt the Unlit Candle (Luna Stage). BA: Carnegie Mellon. www.julianevans.info #tonycanyouhearme

LAURA STANCZYK CASTING CSA (Casting) Select Broadway, Off Broadway & Tours: Side Show, After Midnight, A Night With Janis Joplin, Follies, Don't Dress for Dinner, Lombardi, Ragtime, Impressionism, The Seafarer, Coram Boy, Translations, Radio Golf, Master Class, The Cripple of Inishmaan, Dirty Dancing, Damn Yankees, Gate/Beckett, The Glorious Ones. Laura works with a host of regional and international theatres. Nominated for six Artios Awards for Excellence in Casting, won for Follies.

**BRIDGET SULLIVAN** (Production Manager) is enjoying her second season with **TheaterWorks**, her experience includes production and project management, as well as many years in the world of props. Head of production for the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company in Vermont for 7 years, Bridget's past work also includes managing celebrity concerts at North Shore Music Theatre, and Project Manager for Barbizon Lighting Company for several years. Highlights of her props and management credits also include City Theatre Company in Pittsburgh and the Santa Fe Opera. A proud graduate of Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, VA., Bridget has a BA in Theatre Arts, and hails from Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

**KATE J. CUDWORTH** (Production Stage Manager) has enjoyed three seasons and 20 productions with **TheaterWorks** including *Relativity, Midsummer, Woody Sez* and *Becoming Dr.* Ruth. Off-Broadway: *Freud's Last Session, [title of show].* NY/Regional: Barrington Stage Company (8 seasons including *Freud's Last Session; Dr. Ruth, All The Way; Joe Iconis' The Black Suits*), Atlantic Stage Company, Hartford Stage, Manhattan School of Music (4 seasons), Yale Opera, York Theatre Company, Bronx Opera Company, Fringe NYC, NYMF.

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