

SETTING THE STAGE FOR KANSAS CITY TALENT AND DIVERSITY

THE KC MELTINGPOT THEATRE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to chronicle the origins of The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company, owned and operated by Kansas City area couple Harvey and Linda Williams. The primary focus will be on the works produced by The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company, their involvement in the community and the people they have employed. The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company has made a worthy contribution to the Kansas City theatre community, by producing new works through the use of local artists and playwrights, diverse artist and diverse material.

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Introduction

Theatre, by its very nature, is an inclusive art form. It requires a diversity of skills and talent. It also requires an audience, which means it can never be done alone. There will always be at least two individuals creating theatre. The inclusivity of theatre is often what draws artists to it. The feeling of being a part of something is enticing. And more often than not, theatre is welcoming to individuals of varied backgrounds and traditions. The unique customs artists from diverse cultures bring to theatre make it a rich and rewarding experience for the artists as well as the audience. However it seems that theatre audiences are still behind when it comes to diversity. Audiences tend to attend show with casts that look similar to themselves. Therefore audiences often look less diverse than they could.

While attending theatre in Kansas City with my children who are bi-racial, I noticed that often they were the only or almost the only people of color in the audience, particularly if the cast of the show was entirely white. On the reverse side, if the show we were attending had an almost entirely black cast then I was one of the few white people present. This was an unsettling discovery. Why was the audience for a particular show not as diverse as the theatregoing community? It was a quest to answer this question that led me to The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company and Harvey Williams.

I had begun by looking at the history of black theatre artists in Kansas City. I thought perhaps understanding their history I could better understand why it was still so difficult to get audiences to see shows that featured a cast that was from a different cultural background from their own. I was encouraged to speak with Harvey Williams, a

Kansas City actor of African-American descent about his experience in theatre in Kansas City. I was (easily) persuaded to attend a show at the Just Off Broadway theatre where Williams's newly founded company, the MeltingPot, was presenting his play *The Session*.

After some difficulty finding the theatre, my mother and I arrived and were enthusiastically greeted and welcomed into the facility. I spoke with the young woman who was managing the box office about how I might get in contact with Harvey Williams after the show. She invited me and my mother to stay after the performance for a celebration honoring everyone involved in the production. This seemed a bit unnecessary, we didn't want to intrude on their festivities, but we agreed and anxiously awaited the party. Before the house opened my mother and I waited in the lobby as is customary at most theatres, but there was something different about this theatre. I couldn't quite put my finger on it until a man in a yellow shirt walked right up to us and began a conversation. It turned out he was a volunteer and one of the founding members of the MeltingPot. David Brown's ability to make anyone feel relaxed and welcome was a refreshing change from other theatres where often no one spoke to me except the box office attendant.

The result of Brown's geniality was that I no longer felt nervous or out of place. I was no longer uncomfortable about the prospect of attending a social gathering where I knew no one except my own mother. We thoroughly enjoyed the play and were actually looking forward to the celebration when it came. The party was held in a large room just outside of the theatre. Everyone was handed a flute of Champagne. The members of the

cast and crew gathered around and toasted the completion of another successful show. Brown noticed that my mother and I were keeping to ourselves. We are both a bit shy and reserved so he pulled us into the crowd and started introducing us to everyone. I met Harvey Williams and told him about the idea for my thesis. Williams seemed genuinely interested. He was more than willing to give me any help he could. We exchanged contact information and within a week we had set up a meeting.

Williams and I met at the Just Off Broadway theatre and began to discuss his experience in the Kansas City theatre community. He too had noticed a pattern to audiences' attendance. When a show that featured a mostly black cast was produced in Kansas City, then the black audiences would flock to the theatre. But they would not necessarily come back for a show that didn't feature a black cast. Williams noted that there was a large black audience in Kansas City, but they were not coming to a large number of shows. He also noticed that other communities in the city were not attending theatre much at all. The Asian and Latino communities were seriously untapped when it came to potential audiences. But he also noted that those communities were significantly underrepresented on Kansas City stages. Williams has visions of changing that.

The first MeltingPot show I saw was actually the second of Williams's plays to be produced. His first show had featured an all-black cast and focused primarily on men's issues. His second show, *The Session* featured an all-female cast, from various backgrounds. The women in *The Session* were diverse. Williams had done this intentionally. He wanted to feature women with unique experiences that they could

bring to the production. His hope was to get the audience to be as diverse as the characters. To some extent he had. The audience was predominantly black and white, but at the show I attended, I didn't notice anyone who was Latino or Asian. Williams wasn't discouraged though. He knew he just needed to get the word out to those communities that they were welcome, and to find a way to draw them in. I asked him how he planned to do that.

Williams explained that most of the members of those communities were not particularly accustomed to seeing themselves on stage. His philosophy was that people want to see themselves on stage. They want to see someone who reminds them of themselves, but that person does not necessarily have to look like them. The characters on stage simply need to represent a characteristic that the audience can connect to. But the reality is, it is easier for the audience to see those attributes if the characters on stage look like them. Williams aims to get people to the theatre by showing them themselves. Once he has their attention, he believes he can keep them coming back. So far it seems to be working.

Of the nine MeltingPot productions I have seen, the audiences appear to be relatively multicultural. One advantage the MeltingPot has is that its productions are new. No one knows exactly what to expect. Audiences have to come to the show to see who is on stage. It is not like a theatre that produces classic plays. If a theatre in Kansas City produces a play by August Wilson, then the patrons know what to expect. If a play is already well known, then the audience might make their decision to attend based on

whether they believe the play will relate to them. MeltingPot audiences seem to have come to the understanding that all of the plays can relate to them.

As I continued to meet with Harvey Williams, I found that I was more and more impressed with the way his company is able to bring diverse audiences in to all of their shows. I found that his philosophy about creating a melting pot both on and off the stage was something I wanted to see more of. I wanted to learn all that I could about the company and the people who had been able to capture audiences. What I found was a group of people with an amazing amount of passion for what they are doing.

Harvey Williams and the KC MeltingPot Theatre Company have found their niche in Kansas City. They are doing something that no one else in the city is doing. They are using all local theatre artists, including the playwrights, to produce new works with diverse themes. The MeltingPot is a model for inclusion, showcasing the talent and diversity that makes up this city. Williams is determined to create an audience for the MeltingPot that represents the people of the community.

In the winter of 2015 the MeltingPot will produce another of Williams's plays entitled *On Shoulders Now*, a piece that has been in the works since my very first meeting with him. In this new play Williams is looking to bring in the Asian community. He was a bit mysterious about how he intended to do this, but his hope is that by featuring cast members of Asian descent in this play, he will get that community interested enough to continue to attend plays at the MeltingPot.

Williams has a novel idea with the MeltingPot, but it is one that seems obvious in hindsight. By offering audiences a chance to see a version of themselves on stage he is

getting them hooked, and bringing them back time and again. The faces I see in the crowd are becoming more diverse but also more familiar as I see many patrons who have been at previous productions. The climate of the audience before and after a show at the MeltingPot is an enthusiastic one. There is a buzz in the air that tells me people are genuinely excited and eager for the next opportunity to see another MeltingPot production.

The MeltingPot does not tout itself as a “black” theatre because that is not what they are. It is a theatre company owned and operated by a black family, but there are no exclusions here. Their welcoming nature and passion for creating new and exciting works is what has audiences coming to see what they will do next and what motivated me to write about their success so far. This has been a thrilling, yet challenging experience for me. While it has been challenging to write about an ever-evolving company, I have had the privilege to watch this company grow from their second show, produced on a shoestring budget, to a highly polished revival of their inaugural play. It has been rewarding to see the audience grow with the company and to feel the passion they invest into every aspect of a production.

CHAPTER 1

THE KC MELTINGPOT THEATRE COMPANY

The KC MeltingPot Theatre was founded by Harvey Williams. Williams is a Kansas City area theatre artist who is passionate about making a difference in his community and in the theatre community in Kansas City. Williams did not set out to create a theatre company. He had become burnt-out with his work and was looking to add some creativity to his life again. Williams had enjoyed working occasionally as an actor in Kansas City. He enjoyed the thrill of the live show. Williams felt a passion for theatre, but was concerned about making a living from it. His work as a teacher was important, but it had become unfulfilling. Williams's wife, Linda Williams, noticed her husband was not content with his job, and she encouraged him to pursue his dreams. Not only was Williams an accomplished actor, but he was also a writer, and deep down that's what he was most passionate about. Williams had written many things, but one that stood out to his wife was a play he had written titled *Old School Ghetto Gospel*. She urged Harvey Williams to get his play produced. As any playwright can attest to, sometimes the only way to get a play produced is for the playwright to produce it. Williams now had a goal. He was going to produce *Old School Ghetto Gospel*.

Producing a play is no easy feat; it takes time, space, and many people, but the target had been set and Williams had a plan. He knew his wife was willing to help, but that was not enough. Williams needed a team of dedicated, passionate people willing to take a leap of faith with him. One of the first people Williams turned to was a friend he had met while acting in August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* at the Metropolitan Ensemble

Theatre in Kansas City. Williams spoke with David Brown, one of the volunteers working at the MET, and decided he would be just the person to help launch this production. Williams planned an informal meeting with Brown in his home. They were going to eat lunch together and discuss the possibilities that lay ahead. Just before the meeting was to begin Williams was on the phone with his wife. She was concerned that he was being too casual about the meeting and advised him to formalize it a bit. Williams's plan was simply to serve Brown a sandwich from *Jimmy John's*. Linda Williams knew she couldn't change the menu, but she insisted that Harvey Williams use real plates instead of paper. As the story goes; The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company was founded on July 31, 2012, over a couple of *Jimmy John's* sandwiches served on a real plate. Brown and Williams will both tell you that this is how The MeltingPot was formed but there is much more that has gone into the company.

David Brown has been a vital part of the organization from the very beginning. Brown has given freely of his time and talent to help see the MeltingPot succeed. Brown has assisted with promotions, marketing, photography and social media services for the MeltingPot. He, along with his business partner Gerome Berry, own and operate InformaQueue a company that offers a range of services for area businesses. Their company, InformaQueue has produced a variety of products for the MeltingPot including playbills, t-shirts and promotional materials. Brown has been a crucial part of making the public aware of the MeltingPot and their contribution to the community.

David Brown was by far not the only person Williams solicited for support. He instinctively concentrated on family first. His children, siblings, in-laws and spouse have

all been instrumental in bringing the MeltingPot to fruition. Their duties have ranged from house management to catering. They have cleaned toilets and organized actors' bios. The cooperation and assistance Williams has received from his family is invaluable. Williams also sought support and guidance from friends and colleagues. When looking to cast *Old School Ghetto Gospel* Williams turned to his colleagues in the theatre community. The cast included several actors that Williams had acted with before. Williams also looked to others he had previously worked with for the technical aspects of the production. His connections to other theatre artists were a major asset to producing *Old School Ghetto Gospel*.

When Brown and Williams had their first meeting, Williams had already made some arrangements. He spoke with local actors about being a part of this production. He had also been shopping around for a venue. He had looked into several spaces, but was discouraged by the price to rent them. Someone suggested that Williams look into the Just Off Broadway Theatre. He gave the theatre a call and went to look around. He was impressed with the beautiful building and the adaptable theatre space, but what impressed him the most was the price. He signed a contract to rent the building for three weeks. The signed contract for the space had made it official; they were going to put on a show.

Linda Williams felt that her husband's dream was bigger than one show. She didn't want him to put together this one production and be finished. She wanted to be supportive of her husband's dreams. She asked him what he truly wanted to do, with the knowledge that her husband had aspirations that stretched far beyond a single

production. Harvey Williams had always hoped to have his own theatre company one day. He was not convinced he should start a business until he discovered that the cost to start a corporation was only thirty-five dollars. That convinced him.

Now they needed a name and a mission statement. The Williamses along with David Brown discussed what they really wanted their company to represent. Harvey Williams knew that he did not want to start a “black” theatre company; black-owned perhaps, but he wanted the company they started to be diverse. He wanted all to be welcome and included. He was concerned that the label of “black” theatre company could limit the possibilities for their company. All parties agreed that the plays they produced needed to resonate with the diverse population that makes up Kansas City. They wanted the company to be a melting pot of communities and cultures. This idea of embracing people from varied backgrounds and encouraging them to lend their voice to the success of the company led to the name: The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company.

Harvey Williams also wanted to keep the artists involved in the productions local. He knew there was a large pool of talented theatre artists in Kansas City that needed a platform for their art. There are playwrights and actors, stage managers and designers, living in the Kansas City area, who are all passionate about their craft and dedicated to making a living from it. Williams knew this was bigger than his dream; others’ dreams needed to be realized as well. He concluded that along with being a company that embraces diversity, they would also be a company that showcases the local talents of the community.

The company had a name and a mission, but the rent had to be paid, and as far as Williams was concerned, the actors had to be paid as well. He was determined that MeltingPot was going to be a professional, for-profit theatre company. He wanted to see if the company could be successful without “welfare”, as he called it, and he felt that having the actors work for free was a form of welfare. Williams had acted in many shows and had not always been compensated. He knew that some of the actors in his cast would be willing to perform without pay, but that went against Williams’s philosophy for creating a company that helped others achieve their dreams. Williams was not certain how much he would be able to pay the actors, but he had resolved to compensate them.

While Williams understands the advantages of a not-for-profit theatre company he was quite adamant that the MeltingPot would be a for-profit company. He knows there will be challenges to face, but feels that those challenges are worth it to know that his company is successful on its own merit and not because they had a crutch to fall back on. Many not-for-profit theatre companies are able to rely on grants and tax-deductible donations. Williams was concerned that if the MeltingPot relied on these forms of support they might not be able to determine the quality of their product. The MeltingPot has been able to be successful because they have offered a quality product that compels audiences to return to the theatre to see new shows.

Williams had begun to see his vision taking shape. He had a script, a stage, and actors. Williams felt confident about where they were in the process but then the business people (namely Linda Williams) descended on him and asked how he planned

to pay for the production. Linda Williams had worked in accounting and business for many years and she was concerned that Harvey Williams had not thought this all the way through. The costs of the production were mounting and the company had no money except for the personal contributions from the Williamses. The time had come to raise funds. They began with looking for sponsors. Linda Williams had a co-worker named Michael Williams, who was the co-founder of a new local company, *Me Time*. *Me Time* produces an all-natural Lemonade. Michael Williams and his business partner William Martin agreed that working together with the MeltingPot would be a good way to promote both new businesses. Harvey Williams had the idea to include *Me Time* in the play script and set design for *Old School Ghetto Gospel*. The set ended up being scaled back and did not include *Me Time*, but the script did. Harvey Williams found a way to incorporate *Me Time Lemonade* as part of the show and in exchange *Me Time* helped to sponsor the production. *Me Time's* sponsorship was enough to nearly cover a week's worth of rent. It was a positive step to funding the production. The MeltingPot members were also able to sell advertisement space in the theatre program. Between the *Me Time* sponsorship, advertisement sales, donations, and tickets sales the MeltingPot was able to make a profit from their first show, albeit a small profit. The MeltingPot had successfully produced their first profitable show.

Just Off Broadway Affiliation

In the spring of 2013 The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company had just wrapped up their first successful production. The second production was already underway and they were making plans for the following year. Then a new dynamic was introduced to the

company. The Just Off Broadway Theatre Association invited Harvey and Linda Williams to attend a board meeting. The Just Off Broadway Theatre Association was looking for feedback about the building and the organization. The MeltingPot company members had enjoyed the experience, but there were concerns. The building had been underutilized for years and needed some maintenance. There was also obvious tension between some of Just Off Broadway Theatre Association board members and as a result the organization was struggling.

The Just Off Broadway Theatre Association had been impressed with the professionalism of the MeltingPot and their ability to draw a crowd. The Just Off Broadway Theatre Association had also taken notice of the time and energy the MeltingPot company members had put into the maintenance of the building while they were using it. By the time of this first meeting with The Just Off Broadway Theatre Association, the MeltingPot had already booked the theatre for their second show, to be performed in August. During the meeting the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association board asked if the MeltingPot might be interested in making the Just Off Broadway Theatre building their permanent home. Because the MeltingPot had already made arrangements for more productions they felt that this would be a positive venture for both parties. The arrangements were made and the KC MeltingPot Theatre Company became the anchor company for the Just Off Broadway theatre.

The Just Off Broadway theatre now had an affiliate theatre company that would be utilizing the building on a regular basis. Harvey Williams set up an office in the Just Off Broadway building and began to run the MeltingPot operations from there. Things

were coming along for both organizations, but the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association was still struggling to find stability. Linda Williams offered her assistance. She knew she had good accounting and organization skills from her years of experience as a manager. The board believed she could help straighten out some of the issues the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association had been having. Within months of their first meeting with the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association the situation with the board escalated; they needed more help than they realized. Linda Williams was asked to become a board member. When she became a Just Off Broadway Theatre Association board member there were many broken relationships surrounding the association. Williams's mission was to figure out what relationships needed to be mended and how she could help bring people back to Just Off Broadway. She wanted individuals to feel welcome and important to the success of the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association.

One of the relationships that had been damaged when the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association was struggling was the relationship between them and The Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks and Recreation Department owns the Just Off Broadway Theatre building. The Just Off Broadway Theatre Association and the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department had an agreement about how the building was to be used. Because of the friction among the board members of the Just Off Broadway Theater Association, the building was not being used according to the agreement. The Parks and Recreation Department wanted the theatre to give some value to the public and that was not happening. As a result The Parks and Recreation Department was no longer supporting the theatre as was originally planned. Linda

Williams set out to mend this relationship and has since been able to reestablish support from the Parks and Recreation Department.

In the course of her first year on The Just Off Broadway Theatre Associations board, Linda Williams was elected as the president. Her dedication and skills have revitalized the organization. Now thanks to Linda Williams and KC MeltingPot Theatre Company the theatre is in use most of the year and the community is able to benefit from its operation. The relationship between the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association and the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department is improving. Today when Linda Williams requests things for the building the Parks and Recreation Departments responds positively.

In addition to The MeltingPot many other theatre companies also perform in the Just Off Broadway building. Linda Williams has made it her goal to provide them with a positive experience. She arranges the schedules and prepares contracts. With the help of the other members of the MeltingPot she also makes sure the building is clean and in order for performances that take place there. She now divides her time between being the executive director for the KC MeltingPot Theatre Company and being the board president of the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association. There is no doubt that both organizations have benefited a great deal from Linda Williams and her ability to maintain a healthy partnership between the two.

The Unwritten Mission

The KC MeltingPot theatre company, like all businesses, has a formal mission toward which they are always striving. "KC MELTINGPOT THEATRE is a venture to

provide a platform for the expression of theatre and arts in Kansas City and its outlying areas. Our pursuit is to produce or assist in producing original works by local talent, representative of the rich and varied ethnic and life communities in the metropolitan and suburban areas of greater Kansas City. We are dedicated to being a worthy addition to our city's vibrant arts community. Our KC MeltingPot Theatre represents the blending of individual endeavors for the enrichment of us all”

(<http://kcmeltingpot.com/aboutUS.html> 2015). But there is also an unwritten mission for the MeltingPot: to create a welcoming environment to all those who come in contact with their company.

Harvey Williams, Linda Williams, and David Brown have all expressed how important this informal mission is to their business. While they strive to create a professional and rewarding theatre experience on stage, they are creating a rewarding experience backstage and off stage as well. Many of the playwrights and actors who have worked with the MeltingPot have expressed their gratitude for the friendly and warm environment the MeltingPot creates. Artists are treated with respect and care and are welcomed openly into the family that is the MeltingPot. There is an immediate sense of belonging for those working with the MeltingPot. The relationships that are established during a show with the cast and crew extend beyond the walls of the Just Off Broadway theatre. The members of the MeltingPot aim to support former colleagues in their professional endeavors as well, attending readings, concerts and productions of the new friends they have made.

The affability does not stop with the staff and crew; it extends to the audience as well. When one enters the theatre as an audience member, there are sincere greetings from the volunteers and staff. Those members of the theatre company who are available before a show are in the lobby speaking with guests and making them feel at home. David Brown noted the importance of this “... it’s not just an impression that we give, we sincerely enjoy the people who come in here. And we do want them to feel at home so even if the show is a bomb we are still going to have family, communion and a good time” (Williams and Brown, Interview, December 10, 2013). This practice has undoubtedly contributed to the growing number of repeat audience members for the MeltingPot. Brown noticed that in some places the theatre experience can feel intimidating and overwhelming to an audience member who is new to theatre. The MeltingPot does not want anyone to leave a show feeling as if they did not belong there. Although it is not part of their official mission, MeltingPot KC has succeeded in creating a friendly, open atmosphere for all who gather there.

The Wang Dang Doodle

Most theatre companies celebrate the ending of a show’s run with a cast party or some other form of celebration, The MeltingPot is no exception. Their first closing party started with their second show, *The Session* in the fall of 2013. After the last evening performance the cast and crew invited the audience to join in the festivities. Audience members were able to mingle with the company while they enjoyed food and drinks prepared with the help of Tina and Gino Martin, Linda Williams’s sister and brother-in-law.

Tina Martin unintentionally gave these closing night parties a name. Tina Martin and Linda Williams had grown up listening to a lot of blues music with their father. One of the songs from their childhood was *Wang Dang Doodle*, a song about throwing a big party. One day while discussing the upcoming event, Tina Martin said “We’ve got to get this Wang Dang Doodle together” and the name stuck. Now The MeltingPot celebrates the closing of each show with a Wang Dang Doodle and it has become a big draw for audiences.

As the Wang Dang Doodle evolved, Harvey Williams noticed that most of the shows they were performing had some kind of a theme involving food. Harvey had the idea to incorporate the foods mentioned in the shows into the Wang Dang Doodles. For instance, in *Waiting To Be Invited*, the women discuss fish sticks and tomato and lettuce salad; at the Wang Dang Doodle that followed this show, fish sticks and tomato and lettuce salad were served. Spaghetti and catfish were on the menu at the Wang Dang Doodle for *Truth Stands* because the father in the play offers to fix spaghetti and catfish for his children. By integrating the foods mentioned in the play into the Wang Dang Doodle, the MeltingPot is able to put an amusing accent on the final performance.

Harvey recognizes that the Wang Dang Doodle is a good marketing tool for the MeltingPot but it is also another example of how The MeltingPot creates a welcoming environment for all. “Besides being the last performance, there’s some free food involved, you know that always gets people’s attention ... the Wang Dang Doodle is the closing party, the period at the end” (Williams, Harvey, Interview, February 26, 2015).

Internship program

In the summer of 2015 the MeltingPot began an internship program for local high school students and college students from across the country. The program originated with six interns – three high school students and three college students— with varying backgrounds. The program is an opportunity for these young people to experience the ins and outs of theatre. The participants not only worked for the theatre during the summer; they also took part in classes that taught them skills they may use in their future theatre endeavors.

While working with the members of The MeltingPot KC Theatre Company, these students have a variety of duties they must undertake. These duties include everything from taking out the trash, filing records and cleaning restrooms to writing e-mail blasts, organizing lighting equipment and assisting with auditions. The list of responsibilities is extensive. The students are rewarded with the opportunity to work with professional theatre artists and to network for future career possibility.

Linda Williams, executive director of the MeltingPot, explained that these interns were not only there to offer cheap or free labor to the theatre, but to really learn from the experience. Williams wants these interns to come away from their time with the MeltingPot with knowledge that will be valuable to them. Therefore the program also includes classes that the students attend to enhance their internship. The classes begin with a session on story-telling, followed by playwriting. From there the students learn about the processes and techniques used by actors and directors when they put a show together. The students also have a class with local poets and continue to learn with a

lesson from the promotional director for the MeltingPot about audience outreach and marketing. The last class before graduation gives the students the opportunity to become the teachers. They teach the members of the MeltingPot Company about social media. Williams acknowledged that the younger generation has a much better grasp on current social media trends and can truly help MeltingPot members learn new methods for reaching artists and audiences.

A recent visit to the theatre allowed me the opportunity to meet with three of the interns. They spoke about some of the tasks they had already performed and some that they were looking forward to. The students seemed enthusiastic about the experience and spoke highly of their interactions with MeltingPot staff. After leaving the interns to their first class, Linda Williams spoke with me about the excitement surrounding this new program. Her dedication to this new program was clearly evident and reminded me how passionate one can become when doing something that one loves.

CHAPTER 2

THE FOUNDING MEMBERS AND THEIR SUPPORTING CAST

Harvey Williams

Harvey Williams is the founder and artistic director of the KC MeltingPot Theatre. The company was founded because Williams wanted a venue to produce his own play, *Old School Ghetto Gospel* (Trussell, "Venue," D1,D8). With the goal of staging original work by Kansas City writers, Williams has created something different for Kansas City audiences. While other theatres have been known for staging new works, KC MeltingPot focuses on using local artists for all areas of production, from playwrights to actors and everyone in between. As a Kansas City native, Williams sees the great potential for artists this city has to offer.

Harvey Williams was born and raised in Kansas City along with his five sisters and two brothers. He attended St. Monica, a Catholic grade school, and then proceeded to graduate from Bishop Lillis High School. After high school, Williams served in the US Army for three years and lived in Germany for a while before returning to Kansas City to attend the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where he majored in Communications. Williams's first experience with theatre began at UMKC where he was taking an elective theatre class. It was a basic theatre class, but his instructor Richard Alan Nichols saw something in him and asked him to take part in a production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* at Park College. Williams remembers with a chuckle his willingness to take the part. "I barely knew a little bit about Shakespeare ... Since I didn't

know what I was doing, I had no qualms about doing it” (Williams, Harvey, Interview, September 20, 2013). That was Williams’s first experience with stage acting.

Through the encouragement of another teacher, Dennis Allen, Williams began to pursue other avenues for his acting. He got involved with a talent agency, Talent Plus, now Talent Unlimited, to act in some industrial films and commercials; his acting career progressed from there. “I just kind of got deeper in the quicksand and enjoyed it, really enjoyed it” Williams said with a laugh (Williams, Harvey, Interview, September 20, 2013). Williams recalled his first major acting role for a professional theatre:

I think the first major acting thing I did was at the American Heartland and I did a production of *Driving Miss Daisy*. That was way back when, and at the time, I was kind of young for the role. I played the role of Hoke, the driver and it’s funny now because I got to do it a little while ago again for Central Standard Theatre. I was finally old enough to play the role, or a little bit closer to the age anyway. And so that was a good experience because I kind of saw how when you’re not really right in terms of age and things and you do a part and then you come back and you have the opportunity to do it again and it’s more age appropriate, it’s a tremendous amount that you can bring to it (Williams, Harvey, Interview, September 20, 2013).

Since his first role in *Driving Miss Daisy*, Williams has been seen at theatres across Kansas City in productions of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Little Tommy Parker*, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, *Now Let me Fly*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Fences*, *12 Angry Men*, *1940’s Radio Hour*, *The African Company Presents Richard the III*,

Monkey Don't Drink Hot Chocolate, Othello, Journey with Barbara Jordan, and others (Evans 2014). In 2011 Williams co-starred with Marilyn Lynch in the Central Standard Theatre's productions of *Driving Miss Daisy*, which they later performed in Bedford, England, and Adelaide, Australia (Trussell, "Women," 21). His most recent acting credit was as Palmeroy Bateman in S.M. Shephard-Massat's *Waiting to Be Invited* at the Just Off Broadway Theatre. This show was produced by a partnership between KC MeltingPot Theatre and Phoenix KC Theatre.

Acting has not been Williams' only interest when it comes to theatre. While at UMKC Williams also became interested in writing. Williams was asked by one of the acting teachers, Dennis Allen, an actor known for his work on *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*, to write some monologues for his acting class. Williams found a new passion in writing and has since written three plays; *Old School Ghetto Gospel* (in which he also performed), *The Session*, and *On Shoulders Now*. His first two shows have had successful runs with KC MeltingPot Theatre, and *On Shoulders Now* (A Christmas Story) will premier in November 2015. "I've always enjoyed the performing but really writing is always been kind of what I wanted to be involved with, and then it just kind of developed from there" (Williams, Harvey, Interview, September 20, 2013).

As a playwright Williams recognized the need to have his work produced. Williams realized that the best way to get his play to the public was to produce it himself. This led to Williams's next position: as a theatre founder. "Harvey Williams, a veteran actor and playwright, didn't really set out to form a new theater company. He just wanted to get one of his plays produced. But his script, "Old School Ghetto Gospel,"

turned out to be the inaugural production of a new company, Melting Pot KC, in February” (Trussell, “Upstarts,” 16-18).

In 2013, the same year Harvey Williams made his debut as a playwright and theatre founder, he also made his directing debut. “His first effort to direct anything was Project Playwright, a unique competition in which local playwrights wrote short plays on deadline that were quickly staged at Just Off Broadway in June. After that, playwright Michelle T. Johnson asked him to direct her original piece, “Wiccans in the Hood,” for KC Fringe” (Trussell, “Women,” 21). Williams went on to direct *The Session*, the second play produced by KC MeltingPot Theatre and written by Williams. He followed this by co-directing *JFK: A Ghostly Evening* with Jacqueline Gafford. Since then Williams has directed four more shows for The MeltingPot; *The Frowning Vajayjays of Shady Pines*, *White Sangria*, *Echoes of Octavia*, and *Old School* (a revival of his original piece *Old School Ghetto Gospel*).

Linda Williams

Linda Williams was born in Dublin County, Missouri, near Arkansas, where her parents lived. Williams moved to Kansas City, Missouri, when she was four years old. Since moving to Kansas City, Williams has always lived in or near Midtown. She attended grade school at Wendell Phillips and then changed to Bancroft Elementary School. Williams attended Manual High School until it was closed during her sophomore year. After Manual High School closed, Williams attended Westport High School where she graduated. After high school, Williams received several scholarships to attend Lincoln University. She quickly decided that the university was not for her and returned to

Kansas City where she took a few classes at UMKC. After returning from her short experience at Lincoln University, Linda Williams (then Linda Miller) became engaged to Harvey Williams. They have been married since 1980.

At the age of fifteen while in high school, Williams worked for TG & Y retail store. She began working in the office doing bookkeeping. Williams had always loved numbers and believed that she wanted to be an accountant. At TG & Y she did the payroll and kept the books. She eventually realized that accounting was not what she really wanted to do. After returning from Lincoln University, Williams began working for the *Kansas City Star*. Williams worked as an auditor at the *Star*, auditing the people who had paper routes and the newspaper dispensers around the city. Williams worked for the *Star* for about five years. She chose to leave the *Star* when she was pregnant with her second daughter because she had decided to become a stay-at-home mom. After only four months Linda Williams and Harvey Williams decided that staying at home was not the place for Linda Williams. She went back into the work force and began working for E. F. Hutton, an investment company. Williams worked for E. F. Hutton as a margin analyst. E. F. Hutton closed their office in Kansas City, which left Williams searching for a new job. Williams got an interview with DST Systems, a company that had E.F. Hutton as a client. Williams was offered an entry-level supervisory position. Once she began her job with DST Systems, Williams felt certain she would not last with the company. It was a rough beginning, but soon she found her place and began to love what she was doing with DST Systems. She moved into management and went on to work for the company for 26 years. After working with DST Systems for 26 years, Williams decided it was time to

begin a new chapter in her life. She parted ways with DST Systems and began her journey with the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association and the Kansas City MeltingPot Theatre Company.

The Kansas City MeltingPot Theatre Company was founded by Linda Williams's husband, Harvey Williams, but Linda Williams has been an integral part of the company from the very beginning. After retiring from his teaching career, Harvey Williams wanted to focus on his writing. He had many new ideas in his head, but Linda Williams encouraged him to take a look at *Old School Ghetto Gospel*, a piece he had written some years before. Linda Williams believed in *Old School Ghetto Gospel* so she convinced Harvey Williams to revisit it, and he did. After updating the script, Harvey Williams decided he wanted to put on a production of his play. Linda Williams was supportive of Harvey Williams's dream, but she was also a bit skeptical. She supported Harvey Williams in his aspirations but warned him that he had to be dedicated to it or she would no longer assist him. Linda Williams was still working a full time job with DST Systems at this point and wanted to know that Harvey Williams was devoted to this project before they put their time and energy into it. Harvey Williams was committed to seeing this project through. While working on the production of *Old School Ghetto Gospel*, Harvey Williams came to the realization that he wanted to create a theatre company so he could put on other productions. Linda Williams recognized Harvey Williams's passion and resolved to help see it through. Because of her years of experience in management and business, Linda William took on the company duties while Harvey Williams focused on the creative side of the business. Together Linda and

Harvey Williams are the Executive Directors for the Kansas City MeltingPot Theatre Company.

Linda Williams was not always so interested in theatre. She admits that even when Harvey Williams was performing on stage she did not always attend his shows. But being a part of the MeltingPot has changed her. Linda Williams is now managing the business side of the MeltingPot as well as being the president of the board of directors for the Just Off Broadway Theatre Association, where KC MeltingPot has performed all of its productions. When Linda Williams talks about this new chapter in her life her eyes light up “I have found my passion here. I get up every day, later than I used to, but I look forward to coming here. I get excited about coming here and about upcoming productions, all of the work and the meetings and the networking. I can’t tell you how long ago I felt about work like that” (Williams, Linda, Interview, April 2, 2015). It is clear that she has fallen in love with the journey she is on with KC MeltingPot Theatre.

David Brown

David Brown was born in Dallas, Texas. At the age of three he moved with his mother and some of his siblings to Leavenworth, Kansas. Brown didn’t always have a lot of friends while he was growing up, but he found that he developed a kinship for people, something that has been a benefit to him throughout his life. He attempted to fit in at school but it wasn’t easy for him being gay in the 70s in Leavenworth, Kansas. The struggle became overwhelming and Brown stopped going to school. His mother worked long hours to support her family and was not home during the day to realize that Brown was not going to school. Eventually the principal called him and his mother

in to talk about Brown's absences. The principal gave Brown the option to return to school if he agreed to come in on Saturdays to clean out lockers. Brown declined the offer and chose to attend Project Stay, an alternative learning program. Brown completed the program in a few months and received his GED.

After he completed the Project Stay program, Brown moved to Lawrence, Kansas, to attend the University of Kansas. After one semester in Brown decided that college was not the right place for him. While attending classes at the University of Kansas, Brown made friends with some members of a church fellowship group. Feeling welcomed by the church group, Brown continued to live in Lawrence. He lived with his brother, his brother's girlfriend and their first child. Brown became like a nanny to his nephew while living there. Brown, like many people, tried his hand at several different jobs including a substitute teacher's aide, a delivery man, and various others. One job that was particularly rewarding for Brown was when he worked for HELP – The Handicap Education Living Program – where he assisted disabled people.

While in Lawrence Brown met Raleigh Montamero from Bolivia. Montamero and Brown became partners. Montamero had a dream of owning his own business. One day while Brown and Montamero were in a video store they heard the owner talking about selling the business. When they left the store, Montamero asked Brown if they should buy it and they both agreed. They bought the video store and together they owned it for several years. Ultimately Brown sold out of the business, and he and Montamero parted ways. Once he had separated from Montamero, Brown visited Kansas City with some friends. They went to an area club, Missie B's. That night Brown met a man who became

the love of his life. Brown moved to Kansas City to be with Lawrence Smith. Brown and Smith were together for fifteen years before Smith sadly passed away from stage four cancer on Christmas Eve in 2009. Brown's world was completely shaken. He was devastated and angry. Brown had always been someone who enjoyed the comfort and safety of being at home, but after Smith's passing he feared that his family and his partner's family would worry about him if kept to himself at home. He knew that the families would be concerned that he was closing himself off from the world shrouded in grief.

Brown did not want the families to worry about him so he looked for something to occupy his time. One day Brown went with a friend to a fundraising event for the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre in Kansas City, Missouri. He found the experience enjoyable if not a bit surreal. He felt as if he were in the presence of classic movie stars. He found himself thinking that perhaps the MET takes volunteers, but he quickly pushed the thought aside. He knew they probably did take volunteers and if he asked about it they would most certainly put him to work. He wasn't sure he was ready for that. But as the evening wore on he became caught up in the atmosphere and eventually did say something about volunteering. He was welcomed with open arms and Brown began to spend his spare time at the MET. He was even awarded the volunteer of year award. Brown volunteered at the MET for two years often spending up to fifty hours a week at the theatre. During his time at the MET, Brown became acquainted with many new people and made some friends and connections. One connection Brown made was with Harvey Williams. Williams was performing in the MET's production of *The Piano Lesson*

by August Wilson. Brown and Williams became close during the production. Brown knew that Williams was interested in producing some of his own work so Brown offered to help him when he was ready. Williams soon called on Brown and together they made plans to produce one of the plays Williams had written. With the help of friends and family their endeavor brought about The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company and its inaugural production, *Old School Ghetto Gospel* (Brown, Interview, June 10, 2015).

The Supporting Roles

Throughout their three years in business The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company has enlisted the aid of various friends and family members. Linda and Harvey Williams have been able to persuade several members of their family to dedicate their time and talents to the success of the MeltingPot. Their two daughters, Tiffany Tucker and Stephanie Williams have performed a host of duties as a way to help their parents. Stephanie Williams handles the box office, dealing with ticket sales, and distributing the comped tickets. She also assists during rehearsals to make sure the actors have everything they need. Once the shows are actually up and running Tiffany Tucker offers more support as a greeter, an usher, or working in the box office selling tickets. Tiffany Tucker also helps with special events, such as luncheons or group events. She also assists with ordering catering for these events as well as support with the Wang Dang Doodles. The Williamses have also been able to count on their teen-aged granddaughter Rayanna Tucker to pitch in wherever she can be of use, from cleaning to running the concession stand Rayanna Tucker does a little bit of everything.

Harvey and Linda Williams also receive support from their siblings. Linda Williams's sister and brother-in-law, Tina and Gino Martin are responsible for catering the Wang Dang Doodles, but Tina Martin has also recruited many of her friends to volunteer at the Just Off Broadway theatre. Linda Williams's brother Eric White and his fiancé Robin Taylor both volunteer at the theatre. White works on maintaining the building by making repairs as they are needed. Both Taylor and White have obtained their liquor license so that they can serve patrons before and during the shows. Harvey Williams has two sisters that have undertaken many responsibilities for the MeltingPot and the Just Off Broadway Theatre. His sister Karen Cushenberry helps with the accounting for the Just Off Broadway Theatre, and his other sister Sharon Hunt contributes by being a part of the planning for events and shows.

The members of the KC MeltingPot Theatre Company have also looked to friends for support. Jacqueline Gafford and Frances Farah, two women who are well-known in the Kansas City Theatre community have become mentors to Harvey and Linda Williams. They are long-time producers, but had to take a break due to Gafford's health issues. When Harvey Williams wanted to produce *Old School Ghetto Gospel* he asked Gafford to direct and Farah to stage manage; they were eager to assist. They have helped with stage managing, directing, even running the concessions for shows. Gafford and Farah have been vital to the MeltingPot through their connections with other theatre artists in Kansas City as well. The Williamses ask them for opinions and advice, and both women are always supportive. MeltingPot is going to reciprocate as they bring back their theatre company Inplay (Williams, Linda, Interview, April 2, 2015).

Another valuable member of the MeltingPot company is Gerome Berry. Berry is the co-owner of InformaQueue along with David Brown. Berry was brought in when the MeltingPot was putting together their logo. Berry is a graphic artist and he was able to create a logo that represents the KC MeltingPot Theatre Company. Brown and Berry, through InformaQueue, have produced the promotional materials for MeltingPot. They have overseen the MeltingPot's social media presence. InformaQueue documents the productions and events of the MeltingPot through video and photography. Berry has also designed the cover art for most of the MeltingPot's playbills.

While putting together the foundation for The MeltingPot Harvey Williams discovered that there were people out there who wanted to be involved, people who had talents in all different areas. There were actors and designers, but there were also those who had a talent for promotions and management. Williams found that the hook to getting a true commitment from these individuals was to find what their desires and drives were and to place them in an area they were most passionate about. Even if making popcorn for the concession stand was the passion, Harvey had opportunities available for everyone (Williams and Brown, Interview, December 10, 2013).

CHAPTER 3

THE PRODUCTIONS

Old School Ghetto Gospel

Preview: January 31, 2013

Show Run: February 1, 2013 – February 17, 2013

Old School Ghetto Gospel was written by Harvey Williams and was the inaugural production for the KC MeltingPot theatre. Williams had written the play years before and was encouraged by his wife Linda Williams to dust it off and bring it up to date for production. *Old School Ghetto Gospel* had been produced once before as a one-time showing at The Gem Theatre in Kansas City, Missouri. It had been well received then and seemed like a fitting play for the time and social climate in 2013. Williams wrote the play based on issues he had seen growing up: families struggling financially and young men turning to a life of crime on the streets to support their families (Williams, Harvey, Interview, February 26, 2015).

The run of The MeltingPot's production coincidentally fell in February – Black History month – and featured a black cast. The play deals with the frustration of feeling hopelessly trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and crime while holding on to hope for the future of family.

Old School Ghetto Gospel opens with Duce (Tim Burks) and Leslie (Linnaia McKenzie) arguing about child support. Unmarried with a child, neither parent has been able to find a stable job that pays enough for them to raise a family. Duce has turned to selling drugs to support them. Duce is aggravated that the child support agency is investigating him and he blames Leslie for it; she just wants what is best for their child.

In what seems like a desperate selfish move, Duce asks Leslie to marry him, admitting that if they were married he wouldn't have to deal with the child support agency.

Leslie's silence triggers Duce's exasperation. He has asked her to marry him before, but she has always turned him down. Leslie would love to be Duce's wife, but she is terrified of becoming his widow. She knows how dangerous the streets are for him and she just cannot become his wife knowing that it might be temporary. Their tempers boil over and Duce leaves Leslie alone as the scene ends.

In the next scene we are introduced to Old School (Harvey Williams) as he sets up his street corner where he spends his days preaching his street gospel. Old School is the neighborhood sage, often giving unwanted advice to the people who pass by him. Old School is always seen with his drink in hand, a bottle wrapped in a brown paper bag. The residents have gotten used to Old School and his rambling, but they still stop from time to time to chat with the old man.

As Old School is mumbling to himself, Duce walks by. They engage in a conversation about Duce's future and what he should be doing to be an example for his son. Duce complains that hustling is the only way to provide for his family but Old School argues that this path is only going to lead to an early grave. Fed up with the old man's warnings, Duce leaves Old School to his rambling.

After Duce leaves, Old School has a conversation with an off-stage young man before Leslie enters. Old School asks Leslie about her life and if she's still on "that" welfare. He suggests she go to school. He is pushing her buttons. Leslie gets worked up and unloads on Old School about how difficult and degrading it is to be on welfare, but

how she can't afford not to be. Old School is flustered but he is trying to be understanding and supportive. He tells her to never stop dreaming. Leslie walks away angry and defeated by the circumstances of her life.

After Leslie leaves, Detective Martin (George Forbes) enters and Old School quickly reminds him of their bet. Detective Martin owes Old School two dollars because a young man was shot the night before only a few blocks from where they are now. Old School had bet that someone in the neighborhood would stop a bullet before the day was done. They have been making similar bets for a while now, but Detective Martin always loses. Detective Martin seems a bit indifferent about the whole thing but it is a defense mechanism against the gruesome crimes he sees on a daily basis. He has been working in this neighborhood for eighteen years and he has seen so much violence in that time that he has to do something to help him cope.

Detective Martin tells Old School about his first week on the job. He was so enthusiastic in those days because he wanted to serve and protect the people. He was excited about his new partner, a fifteen-year veteran on the force, who he thought could teach him a thing or two. In his first week Detective Martin's partner tells him the dos and don'ts of the job. The don'ts all relate to the "white" neighborhoods; don't walk on the flowers, don't shine lights into the houses, don't talk too loud. The dos are for the "black" neighborhood – the "hood" – do call for back up, do flood the area with lights, do have your firearm in hand, do pull the trigger. His partner was racist, but his partner was also black. It is a hard reality for Detective Martin to accept. Old School and

Detective Martin continue to talk and joke, but their conversation is cut short. Detective Martin has received word of another shooting six blocks away.

When the lights come up again, the action has moved to a local police station where Leslie is talking with Ms. Stone (Lynn King), Duce's parole officer. Duce has been wounded in a shooting and a friend of his has been killed. Ms. Stone is hoping to get some information from Leslie about the possible motive for the shooting. Leslie claims she doesn't know. Ms. Stone is not convinced. She notices that Leslie seems more annoyed than upset by the news about Duce and questions her. Leslie explains that she has been to more than her share of funerals and she knows that Duce's time is coming. It is not a matter of if he will be killed, it's when. Leslie explains that it would almost be easier if Duce was dead because she wouldn't be in constant fear of the phone call that will bring news of his death. If Duce were dead then Leslie could finally be at peace. Ms. Stone is sympathetic, but she wants what is best for Duce and his family. She has hope even if Leslie doesn't.

In the next scene Duce is being questioned by Detective Martin about the shooting. Detective Martin tries several tactics to get Duce to tell him who shot him. Duce maintains he doesn't know. Detective Martin is determined to end this cycle of violence, but Duce will not cooperate. Leslie and Ms. Stone enter as Detective Martin continues to interrogate Duce. As a last resort Detective Martin implies that Duce set up his friend in the shooting. This triggers a violent response from Duce and they wrestle to the floor. Detective Martin stops just short of punching Duce. He pulls him to his feet and sends him home.

After Leslie and Duce leave, Ms. Stone scolds Detective Martin for his rash behavior. They argue about how to handle the situation with Duce and discuss the harshness of their profession. As they talk, the conversation shifts to their personal lives. They both admit that their jobs have kept them from building personal relationships. They begin to feel a connection and are starting to see each other in a new light when Leslie and Duce burst in, followed by Old School who brandishes a gun. Everyone is shocked and confused as the lights go out for intermission.

When the lights come up, the action resumes. Old School holds everyone hostage because he has something he needs to get off of his chest. The situation with Duce has brought up issues from the past that Old School needs to deal with. He has come to the police station on a mission. He sermonizes about being born a man, equal to all other men at birth. Born with one brain that has free will to choose, one heart beating for better or worse and one dick to spread the seed of what the brain and heart produce. That is what he believed made a whole man. Old School speaks to Duce, man to man while the others listen. Old School understands the situation Duce is in, but he wants Duce to make a better choice than he did.

It is revealed through Detective Martin that Old School is actually Dwayne McGill. He had lived in the neighborhood before it became overrun with crime and violence. Old School was a victim of the violence years before when his wife and son were killed in a drive-by shooting. He and his three year old daughter survived. Old School knew who had done it, but he told the police he could not identify the men. Two weeks after the murder of most of his family, Old School got his revenge. He shot the

men involved in the crime; one bullet to the brain, one bullet to the heart and one bullet to the groin of each of the three men. He said he wanted to kill the whole man. He turned himself in to the police and gave up custody of his daughter because he believed she would be better off without him. When Detective Martin finishes telling them about Old School, Leslie speaks up. She knows Old School's story because it is her story too. She is Old School's daughter.

Leslie has had enough of this fiasco. She wants to leave, but Ms. Stone stops her. She needs to hear Old School out and understand why he is doing all of this. He realizes that he made a huge mistake all those years ago and he does not want to see Duce do the same thing. He asks Duce to be the man he should have been, because a man puts family first, above all else. Old School is not looking for forgiveness or redemption, he just wants to protect what is left of his family. He wants to be a father for Leslie and keep Duce alive to be a father to his grandson.

As Old School and Leslie begin to make peace with their past Detective Martin gets the gun from Old School. He discovers that it was a fake gun, a prop, the whole time. Detective Martin puts Old School in handcuffs, determined to arrest him. He confiscates the bottle in his pocket, hoping to get him on some kind of drunkenness charge, but he discovers that the bottle was only lemonade – Me Time Lemonade. Old School admits that he hasn't had a drink of alcohol in years. Detective Martin is frustrated and embarrassed but he lets Old School go.

Inspired by Old School, Duce agrees to come in and talk with Detective Martin the next day about the shooting. He also agrees to do what is best for his son and his

future wife and give up his dangerous lifestyle. Old School offers to give his home to Duce and Leslie so they can start their family together. Encouraged by the positive events of the evening, Detective Martin ask Ms. Stone to dinner and she agrees. The plans are in place for an optimistic future for everyone involved. Ms. Stone, Duce, and Leslie head for the door and leave Detective Martin and Old School alone for one final conversation. Old School looks at his watch and realizes that it's after midnight. He pulls out two dollars and hands it to the detective. He's won the bet this time, no one was killed in the past twenty-four hours.

This production included a unique feature. Between scenes two men dressed in suits come out to recite poetry. The Recipe – formed by Theodore “Priest” Hughes and Desmon “3-3-7” Jones – are a duo of spoken-word artist. The words from these two men flow with a powerful rhythm. Their words flood the room with emotions: anger and joy, frustration and hope. They preach a gospel of how to be men, to be strong and brave, to stand up to discrimination and to stand out as leaders. Their pieces, interspersed between the scenes in the play put a period on it. The play is the main course and these words are the dessert. They tie the message of the play together reiterating the points the playwright has made. Similar to a Greek chorus, perhaps they are the ghetto chorus, defining what is important to the audience, helping to bring the message in to clearer focus.

The Session

Preview: August 22, 2013

Show Run: August 23, 2013 – September 8, 2013

The second production from The KC MeltingPot theatre is also a second look at Harvey Williams as a playwright. After his first endeavor with *Old School Ghetto Gospel*, Williams took to the page again to write *The Session*. Although it was not exactly a response to *Old School Ghetto Gospel*, it was Williams's goal to write a piece that focused on women since *Old School Ghetto Gospel* had more to do with men.

“Honestly, after I did ‘Old School,’ I felt like that was a play with a male theme to it, and I wanted to come back with something different,” he said. “So I wanted it to involve women. ... It’s a platform to get a group of women from different backgrounds together” (Trussell, “Women,” 21).

Drawing on their mission to produce works that are representative of the varied ethnic communities in Kansas City, Williams places five women from contrasting backgrounds into a court-ordered anger-management session. “The goal of the show is quite clear: to present five characters who seem easy to understand on the surface while trying to show the unexpected layers underneath” (Adams, 12). Each woman has her own reasons for being there, but what is soon obvious is that they really aren’t that different deep down. Lynn King plays Ms. Davis, an angry black woman, frustrated by the role black women are assigned in society. Vanessa Harper is Beth, a white woman who is bitter from being thought of as “trailer trash”. Nicole Santorella plays Cynthia, a Hispanic woman who is disillusioned by her “foreigner” status. Alexandria Washington is Reatha, an aggressive young woman of color who has become all too familiar with

isolation. The cast was rounded out by veteran actress Marilyn Lynch who portrayed Ms. Hunter, the distracted facilitator of the group.

Throughout the course of the play the women reveal what has brought them to this place and why they are so angry. According to Williams “What transpires is something that none of them were expecting, so it really turns into a session about what some people are perceiving as anger, but in most cases it turns out to be a case of them just being in pain. And anger is how they cover it up” (Trussell, “Women,” 21). By the end of the play the women must come together to cope with an unexpected turn of events as we discover that Ms. Hunter, the group’s leader, is not what she seems.

The script for this play was derived from the experiences the playwright, Williams, had while working as a juvenile court officer. “‘We used to do some things called family sessions, which as the court officer I had to run,’ he said. ‘And there was always a part of it where they would tell us or explain that sometimes, even in family situation, you get into some deep anger issues. Nine times out of ten what was behind it all was that someone was in a certain amount of pain or confusion. I think it’s more pain management than anger management’” (Trussell, “Women,” 21). Williams establishes the pain these women are facing through monologues each character has during the play. Williams confronts some difficult issues but manages to bring humanity to the characters in the process.

“Beyond the play itself, the production is seasoned by two local poets — Mz Angela Roux and Cheri Woods — who perform at the beginning of each act. Woods’ material, most of which she sings a cappella in what can be called an Americana style,

exhibits clever wordplay. Roux is a charismatic performer who demonstrates such an impressive emotional range with her verse that she could easily take her place among Williams ' characters and fit right in" (Trussell, "Humor," D3).

JFK: A Ghostly Evening

Preview: November 21, 2013

Show Run: November 22, 2013 – December 1, 2013

The third production for The MeltingPot KC Theatre Company was in association with the Westport Center for the Arts. *JFK: A Ghostly Evening*, written by Rev. Scott Myers, premiered on the November 11, 2013, the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. This aptly-timed piece depicted a fictional encounter between two prominent leaders in our nation's history: John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. The play focuses on an evening at the White House where JFK and his wife are hosting a dinner with the Kings. Throughout the play the audience is privy to private conversations between the men, the women and each couple. These conversations help to present these historic icons with some humanity and empathy that is often forgotten in the pages of history. In an interview with Don Dagenais of *KCMetropolis.org*, Kansas City's Online Journal of the Arts, Myers stated "We often learn more from art about a key person or event or time in history than from actual history books" (Dagenais). Taking his vision to the stage allowed Myers the freedom to explore the emotions, fears and internal struggles these real-life people must have faced. Without the burden of historical accuracy, Myers is able to dramatize an event that didn't actually take place, but certainly could have.

The play opens as Granvile O'Neal steps on stage to read a newspaper article written by Bruce R. Watkins, the first African-American elected to the Kansas City Council. Watkins's words are a tribute to the slain president. It is a heartfelt and solemn passage that reminds the audience of the tragic incident that occurred fifty years earlier. The events in the play take place on an early fall evening mere months before the assassination of JFK. John F. Kennedy (Jordan Fox) and Jacqueline Kennedy (Sabrina 'Brie' Henderson) chat with the Kings over coffee. As the evening progresses, Martin Luther King, Jr. (Jerron O'Neal) and Coretta Scott King (Lynn King) express their concerns about the growing danger in the South. Tension rises between King and Kennedy as Kennedy encourages King to rid himself of two associates who are being vilified by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI. King fears he is being monitored by Hoover, but Kennedy assures him he is keeping the FBI at bay. While the men are talking, Coretta and Jacqueline tour the White House and discuss their families and their husbands. Coretta conveys her sympathy to Jacqueline for the recent loss of her child. Knowing there are difficult times to come, both women speak of their fears concerning their husbands' health and safety. They share a solidarity that comes from having a husband in a powerful position. The Kennedys and Kings part for the evening and reunite with their spouses. The Kennedys share an intimate moment during which they grieve over the recent loss of their baby. The Kings discuss the future of their family as they continue the dangerous fight for civil rights. While the conversations between the Kennedys and the Kings are intense, the most compelling drama in the play comes in a conversation between John F. Kennedy and the ghost of slain civil rights activist Medgar Evers (Tim

Burks). Evers's ghost appears to Kennedy while he is alone in his office. Kennedy expresses his regret over Evers's murder, but Evers truly wants Kennedy to see how important his involvement with the civil right movement is. Evers pressures Kennedy to take a more purposeful stand in the fight for equality, but also warns him that tragedy is looming. The exchanges between Evers and Kennedy are sincere and powerful. Scattered between the face-to-face interactions are a few telephone conversations between the president and Bobby Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and J. Edgar Hoover. These three men are portrayed by Ben Husmann, who skillfully transitions between characters. The play ends with the song *Abraham, Martin and John*, written in 1968 by Dick Holler, being played as a spotlight shines on the characters of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy. It is a haunting reminder of the price these leaders paid for progress. "In reality, of course, every character on stage is a ghost. They live on in our collective memory as icons, as monumental figures who forced and attempted real change. That's the source of the play's power" (Trussell, "What if?").

JFK: A Ghostly Evening was co-directed by Jacqueline Gafford and Harvey Williams. Williams and Gafford had to work with the cast to bring to life these iconic figures, many of whom were dead before most of the cast were even born. According to Williams, the cast members immersed themselves in research to connect the audience with the people who lived through these difficult experiences (Trussell, "Play asks," 21,23). The lighting and set designer, Warren Deckert, divided the stage into three parts. Stage right was Kennedy's office, stage left was a non-specific location where Husmann

performed, and center stage changed throughout the play to represent different rooms in the White House.

The Frowning Vajayjays of Shady Pines

Preview: March 20, 2014

Show Run: March 21, 2014 – April 6, 2014

The first play in the first full season for The KC MeltingPot Theatre is a dramatic comedy written by award-winning playwright Vicki Vodrey. *The Frowning Vajayjays of Shady Pines* is the first in a series of three plays by female playwrights presented by The KC MeltingPot Theatre. "Vodrey said she intended to produce a shorter version of "Vajayjays" at the fringe fest this year. But Harvey Williams, artistic director of Melting Pot, heard her read the script at a monthly gathering of playwrights at the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre and immediately asked her to forgo the fringe fest and let him produce the play at Just Off Broadway. "... Williams said the play fits perfectly with Melting Pot's mission of depicting people from diverse walks of life in terms of ethnicity, gender and age" (Trussell, "Melting," C18-C19).

The Frowning Vajayjays of Shady Pines featured Nancy Marcy as Marilyn, a quirky older woman with a bad hip; Cindy Siefers as Peggy, friend and roommate to Marilyn, who suffers from emphysema; Petra Allen as Lila an aged Southern belle who is tactlessly racist; and Sherri Roulette-Mosley as Bertie, the new foul-mouthed, black roommate to Lila. Jeff Smith completes the cast as Jeff, the attractive physical therapist who is the subject of some racy conversations among the women.

Vodrey confronts issues of aging, dying and race in this piece set at Shady Pines, a nursing home in the south. As the show opens Lila, Marilyn and Peggy have just come

from the funeral of Lila's former roommate. "They are sad about the passing of their friend and fellow bridge player but the talk is light and sassy, with a sort of 'Golden Girls' style of banter" (Slegman, C3). Enter Bertie, who can play a mean game of Bridge, but who is also black. Marilyn and Peggy know that this is going to be a huge issue for Lila. As is expected, Lila is tolerant of Bertie's presence but doesn't hesitate to stick her foot in her mouth and spew prejudice at nearly every turn. Eventually Bertie and Lila come to terms with their feelings about each other and about the racial stereotypes that have become so ingrained in their minds. The two women "come to the realization – in a Kumbaya, hug-it-out moment – that race and backgrounds are no longer barriers to a friendship" (Slegman, C3). By the end of the play the characters face more loss as one of the four women passes away. Vodrey's script brings to light some legitimate concerns faced by aging individuals, but it also touches on issues faced by all people regardless of age.

White Sangria

Preview: May 1, 2014

Show Run: May 2, 2014 – May 18, 2014

The KC Melting Pot Theatre continued its series of plays by area women with *White Sangria*, a play that seemingly pays homage to the work of Edward Albee. Much like *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Arika Larson's *White Sangria* focuses on two couples who share drinks and conversation in the living room of one of the couples. The first couple, Ben and Marla Bourbina, played by Jonathon Engle and Sabrina 'Brie' Henderson, respectively, have invited Susan Hardin, played by Melody Butler, and John Martin, played by Coleman Crenshaw, into their home for a night. Ben and Marla appear

to be a typical couple who have arguments and inside jokes, but as the night progresses it becomes clear that there is a darker side to this pair. Similar to *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf's* George and Martha, Ben and Marla are good at playing mind games, not only with each other, but with those whom they snare in their trap. Susan and John become tangled in the twisted sport played by Ben and Marla. The indecipherable line between truth and lies told by the hosts creates a most uncomfortable atmosphere for the visitors.

White Sangria, which was originally featured in the 2011 KC Fringe Festival, and won best-selling show in its venue, is the first professional production for Larson.

“Larson said the play began as one scene she wrote in a playwriting workshop hosted by Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre. Playwright Stuart Spencer, who led the workshop, threw out images for the young playwrights to build on” (Trussell, “Playwright,” 22).

Echoes of Octavia

Preview: August 7, 2014

Show Run: August 8, 2014 – August 24, 2014

The final play of the first season at KC MeltingPot Theatre focused on the ambitions of a young black woman. Written by Michelle T. Johnson, *Echoes of Octavia* introduces us to Zora Anderson, graduate student and co-owner of her family's diner. Zora has recently been offered a fellowship at Stanford University which comes with a substantial stipend. This offer comes in the midst of a huge development for her family's business. The diner is to become part of the city's new entertainment district. Zora's father, Roscoe, is pushing her to stay with the diner and help make the transition to a new location and possibly greater wealth. Zora wrestles with the decision to stay or go

throughout the play. Many voices help Zora in her process along the way as each of the other characters in the play has an opinion about Zora's future. "Johnson described 'Echoes of Octavia' as an effort to revisit some of the themes of Lorraine Hansberry's classic 'A Raisin in the Sun,' but with a contemporary twist" (Trussell, "Swiftly," C18-C19).

Actress Aishah Harvey, a student at UMKC, takes on the character of Zora, bringing a wavering confidence to the role. Zora is no doubt a strong character, based on Johnson's writing, but Harvey plays the part with less emotional depth than one might hope for. Granvile T. O'Neal a veteran actor in Kansas City plays Roscoe, Zora's father. O'Neal's portrayal of Roscoe is solid and genuine. O'Neal masterfully brings to light Roscoe's insecurities as he prepares for the new developments of his family business, apprehensive that his daughter might not be around to help him. Sherrie Roulette-Mosley brings a meticulous sincerity to the character of Nelly, a long-time family friend who is also Roscoe's second wife and Zora's step-mother. Zora uses Nelly as a sort of emotional punching-bag throughout much of the play. Zora distrusts Nelly due to the speed at which she married Roscoe after the death of Zora's mother. Roulette-Mosley's skillful performance as the patient Nelly brings the audience around to sympathize with her as she supports Zora through her difficult decision. Another UMKC student, actor Petey McGee portrayed Zora's boyfriend, Milo. McGee's Milo was humorous and likeable, but there were some trepidations from the actor as he struggled to bring intensity to character. The cast was completed with Alisha Espinosa as Jessie, a

spunky, teenaged waitress at the diner, and Donovan McClendon, Zora's academic advisor and supporter of her dreams, Professor Lane.

Waiting To Be Invited

Show Run: January 16, 2015 – January 31, 2015

In January of 2015, The KC MeltingPot Theatre in partnership with Phoenix KC Theatre produced *Waiting To Be Invited* by S.M. Shephard-Massat. The events of *Waiting to Be Invited* take place in Atlanta in 1964 just after the Supreme Court passed the Civil Rights Act. While the playwright doesn't think of it as a "civil rights play," *Waiting To Be Invited* certainly brings to light the people who had the courage to stand up for equality during a time when many were being denied basic freedoms. This production opened just in time for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, a fitting tribute to the leaders and trailblazers who took action in the face of adversity.

Because it was an established play a partnership with Phoenix KC Theatre was created, following a suggestion by director Warren Deckert. Although this play was not a new piece or written by a local playwright –two of the goals of The KC MeltingPot Theatre-- it was certainly "a worthy addition to our city's vibrant arts community" (<http://kcmeltingpot.com/aboutUS.html> 2015). Deckert first saw Shephard-Massat's powerful piece in 2000 at the Denver Center Theatre Company. Impacted by the experience, Deckert felt compelled to bring the show to more viewers. He staged *Waiting To Be Invited* at the Great Bend Community Theatre in Kansas. In 2015 he wanted to bring the play to the Kansas City audience, hence the collaboration between Phoenix and MeltingPot (Trussell, "Courageous," C14).

The co-production included veteran actor and KC MeltingPot founder Harvey Williams along with five talented actresses, both seasoned and new. Experienced actresses, Sherri Roulette-Mosley, Lynn King and Marilyn Lynch gave commanding performances as the older women in the play. Aishah Harvey and Shawna Downing skillfully brought youth and energy to the stage. Together all of these women were a force. The cast's portrayal of Shephard-Massat's characters bring to life the real people who struggled through similar experiences.

Act I begins with three African-American women, Ms. Odessa, Ms. Louise and Ms. Delores (Sherri Roulette-Mosley, Lynn King and Aishah Harvey respectively) in the changing room of the toy factory where they work. Odessa is passionate and outspoken. Louise is more reserved but optimistic. Delores is upbeat and a bit naïve. While changing out of their work clothes, they discuss what lies ahead for them. They are about to embark on a short journey that could have a long effect on their lives. The Supreme Court has just passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which will allow them access to the previously "whites-only" lunch counter at the local department store. The women have been preparing for this day and are now ready to take on the dangers that could come from crossing that line. It is an incredibly hot summer day and the women must take the bus to their destination. The bus driver, Palmeroy Bateman (Harvey Williams), greets them when they board the bus that will take them to Marsh's Department Store. As they dab the sweat from their brows and fan themselves gently, they continue to discuss their apprehension. Palmeroy interjects with his thoughts on the situation. He has clearly seen a lot in his days and worries that the women are taking an unnecessary

risk simply to prove a point. The women are clearly familiar with Palmeroy, but refuse to heed his warnings. They are determined to take a stand that day. As the bus makes its way down town, Ms. Grayson (Marilyn Lynch) boards the bus. She is an older white woman who is the widow of a Methodist minister. At first Ms. Grayson seems a bit oblivious to the uneasiness mounting on the bus as she chatters away about trivial issues. Before she leaves the bus Ms. Grayson weighs in. She tells a story from her childhood that shows her solidarity with the women. Ms. Grayson is subtly supportive, but clearly concerned for the safety of the women. Act I ends with the women standing outside of Marsh's Department Store, ready to make their mark on history.

Act II begins with the three women still outside the store. They are hesitant to enter the store, aware that the consequences may outweigh what they will gain. They are joined by Ms. Ruth (Shawna Downing), who only adds to their anxiety. Ms. Ruth is a preacher's wife with a questionable past. She has made mistakes, but she has turned things around and fears that making this social statement could hurt her or her husband. The other women encourage her to be a leader for the community and take a stand. The women argue and vacillate back and forth between going in or staying out. In the end the audience does not see the women enter the store, but they stand at the entrance, poised to enter the future with bravery and purpose.

Truth Stands

Show Run: February 6, 2015 – February 21, 2015

The February 2015 production at the Just Off Broadway theatre, produced by the KC MeltingPot Theatre Company, is a family drama centered upon the concept of Hip-Hop music and style. *Truth Stands*, written by area playwright Cynthia

Hardeman, is a touching story of a family that has been divided, but finds each other again through a shared passion for music. The characters face many struggles and there are some heavy themes throughout the play, but Hardeman manages to handle them with style and skill.

The stage for *Truth Stands* is split into three scenes. Stage right is the home of JD and Popz, stage left, the home of Junebug and Momz, and center stage is the corner where Junebug recites his lyrics for money. The sets, designed by Warren Deckert, paint a picture of the lives the characters live. JD and Popz live in a modest, but well maintained home. The walls are decorated with CD covers, and instruments are placed around the room to establish JD's passion for music. The audience is made aware of Junebug and Momz's poverty by the dilapidated conditions of their home. The furniture is bare and worn, and the walls of their home are falling down. The one notable piece in the room is a small stereo where the favorite music of Junebug and Momz is played. Junebug's corner is shown to be a pretty sketchy environment. There are boarded-up windows plastered with posters for nightclubs and music venues. It is revealed that Junebug works his beats outside a strip club run by a dangerous character. Warren Deckert's designs skillfully establish the atmosphere these characters endure.

Situated in Deckert's vivid settings, the play has Cynthia Hardeman's complex characters right at home. Junebug is a teen who has been dealt blow after blow in his short life. Faced with a drug-addict mother and an absent father, Junebug has had to provide for himself and his mother. He raps on a street for money to help support his mother's drug habit. His mother, Momz, has had a difficult life as well. Before Junebug

was born she had a husband and a son who loved her deeply, but her husband could not cope with her drug abuse. He left her -- unaware that she was expecting their second child -- and took their son to try to give him a better life. Pregnant and alone, Momz was left to raise Junebug while battling her addiction. Far from the painful lives of Junebug and Momz, both in distance and in experience, live JD and Popz. JD is a college student studying to get his law degree at the insistence of his father who wants the very best for him. JD has grown up without his mother. Popz has provided a pleasant life for JD, working hard to give him all that he can. Popz has instilled a love of music in JD but refuses to see JD's passion for it as more than just a hobby.

The play opens on the street corner where Junebug, played by Shawna Downing, is "spiting" truth in a rap/lyrical poetry style. Junebug is talented; his words ring true to the life he has lived. On this night JD, played by Petey McGee, happens to be in the area and hears Junebug's words. Surprised by the abilities of Junebug, JD stops to listen. They strike up a conversation and JD encourages Junebug to get off the streets and focus on school; Junebug refuses. JD offers Junebug a sampling of his own music, and leaves before Junebug can reject it. JD returns home excited about what he has heard. He tells his father, Popz, played by John (Br. John) Anderson, his news about the talented Junebug. Popz is unimpressed and reveals that he can recite the same words as Junebug without having ever met him. Popz claims he wrote those words years ago. JD is furious; he feels deceived and soon confronts Junebug about his stolen lyrics. They argue over the origins of the words and come to the conclusion that they are actually related; they are brothers and the lyrics have come from their parents. Both young men, angered by

the revelation -- Junebug believing his father was dead, and JD believing his mother was -- have just had their worlds flipped upside down.

Popz has a disappointing encounter with Momz as he tries to apologize for abandoning her and Junebug. Momz, played by Sherri Roulette-Mosley, is high when Popz arrives and originally mistakes him for a John. Popz is appalled to discover that Momz has been supporting her habit through prostitution. They argue, but through it all Popz realizes how much he still loves her. He leaves her some money and takes off again, but this time he vows to help her and Junebug get their lives on track.

Frustrated, but hopeful the two young men begin to build a relationship and a business partnership around their passion for music. Junebug is reluctant to give his father a chance, refusing to believe that Popz didn't know that he existed. JD is hopeful that he can establish a relationship with the mother he thought was dead. As things begin to look like they are going to work out for the characters, tragedy strikes. Weak and tired of fighting her addiction, Momz overdoses on heroin. Junebug discovers her and tries desperately to save his mother. Popz and JD arrive too late, Momz is gone.

After Momz's death, Popz offers Junebug a home with him and JD. Reluctantly Junebug begins to build his trust of his newly acquired family. JD and Junebug work to create a demo record using Junebug's lyrics and JD's beats. Popz shows a real interest in Junebug and his talents. JD is jealous of Popz's belief in Junebug's abilities. JD feels slighted that his father has never fostered his dreams of being a musician even after instilling in him such a passion for music. After walking in on JD recording his own lyrics, Junebug feels like he is being lied to and that JD doesn't want him around after all. He

runs off to his old home where he contemplates using his mother's heroin. Popz and JD find him and stop him from making a terrible choice. Seeing the love that JD and Popz have for him, Junebug decides to reveal his biggest truth. Junebug strips off his baggy outer clothing to reveal that he is in fact a young woman. Junebug has been pretending to be a boy all his life because Momz thought he would be safer that way. She believed that Junebug stood a better chance as a man, who was street tough, than as a woman who could be used and mistreated by the world around her. Popz and JD are shocked, but are thrilled that Junebug feels like she can finally be free to be herself with them.

The Taste Test

Show Run: June 12, 2015 – June 27, 2015

On the surface, *The Taste Test* by Frank Higgins is a play about three women working for a leading cola company. These women must navigate through a major marketing debacle that seems all too familiar to those of us who lived through the 1985 "New Coke" fiasco. The company they are working for, King Cola, has come up with a plan to try to win back their standings in the cola market. King Cola has been covertly conducting blind taste tests of a new formula. The research has indicated that study participants preferred the new product over the old and over the leading competitor's. Higgins explores what might have played out between these three powerful women as they face the backlash of introducing this new product.

"New King" is a resounding failure. Customers are outraged that they can no longer get the original King Cola that they know and love. The three women work furiously to come up with a solution to appease the masses. Their loyalty and

relationships come into question over the entire affair. Was the whole plan a maneuver by Mary to help her reach the top, to dethrone Clair from the top of the heap? Was it all just a ploy to get customers to realize how much they liked the original King Cola in the first place?

Two women Mary (Laura Jacobs) and Jewel (Chioma Anyanwu) have been friends since they were roommates in college. The play opens on these women celebrating their forthcoming graduation the next day. Both women appear to be motivated strong women. Jewel dreams of having a successful career as a writer while Mary is more interested in being a successful business woman.

In the next scene we see that some time has passed and Jewel is preparing for an important interview with the CEO of a powerful Cola company, King Cola. Her friend Mary works directly under Clair (Marilyn Lynch) and has helped to make this interview possible. The cola company is looking to launch a very secretive campaign in order to pull ahead of their leading competitor. Clair and Mary have enlisted the help of Jewel to create a media blitz to spread the word about "New King". Jewel understands people and can help king cola in their race to be the top cola company.

When Jewel and Mary being working together, it seems like an exciting possibility. They have been long time friends and now they have the chance to work closely together on a special project. Mary's boss is tough but she knows her stuff and has the potential to give Jewel and Mary a leg up in the business world. The women have to rely on each other to make it through this monumental upheaval of a trusted product. Clair must put her faith and trust in Jewel and Mary, but should she? Jewel is

known for her honesty. Clair tests her in her interview to see if she can be trusted, she passes. The same may not be true for Mary. She is number two and might be playing Clair in an attempt to take over as CEO of King Cola. Mary knows that if Clair's plan fails she can swoop in and pick up the pieces and be the hero.

Jewel has to determine where her loyalties lie. Does she follow her long-time friend even if it means she might have to compromise her ethics or does she stand by who she is, an honest person? When the new product flops, people are outraged that King Cola would change their product after all these years. Sales drop even further as the public protests the change. Something has to happen, Clair still believes in the new product but can't continue to stand behind it in the face of all the backlash. Mary keeps pushing Clair to stick with the plan but Jewel tells her it's a bad idea. Jewel doesn't know if Mary has done this all on purpose knowing it would fail or if she is just part of the biggest corporate blunder of our time. Jewel is caught in the middle and frustrated by the dilemma in which she finds herself.

Old School

Show Run: August 14, 2011 – August 29, 2014

In August of 2015 The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company offered new audiences a chance to see a revival of their inaugural production, *Old School Ghetto Gospel*. For many (including myself) this was an exciting opportunity. In 2013 when the MeltingPot launched their new company they relied heavily on word of mouth to gain new audience members. Word spread quickly, but still many were not able to attend this first production. Some only discovered the MeltingPot after the show had wrapped. This

revival was also a chance for the MeltingPot to show how they have grown since their first production.

The timing for the *Old School Ghetto Gospel* revival was significant to the playwright Harvey Williams. He had been watching the social climate of our nation begin to change. In the wake of several incidents involving young people of color losing their lives at the hands of law enforcement and vigilante neighborhood watchmen, Williams decided it was the right time to update and revive his story. Williams made adjustments to the script that acknowledged the current events and the need for change, not only by law enforcement, but by all those who use violence as a means to solve differences. The message in this play is clear, the cycle of violence and crime needs to end somewhere and it might as well start with this generation.

Numerous changes were made for the revival of *Old School Ghetto Gospel*. The first notable change was in the title. Williams shortened his original title to *Old School* for the revival. Another prominent change was to the set. In the original production the set was incredibly basic. The original set had only a simple wall and a few functional pieces of furniture. In the revival the set remained simple but was given details that really helped to set the scene for the audience, creating a clearer picture of the environment the characters were living in.

This production of *Old School* also featured The Recipe – a duo of spoken word artists, Theodore “Priest” Hughes and Desmon “3-3-7” Jones –as performers between scenes of the play and as part of the cast. The addition of Priest and 3-3-7 to the cast of the show added to the ambiance, giving insight into the environment of the

play. Their banter with Old School and Duce revealed more about the characters. The witty jokes also added to the humor of the play which kept it light when it needed to be. The truth behind the humor helped to send subtle messages about bigger issues faced by many who live in similar circumstances as the characters in the play.

The 2015 production of *Old School* featured an entirely new cast. In the original production (which I was fortunate enough to see on video since I had missed the original run of the show) Harvey Williams portrayed the title character, Old School. His performance had been dynamic, humorous, and endearing. I was uncertain that another actor could capture the essence of Old School so thoroughly. Granville T. O'Neal, the actor who portrayed Old School in the revival, was able to capture the essence of Old School, while still making the character his own. O'Neal played Old School with a moving sincerity that charmed the audience.

The inclusion of Petey McGee as Duce and Aishah Ogbeh (formerly Aishah Harvey) as Leslie to the new cast added a gratifying dynamic to the play. McGee and Ogbeh have performed together before for the MeltingPot and their interaction is always entertaining. They have a powerful chemistry on stage that brings light and depth to the characters they portray. McGee's portrayal of Duce was powerful and confident. McGee's skill as an actor revealed Duce to be a much more complex character than was evident in the original production of *Old School Ghetto Gospel*. Ogbeh's interpretation of Leslie also revealed a more complicated individual. Ogbeh gave Leslie so much heart and intensity, that the audience was captivated by her performance.

Arthur R. Newton III and Victoria Barbee completed the cast as Detective Martin and Ms. Stone, respectively. Newton gave Detective Martin the more weathered feel of a detective who had been on the force a long time. Newton played the character a bit more abrasively than in the original production making him rather less genial. Barbee's portrayal of Ms. Stone was considerably gentler with the other characters. She interpreted Ms. Stone to be more vulnerable and slightly weaker than the portrayal of the same character in the original production.

Harvey Williams came out to speak with the audience prior to the show. His message was that he hoped we all could see ourselves in the characters, to look at the story and the struggles and see how we are all alike and face similar battles in our lives. Williams's play revolves around a cast of black characters, but many of the issues they face could belong to anyone. Deep down this is a play about a broken family that finds a way to begin healing; something anyone can relate to.

Conclusion

Although KC MeltingPot Theatre began as vehicle to present the work of veteran actor and aspiring playwright, Harvey Williams, what emerged was an outlet for local artists to showcase their talents. Through KC MeltingPot Theatre, playwrights, actors and designers alike have the opportunity to share their gifts with the community that they call home. Kansas City is home to many talented theatre artists. Harvey Williams recognizes that and has decided it is time to give them a venue to exhibit their work.

While there are many opportunities for theatre artists in Kansas City, it is not uncommon for local theatres to reach beyond their own community for designers, actors and playwrights. Williams feels there are plenty of gifted artists right here in Kansas City and that those artists should be working in the community where they live. Williams also understands the importance of showcasing new work. Kansas City has a large number of skillful playwrights who are in need of a space to debut their work. KC MeltingPot Theatre is giving opportunities to playwrights who otherwise might not be able to get their plays produced.

The productions of new works by The MeltingPot is one way they have met their goal of encouraging diversity on and off the stage. These original works by playwrights of varied backgrounds feature casts with a wide range of cultural experiences. The advantage of a new work is that the audience cannot make a decision about the play without seeing it. Williams understands this and uses that novelty to keep audiences coming back. If audience members want to know who they will see on stage they must go see the show. The MeltingPot audience members that return for each new show

have come to understand that regardless of what the cast looks like, they can relate to the experiences the characters have on stage.

From their first meeting over a Jimmy John's sandwich served on a real plate, to their Wang Dang Doodles, The KC MeltingPot Theatre Company has come a long way in carving out their niche in the Kansas City theatre community.

PRODUCTION LIST CAST AND CREW

Old School Ghetto Gospel

Preview: January 31, 2013

Show Run: February 1, 2013 – February 17, 2013

Playwright: Harvey Williams

Director: Jacqueline L. Gafford

Stage Manager: Frances Farah

Lighting Design: Gregory Casparian

Set Designer: Tyler Miller, Tymeworks

Cast:

Lynn King – Ms. Stone

Linnaia McKenzie – Leslie

Tim Burks – Duce

George Forbes – Detective Martin

Harvey Williams – Old School

The Recipe:

Theodore “Priest” Hughes

Desmond “3-3-7” Jones

The Session

Preview: August 22, 2013

Show Run: August 23, 2013 – September 8, 2013

Playwright: Harvey Williams

Director: Harvey Williams

Stage Manager: Neil Andes

Technical Director/Lighting Design: Warren Deckert

Set Assistant, Tymeworks: Tyler Miller

Cast:

Marilyn Lynch – Ms. Hunter

Lynn King – Ms. Davis

Nicole Santorella – Cynthia

Alexandria Washington – Reatha

Vanessa Harper – Beth

Better Angels:

Mz Angela Roux

Cheri Woods

JFK – A Ghostly Evening

Preview: November 21, 2013

Show Run: November 22, 2013 – December 1, 2013

Playwright: Scott Myers

Co-Director: Jacqueline L. Gafford

Co-Director: Harvey Williams

Stage Manager: Neil Andes

Technical Director/Set & Lighting Design: Warren Deckert

Costume Designer & Properties Coordinator: Nicole Sukolics-Christianson

Cast:

Jordan Fox – John F. Kennedy

Sabrina 'Brie' Henderson – Jacqueline Kennedy

Jerron O'Neal – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Lynn King – Coretta Scott King

Tim Burks – Medgar Evers, A Ghost

Ben Husmann – Bobby Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, J. Edgar Hoover

Granville O'Neal – A friend of Kansas City council member Bruce R. Watkins

White Sangria

Preview: May 1, 2014

Show Run: May 2, 2014 – May 18, 2014

Playwright: Arika Larson

Director: Harvey Williams

Production Stage Manager: Melissa E. Koerner

Relief Stage Manager: Danelle Drury

Technical Director/Set & Lighting Design: Warren Deckert

Cast:

Jonathon Engle – Ben Bourbina

Sabrina 'Brie' Henderson – Marla Bourbina

Melody Butler – Susan Hardin

Coleman Crenshaw – John Martin

The Frowning Vajajays of Shady Pines

Preview: March 20, 2014

Show Run: March 21, 2014 – April 6, 2014

Playwright: Vicki Vodrey

Director: Harvey Williams

Assistant Director: Michelle T. Johnson

Stage Manager: Melissa E. Koerner

Technical Director/Lighting Design: Warren Deckert

Cast:

Nancy Marcy – Marilyn

Sherri Roulette-Mosley – Bertie

Petra Allen – Lila

Cindy Siefers – Peggy

Jeff Smith – Jeff

Echoes of Octavia

Preview: August 7, 2014

Show Run: August 8, 2014 – August 24, 2014

Playwright: Michelle T. Johnson

Director: Harvey Williams

Assistant Director: Lynn King

Stage Manager: Melissa E. Koerner

Technical Director/Lighting Design: Warren Deckert

Cast:

Aishah Harvey – Zora

Granville T. O’Neal – Roscoe

Sherrie Roulette-Mosley – Nelly

Petey McGee – Milo

Alisha Espinosa – Jessie

Donovan McClendon – Professor Lane

Waiting To Be Invited

Show Run: January 16, 2015 – January 31, 2015

Playwright: S. M. Shephard-Massat

Director/technical director: Warren Deckert

Stage Manager/ Dramaturg: Melissa Koerner-Fritzinger

Costumes/Props: Gary Campbell

Cast:

Sherri Roulette-Mosley – Ms. Odessa

Lynn King – Ms. Louise

Aishah Harvey – Ms. Deloris

Shawna Downing – Ms. Ruth

Marilyn Lynch – Mrs. Grayson

Harvey Williams – Palmeroy Bateman

Truth Stands

Show Run: February 6, 2015 – February 21, 2015

Playwright: Cynthia Hardeman

Director: Jacqueline L. Gafford

Stage Manager: Melissa E. Koerner

Technical Director/Designer: Warren Deckert

Cast:

Shawna Downing – Junebug

Petey McGee – JD

John (Br. John) Anderson – Popz

Sherri Roulette-Mosley – Momz

Victoria Barbee – Momz Understudy

The Taste Test

Show Run: June 12, 2015 – June 27, 2015

Playwright: Frank Higgins

Director/Designer: Warren Deckert

Production Stage Manager: Melissa E. Koerner

Stage Manager: Alex Murphy

Costume Designer: Atif Rome

Cast:

Marilyn Lynch – Clair

Laura Jacobs – Mary

Chioma Anyanwu – Jewel

Old School

Show Run: August 14, 2011 – August 29, 2014

Playwright: Harvey Williams

Director: Harvey Williams

Stage Manager: Matthew Henrickson

Technical Director: Warren Deckert

Sound and Music: Danelle Drury

Musician/Producer/DJ: Dishaun Phillips

Production Assistant, Promotion and Graphics: Cynthia Hardeman

Cast:

Petey McGee – Duce

Aishah Ogbeh – Leslie

Granville T. O’Neal – Old School

Arthur R. Newton III – Detective Martin

Victoria Barbee – Ms. Stone

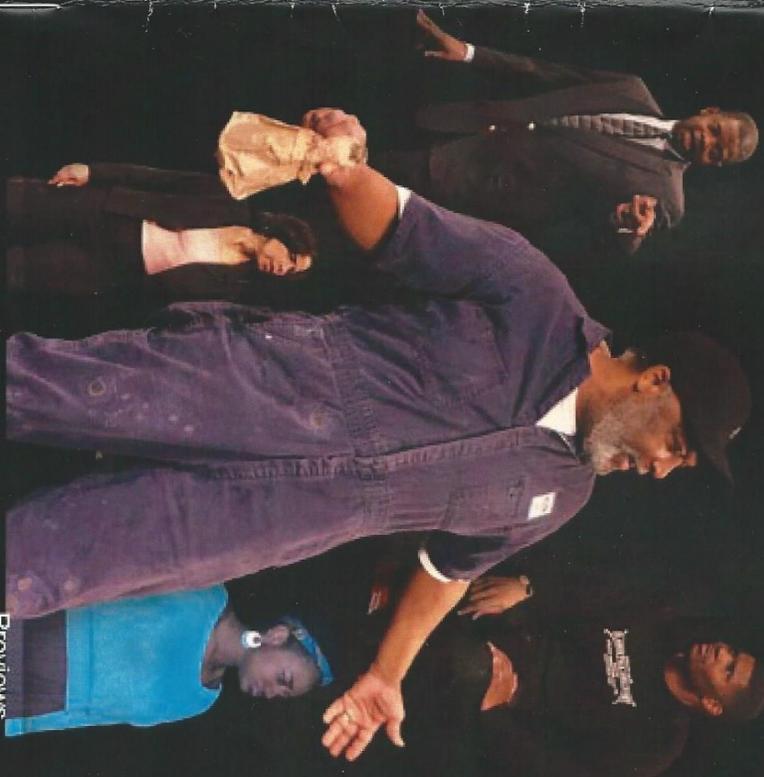
The Recipe:

Theodore “Priest” Hughes

Desmond “3-3-7” Jones

Old School Ghetto Gospel

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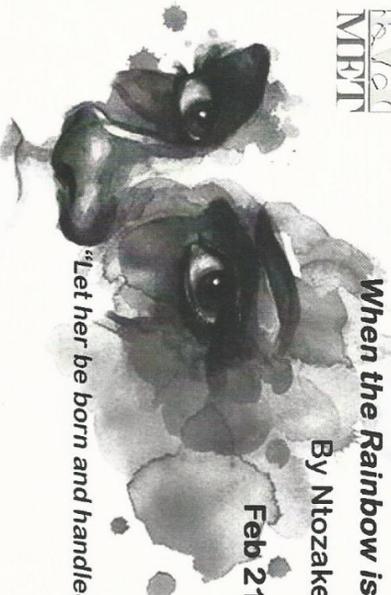
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Our MELTINGPOT represents the blending of individual endeavors for the enrichment of all.

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Old School Ghetto Gospel

One man, one choice, does that choice with its consequence effect the whole of humanity? The choices each of us make, the ripple effect of a pebble tossed into a pond, affecting more than we can possibly imagine. With the benefit of hindsight if we could reset and make a different choice, could we salvage tragedy, misfortune into positive outcomes. Can we rectify? No, life has no such switch that allows us a do over. What life has are lessons that if taught and accepted, may not prevent tragedy and misfortune, but may allow a path to recovery and promise.

This play looks at one man, one choice, while questioning all men and all choices. How do you talk to a man who will not hear, how do you give vision to a man who will not see? One way is to go Ghetto Gospel.

That old man, on that corner, he don't know nothing about nothing, but claims he knows something about everything. Who is he? Who is this man? The comic relief? On that corner every day, bottle in hand, greetin', teachin', preachin'. If he's nothing else, he is a man, obviously a less than an ideal man. Regardless of his measure of worth, like all men he has free will to choose, and even his choices for better or worse, render consequences that affect us all. Those consequences are the life lessons Old School finds himself desperate to teach, and from desperation he has one gospel to stand and deliver. In his own words...

"We all on the corner, we all whores, but there's two kinds of whores, whores that want to be whores, and whores who don't know what they want to be. They the ones get pimped." (OLD SCHOOL)

Please accept this first offering.
Harvey Williams – Playwright

Please visit our website for more information about our company, and upcoming productions. (kmeltingpot.com)

Cast



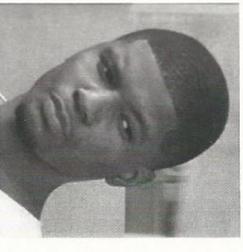
Lynn King

Lynn King (Ms. Stone) is a native of Kansas City and has been performing for more than 20 years. Lynn began working on the professional stage while a MFA graduate student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Lynn appeared in Missouri Repertory Theatre (now the Kansas City Repertory Theatre) productions of *Medea*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Family*, *Can a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Miracle Worker* and the national premiere of *Nicholas Nickleby*. With the Theatre for Young America she has performed in *Africa's Daughters*, *African Tales of Anansi*, *Harriet Tubman*, *Footsteps to Freedom*, and *The Monarchs of KC* to name a few. With the In Play theatre company she has performed in productions of *Harlem Knights*, *Ohello*, *The African Company*, *Presents Richard III*, *Nothing Comes to Sleepers*, *My Monkey Don't Drink Hot Chocolate*, *A Raisin in The Sun* and *Sonn Stories*.



Linnaia McKenzie

Linnaia McKenzie (Leslie) - Local credits: Cotere Theatre, Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre, and the Unicorn Theatre. Linnaia was seen most recently in *The Kentucky Cycle* and as Then in the Kansas City premiere of *Spring Awakening*. Other credits: EPIC Entertainment. Linnaia would like to give all thanks to God for opening the doors of opportunities in Kansas City. She sends lots of love to her Mom, family, and friends. And a huge Thank You to the Melting-PotKC for paving the road for local talent! Colossians 3:23.



Tim Burks

Tim Burks (Duce) has performed in theater companies both locally and statewide. His talent has enabled him to be a part of such productions as, *My Monkey Don't Drink Hot Chocolate*, *The Rainmaker*, and the production of InPlay Theater Companies' *Nothing Comes To Sleepers* both here in Kansas City, as well as Cape Girardeau, MO. In addition, Tim has worked with 38 The Spot on commercial projects. He feels very blessed and fortunate to have been selected to play Duce in this original production of *Old School's Ghetto Gospel* and looks forward to the opportunity to learn as well as continue to grow.



George Forbes

George Forbes (Detective Martin), celebrates 18 years of performing for Kansas City audiences. George has had the opportunity to perform in many of the major theatre venues in and around Kansas City, portraying a range of characters from *Ohello* to *Troy Maxson*. He has had the honor to perform with stars like Al White, Traci Thomas, James McDaniels, as well as the late Yolanda King, in addition to many local veteran actors. His film credits include: *C.S.A. Confederate states of America Lone Elm*, *The only good Indian*, *Next*, *Jake's Forgotten*. Mr. Forbes will soon be seen in the upcoming films: *Destiny Planet Negra*, in which he portrays Dr. George Washington Carver, in a comic turn, and *Jayhawkers*, as the legendary Goose Tatum of the Harlem Globe Trotters. George would like to thank Harvey Williams and his staff for putting together this project and hopefully future collaborations allowing various communities to share their stories their way. George thanks you all for your support.



Harvey Williams

Harvey Williams (Old School) is the founder of KCMELT-INGPOT INC. He has been seen at theatres across Kansas City in productions of *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Rosenkrantz and Guilderstern are Dead*, *Little Tommy Parker*, *The Watsons go to Birmingham*, *Now Let me Fly*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Fences*, *12 Angry Men*, *1940's Radio Hour*, *The African Company presents Richard the III*, *Monkey Don't Drink Hot Chocolate*, *Ohello*, *Journey with Barbara Jordan*. Harvey has toured with Bob Paisley's Central Standard Theatre to Bedford, UK, and the Adelaide Fringe Festival in Adelaide, Australia. He is a member of the Screen Actors' Guild and Actors' Equity. Harvey is the author of *Old School's Ghetto Gospel*.



Theodore 'Priest' Hughes and Desmon '3-3-7' Jones

Theodore "Priest" Hughes and Desmon "3-3-7" Jones, comprise THE RECIPE KC. The duo's dramatic Art-n-Rhythm meshed with Poetic Theatre, has an expanding fan base of all ages. From a Tom Joyner Morning Show performance, to performances in Chicago, San Antonio, and New York City's Times Square. The Recipe is spreading throughout the United States, in addition to web performances that have garnered front page coverage in places as far as Nagasaki, Japan. "Our performances, and c.d.s, cook various tempos, with seasonings of message and harmonies, via Poems, Songs, and Theatre. Not unlike Pink Floyd, we flow by evolving concepts and messaging through our original works. In 16 bars of music blended with critical analysis of the effects that words have on all cultures, that is our mix. We are Artist/Activist, we believe that through spoken word and example, we can make a path toward common goals for the benefit of us all. Our commitment is to truth, our recipe through art. We are THE RECIPE KC." therecipekc@yahoo.com/Check out The Recipe KC at: <http://www.recreation.com/therecipe>



Sherri Roullete-Mosley (Ms. Stone Understudy) is thrilled to be a part of The Melting Pots debut production of Old School's Ghetto Gospel. Sherri has performed on several KC stages for over 20 years, including sharing the stage with Harvey Williams in *The Piano Lesson* and Lynn King in *For Colored Girls* and *Storm Stories*, George Forbes in *Funny First* and recently with Linnina McKenzie in *Kennichy Circle*. She received her Theatre Arts from Grinnell State University and is very grateful whenever she is able to express herself on stage.



Jacqueline L. Gafford (Director) has been an actor, stage manager, playwright and director in Kansas City for over 25 years. She has been a member of Actors Equity for over 20 years. As an actor her work has been seen at New Directions Theatre, Theatre for Young America, The Coterie and The Unicorn. She has also directed at TYA, The Unicorn, UMKC, Rochnurst University, and Lawrence Community Theatre. Ms. Gafford is Artistic Director of Inplay Theatre Company, a not-for-profit multiracial performing arts organization which is an original member of the Just Off Broadway Association. As playwright Ms. Gafford penned the highly successful "Harlem Knights", and "Nothing Comes to Sleepers" and also co-authored along with Gene Mackey, Artistic Director of Theatre For Young America, "The Journey of Barbara Jordan". Ms. Gafford welcomes this opportunity to once again work with old friends and colleagues. Okay let's make magic.

Just Off Broadway Association



Tyler Miller, set designer, Tymeworks I am pleased to be with the debut of KC Melting Pot "Old School Ghetto Gospel" and working with new and old friends.

By profession I am a stagehand and actor. The exciting part about this project is working in JOB where I was an original board member and produced a hand full of productions including *Killer Joe* by Tracy Letts.

Killer Joe



Frances Farrah (Stage Manager) has been working in the Kansas City Area for many years as a Director/Teacher and Stage Manager. She received her BA in Theatre from the Univ. of Iowa, and her MFA in Theatre Direction from UMKC.

Frances has worked with Theatre for Young America as a Director for Don Quixote, Heidi, and In The Footsteps of Barbara Jordan. She is proud to have been Artistic Director and Co-Founder of New Directions Theatre Company, where she directed *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf* and Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*, as well as produced many other productions.

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II



Gregory Casparian

Lighting: *White Nose Christmas, Bump, Dying City, Rubble, Mask of the Broken Heart, Voyageur: An Urban Rhapsody, The House of Yes, BLANK, Fuly Committed, Pre-mortem, InTENSity, Christmas Lovers, Romantic Fools, Dying City, Show on the Road (Fishank), The Kentucky Cycle, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Pride and Prejudice, The Seagull, Three Tall Women, Housebreaking, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, The Piano Lesson, All My Sons, Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre), Transformations (Civic Opera Theater of Kansas City), Boom! An International Lost and Found Family Marching Band (National Tour), Pres From the Porn Kitchen, (Fishank), Live! In Lexington (Concert Series), A Steady Rain, Driving Miss Daisy (Central Standard Theatre),*

Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre

Projections: *The Kentucky Cycle, The Who's "Tommy" (Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre), White Nose Christmas, Bump, Voyageur: An Urban Rhapsody, Pre-mortem (Fishank) Trains, Moore in Time (Wylliams-Henry Dance), Love at the Louvre (The Flock)*

Sound: *The Kentucky Cycle, Housebreaking (Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre), White Nose Christmas, Bump, Mask of the Broken Heart, Show on the Road, Romantic Fools, Christmas Lovers*

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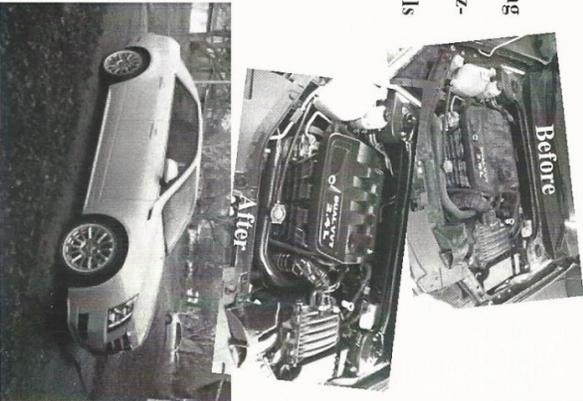
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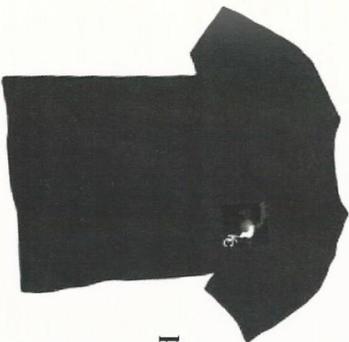


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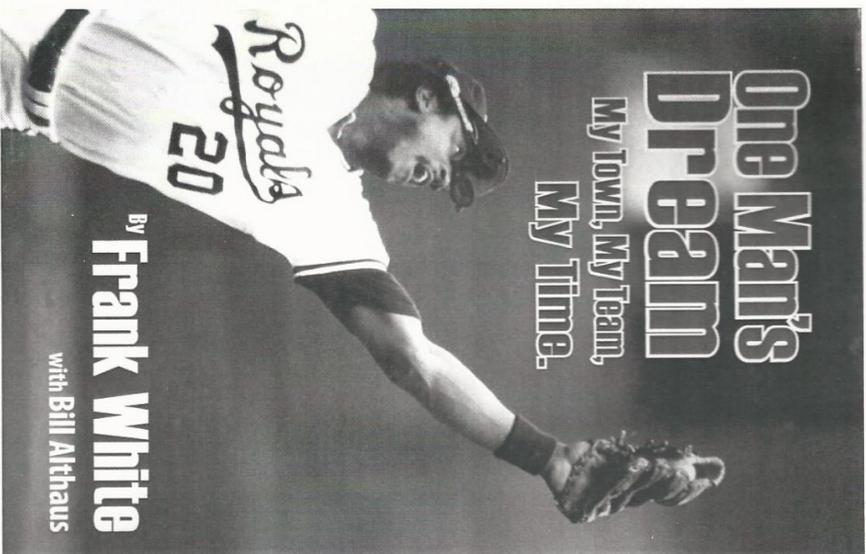
Myra Dillingham - Founder
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 myrafd@yahoo.com 816-916-9322 (Cell)

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In *One Man's Dream*, White gives fans an inside look at his baseball legacy, from the glory days of the 1970s and 1980s to the disappointing way the team turned its back on its greatest representative, both on and off the field.

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SPECIAL THANKS

Don & Pat Dagenais

Royce Ersery

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George Forbes

A quest is noble, a dream is great. To accomplish it, was hard as hell. For the dedication, perseverance, for their flat out hard work and sacrifice. I would like to thank the Executive Committee of MeltingPot KC.

Linda Williams

Tiffany Tucker

Stephanie Williams

David Brown

Gerome Berry

Tina Martin

Gino Martin

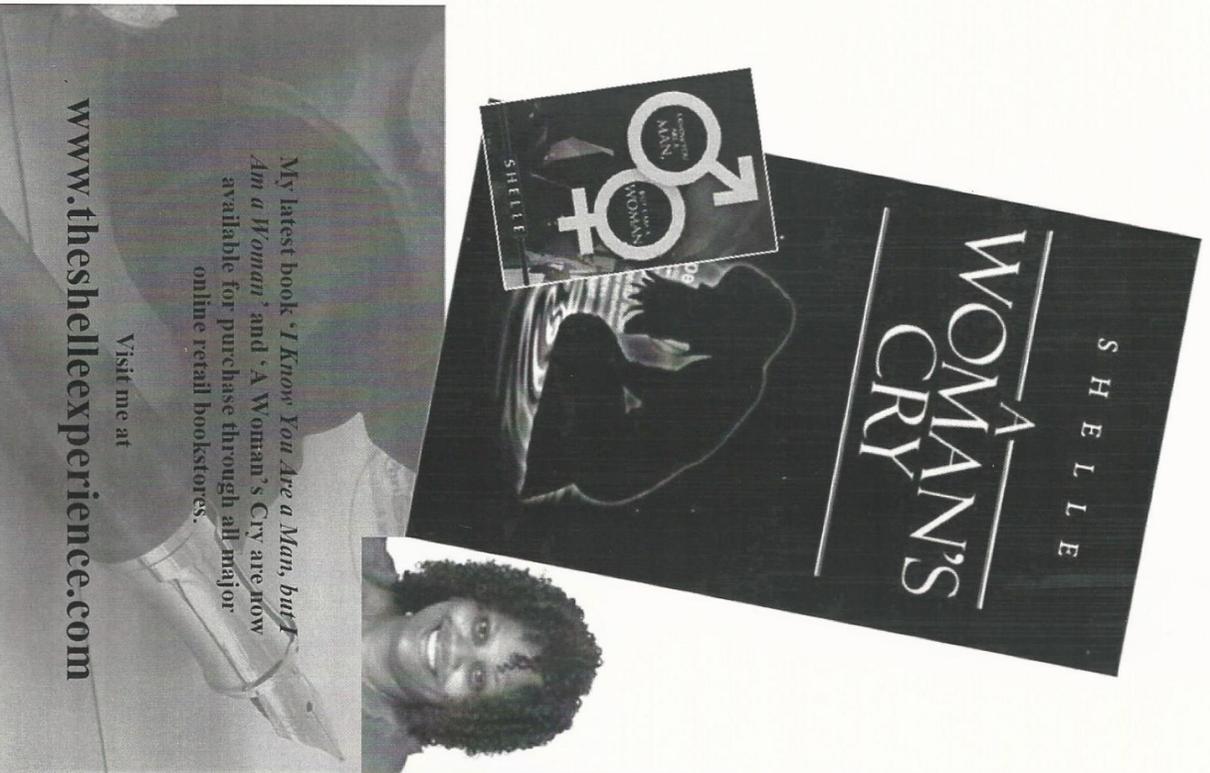
Rayanna Tucker

Whatever level of success MeltingPot KC obtains, you have laid our foundation and set our standards. You are the fire under the MeltingPot.

Love You All,

Harvey Williams

Ray - Roy



My latest book 'I Know You Are a Man, but I Am a Woman' and 'A Woman's Cry' are now available for purchase through all major online retail bookstores.

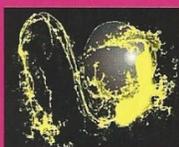
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The Session

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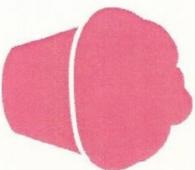


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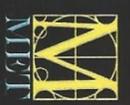
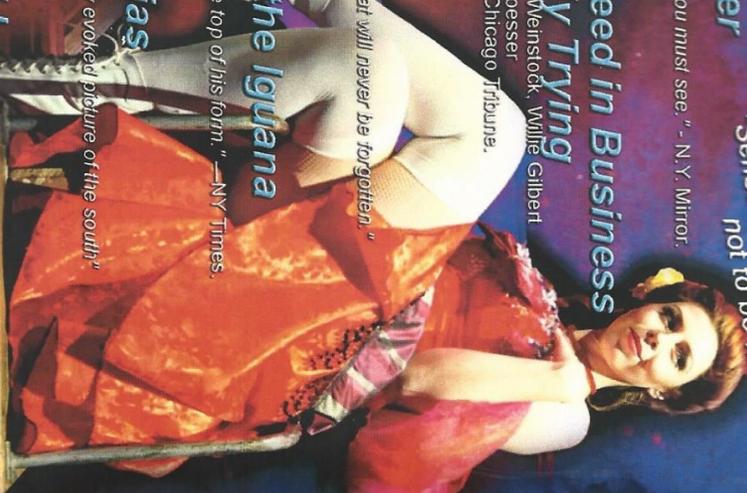
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YOUR INVITATION TO A READING

On Saturday, September 7, 2013, MeltingPot KC invites you to attend the formal reading of a new work by Kansas City Playwright Michelle T. Johnson, entitled "Echoes of Octavia". The reading will be at Just Off Broadway Theatre 3051 Central, Penn Valley Park, KCMO. The theatre will open at 12:00 noon and the reading will start promptly at 1:00 pm. There will be a \$5.00 admission which will include snacks and refreshments compliments of MeltingPot KC. We would love to have you join us for this event.

"Echoes of Octavia"

Written By Michelle T. Johnson

A family business about to take off. A chance of a lifetime far away from family. To pick one is to close the door on the other. But these are the choices faced by Zora Anderson as emotional ghosts tug her in different directions forcing her to choose between loyalty and independence.

Cast: Tim Burks, Brianna Marxen-McCollom, Bryan Moses, Granville T. O'Neal, Sherri Roulette-Mosley and Alexandria Washington.

Directed by Harvey Williams



Michelle T. Johnson is a Kansas City area native who works in the diversity field nationally and locally as a speaker and writer. She's a former journalist and former employment attorney of several years. In addition to her three published books on workplace diversity, Johnson is the "Diversity Diva" whose freelance column runs twice a month in the Kansas City Star's Business section since 2008.

As a playwright, her plays have been produced in the Barn Players of Mission, Kansas' "2011 Six By Ten Festival," the 2012 Kansas City Fringe Festival and by Potluck Productions in 2012. She was selected as a featured playwright in the Unicorn Theater's Writer Showcase in February 2013, as a participant in the 2013 Project Playwright competition and had her micro-play read at the 2013 World Theater Day celebration held by Mind The Gap Theater in New York City. Michelle's plays have been picked and produced for playwrighting festivals in Houston, Texas and Medford, Connecticut. Johnson's play "Wiccans in the Hood" was selected for and produced in the "Midwinter Madness Short Play Festival" in New York City in February 2013 and was the sixth best-attended show out of over 120 acts in the 2013 Kansas City Fringe Festival.

OUR MISSION

MELTINGPOT KC was founded by Harvey Williams, a venture to focus on local talent in theatre. Works created by local writers, performed by local talent and hopefully supported by audiences throughout the greater Kansas City area. We have exceptional talent right here in our city; hopefully

MELTINGPOT KC can provide one more platform to showcase Kansas City's own. We want this effort to evolve and sustain itself from the support of a community that appreciates the potential of local writers, actors, or anyone with interest in the value of Theatre Arts. We are committed to giving access and opportunity to all communities in our area, Black, White, Latino, Asian, African, we all have stories to share and dreams to realize.

Our MELTINGPOT represents the blending of individual endeavors for the enrichment of all.

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MeltingPot KC is a for profit organization and although we need and welcome contributions made to us they are subjected to regular tax status. We realize that many potential contributors would like to utilize the tax exempt status for their donations; because we are an affiliate of Just Off Broadway we encourage you to make tax deductible contributions to "Just Off Broadway Theatre".

MeltingPot KC and Just Off Broadway need and greatly appreciate your support which allows us to continue our separate but conjunctive mission of promoting and producing local artists, writers, actors and technicians and showcasing the creative treasures right here in our Kansas City Community.

THANK YOU



THE SESSION

written by Harvey Williams

Four women diverse in background, each coping with personal issues are ordered by a judge to seek counseling for their anger problems. Not so bad it's just one session, some nobody counselor and a few people you don't know, not a big deal, just another intrusion in your life.

An Anger Management Session, what a joke. Two hours in and out, court order satisfied... the judge is happy... you're not in jail. No fine, no crime... slam-barn thank you ma'am. Then before slam could barn, the joke turned serious.... a real session broke out.

Working with many different "people", "races", "genders, over time has borne out at least to me, that more often than not a veil of anger lifted exposes a Wall of Pain... such Pain that even nature's most powerful vaccine the passage of time can but incubate, for pain... true pain will remain eternally dormant within our Souls.



Harvey Williams (Writer/Director) - Harvey Williams, the founder of MELTINGPOT KC INC., has been seen in theatres in and around the Kansas City Area. In addition to local stage performances he has traveled to Adelaide Australia, and Bedford UK. Harvey is a member of The Screen Actors Guild and Actors' Equity. "The Session", the second offering of MeltingPot KC, is another original work by Harvey Williams, it follows "Old School Ghetto Gospel" the company's first production. In November, in association with Westport Center for the Arts, MeltingPot will produce its first outside production "JFK - A Ghostly Evening", an original piece by Scott Myers of Kansas City. Starting in 2014 MeltingPot KC, along with Journeyman Productions, will introduce a season of theatrical productions at Just Off Broadway Theatre. We have worked hard, and have been blessed. Our first year has been incredible. Please join us while we ramp it up and continue our journey.

CAST



Marilyn Lynch (Ms. Hunter) is a Kansas City native and has performed in numerous productions, such as *Three Tall Women*, *Pride & Prejudice*, and *Enchanted April* at the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre; *Driving Miss Daisy* with Harvey Williams for Central Standard Theatre; *Lend Me A Tenor* at the New Theatre Festival; and *Inspecting Carol* at the Unicorn Theatre, to name a few. Marilyn is looking forward to being a part of MeltingPot KC's World Wide Premiere of *The Session*.



Lynn King (Ms. Davis) is also a native of Kansas City and has been performing for more than 20 years. Last seen with MeltingPot KC in the premiere of "*Old School Ghetto Gospel*". Lynn appeared in Missouri Repertory Theatre's (now the Kansas City Repertory Theatre) productions of *Medea*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Family*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Miracle Worker* and the national premiere of *Nicholas Nickleby*. With the Theatre for Young America she has performed in *Africa's Daughters*, *African Tales of Anansi*, *Harriet Tubman*. In *The Footprints Of Freedom*, and *The Monarchs of KC* to name a few. With the InPlay theatre company she has performed in productions of *Harlem Knights*, *Ohello*, *The African Company Presents Richard III*, *Nothing Comes to Sleepers*, *My Monkey Don't Drink Hot Chocolate*, *A Raisin in The Sun* and *Storm Stories*.



Nicole Santorella (Cynthia) is very excited to join the cast of *The Session*. Some of her past favorite credits include *Anita in West Side Story*, *Helga Ten Dorn in Deathtrap*, *The Acid Queen in The Who's Tommy*, *Columbia in The Rocky Horror Show* and *Mary Warren in The Crucible*. She also acted for the First Annual Project Playwright competition last summer and is excited to make her MeltingPot KC debut! Nicole would like to thank her grandparents, Ron and Jackie Santorella, for always being a rock for her to stand on and her family for giving her the foundation to continue this craft.



Alexandria Washington (Reatha), has been working in Kansas City theatre for the past 6 years. Graduating from Avila University in 2009 with a B.F.A. in Acting she enjoyed playing the roles of *Angel in Matisol*, *Mother in Barefoot in the Park*, and *Steele in Piece of my Heart* to name a few. Her professional debut was with Theatre for Young America in 2007 performing *Harriet Tubman*. In *The Footprints of Freedom* with her current castmate Lynn King, Alexandria has performed in 9 shows with Theatre for Young America and continues to focus on the business aspect of theatre while completing her Master's Degree in Organization Development at Avila University this fall. She is thrilled and honored to be a part of MeltingPot KC's production of *The Session*. A special thanks to her friends, family, and educators for helping her continue to follow her passions.

CAST



Vanessa Harper (Beth) is so excited to be joining this amazing group of performers and an excellent production team in her first MeltingPot KC production! Some of her favorite roles have been as *Adelaide in Guys and Dolls*, *Julia in The Wedding Singer*, *Georgie in The Full Monty*, *Juror #7 in Twelve Angry Men*, and *Mrs. Walker in The Who's Tommy*. Vanessa also enjoys performing throughout the Kansas City area as a vocalist for the Boulevard Band. She would like to thank all her family and friends for their unending support & encouragement!

BETTER ANGELS



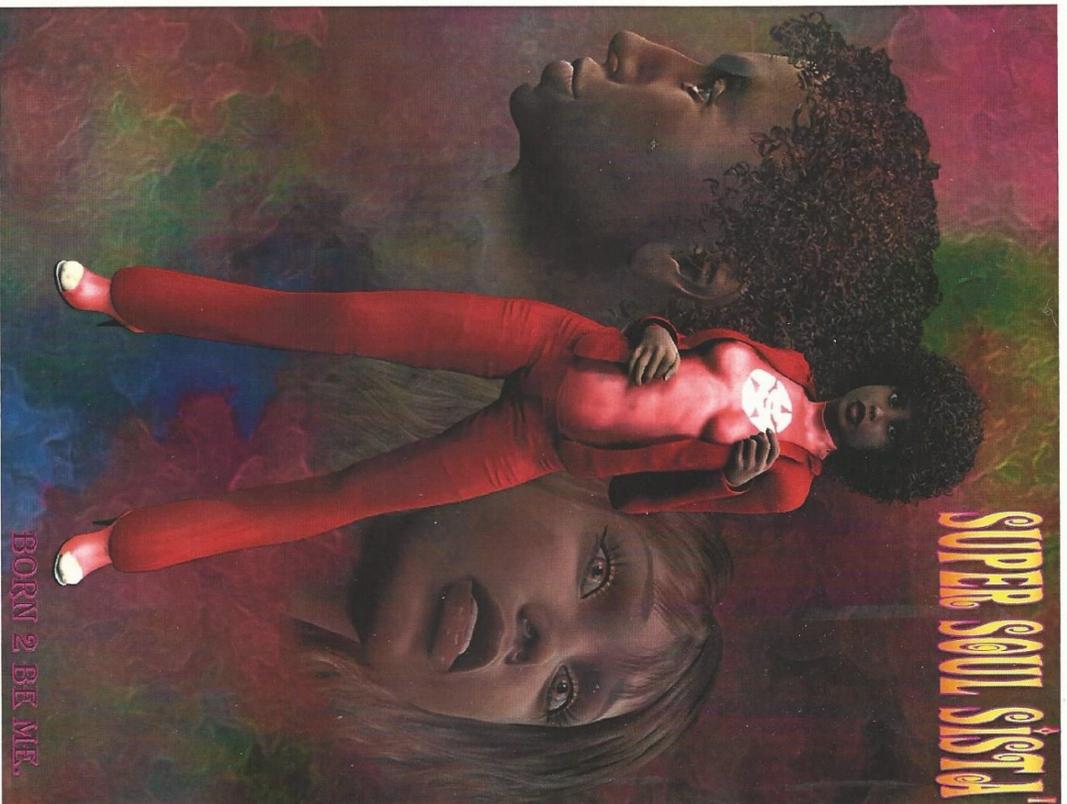
Mz Angela Roux has always been a fan of language. Starting with writing short stories at age eight, she did not find her poetic voice until her early 20s. She describes her poetry as "edu-tainment" combining witty autobiographical accounts of her life with telling stories of social injustice for people who cannot speak for themselves. She is the creator and producer of *Esfrogen Rush!*, an all-female poetry show, which debuted in Fall 2012. She was featured at the 2013 KC Fringe Festival, with jazz quarter Eddie Moore and The Outer Circle, Kansas City's Natural Hair Care Expo, Poetic Notes, Lee Langston's Avant-Garde and The Mis-education of Lauryn Hill Tribute. She is a member of the KConsciousness Poetry Collective, ULTT 101, BOLD.NEW.POETS and has performed at some of KC's premiere poetry venues.



Cheri Woods finds fodder for her verse hiking through the woods, walking the dogs or just sitting on the back porch. Honest grittiness aids her lone voice as she leads you through witty wordplay, rants, ramblings and sorrowful laments. Native to the area, Cheri ponders a rural existence, playing in the river and singing homemade songs.



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MeltingPot KC is pleased to announce its first outside production in association with Westport Center for the Arts. Premiering on November 22, 2013 and running thru December 1, 2013, the presentation of a new work, "JFK - A Ghostly Evening", by Scott Myers.

On the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy the story of an event that never happened but surely could have.

Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife Coretta have been invited to the White House for a private dinner with President Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. Both couples are in the crossfire of events they are responsible for, decisions they must make that will escort America and The World through some very perilous times. The dinner conversation should be a full course meal for the mind.

CREW



Neil Andes, Stage Manager

Neil can usually be found avoiding the spotlight, in the darkest rooms in the theatre. After several years of apathy, he re-discovered his passion for storytelling in this unique way, and has been working to exhaustion ever since, because it doesn't feel like work. Recent credits include: *Wiccan's in the Hood* (Stage Manager, 2013 KC Fringe Festival), *Ragtime* (Production Assistant, MET), *Hurdyburdy* (Production Assistant, The Living Room), and *Man After Superman* (Stage Manager, Journeyman Theatre Company). 2013 has brought about so much opportunity, it solidifies his mantra: "Sometimes you get exactly what you're looking for. And other times, you get so much more." He would like to thank MeltingPot KC for this opportunity, the KC theatre community for being so welcoming, and his family and friends, for sacrificing time with him, so that he can work to achieve some goals.



Warren Deckert, Technical Director/Lighting Design was the Artistic/Technical Director for Great Bend Community Theatre for nearly 20 years, directing such shows as *Book of Days*, *Wit*, *Our Town* and *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday*. He has designed lighting and/or sets for over 150 productions. Recent projects include directing the Wichita Community Theatre production of Becky's *New Car*, lighting design for *Enchanted April* (MET) and directing the 2013 KC Fringe Festival shows *Bernice Al Bay* and *The Butterfly Effect*. He is part of the front-of-house staff of the Kansas City Repertory Theatre as one of the assistant house managers/volunteer coordinators.



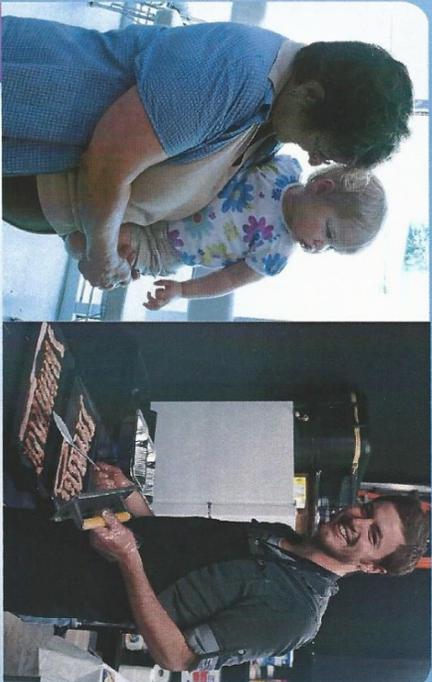
Tyler Miller, Set Assistant, Tymeworks

By profession I am a stagehand and actor. The exciting part about this project is working in JOB where I was an original board member and produced a hand full of productions including *Killer Joe* by Tracy Letts.



THE SESSION

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Doug Talley Quartet: Concert to Honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Monday, Jan. 20, 2014 12 noon Community Christian Church, 46th & Main, KCMO



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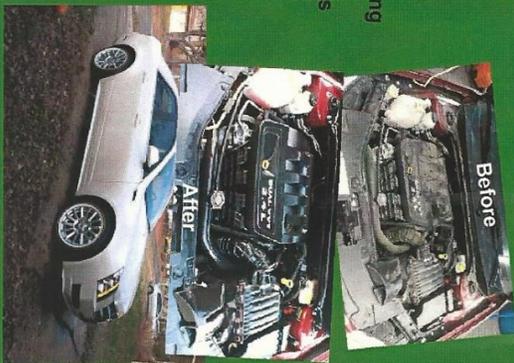
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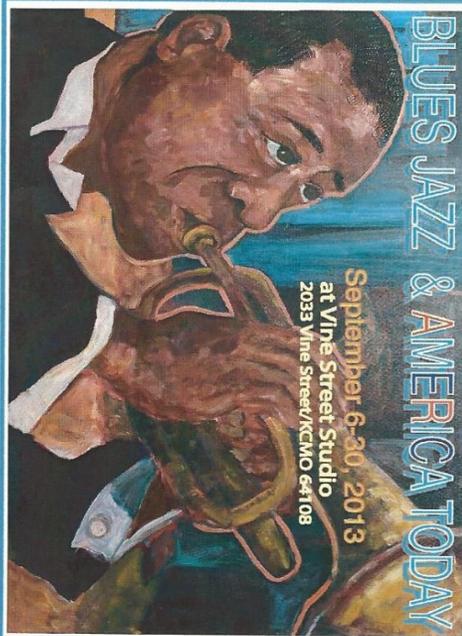
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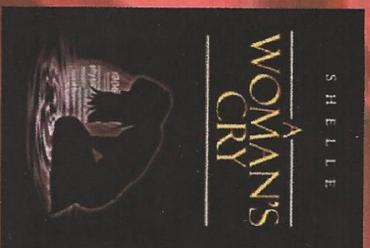
The Gem Cultural Center

Making the Arts Accessible

The Shelle Experience



Author: Ramona Harris

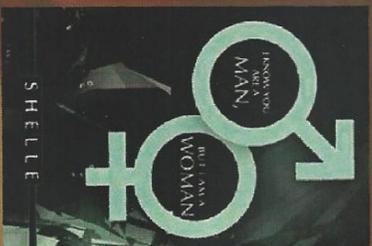


A Woman's Cry

As with her previous book "I Know You Are A Man, But I Am A Woman", Shelle highlights domestic violence and the repercussions of such acts. She also highlights the lasting effects of child abuse into adulthood and how it affects your relationships with others. A self-help book with a sense of direction on being positive about oneself, daring to dream, daring to love oneself, and daring to accomplish anything you put your mind to. Shelle continues to bring awareness of abuse on women and children to light.

I Know You Are A Man, But I Am A Woman

History is a life lesson that often repeats itself, however we as women can learn from our past to create a promising future. Learning is a powerful tool that most of us take for granted. With this book, I hope to teach and inspire individuals from my personal perspective.



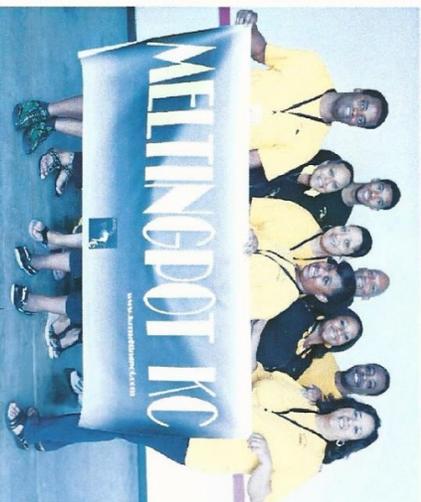
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Terry & Glenna Anderson – For attending EVERY function
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Our "Fire" - The Executive Committee - David Brown, Tiffany Tucker, Tino Martin, Tina Martin, Rayanna Tucker, Gino Martin, Stephanie Williams, Gerome Berry and Linda Williams.

On July 31, 2012, Harvey Williams invited David Brown to lunch at his home, he served him Jimmy John's, on a real plate. The rest was history on a fast track. MeltingPot KC was started.

In that year we produced and premiered our first offering, "OLD SCHOOL GHETTO GOSPEL", we became an affiliate Theatre Company of Just Off Broadway Theatre, we've been involved in Project Playwright 2.0, had the privilege of directing the sixth most attended show in the 2013 Kansas City Fringe Festival, Michelle T. Johnson's "WICCANS IN THE HOOD". And recently we held our first MeltingPot fundraiser, a pancake extravaganza, which was a success. As we go into our second offering, "THE SESSION", we are also looking forward to November when we will produce our first outside production in association with Westport Center for the Arts, "JFK - A GHOSTLY EVENING", an original play written by Scott Myers. Last but not least we are announcing that MeltingPot KC, along with Journeyman Productions, will present a full season of productions at Just Off Broadway Theatre beginning in 2014.

Yeah! We have been kinda/sorta busy and we could not be more appreciative and thankful to Kansas City and to everyone who has followed, supported and encouraged us. We love you Kansas City! Stick with us because the best is yet to be written.

With Gratitude,
Harvey Williams
MeltingPot KC

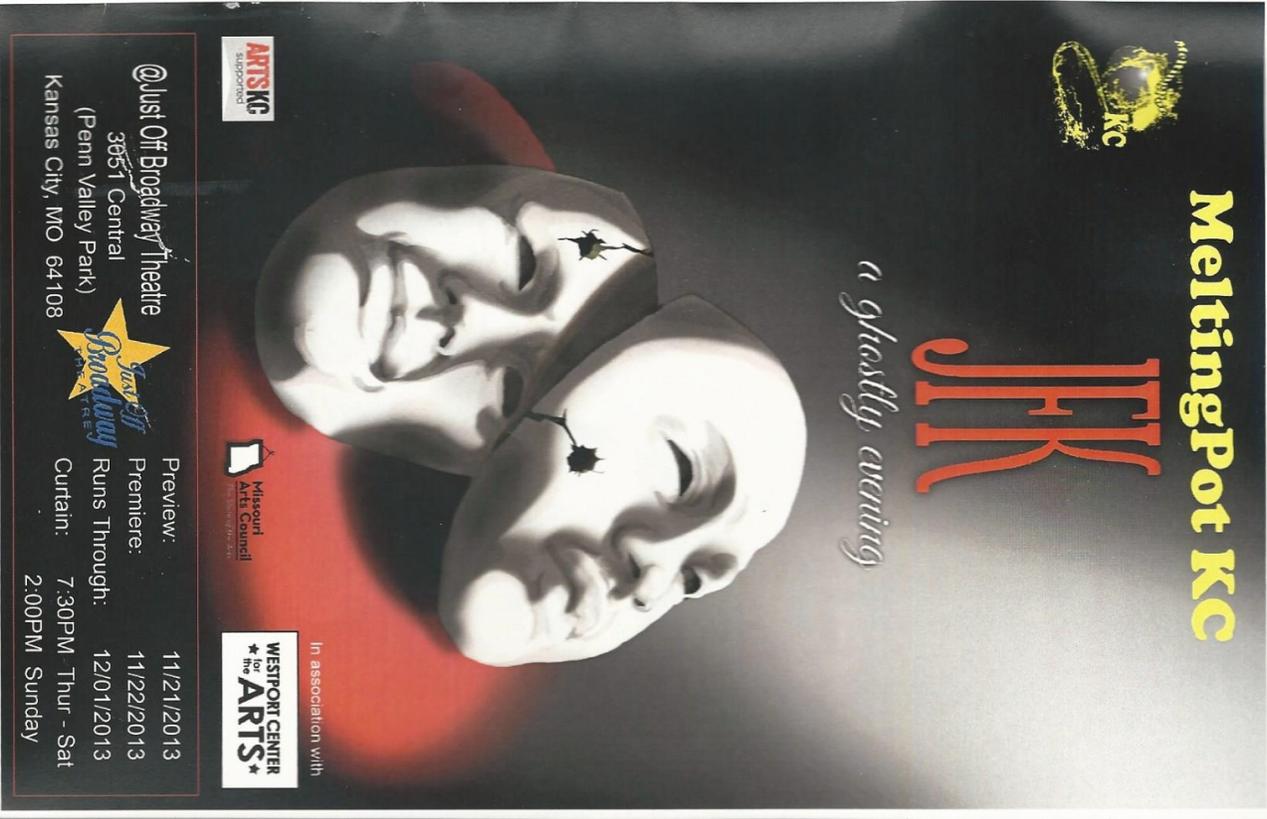
JFK A Ghostly Evening



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JFK - A Ghostly Evening



MeltingPot KC

JFK
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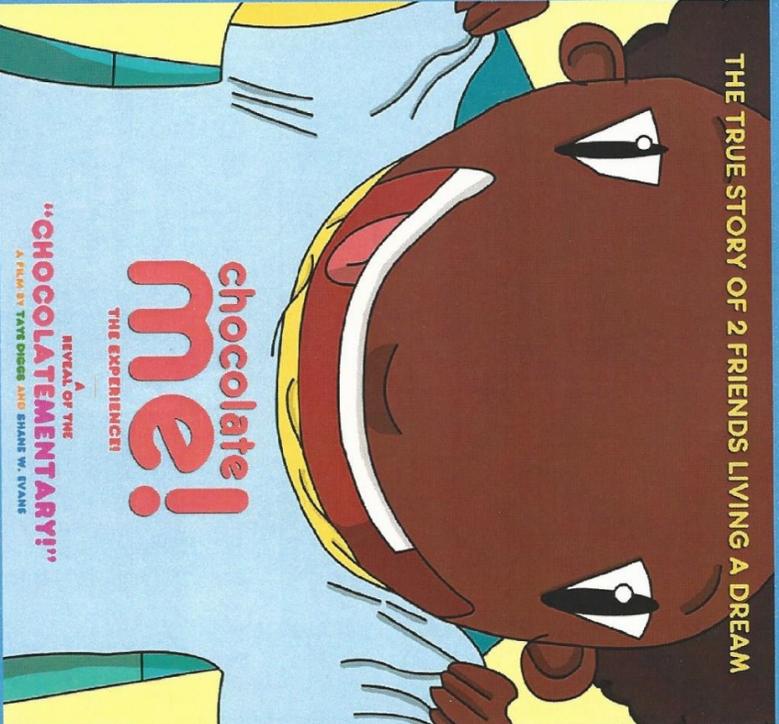
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Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1700 Westport Rd, KCMO

Rebecca Bell & Marian Thomas, harpsichord
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MeltingPot KC

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JFK - A Ghostly Evening

written by Scott Myers

Perhaps the most decisive event in the 2nd half of the 20th century was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. History would surely have run a different course, and our world would not be the same today had he lived and, in all probability, served as our leader until the end of 1968.

Although he increased the number of U.S. military advisors in Vietnam, he was not "gung ho" about the Vietnam War! He would have tried to think of ways to head off the racial war that ensued in the 1960's!

JFK had the kind of open, inquiring and cautious mind that might well have turned away from those catastrophes before it was too late!

At the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination, this play is a literary effort to illuminate who JFK really was, and also his wife, Jackie. And because his encounter with the Black Freedom Movement was so pivotal to his Presidency, *JFK - A Ghostly Evening* also reveals something of who Dr. Martin Luther King and his wife Coretta really were. In contrast to a documentary film, a play can tell a mythic, yet true story that goes to the essence of a person! The same holds true for another key character in this drama, the Ghost of Medgar Evers.

I have no other purpose than the above. And even as I hope the audience can again encounter Medgar, Martin, Coretta and Jackie in this play—still everything here is meant to bring our slain President to life—truthfully, on a stage. If he would object, so be it. His life and his death have impacted us far beyond anything he ever could have intended.

Scott Myers has been a minister for over 30 years in the Presbyterian Church. He is starting his 20th year as pastor of Westport Presbyterian Church and is deeply involved in the effort to rebuild the church after a catastrophic fire just after Christmas in 2011.

He served previously in urban congregations in St. Louis and in a farming community in Ohio, his native state. Previous to being a minister, he ran a small business and was a community organizer in St. Louis.

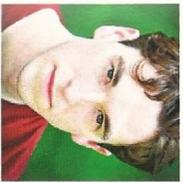
He received a Lily Endowment grant in 2005 to explore "Arts and Spirituality". He is one of the founding board members of the Westport Center for the Arts and co-creator of a long running children's peacemaking program—Peace Quest. He is married to Jeanne Reiss, M.D., and has three daughters and eight grandchildren.

Scott Myers attended the University of Michigan (B.A. History, English Literature), University of Dayton (Masters of Education, Counseling) and Eden Theological Seminary (Masters of Divinity).

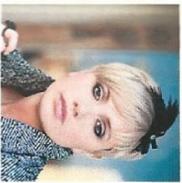
Since writing *JFK - A Ghostly Evening*, he has written two new plays: *Star Over Our Tree House* and *Stealing Kandinsky*. He has also written a number of narrative poems and jazz poems, including: *Hey Ron Brown*, *Stan the Man*, *Tree Climbing*, *Grandpa is Magic*, *The Art of Serious Conversation*, *Brevity's Liabilities* and *The Big Bang Begins to Bang*.



Cast



Jordan Fox (John F. Kennedy) is proud to appear with MeltingPot KC and for the opportunity to portray such a legend as John F. Kennedy. Audiences may be familiar with his Kansas City appearances from the previous season such as *The Kentucky Cycle*, *Pride's Crossing*, *Ragtime* (Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre), and Jacob Holder's play *Bedtime Solos* (Central Standard Theatre), in which he starred in the Kansas City and Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Jordan is also a puppeteer-in-training with Stonelion Puppet Theatre and a Starbucks barista. He would like to dedicate his performances to Jude, Joon, and Erika, with great love.



Sabrina 'Brie' Henderson (Jacqueline Kennedy) is honored to be playing Jacqueline Kennedy, possibly her most challenging role yet. Recently you will have seen her as Edna Potts in *Murder at the Royal for the Mystery Train*, and both *Wiccans in the Hood* and *Lucky Streak* at the KC Fringe Festival 2013. Although stage is her first love, she has been in numerous local films and commercials. She was also the Kansas City host of RAW 2013, an international arts organization. Brie would like to thank her family, friends, and boyfriend for their support her in her somewhat unconventional goals, as well as MeltingPot KC for taking a chance and giving her this incredible opportunity. You will see her again this Spring in MeltingPot KC's presentation of *White Sangria*.



Jerron O'Neal (Martin Luther King, Jr.) is a native of Kansas City, Kansas and is very excited to be on the stage once again. This is the first time Jerron is working on a MeltingPot KC production, but not the first performing at Just Off Broadway. He worked with Jacqee Garford in In Play's production of *Storm Stories*. Some of Jerron's favorite roles were Creon in *Colonus*, Wil in *Flying West*, and Walter Lee in *The Colored Museum*. He also performed in the ensemble cast for the play *Now Let Me Fly*, this past summer at KCKCC. Jerron would like to thank friends and family for their continued support.



Lynn King (Coretta Scott King) is also a native of Kansas City and has been performing for more than 20 years. Lynn began working on the professional stage while a MFA graduate student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Lynn appeared at the Missouri Repertory Theatre (now the Kansas City Repertory Theatre), the Theatre for Young America, the In Play theatre company, the Unicorn Theatre, the New Theatre Restaurant and the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre. Last seen with MeltingPot KC in the *Session* and part of their inaugural production, *Old School Ghetto Gospel*. She would like to thank Jacque, Francis, Linda, Harvey and the MeltingPot KC Committee.

Cast



Tim Burks (Medgar Evers, A Ghost) has performed in theater companies both locally and statewide. His talent has enabled him to be a part of such productions as, *Old School Ghetto Gospel*, MeltingPot KC's Flagship Production, *My Monkey Don't Drink Hot Chocolate*, *The Rainmaker*, and the production of In Play Theater Companies' *Nothing Comes To Sleepers* both here in Kansas City, as well as Cape Girardeau, MO. In addition, Tim has worked with 38 The Spot on commercial promos. He feels very blessed and fortunate to have been selected to play Medgar in this original production of *JFK - A Ghostly Evening*.



Ben Husmann (Bobby Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, J. Edgar Hoover) is delighted to be making his Just Off Broadway Theatre debut. Some of his previous roles include, Jesse James, in *The Life & Times of Jesse James*, (James Farm Kearney Mo.) Polixenes & Autolycus, in *The Writer's Tale*, Jesus in *Cotton Patch Gospel* (Both Gammaliel Theatre east coast tours). And a Swashbuckling Lover in *Marlowe* (Soho Playhouse NY). Ben has appeared locally in Spumoni at the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre stage for the KC Fringe Festival, and in both *Titus & The Death of Cupid* at The Living Room Theatre. He can be seen in regular appearances as Sir Warren Peace with the Murder Mystery Company at the Tiffany Ballroom, and Detective Peter Ness at Sanford & Sons Comedy House.

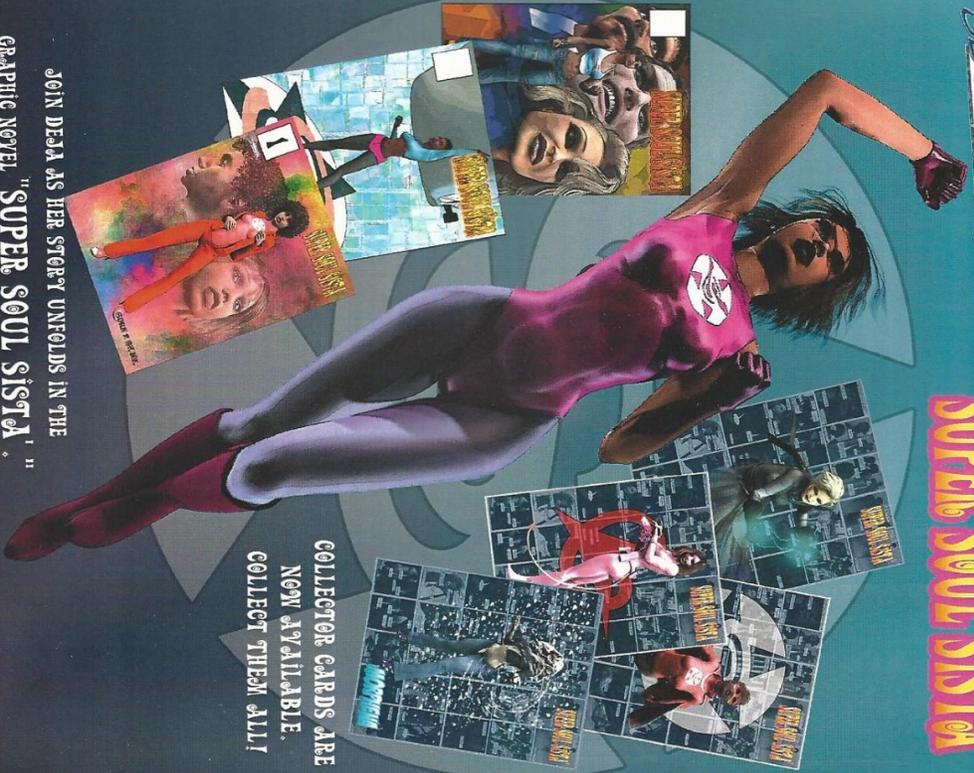


Granville O'Neal (A friend of Kansas City council member Bruce R. Watkins) is a local actor who has performed in many theatre venues in and around the Kansas City metropolitan area including Lawrence and Topeka, Kansas. His most recent stage performance was with the Colore Theatre in their production of "*Bud Not Buddy*." A graduate of Park College, his resume includes movies, two of which are yet to be released, "*Destination, Planet Negro*" and "*Jayhawkers*," commercials, and voice overs. He serves on the board of the Traditional Music Society and is President of the MC Players. Granville is also a retired Kansas City Kansas fire fighter.



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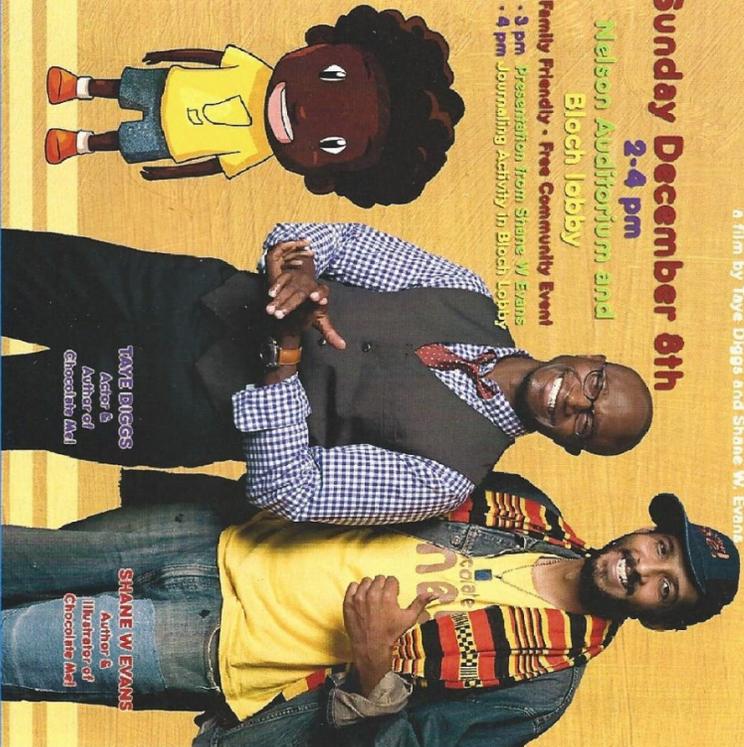
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Actor &
Author of
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SHANE W. EVANS
Author &
Illustrator of
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THE TRUE STORY OF 2 FRIENDS LIVING A DREAM

Stage Production Staff



Neil Andes, Stage Manager can usually be found avoiding the spotlight, in the darkest rooms in the theatre. After several years of apathy, he re-discovered his passion for storytelling in this unique way, and has been working to exhaustion ever since, because it doesn't feel like work. Recent credits include: *The Mistakes Madeline Made* (Stage Manager, The Living Room) *The Session* (Stage Manager, MeltingPot KC), *Wiccan's in the Hood* (Stage Manager, 2013 KC Fringe Festival), *Ragtime* (Production Assistant, MET), *Hurlyburly* (Production Assistant, The Living Room), and *Man After Superman* (Stage Manager, Journeyman Theatre Company). 2013 has brought about so much opportunity, it solidifies his mantra: "Sometimes you get exactly what you're looking for. And other times, you get so much more."



Warren Decker, Technical Director/Set & Lighting Design is excited to partner with Nicole Christianson on the production design for *JFK - A Ghostly Evening*. He was the Artistic/Technical Director at Great Bend Community Theatre for nearly 20 years, directing such shows as *Book of Days*, *Wif, Our Town* and *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday*. He has designed lighting and/or sets for over 150 productions. Recent projects include directing the Wichita Community Theatre production of *Becky's New Car*, lighting design for *Enchanted April* (METKC) and directing the 2013 KC Fringe Festival shows *Bernice At Bay* and *The Butterfly Effect*. He is part of the front-of-house staff of the Kansas City Repertory Theatre as one of the assistant house managers/volunteer coordinators.



Nicole Sukolics-Christianson, Costume Designer & Properties Coordinator has immersed herself in the Kansas City theatre community for the last six years fulfilling a variety of roles at many of the theatres in the area. Recently, she designed the costumes for *Bernice/Butterfly* for the Kansas City Fringe Festival, *Hurlyburly* and *Burn This* for The Living Room, and Properties Coordinator and Set Dresser for *Weekend Comedy* at New Theatre Restaurant. Nicole also regularly enjoys working backstage at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre. This is her first production with MeltingPot KC and she is looking forward to many more.

JFK - A Ghostly Evening

Stage Production Staff



Jacqueline L. Gafford, Co-Director has been an actor, stage manager, playwright and director in Kansas City for over 25 years. She has been a member of Actors Equity for over 20 years. As an actor her work has been seen at New Directions Theatre, Theatre for Young America, The Coleridge and The Unicorn. She has also directed at TYA, The Unicorn, UMKC, Rockhurst University, and Lawrence Community Theatre. Ms. Gafford is Artistic Director of InPlay Theatre Company, a not-for-profit multiracial performing arts organization which is an original member of the Just Off Broadway Association. As playwright Ms. Gafford penned the highly successful *Harlem Knights*, and *Nothing Comes to Sleepers* and also co-authored along with Gene Mackey, Artistic Director of Theatre For Young America, *The Journey of Barbara Jordan*. Ms. Gafford welcomes this opportunity to once again work with old friends and colleagues. Okay let's make magic.



Harvey Williams, Co-Director - Harvey Williams, the founder of MELTINGPOT KC INC., has been seen in theaters in and around the Kansas City Area during the past year. In addition to local stage performances he has traveled to Adelaide Australia, and Bedford UK. Harvey is a member of The Screen Actors Guild and Actors' Equity. We have worked hard, and have been blessed. Our first year has been incredible. Please join us while we ramp it up and continue our journey.



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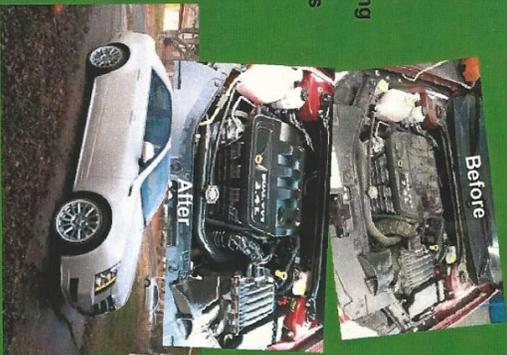
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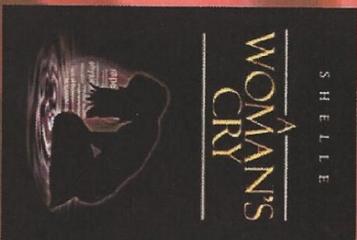
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JFK - A Ghostly Evening Cover Artwork Contest

In October 2013, Weirington KC, Westport Center for the Arts (WCA) and the Illustration Department of the Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI) teamed up to create a poster design for the promotion of "JFK - A Ghostly Evening". Sixteen graphic design students were tasked with this assignment and the producers were invited to KCAI to select the winning design. KCAI, WCA and Weirington KC are thrilled with the results of the students collective efforts, and are looking forward to future joint projects.



Jacob C Robinson



Katherine E. Dodson
1st place winner, cover artist



Kelsey Wroten



Kelsey Borchering



Adam Soyving



Augustus Oberg

All poster designs are currently on display in the lobby.

Our Mission

MELTINGPOT KC was founded by Harvey Williams, as venture to focus on local talent in theatre. Including works created by local writers, performed by local talent and hopefully supported by audiences throughout the greater Kansas City area. We have exceptional talent right here in our city, hopefully MELTINGPOT KC can provide one more platform to showcase Kansas City's own. We want this effort to evolve and sustain itself from the support of a community that appreciates the potential of local writers, actors, or anyone with interest in the value of Theatre Arts. We are committed to giving access and opportunity to all communities in our area, Black, White, Latino, Asian, African, we all have stories to share and dreams to realize.

Our MELTINGPOT represents the blending of individual endeavors for the enrichment of all.

www.kcmeltingpot.com
Visit us on facebook – kc meltingpot

MeltingPotKC and Just Off Broadway need and greatly appreciate your support which allows us to continue our separate but conjunctive mission of promoting and producing local artist, writers, actors and technicians and showcasing the creative treasures right here in our Kansas City Community. THANK YOU

Sponsorships are available

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Terry & Glenna Anderson – For attending EVERY function
Paul Tilson
Francis Farah
Patty Smith at Blondie's Salon

Our "Fire" - The Executive Committee

David Brown
Gerome Berry
Gino Martin
Tina Martin
Linda Williams
Rayanna Tucker
Stephanie Williams
Tiffany Tucker

Thank you also to all of our volunteers who help us "get things done."



On July 31, 2012 Harvey Williams invited David Brown to lunch at his home, he served him Jimmy John's, on a real plate. The rest was history on a fast track. MeltingPot KC was started. In that year we produced and premiered our first offering, "Old School Ghetto Gospel", we became an affiliate Theatre Company of The Just Off Broadway Theatre, we've been involved in Project Playwright 2.0, had the privilege of directing the sixth most attended show in the 2013 Kansas City Fringe Festival, Michelle T. Johnsons "Wiccans in the Hood". We held our first MeltingPot fundraiser, a pancake extravaganza, which was a success. We produced our second offering, "The Session", And now present our first outside production in association with Westport Center for the Arts, "JFK - A Ghostly Evening", an original play written by Scott Myers. MeltingPot KC along with Journeyman Productions will present a full season of productions at Just Off Broadway Theatre beginning in 2014.

MeltingPot, KC has now joined with Shane Evans and Dreamstudio for a "Chocolate Me" workshop event... more to follow on that.

Yeah! We've been kinda, sorta, busy and we could not be more appreciative and thankful, to Kansas City and to everyone who has followed, supported and encouraged us. We love you Kansas City! Stick with us because the best is yet to arrive.

With gratitude,
Harvey Williams
MeltingPot, KC

White Sangria

Our Mission

MELTINGPOT KC INC.

MELTINGPOT KC is a venture to provide a platform for the expression of theatre and arts in Kansas City and its outlying areas. Our pursuit is to produce or assist in producing original works by local talent, representative of the rich and varied ethnic and life communities in the metropolitan and suburban areas of greater Kansas City. We are dedicated to being a worthy addition to our city's vibrant arts community. Our MELTINGPOT represents the blending of individual endeavors for the enrichment of us all.

What We're About

MELTINGPOT KC was founded by Harvey Williams, it is as stated, a venture to focus on local talent in theatre. Works created by local writers, performed by local talent and hopefully supported by local audiences throughout the greater Kansas City area. We have exceptional talent right here in our city, hopefully MeltingPot KC can provide one more platform to showcase Kansas City's own. We want this effort to evolve and sustain itself from the support of a community that appreciates the potential of local writers, actors, or anyone with interest in the value of Theatre Arts. We are committed to giving access and opportunity to all communities in our area, Black, White, Latino, Asian, African, we all have stories to tell and dreams to realize.

2014 begins our 1st season as an affiliate of the Just Off Broadway Theatre. Look for many worthwhile events in the upcoming months as MeltingPot KC and The Just Off Broadway Theatre Association are eager to work with local schools and community organizations, to enhance the availability of the various Performing Arts in the Kansas City and surrounding areas. MeltingPot KC celebrates our differences as they are what make us the same. 2014 will feature local female writers.

Echoes of Octavia written, by Michelle T. Johnson opens August 7, 2014
We will also have a joint production with JourneyMan Theatre Company *Behind the Veil*. Next to the *Watercooler*, written by Kerry Austin which opens September 4, 2014

All performances will be held at Just Off Broadway Theatre.
3051 Central in Penn Valley Park, KOMO 64108.
Tickets can be purchased from our website www.kmeltingpot.com or by calling 816-226-8087. Group rates are available.



White Sangria
written by Arika Larson

Just Off Broadway Theatre
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The Penn Valley room has seating for 40+ guests and is optimal for rehearsals, meetings and small productions. This space also features a professional grade dance floor.

Our scenic grounds are ideal for picture taking and outdoor events.

In July, we will participate in the KC Fringe Festival. Look for more information soon!

Our affiliate production companies, Journeyman Theatre and MeltingPot KC have a full 2014 session planned.

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Check out our websites for information on upcoming events and friend us on facebook:
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White Sangria

written by Arka Larson



Arka is proud to join the MeltingPot KC team for this amazing season of works by KC women! Her plays have been seen in three Kansas City Fringe Festivals. You may recognize this piece from the 2011 Festival where it won best-selling show in its venue. Though she now lives in Brooklyn, she's thrilled to share this new version of *White Sangria*, and happy for the excuse to come home to Kansas City and work with such a talented group. Her play *Foreign Bodies* will be produced at The Artist's Movement in 2014 in New York, and her play *Birthday Boy* is a semifinalist for the 2014 Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference. Look for her brand new comedy *don't it the easy way* in this summer's KC Fringe Festival.

I wrote the first lines of this play in an intensive at the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre. I was simultaneously in rehearsal for my first ever production of my play *Spunout* at the KC Fringe. That play was a complicated massive undertaking, and I had two other jobs as well. It was 100,000 degrees outside that week-- a normal July in KC-- and the MET's air conditioning wasn't working. I had to bring in pages for the first day of the intensive, and I hadn't had the time to write them, so I stayed up all night after rehearsal, and wrote three different scene sketches. The first scene between Ben and Maria was one of them.

So this piece came out of a place of hot desperation in me. The first day of the intensive, as two actors read that scene for the first time, I immediately began to see some interesting things. These two were not saying what they were thinking, and there were sparks flying between them, somewhat inexplicably. It was suspenseful, and I wasn't even sure why or how. I decided to pursue them further-- to write their play. The simple goal with which I began was to explore the subtext underlying the things we actually say to one another. I also knew that there wouldn't be a good guy or a bad guy. It would shift back and forth for the entirety of the play.

The following summer, I produced the show in the KC Fringe Festival at Vulcan's Forge. It was 100,000 degrees that week too, and the air conditioning was so loud that we had to turn it off so the audience could hear the dialogue. It was crazy hot in Ben and Maria's house again. That version of the play was a break neck jump off the edge of a cliff type production. I could feel the audience both on the edge of their seats and shifting uncomfortably because of the tension between them, and I knew that what I wrote was working.

The more time I spend with this piece, the more I become fascinated with this unmistakable heat that burns between Ben and Maria from the plays first moments and slowly grows throughout the story. Ben and Maria's home and their relationship is their place of hot desperation, and it comes from their constant mutual desire to gain power over the other, and anyone else in the room. It has become both a compulsion and the thing that ultimately unites them. But where, if anywhere, is the balance between the intoxicating heat of their manipulative power volley, and a place two people can actually live?

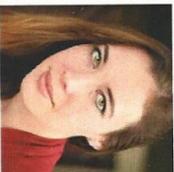
Cast



Jonathon Engle (Ben Bourbina) As this is my first show with KC MeltingPot, allow me to quote the book of Armaments: And the Lord spake, saying, "First shalt thou take out the Holy Pin, then shalt thou count to three, no more, no less. Three shall be the number thou shalt count, and the number of the counting shall be three. Four shalt thou not count, neither count thou two, excepting that thou then proceed to three. Five is right out. Once the number three, being the third number, be reached, then lobbest thou thy Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch towards thy foe, who being naughty in my sight, shall snuff it." Thank you Monty Python.



Sabrina Brie Henderson (Maria Bourbina) is delighted to be playing Maria in *White Sangria*. Recently you will have seen her as Edna Potts in *Murder at the Royal for the Mystery Train*, and in *Wiccans in the Hood and Lucky Streak* in the KC Fringe Festival. Although stage is her first love, she has been in numerous local films and commercials. She was also the Kansas City host of RAW, an international arts organization, for 2013. Brie would like to thank her family, friends, and boyfriend for supporting her in these somewhat unconventional goals, as well as MeltingPot KC for taking a chance and giving her this incredible opportunity. In addition, you can catch Brie this summer in *MOM.com (Roadrage)*, a KC Fringe show at Just Off Broadway Theatre.



Melody Butler (Susan Hardin) is so excited to be back on stage and a part of this incredible new work. Some of her previous credits include Ruth Birdseye in *Hexing Hitler* at the KC Fringe Festival and participating in Project Playwright at Just Off Broadway. She earned her BFA in Theatre Arts from Stephens College and is currently a teaching artist for The Coterie Theatre.



Coleman Crenshaw (John Martin) is delighted to be making his MeltingPot debut. Other Kansas City credits include work at The Coterie (*Number the Stars*, *Bridge to Terabithia*), The Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre (*The Seagull*, *Pride's Crossing*, *Kentucky Cycle*, *Rules for Widows*, *Enchanted April*, *Anaika and Sing!*), The Fishbunk (*Voyeur*, *Rubble*, *53 Days and 52 Nights*), The Living Room (*Skillet Tag*, *Titus Andronicus*, *A Bucket of Blood*, *A Very Accidental Holiday*), TYA (*Pippi Longstocking*, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*), and The KC Fringe Festival (*Pilgrimage*). He can be seen next in Bill Rogers' new play *Dangerous to Dance With* during this year's KC Fringe Festival. He is also a busy teaching artist, for more information about his innovative early education playwrighting programming please visit <http://goo.gl/Epic>.

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Stage Production Staff



Melissa E. Koerner, Production Stage Manager - Melissa is excited about working her second production with MeltingPot KC. In 2013, Melissa moved to Kansas City from Orlando, Florida where she worked for The Orlando Repertory Theatre, Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, Beth Marshall Presents, Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival and Walt Disney World Entertainment as a Stage Manager. Although new to Kansas City, she is pleased to work with The Coterie Theatre and The Fishbark Performance Studio. Melissa would like to thank Greg & Harvey for taking a chance on her and thank the cast for being wonderful! To her new husband, Joel: Love you much!



Danelle Drury, Relief Stage Manager - Danelle hails from South Africa where she studied Musical Theatre and Education. She has worked on various theater, television, film and voice-work productions, including the BBC TV-drama, To the Ends of the Earth. Some Kansas City credits include script-in-hand performances for the KC Public Libraries: *South Pacific*, *Guys and Dolls*, I remember Mama, *The Heidi Chronicles* and *You Can't Take It With You* (SM). *Enchanted April* for the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre, Stonelion Puppet Theatre shows and *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* for Theater for Young America. Danelle is a member of the Jest Murder Mysteries team, along with her husband Ari Bavel, whom she met working on *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* for Spotlight Productions in 2010. She has been assistant stage manager for Andy Garrison's production of *Gun Game* and is thrilled to be working with KC MeltingPot!



Warren Decker, Technical Director/Set & Lighting Design - Warren was the Artistic/Technical Director for Great Bend Community Theatre for nearly 20 years, directing such shows as *Book of Days*, *Wit*, *Our Town*, *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday*, *Nursesense* and *The Fantasticks*. He was a member of I.A.T.S.E., Local 190, Wichita, KS, technical director/designer for the Bethel College Theatre Department, and has designed lighting and/or sets for over 150 productions. Some recent projects include directing the Wichita Community Theatre production of *Becky's New Car*, lighting design for *Enchanted April* (MET) and producing and directing the 2013 KC Fringe Festival shows *Berrice At Bay* and *The Buttery Effect*. He is part of the front-of-house staff of the Kansas City Repertory Theatre as one of the assistant house managers/volunteer coordinators. This summer he will design *Eclipses of Octavia* for MeltingPot and direct the KC premiere of *Gideon's Knot* for the 2014 KC Fringe Festival. Next January he will direct and co-produce with MeltingPot KC Theatre the Kansas City premiere of *Waiting To Be Invited*.



Harvey Williams, Director - Harvey Williams, the founder of MELTINGPOT KC INC., has been seen in theatres in and around the Kansas City Area. In addition to local stage performances he has traveled to Adelaide Australia, and Bedford UK. Harvey is a member of The Screen Actors Guild and Actors' Equity. We have worked hard, and have been blessed. Our first year has been incredible. Please join us while we ramp it up and continue our journey.

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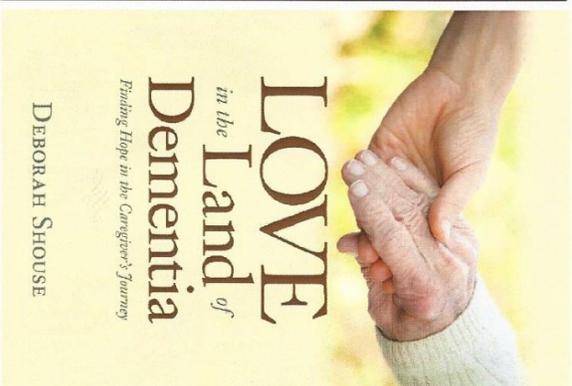
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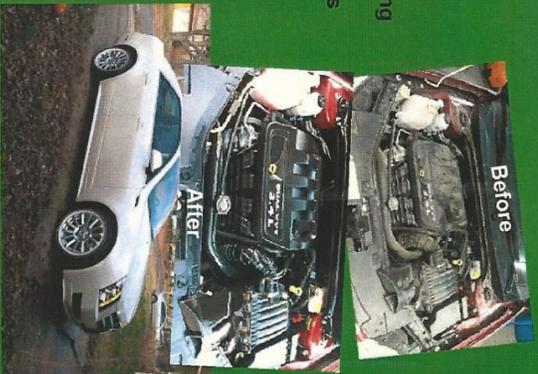
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Special Thanks

As we head into our 2nd season, we'd like to take a minute to look back to 2013 and say thanks to some of the people who helped us get through the first year with firm footing for 2014.

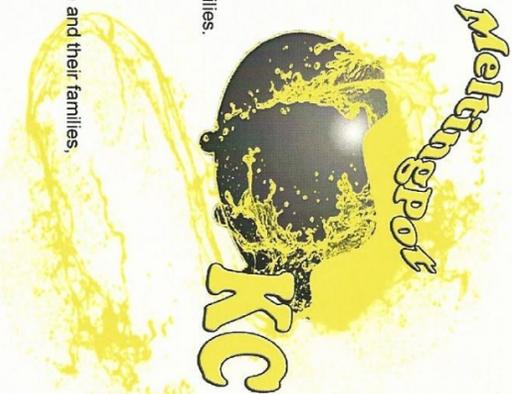
Vanessa Chatman, the first attendee to our first play.
 Terry & Glenna Anderson – For attending EVERY function, Shows and Fundraiser. And they bring us fantastic cakes and treats!
 Special thanks to Don & Pat Degenais and Jacqueline Washington.
 Our mentors, Jacqueline Gafford and Harold Keairnes.
 Those who are there no matter what we need or when we need them, Fran Farah, Tina Martin, Gino Martin.
 Our Friends of MeltingPot volunteer crew,
 Cheryl Harris
 Eric White
 Karen Tate
 Karen Williams
 Laura Smith
 Rhonda Leapheart
 Rita Trotter
 Robin Taylor
 Roman Leapheart
 Sharon Hunt
 Susan Kysela
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 Tricia Draper

Those who donated funds.
 Those who donated time.
 All our cast members and their families.
 Our Crew and helpers,
 Warren Deckert
 Denise Deckert
 Neil Andes
 Tyler Miller

Our wonderful executive committee and their families,
 David Brown
 Gerome Berry
 Linda Williams
 Rayanna Tucker
 Stephanie Williams
 Tiffany Tucker

The countless others who have provided guidance, time, encouragement, constructive feedback, partnerships and support.
 And last, but by no means least, YOU, our patrons. Thank you for gracing us with your time and presence. We hope we have brought you some enjoyment.

With gratitude,
 Harvey Williams
 MeltingPot KC



The Frowning Vajayjays of Shady Pines

Our Mission

MELTINGPOT KC INC.

MELTINGPOT KC is a venture to provide a platform for the expression of theatre and arts in Kansas City and its outlying areas. Our pursuit is to produce or assist in producing original works by local talent, representative of the rich and varied ethnic and life communities in the metropolitan and suburban areas of greater Kansas City. We are dedicated to being a worthy addition to our city's vibrant arts community. Our MELTINGPOT represents the blending of individual endeavors for the enrichment of us all.

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The Frowning Vajajays of Shady Pines, written by Vicki Vodrey opens March 20, 2014

Write Sangria, written by Arika Larson opens May 1, 2014

Echoes of Octavia written, by Michelle T. Johnson opens August 7, 2014

We will also have a joint production with JourneyMan Theatre Company *Behind the Veil*, Next to the *Watercooler*, written by Kerry Austin which opens September 4, 2014

All performances will be held at Just Off Broadway Theatre.
3051 Central in Penn Valley Park, KCMO 64108.
Tickets can be purchased from our website www.kemeltingpot.com or by calling 816-226-8087. Group rates are available.

The Frowning Vajajays

Of Shady Pines
written by Vicki Vodrey



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check us out at
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For ticket info:
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group discounts are available

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Premiere: 03/21/2014
Runs through: 04/06/2014
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In July, we will participate in the KC Fringe Festival. Look for more information soon!

Our affiliate production companies, Journeyman Theatre and MeltingPot KC have a full 2014 session planned.

Discounted season tickets are still available. Get them at the Box Office.

Check out our websites for information on upcoming events and friend us on facebook.

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The Producers Vajajays of Shady Pines



Vicki Vodrey
Playwright

Vicki is a playwright and the owner of Lot In Life Productions, LLC. Her play, "Hanky Panky", was a top-rated play at the 2010 KC Fringe Festival and placed in the top ten in the TRU Voices Playwriting Competition that same year. "Hanky Panky" was in the Midtown International Theatre Festival in 2011 in NYC, and was nominated in three categories – Outstanding New Play, Outstanding Production of a Play, and Outstanding Ensemble. Her play "Thank You Notes: Headed To Heaven W/ Flat Jimmy Fallon" was in KC Fringe in 2012, and then headed straight to the Midtown International Theatre Festival. This award winning production received terrific reviews in both cities, and the production was nominated for five awards by the MITF – Outstanding New Script, Outstanding Lead Actress, Outstanding Supporting Actor, Outstanding Direction and Outstanding Art Direction. Vicki was honored to be chosen by the Kansas City Repertory Theatre in 2013 as one of five playwrights to participate in their first Playwrights' Slam. She was also one of the three finalists in the inaugural year of "Project Playwright" in 2012. Her first play, "Trembles", was a top-three winner in the 2000 Gorilla Theatre Playwriting Competition, received readings in KC and was also produced as a benefit for KC Hospice by Eubank Productions at the Just Off Broadway Theatre. Look for her new play, "A Hard Day's Night", in KC Fringe 2014. Vicki was a theatre critic for Citi News in Kansas City. She has also worked as an actor and acting coach in KC, NY and LA. She is a member of Actors' Equity Association and the Dramatists' Guild. Special Note: Thank you, Michelle T. Johnson, for letting me borrow your term, and teaching me about, "blackanalysis"! For further information and reviews, please go to lotinlifeproductions.com.

Cast



Nancy Marcy* (Marilyn) is thrilled to join the MeltingPot KC theatre family! She loves being a part of a premiere production of a new play, and is honored to work with playwright Vicki Vodrey. Her most recent performance was in the KC Fringe Festival production of Michael Ruth's new play *Devoured by Tigers*. Favorite roles include the title roles of *Shirley Valentine* (QHP), *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* (Coterie), and *Kimberly Akimbo* (MET). Nancy is quite happy as a character actor, especially when the characters are the likes of Nat in *Rabbit Hole* (Okoboji Summer Theatre), the Nurse in *After Juliet* (Coterie), the feisty Italian maid in *Enchanted April* (MET), Gertie in *Fuddy Meers* (Unicorn), and most recently crazy Dorothy in *Inspecting Carol* (KCAT, UMKC, and Unicorn co-production).

Sherri Roulette-Mosley (Bertie) is thrilled to be a part of Vicki Vodrey's *The Frowning Vajajays Of Shady Pines* here with MeltingPot KC. Sherri has performed on several stages in Dallas TX, New York City, and Chicago, Illinois before returning to Kansas City. Some of her favorite KC productions include The Coterie's *A Star Aint Nothin But A Hole in Heaven*, The MET's *Kentucky Cycle*, August Wilson's *Plano Lesson* and *For Colored Girls*, to name a few. She received her Theatre Arts degree from Grambling State University and is very grateful for any opportunity to be apart of bringing a story to life on stage.



Petra Allen (Lila) comes from an extensive theatre background, both parents having been actors, then marrying a man she met in theatre. She now has a son working for New Dramatists in NYC developing new plays and playwrights. Petra got her theatre degree in CA and has both taught and performed for many years. She was Artistic Director with husband, Bob, for the Leawood Stage Co., producing several staged readings of original works, and participated with Project Playwright for the past two years as both actor and judge. Last June, Petra worked with Vicki Vodrey and Sherri Roulette-Mosley on the short version of this terrific play and is thrilled to be with this great cast in the full-length version! Other favorite recent roles include Mother Superior in *Agness of God*, Mary Todd Lincoln in *Mary and Myra*, Martha Brewster in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and Mrs. Chauvenet in *Harvey*.



Cindy Siefers (Peggy) is thrilled and honored to be included in this cast along with three of her favorite actresses! Although only entering the Kansas City theatre scene a couple of years ago, Cindy has been involved in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles and Memphis for a good many years. Upon moving to the Midwest she spent the first 10 years here raising her kids and sending them off to college, eventually deciding to try/re-entering the world she loves and reacquainting herself with live theatre from a new, more "naïve" perspective! In Kansas City, you may have seen her in the past two Fringe Festivals in 2012 as Agatha in *Relevance Productions Buck Hass*, and in 2013's (H)our Productions *The Last Temptation of Harry* as Connie. Special thanks to Vicki Vodrey and Harvey Williams for this wonderful opportunity and to the entire cast and crew for a dream come true.

Cast



Jeff Smith (Jeff) is so excited to be making his MeltingPot KC debut and ecstatic to be working on another Vicki Vodrey show after last playing Joey in *Lucky Streak*. Jeff has performed all throughout Kansas City. His favorite roles include the Minotaur in *Hungry* (Unicorn), Shane in *Pride and Joy* (Actors Against AIDS-Unicorn), Darryl in *The Outsiders* (Coterie Theatre), and Ash in *Evil Dead* (Union Station City Stage). Shameless plug! A show written by Jeff, *A-Cop-Alypse*, will be produced July 17-27th. It's a spoof of the buddy-cop genre that incorporates a zombie apocalypse, so check it out! Sending love to Jill, Jessica, Mom, Dad, Fuad and most of all, my wife Jasmine. Enjoy the show!

Stage Production Staff



Melissa E. Koerner, Production Stage Manager - This is Melissa's first production with MeltingPot KC and she is so excited! In 2013, Melissa moved to Kansas City from Orlando, Florida where she worked for The Orlando Repertory Theatre, Orlando Shakespeare Theater, Beth Marshall Presents, Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival and Walt Disney World Entertainment as a Stage Manager. Although new to Kansas City, she is pleased to work with The Coterie Theatre and The Fishhawk Performance Studio. Melissa would like to thank Greg & Harvey for taking a chance on her and thank the cast for being wonderful! To her new husband, Joel: Love you much!



Warren Decker, Technical Director/Set & Lighting Design - Warren was the Artistic/Technical Director for Great Bend Community Theatre for nearly 20 years, directing such shows as *Book of Days*, *Wit*, *Our Town*, *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday*, *Nunsense* and *The Fantasticks*. He was a member of I.A.T.S.E., Local 190, Wichita, KS; technical director/designer for the Bethel College Theatre Department, and has designed lighting and/or sets for over 150 productions. Some recent projects include directing the Wichita Community Theatre production of *Becky's New Car*, lighting design for *Enchanted April* (MET) and producing and directing the 2013 KC Fringe Festival shows *Bertrice At Bay* and *The Butterfly Effect*. He is part of the front-of-house staff of the Kansas City Repertory Theatre as one of the assistant house managers/volunteer coordinators. This spring and summer he will design two more shows for MeltingPot and direct the KC premiere of *Gidion's Knot* for the 2014 KC Fringe Festival. Next January he will direct and co-produce with MeltingPot KC Theatre the KC premiere of *Waiting To Be Invited*.



*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States, appearing under a Special Appearance Contract.

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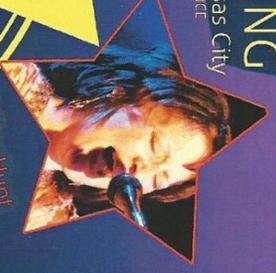
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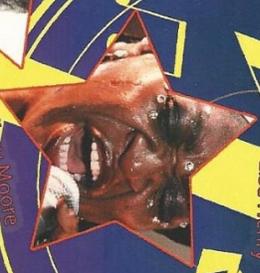
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Lisa Henry



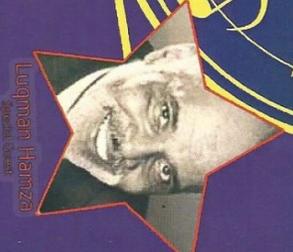
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Mavis Moore



Pamela Basikin - Watson



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Stage Production Staff



Michelle T. Johnson, Assistant Director - Michelle is a Kansas City-based local and national diversity consultant and speaker. A former journalist and attorney, Johnson has three published books on workplace diversity and has written a freelance column in the Kansas City Star as the "Diversity Diva" since January 2008.

Michelle is also a playwright. Her play *Echoes of Octavia* will be produced by KC MeltingPot this August and her plays *Trading Places* and an expanded *Wiccans in the Hood* will be produced in the 2014 season of Brainspunk Theater of Philadelphia, PA.



Harvey Williams, Director - Harvey Williams, the founder of MELTINGPOT KC INC., has been seen in theatres in and around the Kansas City Area. In addition to local stage performances he has traveled to Adelaide Australia, and Bedford UK. Harvey is a member of The Screen Actors Guild and Actors' Equity. We have worked hard, and have been blessed. Our first year has been incredible. Please join us while we ramp it up and continue our journey.

Jewelry pieces for the Vajajays provided by Julie Lacy. Visit her in the lobby to purchase your pieces.

Bridge lessons provided by Jeanie Brown.

The Prompts
Vajajays
of Shady Pines
written by Vicki Adams

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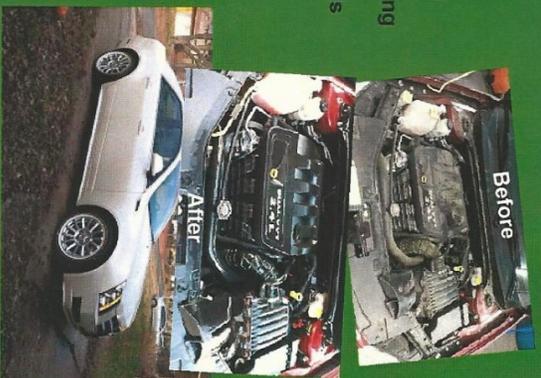
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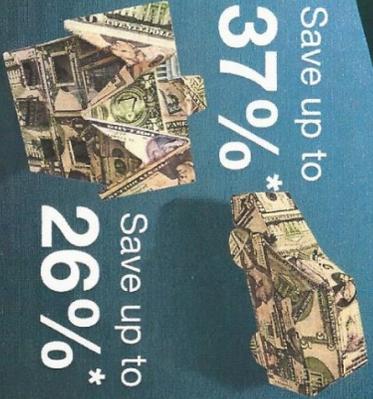
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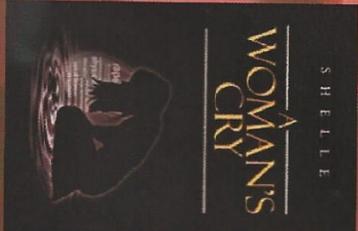
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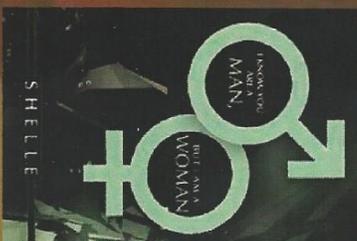


A Woman's Cry

As with her previous book "I Know You Are A Man, But I Am A Woman", Shelle highlights domestic violence and the repercussions of such acts. She also highlights the lasting effects of child abuse into adulthood and how it affects your relationships with others. A self-help book with a sense of direction on being positive about oneself, daring to dream, daring to love oneself, and daring to accomplish anything you put your mind to. Shelle continues to bring awareness of abuse on women and children to light.

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MeltingPot KC

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 March 20-23, 27-30, April 3-6

"White Sangeria" written by Arika Larson
 May 1-4, 8-11, 15-18

"Echoes of Octavia" written by Michelle T. Johnson
 August 7-10, 14-17, 21-24

Journeyman Theatre Company & MeltingPot KC Joint Production

"Behind the Veil, Next to the Watercooler" written by Kerry Austin
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Echoes of Octavia

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Echoes OF Octavia

Written by Michelle T. Johnson



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Preview: 08/07/2014

Premiere: 08/08/2014

Runs through: 08/24/2014

Curtain: 7:30PM Thur - Sat

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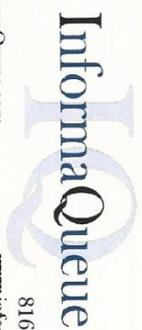
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Echoes of Octavia

written by Michelle T. Johnson

A family business about to take off. A chance of a lifetime far away from family. To pick one is to close the door on the other. But these are the choices faced by Zora Anderson as emotional ghosts tug her in different directions forcing her to choose between loyalty and independence.

Directed by Harvey Williams, "Echoes of Octavia" features the cast of Alishah Harvey, Sherri Roulette-Mosley, Granville T. O'Neal, Peley McGee, Alisha Espinosa, and Donovan McClendon.



Michelle T. Johnson is proud to join the MeltingPot KC team for this amazing season of works by KC women! Her plays have been seen in the Barn Players of Mission, Kansas' "2011 Six By Ten Festival," the 2012 Kansas City Fringe Festival and by Potluck Productions in 2012. She was selected as a featured playwright in the Unicorn Theater's Writer Showcase in February 2013 and as a participant in the 2013 Project Playwright 2.0 competition.

Michelle continues to showcase her talent around the country with award nominations and plays produced in New York, Philadelphia, Texas and Connecticut. Johnson's play "Wiccans in the Hood" was selected for and produced in the "Midwinter Madness Short Play Festival" in New York City in February 2013 and the play was the sixth best-attended show in the 2013 Kansas City Fringe Festival. Michelle is the Playwright-in-Residence for Brainspunk Theater of Philadelphia with her play "Final Arrangements" scheduled for May 2015.

Cast



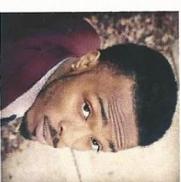
Alishah Harvey (Zora) is a student at UMKC studying Theatre and Black Studies. You may have seen her in the following shows: *For Colored Girls*, *The Cover of Life*, *Seven Guitars*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Everybody Loves Opal*, and *Grease*, just to name a few. Alishah plans "to let the Lord lead me on my journey of acting. I know I'll end up in the movies this way!"



Granville T. O'Neal (Roscoe) is a local actor who has performed in many theatre venues in and around the Kansas City metropolitan area, including Lawrence and Topeka Kansas. His most recent stage performances were with the Corolie Theatre in their production of *Bud*, *Not Buddy* and a cameo appearance in MeltingPot KC's production of *JFK-A Ghostly Evening*. He serves on the board of The Traditional Music Society. A graduate of Park College, his resume includes movies, two of which were recently released, "Destination, Planet Negro" and "Jayhawkers," commercials, and voice overs. He is a retired fire fighter with the Kansas City Kansas Fire Department and is Co-founder of the MC Players. Granville enjoys anything that has to do with live theatre and credits his high school drama teacher for introducing him to the stage. He would like to thank the MeltingPot KC Family and his wife for the opportunity to continue to sate his theatrical appetite.



Sherrie Roulette-Mosley (Nelly) is thrilled to be back at MeltingPot KC shortly after enjoying a terrific run as 'Bertie' in their production of *The Frowning Vajjayays Of Shady Pine*. Sherri has performed on several stages in Dallas TX, New York City, and Chicago, Illinois before returning back to KC. Some of her favorite KC productions include, several Fringe Shows, *The Coterie's*, *A Star Ain't Nothin But A Hole in Heaven*, *The MET's*, *Kentucky Cycle*, *Plano Lesson* and *For Colored Girls*, to name a few. Also, look for Sherri in the Coterie's 2014 season opener *Rosa Parks*, running Sept. 23rd-Oct 19th. Sherri received her Theatre Arts degree from Grambling State University and feels very blessed and grateful for any opportunity to be apart of bringing a story to life on



Peley McGee (Milo) is a 3rd-year theatre performance major at UMKC. Peley went to high school at Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts in Kansas City, Missouri and Franklin High School in Somerset, New Jersey. Peley has performed roles such as Red Carter in *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson, *Man in Play* by Samuel Beckett, and John in *The Whipping Man* by Matthew Lopez, to name a few. This upcoming fall he will play the part of Oberon in *Midsummer Nights Dream* by William Shakespeare. In Peley's spare time he enjoys producing and performing music.



MeltingPot KC's 2015 Season Schedule

"WAITING TO BE INVITED"

by S.M. Shephard-Massat
 January 16th thru February 1st
 MeltingPot in partnership with Phoenix KC Theatre

"TRUTH STANDS"

by Kansas City Writer Ms. Cynthia Hardeman.
 February 6th thru February 22nd

"OLD SCHOOL"

by Harvey Williams
 August 13th thru August 30th

"ON SHOULDERS NOW"

A Christmas Story
 by Harvey Williams
 November 27th thru December 20th



All shows will be part of the Season of Productions of
 The Just Off Broadway Theatre
 3051 Central, KCMO 64108
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 or visit meltingpot.com

Cast (cont.)



Alisha Espinosa (Jessie) is thrilled to be making her Melting Pot debut and performing a role in her first Michelle T. Johnson play. She was last seen at The Unicorn in *Water by the Spoonful* (Yazmin) and at the Coleridge in *Afflicted: Daughters of Salem* (Triuba). Alisha is currently starting her third year in UMKC's MFA Acting program. Her recent credits there include *Almost, Maine* (Gayle/Ginette), *Seven Guitars* (Ruby), and *Kansas City Swing* (Moira).



Donovan McClendon (Professor Lane) is a native of Kansas City Missouri. He has always had a desire to be in film and theatre. He is happy to be making his stage debut in MeltingPot KC's production of *Echoes of Octavia*. This is his first major role on stage. Donovan is very excited and honored to be a part of this production. He has a love for cars, music and putting a smile on people's faces. He would like to thank his father for being a strong role model in his life, his mother, brother and friends for their support.

Stage Production Staff



Melissa E. Koerner, Production Stage Manager - *Echoes of Octavia* is Melissa's third production with MeltingPot KC (*The Frowning Valley/ays of Shady Pines* and *White Sangria*). Melissa is from Orlando, Florida where she was stage manager for The Orlando Repertory Theatre, Beth Marshall Presents, Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival, and Orlando Shakespeare Theatre (*The Exit Interview*, *NWPN World Premiere*). For five years she was also an Entertainment Manager, Fireworks Manager and Special Event Manager for Walt Disney World Entertainment. Melissa is currently the Company Manager for the Kansas City Repertory Theatre but has worked with the Fishback Performance Studio and The Coleridge Theatre. She would like to give special thanks to the entire company of MeltingPot KC for welcoming her into the family; you are all truly wonderful. For her husband Joel - I couldn't do any of this without your support. I love you much!



Warren Decker, Technical Director/Set & Lighting Design - Warren is the Artist/Technical Director for Great Bend Community Theatre for nearly 20 years, directing such shows as *Book of Days*, *Wit*, *Our Town*, *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday*, *Nurse and The Fansticks*. He has designed lighting and/or sets for over 150 productions. Some recent projects include directing the Wichita Community Theatre production of *Becky's New Car*, lighting design for *Enchanted April* (MET) and producing and directing the 2013 KC Fringe Festival shows *Bernice At Bay* and *The Buttery Effect*. He is part of the front-of-house staff of the Kansas City Repertory Theatre as one of the assistant house managers/volunteer coordinators. This summer he will design *Echoes of Octavia* for MeltingPot and direct the KC premiere of Giddon's *Knot* for the 2014 KC Fringe Festival. Next January he will direct and co-produce with MeltingPot KC Theatre the Kansas City premiere of *Waiting To Be Invited*.



Lynn King, Assistant Director is delighted to re-join the MeltingPot KC family for *Echoes Of Octavia*. For the past 6 six years, she has been a Middle and High School theatre instructor and director at The Pembroke Hill School. During that time, she has produced one Middle School and one High school production each year. Lynn is a Kansas City native and recently performed with MeltingPot KC in productions of *Old School Ghetto Gospel*, *The Session*, and *JFK - A Ghostly Evening*. Lynn was honored with a Best in KC award for acting and has appeared in several film projects including the recently released *JAYHAWKERS* directed by Kevin Willmott. A special thanks to Harvey, Michelle, Linda, Melissa, and this incredibly talented cast. Lynn would like to thank Dennis and her family for their support. She is deeply grateful for each and every blessing.

Harvey Williams, Director - Harvey Williams, the founder of MELTINGPOT KC, INC., has been seen in theatres in and around the Kansas City Area. In addition to local stage performances he has traveled to Adelaide Australia, and Bedford UK. Harvey is a member of The Screen Actors Guild and Actors' Equity. We have worked hard, and have been blessed. Our first year has been incredible. Please join us while we ramp it up and continue our journey.



Echoes OF Octavia

written by Michelle T. Johnson

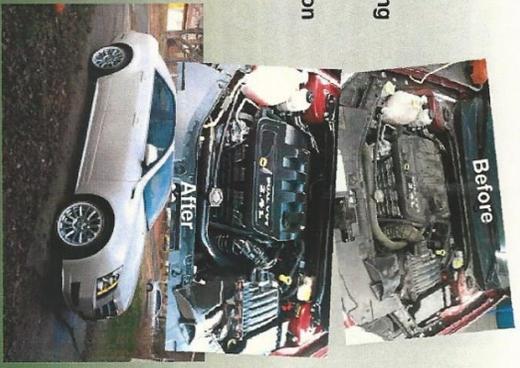
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Special Thanks

Mercedez Morgan-Rutai for designing and making the wig for this production.
Terry & Glenna Anderson
Ron Zoglin and Debraarah Shouse
Our mentors, Jacqueline Gafford and Harold Kealines.
Those who are there no matter what we need or when we need them, Fran Farah,
Tina Martin, Gino Martin.
Our Friends of MeltingPot volunteer crew,
Cheryl Harris
Eric White
Steven Wilson
Richlyn Morris
Marta Reynolds
Brian Cushmanberry
Karen Williams
Laura Smith
Rhonda Leapheart
Rita Trotter
Robin Taylor
Roman Leapheart
Sharon Hunt
Susan Kysela
Tricia Draper

Those who donated funds.
Those who donated time.
All our cast members and their families.
Our Crew and helpers,
Warren Deckert
Denise Deckert
Melissa Koerner

Our wonderful executive committee and their families,
David Brown
Gerome Berry
Linda Williams
Rayanna Tucker
Stephanie Williams
Tiffany Tucker

The countless others who have provided guidance, time, encouragement, constructive
feedback, partnerships and support.
And last, but by no means least, YOU, our patrons. Thank you for gracing us with your
time and presence. We hope we have brought you some enjoyment.

With gratitude,
Harvey Williams
MeltingPot KC

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Waiting To Be Invited

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WAITING TO BE INVITED

Drama by S.M. Shephard-Massat



January 16-31, 2015

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The "black box" theatre has seating for 200 guests and gives production companies a space that can be configured to meet the needs of their production.

The Penn Valley room has seating for 65 guests and is optimal for rehearsals, meetings and small productions. This space also features a professional grade dance floor.

Our scenic grounds are ideal for picture taking and outdoor events.

Our anchor production company, KC MeltingPot Theatre has an entire 2015 season planned for your enjoyment.

Check out our websites for information on upcoming events and friend us on facebook.

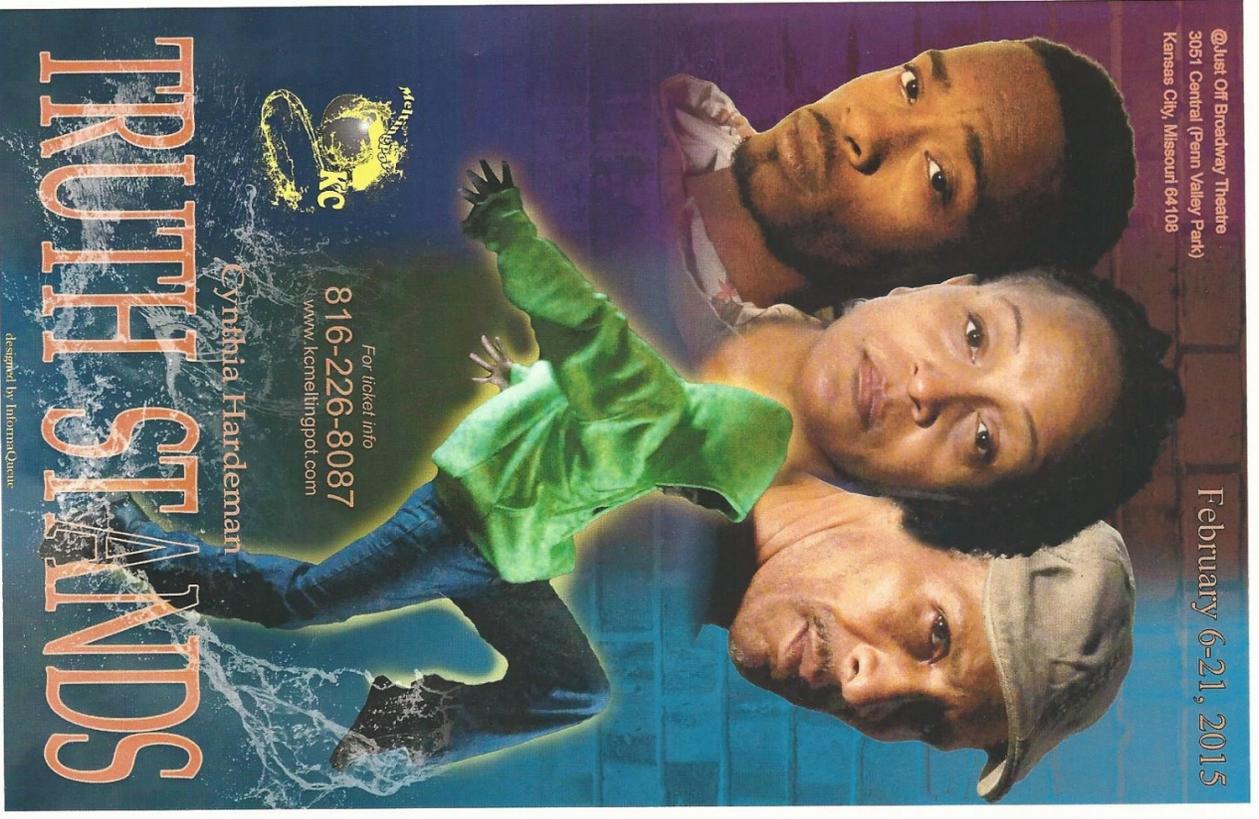
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February 6-21, 2015



TRUTH STANDS

Cynthia Hardemann

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KC MeltingPot Theatre

in partnership with

Phoenix KC Theatre

presents

WAITING TO BE INVITED

by S.M. Shephard-Massat

CAST

Ms. Odessa Sherri Roulette-Mosley
Ms. Louise Lynn King
Ms. Delores Aishah Harvey
Palmeroy Bateman Harvey Williams
Ms. Grayson Marilyn Lynch
Ms. Ruth Shawna Downing

Atlanta, Georgia -- Summer, 1964

ACT 1 -- The women's dressing room of the
Hornsby Toy Company and a city bus

Intermission -- 15 minutes

ACT 2 -- Outside Marsh's Department Store

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director Warren Deckert
Production Stage Manager/Dramaturg
..... Melissa Koerner-Fritzinger
Costumes Gary Campbell

Director's Notes

Atlanta, 1964 -- A point in history that is both dated or timeless, depending on whether you're looking at a calendar or in a mirror. The struggle for equal rights that led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a battle that still has not been won in the hearts and minds of many Americans. Campaigns for equality on many other issues -- religious freedom, freedom to marry, opportunity for economic justice, the list goes on -- are still being fought today. The stories of many past Americans, both famous and anonymous, who found the courage to stand on the side of right, often at great personal risk, are -- and should be -- still an inspiration to us today.

-- Warren Deckert
Phoenix KC Theatre
-- "Take Flight"

Special Thanks

Lana Barnett	Rhonda Leapheart	Marla Reynolds
Laura Burkhart	Roman Leapheart	Monte Sledge
Timothy Burks	Vickie Little	Laura Smith
Brian Cushenberry	Marilyn Lynch	Robin Taylor
Tricia Draper	Gino Martin	Rita Trotter
Joyce Fulps	Tina Martin	Roy Tucker
Cheryl Harris	Richlyn Morris	Eric White
Sharon Hunt	Arthur Newton	Karen Williams
Susan Kysela		

MeltingPot/Phoenix Executive Committee & Family

Gerome Berry	Rayanna Tucker
David Brown	Tiffany Tucker
Denise Deckert	Linda Williams
Joel Fritzinger	Stephanie Williams

Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

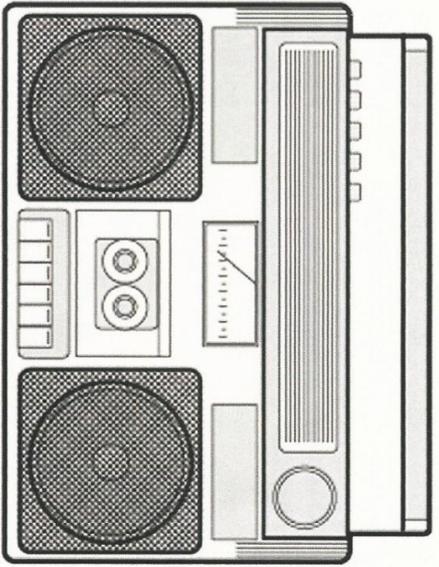
Waiting To Be Invited was originally produced at the
Denver Center Theatre Company
Donovan Marley, Artistic Director
A US WEST World Premiere

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Cast



Sherri Roulette-Mosley (Ms. Odessa) is very excited to be apart of this Phoenix/KC MeltingPot joint production of *Waiting To Be Invited*. She feels honored to be back with KC MeltingPot after appearing as 'Berlie' in their production of *The Frowning Vajajays Of Shady Pine* and as 'Nelly' in *Echroses of Octavia*. Sherri has performed on several stages in Dallas Tx., New York City, and Chicago, Illinois before returning back to KC. Some of her favorite KC productions include, *The Colerife's*, *Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott*, and *A Star Ain't Nothin But A Hole In Heaven*. The METS, Kentucky Cycle, *Piano Lesson* and *For Colored Girls*, to name a few. Also, look for Sherri in KC MeltingPots next show, *Truth Stands*. Sherri received her Theatre Arts degree from Grambling State University and feels very blessed and grateful for any opportunity to be apart of bringing a story to life on stage.



Lynn King (Ms. Louise) is delighted to return to the KC MeltingPot family for *Waiting To Be Invited*. She was last here wearing a new hat, Assistant Director, for the production of *Echroses of Octavia*. Lynn is a proud Kansas City native and has appeared onstage for Theatre for Young America, InPlay Theatre Co., Colerife Theatre, New Theatre Restaurant, KC Repertory Theatre, The Unicorn Theatre, JCCC and UMKC Theatre Depts., (her alma mater), and with the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre. She has previously performed with KC MeltingPot in productions of *Old School Ghetto Gospel*, *The Session*, and *JFK: A Ghostly Evening*. Lynn is proud to have been honored with a Best in KC award for acting and has appeared in several film projects including the recently released *JAYHAWKERS* directed by Kevin Willmott. A special thanks to Harvey, Linda, Melissa, and this incredibly talented cast. Thanks too, to Dennis and to my family for their love and support. Lynn feels truly blessed and deeply grateful for the opportunity to do what she loves most.



Aishah Harvey (Ms. Deloris) is a student at UMKC, studying Theatre and Black Studies. She has performed in quite a few plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Titania, *Seven Guitars* as Louise, *The Cover of Life* as Sybil, *A Letter to the Black as Chanel*, *Echroses of Octavia* as Octavia, and *The Wizard of Oz* as The Wicked Witch of the West. Aishah plans to move to California after graduating to fulfill her destiny of being a phenomenal actress and role model!



Shawna Downing (Ms. Ruth) is excited to be making her KC MeltingPot debut at Just Off Broadway Theatre. Currently, she works professionally as an actor/singer based in Kansas City having worked with: the Colerife Theatre, Egadsi Theatre Company, Theatre for Young America, Heart of America Shakespeare Festival, Fishank Performance Studio, Jewish Community Center, and Summit Theatre Group. She was last seen playing Myrrhine in *Lysistrata Lones with Egadsi Theatre Company* and *Girl On Girl* in the 2014 Fringe Festival. In addition, she is also a teaching artist with Kansas City Young Audiences and a peer educator with the Dramatic Health Education Project. Shawna would like to thank her family and friends for their love and support and the incredible cast and crew of *Waiting To Be Invited*. Inspire. Entertain. Educate.

Cast (cont.)



Marilyn Lynch (Mrs. Grayson) was last seen at Just Off Broadway in KC MeltingPot's production of *The Session* and Phoenix Theatre's Fringe Festival 2013 entry *Bernice at Bay* in Union Station's City Stage Theatre. She was most recently seen as Grandma Kurnitz in the METS's production of *Lost in Yonkers*. "It's always a delight to work with Warren and Harvey." Harvey and Marilyn performed in Central Standard Theatre's production of *Driving Miss Daisy* together and toured the production to the Fringe Festivals in Bedford, England and Adelaide, Australia. "Way too much fun. So sit back, and relax as you have been invited to experience this marvelous play."



Harvey Williams (Palmeroy Bateman), the founder of KC MELTINGPOT, has been seen in theatres in and around the Kansas City Area. In addition to local stage performances he has traveled to Adelaide Australia, and Bedford UK. Harvey is a member of The Screen Actors Guild and Actors' Equity.

"We have worked hard, and have been blessed. Our first two years have been incredible. Please join us while we ramp it up and continue our journey."



Stage Production Staff



Melissa E. Koerner, Production Stage Manager - Waiting To Be Invited is Melissa's fourth production with KC MeltingPot. (Production Stage Manager - *The Frothing Vajjajays of Shady Pines, White Sangria and Echoes of Octavia*). Melissa is from Orlando, Florida where she was stage manager for The Orlando Repertory Theatre, Beth Marshall Presents, Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival, and Orlando Shakespeare Theatre (*The Exit Interview, NPN World Premiere*). For five years she was also an Entertainment Manager, Fireworks Manager and Special Event Manager for Walt Disney World Entertainment. Currently the Company Manager for the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Melissa has also worked with the Fishback Performance Studio as Production Assistant and The Colerle Theatre as Stage Manager.

Melissa would like to give special thanks to the entire company of KC MeltingPot for welcoming her into the family: "You are all truly wonderful". For her husband Joel: "I couldn't do any of this without your support, I love you much!"



Gary Campbell, Costumes/Props - has been an Actor, Production Assistant, Prop and Costume Designer for many KC theatres! His 2014 design credit includes: *Spinning Tree Theatre's Violet and Ghost Writer* (both Costume/Prop Designer) and *A Little Night Music* (Prop Designer). The Living Room Theatre's *Master of the Universe* Costume Designer and Costume Designer for KC Strips- the KC Artists Against Aids benefit for Aids Walk 2014. He was a founding member with Late Night Theatre on stage in many, many productions (usually in a dress) and as a designer. His most recent acting credit: Sophia in the LNT reunion show of *Gold! Girls Gone Wild!!!* Gary is currently the Costume and Properties Rental Manager for the Kansas City Repertory Theatre. "Love to Darrel and his Sister Saints."



Warren Deckert, Director/Technical Director - Warren's 45 years of theatre experience include being the Artistic/Technical Director for Great Bend Community Theatre, Technical Director/Designer for the Bethel College Drama Department and union membership in I.A.T.S.E., Local 190, Wichita, KS. He has designed the lighting and/or sets for over 160 productions. Currently he is an Assistant House Manager for Kansas City Repertory Theatre, the Resident Technical Director/Designer for KC MeltingPot Theatre and the Producing Director of Phoenix KC Theatre -- grateful for the ongoing partnership with MeltingPot. Upcoming projects include directing 3 shows -- Frank Higgins' new play *The Taste Test* (June), Vicki Vodrey's new play *Sue Aside...* (KC Fringe Festival/July) and a reprise of the 2014 KC Fringe Festival show *Gidion's Knot* (October) as well as designing 3 shows for MeltingPot.

WAITING TO BE INVITED

Drama by S. M. Shephard-Massai

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE JANUARY 19, 2015



"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. devoted his life to equality, social justice, economic advancement, and opportunity for all. He challenged us to build a more perfect union and taught us that everyone has a role to play in making America what it ought to be.

By making service part of our daily lives, we can help realize Dr. King's dream. Together, we can create and sustain opportunities for Americans to strengthen their own and other's economic opportunity, ensure that more young people graduate from high school, support our military families and veterans, and help communities prepare for and recover from disaster. Together, we demonstrate what it means to be citizens.

What is the MLK Day of Service?

After a long struggle, legislation was signed in 1983 creating a federal holiday marking the birthday of Dr. King. Americans first observed the holiday in 1986. In 1994, Congress designated the holiday as a national day of service and charged the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) with leading this effort. Taking place each third Monday in January, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service is the only federal holiday observed as a national day of service -- a "day on, not a day off." This day of service empowers individuals, strengthens communities, bridges barriers, addresses social problems, and moves us closer to Dr. King's vision of a "Beloved Community."

Why Serve on MLK Day?

Dr. King recognized the power of service. He famously said, "Everyone can be great because everybody can serve." Observing the Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday through service

is a way to begin each year with a commitment to make your community better. Your service honors Dr. King's life and teachings and helps meet national challenges.

Service also brings people together of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. The MLK Day of Service encourages all types of service, particularly projects that have a lasting impact and connect participants to ongoing service. The most successful projects connect to the life and teaching of Dr. King, meet a pressing community need, and include time to reflect on his teachings.

We encourage organizations to join us in supporting and implementing projects that increase economic opportunities, improve education, support veterans and military families, and help communities prepare for and recover from disaster. We have several toolkits available at MLKDay.gov to help you plan these kinds of projects.

The Corporation for National and Community Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW | Washington, D.C. 20525 | 202-606-6000 | MLKDay.gov

Truth Stands

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TRUTH STANDS

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February 6-21, 2015

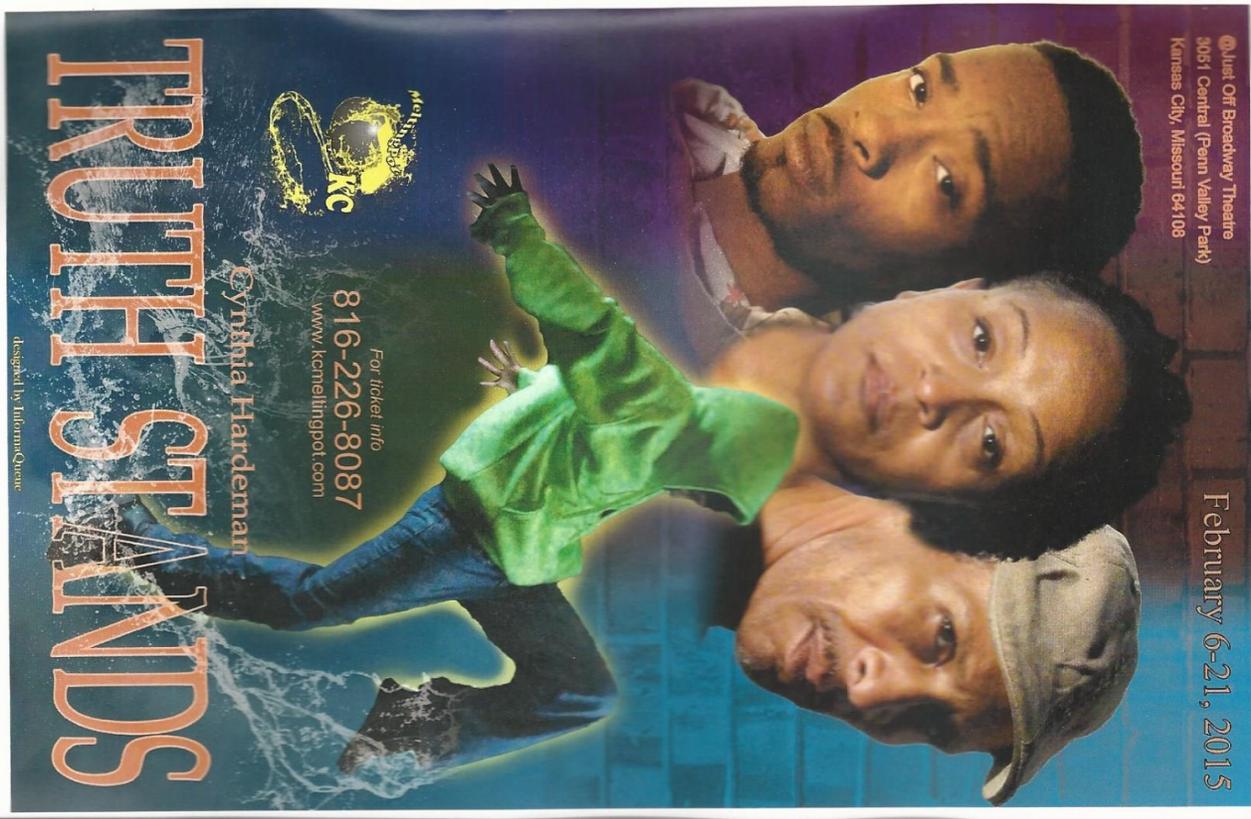


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Cynthia Hardeman

TRUTH STANDS

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Coming

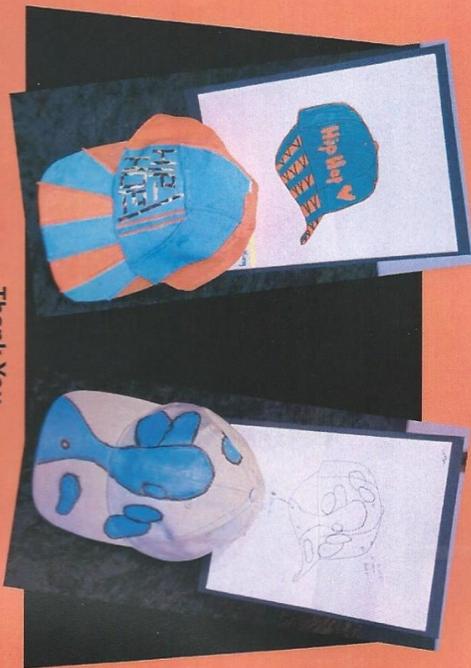
June 12th

The Taste Test

by Frank Higgins



African Centered College Preparatory
Academy and DeLaSalle
"Lid Project"



Thank You

We are very thankful for the Executive Director Mark Williamson and Art Teacher Mikendra Young at DeLaSalle and Principal Chester C. Palmer and Art Teacher Vanessa Toland at the African Centered College Preparatory Academy for allowing their students to participate in the "Lid Project". Their students designed ball caps for the main character and competed for the design that would be worn during the live production of "Truth Stands."



Congratulations to Hannah P. King of ACE and Cristian Perez of De La Salle who both designed winning caps! Thanks for the outstanding designs and efforts of all the participating students.

So very grateful, Cynthia Hardeman Playwright

*Caps are available for purchase. See bidding sheets in lobby. Proceeds benefit KC MeltingPot Theatre

TRUTH STANDS

Cynthia Hardeman

At the intersection of addiction, family, hopes and dreams, estranged siblings find each other through their love of hip-hop and inherited musical abilities.

Their chance encounter on a dark street corner begins to unravel their lives as they know it and leads to a revelation of secrets. Father, mother, children alike, no one here will be spared from the truth. Will it set them free or will they sulk back into their familiar cocoons of oppression?



Cynthia Hardeman is a graduate of Spanish and Theatre from The University of Missouri Kansas City. Born and raised in Kansas City Cynthia traveled the world serving in the United States Air Force. She is currently a family advocate for families in crisis and mentor for at-risk youth.

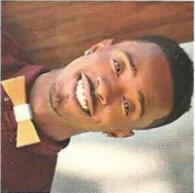
Cynthia's love of the theatre led her to begin playwrighting classes in 2011 at UMKC under the instruction of renown playwright Frank Higgins. In 2012, her one act play Jack and Jill was produced in Intensity: 10 Bite-Sized Plays by 10 KC Writers at the Fishbank Performance Studio. Her first full length play Truth be Dead was chosen as a finalist to be workshopped in the 2012 WordBRIDGE Playwrights Laboratory, at CenterStage Theatre in Baltimore, MD. In the fall of 2012 Cynthia was selected to participate in a Gala for 'The Unicorn Theatres' playwright showcase with her short politically themed play Like Me. Which led to the subsequent reading of her play aka Truth at the Unicorn Theatre. Cynthia was the 2013 Winner of Kansas City's Project Playwright 2.0, having three of her Ten minute plays produced There Goes Brazil, Ready to Go and A Soldier's Return. That same year Truth Stands had its original production at Coppin State University in Baltimore, MD. Cynthia then joined Michelle T. Johnson and Teresa Leggard in writing and producing the Girl on Girl production for the 2014 KC Fringe Festival. Grateful to Harvey and Linda Williams with KC MeltingPot Theatre for it's KC Premiere of Truth Stands at Just Off Broadway Theatre.

Cast



Shawna Downing (Junebug) is excited to appear in her second KC MeltingPot production, following her KCAMP debut in *Waiting To Be Invited*. Currently, Shawna works professionally as an actor/singer based in Kansas City having worked with: the Coleridge Theatre, Egadsi Theatre Company, Theatre for Young America, Heart of America Shakespeare Festival, Fishank Performance Studio, Jewish Community Center, and Summit Theatre Group. She was last seen playing Myrrhine in *Lysistrata* Jones with Egadsi Theatre Company and *Girl on Girl* in the 2014 Fringe Festival. In addition, Shawna is also a teaching artist with Kansas City Young Audiences and a peer educator with the Dramatic Health Education Project.

Shawna would like to thank her family and friends for their love and support and the incredible cast and crew of Truth Stands. Inspire. Entertain. Educate.



Pezey McGee (JD) went to high school at Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts in Kansas City, Missouri and Franklin High School in Somerset, New Jersey. Pezey has performed roles such as Red Carter in *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson, Oberon in *Midsummer Nights Dream* by William Shakespeare, Millicent in *Echoes Of Octavia* by Kansas City playwright, Michelle T. Johnson, and Adrian in *Private Eyes* by Steven Dietz, to name a few. In his spare time, Pezey enjoys producing and performing music. Pezey is a 3rd-year theatre performance major at UMKC.



John (Br. John) Anderson (Popz) This is Br. John's debut appearance in a KC MeltingPot Theater production. However, he is no stranger to the stage. From his early career days of being founder/co-artistic director (and actor) in a community theater company, to over 20 years experience as a motivational storyteller, Br. John strongly champions the Arts as a vehicle for communication, healing and therapy.

Currently, an ordained minister, former children's pastor and early childhood educator. Br. John has had the pleasure of developing and presenting several educational stage presentations throughout the country that combines his two passions, Music and Cultural History. *Tales From The Black West* (The Musical) and *John Henry: Man, Myth and Legend* are just two of his acclaimed, one man showcases. Br. John has also produced and been featured in *Hey Minnie The Moocher: A Tribute To The Cotton Club Swing Jazz Legends* and *Br. John Sings Sam Cooke: A Tribute To The Father Of Soul*. Both shows won respectively, the 2013 and 2014 "Best Of Venue Award" in the KC Fringe Festival.

Br. John also hosts a monthly, musical, open mic performance titled, *Br. John's Motivational & R&B/Soul Showcase* and can be heard as co-host on "Legacy Alive Testify" an empowerment/inspirational, internet, talk-show.



Sherri Roulette-Mosley (Momz) is very excited to be a part of KC MeltingPot's production of *Truth Stands*. Sherri feels honored to be back with KC MeltingPot after appearing as Ms. Odessa in their joint production with Phoenix KC Theatre of *Waiting To Be Invited*. You might also remember Sherri as 'Bert' in KC MeltingPot's play *The Frowning Vajjayjays Of Shady Pine*, written by local playwright Vicki Vodrey, and as 'Nelly' in *Echoes of Octavia*.

Sherri has performed on several stages in Dallas Tx., New York City, and Chicago, Illinois before returning back to KC. Some of her favorite KC productions include: *The Coleridge's*, *Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott*, and *A Star Ain't Nothin' But A Hole in Heaven*, *The METS*, *Kentucky Cycle*, *Piano Lesson* and *For Colored Girls*, to name a few.

Cast/Stage Production Staff



Victoria Barbee (Momz/Understudy) has been sharing her gift of song, since she was a child in her father's church, for more than 45 yrs. She was introduced to theater in 1998, here in KC, at the Historic Gem Theater in their production of *Black Nativity*. Since then Victoria has been blessed to be consistently working by lending her voice to numerous causes, in which she believes. Currently, one can hear Victoria's band, *Dark & Darker*, featured monthly in the P&L District at Hotel Phillips, 12th & Baltimore. Victoria's most recent theatrical production credits are: *For Colored Girls*, *RA&TIME* and *How to Succeed in Business* all performed at the MET during the past year. However, she was last seen as Norma in *Hearts on Hardbody* at the Unicorn theater.

Victoria is overjoyed for being invited into the company/family of KC MeltingPot at Just Off Broadway Theatre.



Melissa E. Koerner, Production Stage Manager - *Truth Stands* is Melissa's fifth production with KC MeltingPot (Production Stage Manager- *The Frowning Vajjayjays of Shady Pines*, *Write Sangra*, *Echoes of Octavia* and *Waiting To Be Invited*). Melissa is from Orlando, Florida where she was Stage Manager for The Orlando Repertory Theatre, Beth Marshall Presents, Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival, and Orlando Shakespeare Theater (*The Exit Interview*, NNPN World Premiere). For five years she was also an Entertainment Manager, Fireworks Manager and Special Event Manager for Walt Disney World Entertainment. Currently the Company Manager for the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Melissa has also worked with the Fishank Performance Studio as Production Assistant and The Coleridge Theatre as Stage Manager.



Warren Decker, Technical Director/Designer - Warren's 45 years of theater experience include being the Artistic/Technical Director for Great Bend Community Theatre, Technical Director/Designer for the Bethel College Drama Department and union membership in I.A.T.S.E., Local 190, Wichita, KS. He has designed the lighting and/or sets for over 180 productions. Currently he is an Assistant House Manager for Kansas City Repertory Theatre, the Resident Technical Director/Designer for KC MeltingPot Theatre and the Producing Director of Phoenix KC Theatre -- grateful for the ongoing partnership with MeltingPot.

Upcoming projects include directing 3 shows -- Frank Higgins' new play *The Taste Test* (June), Vicki Vodrey's new play *Sue Aside...* (KC Fringe Festival/July) and a reprise of the 2014 KC Fringe Festival show *Gidlon's Knot* (September) as well as designing 2 shows for KC MeltingPot.



Jacqueline L. Gafford, Director - has been an Actor, Stage Manager, Playwright and Director in Kansas City for over 25 years. She has been a member of Actors Equity for over 20 years. As an actor her work has been seen at New Directions Theatre, Theatre for Young America, The Coleridge and The Unicorn. She has also directed at TYA, The Unicorn, UMKC, Rockhurst University, and Lawrence Community Theatre. Ms. Gafford directed MeltingPot's premier production "Old School Ghetto Gospel" in 2013 and will be happy to direct the reprisal production later this year.

Ms. Gafford is Artistic Director of Inplay Theatre Company, a not-for-profit multiracial performing arts organization which is an original member of the Just Off Broadway Association. As playwright Ms. Gafford penned the highly successful Harlem Knights, and Nothing Comes to Sleepers and also co-authored along with Gene Mackey, Artistic Director of Theatre for Young America, *The Journey of Barbara Jordan*. Ms. Gafford welcomes this opportunity to once again work with old friends and colleagues. "Okay let's make magic."

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 1st Place



Shelby Mabery
 Runner-up



KC MeltingPot would like to thank the Kansas City Art Institute Program Instructor, Hector Casanova, and all participating students for their time and commitment to this project.

All artwork is available for purchase and is on display in the lobby.

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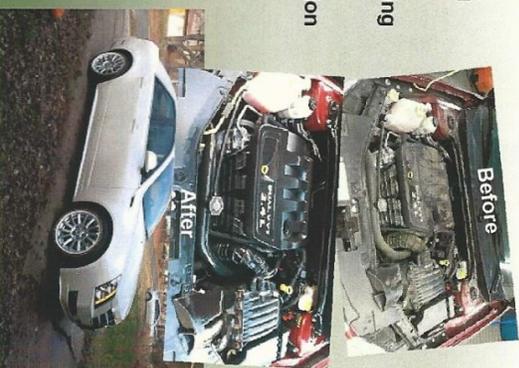
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The Taste Test



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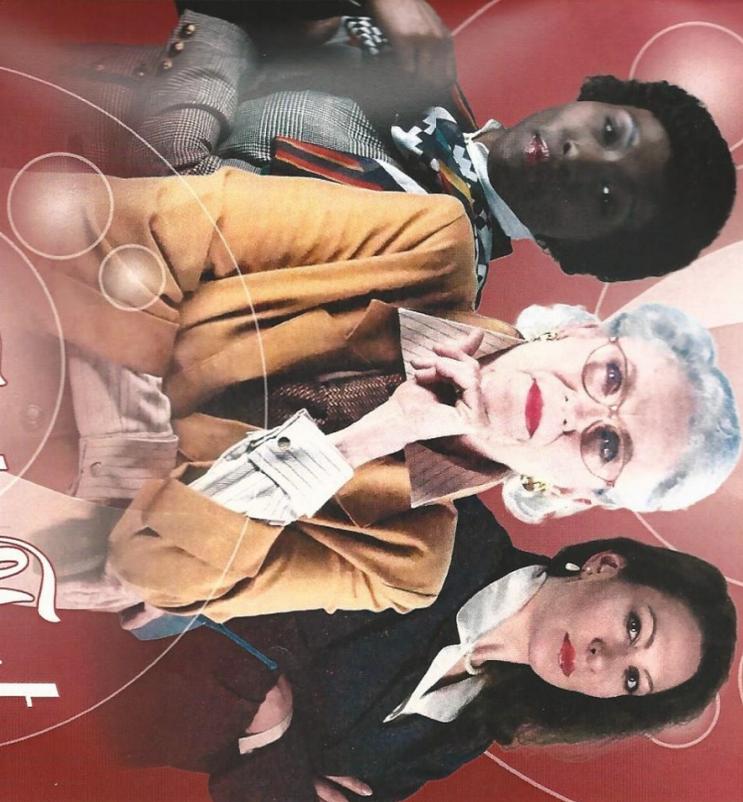
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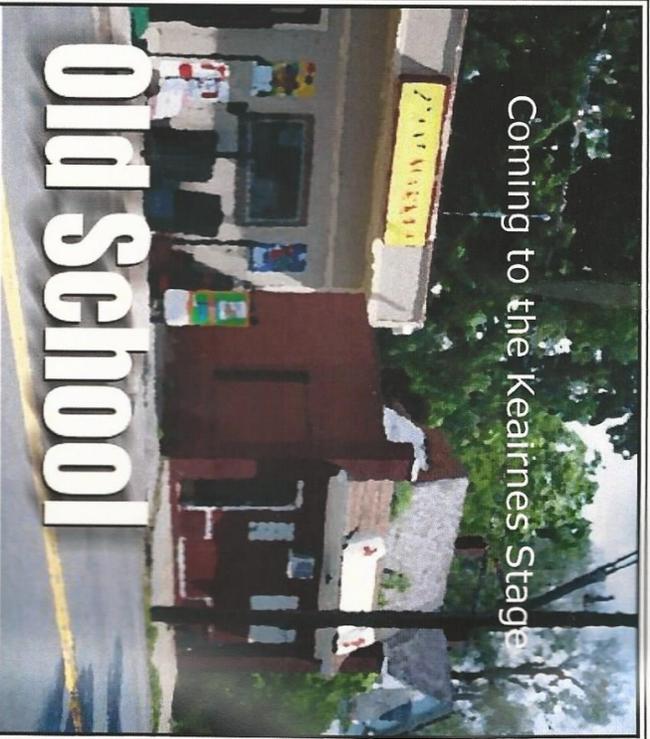
The Taste Test

by Frank Quinn

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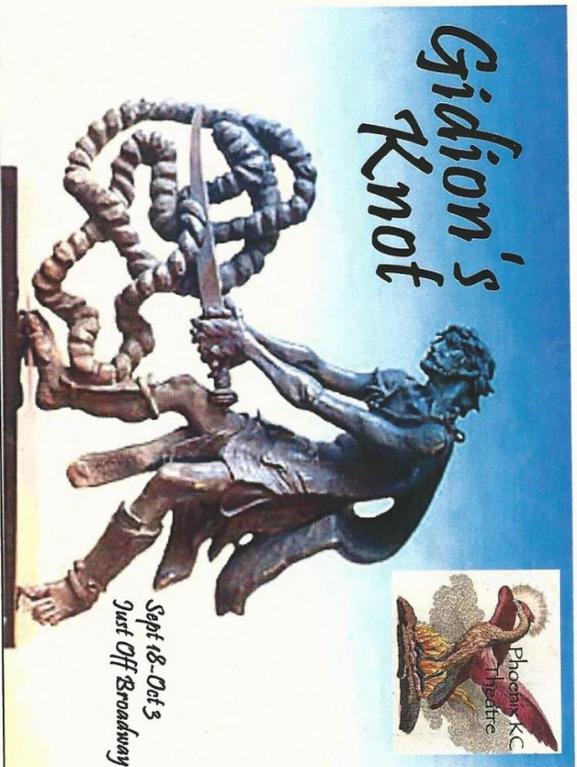
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KC MeltingPot Theatre

presents

The Taste Test

by Frank Higgins

CAST

Jewel Chioma Anyanwu ♦
Mary Laura Jacobs *
Clair Marilyn Lynch *

New York City -- 1985-86, with flashbacks to 1965 and 1974

PLACE & TIME

ACT 1, Scene 1 -- A conference room, 1985

Scene 2 -- Two months later

Scene 3 -- The Green Room at Lincoln Center,
the next morning

Intermission -- 15 minutes

ACT 2, Scene 1 -- The conference room, a month later

Scene 2 -- A month later

Scene 3 -- Jewel's office, three months later

♦ Appearing courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States, appearing under a Special Appearance Contract.

* Phoenix KC Theatre Company Member

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director/Designer Warren Deckert *
Production Stage Manager Melissa Fritzingler *
Stage Manager Alex Murphy
Costume Designer Atif Rome
Production Assistant Cydia White
Director's Assistant Harvey Williams
Playwright's Assistant/Dramaturg Andrew Hagerly

Special Thanks

Victoria Barbee	Cynthia Hardeman	Robin Taylor
K. B. Bell	Sharon Hunt	Roy Tucker
Gary Campbell	Kansas City Repertory	UMKC Dept. of
Kelly Cooper	Theatre	Theatre
Brian Cushenberry	Susan Kysela	Cydia White
Karen Cushenberry	Rhonda Leapheart	Eric White
Rosie Devine	Roman Leapheart	Anastacia Williams
Kari Ewalt	Arthur Newton	Ebonee Workcuff
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Actor Sponsorship

Marilyn Lynch is sponsored by a donation from

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Cast



Marilyn Lynch - (Clair) Marilyn gets to be back with Harvey, Linda and Warren! What a joy. Marilyn was last seen as Grandma Kurnitz in *Lost in Yonkers* at MET. Mrs. Grayson in *Waiting to be Invited* for Phoenix KC Theatre, General Cartwright in *Guys & Dolls* at MTH. You might have heard about swimming with sharks, have fun with the barracudas-keep hands and feet inside the ride.



Laura Jacobs - (Mary) is excited to be back at Just Off Broadway making her debut with both Phoenix KC and KC MeltingPot. Appearances include Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Unicorn Theatre, New Theatre, Starlight, The Living Room, MET, and Great River Shakespeare Festival. Upcoming: KC Fringe. Laura proudly calls Kansas City her artistic home.



***Chioma Anyanwu** - (Jewel) is very excited to be part of this new, all-ladies (but gentlemen welcome) adventure!!! She has been blessed to work at various theatres in town including Egads Theatre Co., The Living Room, MTH, MET, Colere At Night, and the Unicorn Theatre. Here's to a new journey with a fabulous group. Enjoy the show!



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Stage Production Staff



Atif Rome (Costume Designer) is a visual artist who designs for the performing arts. He has designed for professional and academic theatre, dance and music productions in the Kansas City area for over thirty years. Recent productions include: *You Can't Take It With You* and *Cabaret* at Rockhurst University, *Memories of Xiaoxiang* (Susan Rieger - Dancer, Choreographer) with New Ear Contemporary Chamber Ensemble and *Lost in Yonkers* at the MET. He first worked on a Frank Higgins play *The Great War* in 1984 and enjoys the opportunity to do it again.

Stage Production Staff



Cydia S White is thrilled to be making her debut at Just Off Broadway Theatre in *The Taste Test*. Cydia is a student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City studying Theatre Performance. She was just seen in UMKC's production of *Freedom Rider* (Manda and ensemble). She has been in two productions at the Fishrank Performance studio, *Death by Shakespeare* (Lady M, clown and ensemble) and *Our American Musical* (Greta and Ensemble) she has also worked with organizations such as Reproductive Justice in the Reproductive Justice Walking Tour, Artist Striving to End Poverty in *Unpacking Home* (Mildred, ensemble) and Kids Creative Collective. She is grateful for the opportunity that she has been given and would like to thank her family and friends for their continued support, and most importantly God, for without him nothing is possible.



Alex Murphy (Stage Manager) is thrilled to make his Phoenix KC and KC MeltingPot debut with *The Taste Test*! Stage Management: *The Butcher's Son* (Westport Center for the Arts) *Drunks*, *Apocalypse*, Film Classics Presents: *Heaven So Far* (KC Fringe Festival); *The Death of Cupid*, *Hurryburly*, *Fool For Love*, *Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll*, *Dog Sees God*, *A Bucket of Blood* (The Living Room Theatre); *A Little Night Music* (Spinning Tree Theatre) *How to Succeed in Business*, *The Who's Tommy*, *Enchanted April*, *The Time of Your Life* (Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre); *In Trousers*, *Vallhalla* (Egads Theatre Company). Production Assistant: *Sticky Traps*, *Angels in America* Pts. 1 and 2, *The Santaland Diaries* (2013, 2014), *The Who and the What*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Kansas City Repertory Theatre); *Grounded*, *Other Desert Cities* (Unicorn Theatre). Alex holds an M.F.A. in Stage Management from University of Missouri-Kansas City.



Melissa E. Koerner (Production Stage Manager) - *The Taste Test*'s Melissa's sixth production with KCMeltingPot/Phoenix KC Theatre (Production Stage Manager - *The Frowning Valley/ays of Shady Pines*, *White Sangria*, *Echoes of Octavia*, *Waiting To Be Invited* and *Truth Stands*). Melissa is from Orlando, Florida where she was Stage Manager for The Orlando Repertory Theatre, Beth Marshall Presents, Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival, and Orlando Shakespeare Theater (*The Exit Interview*, NNPN World Premiere). For five years she was also an Entertainment Manager, Fireworks Manager and Special Event Manager for Walt Disney World Entertainment. Currently the Company Manager for the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Melissa has also worked with the Fishrank Performance Studio as Production Assistant and The Colere Theatre as Stage Manager.



Warren Deckert, (Director/Designer) - Warren's 45 years of theatre experience include being the Artistic/Technical Director for Great Bend Community Theatre and Technical Director/Designer for the Bethel College Drama Department. He has designed the lighting and/or sets for over 160 productions. Currently he is an Assistant House Manager for Kansas City Repertory Theatre, the Resident Technical Director/Designer for KC MeltingPot Theatre and the Producing Director of Phoenix KC Theatre - grateful for the ongoing partnership with KC MeltingPot. Upcoming projects include directing a new play by Vicki Vodrey - *Sue Aside* ... (KC Fringe Festival/July) and a reprise of the 2014 KC Fringe Festival show *Gideon's Knot* (September), as well as designing 2 more shows for KCMeltingPot.

The Taste Test

by Frank Higgins

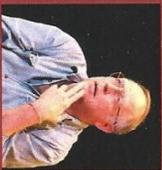
Where were you during the Great Cola Wars of the 1980's? Frank Higgins' new play *The Taste Test* takes us back to 1985 as the biggest cola company in the world is about to abandon the tried & true and shock America with the introduction of a brand new product.

Clair, The C.E.O. of "King Cola" -- an aging leader who wants to prove she will always be one of the most powerful people in the world.

Mary, her Deputy C.E.O. -- a #2 who is always the smartest person in the room.

Jewel, the advertising account executive in charge of the campaign -- a woman who always "tells it like it is."

But, this is not a play about selling sugar water. In this multi-layered character study playwright Frank Higgins intricately weaves contrasting themes of loyalty to your friends and colleagues versus self interest, honesty and trust versus hidden agendas and secrets; and perception versus reality. Ultimately, all three characters struggle with the biggest question -- "What would it take for your best friend to betray you? ... or vice versa?"

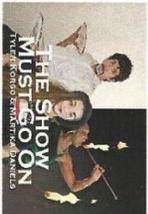
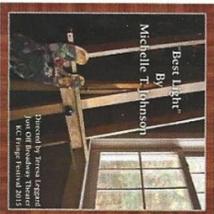
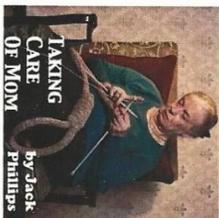


Frank Higgins is the author of *The Sweet By'r*, which was produced with Tony-winner Blythe Danner and then future-Oscar winner Gwyneth Paltrow, and *Black Pearl Sings!*, which was produced at Ford's Theatre in Washington DC with Tony-winner Tonya Pinkins. The play was also seen in KC in March at Just-Off Broadway space, produced by Spinning Tree Theatre. His plays have been seen in New York, and at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, the Old Globe Theatre, Northlight Theatre in Chicago, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Inter-Act Theatre in Philadelphia, Horizons Theatre in Atlanta, and many other places. His plays have been published by Dramatists Play Service, Samuel French, Dramatic Publishing Company, and Pioneer Drama Service. His one act play *The True Death of Socrates* is included in *Best American Short Plays of 2013*, published by Applause Books. He has also written several plays for young audiences, including *Anansi the Spider* and *The Middle Passage*, and *The Country of the Blind*. He has also published two books of poetry, and two books of haiku.

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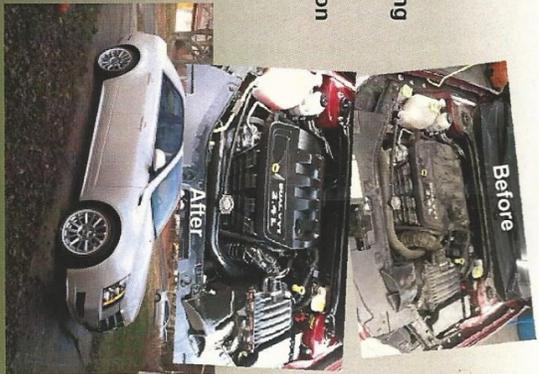
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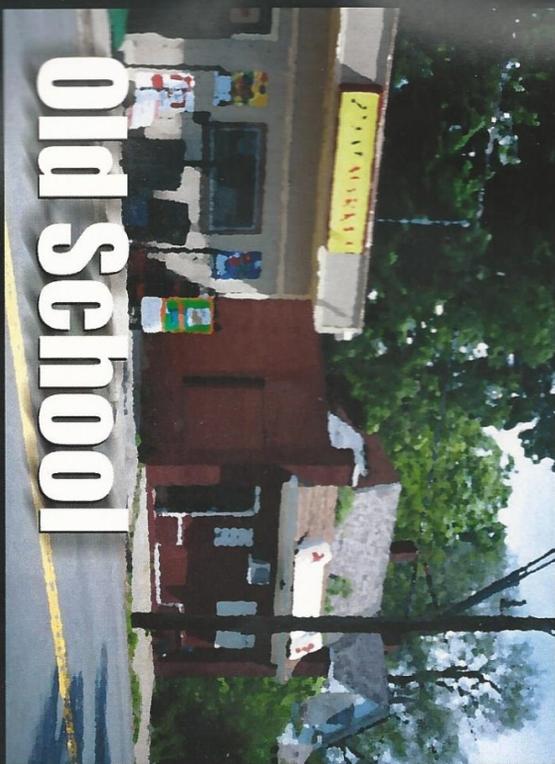
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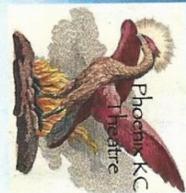
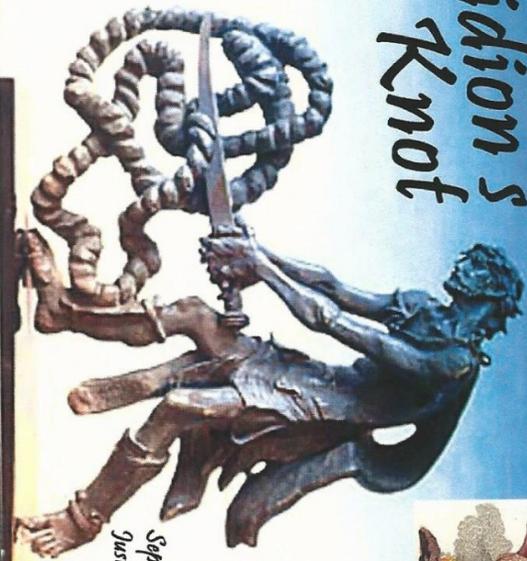
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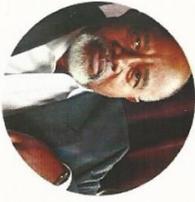
Cast



Patey McGee (JD) went to high school at Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts in Kansas City, Missouri and Franklin High School in Somerset, New Jersey. Patey has performed roles such as Red Carter in *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson, Oberon in *Midsummer Nights Dream* by William Shakespeare, Milo in *Echoes Of Octavia* by Kansas City playwright, Michelle T. Johnson, and Adrian in *Private Eyes* by Steven Dietz, to name a few. In his spare time, Patey enjoys producing and performing music. Patey is a 3rd-year theatre performance major at UMKC. **Mr. McGee's performance is sponsored by Ralph White.*



Aishah Ogbeh is a student at UMKC, studying Theatre and Black Studies. She has performed in quiet a few plays such as *Midsummer Nights Dream* at Tiana, *Seven Guitars* as Louise, *The Cover of Life* as Sybil, *Al Letter* to the Black as Chanel, *echoes of Octavia* as Octavia, and *The Wizard of Oz* as the *Wicked Witch of the West*. Aishah plans to move to California after graduating to fulfill her destiny of being a phenomenal actress and role model. **Mrs. Ogbeh's performance is sponsored by Ralph White.*



Granville T. O'Neal is a local actor who has performed in many theatre venues in and around the Kansas City Metropolitan area, including Lawrence and Topeka, Kansas. His most recent stage performances include "Jitney" at The Met, "Echoes of Octavia" and "JFK - A Ghostly Evening" with KC MeltingPot and "Bud" at the Coleridge Theatre. He serves on the board of the Traditional Music Society. A graduate of Park College, his resume includes movies, two in which were recently released, "Destination, Planet Negro" and "Jayhawkers", commercials, and voice overs. He is a retired fire fighter with the Kansas City Fire Department and is Co-Founder of the MC Players. Granville enjoys anything that has to do with live theater and credits his high school drama teacher for introducing him to the stage. He would like to thank the KC MeltingPot Family and his wife for the opportunity to continue to satiate his theatrical appetite.



Arthur R. Newton III is pleased to be a part of KC Melting Pot's Production of *Old School*. Arthur has acquired leading roles in a variety of quality productions throughout his career, among which are *Purile Victorious - Giltlow* - for Tiffany's Attic, *Lillies of the Field - Homer Smith* - for Wyandotte Players, starring Abe Lincoln, *Donny's House*, *three Little Pigs* for Theatre For Young America and *Do Lord Remember Me* for Metropolitan Ebony Theater. Arthur is most grateful to McNeill and Jair Newton, Arthur Newton IV and Harvey and Linda Williams for what he feels is an opportunity to Begin Again.

Cast -continued



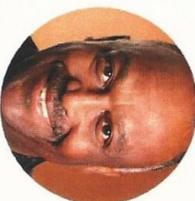
Victoria Barbee has been sharing her gift of song since she was a child in her father's church, for more than 45 yrs. She was introduced to theater in 1998, here in KC, at the Historic Gem Theater in their production of *Black Nativity*. Since then Victoria has been blessed to be consistently working by lending her voice to numerous causes, in which she believes. Currently, one can hear Victoria's band, *Dark & Darker*, featured monthly in the P&L District at Hotel Phillips, 12th and Baltimore. Victoria's most recent theatrical production credits are: *Full Monty*, *For Colored Girls*, *RAGTIME*, and *How To Succeed in Business all performed at the MET* during the past year and Norma in *Hands on Hardbody* at the Unicorn Theater. Victoria is overjoyed for being invited into the company/family of KC MeltingPot at Just off Broadway Theater.



Theodore "Priest" Hughes, insightful writer, educator, and electric spoken work performances by trade having performed around the nation on stages, radio and TV. Priest having embraced the theater once given the opportunity, over the past decade has played roles in *Fences*, *Piano Lesson*, *Rain in the Sun*, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and a host of smaller roles on stage around Kansas City. His most recent role was *Doubt* in *Jitney* at The Met.



Desmond "3-3-7" Jones, a Kansas City spoken word artist and Co-Founder of the *Recipe Poetry Guild*, known for his captivating spoken word performance has shown versatility with his theatre performances. Desmond has appeared in *Semple Stories* by Langston Hughes, *Gallileo*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, and *The Piano Lesson* at The Met. Now alongside his "partner in rhyme" Theodore "PRIEST" Hughes, the duo teaches "Dramatic Art & Rhythm" throughout schools in the Kansas City area and on the USA Networks "NFL Characters United." **Mr. Hughes and Jones, The Recipe's performance is sponsored by Ralph White.*



Harvey Williams the writer and director of "Old School", is the founder of KC Melting Pot Theatre LLC. Harvey has performed at theatres across Kansas City in productions of "Driving Miss Daisy", "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead", "Little Tommy Parker", "The Watsons go to Birmingham", "Now Let me Fly", "The Piano Lesson", "Fences", "12 Angry Men", "1940's Radio Hour", "The African Company presents Richard the III", "Monkey Don't Drink Hot Chocolate", "Othello", "Journey with Barbara Jordan", Harvey has toured with Bob Paisley's Central Standard Theatre to Bedford, UK, and the Adelaide Fringe Festival in Adelaide, Australia. He is a member of the Screen Actors' Guild and Actors' Equity. In addition to "Old School", Harvey is the author of "The Session" (returning in 2016), "Mom F***ing Com", "On Shoulders Now" (premiering Nov, 2015), "2121" (premiere August 2016).

Stage Production Staff

Stage Production Staff -continued



Warren Decker, Technical Director - Warren's 45 years of theatre experience include being the Artist/Technical Director for Great Bend Community Theatre and technical director/designer for the Bethel College Dram Department. He has designed the lighting and/or sets for over 160 productions. Currently he is an assistant house manager for Kansas City Repertory Theatre, the resident technical director/designer for KC MeltingPot Theatre and the producing director for Phoenix KC Theatre - grateful for the ongoing partnership with MeltingPot. Upcoming projects include directing a reprise of the 2014 KC Fringe Festival show Gidon's Knot (September).



Matthew Henrickson, is very excited to be working on his first production for Melting Pot. Matthew is a recent graduate of the University of Missouri-Kansas City where he received his Masters in Stage Management. Matt recently stage-managed the Grand Illusion, which won best of venue at the Arts Asylum during the KC Fringe Festival. Matthew is also the Production Stage Manager at the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre. Matthew would like to thank his family and most importantly his wife Laura Irwin for all of her loving support.



Danielle Drury - (Sound and Music) hails from South Africa where she studied Musical Theatre and Education. She has worked on various theatre, television, film and voice work productions, including the BBC TV-drama, To the Ends of the Earth. Some Kansas City credits include script in hand performances for the KC Public Libraries: South Pacific, Guys and Dolls, I remember Mama, The Heidi Chronicles and You can't take it with you and Enchanted April for the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre; Stoneielon Puppet Theatre shows and The Best Christmas Pageant Ever for Theater for Young America. She has been known to stage manage for KC MeltingPot amongst others and when she is not acting, she teaches yoga, tutors English and Reading and teaches about and sells essential oils. www.dotterra.com/danelledrury



Dishaun Phillips, Musician/Producer/DJ - Began playing musical instruments as a hobby and producing music for various musicians around the city, as well as djing. This is my first production and I am extremely excited to be working with KC MeltingPot.



Cynthia Hardeman, Production Assistant, Promotion and graphics

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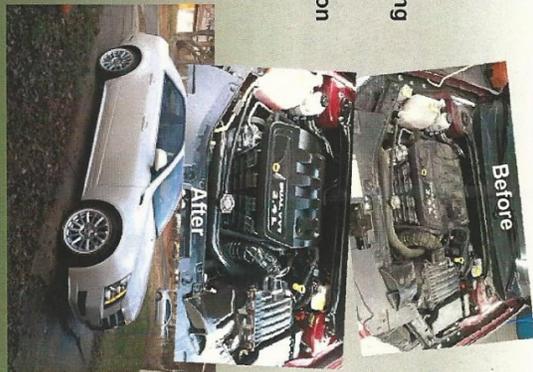
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Vita

Lori Kay Manherz was born on February 13, 1980, in Caney, Kansas. She moved with her family to Holton, Kansas in 1985 and in 1990 they moved to Kansas City, Kansas. Kay graduated from Sumner Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1998 and began to take classes at Emporia State University that fall.

In 2002 she became the mother of twins and put her education on hold. Kay returned to her education in 2005 at the Kansas City Kansas Community College. While she attended the community college she became involved in the theatre program there where she acted, directed, and wrote a one-act play that was produced for the 2007 Student One-Act Play Festival. Kay graduated from the Kansas City Kansas Community College in 2008 and continued her studies at Park University. She transferred to Ottawa University where she completed her B. A. in Communication in 2011.

In 2012 Kay was accepted into the Masters of Arts in Theatre program at the University of Missouri Kansas City. She accepted a GTA position with UMKC to teach Foundations of Theatre. Kay served as dramaturg for *Seven Guitars* at UMKC and directed *Harvey* at KCKCC. Upon completion of her degree from UMKC, Kay plans to pursue a career in theatre education.