MEDIA ALERT
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INDEPENDENT SHAKESPEARE CO. ANNOUNCES

A NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

White People Do Not Know How to Behave at Entertainments Designed for Ladies and Gentlemen of Colour

Los Angeles... Independent Shakespeare Co. (ISC) has launched a new play development program, upholding our commitment to our Black artists. ISC has always approached theater in a deeply collaborative manner, and this project emphasizes collaboration and the voices of our Black Ensemble members. Giving our artists the freedom to create is the goal of this project.

The working title, White People Do Not Know How to Behave at Entertainments Designed for Ladies and Gentlemen of Colour is taken directly from the African Grove Theatre Company’s signage. White patrons were known to start riots and throw objects from the audience, so the African Grove created a separate “Whites Only” section in the back of the theater to limit these aggressive disturbances. It is the radical resilience and trailblazing work of the African Grove Theatre Company that has provided the creative spark and framework for the devising of the piece.
Phase 1 was a 6-week process of exploration, allowing for the coming together of ideas. Phase 2 is a period of individual research followed by Phase 3 this summer when the artists will embark on an in-person devising period. A workshop presentation of the completed piece (Phase 4) is planned for Fall 2021 at the ISC Studio, followed by a full production in Spring 2022.

The ISC Ensemble members involved in this project are Patrick Batiste, Aisha Kabia, Bukola Ogunmola, Carene Rose Mekertichyan, Brent White and Sabra Williams.

Carene Rose Mekertichyan, Ensemble member and Artistic Associate for Social Justice says, “We had all been part of ISC’s production of Pericles in Griffith Park in 2019, a production that was so special for us because the majority of the cast was Black and every woman in the cast was Black. It was definitely an experience that has stayed with all of us because it is such a rarity in classical theater, but this new piece will be even more special because we have complete ownership and authorship. We all feel it is such a gift to create a piece that uplifts and centers Black bodies and voices. This piece will be born of our experiences and those of our ancestors and absolutely will not center the white gaze. As an ensemble we are tired of Black trauma being at the center of the most ‘popular’ Black productions on both stage and screen. The structure of this new play development has ensured that the white supremacy that is so steeped in our theatrical institutions (and this country) will take up no space in our art making.”

Comments ISCs Artistic Director, Melissa Chalsma, “Creating the space for our Ensemble members to bring their whole selves to the creative process is one of our guiding principles. It’s exciting to keep learning how best to do this; all of us on the staff are incredibly excited to support these artists throughout their journey, and I know the end result is going to be something extraordinary for our audience.”

ISC’s New Play Development program is funded in part by the Venable Foundation. For more on the process and the framework, visit iscla.org/lgc.
For more information, photos and press interviews please contact Marisa Johnston at media@iscla.org or 818-710-6306.

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ABOUT INDEPENDENT SHAKESPEARE CO.
Independent Shakespeare Co. (ISC) has been presenting free Shakespeare in Los Angeles city parks for 16 years – the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival has grown to become a tradition for tens of thousands of Angelenos, bringing together our diverse, vibrant community through accessible, imaginative performances of classical plays. ISC is the 2018 recipient of the Paul Robeson Award by Actors’ Equity Foundation and Actors’ Equity Association (the first organization on the West Coast to receive this honor). Since 2013 the Festival has welcomed over 40,000 people each summer to the Old Zoo and we have now performed to nearly 500,000 people. Our audience is unique: we attract a community that is young (71% age 35 and under), diverse (48% identify as non-Caucasian), and, unlike national trends, 75% are middle and lower income. In 2018, we opened the ISC Studio, an upgrade from our previous indoor space into a larger performance venue and lounge at the Atwater Arts + Innovation Complex. The ISC Studio is active and unpredictable, serving as a multi-purpose and multi-disciplinary laboratory.

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