BLOOD AT THE ROOT
by Dominique Morisseau

Directed by
Marti Gobel

Costume Design
Marti Gobel

Sound Design
David Cesarini

Choreographer
Alicia Rice

Scenic & Lighting Design
Jason Fassl+

Movement & Stomp Director
Marti Gobel

Dramaturg
Mike Fischer

Properties Design
Heidi Salter

Composer
Kemet Gobel

Stage Manager
Jessica Connelly*

January 31 – February 24, 2019

Generously sponsored by The Richard & Ethel Herzfeld Foundation, Bader Philanthropies, Inc., and The Dental Offices of Dr. David Paris

BLOOD AT THE ROOT is supported in part by a grant from the Milwaukee Arts Board and the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the state of Wisconsin.

Next Act Theatre’s 2018-19 Season is supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.

BLOOD AT THE ROOT is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC. BLOOD AT THE ROOT was commissioned by the Penn State School of Theatre, and was first produced by Penn State Centre Stage, Dan Carter, Producing Artistic Director.

The New York Premiere of BLOOD AT THE ROOT was produced by Penn State Centre Stage and presented by Hi-ARTS and the National Black Theatre, Inc.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

Next Act Theatre | 255 S. Water Street | Milwaukee, WI 53204
THE CAST

Raylynn .......................................................... Chantae Miller
Toria .......................................................... Grace DeWolff
Asha .......................................................... April Paul
Justin .......................................................... Ibraheem Farmer
Colin .......................................................... Casey Hoekstra*
De’Andre ....................................................... Justin Lee

*member of Actors’ Equity Association

TIME:
2006/2007

PLACE:
Louisiana

The play will be performed with no intermission.

SPECIAL THANKS

Ken Hill, Bob Amsden, John Dalziel & Ripon College Theatre Department, Rick Fassl

Opening Night Reception Sponsor

SKYLINE CATERING

Outstanding Food, Outstanding Service
DIRECTOR’S NOTES – MARTI GOBEL

Why do we as a species continually battle each other rather than reaching for common ground? And why do we as Americans consistently fail to acknowledge that our roots are entangled in a shared, if troubled, history?

These aren’t just rhetorical questions; they’re questions I myself can’t always answer. Despite my constant study of the emotions and actions through which we engage each other, I’m still often unable to track the root cause of why ostensibly rational human beings fail to respect the differences – philosophical and sexual, racial and political, familial and communal – that divide us. Living through our complex and conflicted cultural moment, I often feel as though we’re moving backward; like the characters in this play, we sometimes generate more heat than light.

But if we do not continually attempt to reach the root of the problems that have shaped the American family tree, we cannot begin to repair the damage done to our greater society. Nor can we prune and shape that tree in a way that nurtures its health and extends its sheltering canopy. And if we don’t try to do better – if we choose apathy over engagement and anger over empathy – that tree will atrophy and die.

We can – we must – do better. Dominique Morisseau’s play rightly suggests that the best way to do so might involve exploring how conflicted each of us is, as we confront the internal struggles and inconsistencies that both define and delimit us as individuals. Each of the characters in this play is a house divided against itself. None of the characters in this play can be readily pigeonholed. All of the characters in this play are more complex than one might think. The young – and the characters in this play are young – always are.

If we come to see ourselves and each other as the multi-dimensional beings we have the potential to be, perhaps we’ll be better positioned to tackle some of the issues this play raises. Should we assume that the survival of something that’s already there is as important as what’s evolved and emerged from those frequently troubled origins? How do we deal with roots that simultaneously choke and contribute to growth? Can we learn from our youth as they not only struggle to define themselves as individuals but also find a place within a larger community? Can we acknowledge and own this country’s original sin while moving toward a better future? Can we cop to the blood at the root while making a new and better garden? And can we learn how to learn from our kids, who in Jena and elsewhere are trying to change the rhythm of their communities while maintaining their individual songs?

“Listen... they are in the rustling trees” – Sweet Honey in the Rock
IN THE LOOP

We have great news for patrons who require a hearing boost while attending our shows. Longtime supporter Milan Racic has honored his beloved late wife Gordana with a generous memorial gift. In part, these proceeds have been used to install a state-of-the-art Induction Loop listening system at Next Act. (The black striping you see on the floor along the front rows is part of the new system.) This greatly improves the listening experience for patrons who have special “T-coil” hearing aids, as well as for those who rely upon conventional sound augmentation. The Loop installation replaces our older radio signal system, and offers a much better quality of sound, with far less background noise.

T-coil listeners simply need to switch their aids to the Loop setting. For conventional listeners, handy receiver packs with headphones are available at the Concessions bar. The same strong sound will be available through either method of listening. We hope you take advantage of this terrific improvement and find you enjoy Next Act’s intimate brand of theatre even more!

Many, many thanks goes to Milan for his tremendous generosity. We believe that Gordana would have heartily endorsed this thoughtful and practical gift. Special thanks is also due to Nancy Einhorn, for her advocacy and support of this project.

AUDIO LOOP INSTRUCTIONS:

T-Coil Listeners: Simply set your hearing device to the Loop setting, and enjoy the show.

Conventional Listeners: Check out a receiver and headphones set at Concessions. The House Manager can instruct you on its use, but here are some simple instructions.

Like a transistor radio, the small box has an off-on and volume knob; turn on and adjust for your comfort level. You will need to be in the seats to receive the Loop signal.

The box works directionally, that is, it matters which way it is pointing.

- **In most of our seating**, the box works best when held up straight, with the volume knob on top, and the flat back pointing toward the stage.

- **In the front rows**, you will get the strongest signal with the box laying flat on your leg, with the flat back pointing straight to the floor.

Please ask the House Manager for assistance, if needed. We hope you enjoy the show.
If scientist Rosalind Franklin played a crucial role in discovering the DNA Double Helix, why is her name left out of our history books? This is her story.
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BIOGRAPHIES

DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU (Playwright)

Dominique Morisseau is the author of THE DETROIT PROJECT (A 3-Play Cycle) which includes the following plays: SKELETON CREW (Atlantic Theater Company), PARADISE BLUE (Signature Theatre), and DETROIT ‘67 (Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem and NBT). Additional plays include: PIPELINE (Lincoln Center Theatre), SUNSET BABY (LAByrinth Theatre), BLOOD AT THE ROOT (National Black Theatre) and FOLLOW ME TO NELLIE’S (Premiere Stages). She is also the book writer on the new musical AINT TOO PROUD – THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE TEMPTATIONS (Berkeley Repertory Theatre). Dominique is an alumna of The Public Theater Emerging Writer’s Group, Women’s Project Lab, and Lark Playwrights’ Workshop and has developed work at Sundance Lab, Williamstown Theatre Festival and Eugene O’Neil Playwrights Conference. Her work has been commissioned by Steppenwolf Theater, Women’s Project, South Coast Rep, People’s Light and Theatre, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival/ Penumbra Theatre. She most recently served as Co-Producer on the Showtime series SHAMELESS. Awards include: Spirit of Detroit Award, PoNY Fellowship, Sky-Coooper Prize, TEER Trailblazer Award, Steinberg Playwright Award, Audelco Awards, NBFT August Wilson Playwriting Award, Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama, OBIE Award, Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellowship, and being named one of Variety’s Women of Impact for 2017-18.

GRACE DEWOLFF (Toria)

Grace is a Milwaukee actor and educator honored to be a part of Next Act’s season for the first time outside of her work with the Next Actors: Summer Theatre for Teens and understudying Deborah Staples in SILENT SKY. Recent roles include Seta in BEAST ON THE MOON and Laura in THE GLASS MENAGERIE at In Tandem, and Griselda in TOP GIRLS at Renaissance Theaterworks. Thank you to all her students, recent and past, for the character research, and to Next Act audiences and supporters.

IBRAHEEM FARMER (Justin)

Returning to the intimate Next Act stage, Ibraheem Farmer is grateful to be giving life to Justin. Mr. Farmer hails from Natchitoches, Louisiana and has lived in Milwaukee a year now. He is a 2017-18 First Stage Academy Fellow alum and was recently seen in Tiffany Ike’s BALL AND CHAIN (Lights!Camera!Soul!). Other professional credits include: THE PECULIAR DISTRACTION OF MR. LINCOLN’S SOCIAL MEDIA (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre), Bronzeville Art Ensemble’s POSTHUMUS FAME as Tupac Shakur, Marquette University’s Malaina Moore’s WHITE PRIVILEGE as Black Boy/Angry Black Man, Ensemble in MY FAMILY CAME FOR THIS (Arts @ Large), Ensemble in KING LEAR (Optimist Theatre), Anthony in I AND YOU (Next Act). Mr. Farmer is a proud graduate of The Grambling State University where some of his favorite credits include: THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI AND THE FACE OF EMMETT TILL as Emmett Till, BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY as Leland Cunningham, and Bo Decker in BUS STOP. Ibraheem is thankful to God, and love and support from family and friends for his continued success.

CASEY HOEKSTRA (Colin)

Casey is thrilled to be making his Next Act debut while also working on a Dominique Morisseau play! Most recently Casey appeared at Writer’s Theater...
(TWELFTH NIGHT), and has spent three seasons working at American Players Theater (MEASURE FOR MEASURE, EXIT THE KING, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, ARCADIA). He has worked regionally in Minneapolis at the Guthrie (JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK), Atlanta and Chicago and has toured with the National Players and Montana Shakespeare to the majority of the fifty states. He graduated from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, and is represented by Stewart Talent. He is thankful to be working on this profoundly honest and powerful piece of theater.

JUSTIN LEE
(De’Andre)
Justin is overjoyed to be joining the cast of BLOOD AT THE ROOT and making his Next Act debut. This past season he served as the Artistic Fellow at First Stage. Some credits include: CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG; ANTARCTICA, WI; DR. SEUSS’S THE CAT IN THE HAT; JUDY MOODY AND STINK (First Stage); FLYIN’ WEST and BLACK NATIVITY (Bronzeville Arts Ensemble). Proud graduate of Xavier University. Thanks to Marti, the Creative Team, and my friends and family for their continued love and support. To God be the glory.

CHANTAE MILLER
(Raylynn)
Chantae Miller is delighted to make her debut on the Next Act stage with such brilliant artists. Some recent and favorite credits include Small Alison in FUN HOME and Caroline in I AND YOU (Forward Theater). Other favorite places to perform include the Milwaukee Repertory Theater and First Stage. Recently, Chantae took first place at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, and she is currently shooting a film in Chicago about human trafficking and sexual abuse, an unfortunately prevalent topic. After BLOOD AT THE ROOT, she can be found at First Stage as the title role in TINKERBELL. Represented by Stewart Talent. “I am eternally grateful.” For CM.

APRIL PAUL (Asha)
Eight years ago April had her first audition here at Next Act Theatre and now she is thrilled to be making her debut. With a Bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, April has worked with several companies across the Milwaukee area. Some of her recent projects include BAREFOOT IN THE PARK (Rochester Civic Theatre), DOUBT: A PARABLE (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre), RUSSIAN TRANSPORT (Renaissance Theaterworks) and PEPPER’S GHOST (The Alchemist Theatre). Next up, April will be performing in BLOOMSDAY with Milwaukee Irish Arts.

MARTI GOBEL
(Director/Costume Designer/Movement & Stomp Director)
Marti Gobel is a local actor, director and teaching artist. A proud member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA, Ms. Gobel returns to Next Act Theatre for the first time as a director. Proud to call Next Act one of her artistic homes, you may recall her past performances in PERFECT MENDACITY; NO CHILD...; TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992; and THE TAMING, as well as several staged readings. She thanks her cast and creative team for their dedication to this project and the telling of this tale. She hopes you enjoy the show.
JESSICA CONNELLY (Resident Stage Manager)
Jessica first began working with Next Act Theatre in 2003. Since 2006 she has been the Resident Stage Manager here, stage managing more than 50 productions. A few of Jessica’s favorite projects include: DEAR ESTHER; MASTER HAROLD and the BOYS; LAST OF THE BOYS; MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP; GREETINGS; FAITH HEALER; PURGATORIO; GOING TO ST. IVES; VIGIL; GRACE; THREE VIEWS OF THE SAME OBJECT; TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992; BLOOMSDAY; SILENT SKY; EQUIVOCATION; and I AND YOU (Next Act Theatre); A RISING WIND (John Michael Kohler Arts Center); CHESAPEAKE; TROJAN WOMEN; THE SHAPE OF THINGS; and the US premiere of SKIN TIGHT (Renaissance Theaterworks); FENCES and BLUE ROSE (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); SANTALAND DIARIES (Marcus Center for the Performing Arts), HAIRSPRAY (Little Theatre on the Square). Jessica is a proud member of Actors’ Equity Association. She is the loving dog mom to three small, furry babies Cleo, Auggie and Fritz.

JASON FASSL (Scenic & Lighting Designer)
This production marks Jason’s 19th Next Act production including FAITH HEALER, MARY’S WEDDING and most recently BLOOMSDAY. Over the last decade, Jason has consumed mass quantities of electricity at American Players Theatre, The Milwaukee Repertory Theater, The Milwaukee Ballet, First Stage Children’s Theatre, Skylight Music Theatre, Peninsula Players, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Next Act Theatre, Forward Theater Company, Milwaukee Opera Theatre, TheatreLILA, The Fireside, and many others. Jason is a member of Scenic Artists Local #829, Milwaukee Stage Hands Local #18 and a proud graduate of the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Portfolio and information at AntiShadows.com

DAVID CECSARINI (Producing Artistic Director/Sound Designer)
Long before his professional theatre debut, David busied himself in the basement performing radical surgery on the family’s electronic devices. Eventually he set aside the cassette tapes and soldering gun in favor of just twirling the knobs – and, more recently, pointing and clicking the mouse – and has designed sound effects and scores for over 100 professional productions. Favorite sound designs include THE VOICE OF THE PRAIRIE; THE DRESSER; LAST OF THE BOYS; THE BRIDGE AT MO DUC; MARY’S WEDDING; MICROCRISIS; TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992; and THE TAMING. He has proudly served as Producing Artistic Director for Milwaukee’s Next Act Theatre for 27 years.

KEMET GOBEL (Composer)
Kemet Gobel is a senior at Ronald Reagan High School. A former actor, Kemet started his life as a musician at the age of 6 with piano lessons. Mr. Gobel began producing and composing music at the age of 12. A multi-instrumentalist, Kemet is currently the bassist in the progressive rock band, Fighting Bob. In addition, he is a beat producer, engineer and DJ for the rap group, Four Us Only. He hopes you enjoy the show.

ALICIA RICE (Choreographer)
Alicia graduated with a BFA in theatre from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia before going on to study, teach and compete in Ballroom and Latin dance. By day, Ali supports and promotes family programming at the Milwaukee Art Museum as the Kohl’s Art Generation Community Relations Coordinator. She has continued to combine her two passions, theatre and dance, as choreographer for numerous productions including Windfall Theatre’s CELEBRATION, BY JEEVES and CITY OF ANGELS, as well as Theater RED’s
production of BONNY ANNE BONNY, in which she played the title role. She has recently appeared as Katherine in TAMING OF THE SHREW, Helena in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM and Inez in NO EXIT (Off the Wall Theatre).

HEIDI SALTER (Properties Designer)
Heidi Salter is delighted to be designing props in her 5th season at Next Act Theatre. She has worked with Renaissance Theaterworks recently on PHOTOGRAPH 51 and at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre on SHERLOCK HOMES AND THE CASE OF THE JERSEY LILY. Heidi just began work at First Stage as the Annual Campaign & Development Database Manager. In her spare time (haha!) she founded Imagination Theatre of Germantown and has proudly produced and directed such shows as DEATH OF A SALESMAN, INTO THE WOODS, RUN FOR YOUR WIFE and RABBIT HOLE.

MIKE FISCHER (Dramaturge)
Mike is a dramaturge based in Milwaukee. For the past 15 years, he has seen over 200 plays each year on behalf of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, for which he began reviewing in 2003 and for which he served as chief drama critic from 2009-18. Mike served as the dramaturge for the recent Renaissance Theaterworks production of NATIVE GARDENS. Following BLOOD AT THE ROOT, Mike will serve as dramaturge and assistant director for the First Stage production of BIG RIVER. Mike dedicates his work on this production to Cornell West and Ta-Nehisi Coates as well as his (and Dominique Morisseau’s) native city of Detroit, each reminding us every day just how far we must yet go if we hope to overcome.

ANNE LEHMER (Development Director)
A nonprofit fundraising professional since 2005, Anne came to Next Act in January of 2016. In Seattle, she raised millions for the Nordic Heritage Museum, United Indians for All Tribes Foundation and the YWCA Seattle|King|Snohomish, was active in the Northwest Development Officers Association and the WA Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFPWA), served on the Board of Directors of AFPWA and as Board Chair for teen mentoring organization, the Service Board. Anne holds a Masters in Museum Studies: Fundraising and Administration, from San Francisco State University and loves to enjoy Milwaukee’s museums, historic architecture, green spaces, performing arts, festivals and ethnic/cultural events. That is, when she’s not puttering in her vegetable garden or playing in the snow.

MIKE VAN DRESER (Technical Director/ Rental Coordinator)
Mike has served as Next Act Theatre’s Technical Director since 2011, taking on the additional roles of Facility Manager and Rental
Coordinator in 2014. Previously, Mike was the resident Master Electrician and Light Board Operator. Mike studied with renowned Lighting Designer Jason Fassl. Some of Mike’s designs include I AND YOU; UnSILENT NIGHT; BRAVO, CARUSO!; IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE LIVE RADIO SHOW; NO CHILD...; PERFECT MENDACITY; and ONE TIME with Next Act Theatre and HEDWIG & THE ANGRY INCH, NEXT TO NORMAL, THE WILD PARTY and LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS with All In Productions. When Mike is not working for Next Act he is working on building his own production company that services technical theatre needs for high schools, colleges and other area theatre organizations. Mike looks forward to many more years with Next Act and the Greater Milwaukee theatre arts.

GRACE DEWOLFF (Education Manager)
Grace is a Milwaukee born-and-raised theatre maker with experience as a professional actor and as an auxiliary theatre teacher in a multitude of MPS schools. Before working at Next Act, she taught in educational outreach programs at First Stage, Skylight, Arts@Large, and The Rep, and continues to bring professional theatre experiences to classrooms and students in and around Milwaukee. When not at Next Act, Grace can be found traveling to the Edinburgh, Scotland Fringe Festival or rehearsing a staged sword fight (someday maybe both at once).

VERONICA ZAHN (Administrative Assistant)
Veronica Zahn has been the Administrative Assistant for Next Act since May 2017, focusing on marketing and development projects. Veronica has also stage managed at Next Act for THE OTHER PLACE and HEAR WHAT’S IN THE HEART. She has a BA in Theatre Arts from Bethel College and an MFA in Stage Management from Wayne State University. A part of the theatre community in Milwaukee since the 2014-15 season, Veronica has also stage managed at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Skylight Music Theatre and Theatre Gigante, in addition to teaching stage management at Carthage College. She enjoys exploring all that Milwaukee has to offer with her husband, Matt Norby.
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Milwaukee Ballet, *The Nutcracker*, 2017, Marize Fumero, Photo by Mark Frohna;
First Stage, *The Wiz*, DiMonte Henning, Darrington Clark and Reese Parish, Photo by Paul Ruffolo;
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We make every effort to make this list accurate. Please contact the office at 414-278-7780 or anne.lehmer@nextact.org for corrections.

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Megs and Davey survived Vietnam, but they’re having trouble surviving back home... until one morning changes everything.

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featuring Marques Causey, Krystal Drake & Ken T. Williams

FEB 22- MAR 17, 2019

Megs and Davey survived Vietnam, but they’re having trouble surviving back home... until one morning changes everything.
BLOOD AT THE ROOT PRODUCTION STAFF

Director/Movement & Stomp Director/Costume Design: Marti Gobel
Stage Manager: Jessica Connelly*
Dialect Coach: Raeleen McMillion
Scenic & Lighting Designer: Jason Fassl+
Assistant Scenic Designer: Evan Crane
Sound Design: David Cecsarini
Composer: Kemet Gobel
Choreographer: Alicia Rice
Properties Design: Heidi Salter
Dramaturge: Mike Fischer
TD/Set Construction: Bronze Leaf Studio
Master Electrician/Board Op: Mike Van Dreser
Deck Chief: Jessica Betts
Wardrobe Manager: Shelby Kaishian
Painting Charge: Andrea Toussaint
Administrative Assistant: Veronica Zahn
House Management Staff: Libby Amato, Bekah Kalb, Audwin Short

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association
+Member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the IATSE
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FOOD AND BEVERAGES – Drinks may be taken into the theatre, but food is not permitted.

ENTERING AND EXITING THE THEATRE SPACE – Please use walkways to access the seating areas and refrain from crossing over the stage.

CANCELLATION POLICY – Next Act does not cancel or reschedule performances due to inclement weather or sporting events, nor do we offer refunds.

LATECOMER POLICY – Latecomers will not be seated until an appropriate time in the performance. This may be at the intermission. **Seating may not be permitted 30 minutes after the start of a performance. If you are running late, please call the Ticket Office at 414-278-0765.**

HEARING LOOP LISTENING SYSTEM – The theatre is equipped with an advanced technology Hearing Loop Listening System. The system will broadcast directly to those with T-coil hearing aids. Portable assistive listening devices for conventional listening are also available and may be checked out at the Concessions counter.

LOST PROPERTY – Items left at the theatre are kept in Lost & Found for 30 days. Call the Ticket Office at 414-278-0765 if you have lost an item.

TICKET EXCHANGES – Subscribers may exchange their tickets, without fee, up to 48 hours prior to the performance (price adjustments may apply). Single ticket buyers may exchange their tickets for a fee of $5 per ticket up to 48 hours prior. Exchanges are based strictly on availability. Patrons are strongly urged to request exchanges well in advance.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES – To avoid disturbing the performance, NO cameras or recording devices of any kind are allowed in the theatre. Please turn off all electronic equipment including pagers and cell phones.

SMOKING – The Next Act Theatre facility is a smoke-free environment.

STUDENT AND SENIOR CITIZEN DISCOUNTS – Seniors and students receive a $5 discount per ticket on advance sales. Students may also purchase half-price rush tickets with a valid student I.D. one half-hour prior to curtain, based on availability. Discounts are not available on performance run extensions.

GROUP DISCOUNTS – Groups of 10 or more receive a discount of 20%. To book groups, contact Becky at 414-278-7780. Discounts are not available on performance run extensions.