

ONLYXfest

written in black

A Celebration of African American Voices

Presented by IndyFringe and A.R.T.I. (Africana Repertory Theatre of IUPUI) – Indy's first and only theatre festival dedicated to the stories of Black playwrights.

2020

OCTOBER 1-10

www.indyfringe.org

Welcome to OnyxFest



Gary J. Reiter
Board President

IndyFringe has actively worked towards embracing diversity and inclusion for the past 16 years by providing support and all inclusive venues for the annual Festival and on our stages year-round. OnyxFest has changed the theatrical landscape of storytellers, actors and the audiences who make up the Indianapolis theatre community by giving voice to Black playwrights. We salute the brave audiences who support our bold artists. Our gratitude extends beyond the people inside our theatres. Outside, the business owners of the Mass Ave Arts & Theatre District provide the hippest, most welcoming environment we could ever hope for. Supporting them is supporting us. And a special thank you to our funders and donors who bring their ideas, suggestions, alternatives and personal resources to the IndyFringe Arts and Culture community.



Director, OnyxFest
2020, IUPUI
Communication and
Community
Engagement

OnyxFest 2020 was a tale of endurance – much like this year. When the Africana Repertory Theatre of IUPUI (A.R.T.I.) partnered with IndyFringe to sponsor the event, no one imagined the challenges. For starters, the word ‘coronavirus’ wasn’t even in our vernacular. Like the world, we were forced into a standing pattern. In the interim, an unbelievable mix of playwrights, directors and actors built enthusiasm, pooled creativity and demonstrated exemplary professionalism over five months of virtual rehearsals. Their commitment embodied the faith of ARTI, the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Incubator, and a tandem of “angel” supporters such as the Margot L. Eccles Art and Culture Fund, the Central Indiana Community Fund (CICF), WFYI, Morgan Stanley, Barnes and Thornburg and the Butler Arts and Events Center, with the Jordan College of Arts, responsible for streaming this year’s event on the Clowes Hall website. Indeed, every collaborator with OnyxFest 2020 is a star!



Morgan Stanley



The Africana Repertory Theatre of IUPUI (ARTI) is a program of study offered by the IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI, the School of Education and the IUPUI Office of Community Engagement using a multidisciplinary approach to “edutainment.” ARTI was developed to document and artistically reflect the history, cultural life, and politics of peoples of the African Diaspora. As a public arts initiative, ARTI has a deep commitment to and focuses on artistic and community engagement. The Office of Community Engagement and the Schools of Liberal Arts and Education are supporting this proposal because it advances the idea that learning in the arts is invaluable at all stages of life, and the integration of the arts into the fabric of community life may advance civic engagement while also creating a college and career pathway. Leslie Kenneth Etienne, ARTI manager and acting director of IUPUI Africana Studies, said his group also seeks to increase collaborations with local Black and other minority theatre groups in Indianapolis, launch a black events quarterly periodical and establish an advisory council for Black theater in the Indiana Avenue Cultural District. Along with Etienne, ARTI consists of Khaula Murtadha, associate vice chancellor for community engagement; Regina Turner, associate faculty in communication studies; Lasana Kazembe, associate professor in the school of education, and Vernon A. Williams, communication and community engagement strategist.

About A.R.T.I.

The Indianapolis Theatre Fringe Festival (IndyFringe) founded in 2005 is a place, an event, a movement, an incubator for new talent and a magnet for imaginative and thoughtful people. IndyFringe is best known for the annual IndyFringe Festival that transforms Mass Ave in downtown Indianapolis into a vibrant, eclectic and exciting festival avenue. IndyFringe has been a catalyst for the resurgence of arts and culture in downtown Indianapolis. IndyFringe also operates two theatres on the fringe of Mass Ave; the IndyFringe Basile and Indy Eleven Theatres. They are known for presenting five mini-festivals including OnyxFest, amplifying the voices of African American playwrights, DivaFest, providing a stage for women’s voices, a festival of New Plays and Ten Minute Plays and the international Winter Magic Festival. The District Theatre at 627 Mass Ave has a rich LGBTQ history of community theatre and presents an eclectic mix of drama, dance, music and magic. IndyFringe has been a catalyst for the resurgence of arts and culture in downtown Indianapolis. IndyFringe extends its reach into the community with Fringe on Wheels, a mobile theatre which takes live theatre to artists and audiences who do not have access to traditional theatre experiences.

About IndyFringe:



Performances

Friday, October 2, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 3, 2020 - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 4, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.

"A Bluesy Night"

by Aniqua Chatman

explores the bliss and blues of unexpected attraction and unexpected challenges.

DIRECTED BY: Trent K. Haw-Rich

PERFORMED BY: Aniqua Chatman,
Jalen Anderson and Aaron Wright

"Anniversary"

by J.R. Baltimore

is a humorous tale of temptation and consequences of carnal options outweighing conscience.

DIRECTED BY: Kelly Mills

PERFORMED BY: Nate Russell, Montez Lafayette, Bianca Black, and Kaitlynn Nailon



Performances

Sunday, October 4, 2020 - 4:00 p.m.

Friday, October 9, 2020 - 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 10, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.



Performances

Friday, October 2, 2020 - 8:00 p.m.

Friday, October 9, 2020 - 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 10, 2020 - 7:30 p.m.

“Being Black”

by Vernon A. Williams

a collection of vignettes that create a soulful sojourn into myriad layers of the Black experience.

DIRECTED BY: Tijideen Rowley

PERFORMED BY: Lark Hodges, Isaiah N.B. Moore, Latrice Young, Leonard Harris, Ricky Cortez, Monica Cantrell, Deserae Kay, Tommy Gray

“I Feed You Defiance”

by Rain Wilson

offers a raw and tender revelation of the dilemma faced by mothers raising Black and Brown sons.

DIRECTED BY: Rain Wilson

PERFORMED BY: Dayna Arnett, Brittany Crone, Faye Holmes, Kelsey E. Johnson, Kimberlan Peak-Hill, Andrea P Wilson, and Alaina Renae Williams



Performances

Friday, October 2, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 3, 2020 - 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 10, 2020 - 4:00 p.m.



Performances

Saturday, October 3, 2020 - 2:00 p.m.

Thursday, October 8, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.

Friday, October 9, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.

"On The Corner"

by Michael Florence

offers pensive reflections of three death row inmates with contrasting perspectives on their journey.

DIRECTED BY: Edric Mitchell

PERFORMED BY: LKJ Dennis,
Matias Gonzalez, and Deont'a
Starks

"Seven Days"

by Shandrea Funnye

is a warm story of love, spontaneity, sacrifice and the notion that timing is everything.

DIRECTED BY: Shandrea Funnye

PERFORMED BY: Tajuan Woodson,
Frederick Weathers, Tessia Jones-Clark,
and Anjoynae Jimpson



Performances

Thursday, October 1, 2020 - 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 3, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, October 8, 2020 - 7:30 p.m.

About the playwrights

Aniqua Chatman - "A Bluesey Night" Aniqua ShaCole Chatman is an actress and playwright originally from Gary, IN. She began her career in performance at the age of 10. Her background in theater includes acting/vocal training at the Emerson Visual and Performing Arts High Ability Academy, Gary IN, acting/dance classes at The University of Northern Iowa, and on camera film study at Indy Actors Studio Workshops. Her credits list shows such as A Bluesey Night, The African Company Presents Richard III, August Wilson's Joe Turner's Come and Gone, and The Gifted Souls to name a few. Chatman has completed voice-over work in an online audio series Grown and Beautiful, appeared in the short film projects Oregano and Not My Pot and a feature film 5 Hours to Georgia. She also hosts numerous creative and artistic events in the city. Chatman is an alum of IUPUI. She is presently obtaining her master's degree in Public Relations as an online student at Ball State University.

J.R. Baltimore - "Anniversary" J.R. Baltimore, whose first love is comedy, describes himself a fictitious character with a passion for writing. At the age of one, he found a 20 dollar bill that belonged to one of his older brothers, tore it in half to double his scribble paper, grabbed a pencil from the kitchen table and began scribbling. Though he did not yet know his alphabet, he was anxious to speak in complete sentences transfer his overactive imagination into writing. At the age of three, young Baltimore tried to read everything he could get his hands on, amassing a huge collection of comic books. By first grade he was drawing imaginary characters in storyboard boxes and writing dialogue in cartoon conversation bubbles. In the third grade, he received a double-promotion and went straight to the fifth. From that point, writing became his passion. In high school Baltimore wrote the script for several class plays. He was editor of the school newspaper and the yearbook. He earned a full scholarship to Northwest University where he completed a degree in Journalism.

Vernon A. Williams - "Being Black" Vernon A. Williams is celebrating his 40th year as a playwright. His first work, "Whatever Happened to Blackness," in 1980 was staged by the Gary Creative Theater Ensemble. Williams later co-founded the William Marshall Players in Gary IN. After moving to Indianapolis IN 2001 Williams produced "sonnets for my sistahs," – from his book of the same title – an intimate collection of vignettes depicting seldom-heard heartfelt expressions of men to women. The production premiered at the Madam C.J. Walker Theater and toured throughout the state. Williams staged productions include "Playin' for Keeps," a talk-show setting for relationship dialogue; "A Woman's Place" following five college girls' evolution over the next two decades after graduation; "True Colors" which examined reactions to the election of the nation's first Black president; and "The Divine Nine," offering a glimpse into dynamics of Black fraternities and sororities. In 2019, Williams wrote, produced. and directed "The Price of Progress: The Indiana Avenue/IUPUI Story."

Rain Wilson – “I Feed You Defiance” Theater is a great gift for a writer to speak truth to power while empowering people who often are invisible or ignored and in this time where the world must crumble some to be rebuilt – the Onyx festival gives me permission and support to lean against the wind and be part of that rebuilding...” Rain Wilson is a writer, activist, director and arts educator – and believes in the power of the arts to build bridges and create a space for youth and community to walk into their voices and become a part of the change they want to see. She uses the stage to empower and build conversations around tough subjects like race, prison reform, homelessness, poverty and social justice. Wilson has a B.A. from Columbia College and an M.F.A. from Rutgers Masson Gross School of the Arts. Recently re-located from Chicago IL she is the Director of the Indiana Black Expo Arts Academy which empowers youth through dance, music, theatre and videography. Wilson’s recent inspirations unfold in “Jungle Kings” that details the impact of trauma on youth in urban streets “ I Feed You Defiance” which provides lessons for survival and light to fatherless young boys and men – and her one-woman show, “The Ink Never Dries” about the toll of activism today on the human heart - along with her latest commissioned art works, “Freedom in Hand” and “The Unheard”, dealing with the power of love, equality and the violence of silence. She is excited to share her passion with the Indianapolis community.

Michael Florence - "On The Corner" Michael Florence is a lifelong resident of Indianapolis. Several years ago, he had the idea to write a One Act Play. His thought process was “maybe I could bring my novel to life” and have a better chance of telling a good story. To date, he has written two one act plays, “On the Corner” and “Understanding Tony.” Florence is also an avid photographer for weddings, portraits, and other special events. He regularly contributes “volunteer photography” to the American Diabetes Association and the Alzheimer’s Association. <http://michaelflorencephotography.com>. Florence has worked as a Lease Accounting Specialist for Simon Property Group over 21 years. He is a member of the Indianapolis Chapter of the National Black MBA Association an association of Blacks with master’s degrees in business and related disciplines. Florence received an associate degree in accounting from Ivy Tech in 1983; Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Indiana Wesleyan University in 1993 and master’s degree in business administration in 1997 from Indiana Wesleyan University.

Shandrea Funnye – “Seven Days” Shandrea Funnye is a writer, director, singer, songwriter, and actress originally from Chicago IL. She has been writing since third grade, which is also where she won her first young authors contest. A Warren Central High School graduate she also attended IUPUI. A mother to two beautiful children, Funnye focused more on her family and less on the arts. Years later she auditioned for a small part in a friend’s production. When selected as the lead, she knew the opportunity was a needed push back in the right direction. Since 2017 Funnye has written and produced five original stage plays, sold out numerous shows, written and produced a short film and is currently in production for the feature film “Seven Days”, based on the stage play. Funnye is most grateful for her children - her main source of motivation and her amazing mother, who supports her in everything she does. She would also like to thank her wonderful friends and family members who have supported her in this journey; whether they purchase a ticket, share a post, offer kind words, or show up and show out at each or every production they are helping to make a dream come true.

Special Thanks

A.R.T.I. LEADERSHIP

Regina Turner, Associate Professor, Communication Studies
and Division of Undergraduate Education

Leslie Etienne, Interim Chair of Africana Studies in the
IU School of Liberal Arts

Lasana Kazembe, Assistant Professor, School of Education

Khaula Murtadha, Associate Vice Chancellor, Office of
Community Engagement

Vernon Williams, Communications & Community

Engagement Strategist for the IUPUI Office of Community Engagement

ONYXFEST

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Syearra Liggins

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