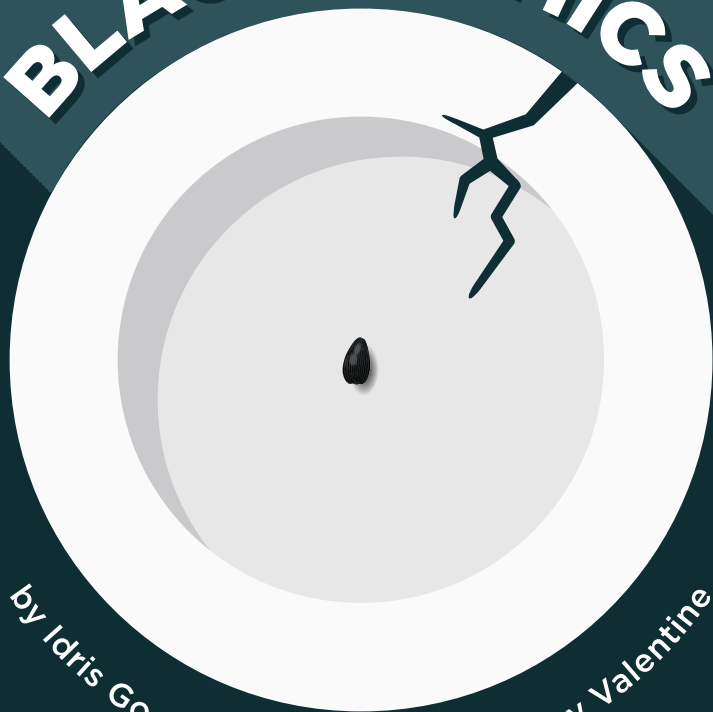




BLACKADEMICS



by Idris Goodwin • directed by Ansley Valentine

MAY 22 - 26 • A VIRTUAL EVENT

DEAR FRIENDS



WELCOME to *Blackademics* by Idris Goodwin, the final performance of Cleveland Play House's 2020-21 Virtual Season. In the midst of this terrible time of loss, sorrow, isolation, displacement, and division, we were determined to persevere—just like our CPH predecessors did during the Great Depression and WWII—continuing our service to the community in times of crisis and refusing to “go dark.” This season we produced over 47 hours of unique theatrical digital programming that employed more than 100 artists. We experimented, widened our circle of collaborators, and kept the metaphorical lights on to illuminate stories of joy, family, and resilience, to spotlight a diverse group of artists, to reflect back the experiences of this moment, and to keep the warm glow of connection with you.

Tonight's show is a razor-sharp satire that features dynamic, funny, and very talented local actors Mariah Burks, Colleen Longshaw, and Lisa Marie Schueller. One of the challenges of producing virtual theatre remotely is that the actors, working from home, don't have a technical crew to support them. Their acting job is hard enough without having to worry about managing lighting, cameras, and sound equipment on their own. To meet this challenge, CPH hired their loved ones, who were part of their COVID bubbles, to serve as production assistants. A big thank you to Rob Grant III, Adam Howard, and Emmanuel Jackson who played these vital “backstage” roles. Stage manager Olivia Louise Tree Plath, production assistant/script supervisor Ashley Raymer-Brown, video editor Ben Needham, composer Aaron Needham, and CPH's Artistic Digital Programs Manager Adam Kern round out this incredible, hard-working team.

Leading the entire endeavor is director Ansley Valentine, whose vision of this play stems from his own experience as a scholar and educator. Ansley, who completed a fellowship at CPH in 1994 and was an assistant director for our production of *Forest City* in 2003, has done a magnificent job. We're so happy he was able to return to CPH after several years to lead this project. Under Ansley's expert direction and guidance, this production is a springboard for thought, dialogue, and new understanding. To that end we hope you join us for a panel conversation discussing the themes of the play.

Ansley will moderate the discussion, which will include guest panelists Erica Merritt, Certified Diversity Professional and Founder of Equius Group; Dr. Yvonne Williams, inaugural recipient of The Hampton and Esther Boswell Distinguished University Professorship at DePauw University; and Dr. JeffriAnne Wilder, Executive Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Shaker Heights Schools. We hope you can join us for this exciting conversation on Monday, May 24 at 7:00 p.m. EST.

Thank you for all of your support of Cleveland Play House this year. We hope you enjoy this virtual production of *Blackademics*, and we look forward to seeing you in-person next fall!

Please mark your calendar for our 2021-22 Season Announcement on Friday, June 25.

LAURA KEPLEY
Artistic Director

COLLETTE A. LAISURE
Interim Managing Director



Artistic Director **LAURA KEPLEY**
Interim Managing Director **COLLETTE A. LAISURE**

WELCOMES YOU TO

BLACKADEMICS

Written by **IDRIS GOODWIN**

Directed by **ANSLEY VALENTINE**

Editor
BEN NEEDHAM

Composer
AARON NEEDHAM

Stage Manager
OLIVIA LOUISE TREE PLATH

MAY 22 - 26, 2021

Cleveland Play House's production staff are responsible for costumes, lighting, props, furniture, sound, and/or special effects used in this production.

Presenting Sponsor of the 105th Cleveland Play House Season



SYNOPSIS

A select table reserved at an exclusive café inspires a ravenous appetite from African-American professors Ann and Rachelle. From seed to slaughter, their host has the evening fully planned—down to the last chair. This comedic culinary celebration turns from crudit  to cruelty as our scholars banter, debate, and battle each other to claim their literal seat at the table.

PLACE: A caf  in the rural Midwest, maybe 20 miles outside the main college town in which Ann and Rachelle teach

TIME: Now

THE CAST (in alphabetical order)

Rachelle • **MARIAH BURKS**

Ann • **COLLEEN LONGSHAW**

Georgia • **LISA MARIE SCHUELLER**

The actors and stage manager in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

The director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

*It is a peculiar sensation,
this double-consciousness*

...

*two souls, two thoughts,
two unreconciled strivings;*

*two warring ideals
in one dark body*

W. E. B. Du Bois

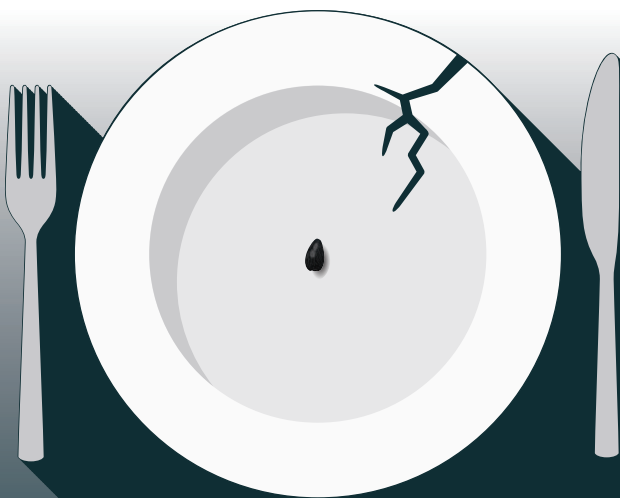
**RUN TIME IS APPROXIMATELY 85 MINUTES.
THIS PLAY WILL BE PERFORMED WITHOUT AN INTERMISSION.**

ADDITIONAL STAFF

Artistic Producer • **MAUREEN BURNS**
Artistic Virtual Programs Manager • **ADAM KERN**
Company Manager • **BETTY B. BROOKS**
Director of Production • **TYLER JACOBSON**
Director of Marketing • **NATHAN LILLY**
Associate Director of Production • **MARYANN MORRIS**
Audience Services Manager • **KRISTEN VLAHOPOULOS**
Creative Director • **BRIAN TATSUMI**
Marketing Communications Manager • **LEE MCKINSTRY**
Audience Services Associate • **ROBERT TAYLOR**
Technical Director • **GEORGE BLOGNA**
Sound & Projection Supervisor • **JAMES C. SWONGER**
Lighting Supervisor • **MICHAEL BOLL**
Costume Shop Manager • **JEFFREY VAN CURTIS**
Prop Shop Supervisor • **JESSICA ROSENLIEB**
Assistant to the Artistic & Managing Directors • **HOLLY KOSALKO**
Additional Music • **MAX LUNATI**
Production Assistant/Script Supervisor • **ASHLEY RAYMER-BROWN**
Production Assistant • **ADAM HOWARD**
Production Assistant • **EMMANUEL JACKSON**
Production Assistant • **ROB GRANT III**

Blackademics is produced by special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc. / [playscripts.com](https://www.playscripts.com)

During the performance, photography, video, and/or audio recording by any means is strictly prohibited.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE



ANSLEY VALENTINE

Many say this virtual production isn't theater... but it isn't a film either. What we have created is something in between. This is as much an art form made new as film was changed when sound was introduced. My work as the director has turned toward blurring the line between film and theatre, while still working remotely. I have had two major productions this spring: *Security* by Hammaad Chaudry, produced by Kane Repertory Theatre in St. Charles, Illinois, and starring Oscar- and Golden Globe-nominee Eric Roberts, and now *Blackademics* at CPH.

Through both productions, I worked to perfect an approach that blends theater practice with a film technique. Perhaps you would call it Zoom Theatre 2.0 or 5.0. If the actor (and their co-habitants) must be their own production crew, how do we create something artful and as intellectually and emotionally engaging as the audience would experience in a live theater? That is the magic question.

For one, we had several days to rehearse, exploring the complex themes and ideas in the text. A theatrical rhythm developed in rehearsal that is not always a consideration when making a film. From there, we plotted how to use the camera in ways that would make sense to the audience, preserve a theatrical feeling, and still get the intimacy of a film. On filming days, everyone worked through monitors with multiple cameras rolling. It felt as though everyone was in the room together—because we were, albeit virtually. Video editor Ben Needham has the yeoman's task of stitching the pieces and parts together. The final visual product may include green screen work, audio replacement, and other editing techniques.

BLACKADEMICS Panel Conversation • Monday, May 24 • 7:00 pm

NAVIGATING RACE AND GENDER ROLES AS HIGHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

Join us for a conversation between three Black women who have navigated professional careers in and around higher education. Discover how these experts and their extraordinary journeys can lend insight into the intersections between race, gender, and academia.

GUEST PANELISTS

Dr. JeffriAnne Wilder

Executive Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Shaker Heights Schools

Dr. Yvonne Williams

Founder of the Black Studies Program at The College of Wooster

Erica Merritt

Founder & Principal Consultant of Equius Group, LLC

MODERATOR:

Ansley Valentine • Director of Blackademics

To register, visit clevelandplayhouse.com.

WHO'S WHO



MARIAH BURKS

(*Rachelle*) is a Cleveland, OH native. She is elated to have collaborated and created such unique work alongside this incredible cast. Her works have

mainly been seen at Cleveland Play House and she was most recently set to play the titular role of *Antigone* pre-pandemic. Other credits include; *Clue: A New Comedy* (Cook); *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre); understudy for Sister Rosetta Tharpe/Marie Knight in *Marie and Rosetta*, *Shakespeare in Love*, and New Ground Theatre Festival: *The Nolan Williams Project*. An alumna of the CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program. Credits include: *Macbeth*, *Mary Zimmerman's Metamorphoses*, *Clybourne Park*, and *She Stoops to Conquer*. A graduate of Bowling Green State University's Musical Theatre Program. Credits: *Spring Awakening*, *Legally Blonde*, *Book of Days*, and others. Recipient of the National Irene Ryan Scholarship Acting Award at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in Washington, DC. Regional and local theatre work includes: *Caroline, or Change* (Tantrum Theatre) and *RAGTIME* (Cain Park). Instagram: @magical_mariahb



COLLEEN LONGSHAW

(*Ann*) is a Cleveland native and is excited to make her Cleveland Play House virtual stage debut with this wonderful team and this exciting

piece. Colleen holds an MFA from Kent State University. Credits include: *Kiss Me, Kate* (National Tour), *The Groove Factory* (New York Music Theatre Festival), *Hairspray* (Northshore Music

Theatre, Porthouse Theatre), *Sister Act* (Porthouse Theatre, Karamu House), *The Full Monty* (Northshore Music Theatre), *Fences* (Karamu House), *The Piano Lesson* (Cleveland Play House), *Caroline or Change* (Tantrum, Dobama/Karamu, Mercury) *Starmites* (Porthouse Theatre), *Made in America* (Dobama Theatre), *A Christmas Carol* (Great Lakes Theatre), *The Color Purple* (Karamu House), *South Pacific* (Porthouse Theatre), *Dreamgirls* (Cain Park), *Once On This Island*, (Porthouse Theatre), *Big River* (Porthouse Theatre), *Avenue X* (Cain Park), *Godspell* (Porthouse Theatre), *Aida*, (The Beck Center), *The Buddy Holly Story* (Carousel Dinner Theater), *Twelfth Night* (Ohio Shakespeare Festival). Instagram: @Cocoloco_13



LISA MARIE

SCHUELLER (*Georgia*)

is beyond excited to be making her Cleveland Play House debut.

Favorite roles include:

Your Mother's Vagina

(Layla - Regional Premiere - Allen Theatre/Texas), *Heathers: the musical* (Heather Chandler - Maedgen/TX), *Scotland Road* (The Woman - Wayside/ VA) and *Oh Coward!* (The Woman - Coach House Theatre/ OH) among others. Locally, she has been seen onstage with Ohio Shakespeare Festival, Porthouse Theatre, Cleveland Theatre Company, Carousel Dinner Theatre and Playhouse Square. Lisa holds a BFA in Acting and a MEd in School Counseling both from Kent State University and has been a proud member of AEA since 2005. Love always to husband, and PA, Adam Howard, and little co-stars - Madeline, Guinevere, and Alastair.

WHO'S WHO

ANSLEY VALENTINE (*Director*)

Ansley Valentine is a professional director for the theatre and musical theatre and an educator with experience teaching professionally at the collegiate level and in both public and private performing arts high schools. Ansley holds an M.F.A. in Directing from Indiana University. He is currently a proud member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC) and Actors' Equity Association (AEA). Some of his favorite productions include *Les Misérables*, *The Colored Museum*, *Twelfth Night*, and many new plays. Ansley is also a graduate of the Arts Midwest Minorities in Arts Administration Fellowship, a program funded by the Ford Foundation to increase minority representation in leadership roles at American not-for-profit organizations. His many awards include a Kennedy Center Gold Medallion. He is excited to be working with The Cleveland Play House again. He completed his fellowship here in 1994 and served as assistant director for *Forest City* in 2003. ansleyvalentineproductions.com

IDRIS GOODWIN (*Playwright*)

Across two decades Idris Goodwin has forged an impactful career as a multiple award-winning playwright, breakbeat poet, director, educator, and organizer. Passionate about cultivating new audiences in the arts, Idris is The Director of The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College, the first Black man to hold the position in its 100-year history. Prior to this, Goodwin served two seasons as Producing Artistic Director at StageOne Family Theatre in Louisville, Kentucky. He actively serves on both the advisory boards of Theatre for Young Audiences USA and Children's Theatre Foundation Association.

Idris is the author of over 50 original plays ranging from his Hip Hop inspired breakbeat series to historical dramas to works for young audiences. Works like *And In This Corner Cassius Clay*, *How We Got On*, *Hype Man: A Break Beat Play* and the ground breaking *Free Play: open source scripts for an antiracist tomorrow*, are widely produced across the country by a diverse mix of professional theaters, academic environments, and non-traditional spaces alike. Several of his plays are published and licensed through Playscripts Inc. Other works like the poetry books *Can I Kick It?*, *Human Highlight: Ode To Dominique Wilkins*, and the play *This Is Modern Art* are available from Haymarket Books. Goodwin has appeared on HBO *Def Poetry*, *Sesame Street*, NPR, BBC Radio, and the Discovery Channel. Idris is a 2021 United States Artist Fellow, recognized as a culture bearer who celebrates community values and cultivates histories with care. Supported by prestigious institutions like The Kennedy Center, The Eugene O'Neill Conference, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, and The Playwrights' Center Goodwin uses his full creative powers to galvanize people to the community square to sculpt better tomorrows.

OLIVIA LOUISE TREE PLATH

(*Stage Manager*) is delighted to be working with the Cleveland Play House community again. At the top of the pandemic, Olivia joined her classmate Josh Wilder as Co-Pilot (producer/casting director) for The Playwrights Workshop. With the addition of classmate Christina Fontana this trio led to work with more than 50 playwrights and 80 actors over the course of last year. Olivia's last few projects have been with the Guthrie

WHO'S WHO

Theatre, the International Arts & Ideas Festival and Yale Repertory Theater. Olivia dedicates her work to her remarkable parents, her brother and soon to be sister-in-law and her supportive extended family.

ASHLEY RAYMER-BROWN

(Production Assistant/Script Supervisor) is an award-winning Independent Filmmaker from Northern Kentucky. Her first film, *No Lost Cause*, is currently internationally distributed and was recently featured on TBN. Her second, semi-autobiographical film *The Hepburn Girls* is available on Amazon. In the spring of 2014, Ashley helped found and became the Vice-President of the brand-new theatre company based in rural Henry County, The Theatre Downstream. As of 2021, she is currently serving as President of TTD. Of the nineteen plays the company performed before covid 'caused a pause,' Ashley was fortunate to be able to serve in some capacity (actor, director, assistant director, co-director, playwright, media, public relations, whatever was needed) for all 19 shows. After the pause, she was part of the team that created *The Lemonade Jamboree*, a twelve-part internet television show featuring all original works, or works from the public domain, and featuring alumni from the theatre. No matter what the project, Ashley is happiest when she is able to bring talented people and their art together for the consumption and appreciation of the public. While her taste remains vintage, she is grateful for the technology of the modern world and the opportunity to share her thoughts, aspirations, and adventures. Her lofty dreams are to create things that people remember, finally finish her long-worked on novel, and to one day own an alpaca. Above all, she loves God, her family, her

friends, and being a fur-Mom to her beloved cats.

AARON NEEDHAM *(Composer)*

is a sound designer, composer and performer based out of Cleveland and NY. Past design experiences include sound design on the immersive design productions *Shadow of the Run's Chapter 1: WanderLust*, and *Railroaded*, as well as various projects with The Academy for the Performing Arts in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. Aaron also is an associate artist and designer for Digital Squirrel Studio. His past performances include LaFou in *Beauty and the Beast*, Ryan in *High School Musical*, the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz* and Ren in *Footloose*. Aaron is excited to be collaborating with the Cleveland Play House on this exciting project.

BEN NEEDHAM *(Editor)* is the Owner

and Principal Designer of Digital Squirrel Studio (www.digitalsquirrel.net) a full-service animation, design and architectural illustration studio. Film and television projects include set designer for Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*, *Kill the Irishman*, *Killing Lincoln*, *Killing Kennedy*, *Killing Reagan*, ABC's *The Kingmakers*, Meg Ryan's *Ithaca*, Amazon's Original Series *Point of Honor*, PBS's *Mercy Street* and of AMC's *TURN - Washington's Spies*. Ben was most recently a set designer on the upcoming films *The Outpost* and *Son of the South*. In addition to his editing and television work he has designed over 850 Theatre productions including locally for Porthouse Theatre, Beck Center for the Arts, Dobama, the Fine Arts Association, Signstage on Tour, Karamu Theatre and many others. In addition to running his design studio, Ben also is the Academy for the Performing Arts resident Set and

WHO'S WHO

Lighting Designer and oversees the design/technical theatre instruction for high school juniors and seniors who are pursuing future careers in the performing arts. Ben is excited to be working with the Cleveland Play House on such a unique project.

ADAM KERN (*Artistic Virtual Programs Manager*) is the Director and Co-Creator of *Shadow of the Run Chapter 1: WanderLust*, Cleveland's first full immersive theatre production, based on the Eliot Ness investigation of the Cleveland Torso Murders. Chapter 1 ran in July of 2019, and he and his team and co-creators are developing the next few chapters in the *Torso Cycle*. Producing credits include *The Water Dream*, starring Anthony Rapp and J. Robert Spencer (New York Music Theatre Festival), and Liz Femi's 2014 NAACP Theatre Award nominated *Take Me To The Poorhouse*. Adam has performed internationally at the Moscow Art Theatre, and at the Old Vic through a TS Eliot Fellowship. Regionally he has worked at the Los Angeles Philharmonic and their Toyota Symphonies for Youth, the American Repertory Theatre and the Classical Theatre of Harlem. He holds an MFA from the American Repertory Theatre / Moscow Art Theatre Institute for Advanced Theatre Training at Harvard University, and a BFA in Theatre from Kent State University. He is a proud member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA. adam-kern.com

CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE, founded in 1915 and recipient of the 2015 Regional Theatre Tony Award, is America's first professional regional theatre. Throughout its rich history, CPH has remained dedicated to its mission to inspire, stimulate and entertain diverse audiences across Northeast Ohio by producing plays

and theatre education programs of the highest professional standards. CPH has produced more than 100 world and/or American premieres, and over its long history more than 12 million people have attended over 1,600 productions. Today, Cleveland Play House celebrates the beginning of its second century of service while performing in three state-of-the-art venues at Playhouse Square in downtown Cleveland.

LAURA KEPLEY (*Artistic Director*) became Artistic Director of Cleveland Play House in 2013 and has directed numerous CPH mainstage productions including *Every Brilliant Thing*; *Into the Breeches!*; *Tiny Houses* (world premiere, also at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); *Sweat*; *The Diary of Anne Frank*; *Shakespeare in Love*; *The Crucible*; *Steel Magnolias*; *The Good Peaches* (world premiere); *Fairfield* (world premiere); *How I Learned to Drive* (also at Syracuse Stage); *The Little Foxes*; *Venus in Fur*; *Good People* (also at Syracuse Stage); *A Carol for Cleveland* (world premiere); *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*; *My Name is Asher Lev* and CPH readings of Roe Green Award-winning plays *Tiny Houses*; *The Chinese Lady*; *Soups, Stews and Casseroles: 1976*; *Marjorie Prime* and *Daphne's Dive*. She joined CPH in 2010, having arrived from Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, Rhode Island where she was Resident Director and Artistic Associate for four seasons and Interim Director of the Brown/Trinity Rep M.F.A. in Directing Program for one. She has also directed for The Alliance Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Chautauqua Theater Company, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Contemporary American Theatre Festival, and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts,

WHO'S WHO

among others. A native Ohioan, Laura received her undergraduate degree from Northwestern University and her Master of Fine Arts from Brown University/Trinity Rep. She is a Drama League Fellow and a recipient of the 2009-2011 National Endowment for the Arts/Theatre Communications Group Career Development Program for Directors.

COLLETTE A. LAISURE (*Interim Managing Director*) Interim Managing Director Collette A. Laisure joined the Cleveland Play House leadership on February 15, 2021 partnering with Board Chair Anne Marie Warren and Artistic Director Laura Kepley to support the Board and Staff with overall business operations. Previously, Laisure served as Vice President and Executive Director of the PNC Fairfax Connection from 2012 to

2017, spearheading the strategic and operational direction of the thriving community resource center located in Cleveland's Fairfax neighborhood. Collette served as the President and Executive Director of The Presidents' Council and has held board leadership roles at UH Rainbow Babies & Children's Foundation, Cleveland Public Theatre, Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation and Karamu House. Laisure also served as Director of The City of Cleveland's Office of Equal Opportunity, where she managed a budget of \$1 million and was responsible for administering and monitoring compliance with the Female- and Minority-owned Business Enterprise program. She is a member of Leadership Cleveland's Class of 2008, and a 2008 Crain's Cleveland Business Woman of Note.

Save the Date!

2021-22 SEASON ANNOUNCEMENT

FRIDAY, JUNE 25

For more information visit clevelandplayhouse.com.

