HOW TO CATCH CREATION

by Christina Anderson

Directed by Danielle A. Drakes

March 7-14
Center for the Arts
Studio Theatre

events.towson.edu

How to Catch Creation received its World Premiere at Goodman Theatre, Chicago, Illinois on January 28, 2019 Robert Falls, Artistic Director Roche Schulfer, Executive Director



Theatre Arts

Honor Native Land

Every community owes its existence and strength to the generations before them, around the world, who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy into making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will; some were drawn to migrate from their homes in the hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical in building mutual respect and connections across all barriers of heritage and difference.

At Towson University, we believe it is important to create dialogue to honor those that have been historically and systemically disenfranchised. So, we acknowledge the truth that is often buried: We are on the ancestral lands of communities and nations which include the <u>Susquehannock</u> (suh-skwuh-ha-naak), <u>Nanticoke</u> (nan-tuh-kowk) and the <u>Piscataway</u> (puh-ska-tuh-way) people who consider the land that the university currently occupies part of their ancient homeland. These were among the first in the Western Hemisphere. We are on indigenous land that was seized from the tribes and many others by European colonists.

We pay respects to these elders and ancestors. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today.



Have you ever felt like your identity is caught between two worlds? How to Catch Creation explores this feeling through the lens of intergenerational queer relationships from Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter movements, spanning from 1966 to 2014. It's a powerful journey through protests, societal upheaval, and the ongoing liberatory struggles against white supremacy, homophobia, and sexism.

However, history is not this play's only focus. It asks us to inquire inwardly, to confront our own biases, and to evaluate if and how through commission or omission we have enabled these systems. How to Catch Creation encourages us to engage creativity as a tool for healing and building a more just community.

Playwright Christina Anderson's characters are unforgettable. They defy stereotypes and showcase the incredible resilience of Black queer individuals navigating both historical and contemporary struggles. This play isn't just about entertainment; it's a call to action. It urges us to dismantle existing structures that silence diverse voices. It implores us to create spaces where everyone can thrive.

By staging How to Catch Creation, the Department of Theatre Arts is choosing to amplify a story that celebrates Black and Black queer voices and that invites audiences into the transformative power of creation. In these turbulent times, How to Catch Creation offers a beacon of hope. It encourages us to work towards creative liberation and positive change. Will you join the movement?

- Danielle A. Drakes Director

How to Catch Creation

Written by Christina Anderson Directed by Danielle A. Drakes

March 7-14, 2024 at Towson University Center for the Arts, Studio Theatre

> 7:30pm - March 7-9, 12-14 2pm - March 10

> > There will be a brief intermission.

Content Note: This production contains strong language and themes of queer intimacy.

How to Catch Creation received its World Premiere at Goodman Theatre, Chicago, Illinois on January 28, 2019

Robert Falls, Artistic Director Roche Schulfer, Executive Director

For additional information on productions, please visit our website at www.towson.edu/theatre
For a complete listing of events at Towson University, please visit events.towson.edu

If you would like to share a comment on this production, please e-mail theatre@towson.edu

TIME & PLACE

A place that resembles San Francisco and surrounding areas. 2014, and 1966, 1967. There's a brief moment in 1988.

CAST

Nico Thompson GRIFFIN

Tia Thomas TAMI

Josh Omobhude

STOKES

Layla Smith

RIĹEY

Maggie Sheriff GK MARCHE

Alisa Hicks NATALIE Shamar Martin

THOM/GRIFFIN UNDERSTUDY

Jaelyn Craigen

TAMI & RILEY UNDERSTUDY

Jojo Hatchett II

STOKES UNDERSTUDY/ PRODUCTION BEATMAKER

Makayla Hamilton

GK & NATALIE UNDERSTUDY

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Danielle A. Drakes DIRECTOR

Susan Picinich
COSTUME DESIGNER

Daniel Ettinger SCENIC DESIGNER

Tylar Hinton
HAIR & MAKEUP DESIGNER

Darren Edwards STAGE MANAGER/ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Natalia Dunn LIGHTING DESIGNER

Nick Hernandez SOUND DESIGNER

Teresa Spencer
INTIMACY CHOREOGRAPHER

Makayla Hamilton DRAMATURG

DRAMATURGY NOTES

About the Playwright

Playwright Christina Anderson, a native of Kansas City, Kansas, discovered her passion for playwriting in high school, thanks to a teacher's introduction. Armed with a bachelor's degree from Brown and a Master of Fine Arts from Yale, Anderson embarked on creating art that would amplify the experiences of Black queer women while paying homage to the often overlooked or forgotten Black women



writers who paved the way before her. Anderson has expressed a deep commitment to celebrating and drawing inspiration from Black women writers.

Among her influences are notable figures such as Ann Allen Shockley, Angela Davis, Cheryl Clarke, Jewelle Gomez, and Alice Walker. However, Anderson also draws inspiration from everyday encounters, particularly in San Francisco, where she encountered Black men embracing feminism and their cultural roots. She acknowledges reading the works of queer Black men like Essex Hemphill.

Black Feminism

The concept of feminism, advocating for gender equality, takes on a different dimension when led predominantly by white women. The struggles and limitations faced by women of color, particularly Black women, are often sidelined. Their experiences, intertwined with racism, sexism, and classism, encompass issues ranging from unequal employment opportunities to voting rights and protection from hate crimes. Black feminists like Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and Anna Julia Cooper laid the groundwork for acknowledging and addressing these intersecting challenges.

Despite advancements in the fight for equality, by the 1940s and 1950s, the issues affecting Black women remained overlooked, overshadowed by the leadership and political priorities of Black men. The failure to

recognize the intersectionality of racism and sexism perpetuated systemic inequalities. Emphasizing the empowerment of Black men often came at the expense of acknowledging the harm they inflict on Black women, underscoring the significance of Black men embracing feminism.

Black Queer Feminism

The late 1980s marked the emergence of Black queer feminist theory, epitomized by Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of "intersectionality," which acknowledges how the experiences of Black women stem from the intersections of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. This intersectionality becomes even more pronounced for individuals who are poor, queer, and women of color.

While 19th-century Black feminism centered on heterosexual Black women, the latter part of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century saw a shift toward radical black feminisms that centered queer and trans Black women, girls, and gender nonconforming individuals.

By the 1970s, more Black queer feminists were becoming visible and organized, establishing groups like the Salsa Soul Sisters, one of the earliest multicultural lesbian organizations, in response to tensions with both straight Black feminists and white LGBTQ+ communities.



Today, organizations like BYP-100, comprising young Black activists dedicated to the liberation of all Black people, prioritize including queer Black individuals and centering their intersecting struggles to envision a more inclusive freedom for the entire Black community.

- Makayla Hamilton Dramaturg

PRODUCTION TEAM

Technical Director Garrett Weeda **Lighting Director/Assistant Technical Director** Thomas Gardner **Assistant Stage Manager** Kevin Ferrell Stage Manager Liaison Seth Schwartz Alizon Santamaria **Costume Shop Manager Assistant Costume Shop Manager** Hannah Brill **Faculty Mentor** Jay Herzog **Merengue Instructor** Ruben Del Valle **Scene Shop Foreman** Kai Hopkins **Properties Manager** Alex Mungo **Lead Lighting Electricians** Maxwell "Mack" Leeuwen Frica Sweitzer

Assistant Costume Designer

Sound and Image Programmer

Light Board Programmer and Operator

Sound Board Operator

Deckhands

Faith Singletary

Kevin DeWitt

Erica Sweitzer

Grady Heveron

Errin Powell

Ben Smith
Dom Zuniga
Wardrobe Greg Bennett
Naomi Graham
Scenic Carpenters Sarah Benson

Darren De Groff Kelly Frazier Casey Gessert Wyatt Lieto Kayla Sterling

Costume Shop Staff

Rowan Gardner

Alyssa Millward

Faith Sinaletary

Poster Design
Katie Simmons-Barth
Production Photography
Katie Simmons-Barth

SPECIAL THANKS

Seth Schwartz, Brad Haynes, Jaelyn Craigen

COSTUME CREW

Katie Bartles
Kevin DeWitt
Daniel Kundrat
Echo Lurie
Nadira Nichols
Natalia Dunn
Jordan Rosenzweig
Darren Edwards
Benny Griese
Kaylah Harvey
Alisa Hicks
Daniel Kundrat
Nadira Nichols
Nadira Nichols
Senzweig
Pordan Rosenzweig
Eric Sweitzer
Quinn Toussaint

SCENIC CREW

Matthew Hazlehurst

Arin Ballard-May
Natalia Dunn
EAF
Rowan Gardner
Dersha Horrey
Emily Matsui
Ace Mikolowsky
J.T. Price

Daquan Harrison Grace Sciannella

LIGHTING & SOUND CREW

Davin Banks
Yenevi Castillo
Keely DeGasperis
Echo Lurie
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Keyshawn Mingo
Emery Sheriff
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	Assistant to the Chairperson/Intro to American Theatre
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	analysis/Community Outreach/TTI/Directing/African American Theatre
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	Acting
	Acting/Theatre Studies/Arts Integration
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Kennedy Center education and related artistic programming is made possible through the generosity of the National Committee for the Performing Arts.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Please consider giving a gift to the Department of Theatre Arts Scholarship Fund. The money raised by your generous donations helps students offset the cost of education and sponsors students' travel to conferences, auditions for graduate schools, and special events related to their research and development.

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LeBlanc with the set he designed for a summer seasonof Shakespeare plays in the Antiaoch Ampitheater, where he served as the technical director.

Whitney LeBlanc, born on June 20th, 1931, in Memphis, Tennessee, spent his formative years in Opelousas, Louisiana. He pursued higher education at the University of Iowa, where he earned a Master's in Theater Production in 1958.

In 1960, LeBlanc began teaching at Antioch College. He then held positions as a professor at Howard University, Lincoln University, the University of Texas, and Towson University (then Towson State College).

In 1969, he joined the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting, directing and producing 86 episodes of *Our Street*. He then moved to Hollywood, where he joined the Norman Lear/Tandem Tat organization as the Associate Director of *Good Times*. He would spend the next two decades as a director and a stage manager for numerous shows.

Aside from his contributions to television, LeBlanc was a prolific author, penning five books, and notably receiving the Amistad award for his novel *Blues in the Wind*, a part of his Blues Trilogy.

In 1996, he retired from the Directors Guild of America and moved to Napa Valley, California, where he began designing stained glass window pieces.

Mr. LeBlanc passed away in February of 2023. He is succeeded by his wife, Diane LeBlanc, and four children, leaving behind a lasting impact on both his family and the countless students and friends he inspired throughout his career.

THEATRE

Theatre U-stimulates understanding

Towerlight, April 18,1969

Theatre U was a non-profit community theater organized by Whitney LeBlanc and his then wife Elizabeth Walton at the Garrison Blvd. Church Center in Baltimore City. LeBlanc's vision for Theatre U was rooted in fostering better understanding among people of all races through the power of theater, the establishment of which was catalyzed by the recent assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The name "Theatre U" was intentionally kept a secret, allowing audiences to interpret its meaning freely. LeBlanc emphasized the importance of community involvement, stating, "no matter how polished our performances, if we do not involve the community we will have failed our goal."

LeBlanc expressed a desire to involve Drama Department students from TSC with the inner city, particularly with Black communities. His goal was to expose TSC students to authentic experiences, challenging them to move beyond pretense and understand the realities of different communities.

Towerlight article and images courtesy of the Towson Special Collections and University Archives "No matter how polished our performances, if we do not involve the community we will have failed our goal."

- Whitney LeBlanc

Unearthing Towson's History Project

In 2022, Allyn Lawrence, a student researcher with the Unearthing Towson's History Project, conducted an interview with Whitney LeBlanc where he recounts the memories of his experience as the first Black faculty member at the school.

To watch the collection of interviews with members of Towson's history, visit archives.towson.edu

TU TOWSON UNIVERSITY

LeBlanc Joins TSC

LeBlanc New Set Designer

Towerlight, October 22, 1965

The Speech and Drama Department was established at Towson State College (TSC) by Richard Gillespie in 1964. Just a decade after the ruling of *Brown v. Board,* Gillespie set out to integrate the department by recruiting Whitney LeBlanc as the assistant professor in Speech and Drama and the first Black faculty member at the school.

Despite his contentment as a professor at Howard University at the time, LeBlanc felt compelled to serve the purpose of integrating Towson's faculty. He joined TSC in 1965.

In an oral history interview conducted through the Unearthing Towson's History Project he recalled his first day on campus. He recounts that only the four faculty members in the Speech and Drama Department spoke to him and he saw less than ten students of color. He likened his experience at TSC to that of Jackie Robinson during this time.



Towerlight, October 22, 1965

"Well, let 'em come."

R acial tensions at TSC came to a boil with The Glen Player's production of $And\ People\ All\ Around$, directed by Mr. LeBlanc. Written by George Sklar, the play is based on the murders of three civil rights workers, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner, in Philadelphia, Mississippi.



In anticipation of the opening night, President Hawkins called LeBlanc and Gillespie to his office where FBI agents informed him of a protest to the play organized by Klansmen, to which LeBlanc responded, "Well, let 'em come." Security measures were put in place, assigning an agent to monitor both the students and LeBlanc during the play.

On the opening night of October 20th, dozens of Klan members dressed in full regalia and George P. Mahoney hats gathered on York Road and marched in front of Newell Hall. The disruptors were met with heckling Towson students and the play was put on as originally intended.

Tower Echoes
Vearbook 196

Towerlight articles and yearbook image courtesy of the Towson Special Collections and University Archives



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