

Alumni News

Owiso Odera, Hilary Ward, Jenni Putney, & Wen Ling Liao: In Kyle Donnelly's production of "Detroit 67"



By Dominique Morisseau
Directed by **Kyle Donnelly (Acting Faculty)**

Actors Theatre of Louisville
November 15th-December 11th

The production includes **MFA Acting alums Owiso Odera, Hilary Ward, and Jenni Putney**. The lighting design is by **MFA Lighting Design alum Wen Ling Liao**.

The music of Motown fuels this deeply-felt drama about an explosive moment in a great American city.

About the show

It's the summer of 1967, and the irresistible music of Motown is breaking records and breaking down barriers. Siblings Chelle and Lank make ends meet by running an unofficial nightclub in their Detroit basement, a risky business as police crack down on after-hours joints in black neighborhoods. When Lank offers shelter to an injured white woman, tensions escalate both in their home and in their community-and they find themselves caught in the middle of the '67 Detroit riots. Dominique Morisseau's deeply-felt drama explores an explosive moment in a great American city.



(From left: Owiso Odera, Hilary Ward, and Jenni Putney)

For tickets and more information, [click here](#).

Keith Wallace, Deborah Stein, Kamra A Jacobs, Mandisa Reed, Charlie Jicha, Brandon Rosen, and Melissa Ng: The Public Theatre's Under the Radar Festival Presents "The Bitter Game"

A solo performance charged with pain, poetry, and laughter, *The Bitter Game* blends verse, prose and "shit-talkin'" into a stirring commentary that begs the question: what does it mean to survive while Black in America? Wallace explores the question of police agency and excessive force, the ripple effects of trauma in communities of color, and the value of Black lives in this country.

MFA Acting Alum Keith A. Wallace is an actor, playwright, director, and self-proclaimed "actorvist." He has appeared in *Junk*, *Blueprints to Freedom*, *Movers + Shakers*, *Death of a Driver*, *Venus*, *In the Crowding Darkness*, and more. Directing credits include *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* and *The Brothers Size* (Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Production). MFA in Acting from UCSD; recipient of the 2016 Princess Grace Theater Award. **Deborah Stein's (Playwriting Faculty)** play *Chimera* was seen in UTR 2012; other plays include *Marginal Loss*, *The Wholehearted*, and *God Save Gertrude*. She is Co-Artistic Director of Stein | Holum Projects, an alumna of New Dramatists, and teaches at UCSD, where her collaboration with Wallace began.

The production team includes many current UC San Diego students and alums:

Production Stage Manager: **Kamra A. Jacobs (MFA Stage Manager)**

Stage Manager: **Mandisa Reed (MFA Stage Manager)**

Set Designer: **Charlie Jicha (MFA Scenic Design)**

Lighting Designer: **Brandon Rosen (MFA Lighting Design)**

Costume Designer: **Melissa Ng (MFA Costume Design Alum)**



(Keith Wallace; Photo by Jim Carmody)

For tickets and more information, [click here](#).

Kevin Katan: In the Touring Production of Cirque Du Soleil's Toruk: The First Flight

Kevin Katan (UG Alum) is the stage manager for Cirque Du Soleil's production of "Toruk: The First Flight". He will be here in San Diego with the tour of Toruk: The First Flight

Toruk: The First Flight is a live immersive multimedia spectacle that brings to the stage the breathtaking world of James Cameron's AVATAR like you have never seen it before. Through a riveting fusion of cutting-edge visuals, puppetry and stagecraft buoyed by a soaring cinematic score, Cirque du Soleil applies its unique signature style to James Cameron's imaginary world and "makes the bond" between two kindred artistic visions that capture the imagination. This live immersive experience also bears the distinct signature of directors and multimedia innovators Michel Lemieux and Victor Pilon. It is a living ode to the Na'vi's symbiotic coexistence with nature and their belief in the basic interconnectedness of all living things. Narrated by a "Na'vi Storyteller" and populated by unforgettable characters, TORUK - The First Flight is a mythical tale set thousands of years before the events depicted in the film AVATAR, and before any humans ever set foot on Pandora.



For tickets and more information, [click here](#).

Aprill Winney: Selected for the Disney-ABC Television Group Directing Program

Indie film directors, television editors and a former Spike Lee Fellow are among the 10 program directors chosen by Disney-ABC Television Group to take part in its 2016-17 Directing Program. The participants will be pitched to shadow on such ABC series as *Fresh Off the Boat*, *The Goldbergs*, *The Real O'Neals*, *Quantico* and *Scandal*; Freeform's *Shadowhunters* and *Young & Hungry*; and Disney Channel's *KC Undercover* and *Stuck in the Middle*.

The newly named program directors are indie film directors Pete Chatmon (*Premium*), Anthony Lucero (*East Side Sushi*); television editors Dane Collier (*Timeless*), Jill D'Agnew (Switched at Birth), who made her episodic directing debut on the same series; former Spike Lee Fellow Jess dela Merced, who was named as one of *Filmmaker Magazine's* 25 New Faces of Independent Film; award-winning documentarian Sarah Feeley (CNN Films' *Raising Ryland*); Steven J. Kung (*Dear White People*), Co-Chair of the DGA's Asian American Committee and writers' assistant; Mundo Fox segment producer Rebecca Murga, who is also on the Board of Advisors for Veterans in Film and Television; Emmanuel Osei-Kuffour, whose *Born With It* garnered awards at the Toronto and Pan African film festivals; and script supervisor **Aprill Winney (UG Alum)**, (*The Fosters*), who made her episodic directing debut on the same series.

Since a redesign six years ago, Program Directors have shadowed more than 100 TV episodes and directed nearly 80 episodes of Disney-ABC Television series. Alumni include Emmy-winner Regina King (*Scandal*, *The Catch*), Zetna Fuentes (*How to Get Away with Murder*, *Jane the Virgin*), Nzingha Stewart (*The Fosters*, *Major Crimes*), Rob Greenlea (*Grey's Anatomy*, *Madam Secretary*) and David Rodriguez (*Scandal*, *Queen of the South*).



To read the full article, [click here](#).

Christine Albright-Tufts, Lila Rose Kaplan, Sherrice Mojgani, Naysan Mojgani, and Carmelita Becnel: Featured in "Children in the Space - A Collaborative Photo Essay on Working Parents in the Theatre"

An excerpt from the essay:

It is beautiful and extremely important (and what great exposure!), featuring mothers who work in the theater with their children, showing many mothers known in the theater out with their children or spending time at home, with one photo in the rehearsal space. Every contribution to increase visibility is a win for all of us. Our essay's focus, however, is on children in the performance/work space and includes dads in as many photos as were submitted. It must be said that there should be no expectation of this sort of treatment across the board at all times for all persons from these theaters - the practice is still unregulated. Negotiations, permissions, and boundaries of space are still discussed on a case by case basis for every person and every theater. However, the point of this essay is that on-site child/parent work photo can be one of the most effective and positive tools for increasing visibility of the working-artist parent lifestyle within the theater and the theatre's need to embrace that lifestyle more consistently across the board.

The photo essay includes **Christine Albright-Tufts (MFA Acting alum)**, **Lila Rose Kaplan (MFA Playwriting alum)**, **Sherrice Mojgani (MFA Lighting Design alum)**, **Naysan Mojgani (PhD alum)**, and **Carmelita Becnel (MFA Stage Management alum)**.



(Christine Albright-Tufts, John Tufts, and their son Henry at rehearsal for OSF Daedalus AIDS Benefit talent show. Photo Credit: Jenny Graham)



(Left: Sherrice Mojgani, Lighting Designer, Moxie Theatre, San Diego; Right: Lila Rose Kaplan, playwright, with 14 month old daughter Hailey Diana at tech for mom's play Home of the Brave at Merrimack Repertory Theatre.)

To see the complete photo essay, [click here](#).

Daniel K. Isaac: Wins Best Actor in a Drama and Best Drama Pilot in the 12th Annual New York Television Festival

"According to My Mother," created by **Daniel K. Isaac (UG alum)**, Cathy Y. Yan, and Devin Landin of Queens, won for Drama Pilot at the 12th annual New York Television Festival. Daniel K. Isaac also won Best Actor in a Drama Series.

The weeklong festival featured a competition for completed pilots and for the first time added a script competition. Participants also competed to secure development deals with the festival's partner networks and production companies.

"According to My Mother" revolves around a gay Korean-American man in New York whose life changes when his devout Christian mother moves in with him.

The winners were chosen from a pool of 84 official pilot selections and 21 scripts.



To read the complete article, [click here](#).

Bennett Fisher: Finalist for the Samuel Goldwyn Writing Award

An excerpt from the UCSD News article:

Faculty and students from UC San Diego's Department of Theatre and Dance excel on Broadway, in theaters nationwide, and in the film and television industry. Now a new graduate, **Bennett Fisher (MFA Playwriting alum)**, is a finalist for a Samuel Goldwyn Writing Award.

Fisher is competing for the award with "Damascus," his play developed and produced as part of the 2016 Wagner New Play Festival (WNPF) on the La Jolla campus. He is the only UC San Diego playwright among a field of four other finalists from UCLA, where the first-, second- and third-place winners will be announced Nov. 1.

"We are very pleased about this nomination," said Naomi Iizuka, head of playwriting in the Department of Theatre and Dance. "Our focus at UC San Diego is storytelling. That's a skill that can be used in theatre, in

addition to film and TV."

"I'm very humbled to have been chosen as a finalist, and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to UC San Diego," said Fisher. "Whatever I've achieved as an artist, I've done so because I've had smart, dedicated mentors and generous collaborators who worked tirelessly with me on every draft. My fellow playwrights provided insight and encouragement when I was stuck, and I had an incredible team for the WNPF production that pushed me to do my best work."



(Andrew Gallop, left, and DeLeon Dallas, right, in a scene from "Damascus. Photo by Jim Carmody)

To read the complete article, [click here](#).

N'Jameh Camara: In "Julius Casear" and "X" at the New Victory Theater in New York



The Acting Company will present William Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" and Marcus Gardley's new play "X" about the assassination of Malcolm X. The Acting Company's 2016/17 national tour will include Baltimore and Princes George's County, MD, Kansas City and Columbia, MO, Phoenix and Flagstaff, AZ as well as Oswego and Syracuse and New York City, NY, and more locations to be announced soon.

N'Jameh Camara (MFA Acting alum) will play Calpurnia in "Julius Caesar" as well as a variety of characters and understudying in the world premiere of Marcus Gardley's "X". She starts rehearsal next month and will go on a national tour until the beginning of April. At that time, the show will return to Broadway's 42nd Street with an Off Broadway run at The New Victory Theater.

Janet A. Teller: Designs Sexy Halloween Costumes for Men

Sexy Halloween costumes for women are so huge and the market so extensive that it has crossed over from titillating to laughably mundane. Traditionally, these costumes allude to their original characters while barely covering the bathing suit area, making many young women susceptible to a late October chill. But if you look in the men's sections on these websites (if they even have one), their costumes have more coverage area than what AT&T boasts in their ads.

"When I would look at photos on social media, I can see people wearing what we make," says **Janet Teller (MFA Costume Design alum)**, the vice president of design at 3Wishes, a website that sells lingerie and sexy costumes that is rapidly expanding its more salacious offerings for guys. "When you see pictures from a frat party, the guy didn't button his police shirt, or he cut his sleeves off. He would take the toga we sell and shorten it. We're addressing a market that definitely was already there, but they just weren't being designed for."



To read the full article, [click here](#).

Melanie Marnich: New Play "These Shining Lives" Produced in San Diego

"These Shining Lives"

By **Melanie Marnich (MFA Playwriting alum)**

Directed by Beth Duggan

Melanie's play will be produced at Mira Costa College and Grossmont College in San Diego this November and December.

About the Play

The year: 192X. The place: Ottawa, Illinois. For a woman, good-paying work is hard to find, yet the assembly line is in full swing at the factory of the Radium Dial Company. Here, Catherine Donohue and her coworkers spend their days hand-adorning the hour markings on clocks and watches with glow-in-the-dark radium paint whose dangerously radioactive properties are unknown to the workers and downplayed by the bosses. As the women begin suffering from mystifying and terrifying ailments, they suspect their job may be to blame. These Shining Lives recounts the true story of the women who formed a bond of kinship as they



fought the Radium Dial Company in their search for justice and how their sacrifice forged a legacy of better working conditions for future generations.

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