



REMY BUMPPPO

think theatre

June 28, 2023

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**Remy Bumppo Theatre Company
Announces Cast, Creative and Production Team for
BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY
by Pearl Cleage
Directed by Mikael Burke
September 14 – October 15 at Theater Wit**

CHICAGO – Remy Bumppo Theatre Company is pleased to announce the cast, creative and production teams for *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, the opening production in its 2023 - 2024 season, written by **Pearl Cleage** and directed by **Mikael Burke**, September 14 - October 15, at Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont Ave. Previews are Thursday, Sept. 14 at 7:30 p.m.; Friday, Sept. 15 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Sept. 16 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, Sept. 17 at 2:30 p.m. with **press opening Monday, Sept. 18 at 7 p.m.** Regular performances run Thursdays - Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2:30 p.m. with additional matinees Saturday, Sept. 23 at 2:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 28 at 2:30 p.m. and Saturday, Oct. 7 at 2:30 p.m. Post-Show Talkbacks are held following all Sunday performances. The Audio Description/Touch Tour performance is Saturday, Sept. 23 at 2:30 p.m. and the Open Caption performance is Saturday, Oct. 7 at 2:30 p.m. Discounted two-show subscriptions are currently available at RemyBumppo.org. Single tickets are \$10 - \$52 and go on sale Wednesday, July 12 at 12 p.m at RemyBumppo.org. Groups of 10 or more may call the Theater Wit Box Office at 773.975.8150 to receive group discounts and make reservations.

It's 1930 in Harlem and Jazz singer Angel (**Tiffany Renee Johnson**) has just gotten fired from The Cotton Club. Supported by her closest friends, Angel hopes for her next big break as costume designer Guy (**Breon Arzell**) imagines sewing dresses in Paris and Delia (**Jazzlyn Luckett Aderele**) works to bring family planning centers to the community. But all of their dreams are put in jeopardy when Angel meets Leland (**Ajax Dontavius**), a recent Alabama transplant. Will Leland be the true love Angel has been waiting for or will he forever alter the dynamic of their precious inner circle? *Blues for an Alabama Sky* by Pearl Cleage is a play about change, struggle and joy set against the tumultuous backdrop of prohibition, the Jazz Age and the beginning of The Great Depression.

"I'm so jazzed to be back with Remy Bumppo to direct the remarkable *Blues for an Alabama Sky* this season," said **Director Mikael Burke**. "With the current onslaught against reproductive, trans, queer and women's rights, coinciding with an impending economic recession, we're living in a world of dwindling hope and increasing hostility

more akin to depression era Harlem than most of us would prefer. But Cleage's found family of dreamers who dare to envision better lives for themselves and their community are a great reminder of how we can hope to survive our present troubles. We have to dream so big, believe so strongly in what is possible, that reality has no choice but to comply. Because if we doubt ourselves and own power for even a moment and put the keys to our happiness in anyone's hands other than our own, reality won't hesitate to bring our dreams crashing down."

The cast for *Blues for an Alabama Sky* features **Tiffany Renee Johnson*** (she/her/hers, Angel)*; **Breon Arzell*** (he/him/his, Guy); **Edgar Sanchez*** (he/him/his, Sam); **Jazzlyn Luckett Aderele** (she/her/hers, Delia); **Ajax Dontavius** (he/him/his, Leland); **Michelle Bester** (she/her/hers, Angel U/S); **Jelani Julyus** (he/him/his, Guy U/S); **Jordan Gleaves** (he/him/his, Sam U/S) and **Monty Kane** (he/him/his, Leland U/S).

* denotes member of Actors Equity Association

The creative and production team for *Blues for an Alabama Sky* includes **Mikael Burke** (he/him/his, Director); **Jasmine B. Gunter** (she/her/hers, Associate Director); **Martine Kei Green-Rogers** (she/her/hers, Dramaturg); **Shadana Patterson** (she/her/hers, Dialect and Vocal Designer); **Lauren Nichols** (she/her/hers, Scenic Designer); **Gregory Graham** (he/him/his, Costume Designer); **Becca Jeffords** (she/they, Lighting Designer); **Peter Clare** (they/them, Sound Designer); **Sam Paulson** (he/him/his, Properties Designer); **Jean E. Compton*** (she/her/hers, Stage Manager); **Anna Vu** (she/her/hers, Assistant Stage Manager); **Addoris Davis** (they/she, Production Manager); **Manuel Ortiz** (he/him/his, Technical Director) and **Nick Chamernik** (he/him/his, Head Electrician).

ABOUT PEARL CLEAGE, playwright

[Pearl Cleage](#) (she/her/hers) is an Atlanta-based writer whose plays include *Pointing at the Moon*, *What I Learned in Paris*, *Flyin' West*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and *Bourbon at the Border*, commissioned and directed by Kenny Leon at the Alliance Theatre. She is also the author of *A Song for Coretta*, written in 2007 during Cleage's time as Cosby Professor in Women's Studies at Spelman College. Her play, *The Nacirema Society Requests The Honor Of Your Presence At A Celebration Of Their First One Hundred Years*, was commissioned by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and premiered in 2010, in a joint production by the ASF and Atlanta's Alliance Theatre, directed by Susan Booth. Her plays have also been performed at Arena Stage, Hartford Stage, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Huntington Theatre, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, the Long Wharf Theatre, Just US Theatre, True Colors Theatre, Bushfire Theatre, the Intiman Theatre, St. Louis Black Repertory Company and Seven Stages. She is also an accomplished performance artist, often working in collaboration with her husband, writer Zaron W. Burnett, Jr. They have performed at the National Black Arts Festival, the National Black Theatre Festival and colleges and universities across the country. Cleage and Burnett also collaborated with performance artists Idris Ackamoor and Rhodessa Jones on the script for *The Love Project*, which premiered at the National Black Theatre Festival in 2008, and is currently touring the country. Cleage is also an accomplished novelist. Her novels include "What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day," a New York Times bestseller and an Oprah Book Club selection, "I Wish I Had a Red Dress," "Some Things I Never Thought I'd Do," "Babylon Sisters," "Baby Brother's Blues," "Seen It All and Done the Rest," and "Till You Hear from Me." She is also the author of "Mad at Miles: A Blackwoman's Guide to Truth," a groundbreaking work of race and gender, and "We Speak Your Names," a praise poem commissioned by Oprah

Winfrey for her 2005 celebration of legendary African American women and written in collaboration with Zaron Burnett. Cleage has also written for magazines, including "Essence," "Vibe," "Rap Pages," and "Ms." In addition to her work as the founding editor of "Catalyst" magazine, a literary journal, she was a regular columnist for the Atlanta Tribune for ten years, winning many awards for her thought-provoking columns. She has also written for TheDefendersOnline.com. Cleage has been awarded grants in support of her work from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Fulton County Arts Council, the Georgia Council on the Arts, the Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs, and the Coca-Cola Foundation. Her work has earned her many awards and honors, including an NAACP Image Award for fiction in 2008. Pearl Cleage is represented by Ron Gwiazda at Abrams Artists Agency in New York City.

ABOUT MIKAEL BURKE, director

[Mikael Burke](#) (he/him/his) is a Chicago-based director, deviser and educator. A Princess Grace Award-winner in Theatre and Jeff Award-nominated director, Burke has worked with Goodman Theatre, About Face Theatre, Victory Gardens Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Raven Theatre, Jackalope Theatre Company, First Floor Theater, American Theatre Company, Chicago Dramatists, The Story Theatre and Windy City Playhouse in Chicago, and regionally with Theatreworks Hartford, Forward Theatre Company, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Geva Theatre Center, Third Avenue Playworks and Phoenix Theatre Indianapolis. Burke previously served as associate artistic director of About Face Theatre and has taught at DePaul University, Roosevelt University and Butler University. Recent directing credits include *Two Mile Hollow* by Leah Nanako Winkler; the American premiere of *Routes* by Rachel De-Lahay, *The Wanderers* by Anna Ziegler, *Shakespeare's Richard III*, the world and Chicago premieres of *The Magnolia Ballet* by Terry Guest (2022 Jeff Award Winner – production, short run); *Fireflies* by Donna R. Love (Black Theatre Alliance Award – Best Direction of an Ensemble).

ABOUT REMY BUMPPO THEATRE COMPANY:

Remy Bumpo Theatre Company expands and enriches their community's view of the world, and their own, by producing both the great plays of the past and the important plays of today. As an ensemble-driven theater company, Remy Bumpo authors a more humane culture that listens to, and seeks to understand, the voices, the ideas and the stories of one another.

PRODUCTION DETAILS:

Blues for an Alabama Sky

Written by: **Pearl Cleage** (she/her/hers)

Directed by: **Mikael Burke** (he/him/his)

Website link: RemyBumpo.org/shows/blues/

Cast (in alphabetical order): **Ajax Dontavius** (he/him/his, Leland); **Breon Arzell*** (he/him/his, Guy); **Edgar Sanchez*** (he/him/his, Sam); **Jazzlyn Luckett Aderelle** (she/her/hers, Delia) and **Tiffany Renee Johnson*** (she/her/hers, Angel)*.

Understudy Cast (in alphabetical order): **Jelani Julyus** (he/him/his, Guy U/S); **Jordan Gleaves** (he/him/his, Sam U/S); **Michelle Bester** (she/her/hers, Angel U/S); **Monty Kane** (he/him/his, Leland U/S)

Stage Manager: **Jean E. Compton*** (she/her/hers)

Dramaturg: **Martine Kei Green-Rogers** (she/her/hers)

Associate Director: **Jasmine B. Gunter** (she/her/hers)
Assistant Stage Manager: **Anna Vu** (she/her/hers)
Dialect and Vocal Designer: **Shadana Patterson** (she/her/hers)
Scenic Designer: **Lauren Nichols** (she/her/hers)
Costume Designer: **Gregory Graham** (he/him/his)
Lighting Designer: **Becca Jeffords** (she/they)
Sound Designer: **Peter Clare** (they/them)
Properties Designer: **Sam Paulson** (he/him/his)
Artistic Director: **Marti Lyons** (she/her/hers)
Creative Producer: **Christina Casano** (she/her/hers)
Production Manager: **Addoris Davis** (they/she)
Technical Director: **Manuel Ortiz** (he/him/his)

Location: **Theater Wit**, 1229 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, IL 60657

Dates: **Previews:** Thursday, Sept. 14 at 7:30 p.m.; Friday, Sept. 15 at 7:30 p.m.;
Saturday, Sept. 16 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, Sept. 17 at 2:30 p.m.

Press/Opening Performance: Monday, Sept. 18 at 7 p.m.

Run Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes, including one 15 minute intermission

Regular Run: September 21 - October 15; Thursdays - Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and
Sundays at 2:30 p.m.

Matinee Performances (other than Sundays): Saturday, Sept. 23 at 2:30 p.m.;
Thursday, Sept. 28 at 2:30 p.m.; Saturday, Oct. 7 at 2:30 p.m.

Post Show Discussions: Post-show discussions are held following Sunday
performances, September 24 - October 15.

Audio Description/Touch Tour Performance: Saturday, Sept. 23 at 2:30 p.m.

Open Caption Performance: Saturday, Oct. 7 at 2:30 p.m.

Single Tickets go on sale Wednesday, July 12:

Previews: \$30.00

Regular Run: \$36.00 - \$52.00

Industry Tickets: \$15.00, available for all performances using code INDUSTRY

Student Tickets: \$10.00, available for all performances

Group Discounts: For groups of 10 or more, call the Theater Wit Box Office at
773-975-8150.

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Remy Bumpo Theatre Company's season sponsors are Brenda and James
Grusecki, Lynne Simon and Charlotte Toerber.