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THE 5 & DIME
A THEATRE COMPANY

presents



A Play by Al Letson

Directed by Michelle Simkulet

April 17, 18, 24, 25 2015

MCSH
MUSEUM OF SCIENCE & HISTORY



Founders

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Our Mission

The 5 & Dime tells stories that engage, inspire,
entertain, and challenge audiences, nurturing a rich
artistic culture in Jacksonville's Urban Core.

Help us make change!

www.The5andDime.org

The 5 & Dime is proud to be part of
Jacksonville's vibrant theatre community.

ABET: Atlantic Beach Experimental Theatre

www.abettheatre.com

Alhambra Theatre & Dining

www.alhambrajax.com

Amelia Community Theatre

www.ameliacommunitytheatre.org

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www.apextheatrejax.com

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www.ameliaflt.org

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www.limelight-theatre.org

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www.opct.org

Players by the Sea

www.playersbythesea.org

SMTE: Summer Musical Theatre Experience

www.artistseriesjax.org

Stage Aurora

www.stageaurora.org

Theatre Jacksonville

www.theatrejax.com

THANK YOU

First and foremost we'd like to thank MOSH for hosting this production in their fabulous, world-class planetarium.

We could not continue to bring quality theatre to the urban core without our supporters and volunteers. The following people and organizations have helped us realize that, together, we can make change in Jacksonville!

Brett Jacobs

Paul Wenglowisky

Eddie Whisler

WJCT

Sarah Boone and Theatre Jacksonville

JenHoldman Photography

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Denise Watson

Celia Frank and ABET

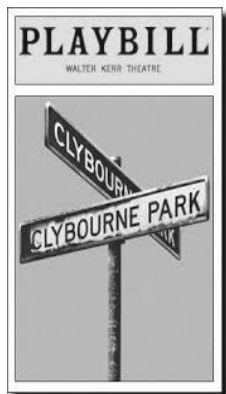
Brian Grant

Tom Fallon

Jim Wiggins

Jan Murphy

NEXT UP AT THE 5 & DIME



Clybourne Park

By Bruce Norris

July 31 - Aug. 2

August 7 - 9

at the Cummer
Museum of Art and Gardens

CAST

JOHN COFFEY.....Larry Knight
GOD WITH A LITTLE G.....Eugene Lindsey
LEGBA.....David Girard
MOTHER ABIGAIL.....Rita Churchwell
BAGGER.....Steven Anderson
CLERK.....Brooks Anne Meierdieks
STEPHEN KING.....Bill Ratliff

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director.....Michelle Svenson Simkulet
Stage Manager/Lighting Board.....Evan Gould
Production Manager.....Lee Hamby
Sets - Costumes - Props... ..Lee Hamby
Technical.....Brett Jacobs
Paul Wenglowisky
Eddie Whisler
Marketing Coordinator.....Judy Gould
Graphic Design.....Shelby Mclachlen
Web Master.....Eric Yarham
Video Promotion.....Abigail Saenz
Box Office Manager.....Krysten Bennett
Volunteer Coordinator.....Craig Leavitt
Program.....Evan Gould, UPS Store #4509

WHO'S WHO

BILL RATLIFF (Stephen King) is a local actor who has appeared in virtually every available Jacksonville venue. He last appeared as Oscar Wilde in the *Players by the Sea* production of *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*. Prior to that he portrayed Mark Rothko in the ABET production of *RED* and was last seen on the 5 & Dime stage as Donner in *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues*. Other PBTS credits include: *Young Frankenstein* (The Monster), *Sordid Lives* (Brother Boy), *The Who's Tommy* (Uncle Ernie), *Parade* (Hugh Dorsey), *Sweeney Todd* (Turpin), *Bat Boy* (Dr. Parker), *The Lion in Winter* (Henry), *Mr. Roberts* (Roberts), *Equus* (Dysart), *Bill W. & Dr. Bob* (Bill W.) and many, many others. He also portrayed Salieri in the PBTS/Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra joint production of *Amadeus*. Theatre Jax credits include: *Forever Plaid*, *Sylvia*, *Anything Goes*, *A Funny Thing Happened...*, and *The Learning Curve*. Numerous other local credits. Bill is a graduate of Furman University where he studied theatre and earned a degree in economics. He sends out big thanks to Beth, Sarah and Andy for letting him go out to play.



LARRY KNIGHT (John Coffey) is poet, writer, and teacher from Baton Rouge, Louisiana; he is an English Literature and Mass Communications graduate of Southern University. In 2004, Knight co-wrote and appeared in "GRIOT: He Who Speaks the Sweet Word," a three-person ensemble piece commissioned by the Baltimore Theatre Project; it was also well received at the 2006 New York City International Fringe Festival, where it received Backstage Magazine's critics pick. Knight has been seen in productions at three of Jacksonville's premier community theatres, *Players by the Sea*, Theatre Jacksonville, and the 5 & Dime. In 2008, Knight appeared as Brutus in *Players by the Sea's* production of "JULIUS X," a role that garnered him the Best Actor Pelican award. In 2009, he appeared as Othello in *Players by the Sea's* production of Shakespeare's classic tragedy. Knight appeared in the *Players by the Sea's* 2010 production of August Wilson's "GEM OF THE OCEAN" as Caesar Wilkes. Knight appeared in the 5 & Dime Theatre Company's 2011 production "FAHRENHEIT 451" as Aristotle. Knight first appeared as John Coffey in the 2012 staged reading of "JOHN COFFEY REFUSES TO SAVE THE WORLD" at Theatre Jacksonville. In 2013, he appeared as John Williamson in David Mamet's "GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS." In February, Knight appeared as Grant Wiggins in *Players by the Sea's* production of "A LESSON BEFORE DYING." Along with acting, writing and performing original poetry, Knight has taught both English Literature and Journalism at Stanton College Preparatory School since 1998. In 2009, he founded The Expressionists, a spoken word poetry society with the aim of inspiring talented, young writers and performers to share their voices. That same year, Knight



PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES (cont.)

story was born. Not from disdain for these characters, but for the love of them. Love for characters that seem somewhat out of step with America today. I've often felt like John, I imagine most of us have, at one time or another; stuck playing a role we never really asked for. And yet we all have a part to play, or do we?

Changing the world may not be as easy as rewriting characters and breathing life into their lives. It's far more complicated with layers of oppression, hard history, and a present divided by financial and political rifts. In my experience traveling the country and watching people take on big challenges to help their communities, every single one of those stories has a common factor — the first small step. It may seem insignificant, but it's a start. I cannot magically make America see people of color as we truly are, fully realized human beings, but I can take a small step to spread that understanding, because Black Lives Matter, even imaginary ones.

Special thank you's: Sarah Boone and Ian Mairs I wouldn't have finished this piece without their push and deadlines! The 5 and Dime, I love you guys. Michelle Simkulet, it seems like a year ago since I roped you into guiding this crazy idea of mine, I can't thank you enough. The cast, I love playing with you guys, thank you for your time, dedication and heart. The Mosh! And Maria Haine! We couldn't have found a better place to do this piece. And lastly Jacksonville...seems like everything I dream, you whisper in my ear "If you build it, they will come." I keep building and you keep supporting, it's a beautiful thing to feel loved by the city you love.

Light,
Al Letson

SECOND SUNDAY

Second Sunday, hosted by The 5 & Dime offers a chance for local performing artists, poets, and playwrights to polish their creative craft. Artists in our community present their works-in-progress, inviting audience feedback though a synchronized mix and mingle. Second Sunday is a time for artist networking, for growing our local talent through constructive, honest conversation, and for having fun! The schedule of performances is filled with fresh, local talent. Now all we need is YOU!

JOIN US AT THE PANGAEA LIVE - 956 N. Liberty St. Downtown Jax
6:00-8:00 PM Every Second Sunday of the month

Contact Craig Leavitt at craig@the5anddime.org if you are interested in presenting or have any questions.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES



Since the inception of this country, black life in America has been and continues to be hotly debated. The seed of that debate comes from a simple question, are people of color less than? How America answers that question lies in three hundred years of slavery, more than one hundred years of Jim Crow, the age of mass incarceration, and the tumult playing out every day between officers of the law and black communities across the country. If asked, most Americans would probably tell you that racism is unacceptable, most of us can agree on that. Where the disagreements begin to blossom is when you ask people if it occurs today and if they think it's prevalent in our culture. Study after study shows the gap between white people and people of color in this perception of race; white people thinking it's rare or infrequent, while people of color think it's more of a concrete problem. One factor in creating that 'Grand Canyon of Misunderstanding' is how we see the world, and how we see our place in it. As a young black kid growing up, I had heroes who looked like me — Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, and Dr. Jay. But I also had a big imagination, and my heroes in that sandbox were Spider-Man, Captain America, and the X-Men. All were white characters with the exception of Storm (being the only black character in the X-Men). This may seem minor to white people, because they see themselves represented in media, but for me, and generations of black people, that lack of reflection in the culture told me my place. We are persona non grata.

The phenomenon of "magical negroes" is an extension of the culture that doesn't see black life. Some might argue the opposite, that these characters, by virtue of their inclusion in the work, are proof that black folks are seen. If that is correct, then the vision of black people in the eyes of these white creators, and by extension the larger culture, is woefully one-dimensional. When black folks are seen in these movies, it's as a caricature, a tool to help the white protagonist get his goal. It may seem inconsequential; it's just a movie, book, or a play! But it is my belief that this lack of fully developing black characters is the evidence of the shape of America's soul, because if our art doesn't tell us who we are, then what will? I am in no way accusing the creators of these works of fiction of being racist, or am I saying that my version is superior to theirs. What I am saying is for America to live up to its creed, the first step is to be able to see all of her people.

The beautiful thing about being a writer is that you get to write your own story, change it, remix it, and rethink it. I didn't start out writing this play with all these political ideas and questions of culture fueling my pen. I started writing from a place of love. I don't know where the spark came from that created a connection between John Coffey and me. Maybe it was Michael Clarke Duncan's portrayal. Maybe it was the unfairness of the story, who knows? There was something there that made me fall in love with the character and that love stretched beyond what *The Green Mile* could do. Mr. Coffey needed his day. And that's where the

WHO'S WHO (cont.)

(continued) appeared as a part of a three man spoken word ensemble in Lincoln Center Out of Doors, a week long event held at various locations in New York City. Knight is also the proud father of two beautiful daughters, Olivia and Camille.

BROOKS ANNE MEIERDIERKS (Clerk) John Coffey Refuses to Save the World is Brooks Anne's second foray with The 5 and Dime. She was previously in their production of *Elegies for Angels, Punks, and Raging Queens*. Most recently Brooks Anne appeared on stage at The Maltz Jupiter Theatre as Betty Meeks in *The Foreigner*. She is thrilled to be working with such talented people and being a huge Al Letson fan, feels honored to have the opportunity to bring one of his characters to life.



EUGENE LINDSEY (god with a little "g") was last seen here at the Five and Dime as Captain Beatty in our inaugural production of *Fahrenheit 451*, and we're excited to have him working with us again at the Five and Dime. Eugene's been busy over the past year portraying some very interesting characters in a verity of shows. From Dr. Gibbs in *Our Town*, to Chutes and Ladders in *Water-By-The-Spoonful*, to Martin Luther King Jr in *The Mountaintop*, to Simon in *The Whipping Man*. A role for which he was recognized with a Pelican Award for Best Actor at *Players-By-The-Sea*. Eugene was also recently recognized as one of two overall Best Actors at the San Diego Black film Festival for his portrayal of Henry in the independent film *Ocean Pond*. If you enjoy watching TV sitcoms, you may have caught his performance on Tyler Perry's *House-of-Payne* as Dr. Mitchell in an episode called *Pledging Paynes*. Some other notable characters Eugene says he has enjoyed giving life to include Troy Maxon in *Fences*. Walter Lee Younger in *A Raisin In The Sun*. Nomax in *Five Guys Named Moe*. The Man in *Blues-In-Night*. Doug in *Dividing The Estate*. Caleb in *Miss Evers' Boys* and Hoke in *Driving Miss Daisy*. Eugene also regularly performs in corporate training videos for companies like CSX, Winn-Dixie, Mayo Clinic and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. He also works as a freelance reporter and photojournalist for the Jacksonville Transportation Authority. JTA Making Moves airs on WJXT channel 4 and WJXX channel 25.



WHO'S WHO (cont.)

STEVEN ANDERSON (Bagger) loves being part of the process that brings life to original pieces like this play. Last seen at Players by the Sea as Youth in the musical *Passing Strange*, Steven's body of theatrical roles includes credits in *Hair*, *Parade*, *In the Blood*, *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues* and *Fahrenheit 451*. Previously, Steven has appeared in two other shows written by Al Letson: *Julius X* and *Crumbs: A Possibly True Story*. He also recently had the pleasure of co-starring with Eugene Lindsey in the award-winning short film *Ocean Pond* currently making its way through the independent festival circuit.



After getting a start voicing radio spots for PBTS, Steven can also be found behind the microphone voicing audiobooks, corporate training videos or commercials and promos for companies like The Walt Disney Corporation, Sony, Rawlings, and CCP Games.

Steven is deeply thankful to his family for their love and support of his creative endeavors, and for not letting him take things too seriously. Thanks are also due to Al for writing this play, Michelle for directing it, and The 5 & Dime for producing it. Ever grateful to be a member of this fantastic cast, a big thank you to the legion of people who work so hard behind the scenes in support of the show and the theatre, because you make the cast look (and sound) fantastic. A special thank you also goes to Rita pulling a Mother Abigail with the steady supply of rehearsal candy, because candy is awesome.

A final thank you goes to you, sitting in the audience. Thank you for supporting your local artists.

A. RITA CHURCHWELL (Mother Abigail) is a native New Englander born and raised in Boston. She has been involved with the theatre for over 30 years. She has traveled extensively world-wide and nation-wide while being married to her husband, the late LCDR. Ralph Churchwell. They have two grown children and three grandchildren. Rita has a degree in criminal justice from Florida State and a degree in public administration from Flagler College. Some of Rita's plays include: *Blessed Assurance*, *Proposals*, *Members of the Wedding*, *Bus Stop*, *Promises-Promises*, *Mardi Gras*, *Women Behind Bars*, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, *Death Suite*, *Berkeley Square*, *The Drug Machine*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*, for which she won the Pelican Award for Best Actress. Rita is a former board member of the Florida Motion Picture Television Arts of Northeast Florida. She is the number one, die-hard fan of the Super Bowl World Champions... The New England Patriots.



WHO'S WHO (cont.)

DAVID GIRARD (Legba) I am pleased to have done many things in Jacksonville, Florida, as well as New York, Baltimore, and other various places. It brings me great joy to be able to be a part of John Coffey Refuses to Save the World. I love working with great source material, provided by my great friend Al Letson. The cast is stellar and the director is an amazing woman and an even more amazing talent. I want to take this time to thank my family for allowing me the time to pursue my dreams. I would also like to thank all of you reading this for your continued support of the arts and theater. Be the change...



MICHELLE SIMKULET (Director) always feels so privileged work with the great folks who love what they do. And this show has been a truly wonderful experience! Nothing beats the energy created by such tremendous talent. Still confused as to why she has been so lucky, she will be eternally grateful to Al, the cast and the tireless work of the 5&Dime. Previously, Michelle has directed at Theatre Jacksonville, most recently for *Hilda's Yard*, the celebrated class of *Steel Magnolias*, the eclectic multicultural companies from the 2013 International Theatre Festival and the powerful troop from The Big Read's *A Lesson Before Dying* staged reading. Additional directing credits include *The Night of January 16th*, *Getting Sara Married*, *Champagne Charlie's Stakes* and *Kitchen Witches*. Professionally, Michelle helps put on a show every day at WJCT. She is loved and supported by her home team: Dave, Kaelan & Jake. Enjoy!

EVAN GOULD (Stage Manager) is proud to be one of the nine friends who came together in 2011 to form the 5 & Dime. He also serves on their Board and Artistic Team. When he is not performing in front of his drama and chorus classes at Lake Asbury Jr. High, he is performing on local stages. His latest gig was as Mr. Lyons in ABET's production of *Blood Brothers*.

LEE HAMBY (Production Manager, Set & Costume Design) wears many hats in this business we call Theatre. Designer, director, choreographer, actor, volunteer and social butterfly just to name a few. A Jacksonville native and a graduate of Douglas Anderson School of the Arts majoring in Vocal Music/Musical Theatre, Lee went on to study Musical Theatre at The Broadway Theatre Project and The American Musical and Dramatic Academy under the direction of such greats as Gregory Hines, Tommy Tune, Ann Reinking, Jules Styne, Chita Rivera and Patricia Birch. Working as a professional actor for almost two decades, Lee has traveled the US and Europe performing in national tours, regional theatres, amusement parks and dinner theatres in a vast array of musicals, plays and revues. Residing in Jacksonville once again he is currently very active in the local arts community performing, designing, teaching and directing. He is one of the founders and board members of The 5 & Dime.