



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Media Contact: Nicole Lane  
[nlane@artistsrep.org](mailto:nlane@artistsrep.org) | 360.601.4298

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' gasp-inducing satire

## AN OCTOROON

Kicks Off Artists Rep's

New. Now. Necessary.

35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season

**Metatheatrical Melodrama Meets Blistering Social Commentary**

**WHO:** Artists Repertory Theatre

**WHAT:** [An Octoroon](#)  
By Branden Jacobs-Jenkins  
Co-Directed by Lava Alapai & Dámaso Rodríguez

**WHEN:** September 3 – October 1, 2017  
Preview performances: September 3, 5, 6, 7, 8  
Opening Night/Press Night: Saturday, Sept. 9  
Regular run Sept. 9 through Oct. 1: Wed-Sun @ 7:30pm, Sun @ 2pm  
Additional performances:  
    Tuesdays: Sept. 5 and 26 @ 7:30pm  
    Wednesday: Sept. 20 @ noon  
    Saturday: Sept. 30 @ 2pm  
    Sunday: Oct. 1 @ 2pm

**WHERE:** Artists Repertory Theatre, Alder Stage, 1516 SW Alder Street, Portland

**TICKETS:** \$50 regular price; \$25 preview/student/under 25  
Buy Tickets: 503.241.1278 or [www.artistsrep.org](http://www.artistsrep.org)

**PREVIEW WEEK SPECIALS**

Pay-What-You-Can First Preview performance: Sunday, Sept. 3  
    -\$5-\$25 sliding scale to book ahead or PWYC at the door, preshow live music

\$10 Tuesday: Tuesday, Sept. 5  
    -\$10 ticket

Preview Play Price & FREE Wine: Wednesday, Sept. 6  
    -\$25 ticket & FREE Dark Horse wine  
    (more)

Preview Play Price & Pizza: Thursday, Sept. 7  
-\$25 ticket & FREE slice of Hot Lips Pizza  
Preview Play Price & Beer: Friday, Sept. 8  
-\$25 ticket & FREE Lagunitas Beer

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Pre Show Music | Sunday first previews. Additional dates on website and social media.

Post Show Discussions | Follow matinees on Sept. 10, 17, \* 20, 24 and Oct. 1

\*with Oregon Psychoanalytic Center

**SHOW IMAGE ATTACHED:** Design credit Jeff Hayes

**PRODUCTION PHOTOS AVAILABLE:** Sept. 8, 2017

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. Portland, Oregon | August 16, 2017.** Artists Repertory Theatre launches its 2017/18 season with Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' provocative *An Octoroon*. An incendiary satire, this bold start to their 35<sup>th</sup> theatre season is co-directed by Lava Alapai and Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez. *An Octoroon* begins preview performances September 3, opening night is September 9 and the play runs through October 1 on the Alder Stage.

*An Octoroon* is a raucously irreverent *Gone with the Wind* meets *Looney Tunes* mash-up that *The New York Times* calls "...this decade's most eloquent theatrical statement on race in America today." Riffing off the 19th Century hit *The Octoroon* by Dion Boucicault, Jacobs-Jenkins offers a brazen, metatheatrical melodrama that twists a funhouse world of larger-than-life stereotypes into blistering social commentary. It's gasp-inducing satire from one of America's most thrilling writers.

"*An Octoroon*, is subversive, controversial and filled with uncomfortable truths delivered through a vehicle of audacious comedy and jarring visual poetry," wrote Artistic Director and play co-director Dámaso Rodríguez for the show's playbill. "*An Octoroon* confronts our country's undeniable racist heritage through unconventional means. Jacobs-Jenkins puts on display and then subverts one of 19<sup>th</sup> century America's most popular, crowd-pleasing pieces of entertainment, *The Octoroon*, in all its racist and distressing stereotypes, including the manner in which it was traditionally performed: in blackface and redface. Our purpose is for audiences to laugh uncomfortably and involuntarily at this skewering and rewriting of our shared heritage, and to consider how it haunts contemporary life. These are incendiary times in Portland. It's tempting to avoid a production of *An Octoroon* in favor of less challenging or more comforting material, but opting not to produce the play feels to me like an act of fear and retreat. Choosing to produce this profound and difficult piece of theatre has rewarded all of us at Artists Rep with the opportunity to confront our own relationship to the institution of racism – discussing our past, our privileges, our biases and our mistakes– and to move forward together urgently toward creating an inclusive, diverse and equitable culture."

Co-director Lava Alapai said at the first rehearsal of *An Octoroon*, "This play has my sense of humor, but I didn't like the play the first time I read it." Alapai continued, "However, the more I read it, the more I saw how this play confronts how we consume race as a commodity and I feel a responsibility to tell my people's story with compassion, honesty and a little laughter."

A shocking comedy that won the 2014 OBIE Award for Best New Play, written by MacArthur Genius Grant-winning playwright Jacobs-Jenkins, Artists Rep's production features Resident Artists Michael Mendelson, John San Nicolas and Ayanna Berkshire with Alex Ramirez de Cruz, Kailey Rhodes, Andrea  
(more)

Vernae, Josie Seid and Jimmy Garcia. The design team includes Tal Sanders (Set Design), Wanda Walden (Costume Design), Blanca Forzán (Light Design), Phil Johnson (Sound Design), Mary McDonald-Lewis (Voice & Text Director) along with Pancho Savery, Artists Rep Board Member and Reed College Professor of English and Humanities, serving as Dramaturg.

## NATIONAL REVIEWS

"Mr. Jacobs-Jenkins is using a genre associated with exclamation points to ask questions not only about the portrayal of race in America but also about the inadequate means we have for such portrayals." - *The New York Times*

"This decade's most eloquent theatrical statement on race in America today." - *The New York Times*

"Messy, clever and sometimes gut-bustingly funny." – *StarTribune*

"A knockout, a radical rethinking, a great time." - *Philly.com*

"*An Octoroon* is like nothing we've seen in contemporary American theater." - *Cleveland.com*

"A work that is infinitely playful and deeply serious and which dazzlingly questions the nature of theatrical illusion." - *The Guardian*

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

**BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS'** credits include *Everybody* (Signature Theatre), *War* (LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater), *Gloria* (Vineyard Theatre; Pulitzer Prize finalist), *Appropriate* (Signature Theatre; Obie Award), *An Octoroon* (Soho Rep; Obie Award) and *Neighbors* (The Public Theater). He is a Residency Five playwright at Signature Theatre and under commissions from LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater, MTC/Sloan, and the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. His recent honors include the MacArthur Fellowship, the Windham-Campbell Prize for Drama, the Benjamin Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation Theatre Award, the Steinberg Playwriting Award, and the Tennessee Williams Award. He currently teaches in the Hunter College Playwriting MFA Program, where he is a Master-Artist- in-Residence.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

**LAVA ALAPAI** is originally from Okinawa, Japan and grew up in Honolulu, Hawaii where she learned the art of Bunraku puppetry. She graduated with an MFA in acting from California Institute of the Arts and has been creating theatre in Portland for more than a decade. Credits include design and acting work for Portland Playhouse, defunkt theatre, Tears of Joy Theatre and Many Hats Collaboration, among others. Directing credits include *Columbinus*, *Charlotte's Web* and *Locomotion* for Oregon Children's Theatre, and staged readings for Profile Theatre and Playwrights West. She is an associate member of the Stage Directors & Choreographers Society (SDC). [www.lavaalapai.com](http://www.lavaalapai.com)

**DÁMASO RODRÍGUEZ** is in his fifth year as Artistic Director of Artists Repertory Theatre. In 2001 he co-founded the Los Angeles-based Furious Theatre Company, where he served as Co-Artistic Director until 2012. From 2007-2010 he served as Associate Artistic Director of the Pasadena Playhouse. His directing credits include work at Artists Rep, Playwrights' Center, the Pasadena Playhouse, Intiman Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Laguna Playhouse, A Noise Within, The Theatre@Boston Court, Naked Angels and  
(more)

Furious Theatre. Rodriguez is a recipient of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award, the Back Stage Garland Award, the NAACP Theatre Award and the Pasadena Arts Council's Gold Crown Award. His productions have been nominated for multiple LA Weekly Theatre Awards and LA Stage Alliance Ovation Awards. In 2012, Rodriguez was honored by the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation as a Finalist for the Zelda Fichandler Award. He is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC).

Directing credits at Artists Rep include the World Premiere musical *Cuba Libre* by Carlos Lacámara featuring the music of three-time Grammy-nominated band Tiempo Libre; the Portland premieres of Nick Jones' *Trevor*, David Ives' adaptation of Pierre Corneille's *The Liar*, Nina Raine's *Tribes* and *Exiles* by Carlos Lacámara; the U.S. premiere of Dawn King's *Foxfinder*; the West Coast premieres of Jeffrey Hatcher's *Ten Chimneys* and Dan LeFranc's *The Big Meal*; and revivals of *The Skin of Our Teeth* by Thornton Wilder, *The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson and *The Playboy of the Western World* by J.M. Synge. Credits at other theatres include productions by contemporary and classic playwrights including Craig Wright, Neil LaBute, Matt Pelfrey, Peter Sinn Nachtrieb, Richard Bean, Owen McCafferty, Alex Jones, William Shakespeare, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Noel Coward, Bernard Shaw, Clifford Odets and Lillian Hellman. Upcoming directing projects for Rodríguez are: *The Humans* by Stephen Karam and *Magellanica* by E.M. Lewis at Artists Rep; and *Romeo & Juliet* by William Shakespeare at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. [www.damaso-rodriguez.com/](http://www.damaso-rodriguez.com/)

## An Octoroon

By Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

Co-directed by Lava Alapai and Dámaso Rodríguez

### CAST

Joseph Gibson\* as BJJ/George/M'Closky—*Trevor*, *We Are Proud to Present* (Artists Rep), *Hands Up* (Red Door Project)

Michael Mendelson\*~^ as Playwright/Wahnotee/Lafouche—*Marjorie Prime*, *Trevor*, *Mothers and Sons* (Artists Rep)

John San Nicolas\*^ as Assistant/Pete/Paul—*The Talented Ones*, *A Civil War Christmas*, *Trevor* (Artists Rep)

Andrea Vernae\* as Minnie—*A Civil War Christmas* (Artists Rep), *Building the Wall* (Triangle Productions)

Josie Seid+ as Dido—*The Miracle Worker* (Artists Rep), *A Maze* (Theatre Vertigo), *Nine* (Lakewood)

Ayanna Berkshire\*^ as Grace—*The Importance of Being Earnest*, *A Civil War Christmas* (Artists Rep)

Kailey Rhodes+ as Dora—*The Importance of Being Earnest* (Artists Rep), *Gypsy* (Broadway Rose)

Alex Ramirez de Cruz as Zoe—*26 Miles* (Profile Theatre), *The Oregon Trail* (PCS), *db* (CoHo)

Jimmy Garcia\* as Ratts—*A Civil War Christmas* (Artists Rep), *Òye Oya* (Milagro), *26 Miles* (Profile)

### CREATIVE TEAM

Lava Alapai~ | Co-Director

Dámaso Rodríguez~ | Co-Director

Tal Sanders# | Scenic Designer

Wanda Walden | Costume Designer

Blanca Forzán | Lighting Designer

Phil Johnson | Composer/Sound Designer

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Pancho Savery | Dramaturg  
Mary McDonald-Lewis^ | Voice & Text Director  
Robert Amico | Props Master  
Jonathan Cole~ | Fight Choreographer

## **PRODUCTION TEAM**

Artistic Producer | Shawn Lee  
Associate Producer & Production Manager | Kristeen Willis Crosser  
Stage Manager | Carol Ann Wohlmut\*^  
Board Op | Jason Coffey  
Production Assistant | Karen Hill  
Production Assistant | Megan Moll  
Wardrobe | Clare Hungate-Hawk  
Technical Director | Nathan Crone  
Master Carpenter | Eddie Rivera  
Master Electrician | Ronan Kilkelly  
Scenic Charge | Sarah Kindler

*\* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers  
# The scenic, costume, lighting, projection & sound designers are represented by United Scenic Artists  
~ Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society  
^ Artists Rep Resident Artist  
+ Equity Membership Candidate*

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## **ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE**

[Artists Repertory Theatre](#)'s mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for artists and audiences of varied backgrounds to take creative risks. Artists Rep is Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company and is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodriguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. Artist Rep became the 72<sup>nd</sup> member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) in 2016 and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN).

Artists Rep's 2017/18 season of play selections for the company's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary season can be [found here](#).

Artists Rep offers the second year of their groundbreaking [Frontier Series](#) which presents internationally acclaimed artists who are reimagining how theatre is created and shared. The 2017/18 series features three bold new works: *They, Themselves and Schmeer* by Becca Blackwell (New York), *The Holler Sessions* by Frank Boyd (Seattle) and *White Rabbit Red Rabbit* by Nassim Soleimanpour (Iran). These are limited, one weekend engagements, offering Portland audiences access to fresh touring performances from around the world. The Frontier Series is curated by Jerry Tischleder, Artists Rep ArtsHub Director and Artistic Director of Risk/Reward Festival.

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Artists Rep has become a significant presence in American Regional Theatre with a legacy of world, national and regional premieres of provocative new work with the highest standards of stagecraft. The organization is committed to local artists and features a company of Resident Artists, professionals of varied theatre disciplines, who are a driving force behind Artists Rep's creative output and identity.

Artists Rep is committed to developing new work through its new play development program Table|Room|Stage. With T|R|S, Artists Rep strives to empower and support Oregon-based playwrights while also creating a Portland home for writers from around the country to develop their work. Additionally, this program strives to make a meaningful impact on diversity, equity and inclusion in the theatre field by mandating opportunities for women writers and writers of color, and cultivating the next generation of theatre-goers by creating work specifically for young people (13 and up). Artists Rep makes a vital impact on the Portland arts community with its ArtsHub, creating space and offering a home to ten multidisciplinary arts organizations within its facility.

[RESIDENT ARTISTS](#) – Artists Rep productions feature the work of a core group of over two dozen multidisciplinary theatre professionals. Hailing from around the country, our Resident Artists are nationally renowned and award-winning actors, directors, writers, designers and educators who have chosen to make Portland and Artists Rep their artistic home. Working together and independently, they create inventive and theatrically rich experiences for our audiences while playing a major role in defining Portland's cultural landscape.

[TABLE|ROOM|STAGE](#) – Established in 2015, Table|Room|Stage (T|R|S) is Artists Rep's robust new play program that offers development opportunities for local and national playwrights, and ensures that underrepresented voices are heard on stage. With this program, Artists Rep is committed to bringing the work of exciting women, transgender and non-binary writers and writers of color to its stages. Artists Rep's first completed T|R|S commission was *The Talented Ones*, by Yussef El Guindi. They will produce Larissa FastHorse's *The Thanksgiving Play* as part of their regular season in April. Current playwright commissions include: Linda Alper, Larissa FastHorse, Hansol Jung, Dael Orlandersmith, Steve Rathje and Andrea Stolowitz. The works created by these writers through T|R|S will establish Artists Rep and Portland as an engine for new play development and will enrich the national new play landscape. To learn more about all the projects, playwrights and programs of Table|Room|Stage [visit here](#).

[ARTSHUB](#) – Artists Rep is also home to the growing ArtsHub, where 12 arts organizations find a home in the building. A diverse range of artists and arts organizations can thrive here with access to affordable administrative, performance and rehearsal space, as well as a myriad of support services. The ArtsHub serves as a community arts center, where its performance venues and lobbies buzz with creative energy and Portland's arts-loving audiences can gather. Over the last year, more than 500 performances, events and happenings by Portlanders found a place in Artists Rep's building. To learn about the arts organizations Artists Rep's ArtsHub [visit here](#).

The 2017/18 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by sponsors Robert & Mercedes Eichholz Foundation, Ronni Lacroute, David & Christine Vernier, James F. & Marion L. Miller Foundation, Regional Arts & Culture Council, and WorkForArt.

*An Octoroon* is made possible by show sponsors Bob & Janet Conklin and Charlotte Rubin.

[artistsrep.org](http://artistsrep.org)

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