



LORRAINE HANSBERRY THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Lorraine Hansberry Theatre presents *Single Black Female* by
Lisa B. Thompson
Directed by AeJay Mitchell**

October 26-November 10, 2019
(Previews October 25-26, 2019)
Buriel Clay Theatre
African American Art &
Culture Complex
762 Fulton Street, SF, CA 94012

The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre will present *Single Black Female* by Lisa B. Thompson with a press night on Saturday, October 26 at 8:00 PM. The play will run through Sunday, November 10. (Previews Oct. 25 @ 8:00 PM and Oct. 26 @ 3:00 PM) *Single Black Female* is to be directed by AeJay Mitchell with as cast that features Tanika Baptiste and Paige Mayes.

Single Black Female takes an uproariously comedic look at the lives of two middle class African American women. Through hysterically funny vignettes, we follow them into the world of online dating, visits to the OB/GYN and past relationships, as they vent their joys, frustrations and coming to terms with the ironies and challenges Black women face in finding a mate. These women search for love and dignity in a world that continually fails to recognize them amid a parade of stereotypical images.

Single Black Female is a kind of "Sex In The City" journey through the dating lives of two African American female prototypes. Along the journey the women remind us that historically African American women have been burdened with stereotypes such as the Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire and these new modern African American women are re-defining and liberating themselves far beyond the stereotypes.

Lisa B. Thompson's vignettes often cross ethnic and sexual lines into more universal territory that examine issues of gender and race in America. She challenges us to think beyond the preordained norms

of gender and race behavior, while serving up stereotypical icons that are both endearing and disturbing. They comment on current social and political events, from the perspective of middle class African American women, a demographic we rarely hear from in the theatre. However, these are events and happenings in which we can all relate.

Review Quotes from Previous Productions

"*Single Black Female* at Congo Square Theatre is an incredibly different and joyous stage play. Playwright Lisa B. Thompson sets out to lift up the lives of middle-class single Black American women, a demographic largely bypassed by mainstream media in favor of voyeuristic and exploitative narratives of downtrodden poor single mothers." *Sheri Flanders, Chicago Reader*

"The play, having its New York premiere at the Peter Jay Sharp Theater, is a socially significant and very entertaining two-woman show that manages to be simultaneously self-deprecating and proud." *Anita Gates, New York Times*

Bios for playwright, director and cast

Lisa B. Thompson (playwright) is an award-winning artist, scholar, and teacher whose plays have been produced and developed by institutions such as Brava for Women in the Arts!, New Professional Theatre, The Vortex Repertory, Theatre Rhinoceros, Crossroads Theatre, Austin Playhouse, National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa, Company of Angels Theater, New African Grove Theatre Company, Black Spectrum Theatre, Montreal Fringe Festival, and the National Black Theatre Festival. Her plays include the off-Broadway show *Single Black Female* (*LA Weekly* Theatre Award best comedy nominee), *Underground* (Austin Critics Table David Mark Cohen New Play Award), *Monroe* (Austin Playhouse Festival of New Texas Plays winner), and *The Mamalogues* which will have its world premiere at Vortex Repertory Company in August 2019. Thompson is also Professor of African & African Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas at Austin and the author of the book, *Beyond the Black Lady: Sexuality and the New African American Middle-Class*. Her work has been published in *Contemporary Plays by African American Women: Ten Complete Works* (University of Illinois Press, 2015) and *Catch The Fire: A Cross-Generational Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry*.

AeJay Mitchell (director) is a director, choreographer, scholar, and actor based in Oakland, California. Originally from Louisiana, their direction and choreography has been seen in Detroit, North Carolina, Louisiana and the Bay Area where they were nominated for the Best Choreography Award by the Bay Area Critics Circle Awards for their work on *Priscilla: Queen of the Desert* in 2017. They recently directed the critically acclaimed, gender explosive production of *Sister Act: The Musical* at Theatre Rhinoceros. As current Director of Theatre at Contra Costa School of Performing Arts, they have directed *The Crucible*, *The Secret Garden*, *Marisol*, and *Footloose*. They will direct *Footloose* again this spring at California State East Bay, following their production of *Little Shop of Horrors* there last year. AeJay is a company member of TheatreFirst and of Black Artists Contemporary Cultural Experience, where they performed in Robert O'Hara's *Bootycandy* and *American Maul* at BRAVA!

Tanika Baptiste (SBF Woman 1) is grateful and excited for her debut at Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. Regional Credits: *Sister Act (Deloris Van Cartier)* Pittsburg Community Theatre, *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (Snout/1st Fairy u/s) California Shakespeare Theatre, *Smokey Joe's Cafe* (BJ) Tri-Valley Repertory, *Violet* (Lula Buffington/Landlady) Bay Area Musicals, *Avenue Q* (Gary Coleman) New Conservatory Theatre, *She Persisted, the Musical* (Harriet Tubman) Bay Area Children's Theatre, *Dreamgirls* (Effie) Berkeley Playhouse, *Rock of Ages* (Justice Charlier) Pacific Coast Repertory Theatre, *HAIR* (Ronny, Dionne, Abraham Lincoln) Falcons Eye Theatre, *The Wiz* (Aunt Em/Glinda) Black Repertory Group Theater, *2018 Pop Tour Home of the Brav* (Gina) La Jolla Playhouse.

Paige Mayes (SBF Woman 2) is thrilled to make her debut, at Lorraine Hansberry Theatre in *Single Black Female!* She most recently appeared in *Jazz* at Marin Theater Company and *The Tenderloin Project* at Cutting Ball Theater. She has also worked with African American Shakespeare Company, The New Conservatory Theatre and Bay Area Children's Theatre.

Design Team

Scenic Design by Tom Hird, **Lighting Design** by Kevin Myrick, **Costume Design** by Rene Walker, **Sound Design** by Anton Doty, **Stage Management** by April Ballesteros, **Production Assistance** by Solomon Casado and Darryl V. Jones

Calendar Listing

What: *Single Black Female* takes an uproariously comedic look at the lives of two middle class African American women. Through hysterically funny vignettes, we follow them into the world of online dating, visits to the OB/GYN and past relationships, as they vent their joys, frustrations and coming to terms with the ironies and challenges Black women face in finding a mate.

When: Previews: Friday, October 25, @ 8:00 PM and Saturday, October 26, @ 3:00 PM
Opening Night: Saturday, October 26, @ 8:00 PM
Run: October 25, 26, November 1,2, 8,9 @ 8:00 PM
October 27, November 3, 10 @ 3:00 PM

Where: Buriel Clay Theatre, African American Art & Culture Complex, 762 Fulton Street, SF, CA 94012

Ticket Prices:	Adults	Seniors	Students
Previews:	\$30	\$20	\$10
Opening:	\$40	\$30	\$20
Run:	\$35	\$25	\$15

About the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre

Currently under the management of Executive Director, Stephanie Shoffner and Acting Artistic Director, Darryl V. Jones, the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre presents plays by both emerging and established African American and multicultural playwrights. We provide employment and career opportunities for actors,

directors, designers and technicians from African American and multicultural communities. More at <https://www.lhtsf.org/>

Designer and Production Staff Bios

Thomas Hird, Set Designer and Technical Director: Tom served at CSU East Bay as professor, resident designer and TD from 1972-2019. He has represented educators and professionals on the boards of the California Educational Theatre Association, the Nor-Cal US Institute for Theatre Technology, and the Theatre Bay Area Individual Services Committee. His work has been recognized for educational and artistic excellence by CETA, USITT and the Kennedy Center. Tom produced twenty international shows featuring students and alumni in Scotland, Cyprus, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Following a long term as Chair of Theatre and Dance at CSUEB, he concluded his career as Director of the School of Arts & Media. He began his professional career designing “A Thousand Clowns” for the Ebony Showcase Theatre starring LA radio and TV personality Larry McCormick. He designed and TD’d the famous Christmas Spectacular in San Jose for five years. His credits also include Woodminster Summer Musicals.

Anton Doty, Sound Designer: Anton is a sound engineer and music producer who hails from San Francisco. With credits for Grammy winning and platinum record holding artists, as well as countless albums, EPs and singles under his belt, he has a strong foothold in the world of music. *Single Black Female* at the Lorraine Hansberry Theater is his first project as a theatrical sound and projection designer, and he hopes to expand his reach further into the world of theater production. A graduate of UC Santa Cruz’ Film Production and Music Recording programs, Anton has spent most of his life creating audio/visual content and is ecstatic to see that content contribute to an institution like the Lorraine Hansberry Theater; especially for a production that dissects the often marginalized and misrepresented experience of African-American women.

Kevin Myrick, Lighting Design: Kevin has designed several shows for the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre Company, most recently working on productions of *The Urban Retreat*, *Home*, *Thurgood* and *Soulful Christmas*, and for the African American Shakespeare Company *Macbeth*. Other credits include: Theatre First *The Last Sermon Of Sister Imani*, Throckmorton Theatre *RAGTIME* and Youth Musical Theatre Company *A Man Of No Importance*. He studied technical theatre at San Francisco State University, and later earned degrees and worked in Computer Science and Technology. Since 1974 Kevin has worked as a designer, technical director or theatre tech for many festivals, artists and arts organizations including civic organizations like the San Francisco Neighborhood Arts Program and the Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs, theatre companies like AfroSolo, Cultural Odyssey, the Oakland Ensemble Theatre Company, the Atlanta Children’s Theatre Company, Alliance Theatre Company and Just Us Theatre Company. Kevin has also produced and designed for community/public access television.

April Helen Ballesteros, Stage Manager: April is enjoying her 3rd season with Cal Shakes, working her way up from a summer intern to a full-time staff member. Ballesteros works alongside the Director of Artistic Learning to plan and coordinate Cal Shakes' educational programs. She also works closely with the Director of Grants, as well as the Director of Marketing & Development to assist in grant writing and events planning, respectively. A recent grad of California State University, East Bay, she holds a B.A. in Theatre Arts. Ballesteros was recently seen in *¡CHEER!: Story of a Dreamer* (Potrero Stage) and *Shifts in Consciousness* (SF International Arts Festival). This is her 3rd show with the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre and hopes for many more! The L.A. native wishes to thank her family and friends for loving and supporting her and allowing her to chase her dreams.

Solomon Casado, Production Assistant: Solomon Casado is proud to make his Lorraine Hansberry and Bay Area theater debut. This is his first time on the production side of theater. As a performer, he has played Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and King Ceyx in *Metamorphoses*. He is currently a high school senior at Sojourner Truth Independent Study and previously studied theater at Contra Costa School of Performing Arts. He would like to thank his family for all their love and support.