



MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE



UNTIL THE FLOOD

April 21-May 5, 2021

COURTNEY SALE, NANCY L. DONAHUE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Thank you for joining us for our 42nd season. This spring slate of shows stands out for many reasons: our first endeavor into filmed performances, the first show we've fully produced since March of 2020, and the first time the remarkable words of Dael Orlandersmith have been on the MRT stage.



Until the Flood focuses on the lasting impact of the shooting of Michael Brown on the Ferguson community and nation. Told through a cross section of identities—

Black, white, women, men, young and old—Dael builds a powerful play that allows us to go underneath the headlines. The play asks us to examine the legacy of police brutality against Black communities, the disturbing leverage of male violence, and the ways in which we forge paths of justice and healing.

I want to acknowledge the incredible team of artists, including Maiesha McQueen, who tells this story with such humanity and generosity. Special thanks to director Timothy Douglas and the entire design team for their fortitude and artistry bringing this work to life. I also want to lift up the amazing staff at MRT from production to marketing to development to finance. We work as a collective here, and we truly could not do what we do without this entire village. We are proud to share this work with you.

In Service,
Courtney

**Welcome. This is a diverse, inclusive,
accepting and safe space.**

BONNIE J. BUTKAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Your notes of encouragement have lifted our spirits as we prepared to create this play safely, and as we moved through the difficulties of the last 12 months.



Creating *Until the Flood* involved months of planning—our small team worked tirelessly to find HVAC vendors and air purifiers, to create places for the artistic team to rehearse while maintaining social distancing, and to draft safety plans while keeping an eye on the latest Covid mandates and recommendations.

Now we have the chance to give back to you with this extraordinary work. I hope your hearts will lift with Dael Orlandersmith's brilliant work, and I look forward to seeing you again soon.

Thank you,
Bonnie



Maiesha
McQueen being
filmed by Kathy
Wittman of Ball
Square Films.

INTERVIEW: PLAYWRIGHT DAEL ORLANDERSMITH

In Until the Flood, Orlandersmith explores the social unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, following the shooting of teenager Michael Brown. Drawing from her extensive interviews with Ferguson residents, Orlandersmith crafts an extraordinary theatrical experience in which she embodies eight residents of the town as they try to come to terms with the complex events that shook the nation.

—Sarah Brandt, Courtesy of the Goodman Theatre



Sarah Brandt: Why did you want to write this play?

Dael Orlandersmith: Well, actually, the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis first came to me [about writing the piece]. I said yes because I think it's important. I want to tell a story. I want to go beyond what's right, who's right, who's wrong. How does this shooting affect people? In terms of race, how far have we come? Those are the questions that have come to mind. What does it invoke, provoke in you? What kind of thought?

SB: The people we meet in the play—are these people you met?

DO: They are composite figures. Because I made it very clear to everyone that I spoke with—I don't have a right to invade your life that way. I have a right as a playwright to tell a story. But I don't have a right to dig into someone's life like that. Because that's no longer about theater; that's perverse voyeurism. A word that I use heavily is "boundary." The role of certain types of a right to invade your life that way. I have a right as a playwright to tell a story. But I don't have a right to dig into someone's life like that. Because that's no longer about theater; that's perverse voyeurism. A word that I use heavily is "boundary." The role of certain types of theater, we are supposed to be mental and emotional travelers, but having said that, if I write about someone's life directly, that makes me responsible for them in certain ways that I don't feel comfortable with. And given where that person is within their life, it can invoke and provoke a lot of stuff that they just won't be able to deal with. I'm not a therapist. And I actually said that to everyone I spoke with.

SB: When a performance [is finished] and the lights go down, is there anything in particular that you're hoping the audience takes away?

DO: Did I give them permission to feel both comfortable and uncomfortable? That's what interests me, because I don't speak for people, I speak to people. Because when you start speaking for people, you get on a political tirade, and I know this situation goes beyond the political. It extends itself into personal stories and the emotional and how we live on a day-to-day basis. What are our personal narratives? And how do we feel about this, knowing this could have happened with these young men?

VIDEO CLIPS OF DAEL ORLANDERSMITH

Director Timothy Douglas interviewed Orlandersmith about her motivations for creating *Until the Flood*.

CLICK for Video #1: "I don't feel comfortable playing *you*. But this does affect me and the rest of the world."



Director Timothy Douglas and Maiesha McQueen in rehearsal for *Until the Flood*. Photo: Kathy Wittman



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NANCY L. DONAHUE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



BONNIE J. BUTKAS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

UNTIL THE FLOOD

BY

DAEL ORLANDERSMITH

FEATURING

MAIESHA MCQUEEN*

SCENIC DESIGNER

BILL CLARKE^

COSTUME DESIGNER

YAO CHEN^

LIGHTING DESIGNER

CAROLINA ORTIZ HERRERA^

ORIGINAL MUSIC/SOUND DESIGNER

LINDSAY JONES^

FILMMAKER

KATHY WITTMAN

STAGE MANAGER

MAEGAN A. CONROY*

DIRECTED BY

TIMOTHY DOUGLAS+

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*Actors and Stage Managers appear courtesy of Actors' Equity Association

+Member of Stage Director and Choreographers Society

^Member of United Scenic Artists

Originally Commissioned and Produced by The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis
(Steven Woolf, Artistic Director; Mark Bernstein, Managing Director)

New York Off-Broadway premiere produced by Rattlestick Playwrights Theater

UNTIL THE FLOOD is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

"Tonight's talk:
The *Real* Emily Dickinson." *Mabel Loomis Todd*

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DIRECTED BY COURTNEY SALE

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Maiesha McQueen.....All Characters

TIME AND PLACE

Based on interviews conducted in St. Louis in the Spring of 2015

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION CREDITS

Assistant Director Pascale Florestal
Associate Sound Editor Paul Peterson
Production AssistantLindsey Walko
Streaming PlatformOverture+
Photographer Kathy Wittman



Maiesha McQueen in *Until the Flood*. Photo: Kathy Wittman



*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.



The Scenic, Costume, Lighting, and Sound Designers in this production are represented by United Scenic Artists (USA) Local USA-829, IATSE.



Merrimack Repertory Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre.



Merrimack Repertory Theatre operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), a consortium of regional theatres throughout the nation, and AEA (Actors' Equity Association), SDC (Stage Directors and Choreographers Society), and USA (United Scenic Artists).

SAVE THE DATE

FRIDAY, JUNE 11

LOWELL TOGETHER
A Virtual Gala for Free Soil Arts Collective
& Merrimack Repertory Theatre



On Friday, June 11, we will host a vibrant virtual gala, right in your home! It will be an incredible, heartfelt, fun, and entertaining night to support Free Soil Arts Collective and Merrimack Repertory Theatre's education and community engagement programs.

Make reservations, shop the auction, and find the answers to all of your questions on our GiveSmart page! (Dazzling auction items coming soon.)

CLICK anywhere on this page to visit.



WHO'S WHO



MAIESHA MCQUEEN

(*All Characters*) is an Atlanta native, who was last seen playing the principal role of Becky in the national tour of the Broadway musical

Waitress. Noted regional credits include: *The Color Purple*, *His Eye Is on the Sparrow*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Portland Center Stage); *Da Kink In My Hair* (Horizon Theatre); *Sirens of Song* (Milwaukee Rep); *Chasin' Dem Blues*, *East Texas Hotlinks* (True Colors Theatre). Maiesha has also traveled the globe as co-founder and musical composer for the touring company Progress Theatre, whose work has been presented at spaces such as The Public Theater, The Kennedy Center, The Apollo Theatre, and the World Music Festival in Amsterdam. NYU/Fordham graduate. Special thanks to Dael Orlandersmith for birthing such a beautiful and important piece of art. IG: @maieshamcqueen

DAEL ORLANDERSMITH (Playwright)

Dael's plays include *Stoop Stories*, *Black n' Blue Boys/Broken Men*, *Horsedreams*, *Bones*, *The Blue Album*, *Yellowman*, *The Gimmick*, *Monster*, and *Forever*. Ms. Orlandersmith was a Pulitzer Prize finalist and Drama Desk Award nominee for *Yellowman* and the winner of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for *The Gimmick*. Dael is the recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts grant, The Helen Merrill Award for Emerging Playwrights, a Guggenheim, along with several other awards and honors. Her play *Forever* was commissioned and performed at the Mark Taper Forum/Kirk Douglas Theatre in 2014, followed by performances at the Long Wharf Theatre Winter 2014/15, New York Theatre Workshop 2015, and Portland Center Stage 2016. Her play *Until the Flood* was done at St. Louis Repertory in the fall of 2016. She is currently working

on two commissions for Artists Repertory Theatre in Portland and Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. *Until the Flood* was done at Rattlestick Theatre in 2018 and Milwaukee Rep in 2019 before it was done at Portland Center Stage, ACT Seattle, the Arcola Theatre in London, The Galway Arts Festival at the Druid theatre, and at the Traverse at Edinburgh Festival... the play is scheduled to be performed in Berlin in October of 2021. Ms. Orlandersmith is working on a commission for Rattlestick Theatre called 'watching the watcher' and has two plays opening at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre in 2021 – *New Age* – to be directed by Jade King Carroll, and *Antonio's Song/I Was Dreaming of a Son* – co-written with Antonio Suarez Edwards and directed by Mark Clement. She is also working on a new work with writer/performer David Cale called *You Don't Know the Lonely One*. In 2020 Ms. Orlandersmith received the Doris Duke award.

TIMOTHY DOUGLAS (Director)

Previous collaborations with Ms. McQueen: *His Eye Is on the Sparrow* and *The Color Purple* (Portland Center Stage). Premieres: Adrienne Kennedy's *Etta & Ella on the Upper West Side* (McCarter Theatre Center); August Wilson's *Radio Golf* (Yale Rep), Robert O'Hara's *Etiquette Of Vigilance* (Steppenwolf), Jason Reynolds' *Long Way Down* (Kennedy Center), Rajiv Joseph's *The Lake Effect* (Silk Road Rising), Keith Adkins' *Safe House* (Cincinnati Playhouse). Off-Broadway: *Yellowman* (Billie Holiday), *Bronte: A Portrait of Charlotte* (Alloy), and *Rosmersholm* (Oslo Elsewhere). Representative projects: Ayad Akhtar's *Disgraced* (Arena Stage, Great Theatre of China/China tour) and projects for Actors Theatre of Louisville, Guthrie, ACT, Folger Shakespeare, Mark Taper Forum, 24 Hour Plays/Broadway, South Coast Rep, Sundance, Round House, and many others. Currently serving

WHO'S WHO

as *Distinguished Artist in Residence* at Emerson College. 2018 Lloyd Richards'/National Black Theatre Award.
MFA: Yale. www.timothydouglass.org

BILL CLARKE (*Scenic Designer*) is pleased to return to Merrimack Rep where he designed 26 productions with Charles Towers, favorites being *The Price*, *Secret Order*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The Seafarer*, and *Stella and Lou*. He designed *A Walk in the Woods* on Broadway. Off-Broadway credits include *Lemon Sky* (Keen Co.), *So Help Me God!* (Lortel), *The Daughter-in-Law* (Mint Theater; *NY Times* 10 Best List), *June Moon* (Drama Department), Ann Magnuson's *You Could Be Home Now* (NYSF). Regional credits include Seattle Rep, Old Globe, Milwaukee Rep, Alley, Denver Center, Asolo, A.R.T., Huntington, McCarter, Coconut Grove, Cleveland Playhouse, Cincinnati Playhouse, and Indiana Rep. MFA: Yale School of Drama. Awards: Merrimack Rep Artistic Achievement Award, IRNE (New England) Award, New Hampshire Theatre Award, Hollywood Drama-Logue Award, and San Diego Theater Critics' Circle Award.

YAO CHEN (*Costume Designer*) is thrilled to join Merrimack Repertory Theatre! Originally from China, Yao Chen is a costume designer and Illustrator with international design credits. Her designs can be seen in the United States, China, Caribbean, and Costa Rica. She has been active collaborator with Seattle Children's Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Berkshire Theatre Group, Trinity Repertory Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, New Repertory Theatre, Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Orlando Repertory Theatre, Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, Don Gong Theatre in Beijing, China; Espresso Theatre in San Jose, Costa Rica; Cayman Culture Foundation, Cayman Island. Finalist in World Stage Design Exhibition 2017, Taipei,

Taiwan. <https://www.yao-chen.com>

CAROLINA ORTIZ HERRERA (*Lighting Designer*) is New York-based Lighting Designer for theater, opera, and dance. Selected credits include: *All's Well That Ends Well* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *American Mariachi* (Arizona Theater Company); *Seven Guitars* (Yale Repertory Theatre); *Yellowman*, nominated for Best Lighting Design at the AUDELCO Awards (Billie Holiday Theatre); *She Persisted* (Atlantic Theatre Company); *Sweeney Todd* (Yale Drama); *Titus Andronicus*, *Women Beware Women*, *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Yale School of Drama); *Florencia en el Amazonas* (Shubert Theatre); *The Silent Lyre* (Lighten Theatre); and *Trouble in Tahiti* (New Jersey University). Carolina is the lighting director for Calpulli Mexican Dance Company, and she was featured on the 2nd Annual "Women to Watch List" from the Broadway Women's Fund. Education: MFA, Yale School of Drama. Member of USA Local 829. www.carolinaortiz.com

LINDSAY JONES (*Original Music and Sound Design*) Broadway: *Slave Play*, *The Nap*, *Bronx Bombers*, and *A Time to Kill*. Off Broadway: *Privacy* and *Kings* (The Public Theater), *Mankind* and *Bootycandy* (Playwrights Horizons), *Rx* (Primary Stages), *Top Secret* (New York Theatre Workshop), and many others. International: *Henry IV, Parts I and II* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *Titus Andronicus* (Stratford Festival), many others. Regional: South Coast Repertory, Arena Stage, Goodman Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Guthrie Theater, Hartford Stage, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Lookingglass Theatre Company, and others. Film scoring work includes *The Brass Teapot* (Magnolia Pictures) and the Academy Award-winning *A Note of Triumph: The Golden Age of Norman Corwin* (HBO Films).

WHO'S WHO

Audio drama work includes *A Streetcar Named Desire* for Audible, *Gather* for Playwrights Horizons, and the award-winning weekly podcast for children *The Imagination Neighborhood*. Lindsay has received two Tony Award nominations for Best Score and Best Sound Design of a Play; seven Joseph Jefferson Awards and 24 nominations; two Ovation Awards and three nominations; and many others. www.lindsayjones.com.

KATHY WITTMAN (*Filmmaker*) is a Boston-based photographer, video designer and documentary filmmaker. She is the principal artist at Ball Square Films, a video production company specializing in documentary photo and video for the performing arts. Recent projects include the video design for *Our Time*, a theatrical time capsule at Suffolk University, and director of photography for *Dialogues of the Carmelites* at New England Conservatory. She also produces virtual performances and maintains video archives for many Boston organizations, including Blue Heron, Boston Baroque, The Huntington Theatre Company, and the Boston Early Music Festival

MAEGAN A. CONROY (*Stage Manager*) Maegan is thrilled to finally be returning to MRT for *Until the Flood!* Selected previous stage management credits include *Nina Simone: Four Women*, *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Tiny Beautiful Things*, *Cry It Out*, *The Heath*, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Native Gardens*, *The Royale* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre); *Creditors*, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *DibbleDance: Shoes On, Shoes Off*, *Private Lives*, *Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare & Company); *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (Greater Boston Stage Company); *Guards at the Taj* (Central Square Theatre); *The Effect*, *A Measure of Normalcy* (Gloucester Stage Company).

Maegan received her BFA in Stage Management from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. She and her husband live with their dog in Lowell, MA. Maegan is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

BONNIE J. BUTKAS (*Executive Director*) has served as the Senior Director of Foundation Relations at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Director of Development at Geva Theatre Center, Director of External Relations at the York Theatre Company, Director of Development and Communications at TADA! Youth Theatre, a Directing Assistant on *The Lion King* on Broadway, and the co-founder of Lexington Dance Collective. Achievements include: a \$10 million capital campaign at Geva; pivotal funding from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for RIT; and significant growth in contributed revenue at the York, TADA!, and Bristol Valley Theatre. At MRT, she oversaw the company's 40th Anniversary Gala breaking previous fundraising records; led MRT through a yearlong artistic director search and transition; posted three best-selling shows for the company; secured a prestigious Barr Klarman Massachusetts Arts Initiative grant; and led sustained growth in contributed income. She teaches at Middlesex Community College and serves on the Board of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). Previously she volunteered with Girl Scouts of Western New York, YWCA of Monroe County, and co-founded Action Together, a progressive coalition of volunteers. She lives in Westford with her family and extends gratitude to the Trustees, staff, artists, patrons, and volunteers of MRT.

COURTNEY SALE (*Nancy L. Donahue Artistic Director*) joined MRT as the Nancy L. Donahue Artistic Director in March of

WHO'S WHO

2020. At MRT she has directed readings of *Gaslight* by Steven Dietz, *The Pill* by Tom Horan in collaboration with UMass Lowell, as well as the upcoming filmed production of *A Woman of the World* by Rebecca Gilman. MRT commissions under her leadership include Vichet Chum and Trista Baldwin. Prior to MRT, she served as the Artistic Director of Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT), the nation's leading generator of new work for young audiences. At SCT, she directed *Black Beauty*, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, and *The Little Prince*. Commissioned writers under her tenure include Idris Goodwin, Cheryl L. West, Allison Gregory, Karen Hartman, Trista Baldwin, Ramon Esquivel, and James Still. Recent directing projects: *Tiny Beautiful Things* at Seattle Rep, the world premiere of Steven Dietz's *The Ghost of Splinter Cove* at Children's Theatre of Charlotte, and Ellen Faure's *Support Group for Men* at Contemporary American Theatre Festival (CATF). Other credits include *The Cake*; *Wild Horses*; *Not Medea* (CATF); *Mr. Burns, A Post Electric Play*; *On Clover Road* (The Phoenix Theater); *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* (Indy Shakes); and *Zen Prayers & Songs* (Fusebox), written and performed by Kirk Lynn. She spent three years as Associate Artistic Director at Indiana Repertory Theatre, where directing credits include the world premiere of *April 4, 1968: Before We Forgot How to Dream*, *The Mountaintop*, *The Mousetrap*, *Jackie & Me*, and *And Then They Came for Me*, *The Giver*, and two iterations of *A Christmas Carol*. With the Duplicates, she co-created *The Fictional Life of Historical Oddities*, *September Play*, *The Man with the Dancing Eyes*, and *The Poison Squad* (Austin Critics Award). She has developed new work at Denver Center Theatre Company's Summit New Play Festival, The New Harmony Project, Write Now, Dorset Theatre Festival, TheatreWorks (Palo Alto), New Plays for Young Audiences at NYU/Provincetown

Playhouse, and The Orchard Project. Other distinctions included Indianapolis Business Journal's Forty Under Forty designation, Cornish College of the Arts Distinguished Alumni Award, and the keynote speaker at the 2017 International Council of Fine Arts Deans. She has taught at Summer at Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle Children's Museum, Temple College, and the University of Texas at Austin. Ms. Sale is a proud member of the National Theatre Conference and the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. She is represented by A3 Artists Agency in NYC. BFA, Cornish College of the Arts. MFA, The University of Texas at Austin.

MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE www.mrt.org

Merrimack Repertory Theatre (MRT) celebrates 42 years this season as the Merrimack Valley's professional theatre. With a steadfast commitment to new plays, MRT normally produces seven works, including several premieres, in the 279-seat Nancy L. Donahue Theatre at Liberty Hall.

Under the leadership of the **Nancy L. Donahue Artistic Director Courtney Sale** and **Executive Director Bonnie J. Butkas**, MRT strives to fulfill its mission to "create remarkable new and contemporary plays that bring joy to our art form while engaging, entertaining and enriching our community." The non-profit company guarantees that shows are accessible to audiences of all incomes; partners with businesses and other non-profits to fully engage the community; and contributes to the economic vitality of Lowell by attracting diverse audiences from throughout the region.

Recent acclaimed productions include *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley*

WHO'S WHO

and *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, the two bestselling productions in MRT's history; *The White Chip* (Off-Broadway transfer); *I and You* (Off-Broadway transfer) and *Silent Sky* by Lauren Gunderson; *Women in Jeopardy!* and the world premiere of *Slow Food* by Wendy MacLeod; *KNYUM* by Cambodian American playwright and actor Vichet Chum; and *The Lion*, singer-songwriter Benjamin Scheuer's award-winning musical memoir, which launched its national tour from MRT in August 2015, following critically acclaimed runs in New York and London.

STAY IN TOUCH

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“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
 That perches in the soul -
 And sings the tune without the words -
 And never stops - at all -

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