

THE NEGRO ENSEMBLE COMPANY

ZOOMAN AND THE SIGN

WRITTEN BY Charles Fuller

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/PRODUCER Karen Brown

PRODUCER Jacqueline Jeffries

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS Tracy Mack, Douglas Wade

DIRECTOR Phyllis Yvonne Stickney

CAST (in alphabetical order)

GRACE GEORGES Wadiah Brown

ASH BOSWELL Ashlee Danielle

ZOOMAN Isaiah Joseph

RUSSELL ADAMS Salif Kone

VICTOR TATE Isaiah Martinez

DONALD JACKSON Alton Ray

REUBEN TATE Benjamin Rowe

RACHEL TATE Constance Thompson

EMMETT TATE Reggie Wilson

CREATIVE TEAM

VIDEO/PROJECTION DESIGNER Michele Baldwin

LIGHTING DESIGNER Melody Beal

SET DESIGNER Patrice Davidson

SOUND DESIGNER Twan Howard

COSTUME DESIGNER Rhonda Lucas

STAGE MANAGER Erica Jeudy

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS Lawrence Floyd, Liam Riordan

PENN LIVE ARTS PROJECT PRODUCER Stephanie Rolland

Harold Prince Theatre

Thursday, February 15 @ 7:30 PM

Friday, February 16 @ 8 PM

Saturday, February 17 @ 2 PM

Saturday, February 17 @ 8 PM

Sunday, February 18 @ 3 PM

There will be an intermission.

This performance is part of **Toll the Bell**, our season-long focus on the gun violence epidemic. Learn more on page 3 of this program or visit PennLiveArts.org/TolltheBell.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Wadiah Brown (Grace Georges)

Brown is an ambitious actor from Newark, NJ. She has done a slew of independent films as well as regional theatre. Brown is delighted to be working with NEC and would like to dedicate this leg to her former NEC instructors Arthur French and Charles Weldon.

Ashlee Danielle (Ash Boswell)

Danielle is a New York-based actress born and raised in the Bronx. She has been acting, singing, teaching and directing for eight years and is a graduate from St. John's University and The American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Danielle has performed with the Negro Ensemble Company many times and in 2023, starred in its production of *Mecca is Burning* at Penn Live Arts and Harlem School of the Arts. *Mecca is Burning* received a 2023 Adelco award nomination for Outstanding Ensemble. Danielle recently played the lead role of Pauline in Black Spectrum Theater Company's *The Last Block Association* which is set to return with encores in spring 2024. Danielle is thrilled to work with NEC again at Penn Live Arts with *Zooman and the Sign*.

Isaiah Joseph (Zooman)

Joseph is an actor local to New York City. Although he doesn't have any professional training, he has landed roles from *New York Homicide* on Oxygen and touring in *Hamlet* as Rosencrantz and Bernardo to feature films *Out of Spite*, *Focus* and *All City* coming to streaming services next year. Joseph's passion for his craft also paved the way for him to be the main character in a new video game, *Brooklynville*, as well as work in the theatre and film programs of NYU, Columbia, DeSales University, Drexel University and many more. He looks forward to the next phase of his career, whether it be on Broadway or the big screen.

Salif Kone (Russell Adams)

Kone's last credit is *Bosch: Legacy* season two, produced for Amazon, which is set to come out soon. Kone also appeared on HBO's television series, *The Deuce*, and more recently, Hulu's *MIKE*. David Vando was Kone's first classically trained Shakespearian teacher at the New York Film Academy where Kone received his initial formal training. He has trained on both coasts of New York and Los Angeles alongside instructors including Bayne Gibby in acting for TV and Victor Verhaeghe in the Meisner Technique. Kone also has been fortunate to cross paths in instruction with film-legend Richard Lawson. Kone made his first film debut in Rod Scott's *Nineteen Summers* and recently wrapped as the lead in an independent short where he stars as a star athlete, set to release in 2024. Other areas of interest and skills for Kone are singing and dancing, writing poetry and screenplays, and behind-the-scenes editing, directing and cinematography. Kone is trilingual, traveling halfway around the world to Africa and Europe, and bi-coastal, traveling between the east coast and California. Kone is looking forward to even more memorable award-worthy projects and collaborations!

Isaiah Martinez (Victor Tate)

Martinez is an actor, playwright and singer from the Bronx. He started studying theatre at 11 and has never looked back since. Theatre is his discipline; to participate in art is both essential and an honor. Credits include *Arduna Chatmon Must Change*, a reading at MCC Theatre (J); *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* at SUNY Purchase (seven); and *Soft*, a reading at MCC Theatre (Jamal). Martinez received his BA in theatre and performance from SUNY Purchase in 2022 where he premiered his play *Death To Masculinity*, a black queer coming-of-age story. Shout out to the Bronx, mi gente Garífuna y hondureño, and art for giving me a purpose that I wasn't able to see.

Alton Ray (Donald Jackson)

Ray is grateful to God for his wonderful wife and two sons, and for the opportunity to help bring this story to life for the betterment of us all. Ray is a Northern CA native who classically trained at SUNY Purchase, where he received his BFA in acting, led by NEC alumni Dean Irby and faculty. NYC Off Broadway credits: Wayne Miner in the *Buffalo Hero of WWI: The Wayne Miner Story* by Kenthedo Robinson (American Theater of Actors); NEC's *Mecca Is Burning* (Harlem School for the Arts); Cris Eli Blak's *Clipper Cut Nation* (Cherry Lane Theater); and NEC's *Elevator Not Necessary* by Mona Washington (Penn Live Arts). Los Angeles theatre credits: Neil Simon's *Rumors* at The Blank Stage, Los Angeles; and Sam Shepard's *Cowboy Mouth* at The New Collective Theater, Fringe Festival.

Benjamin Rowe (Reuben Tate)

Rowe is a New York-born-and-bred actor who has been working on stages large and small since 2000. He most recently appeared in the Negro Ensemble Company's production of *Elevator Not Necessary* at Penn Live Arts. He also recently appeared in *Mecca is Burning*, another production for Negro Ensemble which was nominated for an AUDELCO award for Outstanding Ensemble Performance. Rowe is honored and thrilled to be along once again with such dedicated and talented artists and even better people. Last, but not least, Rowe wishes to thank his wife, Dawn, and their children, Julian, Da'Wren, Jahanna and Indirabelle. They sacrifice and share him with this creative world.

Constance Thompson (Rachel Tate)

Constance Sadie Thompson is a dynamic actor and youth advocate. She values work that is progressive and impactful. Thompson is honored to be making her NYC debut with the Negro Ensemble Company. Credits include *Defiance of Dandelions* (No Dream Deferred), *The Family Line* (Goat in the Road Productions), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Voices in the Dark Rep) and *The Bluest Eye* (Le Petit Theatre). She is a three-time Big Easy Award nominee, in 2020 for Best Supporting Actress and Best Play for *A Raisin in the Sun*, and in 2023 for Best Performance in a Play for *The Family Line*, as well as a 2023 award-winner for Best Play for *The Family Line*. Thompson has a BA in theater arts and public relations from Loyola University in New Orleans. She is also a proud auntie who is grateful for family and friends who continue to sow into her.

Reggie Wilson (Emmett Tate)

Wilson arrived in NYC in 2011 from Tallahassee, FL to intern with Woodie King Jr. at New Federal Theatre. The following year, he was awarded an AUDELCO Award (Lead Actor) for his performance as Levee in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at New Harlem Arts Theatre. He received his second AUDELCO (Best Solo Performance) for playing the title role in *Sugar Ray*, a bioplay based on boxer Sugar Ray Robinson by Laurence Holder and directed by Woodie King Jr. Other New York credits include *Blues for Mister Charlie*, *Stockholm Savings*, *Haiti's Children of God*, *The Whistle in Mississippi*, *The Meeting*, *Black Angels Over Tuskegee*, *Cowboy*, *Unentitled*, and *Scrambled Eggs*. He was Assistant Director of NEC's 2017 revival of *A Soldier's Play*, which won three AUDELCO awards. He holds a BA in theater from Florida A&M University and an MFA in theater from University of Florida. Wilson thanks his mama, Dr. Vivian Wilson, and his NY mama, Johnnie Mae Allen.

Charles Fuller (Playwright)

Winner of the Dramatists Guild's Flora Roberts Award for his extensive body of work, Philadelphia native Charles Fuller's creative efforts involved a wide range of theatre, film and television. He was a member of The Negro Ensemble Company, where his plays *Zooman and the Sign* won him an Obie Award and *A Soldier's Play* won him a Pulitzer Prize for Best American Play and an Edgar Award. Fuller's adaptation of his play became the 1984 film, *A Soldier's Story*, which was nominated for an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award, and won a Writers Guild of America Award. He wrote screenplays for CBS, PBS and Showtime. Fuller was a mentor for young playwrights at Cherry Lane Theatre and was commissioned to write a play, *One Night*, which opened there in 2014.

Phyllis Yvonne Stickney (Director)

Stickney is a world class artist and a respected veteran of stage television and film. "Ms. S" is an educator, motivational speaker, poet, designer and director whose professional career has spanned over 40 years. Named in the 25th anniversary of *Essence Magazine* as "one of the 200 African American Women who has changed the world," Stickney is a recipient of numerous awards and accolades including two AUDELCO Awards, The Ellie Charles Award for Contribution to Society and the Arts, The Jewel of African Award, The Phenomenal Woman Award and CT Vivian's Torch of Leadership. Stickney was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in 1998 and on September 12, 2023, received The Lifetime Achievement Award as a Comedic Icon. Her face is recognizable from memorable performances in *New Jack City*, *Die Hard III*, *Jungle Fever*, *What's Love to Do With It?*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, and other iconic films. Stickney is one of four living children and dedicates this work to her amazing siblings, Ngozi, Timothy and Eric; her ancestors Felix, Belle and Randall; and gives gratitude to The Most High for talent, intellect, life and the opportunity to serve in this capacity. She thanks Jackie, Doug, KEB, NEC and Penn Live Arts for introducing Charles Fuller's work to new audiences. XOXO to the cast!

Michele Baldwin (Video/Projection Designer)

Baldwin, human, woman and multi-masterful creative artist, is presently recommitting wholeheartedly to her first love of acting and is super excited for the journey ahead. Doing the work and breathing life into the words written for intriguing characters, whether imagined or real, is where she will be focusing most of her time. Baldwin is also a talented production designer and creator of multi-media digital assets. She is grateful to once again be a part of the NEC/Penn Live Arts collaboration. She is a seasoned veteran of the entertainment field having successfully worked as an actor, producer, writer and director on stage and in film, TV and the internet for 20-plus years. flowcode.com/page/michelebaldwin

Melody A. Beal (Lighting Designer)

Beal is a two-time AUDELCO Award-recipient for lighting design. Recent designs include: *Untamed* with Black Spectrum Theatre directed by Imani Douglas; *Drum Love* with AsaseYaa African American Dance Theater; *Die Walkure* at Trilogy Opera Company at NJPAC directed by Kevin Maynor; *The March* at Apollo Theatre and Blackberry Productions directed by Jeffery Thompson; and *Hercules Didn't Wade In The Water* with NEC directed by Charles Weldon. NEC AUDELCO Award-winning productions include *A Soldier's Play* directed by Charles Weldon and *Daughters Of The Mock* directed by Denise Dowse. Beal is currently a lighting director with the Philadelphia Dance Company and La Guardia Performing Arts Center. She is psyched to work with this group of talented actors and creative team headed by an awesome director and honored to be with The Negro Ensemble Company.

Patrice Andrew Davidson (Scenic Designer)

Davidson is a production designer and art director for film and motion pictures, and a scenic designer for live entertainment. 2022 marked his third decade in the entertainment industry, during which he has garnered numerous awards and nominations.

Rhonda Lucas (Costume Designer)

AUDELCO Award-nominee Lucas is an established fashion designer that has been in the industry for over 20 years. During that time, her ready-to-wear designs have won editorial recognition through *Essence Magazine*, *Glamour Magazine*, *Victoria's Secret* and others. Her background is comprised of women's wear, men's wear, children's apparel, bridal and accessories. Her design house, Renyee Unlimited, is a celebration of art and ipseity, born from her love of multi-culturalism and styles from near and far! Lucas' designs from her core line are conversation starters and collectors' items. She has constructed pieces for Dance Theatre of Harlem, Black Spectrum Theatre, various singers, dancers, actors and is a proud member of the Negro Ensemble Company family! Instagram: [@renyeeofficial](https://www.instagram.com/renyeeofficial)

Liam Riordan (Assistant Stage Manager)

Riordan is a long-time builder of theatre in NYC, both on and offstage. Most recently, he was on the tech team for Negro Ensemble Company's *Mecca Is Burning* and *Unentitled* plus New Federal Theatre's *Gong Lum's Legacy* (Audelco Award-winner, Best Play) and *Telling Tales Out of School*. He has also worked with the DreamUp Festival at Theater for The New City, Castillo Theatre, Mystical Feet Company and the American Theatre of Actors. Riordan has performed at BAM, Lincoln Center and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Twan Howard (Sound Designer)

Howard is a vocalist, songwriter and music producer. He is also a sound designer, sound recordist and post-production A/V editor for film and video. With decades of experience, beginning as early as primary school, he has continued to study and eagerly put into practice all the skills and knowledge he's collected over the years. Howard has played key roles in numerous projects. His experience in award-winning indie and short film projects includes acting as sound recordist for *Room* by Aisha Densmore-Bey with ADB, sound recordist and post-editor for *Mr. B.* by James Carter, and sound recordist and post-editor/sound mixer for *OMG* by James Carter with BFP. His theatre and concert stage includes sound design/board op/A1 for *Unentitled* by Charles White/Florante Galvez and *The Dream Chest* by Scarlett Finney/Gabrielle Archer with NEC. Howard maintains an undeniable passion for the arts and brings a versatility and originality that complements every endeavor with the highest technically artistic quality and professionalism. howardhousmusicandsound.com