



STEW

BY ZORA HOWARD
DIRECTED BY IBI OWOLABI

NOVEMBER 12, 2020

World Premiere of *STEW* was produced by
PAGE 73 PRODUCTIONS
(Michael Walkup, Artistic Director; Amanda Feldman, Managing Director;
and Rebecca Yaggy, Director of Development)

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING ONLINE
WITH THE HASHTAG *#toDowntownDialogues*

CAST

LIL' MAMA Jessenia Ingram
NELLY Asia Howard*
LILLIAN Cynthia D. Barker*
MAMA Tonia Jackson*
STAGE DIRECTIONS Therecia Lang

* *Appearing through an Agreement between this theatre, Theatrical Outfit, and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

CREATIVE TEAM

PLAYWRIGHT Zora Howard
DIRECTOR Ibi Owolabi
DOWNTOWN DIALOGUES HOST Gail O'Neill
SOUND DESIGNER Mikaela Fraser
SOUND PRODUCER Multiband Studios
STAGE MANAGER Courtney Greever-Fries*

STAFF

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Matt Torney

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Gretchen E. Butler

GENERAL MANAGER
Rochelle Shinn

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Courtney Greever-Fries

APPRENTICE COMPANY
Caroline Cook
Therecia Lang
Jessica McKeown
Jules Tollett

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
Tess Malis Kincaid

BOX OFFICE ASSOCIATE
Abigail Dawkins

MARKETING DIRECTOR
Ryan Oliveti

INTERN
Nicole Hart

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This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. To find out more about how NEA grants impact individuals and communities, visit www.arts.gov.

Major support is provided by the City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs. Major funding for this organization is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners.

Welcome to the fourth and final 'episode' of Downtown Dialogues, Theatrical Outfit's series of digital readings and conversations.

When developing ideas for digital programming, we asked ourselves a simple question: how do we honor our mission to "start the conversations that matter" in a time when we can't gather together? Our answer was to produce digital readings of excellent plays that resonate deeply with the current moment, have fascinating stories and compelling characters, and are performed by some of Atlanta's top theatre artists. To deepen the conversation around the plays, we are pairing each of the readings with a live video podcast hosted by Gail O'Neill in which expert guests will dig into the big questions behind the play and what they might mean for society, as well as addressing questions from you, the audience.

Tonight's reading is the Atlanta premiere of *STEW* by Zora Howard, which was nominated for the 2020 Drama League Award for Outstanding Play. *STEW* brings us into the kitchen of the Tucker family where Mama is making her famous stew, as she does every year on this day. Three generations of women gather and, as they work through the familiar rituals of preparation, the secrets they hide and the bonds they share weave together into a moving story about family. This play is filled with humor, character, and mystery and highlights Zora's incredible ear for language.

We have an exceptional artistic team for the reading, led by Atlanta based director Ibi Owolabi and featuring a cast of TO veterans and newcomers, including Tonia Jackson, Cynthia D. Barker, Asia Howard, and Jessenia Ingram. And joining Gail for the post show conversation are Ibi Owolabi, Zora Howard, Mashama Bailey (the head chef of The Grey in Savannah), and Latria Graham (a South Carolina-based writer, editor and cultural critic).

We are thrilled to introduce Atlanta audiences to this exciting new voice, and these four beautifully drawn characters.

Enjoy!

Matt Torney & Gretchen Butler

PLAY SETTING

Mt. Vernon, New York. Or a neighborhood like it. Some time ago but not too long ago. Let's say somewhere around the millennium. The most recent millennium.

SYNOPSIS

In Zora Howard's *STEW*, Mama is up early to prepare an important meal and, even with her family on hand to help, time is running short. In between cutting celery, garlic, and red peppers, tense secrets are revealed among the three generations of black women. This beautiful and powerful play celebrates the joys and complexities of family life and how to balance old grievances and new revelations with making sure dinner is ready on time.

HISTORY OF STEW

- Zora Howard is a writer and actor who made her professional playwriting debut with *STEW*.
- *STEW* had a limited Off-Broadway engagement presented by Page 73, the New York-based company supporting early-career playwrights, in February 2020.
- The NYC run of *STEW* has been nominated for several major 2020 awards including Drama League Awards (Outstanding Production of a Play), Outer Critics Circle Honors, Drama Desk Awards, and Antonyo Awards.
- *Time Out New York* gave *STEW* ★★★★★



CYNTHIA D. BARKER* (*Lillian*) Regional Credit(s): *Uprising* (Metro Stage). Atlanta Credits: *The Royale* (Theatrical Outfit); *The Mountaintop* (Aurora Theatre); *Beyond Reasonable Doubt: The Troy Davis Project*, *Women+War* (Synchronicity Theatre); *Citizens Market*, *How To Use A Knife*, *Uprising*, *Elemeno Pea*, *Third Country*, and *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery* (Horizon Theatre); *Macbeth* (Georgia Shakespeare), *Flyin' West* (Theatre in the Square); *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Lakebottom Proper*, *Hamlet* (Springer Opera House); *A Christmas Carol*, *Honk! The Musical* (Alliance Theatre); *Paradise Blue, for colored girls who considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *Black Nativity* (True Colors). Film/TV: "Rectify" (Sundance TV), *Ir/Reconcilable* (Blue Sky Clouds), "Tyler Perry's House of Payne" (TBS).



ASIA HOWARD* (*Nelly*) is delighted to be returning to Theatrical Outfit. Previous credits include *Our Town & The Laramie Project* (Theatrical Outfit), *Pipeline* (Horizon Theatre), *Skeleton Crew* (True Colors Theatre), *Titanic* (Serenbe Playhouse), *Nick's Flamingo Grill u/s* (Alliance Theatre), *A Christmas Carol* and *Damn Yankees* (Theatre Buford), *Dangerous Women* (Weird Sisters Theatre Project), and *The Jungle Book* (Georgia Ensemble Theatre). Special thanks to her family and to Nijel for all of their support!



JESSENIA INGRAM (*Lil' Mama*) is a graduate of Spelman College with a degree in Theatre and Performance and minor in Management and Organization. Currently, she is working at the Alliance Theatre as a Spelman Leadership

Fellow and has enjoyed finding new ways to create digital theatre. Recent digital projects include *The Art of Facing Fear* (Os Satyros) and *A Kids Play About Racism* (Bay Area Children's Theatre). She has a passion for activism and using her art as a means to spread love and make change. Follow her @jesseniaingram.



TONIA JACKSON* (*Mama*) off-Broadway: Pan Asian Theater. Select Atlanta Theatre: *Skeleton Crew*, *King Hedley II*, *Detroit '67*, *Sty of the Blind Pig* (Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre); *Gem of the Ocean*, *Radio Golf*, *The Nacirema Society ...*, *One Flew Over the Cookee's Nest* (Alliance Theatre). Other Reginal Theatres: Penumbra (company member), Guthrie, Mixed Blood, Steppenwolf, Horizon Theatre, Theatrical Outfit, Center Stage, American Stage, to name a few. TV & Film: "Atlanta," "Black Lightening," "The Resident," "Greenleaf," "Meet the Browns," "If Loving You Is Wrong," *Constantine*, "The Quad," "House of Payne," "Let's Stay Together," "Outer Banks." Awards: 6-time Suzi Bass Award Nominee (win for Best Ensemble for *Shakin' The Mess Outta Misery*), 1-time Jeff Norton Nominee.

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ZORA HOWARD (*Playwright*) is a Harlem-bred writer and performer. Plays include *STEW*, *AtGN*, *Bust*, and *In Good Faith*. Her work has been developed by Page 73 Productions, SPACE at Ryder Farm, Pipeline Theatre Company, Yale University, and Collaborative Artists Bloc, among others. As a performer, she has appeared on HBO, TV One, PBS, and NBC. In 2019, her feature film *Premature*, which she co-wrote and starred in, had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. She is a member of the 2019 Interstate 73 Writers Group and Pipeline PlayLab. She holds a BA from Yale University and an MFA from UCSD.

IBI OWOLABI (*Director*) is pleased to join the TO family for the first time! She is a local graduate of Georgia Southern, where she went on to intern at Actor's Express and complete the Kenny Leon Fellowship at the Alliance Theatre. She has been collaborating in Atlanta ever since. Recent credits include *The Electric Baby*, *The Nether* and *Here Comes The Sun*.

GAIL O'NEILL (*Downtown Dialogues Host*) is a writer for ArtsATL.org, where she covers arts and culture in Atlanta. She is the host and co-producer of Collective Knowledge— a weekly series of conversations with artists, entrepreneurs and thought-leaders— which can be viewed on YouTube, Facebook and The A Network. Most recognizable for her work in fashion, Gail spent 10 years circling the globe as a model before joining CBS News in New York City as a features reporter. After relocating to Atlanta in 2000, she hosted a travel show for CNN, and subsequently hosted several series and specials for HGTV— including *Mission: Organization*, *Christmas at the White House* and *Behind the Design of HGTV's Dream Home*.

COURTNEY GREEVER-FRIES* (*Production Manager & Stage Manager*) has spent the last decade working in various production roles in and around Atlanta. A proud graduate of Emory University, she came to Atlanta for school and fell in love with this city. Her work as a stage manager, sound designer, and props master has been seen at Dad's Garage, Actor's Express, Georgia Aquarium, Georgia Ensemble, Theater Emory, and Synchronicity to name a few, but she is happy to have found a home at Theatrical Outfit. A homebody at heart, when not working, she prefers being on her couch with a glass of wine, her husband Jonathan, and her dogs.

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