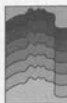




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PENUMBRA

THEATRE COMPANY

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Inside the Creole Mafia

Penumbra Theatre Company opens its 19th season on August 24, 1995, with *Inside the Creole Mafia*, a spicy commentary on race, racism and cultural identity, created and performed by Roger Guenveur Smith and Mark Broyard.

The creators use the backdrop of Mardi Gras and a mesmerizing assortment of New Orleans memories, skits, a cappella singing, and audience spoofing to highlight the plight of Creole actors who are not dark enough for black roles but too dark for white roles. According to the playwrights, "It's about intra-racial conflict, survival, the madness of Mardi Gras...and the proper way to make café au lait." *Inside the Creole Mafia* was first per-

formed in Los Angeles in 1991, where the Los Angeles Times said it "stood out for its inventiveness and craftsmanship...Few artists approach the sophistication, insight and sheer playfulness of this cosmopolitan look at identity. It's anti-racist without being doctrinaire." It subsequently was produced in New York and remounted in 1993 in Los Angeles.

"It's about intra-racial conflict, survival, the madness of Mardi Gras ... and the proper way to make café au lait."



Inside the Creole Mafia previews Tuesday, August 22, and Wednesday, August 23, at 7:30 p.m. The show opens Thursday, August 24, and runs through September 17, 1995. Preview tickets are \$9; regular performances are \$14 & \$17. Tickets are available by calling the Penumbra Theatre Company box office at (612) 224-3180.

About the Creators of Creole

ROGER GUENVEUR SMITH

For the national stage, Roger Guenveur Smith has created and performed *Frederick Douglass Now*, *Christopher Columbus 1992*, and with Mark Broyard, the award-winning *Inside the Creole Mafia*. He also has appeared on the stages of the Mark Taper Forum, New York Shakespeare Festival, Guthrie Theatre and Mabou Mines.

His screen credits include Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*, *Malcolm X*, and *School Daze* as well as John Singleton's *Poetic Justice* and *Deep Cover*. Television viewers know Roger as "Professor Randolph" from *A Different World*.

Mr. Smith studied at the Yale School of Drama, Occidental College, and the Keskidee Arts Center in London as a Thomas J. Watson Fellow. He has taught extensively, most recently as artist-in-residence at the University of California, Berkeley.

MARK BROYARD

Born in New Orleans, Mark Broyard is a vocalist, choir director and assemblage artist. He has collaborated with Teddy Edwards, James Newton, Vi Redd, the Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers and his own Mark Broyard Ensemble. He is co-founder of the Eric Dolphy Memorial Foundation. Other collaborations with Roger Smith include *Conflict*, *Kaos TV*, and *Frederick Douglass Now*.

Notes from the Artistic Director

Experiencing Black issues through theater has too often felt like swallowing a bitter pill. The African American story on stage—exploring dark, complex and dangerous issues—has led to a predominance of an "in your face" style that, while challenging, is also too often heavy and humorless. Black America and Black American theater have much more to offer than just that means of examining their unique place in the world. The 1995/96 season I've pulled together balances the presentation of our experience with all of its joy, pain and problems.

Inside the Creole Mafia kicks off our 19th season taking a hot look at race through music, humor and audience participation. *Flyin' West* swiftly follows. This history lesson affords us the opportunity to look at African American communities in the post-civil war era through the eyes of some very strong and inspiring women. The third show of this season is the latest work from Charles Smith, winner of our second Cornerstone Competition, *Freefall*. *Freefall*

looks at class issues in the black community as a successful middle-class cop and his lower-class convict brother bridge an enormous gap in an inspiring act of brotherly love.

We close the season with two world premieres, *Portrait of an Artist as a Soul Dead Man*, a powerful examination of an African American father-son relationship. The amazing Hannibal Peterson makes his Penumbra debut in the role of a street jazz musician. Finally, Rebecca Rice, whose *Waiting in Vain* thrilled our audiences in 1993, returns to Penumbra with her *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*. Through a vibrant montage of prose, monologue, poetry, percussion and dance, Rice sings the poetry of the womb, the politics of Black womanhood and the black mother's unending work—keeping her children alive on the Earth.

I look forward to sharing this full-spectrum season with you.

Lou Bellamy
Artistic Director

Maurine D. Knighton Bids Farewell

Maurine D. Knighton, Managing Director of Penumbra Theatre Company for the past three years, bid farewell to the organization at the end of July. Knighton has accepted the position of Program Manager for the Network Programs with the Cultural Facilities Fund in New York City.

"Leaving Penumbra was a very

difficult decision," said Knighton. "It is a unique and amazing company, and I have enjoyed working here immensely. The job with the Cultural Facilities Fund is a tremendous opportunity for me. I will never forget the wonderful experience I have had here. Penumbra—and the people who make it—will always hold a special place in my heart."

Inside the Creole Mafia •

by Roger Guenveur Smith & Mark Broyard

In this spicy commentary on race, racism and cultural identity, Smith—the gifted star of several Spike Lee films—and Broyard use the backdrop of Mardi Gras and a mesmerizing assortment of New Orleans memories, skits, a cappella singing, and audience spoofing to highlight the plight of Creole actors who are not dark enough for black roles but too dark for white roles. According to the playwrights, "It's about intraracial conflict, survival, the madness of Mardi Gras...and the proper way to make café au lait."

Runs August 24-September 17

Flyin' West • by Pearl Cleage

This immensely popular show, set at the turn of the 20th century, is a deeply moving, often funny historical tribute to the African American women pioneers who left the racist South for the frontier in search of prosperity and peace of mind. The play follows the exploits of four African American women who run their own ranch in the all-black town of Nicodemus, Kansas. Since its successful premiere in Atlanta in 1992, this play has fascinated audiences with its glimpse of a world about which we hardly ever see or hear.

Runs October 26-November 19



Freefall • by Charles Smith

Freefall is a gripping story of Monk and Grant, two brothers who have chosen dramatically different roads in life—one a convict, one a cop. With an intriguing blend of drama and comedic interludes, Smith keeps audiences at the edge of their seats until the plot reaches its soul-lifting and triumphant resolution.

Runs January 25-February 18

Portrait of the Artist as a Soul

Man Dead • by Jake-ann Jones
Grammy-nominated trumpeter Hannibal Peterson takes the stage for this powerful examination of an African American father-son relationship in which Jones plumbs the gulf between a young artist and his jazz musician father, portrayed by Peterson. The play forges into a harsh terrain of pain and loss, isolation, love and healing, and ultimately the power of death.

Runs April 18-May 12

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

• by Rebecca Rice

Rice sings the poetry of the womb, the politics of Black womanhood and the Black mother's unending work—keeping her children alive on the Earth. Through a vibrant montage of prose, monologue, poetry, percussion and dance, Rice focuses on the American feminist movement and what has often ended up on the movement's battleground—the body of the Black woman.

Runs May 30-June 23

Black Nativity returns for its ninth spirited year. Langston Hughes' collection of gospel songs, carols, scripture and dance celebrating the birth of Christ is one of the Twin Cities' most popular holiday traditions. Runs November 24-December 29

Minneapolis Gospel Sound, the nationally-acclaimed winner of the "Best Gospel Group" from the Minnesota Music Awards and "the most angelic voices this side of heaven," takes the Penumbra stage for 10 performances, opening September 20 and closing October 1.

**For tickets, call
612/224-3180**

The Beauty of Black Theater

by Dwight Hobbles

The beauty of black theater is the reality it reflects. Its subjects are endless: the gap between generations, social and political oppression, history and romance. Story settings range from the rich rural setting of Keith Glover's *Coming of the Hurricane*, in which an individual's fight for life is tied to the land he tends, to Lorraine Hansberry's classic *Raisin in the Sun*, about a family confronting urban social circumstance and overcoming strife within itself. Volumes of black plays cover the immense ground in-between.

Black theater definitively mirrors the stories of people's lives in the multifaceted experience of what it is to be of African ancestry in America. It sheds empathetic light on the soul of personal dreams and desires that acted upon culminate in spiritual despair or deliverance. It does so in a language and lifestyle specific to African Americans. Ironically, the more specifically it conveys the reality of black life the more widespread is its appeal. Timeless plays such as Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* and August Wilson's *Fences*,

steeped in cultural authenticity, are readily accessible to any audience member, regardless of color, who will open his or her heart to the fundamental human concerns the plays addresses—the need for love, dignity and self-respect.

As Minnesota's only professional organization devoted to developing and producing plays about African Americans, Penumbra Theatre Company presents a cultural perspective that would be otherwise sporadically heard if not virtually silent. The genre of Black theater allows Penumbra to explore plays both within and without the structure of traditional western theater.

From Keith Glover's *Coming of the Hurricane* with its linear storyline against an antagonist to Rhodessa Jones' *Big Butt Women*, *Hard Headed Girls*, a one-woman performance art piece, Penumbra's presents the African American experience to its fullest. Its stated mission is to provide high quality content, not just to package commercially viable shows for a

trend oriented audience. To quote two-time Pulitzer Prize winning dramatist August Wilson, "All of Penumbra's productions are well-executed, thoroughly professional and their content offers an exciting and provocative challenge to the audience."

Black audiences today can as never before avail themselves of the opportunity to experience an artistic expression that keeps showing a broader and deeper perspective of a multi-dimensional reality. From the ranks of such writers from days gone by as Hansberry, Langston Hughes and Lewis Peterson to more recently celebrated playwrights as Leslie Lee, Charles Fuller and Ed Bullins, the genre is continually expanding. Penumbra Theatre Company specifically refreshes the artistic blood of black theater and provides a healthy influence to the hearts and minds of young and old alike. Theatre-goers in general and Minnesotans in particular have ample opportunity to avail themselves of Penumbra, which, to borrow a phrase, illuminates the African American experience.

Rafiki (Friend) Coupon

Last season we introduced our early buyer Rafiki coupon and the response was overwhelming. So, back by popular demand is our special offer to you!

This coupon entitles you to \$3 off regular ticket prices for the following Creole Mafia performances:

Friday, August 25, 8 p.m.
Sunday, August 27, 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, August 31, 7:30 p.m.

Call 224-3180 to order your tickets. Limit 4 tickets per person.

Ticket Talk

Ushers

We are always searching for people interested in serving as ushers for our productions. If you would like to see a show free in exchange for a little work, please call the box office at 224-3180.

Single Tickets

Single tickets are now on sale for all of our mainstage shows and the two special offerings, Minneapolis Gospel Sound and Black Nativity. To order tickets, call 224-3180 Monday through Friday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Black Nativity tickets may be ordered through TicketMaster at 989-5151.

Student Groups

Penumbra offers special rates for student matinees. Teachers, we encourage you to expose your high school students to the powerful, educational and exciting productions that we present. For ticket prices and more information, call the box office at 224-3180.

Student Matinees

Flyin' West, 11/8 10 a.m.
Black Nativity, 12/6 10 a.m.
Freefall, 2/7 10 a.m.
Portrait of an Artist, 5/1 10 a.m.

House Buy-Outs

Buy-out a night at Penumbra for your employee appreciation night, or when you need a creative way to raise money for your organization. Guaranteeing the night for your company or organization affords you a greatly reduced ticket price. For more information on performance availability, terms and prices, call 224-3180.

The Donor

Corner

As we all know, these are tough times for the arts. Penumbra has met this challenge with aggressive prospecting for new corporate and foundation funders. We are proud to report our efforts are paying off. Not only have we generated new income for the theatre, we also have begun developing critical new partnerships with Minnesota's finest!

Since April 1995 the following corporations and foundations have joined the Penumbra family: Elmer L. & Eleanor J. Andersen Foundation, James Ford Bell Foundation, Lillian Wright & C. Emil Berglund Foundation, Caring and Sharing Foundation, Ceridian Corporation, Cy & Paula DeCasse Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation, Eugene M. Lang Foundation, Flyte Tyme Productions, Jerome Foundation, Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation, Medtronic Foundation, Minnesota Mutual Companies, Northwest Airlines, Carl & Elise Pohl Family Foundation, Radisson Hotels Worldwide, Schatz, Paquin Lockridge Grindal & Holstein, TCF Foundation, and United Health Care Corporation.

There is much more to be done in this area. Many corporations and foundations are not yet aware of the unique work Penumbra does. You can help us! Let your company's giving program know about Penumbra. Tell friends who are members of area foundation boards. Your networking can be a big boost to our development efforts.

\$19 for the 19th A Great Success

Penumbra raised over \$8000 with its "19th" fundraising campaign during the run of "Three Ways Home." Thank you to those of you who responded and recognized the connection between our patrons' support and the powerful work we present. "Three Ways Home" has closed but it's not too late to give. Call the box office at 612/224-3180 with your credit card donation or send it to Penumbra at 270 N. Kent St., St. Paul, MN 55102.

Fostering "pARTnerships": The Penumbra Business Council

In an effort to bolster our ties with area businesses, Penumbra is forming "pARTnerships" with area businesses, recognizing that the transformative power of the arts fuels our workplaces, schools, communities, and, indeed, our souls.

Businesses that contribute \$500 or more to Penumbra are members of the Council and will be listed in all programs and the Annual Report, receive special discounts on tickets for employees, and have the opportunity to network with other member businesses to help form stronger economic ties and foster community sustenance.

Special thanks to Al MacFarlane of Insight News and Stew Widdess, Penumbra Board member and Minnesota Vikings Vice President, for getting the ball rolling on this initiative.

Season Subscription Order Form*

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Daytime phone _____

Evening phone _____

I. Select Your Performance

Opening Night (Thu, 7:30 p.m.) _____

Thursdays (7:30 p.m.) _____

Fridays (8:00 p.m.) _____

Saturdays (8:00 p.m.) _____

Sundays (2:00 p.m.) _____

Sundays (7:30 p.m.) _____

II. Select Your Season Price

_____ Adult tickets @ \$ _____ = \$ _____

_____ Student tickets @ \$ _____ = \$ _____

_____ Senior tickets @ \$ _____ = \$ _____

Tax deductible contribution _____ = \$ _____

Handling fee _____ = \$ 4.00

TOTAL DUE _____ = \$ _____

*Season subscription includes five plays:
Creole Mafia, Flyin' West, Freefall,
Portrait of an Artist, Everlasting Arms

Subscription Prices

	adult	student/ senior**
Opening Night	\$50	\$40
Thursday & Sunday Nights	\$60	\$50
Friday & Saturday Nights	\$75	\$65
Sunday Matinee	\$60	\$50

**Senior citizen prices are applicable for age 62 and older. Student prices are applicable for age 17 and under or full-time students. For each subscription, a photocopy of a valid student ID/fee statement must be enclosed.

III. Select Method of Payment

Check enclosed for full amount.

Please bill my:

_____ Visa _____ Mastercard

Card No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

IV. Mail To:

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St. Paul, MN 55102

OR call 612/224-3180

OR fax 612/224-7074

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