



Ensemble Theatre

Great Scripts. Cleveland Artists

:: **Lucia Colombi**, Founder :: **Celeste Cosentino**, Executive Artistic Director ::

OCT 27 - NOV 12

The Island

by Athol Fugard, John Kani,
& Winston Ntshona

Ensemble Theatre :: **2023-2024** Season::

Performing Arts Center-Notre Dame College
4545 College Rd. South Euclid, OH 44121

216.321.2930 | www.ensembletheatrecl.org

A Message from the Artistic Director/Director

Dear Friends,

What a journey the last few years have been. Navigating a pandemic and a move from a space we inhabited for almost a decade. We are so thankful for our new partners at Notre Dame College. We are so excited to become a part of the Performing Arts Family here in South Euclid! Both my mother and I graduated from Regina (now part of the college). How wonderful it is to return to where alot of this journey began for me! My office is in my old highschool, and what an honor to help young artists as they navigate the beginnings of a journey I started here so many years ago.

Thank you for joining us for the second production of our second season in our new home at Notre Dame College! As we continue to settle here, we are happy to see so many familiar faces, of supporters who have been with us for many of the years along the way, some since the very first show! We are also happy to discover so many new faces and new members from our now expanded community of supporters in 'the land'! We are part of a rich theatre arts "ensemble" and arts community in Northeast Ohio and are excited for what this next chapter holds!

The Island is a very powerful play. Crafted in collaborattion by three artists who were speaking out against apartheid. It lays bare some very significant worldly issues, while also exploring the bonds of friendship, love, and brotherhood among those who paid the heaviest price for protest. As I learned more about this show, and its creators, I think of the powerful legacy, careers, and admirable lives these arists have lead, even in the face of such extreme adversity. Art IS a powerful force for change. I only hope we are closer to a time when these themes won't resonate with our current climate.

I am so happy to be a part of this oppportunity for two Cleveland actors to shine as the wonderful artists they are!! I am grateful to have artists return who spent many years working with my mom, inspired by these artists' work, who I am now honored and humbled to include as part of my Ensemble history in some way.

Thank you for continuing to be a part of our Ensemble family! Enjoy the show!
Celeste Cosentino, Executive Artistic Director

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:: Lucia Colombi, Founder :: Celeste Cosentino, Executive Artistic Director ::
Presents

THE ISLAND

By **Athol Fugard, John Kani, & Winston Ntshona**

Director :: Sarah May

Prod. Stage Manager/Props :: Becca Moseley

Costume Design :: Jill Kenderes

Set & Lighting Design :: Ian Hinz

Sound :: Sarah May & Becca Moseley

Dialect Coach/Consultant: Chuck Richie

:: The Cast ::

Robert Williams & Nnamdi Okpala

Time/Place:

May, 1973. A cell on Robben Island and surroundings.

Scene 1: A day on the beach, and later that evening

Scene 2: Later that week, the cell.

Scene 3: Before dawn the next day, the cell.

Scene 4: Later that day, the prison Common Room.

Run Time: Approximately 85 minutes.

-There will be no intermission-

Please Note:

Contains **strong language** and **themes** and **simulated** violence .

“The Island (Fugard)” is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

Special Thanks To:

Carol Steiner, Molly Garfield, Natasha Levinson,
Sinegu Gu Gasa, Lehlabile Davhana & Jan Kious

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Who's who in the Cast:



Nnamdi Okpala (Winston) is thrilled to be back storytelling at Ensemble for "The Island"! He has performed with Cleveland Public Theatre, Dobama Theatre, Cleveland State University, Cleveland Play House and other area theatres. Past performances at Ensemble Theatre include George Murchison in Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun" and Kevin/Albert in "Clybourne Park". Notable past roles also include Macduff in 'Macbeth', Eddie in 'Shadow of the Run's Railroaded', and Popcorn Vendor in 'Shadow of the Run's Dreamwalkers'. Nnamdi received his BA in Acting at Cleveland State University. He is beyond grateful for the unconditional love and support from all his family!"



Robert Williams (John) is pleased to be returning to the Ensemble stage where his credits include 'A Raisin in the Sun' 'The Iceman Cometh' and 'Steelbound'. Other credits include 'The Spawn of the Petrosexuals' and 'The Boys in the Band' for Convergence Continuum, 'Twelfth Night' and 'As You Like It' for Cleveland Shakespeare Festival, 'The Hairy Ape' and 'Venus' for Cleveland Public Theatre, 'Ma Rainey's Black Bottom' for Beck Center, 'The Two Gentleman of Verona' for Great Lakes Theatre, and 'Ain't Nothing But the Blues' and 'Zooman and the Sign' for Karamu Theatre.

About The Playwrights!

Harold Athol Lanigan Fugard was born in 1932 in the Western Cape Province of South Africa to a father of British background and an Afrikaner mother of Dutch descent. He dropped out of the University of Cape Town to travel the world as a merchant seaman before returning home to work briefly as a journalist. While working as a clerk in the Native Commissioner's Court he realized how systemically evil apartheid law really was. He liked to call himself "a classic example of a white liberal," but after he started an experimental theatre with his wife Sheila, he began writing political plays that helped bring worldwide attention to the brutal racial injustice in his country. Fugard's dream that art could evoke change was to become reality.

His first major success was **The Blood Knot**, Performances marked the first time a white actor (played by Fugard himself) and a black actor appeared together onstage in South Africa. Authorities finally closed the show, but the play went on to play in London, at Yale University in New Haven, and finally Off- Broadway where it received critical raves. The play was filmed for television by the BBC, and upon return home Fugard had his passport revoked for several years. He continued to turn out beautiful scripts like **Boesman and Lena**, **A Lesson from Aloes**, **The Road to Mecca**, **My Children! My Africa!**, and **Master Harold and The Boys**, capturing the human cost and the far-reaching effects of racism. The success of his work surely hastened the international call to order trade sanctions, and encouraged the UN to expel South Africa in 1984.

In the early 1970's Fugard convinced two friends, the great Black South African actors **John Kani (b. 1942)** and **Winston Ntshona (1941-2018)**, to join him for a groundbreaking theatrical experiment. The three worked closely together using improvisation and "bare bones" techniques to create two dramatic masterpieces that addressed current issues: **Sizwe Banzi is Dead** (passbooks), **The Island** (incarceration.) These plays were secretly performed in South Africa as a limited run, in front of private, members-only audiences. These plays moved to the Royal Court Theatre in London where they ran in repertory for 18 months, before moving to Broadway where John Kani and Winston Ntshona shared the 1974 Tony Award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Play.

Mr. Fugard has continued to write many successful plays including **Playland**, **Valley Song**, **Sorrows & Rejoicings**, **Coming Home**, and **The Train Driver**, all dealing with post-apartheid issues of forgiveness, reconciliation, opportunity and hope. He has published several memoirs, diaries, and a novel "Tsotsi", that was adapted into a film that won the 2005 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. He recently retired from teaching at UC San Diego to live on the small farm he bought in the Karoo Valley of "his beloved country."
He won the Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2010.

About The Playwrights (continued)

Bonisle John Kani was born on 30 November 1942 in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape province. He is a South African actor, author, director and playwright. He is known for portraying T'Chaka in the Marvel Cinematic Universe films **Captain America: Civil War (2016)** and **Black Panther (2018)**, Rafiki in the **2019 remake of The Lion King** and Colonel Ulungu in the Netflix film **Murder Mystery (2019)**. The fact that Kani was a Xhosa native speaker led Chadwick Boseman, who played his onscreen son T'Challa, to make that Wakanda's language, and to learn whole scenes in Xhosa, although he had never studied the language before. His son Atandwa is also an actor, who made his debut on U.S. television on the CW series **Life Is Wild**, and played a younger version of Kani's character T'Chaka in **Black Panther**.

Kani joined The Serpent Players (a group of actors whose first performance was in the former snake pit of the zoo, hence the name) in Port Elizabeth in 1965 and helped to create many plays that went unpublished but were performed to a resounding reception. These were followed by the more famous **Sizwe Banzi is Dead** and **The Island**, co-written with Athol Fugard and Winston Ntshona, in the early 1970s. Kani also received an Olivier Award nomination for his role in **My Children! My Africa!** Kani's work has been widely performed around the world, including New York, where he and Winston Ntshona won a Tony Award in 1975 for **Sizwe Banzi Is Dead & The Island**.

Nothing but the Truth (2002) was his debut as sole playwright and was first performed in the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. This play takes place in post-apartheid South Africa and does not concern the conflicts between whites and blacks, but the rift between blacks who stayed in South Africa to fight apartheid, and those who left only to return when the hated regime folded. It won the 2003 Fleur du Cap Awards for the best actor and best new South African play. In the same year, he was also awarded a special Obie Award for his extraordinary contribution to theatre in the United States.

Kani was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Durban-Westerville, the 'Hiroshima Award for Peace' (in 2000) and the Tribute Magazine's 'Titan of the Century' award. In 2005 he received the Olive Schreiner Prize and on 27 September 2005 Kani was awarded the The Order of Ikhamanga in Silver by the South African Government for "Excellent contributions to theatre and, through this, the struggle for a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa". In 2006 Kani was bestowed with an honorary doctorate by the University of Cape Town. Kani was honoured with a South African Film and Television Lifetime Achievement Award on 20 February 2010. Kani served as executive trustee of the **John Kani Theatre Foundation**, founder/director of the **John Kani Theatre Laboratory** and chairman of the National Arts Council of SA.

Winston Ntshona (6 October 1941 – 2 August 2018) was a South African playwright and actor. He won a Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play in 1975. Born in Port Elizabeth, Zola Winston Ntshona worked alongside fellow South African Athol Fugard on several occasions, most notably in the 1980 film version of Fugard's play **Marigolds in August**, and played a minor role in Richard Attenborough's acclaimed film **Gandhi** (1982).

Ntshona attended Newell High School in Port Elizabeth, where he met long time collaborator and South African acting legend John Kani. In 1967 he joined the Serpent Players drama group alongside John Kani and Athol Fugard. With Fugard and John Kani, Ntshona wrote the 1973 play **The Island**. He and Kani starred in a number of major international productions over the next 30 years. Ntshona and Kani were co-winners of the Tony Award for Best Actor in a play for their performance in both **The Island** and **Sizwe Banzi Is Dead**, which he also co-wrote. This was a first for black actors at the time.

Ntshona's first screen role came when he and Kani were invited by producer Euan Lloyd to audition for roles in a British film. Ntshona played deposed President Julius Limbani, the subject of a rescue attempt in **The Wild Geese** (1978). Limbani is based on Moses Tshombe. He also played a similar role in **The Dogs of War** (1980) as Dr. Okoye, a moderate political figure thrown in jail by the dictator President Kimba of the fictional Republic of Zangaro. His other film credits include roles in **Ashanti** (1979), **Night of the Cyclone** (1991), **The Power of One** (1992), **The Air Up There** (1994) and **Tarzan and the Lost City** (1998).

In October 1976 Ntshona and Kani were arrested and thrown into solitary confinement for 15 days by the then Transkei government. The order was given by the Minister of Justice George Matanzima, who was also brother to the Prime Minister of the Transkei homeland, Kaiser Matanzima. They were held under the Transkei's Proclamation R.400, because Matanzima believed the play **Sizwe Banzi Is Dead** had 'inflammable, abusive and vulgar subject matter'.

In 2010 Ntshona was awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in Silver for his vast contribution to the South African arts and culture landscape. Ntshona died on 2 August 2018, following a lengthy undisclosed illness. He was 76.

Director's note:

When I was asked to direct **THE ISLAND** I opened a drawer and dusted off my old "Clevelanders for a Free South Africa" button. I had been fortunate enough to attend and direct many of Athol Fugard's brilliant plays that helped draw worldwide attention to the brutal apartheid system in his country. I wept tears of joy the day ANC political activist Nelson Mandela walked free after 27 years in prison on Robben Island and in other prisons. I celebrated his election as the first Black South African President in 1994.

In 1999 I had directed my last Fugard show, his lovely post-apartheid play, **VALLEY SONG**, for Ensemble Theatre. Now, 24 years later, it was time to revisit that horrific period portrayed in **THE ISLAND**, Fugard's 1973 classic about two political prisoners sharing a cell. I dove back into my research, watching films, documentaries and news clips from the period. I was interested to learn there has been renewed interest in this play as it touches on timely issues of police reform, mass incarceration, Black Lives Matter, and any liberties at risk, and invites conversation.

But as I watched Bobby and Nnamdi rehearse this play I was stunned by its beautiful portrayal of resilience, hope, and the power of friendship to transcend the worst conditions. I wondered how the victims of apartheid stood fast singing "Freedom is Coming Tomorrow" generation after generation, for more than 40 years, watching protesters, young and old, massacred for voicing their beliefs. I live in a time when our country is so divided; people are seemingly unable to share ideas and work together. How had a country that had been so steadfast in its hurtful prejudices, finally find a way to open its heart to change? I know it wasn't a miracle; there was a painful, carefully orchestrated process of reconciliation and forgiveness. But I am fascinated by South Africa's history! I am proudest of the activists who, like John and Winston (and who like Antigone, the first political activist in literature) took pride in their actions and "honored those things to which honor belongs." Enjoy the play.

A Glossary of terms :

Ag voetsek: go to hell - **Bioscope:** cinema - **Broer:** brother
Hai, haai: Exclamation of surprise

Hodoshe: Nickname for a hated prison guard,
(literally: A fly that preys on flesh)

Ja: yes - **Lap, lappie:** rag - **Moer:** swear word, equivalent to "fuck"

Nyana we sizwe: brother of the land

Ons was gemoer vandag: today was fucked up

Poes: slang for female genitalia

Struesgod! I swear to God!

Warders: prison guards

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Meet the Crew :

Sarah May (Director) is thrilled to return to Ensemble Theatre and revisit the work of the great South African playwright Athol Fugard. Sarah's earlier Fugard productions included 'A Lesson From Aloes' at Karamu, 'My Children! My Africa' and 'Playland' at Dobama, and 'Valley Song' for Ensemble. Other favorite Ensemble shows include the critically acclaimed 'Intimate Apparel', the award-winning revival of 'The Normal Heart', and 'Thurgood' starring Greg White, three mountings of 'St. Nicholas', Horton Footes' 'Dividing the Estate', 'Paul Robeson' featuring Tony Sias, and 'Having Our Say, The Delaney Sisters': First One Hundred Years'. Other area directing highlights include 'The Pitman Painters, Race, Wings (starring Dorothy Silver), The Diary of Anne Frank, and The History Boys all at Beck Center, The Dobama/Karamu collaborations of Caroline or Change, Fires in the Mirror, and The Grapes of Wrath, and Six Degrees of Separation for Charenton. Sarah spent 10 years in NYC performing, directing and developing educational theatre programs for Playwrights Horizons, Roundabout Theatre and The Henry Street Settlement. She returned to Cleveland in the 1980's to serve as Director of Education for Great Lakes Theatre and as Artistic Director of Karamu Theatre. She has taught acting at The Cleveland Play House and Cuyahoga Community College, and been a guest Director for Lakeland and Lorain Community Colleges and Baldwin Wallace University. Sarah dedicates her work to the memory of the artists we lost during the pandemic, and to the endurance of theatres like Ensemble!

Becca Moseley (Prod. Stage Manager/Props) is excited to be back for another season at Ensemble Theatre! In addition to serving as Ensemble's General Manager, she has served as the Resident Production Stage Manager/Assistant stage manager for many Ensemble shows, including 'Describe the Night', both parts of 'Angels in America', 'A Raisin in the Sun', 'The Penelopiad', 'Intimate Apparel', 'The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail', 'Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo', 'The Iceman Cometh', 'Knock Me A Kiss', 'Anna Christie', 'Thurgood', 'Death of a Salesman', and many more. She co-directed 'Run, Kingsbury, Run' and Assistant Directed 'East of Eden'. She was onstage in past seasons at Ensemble as 'The Woman in 'The River', chorus leader/puppeteer in 'Around the World in 80 Days', Pea in 'Jerusalem', 'The Phantom Tollbooth' (Princess Rhyme/Ensemble,) and as Daisy Buchanan in 'The Great Gatsby'. Other favorite credits not at Ensemble include Rosalind (As You Like It), Fabiana Cunningham (The Last Days of Judas Iscariot), Dorine (Tartuffe), Maggie (A Chorus Line), and Ophelia (The Horatio Project.) Most recently, Becca had the privilege to direct Ensemble's critically acclaimed season opener, 'Lungs'. She thanks Ian and Celeste for building and nurturing a theatre that provides a constant supply of great scripts and people to bring them to life, her family for their love and support, and her husband Kyle for always believing in the magic.

Jill Kenderes (Costumes) is happy to return to Ensemble Theatre after previously designing 'Lungs', 'The River', 'Clybourne Park', 'Intimate Apparel' and 'Kindertransport'. She has been performing on stages in Northeast Ohio for seventeen years and is grateful for that journey leading to the costuming world. Her work has been seen at theatres around the area including Blank Canvas Theatre, Broadview Heights Spotlights, French Creek Theatre and Clague Playhouse. Thank you to Joe, Anthony and Samantha.

Ian Hinz (Set & Lighting Design) :: (he/him/his) is a graduate of Ohio University. Ian has worked professionally as a producer, award winning director, Light, Set, & Projection Designer, director of operations and theater educator for over twenty years in Ohio and New York. He is co-founder of the Ensemble StageWrights' workshop, two-time winner of the Cleveland Critics' Circle Best Director award and served as Artistic Director and Operations Manager for the city of Cleveland Jerome's historic Cain Park Amphitheater. He has worked in operations for The Ohio State University Jerome Schottenstein Center and the Cleveland State University Department of Music as a stage production specialist. He has produced off-off-broadway at the Gene Frankel Theater and worked in business development in the tech startup industry in New York City. He was the Executive Director of Raise the Roof for the Arts which operates The Historic Sidney Theatre in Sidney, Ohio from 2018



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Great Scripts. Cleveland Artists

SEP 8 - SEP 24

Lungs

by Duncan
Macmillan



OCT 27 - NOV 12

The Island



by Athol Fugard, John Kani,
& Winston Ntshona

FEB 9 - FEB 25

**Mother
Courage
and
Her
Children**

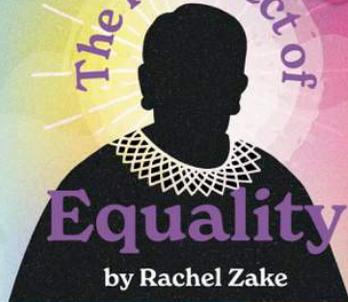


by Bertolt Brecht
Translated by Tony Kushner

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by Rachel Zake

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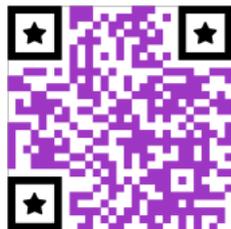
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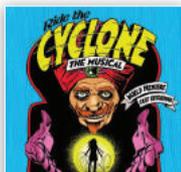
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Some Historical Background

The Southern Cape of Africa was colonized by both the Dutch and British as they opened trade routes to the East. In 1660 a slave lodge was founded near Capetown for trading black South African natives as well as slaves brought from India and Indonesia. The Dutch and British struggled for control of the Cape, forcing Dutch farmers (Boers) to move into the interior, slaughtering black indigenous tribes so they could develop the land.

The discovery of diamonds in 1869 and gold in 1886 sparked an influx of more Europeans. Tension erupted between the Boers and the Brits leading to the Boer War from 1899-1902. In 1910 The Union of South Africa government was founded with a constitution that forbid black and mixed race people to own land, hold office, or vote. The 1927 Immorality Act prohibited marriage or intercourse between Europeans and natives.

In 1948 the National Party adopted Apartheid policies that forced black and mixed race people, who outnumbered whites 5 to 1, to segregate residentially and live in townships. The Population Registration Act in 1950 required all South Africans to register according to their racial group, and to carry their passbooks at all times.

The ANC (African National Congress) led by Nelson Mandela, and other groups, were formed to protest using non-violence and a campaign of civil disobedience. A 1962 Act of Parliament legalized imprisonment without trial.

In 1964 Mandela and other ANC leaders were arrested and sentenced to life in prison on Robben Island, a few miles northwest of Capetown in the Atlantic Ocean. As the world grew aware of the brutality of Apartheid international trade sanctions were placed on South Africa, and it was expelled from the UN in 1974. A protest against passbooks ended with the massacre of peaceful demonstrators in Sharpville in 1960; protests continued to erupt in impoverished townships for nearly 30 years.

In 1976 more than 600 schoolchildren were killed in Soweto, a township near Johannesburg, when new laws required students to switch from English to Afrikaans (Dutch) language.

In 1989 F.W. de Klerk was elected president, after promising to dismantle Apartheid laws, and started releasing political prisoners. Mandela was released in 1990. He became president in 1994.



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