

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****PlayMakers Repertory Company Presents Nambi E. Kelley's "Native Son"**  
2019/20 season opens with a powerful new adaptation of Richard Wright's classic novel**Who:** PlayMakers Repertory Company**What:** Nambi E. Kelley's "Native Son." Based on the novel by Richard Wright. Directed by Colette Robert.**When:** September 11 to 29; Opening Night & Press Opening Saturday, September 14, 7:30 p.m.**Where:** PlayMakers Repertory Company, 120 Country Club Road, Chapel Hill, NC**Tickets:** Start at \$15; Students tickets start at \$10

(Chapel Hill, NC, September 3, 2019) **PlayMakers Repertory Company** proudly opens its 2019/20 Mainstage season with Nambi E. Kelley's powerful and heart-stopping adaptation of Richard Wright's "Native Son". Directed by Colette Robert, and featuring original music by G. Clausen, the production runs from September 11 to 29, 2019.

1930s Chicago. Jazz, speakeasies, and gangsters come to mind. The Southside of Chicago where Bigger Thomas lives is an entirely different world. Bigger struggles to find his place, as a Black man, in a world where systemic oppression, racism, and poverty make fear and violence the everyday currency of life. When he takes a job in a wealthy white household, one fateful decision sends him down a seemingly inescapable path. "Native Son" is an unforgettable theatrical experience that captures the power of Richard Wright's iconic novel about oppression, freedom, and justice.

"When I was selecting plays for our Legacy| NOW '19-'20 season, I found myself drawn to works that provide insight into our present moment through the visceral and intellectual investigation of the stories of our past," said PlayMakers' Producing Artistic Director Vivienne Benesch. "Nambi E. Kelley's adaptation of 'Native Son' was the perfect, gutsy, all-too-timely choice to open our Mainstage season. In the hands of the magnificent Colette Robert and our amazing company—led by Brandon Haynes as Bigger Thomas—this production has a fast-paced, cinematic quality to it that leaves you on edge the whole 90 minutes, with all your senses engaged and your perceptions challenged."

"As I director, I just want to tell a good story," said director Robert. "I want to reflect the world back at itself, and explore the most ugly, beautiful, complicated, and exceptional parts of being human. What drew me to Native Son was the play's fragmented, dream-like structure, and how, to me, it mirrors where we are as a nation, right now, in this moment. I hope this production makes audiences really lean in and look. Look at where we were, look at where we are, and imagine where we could be. It is the looking that inspires empathy, action, and change."

The first stage adaptation of Richard Wright's "Native Son" was written in Chapel Hill, by Wright and North Carolina playwright and humanitarian Paul Green, in 1941.

"Native Son" features **April Mae Davis as Bessie** ("Jump," "Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood"), **Julia Gibson as Mrs. Dalton** ("The Cake," "An Enemy of the People"), **Brandon Herman St. Clair Haynes as Bigger Thomas** ("Life of Galileo," "Tartuffe"), **Tia James as Hannah** (PlayMakers debut; Broadway's "The Merchant of Venice"), **Sarah Elizabeth Keyes as Mary** ("Leaving Eden," "She Loves Me"), **Amadio as Buddy** (PlayMakers debut; Manbites Dog Theatre's "The Miraculous and The Mundane"), **Brandon J. Pierce as The Black Rat** (PlayMakers debut; Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's "Richard II"), **Adam Poole as Jan** ("Jump," "Sweeney Todd"), and **Daniel P. Wilson as Britten** ("Life of Galileo," and Raleigh Little Theatre's "Blood Done Sign My Name").

The Creative Team of "Native Son" includes: **Colette Robert** (Director; Ensemble Studio Theatre's "Behind the Sheet" and "Tempo"), **Lawrence E. Moten III** (Scenic Designer; assoc. design "What the Constitution Means to Me" on Broadway),

**Bobbi Owen** (Costume Designer; “Intimate Apparel,” “Life on the Mississippi”), **Reza Behjat** (Lighting Designer; Waterwell’s “Hamlet”), **G. Clausen** (Sound Design; Studio Theatre’s “PYG or The Miseducation of Dorian Belle”), **Chika Ike** (Assistant Director; American Repertory Theatre’s “Moby Dick”), **Gwendolyn Schwinke** (Vocal Coach; Shakespeare and Company’s “Taming of the Shrew”), **Tracy Bersley** (Movement Coach & Intimacy Director; “My Fair Lady”), **Adam Versényi** (Dramaturg; “The Nutcracker”), and Charles K. Bayang (Stage Manager; “Bewilderness”).

*Due to rough language, adult situations, and racially-charged scenarios, we encourage patrons to use their own discretion in determining the age appropriateness of the material.*

For information and to purchase tickets, call 919.962.7529 or visit [www.playmakersrep.org](http://www.playmakersrep.org). Individual ticket prices start at \$15.

**Performance and Special Event Schedule:**

- **September 12, 6:00 p.m.** — “The Vision Series—Directors in Conversation,” a behind-the-scenes preview with members of the creative team before the evening’s performance, at the Joan H. Gillings Center for Dramatic Art. Free and open to the public.
- **September 11-13, 7:30 p.m.** — Preview performances
- **September 14, 7:30 p.m.** — Opening Performance & Press Opening, with post-show Opening Night Celebration
- **September 15, 2:00 p.m.** — Open captioned performance, with dialogue, stage directions, and sound effects communicated on a “universal access” live caption unit
- **September 17, 2:00 p.m.** — All-access performance for attendees with special needs, with sign language interpretation and audio description
- **September 17, 7:30 p.m.** — Community Night. General admission seating, with all tickets \$15
- **September 19 and 23** — Free post-show discussions with members of the creative team, cast and community members

**About PlayMakers Repertory Company:**

PlayMakers Repertory Company is North Carolina’s premier professional theatre company. For more than 40 years, we have produced relevant and courageous work that tells stories from and for a multiplicity of perspectives and creates transformational impact in our immediate and extended communities. We are proud to be part of a 100-year tradition of playmaking at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. PlayMakers has been named one of the “best regional theatres in America”.

**PlayMakers Contacts:**

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