

THE SEARCH

We're looking for the next generation of Denzel Washingtons, Viola Davis's, Michael B. Jordan's and Angela Bassetts!

Apply for Coppin Repertory Theatre's 2023
Theatre Scholarship Auditions

Follow these three steps to apply for scholarship consideration:

1. **Apply** for admission to Coppin State University by **Friday, June 3, 2023**. For all the information you need to apply to the college, visit <http://www.coppin.edu/office-admissions>
2. **Submit** your Theatre Scholarship application and supporting documents by **Friday, June 3, 2023**. To do so, visit <https://www.coppin.edu/theatre-arts-scholarship>

We ask for:

Headshot (a simple photo of your face is fine - no professional snap needed!)

Résumé highlighting your experience

3. Audition or Interview

Actors/Singers (audition):

Actors need to prepare two memorized, contemporary, or classic monologues from a published play. Total presentation should not exceed 3 minutes total.

Additionally (but not required), those who wish to sing may select a cutting from a song from a published or Broadway musical.

Design/Tech Students (interview):

If you are interested in pursuing an emphasis in design, technical direction, or stage management, prepare a PowerPoint or other digital portfolio including items such as photographs, renderings, playbills, critical reviews, or narratives of recent work. Prepare a 2-3 minute presentation explaining your work history. This will be followed up with an interview with the theatre faculty and staff.

Upload your audition or interview video on YouTube

Email your video to ghyatt@coppin.edu

If you have any questions about the process, call or email Dr. Garey Hyatt at (410) 951-3369 or ghyatt@coppin.edu.

THE 2022-2023 CAREGIVERS SEASON

PLAYBILL

COPPIN REPERTORY THEATRE
presents

SHAKIN' THE MESS OUTTA

Misery

Written by: Shay Youngblood

Directed by: Rashida Forman-Bey



APR 27, 28 & MAY 4, 5, 2023 @ 7:30 P.M.

APR 29, 30 & MAY 6, 7, 2023 @ 3:00 P.M.

The Theatre Lab

Grace Hill Jacobs Building (Lower Level)

Coppin State University
2500 West North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21216

THE OCCASION

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

**I dedicate this show to the loving memory of my mother, Betty Barrett, my spiritual teacher, Iyanla Mother Taylor, and my dear friend and spiritual sister, Mama Yvette Jefferson,
... I know you are here.**

As an African woman born in America, I know well the story of “Big Mamas.” They are the strength of our community. We survived because these women were grounded, resilient and focused. We survived because of their vision and dreams. We survived because of their brilliance and courage. We survived because of their love... their love for their families, their love for their community, their love for humanity and their love for God.

These women were the balm that soothed the wounds of our men and our children as we together strived to heal from the trauma of America’s enslavement, domestic terrorism, and the lie of white supremacy. These women were the freedom fighters who envisioned a world where we were truly free. These women were the bridge that ‘got us over.’ These were women who nurtured many, who were often times undeserving of their love.

America owes a huge debt to these women. America became great on the backs of these GREAT women. All of America may not celebrate them. Yet I do, and I am so overjoyed that playwright, Shay Youngblood chose to celebrate these women. I am so honored to have the privilege to direct an amazing cast of women who, through their art, have chosen to celebrate our “Big Mamas.” I pray that we inspire you to remember those women in your life, those living as well as those ancestors. I pray that we inspire you to embrace the stories, the victories, the lessons, and the love and that you pass them on. Ase!

Peace, Power, and Protection,
Mama Rashida

THE THANK YOUS

WombWork Productions, Inc.

Bokor Iyanifa Iya Mari

Ms. Cheryl Bailey-Solomon

Brandon Addison

Ruffin Bell

Sister Yaa

Maya Onyango

Oyaranti Ayobunmi

Isolene Spencer

Kayode Nelson

THE STAFF

Theatre Faculty and Staff

Producer	Garey A. Hyatt
Director of Speech & Theatre	Willie O. Jordan
Director of Design & Production	Michael D. Klima
Technical Director	James A. Brown
Director Emerita	Amini Johari-Courts

Production Staff

Director	Rashida Forman-Bey
Assistant Director	Stevanie Williams
Choreographer	Folashade Forman-Bey
Scenic & Sound Designer	James A. Brown
Lightning Designer	Michael D. Klima
Costume Designer	Sharlene Clinton
Stage Manager	Larry Gill
Dramaturg	Denise Gant
Drummer(s)	Charles Watson, Omari Forman-Bey, Tobias Johnson
Graphic Designer	K'yeona Winston
Lighting Board Operator	Iyinde Palmer
Sound Operator	Marcus Griffin, Jr.
Wardrobe	Bobbi Forrest
Prop Supervisor	Saidai Stuteley
Run Crew	Xavier Jones
Photography	Justin Eastman
House Manager	Carolyn White
Head Usher	Tamia Brown
Concessionaire	Isa Williams, Naima Hakim-El
Box Office Manager	Garey A. Hyatt
Talk-Back Curators	Deletta Gillespie, Asia Maxton

Department of Humanities

Department Chair	Blessing Diala-Ogamba
Administrative Assistant	Gloria Robbins

THE NOTES

A WORD FROM THE DRAMATURG

Beneath Her Waters



Mother

I need mother
I need mother

I need your blackness now as the
august earth needs rain.

—Audre Lorde, “From the
House of Yemanjá”

In the Yoruba religion of Ifa, the Orishas are emissaries of God. They anoint and carry us through life, encouraging each of us to embrace, and change if needed, our destiny. If we dare to listen with our hearts, we can hear them inside the holler of our soul. Through divination, the sharing of Ebos (gifts), and the making of sacrifices, we can shepherd their immense love into our lives—if this is our chosen spiritual path. Yemaya, the mother of us all, would be the first to tell you there are many ways to swim within her waters, *but baby before you do anything, you gotta dive in.*

Ifa, much like Hinduism, is a monotheistic faith—one with a multitude of entities directed toward a cohesive cosmology of *All There Is*. Donning her glorious blue and white gowns, Yemaya is represented by the ocean. She is mother of us all—her name a contraction of the Yoruba words, *Iye*, meaning mother, *omo*, child, and *eja* fish. We are all her fishes—even the other Orisha who walk amongst the living who include, Oshun, Shango, and Ellegbara. The earth’s seven oceans were birthed from her labors, their salty waters filled with the simultaneous joys and sorrows of motherhood. Yemaya holds a special place for all descendants of the African Diaspora. In

the hull of slave ships, she was the god-force that *carried us this far* and urged people, despite unimaginable horrors, to do more than survive but rather, *make a way out of no way*. She is also the energy that comforted those who leapt from those same ships into the depths of her wide, sheltering arms to embrace the bottom of the sea. Under the cloak of night, surely it was Yemaya who told Harriett to, *“get her children ‘cross them waters”* so they could wade to freedom land. She is also the voice that encourages mothers everywhere to tell their young daughters, *do better than I did.*

Yemaya, also known as Imenja, Yemenja, Yemonja, and other names depending upon where the Transatlantic Slave Trade forcibly transplanted our ancestors, has often been hidden underneath the veil of Christianity, in the recitations of Hoodoo, and in the burning of 7-day candles. Enslaved Africans found sanctuary for her and the Nigerian religion of Ifa “under Mary’s skirt” and combined its tenants with Christianity to become Candomble, Santeria, Lucumi, and Shango Baptist. Like a good mama, Yemaya never forgets a thing, and her waters hold our collective memory, even the pieces enslavement stole. She is the repository for every broken promise, for every ill done in the name of country—for every injustice disrupted by a kiss. Her waves and still waters teach her children everything they need to learn about resistance.

In Shay Youngblood’s poignant work, *Shakin’ the Mess Out of Misery*, we meet the Big Mamas who carry and care for Daughter, much like Yemaya protected our ancestors as they were forcibly dragged across the Atlantic Ocean. These daughters of Yemaya, and their mothers, and their mothers before them, understand the necessity of black women loving up on each other in a world that doesn’t love them back. Like Yemaya, these powerful, yet vulnerable women provide the nourishment, care, life lessons, and love to shepherd their “child” through the sorrows of her journey so that she can embrace and celebrate the salty tears of life. *Ase.*

Denise Kumani Gantt
Dramaturg

THE CAST

Daughter	Christina Stigler-Brisco
Big Mama	Lottie Porch
Aunt Mae	Stevanie Williams
Miss Corine	Monica DeVaughn
Miss Mary/Miss Shine	Christian Fawn Harris
Miss Lamama	Andromeda Bacchus, Shamiriyah Darby
Miss Tom/Maggie	Toshima Cook
Fannie Mae	Olayinka Lawal, Shamiriyah Darby
Dee Dee	Christian Harris, Kalise Robinson
Miss Rosa	Kay Lawal-Muhammad

THE SETTING

TIME	1920's to the present
PLACE	A small southern town; a place where memories and dreams collide

MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS AND/OR ELECTRONICALLY RECORD ANY PORTION OF THIS PERFORMANCE.

THE COMPANY

COPPIN REPERTORY THEATRE

Who We Are

Coppin Repertory Theatre (CRT) is the producing arm of Coppin State University's Visual and Performing Arts Program. CRT regularly produces 3-4 major productions annually. These presentations are directed and designed by, and cast with, visiting professionals, faculty members and the department's most advanced theatre students.

CRT is open to all Urban Arts Majors who are students at Coppin State University. Students are invited to join the Rep based on the quality of their work, both onstage and offstage. Character, service, leadership and scholarship are considered as a part of the membership for this group. To be invited is an honor of the highest caliber.

Mission

CRT exists to use theatre as a tool to

- Build a community of learners
- Nurture and inspire student's creative potential
- Instill the values of discipline and commitment to lifelong growth

Vision

CRT aspires to move from relative obscurity to become one of the vanguard theatre companies in Baltimore City, County, the state of Maryland, the mid-Atlantic region and the nation.

Core Beliefs & Values

- **Excellence** The program shall be identified as a center of excellence. The unit will endeavor to achieve performances of the highest artistic quality, regardless of the level of financial resources invested.
- **Integrity** Faculty, staff and students will challenge themselves continually to employ the highest standards of honesty, fairness and artistic/scholarly integrity in all our work.
- **Lifelong Learning** The program expects every member of its community to participate in a continuous learning process. Faculty, staff and students will continue to upgrade their knowledge base and skills annually.
- **Focus** Students are and shall remain at the center of the educational enterprise.
- **Creativity** The program places a very high value on creativity in all of its endeavors.

THE PROFILES

THE CAST (Continued)

Olayinka Lawal (Fannie Mae) is a performer, facilitator, and teacher for Wombwork Productions, Inc., a social justice community theatre and community-based organization. Her passion is utilizing the performance arts as a healing tool to elevate and teach subject matters such as mental health awareness, food disparities, wealth gaps, rising incarceration rates, trauma, addictions, sexual violence and much more.

Shamiriyah Darby (Miss Lamama/Fannie Mae), a native of Baltimore, is a 2022 Urban Arts Alumnae. She appeared as Molly Cunningham in *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *For Colored Girls...*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, and *The Colored Museum*. She currently teaches Theater at ConneXions: A Community Based Arts School. As a sophomore, Shamiriyah, earned a semi-finalist berth, (top 32 out of 230) in the Irene Ryan Acting category in the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival (KC/ACTF). She plans to continue her acting on the many professional stages. She says, "Don't limit yourself or your education. Set yourself free and make magic. She dedicates her performance to the late playwright and change agent ntozake shange who said, "Where there is a woman, there is MAGIC!"

Stevanie Anita Williams (Aunt Mae), a native of Baltimore, Maryland, is a catalyst of hope and change for America's people of color, and a graduate of The American Music and Dramatic Academy in New York. She is a Teaching Artist that uses theater and Music cultivated by West African practices and the universal language of the Virtues Project to bring awareness, healing, and change to youth in Urban communities. Her most rewarding work is in her role as a member and Assistant Artistic Director of WombWork Productions, Inc, a social change theater company whose work consists of healing the community through the arts.

Kay Lawal (Miss Rosa) For over five decades, Kay Lawal has performed around the world on stages in New York City, Edinburgh, Scotland, Amsterdam, and Kenya. Blending Artistry with Activism, Ms. Lawal- Muhammad is a founding director of Actors against Drugs, Kuumba Women's Theatre Company, and she serves as Artistic Director for WombWork Productions Inc. Ms. Lawal-Muhammad has appeared in the Emmy award-winning episode of the television series "Homicide". Other television appearances include "America's Most Wanted", "The Corner" and "The Wire".

Toshima Cook (Miss Tom/Maggie) was born and raised in Annapolis, MD, where she found a natural love for acting. In fall, 2018, she played her first role, Lady in Blue in a dramatic reading of *For Colored Girls* . . . at Pamoja Productions in Annapolis. In spring, 2019, she appeared as Cheryl in *Second Time Around* by Tracie Jiggetts, part of the Annual Ten-Minute Play Festival at Bowie State. And, in fall, 2019, she played Bertha Holly in *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* with Coppin Repertory Theatre. This is her 2nd show at Coppin. Toshima enjoys, explores, understands, and grows in love of herself and humanity through acting.

THE AUTHOR



Shay Youngblood is an Atlanta based writer, visual artist, and educator. Author of several novels including *Soul Kiss* and *Black Girl in Paris*, collections of short stories and numerous essays, her published plays including **Shaking the Mess Out of Misery**, have been widely produced and her short stories have been performed at Symphony Space and recorded for NPR's Selected Shorts. *Mama's Home and Family Prayer* illustrated children's books are forthcoming from Random House. Honors include a Pushcart Prize for fiction, NAACP award for her plays, and a fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts. Her current projects include **Square Blues**, a stage play about art and activism, **Boss Ladies and Tender-Hearted Girls**, a commissioned play about Southern Black women, *Tent Cities*, an environmental fable, and an interdisciplinary performance work about architecture, memory and the environment inspired by research in Japan, China and the U.S. Youngblood was appointed as a Commissioner to the Japan U.S. Friendship Commission, serves on the board of Yaddo artist residency and teaches graduate creative writing workshops at City College.

THE DIRECTOR



Rashida Forman-Bey a Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP) is a native of Baltimore and one of the founding artistic directors of Womb-Work Productions, Inc. a nonprofit Baltimore based social justice theater company, established in 1997.

Donning many hats, “Mama Rashida,” as she is known in the community, is a director, performing artist, visual artist, adjunct professor, teaching artist, community activist, African Rites of Passage facilitator, Master

Virtues Project facilitator, Reiki practitioner, song writer and author. She uses the arts to help heal, transform, and uplift communities that have been marginalized and oppressed. She has worked as a teaching artist and group facilitator for over 30 years in schools, universities, and community centers throughout the United States. She has directed many plays among them “**For Colored Girls**” by Ntozake Shange. She has travelled internationally to places such as Cuba, Kenya and Tanzania, teaching and sharing the power of the arts and social justice theater to heal communities.

Mama Rashida has been the recipient of numerous awards such as the 2022 Community Healing Award, Aya Education Institute, Atlanta GA, 2021 Sue Hess Legacy Arts Advocate of the Year, Alkebulan Lifetime Achievement Award, Legendary Healer Award, MUSE 360. She graduated from Coppin State University with a BS in Urban Arts-Theatre and as the inaugural Distinguished Community Arts Fellow at Maryland Institute College of Art, where she earned the MFA (Master of Fine Arts) in Community Arts. She is currently an adjunct professor at Coppin State University and Maryland Institute College of Art. In her spiritual walk, she considers herself a lifelong learner who companions others in their spiritual journey through drama, meditation, rituals and the most powerful religion in the world, LOVE.

THE PROFILES

THE CAST

Christian Harris (Miss Mary/Miss Shine/Dee Dee), a Coppin alum, is an actress, vocalist, and educator. She is excited to be part of such a dynamic cast under the leadership of such a phenomenal director.

Monica DeVaughn (Miss Corine), born and raised in Baltimore, MD, is thrilled to be part of *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery*. She became interested in acting early and even played a role in the Eubie Blake musical, *Shuffle Along*. After years of focusing on her career in the Federal Government, Monica decided to explore acting again. She is currently on tour with *Chosen-The Stage Play*. Monica thanks her family and friends for their continued support, but especially her parents who have encouraged and nurtured her interest in acting since she was a child.

Lottie Porch (Big Mama) is a performing artist, educator, and published poet. She serves as a member of the Creative Arts Ministry at Bridgeway Community Church in Columbia, MD, and has traveled within the US, and Africa and Europe to write, teach and perform.

Larry Gill (Stage Manager) hails from Durham, North Carolina. He is a freshman urban arts major with a theatre focus. Normally, you can find him working production behind-the-scenes. He has been a technician since the start of his high school career working on shows like *The Bodyguard*, *State of Urgency*, and *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. Most recently, Larry was the lighting board operator for Coppin Rep's production of *Broke-ology* and the Assistant Stage Manager for *Pipeline*.

Kalise Robinson (Dee Dee) is a freshman Urban Arts-Theatre major from Baltimore. This production marks her acting debut with Coppin Repertory Theatre.

Christina Stigler-Brisco (Daughter) hails from Philadelphia, PA. Her performance credits include Lady in Orange in *For Colored Girls...* Ensemble player in *Tell Pharaoh*, and Lil Ella in *Harlem Renaissance: Rap Chronicles*. She has trained with Fresh Visions Youth Theatre, Arden Theatre, Barbizon Talent Agency and the Coppin State University Visual and Performing Arts Program. She never allows fear to get in the way of her great destiny. She believes in the words of the late actor Chadwick Boseman, "Whatever you choose for a career path, remember the struggles along the way are only meant to shape you for your purpose."

Andromeda Bacchus (Miss Lamama) is a junior urban arts-theatre major whose interest is in performance. Her acting credits with Coppin Rep include *Colorblind: The Katrina Monologues*, *The Colored Museum*, *The Glass Menagerie* and *Pipeline*. She appeared as Candy Lady in Katori Hall's *Hoodoo Love* at Spotlighters Theatre, a role for which she was nominated for Best Supporting Actress by the Broadway World Regional Awards-Baltimore.