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312.443.5151 or [Press@GoodmanTheatre.org](mailto:Press@GoodmanTheatre.org) **August 15, 2023**

**SUSAN V. BOOTH’S FIRST CURATED SEASON AS GOODMAN THEATRE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR BEGINS NEXT MONTH**

**WITH *THE NACIREMA SOCIETY* AND A CITYWIDE CELEBRATION OF ITS PLAYWRIGHT, PEARL CLEAGE**

**\*\*TODAY, LILI-ANNE BROWN STARTS REHEARSALS FOR *THE NACIREMA SOCIETY*, WITH E. FAYE BUTLER, ORA JONES, TYLA ABERCRUMBIE, DEMETRA DEE AND MORE; THE CHICAGO PREMIERE RUNS SEPTEMBER 16 – OCTOBER 15\*\***

**\*\*\*SEASON UPDATE: *FEMALE TROUBLES*, THE ORIGINAL MUSICAL COMEDY PREVIOUSLY SLATED FOR**

**SPRING 2024, IS RESCHEDULED TO JANUARY 2025; A NEW MUSICAL PROJECT WILL BE ANNOUNCED THIS WEEK\*\*\***

(Chicago, IL) Goodman Theatre’s 2023/2024 Season—**Susan V. Booth**’s first to curate as new Artistic Director—begins with works by **Pearl Cleage**, Atlanta’s first Poet Laureate and Booth’s longtime creative collaborator and friend. The season opening production, *The Nacirema Society* directed by **Lili-Anne Brown**, appears in the Goodman’s 856-seat Albert Theatre with a cast including Chicago powerhouses **E. Faye Butler**, **Ora Jones**, **Tyla Abercrumbie**, **Demetra Dee** and more; details below. *The Nacirema Society* is the centerpiece of a citywide salute to Ms. Cleage—including events that offer other entry points to the award-winner’s body of work produced in partnership with Black Ensemble Theater, Congo Square Theatre, Definition Theatre, ETA Creative Arts Foundation, MPAACT and Remy Bumppo Theatre Company (*more details about the Pearl Cleage Festival to be announced later this month*). In addition, Booth announced a season programmatic change: the new musical comedy *Female Troubles*—music by Curtis Moore, lyrics by Amanda Green and book by Gabrielle Allan and Jennifer Crittenden—has been rescheduled from Spring 2024 to January 2025 (appearing as part of the 2024/2025 Season) due to scheduling conflicts. *A new musical project for Spring 2024 will be announced this week.*

Booth tapped famed Chicago-based artist Lili-Anne Brown to direct the season opener, Cleage’s *The Nacirema Society* *Requests the Honor of Your Presence at a Celebration of Their First One Hundred Years*.

“This play is unexpected and joyous,” said **Lili-Anne Brown**. “It reminds us that no matter what is happening in the world—wars, disasters, revolutions—people are still getting married, coming of age, celebrating milestones. We're still living life. I'm so thrilled to dig into this hilarious little slice of life with this amazing powerhouse cast."

Brown’s cast for the Chicago premiere production is led by **E. Faye Butler** as the matriarch of Alabama’s aristocratic family, joined by **Tyla Abercrumbie** (Alpha Campbell Jackson), **Demetra Dee** (Gracie Dunbar), **Eric Gerard** (Bobby Green), **Sharriese Hamilton** (Marie Dunbar), **Ora Jones** (Catherine Adams Green), **Jaye Ladymore** (Janet Logan), **Felicia Oduh** (Lillie Campbell Jackson) and **Shariba Rivers** (Jessie Roberts). Understudies for this production include **Diana Coates** (Janet Logan/Marie Dunbar), **Jabari Khaliq** (Bobby Green), **Gabrielle Lott-Rogers** (Alpha Campbell Jackson), **Tania Richard** (Jessie Roberts/Catherine Adams Green), **Shariba Rivers** (Grace Dunbar), **Kianna Rose** (Gracie Dunbar) and **Aja Singletary** (Lillie Campbell Jackson).

It's 1964 Montgomery, Alabama, and the Nacirema Society prepares for its annual introduction of six elegant African-American debutantes to a world of prosperity, privilege and social responsibility. This centennial year, the Society's grande dame, Grace Dunbar, will have nothing less than perfection for her granddaughter Gracie's debut. And with young love brewing, old family skeletons rattling, national media attention abounding and a blackmail plot bubbling…what would dare go awry? *The Nacirema Society* appears September 16 – October 15, 2023 in the 856-seat Albert Theatre; opening night is Tuesday, September 26. Tickets ($25 –$90, subject to change) are available at GoodmanTheatre.org/Society or by phone at 312-443-3800. The Goodman is grateful for the support of JP Morgan Chase & Co. (Lead Corporate Sponsor) and Allstate (Major Corporate Sponsor).

The creative team includes **Lorenzo Rush, Jr.** (Assistant Director); **Arti Ishak** (SDCF Directing Observation); **Arnel Sancianco** (Set Design); **Samantha Jones** (Costume Design); **Jason Lynch** (Lighting Design); **Stephanie Farina** and **Willow James** (Sound Design); **Greg Geffrard** and **Sheryl Williams** (Intimacy).

Casting is by **Lauren Port**, CSA and Rachael Jimenez, CSA. Dramaturgy by **Gabrielle Randle-Bent**. **Nikki Blue** is the Production Stage Manager and **Joan McCarty** is the Stage Manager.

**Pearl Cleage** is currently the Distinguished Artist in Residence at Atlanta’s Tony Award winning Alliance Theatre. Her new play Angry, Raucous, and Shamelessly Gorgeous, had its world premiere as a part of the theatre’s 50th anniversary season in 2019 and recently completed a successful run at Hartford Stage. Both productions were directed by Susan V. Booth. Her other plays premiered at the Alliance include What I Learned in Paris, Blues for an Alabama Sky, and Flyin’ West. Cleage’s latest play Something Moving: A Meditation on Maynard was commissioned by Ford Theatre’s Lincoln Legacy Project and will be produced at Ford’s Theatre in the fall of 2023. Her first of 8 novels, What Looks Like Crazy On An Ordinary Day, was an Oprah Book Club pick and spent nine weeks on the New York Times bestseller list. Ms. Cleage currently serves as Atlanta’s first Poet Laureate.

**Lili-Anne Brown** (*Director*) is a native Chicagoan who works as a director, actor and educator. She has performed in, directed and produced many award-winning shows, both local and regional. Goodman credits include *I Hate It Here, School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* and the world premiere of Ike Holter’s *Lottery Day*. She is the former Artistic Director of Bailiwick Chicago, where she focused programming on Chicago-premiere musicals and new play development with resident playwrights. She is a member of SDC, AEA, SAG-AFTRA and is represented by William Morris Endeavor. [lilbrownchicago.com](http://www.lilbrownchicago.com/)

In conjunction with this production, a Chicago-wide celebration of Pearl Cleage will be produced in partnership with Congo Square, Definition Theatre, ETA Creative Arts Foundation, Ma'at Production Association of Afrikan Centered Theatre (MPAACT) and Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, to offer other entry points to the award-winner’s body of work. Details to come for the Pearl Cleage Festival.

**ABOUT THE COMPANY (in alphabetical order)**

***For images, bios and additional information about the artists, visit the*** [***Play Detail Page***](https://www.goodmantheatre.org/show/the-nacirema-society/)***.***

*The Nacirema Society* *Requests the Honor of Your Presence at a Celebration of Their First One Hundred Years*

By Pearl Cleage

Directed by Lili-Anne Brown

September 16 – October 15, 2023

Alpha Campbell Jackson……Tyla Abercrumbie

Grace Dubose Dunbar………E. Faye Butler

Gracie Dunbar…… Demetra Dee

Bobby Green……Eric Gerard

Marie Dunbar…… Sharriese Hamilton

Catherine Adams Green……Ora Jones

Janet Logan……..Jaye Ladymore

Lillie Campbell Jackson……Felicia Oduh

Jessie Roberts…… Shariba Rivers

Understudies for this production include Diana Coates (Janet Logan/Marie Dunbar), Jabari Khaliq (Bobby Green), Gabrielle Lott-Rogers (Alpha Campbell Jackson), Tania Richard (Jessie Roberts/Catherine Adams Green), Shariba Rivers (Grace Dunbar), Kianna Rose (Gracie Dunbar) and Aja Singletary (Lillie Campbell Jackson).

Assistant Direction by Lorenzo Rush, Jr.

SDCF Directing Observation by Arti Ishak

Set Design by Arnel Sancianco

Costume Design by Samantha Jones

Lighting Design by Jason Lynch

Sound Design by Stephanie Farina and Willow James

Line Production by Malkia Stampley

Casting is by Lauren Port, CSA and Rachael Jimenez, CSA.  
Dramaturgy by Gabrielle Randle-Bent

Intimacy by Greg Geffrard and Sheryl Williams

Nikki Blue is the Production Stage Manager and Joan McCarty is the Stage Manager.

**ENHANCED AND ACCESSIBLE PERFORMANCES**

*Visit Goodman theatre.org/Access for more information about Goodman Theatre’s accessibility efforts.*

ASL-Interpreted: Friday, October 13 at 8pm – An American Sign Language interpreter signs the action/text as played.

Touch Tour and Audio-Described Performance: Saturday, October 14, 12:30pm Touch Tour; 2pm performance – The action/text is audibly enhanced for patrons via headset.

Spanish Subtitles: Saturday October 14 at 8pm.

Open-Captioned: Sunday, October 15 at 2pm – An LED sign presents dialogue in sync with the performance.

**ABOUT GOODMAN THEATRE**

Chicago’s theater since 1925, **Goodman Theatre** is a not-for-profit arts and community organization in the heart of the Loop, distinguished by the excellence and scope of its artistic programming and community engagement. Led by Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth** and Executive Director/CEO **Roche Schulfer**, the theater’s artistic priorities include new play development (more than 150 world or American premieres), large scale musical theater works and reimagined classics. Artists and productions have earner two Pulitzer Prizes, 22 Tony Awards and more than 160 Jeff Awards, among other accolades.

The Goodman is the first theater in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson’s “American Century Cycle.” Its longtime annual holiday tradition *A Christmas Carol*, now in its fifth decade, has created a new generation of theatergoers in Chicago. The Goodman also frequently serves as a production and program partner with national and international companies and Chicago’s Off-Loop theaters.

Using the tools of theatrical practice, the Goodman’s Education and Engagement programs aim to develop generations of citizens who understand and empathize with cultures and stories of diverse voices. The Goodman’s Alice Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement is the home of these programs, which are offered for Chicago youth—85% of whom come from underserved communities—schools and life-long learners.

Goodman Theatre was built on the traditional homelands of the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nations. We recognize that many other Nations consider the area we now call Chicago as their traditional homeland—including the Myaamia, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sac and Fox, Peoria, Kaskaskia, Wea, Kickapoo and Mascouten—and remains home to many Native peoples today. While we believe that our city’s vast diversity should be reflected on the stages of its largest theater, we acknowledge that our efforts have largely overlooked the voices of our Native peoples. This omission has added to the isolation, erasure and harm that Indigenous communities have faced for hundreds of years. We have begun a more deliberate journey towards celebrating Native American stories and welcoming Indigenous communities.

Goodman Theatre was founded by William O. Goodman and his family in honor of their son Kenneth, an important figure in Chicago’s cultural renaissance in the early 1900s. The Goodman family’s legacy lives on through the continued work and dedication of Kenneth’s family, including Albert Ivar Goodman, who with his late mother, Edith-Marie Appleton, contributed the necessary funds for the creation on the new Goodman center in 2000.

**Julie Danis** is Chair of Goodman Theatre’s Board of Trustees, **Lorrayne Weiss** is Women’s Board President and **Kelli Garcia** is President of the Scenemakers Board for young professionals.

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