LA MAMA
EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE CLUB
PRESENTS

The Poisoner

Developed and Directed by Lee Sunday Evans

Written by M. M. Haney

The Downstairs
66 East 4th Street, NYC, 10003
April 6 - 21, 2024
The Poisoner

Developed and Directed by: Lee Sunday Evans
Written by: M. M. Haney
Dramaturg: Seth Bockley
Associate Director: Isabel Perry
Associate Producer: Maya Maniar
Executive Producers: Tim Disney, Bill Haney
Scenic/Costume Designer: Peiyi Wong
Associate Set Designer/Prop Supervisor: Oscar Escobedo
Associate Costume Designer: Camille Marchini
Lighting Designer: Stacey Derosier
Sound Designer: Brian Hickey
Casting Director: Taylor Williams
Production Stage Manager: Jo Fernandez*
Assistant Stage Manager: Fouad Hasan*
Production Assistant: Amelia McGinnis
Production Manager: William Adams
Script Production Assistant: Tyler Larson

CAST

SHAWN RANDALL* Ron Finder
BRETT DIGGS* Dwayne Davis and others
GREGORY CONNORS* Jack Burden and others
LIZBETH MACKAY* Olive Gaines and others
DANNY WOLOHAN* Brad Johnson

This is an Actors’ Equity approved showcase

Actors’ Equity Association, founded in 1913, represents more than 51,000 professional Actors and Stage Managers nationwide. Equity seeks to foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, improving working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors’ Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions.
Notes from the Director:
When my intrigue was particularly piqued by the play’s exploration of how economic choices and ideologies profoundly affect all of us who live in the social contract that a city government is supposed to provide the basic safety and infrastructure for our health, our families. As someone who firmly believes in the importance of government and the influence of elected officials, I felt it was crucial to delve into the human aspect of these narratives, where the fundamental contract between people and their government is too often breached. A functioning government forms a bedrock of our societies - but a functioning government is immensely complex, in ways that are often over-simplified and misunderstood. The complexity of this narrative, as envisioned by Maura, struck a chord with me. It’s rare to find theatrical pieces that aim to engage so rigorously with the political nuances and offer a detailed analysis that we can carry back into our own civic participation. I am grateful for THE POISONER creating this public forum where we can grapple with the challenge of these pressing questions and tell a deeply emotional, messy, human story about how seemingly mundane economic ideas can drastically alter the course of people’s lives and our cities.

And Playwright’s statement:
My niece, Carly, was just five years old and living near Flint, Michigan, when the crisis unfolded. Her proximity touched me profoundly, prompting an investigation into the crisis. What I uncovered was not just a single failure but a complex tapestry of deep-seated ideologies that bred the corruption that ended up harming thousands of everyday people. It was the layers of misconduct that struck me. The adverse incentives in place, as they are in so many parts of our country, that led to the fall of Flint. There were obvious tragedies like the horrific lead poisoning in children. But the cause – the insidious, eroding faith in government and relinquishing of citizen democracy – seemed particularly damning. Growing up in Michigan I witnessed firsthand the shift in our state’s political landscape – from the union-strong days of the 1950s and 1960s, to the capitulation of the unions in the ‘70s and ‘80s, to an angry, reactionary, and intensely conservative ethos by the early 2000s. This dramatic cultural shift, in my opinion, directly influenced the “business oriented” government decisions that culminated in the water crisis. In THE POISONER I aim to not only recount the events but also explore the fundamental underlying forces in Michigan's political and social fabric that led to this catastrophe. It’s a story of caution, reflection, and the undeniable impact of governance in everyday lives.
Lee Sunday Evans (Director) is a two-time Obie Award winning director and choreographer and the Artistic Director of Waterwell. She most recently directed the acclaimed production of Heather Christian’s *Oratorio For Living Things* and was announced as the director of a Broadway-bound musical adaptation of *A Wrinkle in Time*. She is developing a TV project for A24. Notable credits include *Dance Nation* by Clare Barron, the live production of *The Courtroom* and the film adaptation, *Detroit Red* by Will Power, *Sunday* by Jack Thorne, *In the Green* by Grace McLean, *Miller, Mississippi* by Boo Killebrew, and *Home* by Geoff Sobelle.

M. M. HANEY (Playwright) is an artist and entrepreneur. She has developed and produced several narrative documentary and independent feature films including *What We Find On The Road, Cracking The Code, And Jim Allison: Breakthrough*. She is co-founder of Citizen56, a nonprofit focused on the arts, environment and democracy in America, and World Connect, a global nonprofit, as well as several technology companies.

Shawn Randall (Ron Finder) is an actor, poet, singer-songwriter, playwright, musician, freestyle emcee, and producer. Born and raised in Brooklyn. He made his off-broadway playwriting debut at The Cherry Lane Theater as a part of their 2020 Mentor Project. As an actor, Shawn made his Broadway debut last year in Stephen Adly Guirgis’ Pulitzer Prize-winning TONY nominated play *Between Riverside And Crazy* while understudying Common! Shawn is a proud member of The LAByrinth Theater and Ensemble Studio Theatre. He is the founder and host of Symphonics Live. Symphonics Live is a multi-disciplined evening that showcases the finest singer-songwriters and poets in NY. Along with elements of dance and improvisation, the show promotes Generosity, Love, Integrity, and Creativity through the continual exploration of humanity through the performing and visual arts. Symphonics Live has been featured at the Blue Note, Joe’s Pub, The Highline Ballroom and The Bowery Poetry Club. Shawn has extensive experience in the theater, working with the acclaimed Blue Man Group, and performing at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre, the Bardavon Opera House, The Kennedy Center, INTAR Theatre, La MaMa, and Brooklyn Academy of Music. http://www.shawnalfredrandall.com


Brett J. Diggs (Dwayne Davis) is a Baltimore, MD native and SUNY Purchase alum. He was last seen onstage in Adrienne Kennedy’s Broadway debut of *Ohio State Murders* (U/S). His past TV/Film credits include *Godfather of Harlem* (MGM+), *The Equalizer* (CBS), *Chicago P.D.* (NBC), and *The Post* (20th Century Studios). He’s very excited to work with everyone involved to give voice to this play!


Fouad Hassan (he/him) (Assistant Stage Manager) is a New York-based stage manager from Beirut, Lebanon. While his journey and love for theatre began in Beirut, his career has since led him to live and work in several cities and countries around the globe. Through his stage management work, Fouad strives to be a part of telling the untold stories. As a creative leader, he prioritizes empathy, care, and appreciation for both the people and the story. Fouad earned his bachelor’s degree from Northwestern University, where he studied both film and theatre, and he is currently in the final semester of his MFA in Stage Management at Columbia University.

Thank you to New York Theatre Workshop.

Special Thanks to the hardworking and talented artists, fashion designers, photojournalists and community advocates who have contributed to democracy, water justice, and beauty in Flint and beyond. We would particularly like to thank the Natural Resources Defense Council, Flint Rising, Michigan Public Radio, Michigan Faith in Action, Magnum Photography, National Clean Water Collective, and Flint Fit collaborators, for all their work on behalf of the story.
A full program with information on this production can be found on the *The Poisoner* page of the La MaMa website.

In addition you can scan the QR code Poster located in the theatre lobby for access to the digital program.
La MaMa’s historic, landmark building at 74 East 4th Street underwent an urgently needed complete renovation and restoration to preserve the historic façade, create building-wide ADA accessibility, and provide much needed performance, exhibition and community space for decades to come.

La MaMa, founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961, has been on east 4th Street since 1967. La MaMa embraces every person in its community and is legendary as the place where new artists of all nations, cultures, races, and identities are given opportunities. It is the place where art begins.

To learn more about the renovation, or to make a donation please visit www.lamama.org/remakeaworld
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