



BY TONI MORRISON
ADAPTATION BY LYDIA R. DIAMOND

TH FR SA > AUG 6 - 21, 2021 | GUNSTON THEATRE TWO



THE BLUEST EYE

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The Bluest Eye was commissioned and developed through the Steppenwolf for Young Adults and the New Plays Initiative by Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago, Illinois, (Martha Lavey, Artistic Director, David Hawkanson, Executive Director) where it received its world premiere in February 2005

Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois.

Dominion Stage

2305 S. Walter Reed Dr. Box 15 | Arlington, VA 22206 | www.DominionStage.org

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Dominion Stage is an all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 organization and is a member of the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) and Washington Area Theatre Community Honors (WATCH).

ABOUT THE CAST



CRYSTAL ARFUL-ADDOH (*Pauline Breedlove/Woman 2*) makes her Dominion Stage debut. Crystal is originally from Southeast Missouri (aka The Bootheel). Her passion for theatre was developed and refined at the St. Louis Black Repertory Company where she had the opportunity to contribute as a member of several casts and production teams while learning from accomplished directors, playwrights, and actors. Locally she has worked onstage and behind the scenes with the Creative and Performing Arts Center (CAPAC), a George Mason University Arts Partner at the Hylton Center in Manassas. Crystal is grateful for the support of her husband, parents, brother, family, friends, and Mount Olive Baptist Church Family of Centreville. This performance is dedicated to Sugar Mama, Granddaddy, and Big Mama. RIP.



TIA BERRY (*Mama/Woman 1*) is excited to make her acting debut in this DS production of *The Bluest Eye*. She has enjoyed working with the cast and crew. When she is not on stage, she is hanging out with friends and travelling with her daughter. She would like to thank her daughter Ariana, her friends, the cast and crew of *The Bluest Eye* and her Town of Vienna co-workers for their support.



BRI HOUTMAN (she/her) (*Maureen Peal*) is excited to perform in her first DS production. Bri was last seen in *Sorry, Wrong Number* as Agnes with Fourteenth Grade Players. She is excited for everyone to see Pecola's heart wrenching story about racist beauty standards and overall, what it is like to live as an "other." She hopes audiences find it as touching as she does and take a lot from this Toni Morrison classic.



SIMONE JACKSON-CHARLES (*Pecola*) is excited to be in her first Dominion Stage production, especially in such an important role addressing perceptions by self and others. She was last seen in *Oliver Twist* and *Cats* with PMS. Thanks to the talented and delightful cast, you the audience for coming to see this powerful and moving drama, and most of all to the company and crew for producing a show that engages deep social issues, with well-balanced gravitas and a peppering of humor.



KHALIA MUHAMMAD (*Frieda/Darlene*) is honored to have been cast in a production that highlights the challenges faced by Black people and, specifically, Black women. While this production is her local DC debut, she has previously appeared in *Grease* and has studied at the School of Creative and Performing Arts in New York. She is thankful for the opportunity to help tell such a moving story to the audience, create such pure relationships with her castmates, and be a massive headache to the crew (kidding!). Thank you for coming to see this poignant production, and thank you to the crew for making this happen and always pushing the cast to be our best selves.



MELVIN D. SMITH (*Daddy/Soaphead Church*) is excited to be appearing in his first DS production. He was last seen on stage in *Gone Fishin'* as Mr. Dixon, with SS. Since then, he has appeared in several virtual performances with JaYo Theatre as well as Globe Online Theater. He is a North Carolina native and attended North Carolina A&T State University where he was an education major. He now resides in Prince Georges County, Maryland and is an acting student at The Theatre Lab School of Dramatic Arts, in Washington, D.C.



ROBERT FREEMONT SMITH (*Cholly*) began his professional acting career upon his return from his first deployment to Iraq in 2009. From there, he went on to participate in several theater festivals, training classes, and theatrical tours with a variety of production companies such as RQL Productions where he played both George Murchinson in *A Raisin in the Sun* and Thomas Jones in *Fighting God*. Robert is also known for his charismatic role as Turner Davis in the hit stage play *Tears of the Soul*, which won best stage play in 2019 at the DC Black Theater Festival. Robert is an avid reader, musician, rapper, and stand-up comedian. He remains dedicated to furthering his skillsets with his role as Cholly in *The Bluest Eye*.



CYPRINA STOKLEY (*Claudia*) is super excited and appreciative of the chance to perform in her first play. She is an Army Veteran and has served her country for 5 1/2 years and is looking to have a fresh start following her dreams as a professional actress. She is currently a student at The Theatre Lab in DC and is super grateful to be working with this wonderful cast of *The Bluest Eye*.



BROOKE WEST (*Woman 3/Girl*) is excited to be in her first DS production. Before taking a break from performing to attend undergrad and law school, Brooke performed in over 10 productions at the Riverside Dinner Theater in Fredericksburg including *Pocahontas*, *Willy Wonka*, *The Sound of Music* and more. She also participated in theater in high school as Millie in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, Rosey in *Cinderella Waltz*, and *Godspell*. Thank you to the directors and cast members for the opportunity to be a part of this moving and powerful story!



FROM THE DIRECTOR

I first read Toni Morrison's debut novel when I was in college and was struck by the passion, poetry, and beauty of her prose. Her tale of a young girl in the Midwest towards the end of the Great Depression who loathes the color of her skin and suffers unspeakable horrors earned widespread acclaim, even as its graphic atrocities and injustices left readers wincing. I wondered if this work would be adapted theatrically, thinking at the time that film was likely the best medium to visualize the power of Morrison's language.

Lydia Diamond's adaptation brilliantly captures and depicts the psychological damage racism wreaks across generations. The action of the play takes place in the early 1940s just after the Depression, the novel was written in 1970, and decades later we are still dealing with issues of racial equality and trying to 'live while black'. Morrison writes: "I thought about that baby everybody wants dead, and saw it very clearly. It was a dark, wet place, its head covered with great o's of wool, the black face holding, like nickels, two clean back eyes, the flared nose, kissing-thick lips, and the living breathing silk of black skin. I felt a need for someone to want the black baby to live."

With this production, we celebrate the 51st anniversary of the novel, which despite the darkness and heartbreak in the novel and its play adaptation, I find this story to be a compelling reminder of not only the beauty of black women but of our power and resilience.

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of Arlington Economic Development and the Arlington Commission for the Arts.

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SETTING THE SCENE

Setting: Lorain, Ohio | Time: early 1940s.

CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Claudia Cyprina Stokley
Frieda/Darlene Khalia Muhammad
Pecola Breedlove Simone Jackson-Charles
Mama Tia Berry
Pauline Breedlove Crystal Arful-Addoh
Soaphead Church/Daddy Melvin D. Smith
Cholly Breedlove Robert Freemon Smith
Maureen Peal Bri Houtman
Neighbor Woman/Girl Brooke West

The Bluest Eye is presented without intermission.

Thank you for silencing your mobile devices.

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Original Art by
Diedre (De) Nicholson-Lamb

PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive Producer	Rebecca Harris
Producer and Director	Eleanore Tapscott
Assistant Director	Marzanne Claiborne
Movement Choreographer and Vocal Coach	MarQuis Fair
Intimacy Choreographer and Coach	Michael Page
Acting Coach	Robinette Dorsey
Stage Manager	Micheal J. O'Connor
Co-Lighting Design	Kimberly Crago
Co-Lighting Design	Jeff Auerbach
Sound Design and Technical Director	David Correia
Set Design and Master Carpenter	Michael de Blois
Scenic Painter	Deidre (De) Nicholson-Lamb
Properties Design	Charles Dragonette
Costume Design	Farrell Ann Hartigan
Hair and Makeup Design	Chanel Lancaster
Set Construction, Painting and Load-in Crew	Michael Bagwell, Beverly Benda, Jean Fallow, Peter Finkel, Rebecca Harris, Tom O'Reilly, Richard Robinson, Bill Wisniewski, Rachel Wolkowitz
Photography	Matthew Randall
Playbill Design	Dave Moretti

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Beverly Benda, Jared Davis, Andres Luque, Leon Evans, Nick Jones,
Hexagon, The Little Theatre of Alexandria,
the staff of the Vienna Community Center,
and those that were not available when we went to press.

2019 WATCH AWARD WINNERS

Last Summer at Bluefish Cove

Leta Hall Outstanding Ensemble in a Play
Outstanding Light Design in a Play -

Ken and Patti Crowley

Outstanding Properties in a Play - Helen Bard-Sobola

Outstanding Set Construction in a Play - Alex Bryce

Outstanding Set Decoration in a Play - Sandy Dotson

Outstanding Set Painting in a Play - Cathy Rieder

Outstanding Special Effects - Jon Roberts



ABOUT THE TEAM

MARZANNE CLAIBORNE (*Assistant Director*) alternates between directing and lighting design. Her last directorial effort was LTA's *Blue Stockings* in 2020, delayed to February 2022 by COVID-19. Prior to that she directed ACCT's *Enchanted April* (six WATCH nominations, one win). Favorite lighting designs include *Driving Miss Daisy* (WATCH nomination for Lighting Design), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (LTA Award winner for Excellence in Lighting Design), *The Fantasticks*, *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Key for Two*, *The Fabulous Lipitones*, all at LTA; *A Streetcar Named Desire* (TAP); *Fabulation* (PCP) and *Bus Stop* (ACCT).

MICHAEL DE BLOIS (*Set Design/Master Carpenter*) Many thanks to DS and Eleanore for giving me another opportunity to work with a fine group of designers and actors. Previous shows go way back and include *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *The Fourth Wall*, *Angel*, *A Nightmare in Two Acts* and *Mindgame*. Michael has also designed and built sets for a wide range of DC and Northern Virginia theatre companies. I hope you enjoy this challenging and thought-provoking production. Especially, I hope that you, like me, find great joy in being able once again to enjoy live theatre.

DAVID CORREIA (*Sound Design/Technical Director*) This is David's first production as Sound Designer for Dominion Stage. Earlier in the year David did the sound design for *The Revolutionists* (LTA). Previous productions include *The Judicial Murder of Mrs. Surratt*, *Fools* (ACCT), *Hamlet* (PCP), *The Boys Next Door* (PCP), *A Party to Murder*, *Anne of Green Gables* (LTA) and *The Lion in Winter* (TAP). Previous notable productions include *Hairspray* (2011 WATCH Award for Sound Design in a Musical), *Spamalot* (2014 Watch Nomination for Sound Design in a Musical) and LTA's production of *Proof* (2014 WATCH Nomination for Sound Design in a Play)

CHARLES DRAGONETTE (*Properties Design*) has designed props for LTA (*The Fantasticks*); PCP (*In the Next Room*; *Stupid F#@*ing Bird*) and ACCT (*The Count of Monte Cristo*). He also stage manages, designs sets, produces (which he hates), and takes orphan roles for old men (which he loves.)

MELISSA DUNLAP (Assistant Stage Manage) has never been an assistant stage manager and if she does her job correctly you will not notice her.

MARQUIS FAIR (*Movement Choreographer/Vocal Coach*) is thrilled to be joining his first production with DS. Though he has never worked with any of this dynamic cast and stellar crew of this show, this also marks the first time he has ever had the privilege of working in this capacity with such a renowned community theater. MarQuis has been a mainstay as an actor in the DMV theater scene appearing in such productions as Restoration Stage's *Chocolate Covered Ants* and *The Very Last Days of The First Colored Circus*, Rockville Musical Theater's *Hairspray*, St. Marks' Players *South Pacific* and *Chicago* and many others. He would like to thank his family, friends, and especially his ever-beautiful mother, Veronica, for their love, guidance, support and patience in this and in all things in his life. Check out MarQuis' popular podcast "So...Here's the thing..." wherever podcasts are available.

ABOUT THE TEAM

REBECCA HARRIS (*Executive Producer*) is thrilled to be assisting with such an important piece, *The Bluest Eye* with her home base DS, while serving as Secretary on their Board of Directors. She's dipped her hands in many productions since moving to the area 13 years ago. Special thanks: Arlington Arts, Director Eleanore Tapscott, DS Board, design team, cast, and friends for their love and continued support. Credits: *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*, *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead!*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *Any Given Monday*, *Gilligan's Fire Island*, *Evil Dead the Musical* and *The Great American Trailer Park Musical* (WATCH Best Hair Design Recipient) all with DS. *Company* (MCP), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (RCP), *Rumors*, *Steel Magnolias* and *Dirty Blond* (LTA). "Act well your part; there all the honour lies." - Alexander Pope

FARRELL ANN HARTIGAN (*Costumer Design*) has spent many years making sure no one goes on stage naked (with the exception of Calendar Girls). Farrell's other activities range from automobile repair to community service. She has designed costumes for many of our local theaters and has been honored to receive several WATCH awards. Farrell is pleased to be working with such a great cast and the good folks of DS again.

JK LIGHTING DESIGN > JEFFREY SCOTT AUERBACH and KIMBERLY CRAGO (*Lighting Design*) Jeff and Kimberly are delighted to return to DS for this production of *The Bluest Eye*. Their most recent show at Dominion was *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*. JK Lighting Design also works with ACCT, LTA, RCP, TAP, VTC and other local theatre companies. Jeff and Kimberly are the 2018 WATCH Award winners for Outstanding Light Design in a Play. Jeff would like to thank his family, David and Katie Clement, for all their love and support. Kimberly would like to thank Steve Crago for his support. They both would like to thank the cast and crew for their hard work on this production. Please enjoy the show.

CHANEL LANCASTER (*Hair/Make-up Design*) is excited to be returning to Dominion Stage for *The Bluest Eye*. Most recently she designed the hair and makeup for *The Revolutionists* (LTA) and *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (DS). She would like to thank Eleanore Tapscott for the opportunity to work on this amazing show and her husband Austin for all the love and support.

DEIDRE (DE) NICHOLSON-LAMB (*Scenic Painting*) is pleased to be working with the wonderful cast and crew of *The Bluest Eye*. De most recently painted *Enchanted April* (WATCH Nominee) and *On Golden Pond* for ACCT and *Grey Gardens*, *Allergist Wife*, and *Rocky Horror Show* (Pearl Award - Excellence in Set Painting) for LTA. In 2012, De painted LTA sets for *Sweeny Todd* and *Witness for the Prosecution* (Pearl Award Nominee). Previously De worked at LTA painting four of the six stage sets LTA offered in their 2006 season – *Into the Woods* (Pearl Award), *Auntie Mame*, *Desperate Hours*, and *Footloose*. De thanks Dominion Stage for the fun we had with this show.

MICHEAL J. O'CONNOR (*Stage Manager*) has stage managed *The Fantasticks*, *Legally Blonde*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* for LTA, *Time Stands Still* for MCP, *Leading Ladies* and *See How They Run*, for VTC, *Bus Stop* for RCP, *A Fine and Private Place* for DS, and has ASM *Shrek*, *Sunset Blvd*, and *33 Variations* for RCP. He can be found backstage or in the tech booth, always in the dark.

MICHAEL PAGE (*Intimacy Choreographer/Coach*) is excited to be a part of this amazing production team as Intimacy Choreographer/Coach. He has previously worked in this role for *Dracula* at LTA. His upcoming projects include: co-directing and co-choreographing *On the Town* at RMT (Rockville Musical Theater) this fall, and directing *Firebringer* here at DS early next year. He is excited to get back to work after what felt like an eternity without live theatre. He hopes you enjoy the show!

HEATHER PLANK (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is honored to provide support for this production. Although more often performing onstage than working backstage, Heather has stage managed and assistant stage managed quite a few productions since her theatre beginnings in grade school with the Lake Braddock Children's Theatre. After graduating from Robinson Secondary, she studied theatre at Sweet Briar College and the Marymount/Fordham London Drama Centre. You may have seen her on screen as poet Elizabeth Bishop in *Dear Elizabeth* (VTC 2020) or onstage as Annie Joseph in *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* (Dominion Stage 2019) (WATCH Best Ensemble Winner, WATCH Featured Actress nominee)

ELEANORE TAPSCOTT (*Producer/Director*) is a classically trained actress and director, and a long-time Toni Morrison fan who is thrilled to be producing live theatre after what seems an eternity from the stage. Eleanore has directed for various metro-DC theatres including LTA, PCP, ACCT, TAP, and RCP. Upcoming productions include *Fences* (LTA), *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (Colonial Players), and *Playing Juliet*, *Casting Othello* (Providence Players). She thanks Nick Jones and her colleagues at the Vienna Community Center for their support, and the DS Board for greenlighting the production of this lyrical and powerful story.

GUIDE TO THEATERS and ORGANIZATIONS

ACCT -
Aldersgate Church Community Theatre
CCP - Chevy Chase Players
DS - Dominion Stage
LTA - The Little Theatre of Alexandria
MCP - McLean Community Players
OTQ - Off the Quill
OTC - Olney Theatre Center
PCP - Port City Playhouse
PWL - Prince William Little Theater
RCP - Reston Community Players

RLT - Rockville Little Theatre
RMT - Rockville Musical Theatre
RM - Rude Mechanicals
SSTG - Sandy Spring Theatre Group
SotL: Shakespeare on the Lawn
SSS - Silver Spring Stage
SMP - St. Mark's Players
TAP - The Arlington Players
WATCH -
Washington Area Theatre
Community Honors

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



TONI MORRISON (1931-2019) was born Chloe Anthony Wofford in Lorain, Ohio to a working-class family. She received a B.A. from Howard University after majoring in English and minoring in the classics. She earned an M.A. in English from Cornell University and then taught at Howard University and Texas Southern University, before entering the publishing world as an editor at Random House. She married (and later divorced) Harold Morrison and gave birth to sons Ford and Slade Kevin. Morrison taught at Yale, Bard College, Rutgers University and the State University of New York at Albany. She later held the Robert F. Goheen Professorship in the Humanities at Princeton University.

Recognized internationally as a major American writer, Morrison was the author of eleven novels, including *The Bluest Eye* (1973); *Sula* (1973), which celebrates friendship between women and the complexity of black womanhood; *Song of Solomon* (1977), which follows its male protagonist, Milkman Dead, on his quest for cultural heritage; and *Tar Baby* (1981), which explores a love affair between a couple from radically different socio-economic backgrounds. Morrison's early works received critical acclaim, including National Book Awards nominations and the National Book Critics' Circle Award for *Song of Solomon*.

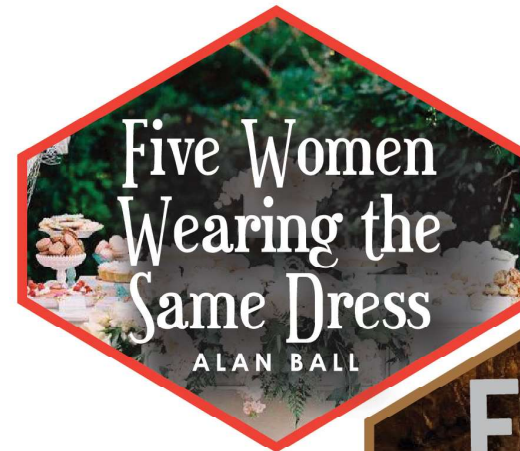
Morrison's fifth novel, *Beloved* (1987), a haunting story about the atrocities of slavery and a black slave mother's effort to protect her children against its dehumanizing effect through infanticide, won the Pulitzer Prize and was instrumental in her receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993.

In her subsequent novels *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998), and *Love* (2003), Morrison continued her exploration of such themes as friendships between women, quest for personal identity, the complexity of the black community, a celebration of African American history and culture, and the importance of love, the dominant theme in her work, to the human experience.

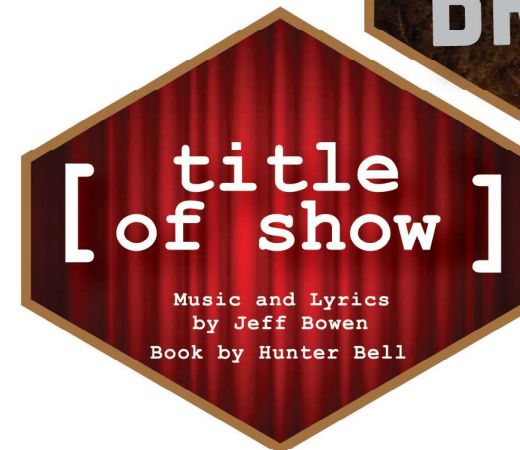


LYDIA R. DIAMOND is a prolific playwright and teaching artist whose plays include *Smart People*, *Stick Fly*, *Harriet Jacobs*, *Voyeurs de Venus*, *The Gift Horse*, *The Inside*, and her adaptation of Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*. Her early works were nurtured in Chicago theatres like Congo Square, MPAACT and Chicago Dramatists, and have gone on to enjoy productions around the country at theatres including: Arena Stage, Company One, The Goodman, The Guthrie, The Huntington, Kansas City Rep, Long Wharf, The McCarter, Second Stage, Steppenwolf, True Colors, and her Broadway run of *Stick Fly* at the Cort Theatre on Broadway.

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