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The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; The Department of Youth and Community Development through the office of City Councilmember Christine Quinn, The Natural Heritage Trust Program through the office of Assemblyman Richard N. Gottfried, The New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency, and The Office of State Senator Thomas K. Duane.

The Kitchen benefits from Materials for the Arts, a program of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs / NYC Department of Sanitation.



The Kitchen presents

Sapphire

Black Wings & Blind Angels

featuring:

Keith Adkins (Wild Thing, Brother)

Arthur French (Coroner, Father)

Connie Winston (Latasha, Sister, Writer)

Jaye Austin-Williams (director)

Passion (stage manager)

Sapphire (writer)

Chris Weston (lighting design)

Musicians:

Kwame Brandt Pierce - Composer, Piano

Maryam Blacksher - Viola

Djibril Toure - Bass

Ramsey Jones - Drums

Carl Hancock Rux (curator)

A Note from the Director

When this celebration of Sapphire's newest book of poems, *Black Wings & Blind Angels* began to come together here at The Kitchen and I was asked to be a part of it, I was both thrilled and honored. Sapphire and I began collaborating in 1994 when I approached her about adapting the poem, "Autopsy Report" for the stage. Much to my delight (and immense relief!) she gave me her blessing, and so we embarked on what has been thus far an extraordinary and rewarding journey. The first incarnation was at New York Theatre Workshop's *Mondays at Three* series in 1995 when Will Badgett, Janine Hamilton, Joan Valentina, Stephanie Roth, Paul Zimet and Harry Mann (both of The Talking Band), performed *Autopsy Report* for the very first time in front of an audience. With support from Anne Cattaneo, director of the Lincoln Center Theatre Directors Lab, I was able to take the tremendously constructive feedback from that first reading to the Sundance Institute's Theatre Lab in the Summer of 1997, where the idea which had started with one poem blossomed into an entire play adapted from the book, *American Dreams*. The artistic support at Sundance was amazing: Chiori Miyagawa served as dramaturg on the project and Emily Mann was my mentor director. The extraordinary cast included: Charlayne Woodard, Ellis "Skeeter" Williams, Novella Nelson, Virginia Wing, David Chandler, Stephanie Roth, Harold Perrineau, Jr. and Seth Gilliam. Among the other wonderful artistic support was dramaturg Shirley Fishman of the Joseph Papp Public Theatre, who, upon seeing the piece, was inspired to develop it further when we returned to New York. In the Spring of 1998, with a cast featuring Charlayne Woodard, Novella Nelson, Kevin Carroll, Spencer Barros, Willie Carpenter, and Connie Winston, *American Dreams* appeared in the Public Theatre's *New Work Now!* Festival. So it feels very right to bring to you a sampling of the material which was part of such a remarkable evolutionary process, and for that material to give way to Sapphire reading from her new book *Black Wings & Blind Angels*. In so doing, we hope to reveal not only a very different choice in writing style and structure, but even more healing and immense growth. I'm so glad you could join us in celebrating this inimitable, powerful and extraordinary artist.

Keith Josef Adkins is an actor and playwright. He was last seen in Said Sayrafiezadeh's *Hallucination* at Expanded Arts early this month. Keith has also performed in *David and Lisa*, *Indian Wants The Bronx*, *Execution of Justice*, and *Natural Knees*. He is the author of *Wilberforce*, *On The Hills of Black America*, and *Hollis Mugley's Only Wish*, and has been produced at Cleveland Public Theatre and Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco. Keith has a M.F.A. from Iowa. Blessings.

Arthur French* is a veteran actor of stage and screen. A founding member of the Negro Ensemble Company, he is the recipient of an OBIE award for Sustained Excellence of Performance and two AUDELCO awards. He can be seen in the film *Music From The Heart* this fall.

Connie Winston recently appeared in *The Autobiography of Dorothy Dean* (which she wrote and was directed by Jaye Austin-Williams) at the Miranda Theatre. She has also appeared at Dixon Place (where *Dorothy Dean* premiered), Soho Repertory, the Ohio Theatre, Lincoln Center's Clark Space (in Ms. Williams' *suBurbs*), and Brooklyn Academy of Music's Leperq Space. She is a member of The AIDS Theatre Project, Theatre Art Against Political Violence, Plays for Living and an affiliated member of New Georges. It is a great honor and privilege for her to have the opportunity to read the works of Sapphire.

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\$10,000+

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The Kitchen depends on the generosity of individuals, foundations, and corporations to continue presenting exciting new work. To discuss becoming a donor please contact Rachel Colbert in the development office at 255-5793 x29 or send checks to:

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For the last three years **Christopher Weston** has been Artistic Director of Resistance Theater where he has written, designed and directed *DreamFire*, *The Blood of Martyrs*, and *AntiGone*. He also designed and directed *Hamletmachine* and *Macbeth*, both by Heiner Muller. Other Lighting designs: *Peep Hole* (Resistance Theater), *Gemini Rising* (Quest 4 Knowledge), *Reckless* (Bank Street Theatre), *The Autobiography of Dorothy Dean* by Connie Winston (Miranda Theatre).

* Member of Actors Equity Association

Poems featured in tonight's presentation are:

"Strange Juice (or the Murder of Latasha Harlins)"

"Wild Thing"

"Autopsy Report 86-13504"

All from *American Dreams*, c. 1994 by High Risk Publications

"My Father Meets God (or the Dream of Forgiveness)"

from *Black Wings & Blind Angels*, c.1999, by Alfred Knopf.

"Newscaster" text paraphrased from an article by Scott Kurashige, forward motion, July 1992, vol.11, no. 3.

Voice of Pediatric Doctor #1- **John McNulty**

Voice of Pediatric Doctor #2 -"**Frank J.**"

Standby - **Rebecca Thomas**

Barking Dog - **Scaramooch** of Brooklyn

Passion* is a member of the Directors Company of the Dramatic Writing Program at New York University and teaches Black Theater at New York Technical College (CUNY). Other credits include production manager for *Runway 22*, directed by Adam Wade at Long Island University; stage manager for *The Offering*, directed by Charles Weldon at the Producers Club and *The Autobiography of Dorothy Dean*, directed by Jaye Austin-Williams. Passion is an AUDELCO Award nominated actress and has performed internationally as stand-up comedienne Rhonda Hansome.

Sapphire is the author of *American Dreams*, a collection of poetry which was cited by *Publisher's Weekly* as "one of the strongest debut collections of the nineties." *Push*, her first novel, won the 1996 Book-of-the-Month Club Stephen Crane Award for First Fiction, the Black Caucus of the American Library Association's First Novelist Award, and in England the coveted Mind Book of the Year Award. *Push* was named by *The Village Voice* as one of the top twenty-five books of 1996 and by *Time Out New York* as one of the top ten books of 1996. Sapphire lives in New York City. She has just completed a new book of poetry, *Black Wings & Blind Angels*, and is currently working on a new novel.

Jaye Austin-Williams (Director/Adapter) is a recipient of the 1999-2001 NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors. Her most recent credits include Connie Winston's *The Autobiography of Dorothy Dean* at the Miranda Theatre, Rahti Gorfein's *When You Try to Save Your Life, You Lose It* at the WOW Café and Dael Orlandersmith's *The Gimmick* at the Long Wharf Theatre. Jaye's adaptation for the stage of Sapphire's first book of narrative poetry and prose, *American Dreams*, was extensively developed at the Sundance Institute's Theatre Lab in 1997 and later presented at the *New Work Now!* Festival at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre. Jaye directed the 1998 college tour of Emily Mann's *Having Our Say*. In addition to various colleges and universities, the tour included the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and Harlem's historic Apollo Theatre. Jaye is also a playwright and actor, having most recently performed in Charles Watson's *The Lonely Room* at Lincoln Center Institute, Jose Rivera's *Sonnets for an Old Century* at New York Theatre Workshop, and in Suzan-Lori Parks' one woman play *Pickling* at HERE (a role she will be reprising on September 30th and October 1st). Her own play, *A Not So Quiet Nocturne*, was produced by Onyx Theatre Company at the Vineyard Theatre under her direction and further developed at the Breadloaf School of English, with Tony Kushner serving as dramaturg. Jaye was a 1997-1998 playwrighting fellow at Manhattan Theatre Club and a Jerome Fellowship finalist. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild, the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers and is an alumna of the Lincoln Center Theatre Directors Lab.