



**For Immediate Release**

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Brava! For Women in the Arts & Black Artist Contemporary Cultural Experience  
present Zakiyyah Alexander's

**Sweet Maladies**

Directed by Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe

**WHO:** Brava! For Women in the Arts, BACCE, and Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe

**WHAT:** Bay Area premiere of Sweet Maladies by Zakiyyah Alexander

**WHERE:** Brava Theater Center, 2781-24th Street at York, San Francisco, CA 94110

**WHEN:** July 18-August 3, 2014 shows Thurs-Sat 8pm; Sun 3pm.

**TICKETS:** \$15

Black Artists Contemporary Cultural Experience continues its collaboration with Brava! for Women in the Arts, and a commitment to produce new works by living playwrights that reflect the Black experience, with the Bay Area premiere of Zakiyyah Alexander's Sweet Maladies. Based on Jean Genet's The Maids, Sweet Maladies features company members, Lisa Porter and Brit Frazier (from last year's In A Daughter's Eyes). Cast will also include Kehinde Koyejo and Stefanée Martin.

**About the play**

Two years into Reconstruction, four girls contemplate a future and their place in the new post-slavery society. Deftly written with a sly humor, Sweet Maladies illuminates the possibilities that have existed between races since slavery's abolition and confronts the baggage that mitigates those possibilities. As the four girls - three sisters and their former mistress - grapple with power and place, secrets are revealed, and betrayals become potent resulting in a shocking and bittersweet conclusion.

**Zakiyyah Alexander** is a resident playwright at New Dramatists since 2004. Current plays include, *10 Things To Do Before I Die* (Second Stage Uptown), *Sick?* (Summer Play Festival), *The Etymology Of Bird* (Hip Hop Theater Festival; Providence Black Repertory Company), *Blurring Shine* (Market Theatre, Johannesburg), and *Sweet Maladies* (Darius Rucker Riverside Theatre). She has received developmental support from Bristol Riverside Theatre, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, Hartford Stage, The Providence Black Repertory Company, 24/7 Theater Company, Hip Hop Theater Festival, Vineyard Theatre, the Women's Project, La MaMa E.T.C., Greenwich Street Theatre, and more. Awards include, Helen Merrill Award, ACT New Play Award/Lorraine Hansberry Award, Stellar Network Award, the Theodore Ward Prize, Jackson Phelan Award, Drama League New Directors/New Works, New Professional Theatre Playwriting Award, Young Playwrights Inc., etc. Her work is included in the current edition of *New Monologues for Women by Women*, featured in the book of essays, *Girls Who Like Boys Who Like Boys*, and *Game on: The Humana Festival '08 Anthology*. Zakiyyah has also written for *Grey's Anatomy*. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama (MFA in playwriting), she is currently on faculty at Bard College where she teaches undergraduate playwriting

**Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe** (Director) has directed theatre productions throughout the United States and abroad. With the company she founded, Black Artists Contemporary Cultural Experience, Edris has directed the work of Pearl Cleage, Keith Adkins and Billy Graham and most recently directed and produced the critically acclaimed, *In A Daughter's Eyes* by A.Zell Williams. She has additional directing credits at Trinity Rep in Providence, Southern Rep in New Orleans, Woolly Mammoth in Washington, D.C., the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, WaterTower Theater in Dallas, and Capital Repertory Theater in Albany, New York. She holds an M.F.A. in Directing from the University of Iowa and is an alumna of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors. Additional training has included theatre research and performance at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and at Shakespeare & Company in Tanglewood, Massachusetts. She has directed in the American Conservatory Theatre's M.F.A. Program and taught at Indiana University, Naropa University and with Telluride Association Sophomore Seminars.

### Acting Company

**Britney Frazier** received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatrical Performance from San Francisco State in the spring of 2013. She has performed with: Shotgun Players in *Bulrushes*, Intersection for the Arts' preview of *Mirrors in Every Corner*, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre's production of *Fabulation*, *The Voyage* and *Daylighting* with Shotgun Players, *Rapunzel* at the Marin Theater Company and *In a Daughter's Eyes* with Black Artists Contemporary Cultural Experience. Brit can also be seen performing with the *Femikazes* -a Berkeley based, all female sketch comedy troupe. In 2012, Brit was co- creator of Cal Shakes's, Intersection for the Arts' and Campo Santo's Artists Training Program (*The Triangle Lab*). She was assistant director for *Jip; His Story*, with Bay Area, theatrical visionary, Ellen Sebastian Chang at the San Francisco Marsh Theatre and as Artistic Associate at the San Francisco Playhouse in 201, she produced a new works, staged reading festival called, "*Our Voices, Our Stories* which featured over twenty plays written by local African American and female. Britney made her directorial and playwright

debuts in the February festival at the SF Playhouse, directing the workshop performance of *Love Balm for my* and with a staged reading of her original full length play, *Obeah*. Brit also directed the original adaptation, *The Lost Secrets of the Iron Triangle* at the East Bay Center of Performing Arts and worked as a Teaching Artist with StageWrite. Brit was the featured playwright in Brava Theatre's Studio Sessions Staged Reading festival in May 2014, where her second play *SugarWater* was shared with audiences for the first time. Brit will start teaching acting and movement with the California Shakespeare Theater's Summer Conservatory in July of 2014.

**Kehinde Koyejo**, a native of Oakland California, is an artist/scholar who holds a master's degree in Performance Studies from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and an associate artist with BACCE. Kehinde's artistic background includes performance art, acting, directing, dramaturgy, and writing. Along with her artistic background, she has over 12 years of experience in the non-profit sector. She has created and implemented curriculums for public schools and community organizations, managed project/program development, and produced yearly productions and events. Kehinde is also Founder/Lead Artist for InterACT Works ([www.interactworks.org](http://www.interactworks.org)) with a vision to help people see what has been made invisible, hear what has been silenced, understand what has been misunderstood, and reconnect to that which has been disconnected.

**Stefané Martin** is an American Conservatory Theater graduate student and a newcomer to the Bay Area theatre scene. Originally from Washington, DC, she traveled to San Francisco after graduating from Temple University with a BA in Theater and an emphasis in acting. At Temple, she performed in several graduate and undergraduate directing projects, an MFA playfest reading, and MFA film projects. Professionally, Stefanée performed in the 2010 Shakespeare Cabaret Festival at Philadelphia Shakespeare Theatre as EGLÉ in *Le Dispute* and at Temple Repertory Theatre as MARIANE in *Tartuffe*. Stefanée also studied at Headlong Performance Institute in south Philadelphia, a dance/theatre training which focuses on a myriad of physical theatre techniques. Since then, she's performed in a number of performance projects and readings at ACT and was most recently in the annual MFA spring repertory festival as BAMBI in *Girl from Maxim's*, directed by Mark Rucker. In the Bay Area, Stefanée participated in the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Bay Area Playwrights Festival as DEVINE in *Brownsville Song*, a 2014 Humana Festival play by Kimber Lee and as ANNIE in Inbal Kashtan's *Fourteen*, directed by Jon Tracy. Recently, Stefanée performed in her first international project in Kampala, Uganda; spearheaded by her classmate, Kemiyoando Coutinho, she played NIA in the critically acclaimed HIV/AIDS awareness play, *In the Continuum*, as a part of the first annual NuVo Arts Festival. Her latest project was "SAARTJIE", a devised performance piece that fused contemporary music, media, and language to explore the true story of a 19th century African woman while meditating on the modern-day, stereotypical expectations of Black women in America.

**Lisa Ann Porter** is a professional actress, director and voiceover talent, as well as a professional voice/dialect coach, a voice/acting/text professor and a designated Linklater voice instructor. Lisa has performed with numerous repertory companies and Shakespeare festivals throughout the country including the American Conservatory Theatre, California Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare/Santa Cruz, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Syracuse Stage, Geva Theatre Center, Shakespeare Festival/LA, Shakespeare & Company, Sacramento Theatre Company, the Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, Interact Theatre Company, and Boston Theatreworks.

# BRAVA

FOR WOMEN IN THE ARTS

She is a member of the Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company where she played Laertes in HAMLET and Buckingham in RICHARD III. She also co-directed and starred in their touring show A WILL OF ONE'S OWN. She has a B.A. in Theatre and American Studies from Wesleyan University and an M.F.A. from the American Conservatory Theatre. Lisa is on the faculty of Shakespeare & Company, the MFA program and Summer Training Congress at the American Conservatory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theatre and the Academy of Art University.

## **Black Artists Contemporary Cultural Experience (BACCE)**

Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe founded BACCE in 2002 with Lester Jones and a company of actors including June Lomena, Michael Carreiro, Peter Macon, Rico Anderson and Tanya Mayo, to produce new plays by, for and about Black people. The company has produced and presented work by Keith Josef Adkins, Pearl Cleage, Robert Alexander and Robert O'Hara. After a 10-year hiatus, BACCE returned last year with the critically successful Bay Area premiere of A. Zell Williams' In A Daughter's Eyes at Brava Theater Center where it is now a resident company. Current company members include Brit Frazier, Algiin Ford, Kehinde Koyejo, AeJay Mitchell and David Skillman. The company recently presented a staged reading of Facing Our Truths – a New Black Fest commission of six short plays on the shooting of Trayvon Martin that is part of a national project.

## **Brava! for Women In The Arts**

Brava! For Women in the Arts celebrates its 26th year as a professional arts organization dedicated to cultivating the artistic expression of women, youth, LGBT, people of color and other unheard voices through the ownership and operation of Brava Theater Center. BRAVA producing history includes award-winning premieres by Diana Son, Eve Ensler, Debbie Swisher, Reno, Cherylene Lee, Suzan-Lori Parks, Culture Clash, Joan Holden, Anne Galjour, Elizabeth Summers, Kate Rigg, Dan Guerrero, and Mabou Mines, as well as works by internationally known playwrights like Jesusa Rodriguez and Liliana Felipe of Mexico, Jorge Drexler of Uruguay, and Ojos de Brujo and Ismael Serrano of Spain. Under the Executive Director of Anastacia "Stacie" Powers Cuellar, BRAVA's current artistic programming includes traditional and contemporary music festivals, a variety of film festivals, contemporary and experimental theatrical productions, international comedy shows, lectures and professional dance productions making BRAVA one of the most eclectic and multi-faceted arts venues in the Bay Area. BRAVA's resident youth programs include the long standing SF Running crew which pairs youth with professional mentors and hands on opportunities for technical theatre training; Cuicacalli Escuela de Danza, traditional and contemporary dance training for youth, Famooly Productions Salsa Band workshops and Loco Bloco dance and drum ensemble. Brava is committed to providing affordable space for artistic development and presentation and quality professional arts training for underserved youth in the San Francisco community.