

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 24, 2017



TimeLine Theatre's Midwest premiere of *PARADISE BLUE* by (from left) Dominique Morisseau, directed by Ron OJ Parson, will feature an original score composed by Orbert Davis. The cast includes TimeLine Associate Artist Tyla Abercrombie, Ronald L. Conner, Kristin E. Ellis, TimeLine Associate Artist Charles Andrew Gardner, and Al'Jaleel McGhee. [Click here](#) to download images.

**TIMELINE THEATRE'S MIDWEST PREMIERE OF DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU'S
JAZZ-INFUSED *PARADISE BLUE*, DIRECTED BY RON OJ PARSON, APRIL 26 – JULY 23,
TO FEATURE ORIGINAL MUSIC COMPOSED BY CHICAGO LEGEND ORBERT DAVIS**

**The cast will feature Tyla Abercrombie, Ronald L. Conner,
Charles Andrew Gardner, Kristin E. Ellis and Al'Jaleel McGhee**

Chicago, IL — TimeLine Theatre Company announces the final production of its 20th Anniversary 2016-17 season—the Midwest premiere of *PARADISE BLUE* by Dominique Morisseau, directed by TimeLine Company Member Ron OJ Parson and featuring original music composed by Orbert Davis, the co-founder, conductor and Artistic Director of Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, May 4 – July 23, 2017 (previews April 26 - May 3) at TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington Ave., Chicago. **Press Night is Wednesday, May 3 at 7:30 p.m.**

For tickets and information, visit timelinetheatre.com or call the Box Office at **(773) 281-8463 x6**.

One of Chicago's most admired jazz artists, Davis' original music, performed by Davis and members of Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, featuring Rajiv Halim, and recorded and mixed by Roger Heiss at Tone Zone Studio in Chicago, will underscore Morisseau's jazz-infused drama about a gifted but troubled trumpeter in Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood. The involvement of Davis and Chicago Jazz Philharmonic in TimeLine's production — was made possible through the generous support of The Chicago Community Trust.

It's 1949 in Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood, and Blue, the gifted trumpeter and troubled owner of the Paradise nightclub, is contemplating a buyout offer for the city's urban renewal plan. As the inhabitants of his famed but faltering jazz club ponder their options and dream of a better life, relationships are tested, new challengers emerge, and a mysterious woman arrives to turn their world upside down. As the fate of all their lives looms, they must decide whether to fight to save what's theirs or risk it all for a chance at redemption.

PARADISE BLUE is the second TimeLine production of a play written by Morisseau, a 2017 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize finalist for her play *PIPELINE*, and directed by Parson, following last season's critically acclaimed *SUNSET BABY*. Hailed as "intriguing ... vibrant ... Morisseau is trying to tell a fuller, deeper story about Detroit than the one that is told by headlines" by the *Boston Globe*, *PARADISE BLUE* is also the latest in Morisseau's widely acclaimed cycle of plays about Detroit, proving again why she is one of America's most urgent playwrights.

CAST AND PRODUCTION TEAM

The cast for PARADISE BLUE includes TimeLine Associate Artists Tyla Abercrombie (Silver) and Charles Andrew Gardner (P-Sam), with Ronald L. Conner (Corn), Kristin E. Ellis (Pumpkin) and Al'Jaleel McGhee (Blue). The production team includes Brian Sidney Bembridge (Scenic and Lighting Design), Christine Pascual (Costume Design), Christopher A. Kriz (Sound Design), Mary O'Dowd (Properties Design), Jared Bellot (Dramaturgy), Taylor Barfield (Assistant Director), and Richard Lundy (Stage Management).

SPONSORS

TimeLine's Midwest premiere of PARADISE BLUE is supported in part by The Chicago Community Trust and The Pauls Foundation. Additional support is provided by The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation.

BIOGRAPHIES

Dominique Morisseau (*Playwright*) was a finalist for the 2017 Susan Smith Blackburn Award for her play PIPELINE. She is an alumna of the Public Theater Emerging Writer's Group, Women's Project Lab, and Lark Playwrights Workshop. Credits include SKELETON CREW (Sundance, Lark Barebones, Atlantic Theater Company (Scott Rudin); DETROIT '67 (Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem/National Black Theatre); SUNSET BABY (TimeLine, Gate Theater, LABYRINTH Theatre); FOLLOW ME TO NELLIE'S (O'Neill, Premiere Stages). She has produced other original works with the Hip Hop Theater Festival, Penn State University, American Theatre of Harlem and The New Group. Her 3-play cycle, entitled "The Detroit Projects," includes DETROIT '67, PARADISE BLUE and SKELETON CREW. PARADISE BLUE premiered at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in July 2015 starring Blair Underwood and directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson. Morisseau is currently the Story Editor on the Showtime series SHAMELESS. Other awards include Jane Chambers Playwriting Award, two-time NAACP Image Award, Primus Prize commendation, Stavis Playwriting Award, Spirit of Detroit Award, University of Michigan Emerging Leader Award, Weissberger Award, PoNY Fellowship, Sky-Cooper New American Play Prize, The Graham F. Smith Peace Foundation Award, and the Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama.

Ron OJ Parson (*Director*) previously directed A RAISIN IN THE SUN and Morisseau's SUNSET BABY at TimeLine, where he is a Company Member. He is a native of Buffalo, New York, and a graduate of the University of Michigan's professional theatre program. He is the co-founder and former Artistic Director of Onyx Theatre Ensemble of Chicago and a co-founder and co-director of Ripe Mango Productions. Ron is a Resident Artist at Court Theatre and an Associate Artist with Teatro Vista. Since moving to Chicago from New York in 1994, he has worked as both an actor and director. His Chicago credits include work with The Chicago Theatre Company, Victory Gardens, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Chicago Dramatists, Northlight, Court, Black Ensemble Theatre, Congo Square, Urban Theatre Company, City Lit Theater, ETA Creative Arts and Writers. Regionally, Parson has directed shows at Studio Arena Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Milwaukee Repertory, South Coast Repertory, Pasadena Playhouse, Geva Theatre, Virginia Stage, Roundabout Theatre, Wilshire Theatre, The Mechanic Theatre, CenterStage, St. Louis Black Repertory, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre, Signature Theatre, and Portland Stage, among others. In Canada, he directed the world premiere of PALMER PARK by Joanna McClelland Glass at the Stratford Festival. Acting credits on television and film include ER, EARLY EDITION, TURKS, AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE, VAMPING, BARBERSHOP 2, PRIMAL FEAR, DROP SQUAD and most recently Starz Network's BOSS. He is a member of AEA, SAGAFTRA, and SDC. For more information, visit ronojparson.com.

Orbert Davis (*Original Music*) is an Emmy-Award winning trumpeter, composer and educator, and co-founder, conductor and artistic director of Chicago Jazz Philharmonic (CJP), a 55+ piece symphonic jazz orchestra dedicated to bringing together audiences of diverse backgrounds through multi-genre projects. Davis has many composer commissions and has played key roles in major film and television projects, including his work as jazz consultant to Academy Award-winning director Sam Mendes for the film *ROAD TO PERDITION*. Recent projects include "Home and Away" honoring U.S. men and women in uniform, and an original score for the Emmy Award-winning national PBS documentary *DUSABLE TO OBAMA: CHICAGO'S BLACK METROPOLIS* produced by WTTW, which garnered Davis an Emmy Award for its soundtrack. His 2004 CD "Blue Notes" was the follow-up to his critically acclaimed "Priority" CD, which garnered an *LA Times* 4-star review, hit the Top 50 list for "most played on national radio" jazz CDs in 2002, and was named a Top 10 best jazz CD of 2002 by the *Chicago Tribune*. His 2009 CD of Chicago Jazz Philharmonic's "Collective Creativity" received rave reviews. Davis's latest release, Chicago Jazz Philharmonic's "Havana Blue," was born from CJP's relationship with the Cuba's Universidad de las Artes (ISA). Davis is the longtime radio personality and host of "The Real Deal with Orbert Davis," a weekly 3-hour program airing on 90.9FM WDCB (also streaming live online at wdcb.org.) For more, visit orbertdavis.com.

ABOUT TIMELINE THEATRE COMPANY

TimeLine Theatre Company, recipient of the prestigious 2016 MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, was founded in April 1997 with a mission to present stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues. To date over 20 seasons, TimeLine has presented 70 productions, including nine world premieres and 30 Chicago premieres, and launched the Living History Education Program, now in its 10th year of bringing the company's mission to life for students in Chicago Public Schools. Recipient of the Alford-Axelson Award for Nonprofit Managerial Excellence and the Richard Goodman Strategic Planning Award from the Association for Strategic Planning, TimeLine has received 53 Jeff Awards, including an award for Outstanding Production 11 times.

TimeLine Theatre's recently announced upcoming 2017-18 season will include:

- The Chicago premiere of **THE AUDIENCE** by Peter Morgan, the imagined story of Queen Elizabeth II's weekly meetings with England's Prime Ministers through decades of history and political strife, directed by TimeLine Associate Artistic Director Nick Bowling and starring TimeLine Company Member Janet Ulrich Brooks as Queen Elizabeth II, August 16 – November 12, 2017 at TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington Ave.
- **IN THE NEXT ROOM, OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY**, Sarah Ruhl's Victorian-era tale of a woman's journey to understand herself and find greater equality in her marriage and the world, directed by TimeLine Company Member Mechelle Moe, October 20 – December 17, 2017 at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave.
- The Chicago premiere of **BOY** by Anna Ziegler, inspired by the real-life story of a boy who claims his true identity after being raised as a girl, and finds love, directed by Damon Kiely, January 10 – March 18, 2018 at TimeLine Theatre.
- And the world premiere of **TO CATCH A FISH** by Chicagoan Brett Neveu, the first play to be produced that was written and developed through TimeLine's inaugural Playwrights Collective, about a family and a community torn apart by a flawed search for justice, directed by TimeLine Company Member Ron OJ Parson, April 25 – July 1, 2018 at TimeLine Theatre.

TimeLine is led by Artistic Director PJ Powers, Managing Director Elizabeth K. Auman and Board President John M. Sirek. Company members are Nick Bowling, Janet Ulrich Brooks, Behzad Dabu, Lara Goetsch, Juliet Hart, Mildred Marie Langford, Mechelle Moe, David Parkes, Ron OJ Parson, PJ Powers, Maren Robinson and Benjamin Thiem.

Major corporate, government and foundation supporters of TimeLine Theatre include Alphawood Foundation, Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Chicago Community Trust, The Crown Family, Forum Fund, The Joseph and Bessie Feinberg Foundation, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Illinois Arts Council Agency, Laughing Acres Family Foundation, MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince, The Pauls Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, The Seabury Foundation, and The Shubert Foundation.

TimeLine is a member of the League of Chicago Theatres, Theatre Communications Group, Lakeview East Chamber of Commerce and Chicago's Belmont Theater District.

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