

## Meet Mr. Mangan

by David Ceccarini



**It's my pleasure** to introduce our Next Act audience to Jamil A. C. Mangan, director of Dominique Morisseau's *PIPELINE*, coming up next. First, I owe a big Thank You to Renaissance Theaterworks Artistic Director Suzan Fete, who recommended Jamil as a possible director for *PIPELINE*. He had directed a virtual production for RTW during the pandemic's early and darker days, and the word was unanimously positive. I believe Suzan put it this way, "He's great. And a real sweetheart." And after our initial 90-minute Zoom meeting, I understood.

Mr. Mangan comes to the *PIPELINE* project with a knowing and experienced perspective on education. Besides his multi-dis-

ciplined artistic background – actor, director, musician, vocalist, voice-over artist – Jamil is an arts educator. As such, he has taught for many arts organizations throughout his native east coast tri-state area. He has first-hand familiarity with the challenges faced by schools, administrations, teachers and students, where cultural and societal issues tend to interfere with the chance for a quality education. Chance and a good recommendation had brought me to the perfect director for Morisseau's *PIPELINE*. [See Jamil Mangan's Director's Statement, page 2.]

Over lunch, I asked Jamil how he came to the theatre world, or did it come to him? A native of Newark, New Jersey, he told me of his family's affiliation with the Newark area's only African-American Catholic church. "My grandma was involved in their theatre program. They did musicals a lot; big ones like *GUYS AND DOLLS*, *OKLAHOMA*, other 'war horses.' And I was taken into New York to see plays; on one such occasion, it was *THE PIANO LESSON* by August Wilson. I saw people in that play who looked like me and I thought, 'I can do that.' I was struck by the power those actors had over their audience and I knew I wanted to feel that for myself."

Having found his heart's desire, he charted a well-rounded arts path through Newark Boy's Chorus, Newark's Arts High School and University of the Arts in Philadelphia, with time to study mu-

sical theatre at Syracuse University and participate as a member of the National Speech and Debate Forensics League.

Jamil's acting resume reflects an ambitious and well-balanced career of regional, New York and television credits, with an impressive mix of classical and contemporary repertoire. He has found a niche of sorts, in portraying the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in various iterations such as *THE MOUNTAINTOP*, *MARTIN LUTHER ON TRIAL* [MLK appears as a witness] and in the one-man show by Craig Edwards, *THE MAN IN ROOM 306*. As many talented actors often do, Jamil has gravitated toward directing, marking his debut at Newark Symphony Hall with *THE GOSPEL AT COLONUS*, an African-American musical adaptation of Sophocles' tragedy *OEDIPUS AT COLONUS*. Some directing projects found him traveling to South America, while others have kept him closer

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to home for institutions such as Young Playwrights of New Jersey and Summer Music Institute. Jamil is also supportive of new work, having recently joined the Board of Seven Devils New Play Foundry, secluded in rural Idaho.

As we waited in my car in line for PCR Covid tests [y'know, like you do these days], we learned our birthdays were just a day apart. "A Libra too!" says Jamil. "My wife's an Aries. We are complimentary. While I'm weighing my decision yet again, Anna Carol will come in with that often-necessary push to get it done." Jamil glows from behind his mask as he spontaneously erupts with, "Oh man, I love my wife!" Minutes later, our nostrils thoroughly swabbed, Jamil's joy was still reverberating as we drove off.

On his website, Jamil's bio is entitled *The Heart of What I Do*. He says he lives by the artistic mission once quoted by the playwright Amiri Baraka: artists have a job to do, to raise the consciousness of the community around them. Both statements are indicative of the passion and commitment Jamil has



for the theatre and what he's bringing to *PIPELINE*. We are in good hands.

And Suzan was right. What a sweetheart.

Jamil A.C. Mangan

## PIPELINE Director's Statement

*PIPELINE* is a play that examines the policies, conditions and biases that plague many of our public school institutions. The play is an exposé on how we are failing our Black youth and the collective responsibility we have toward their growth and educational development. Everyone is held accountable for their actions and the roles played in the deterioration of our educational system, creating a path to the industrial prison complex.

Our production takes place in the present, set in an environment representative of most urban high schools across America. Ms. Morisseau uses the poem *We Be Cool* by Gwendolyn Brooks as a thread throughout the play. The proverbial 'We' consists of the youth who feel voiceless, ignored and undesired. *We real cool. We left school. We lurk late. We strike straight.* These feelings are intimately and passionately channeled through Omari, a Black youth struggling to thrive against great odds.

Throughout the play, Omari lives in a state of subjugation, devoid of a voice, lacking validation; which manifests itself into fear, confusion and exasperation. His deep frustration brings him perilously close to getting pulled in to the school-to-prison pipeline, Morisseau's "namesake" for the play.

The scenic elements of our production consist of bleak dull brick or cinder block walls devoid of color. The windows are barred, with barely a faint streak of sunlight leaking into the classroom. The facility is decades old, worn and in need of repair. Though we traverse through many locations [classroom, teachers' lounge, dormitory, hospital] the design will provide a simple representation of each, allowing the play to move in a fluid, seamless and poetic unfolding of the story.

In our production, Omari's inner struggles will be revealed within an "Undefined Place"; where he echoes the poem 'We Be Cool' and wrestles with his conflicts. Still and moving images will play a part, showing flashes of students in their rebellion, their rage, their beauty and the complexities of their living experiences.

The stakes are high in *PIPELINE*. Many of the characters face dire consequences for their actions. They are existing in a heightened state of reality that feels too real, too familiar. The play reminds us that in order to move forward as a society, we must reach back to the students too often left behind.

# IT'S THE GIFT THAT COUNTS

by Jane Flieller

**The thought behind the gift is equally important.** As a nonprofit arts organization, Next Act Theatre relies on the generosity of individuals like you to help support the work we do. Let's talk about "why"?

**The arts help us to see a different perspective from our own.**

We're shown humanity, psychology, motivations, conflict and resolution in nearly every play. Through the stories we see come alive onstage, we witness the trajectory of persons other than ourselves. What we come away with is a more empathetic world view, helping us be the best version of ourselves when faced with life's challenges.

**The arts revive, revitalize and reinforce the economy.**

From small towns to large cities, theaters and the people who attend can change the dynamic of an entire neighborhood or area, prompting the growth of new businesses and an influx of residents.

**The arts teach our children...**

Enhanced language proficiency, confidence strengthening and the development of skills vital to every industry [working collaboratively, problem-solving, leadership.] The arts encourage children to stay and excel in school. Combined with traditional classroom studies, the arts as part of a child's education will guide them toward their full potential.

Many of you reading this newsletter are already generous donors and the aforementioned is something you already understand. But what about the next generation of donors? Reach out to a younger friend or family member. Teach them about the power of giving and the importance of keeping the performing arts industry strong. **We count on you. We'll count on them.**

## THE CARNIVAL IS COMING TO ... NEXT ACT THEATRE!

Ever wanted to see Producing Artistic Director, David Ceasarini, all wet? Well, now's your chance! Pencil this date in your calendars because you won't want to miss the fun:

Saturday, June 11, 2022 from 5 to 9PM  
**BRAVO, NEXT ACT 2022!**

Back live and in-person at Next Act Theatre, our carnival-themed gala will feature games, prizes, a wine pull, silent and live auctions, entertainment, food, cash bar and of course, a dunk tank!

Start warming up that throwing arm and take a chance at dunking our beloved Artistic Director!

Buy the key that unlocks the BBQ Bundle – a fantastic package that includes a brand-new grill and lots of fixin's!

Putt a few balls and be entered to win one of two putting greens!

This indoor/outdoor event will be loads of fun as we celebrate the end of Next Act's 2021-2022 season. Among the many and varied auction items, you'll find items from your favorite shows, autographed mementos and so much more!



Watch for more information about Bravo, Next Act 2022!

*Meet Next Act's Education Intern, Ryleigh, in her own words!*

**Hello! My name is Ryleigh.** I am 18 years old and an early graduate from Reagan High School. A little background information about myself: I was born and raised in Wisconsin and am the youngest of three girls. I have taken two and a half years of Film and Theater Performance and one year of Film and Theater Production. I have been involved with Next Act since 2019, being in two live summer performances and one virtual performance. This year, I am an Education Intern, working alongside Grace DeWolff, the Education Director for Next Act Theater. After this, I am going to be a student at UW-Milwaukee to major in mathematics and minor in theater.

My passion has always been math, especially algebra. I've always enjoyed it because it was something I was good at and knew I could accomplish. I want to use my math skills to benefit my future job opportunities, whatever those may be. With that being said, my love for theater is going to follow me along on my journey. I have only been into theater for about four years. It started as a way for me to open myself up and try to become more comfortable with myself and others. Since starting, I have realized I love everything about theater, whether it's acting, writing or directing. I wanted to expand on my theater skills and put myself in the shoes

of someone who has experienced so much about theater. This is why I wanted to be part of this internship. My future continues to express all of my love for math and theater combined.



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It's my honor as Director of the Next Actors to brag about our first Sue Krause Next Actor Memorial Scholarship recipient, Isabelle [Bee] Rashkin [they/them]. Bee is a 2016 alum of Next Actors, in which they performed, wrote lyrics, and composed music on the ukulele as part of that summer's show. After their year at Next Actors, they studied at Interlochen Arts Academy, and then went on to UW-Milwaukee's Peck School of the Arts to study Musical Theatre. Bee returned to Next Actors for the 2020 online year of Next Actors to assist in writing and editing. During the pandemic, they collaborated

with a few UWM students to direct and produce their own musical composed entirely from music Bee had written. Bee says their life goal is to "create theatre that changes the pedagogy of the musical theatre landscape," and we're happy to help them do just that. This scholarship will allow Bee to pay off student loans before they graduate this year, providing them stability as they launch into a musical theatre career that focuses on creating equitable theater spaces. Go forth and change the world, Bee!

*"My best memory from Next Actors would have to be touring. Being able to take an original production all around Milwaukee was something that was really special in not only my artistic development but my development as a person: to see the arts and how they affect everybody. Also learning to adapt to venues, that's fun. If it wasn't for Next Act, I wouldn't have been so comfortable with the many different, amazing theater communities Milwaukee has to offer. Next Act gave me a new level of education that helped me become a more aware artist by becoming a better, well-rounded person."*

- Bee Rashkin

Connecting with the Community

by Grace DeWolff



**Malaina Moore, our new Community Liaison,** is a local playwright, actor, teaching artist and community advocate. While attending Rufus King High School, her one-act play *THIS JUST IN...* was one of three pieces selected city-wide for Milwaukee Chamber Theatre's Young Playwrights Festival. While working on her undergraduate degree at Marquette University (studying theatre with an emphasis in performance and a minor in social welfare and justice), her play *WHITE PRIVILEGE* was selected to perform at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF Region III) in January 2019 and also won a national Citizen Artist Award for its social justice impact from KCACTF. You may have seen Malaina recently as Lil' Mama in *STEW* at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre or previously at Next Act in our virtual production of *PRINCIPAL PRINCIPLE*. You can see her at Next Act in our February-March production of *PIPELINE*.

*"As Community Liaison, I want to help create a space for people of color and invoke conversations between people who don't necessarily have the same backgrounds. I think that's what makes theatre powerful; we're coming together and we're forced to reckon with the truth of whatever the story may be. Theatre teaches us so many lessons. I'm always thinking about what stories people have to tell and why those stories are important. It's a way, especially in Milwaukee, to bring people together."*

Malaina Moore





**On Sunday, December 5,** a limited number of Next Act subscribers and donors enjoyed the first public reading of *THE LAST WHITE MAN* by Bill Cain. You may recognize Cain from his plays *EQUIVOCATION*, *HOW TO WRITE A NEW BOOK FOR THE BIBLE* and *9 CIRCLES*, all performed at Next Act in recent years. In early December, Cain spent a week in Milwaukee to workshop this world-premiere play with a team of actors before presenting it for its first-ever public reading. Feedback from attendees, as well as the work done in rehearsal, will inform how the play grows and evolves before it is seen fully-produced on our stage in April! Thank you to everyone who attended and helped shape this new play.

**The Last White Man**

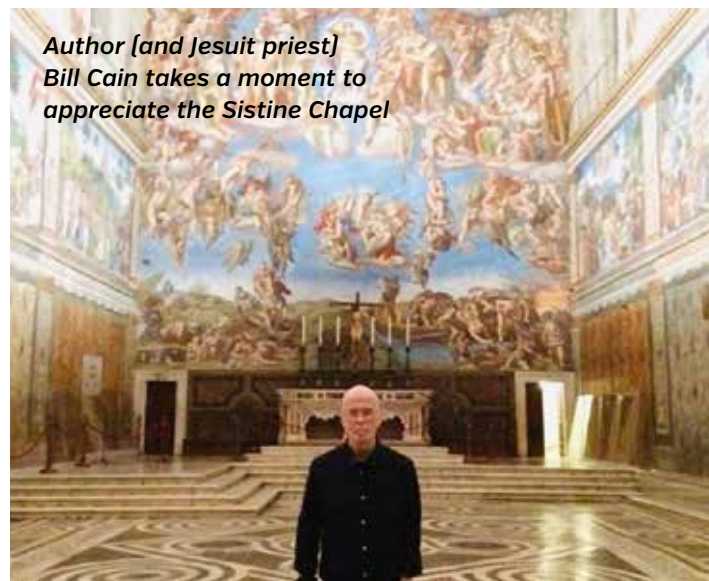
by Bill Cain

First reading - December 5, 2021

- Charlie..... David Ceasarini\*
- Rafe .....Ryan Zierk
- Tigg ..... Jonathan Wainwright\*
- Xandri .....Demetria Thomas\*
- Director ..... David Ceasarini\*
- Stage Manager ..... Bailey Wegner\*
- ASM/Safety Supervisor ..... Natasha Goeller

\* Member of Actors' Equity Association

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**Author (and Jesuit priest) Bill Cain takes a moment to appreciate the Sistine Chapel**

**Notes from Bill Cain:**

This play is suggested by a series of events that took place at the National Theatre, but the play itself is a complete fiction.

It's a theater story.

It never happened – but it might have a truth of its own in any case.

**In early 2016, we had the pleasure** of featuring Tia Richardson as one of our lobby gallery artists. At that time she shared a number of well-received paintings and drawings depicting children and families. Since then her artistic career took off, and she is now an award-winning community mural artist whose process embraces the maxim "It takes a village..."



*PIPELINE* by Dominique Morisseau deals, in part, with the impact of the greater community on a mother and her son. Tia goes into that community with the goal of using art to enhance bonds that may be fraying and build on strengths that need encouragement.

"My heart is in impacting people and touching other people's hearts. A lot of the change we want to see we can legislate but we can't legislate an attitude. You can't just change somebody's attitude at the flip of a switch. That's the work of Community Art."

-Tia Richardson

NAT is honored to feature representations of a few of Tia's recent community mural projects. More information about Tia and her work can be found on her website, Cosmic Butterfly Design at [www.cosmic-butterfly.com](http://www.cosmic-butterfly.com)



**ABOUT THE ARTIST** [from her website]

Tia Richardson is a full-time community mural artist based in her hometown of Milwaukee, WI. In 2003, she graduated with an Associate Degree in Graphic Design from Milwaukee Area Technical College. Since 2007, her work has evolved into collaborative mural efforts that offer many community members from all walks of life a chance to freely express their diverse feelings and perspectives.

Tia has completed over 50 murals in partnership with non-profits, K-12 and post-secondary schools, businesses and local government. She was recognized as Artist of the Year by the Milwaukee Arts Board in 2018 and in 2020 produced a short film about one of her projects called "Rockford Taking Flight".

She believes in the power of shared experience to create a sense of belonging and mutual appreciation of what we each can contribute to the bigger whole to make it better. Documentation of her efforts in the news, print, television and film shows evidence how, despite our differences, we can work together for the common good.

*"My Canvas is the Collective Illusion We Have of Being Separate From One Another."*

-Tia Richardson

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**WHAT'S NEXT** is a quarterly publication of Next Act Theatre

255 S. Water Street | Milwaukee, WI 53204 • 414-278-7780

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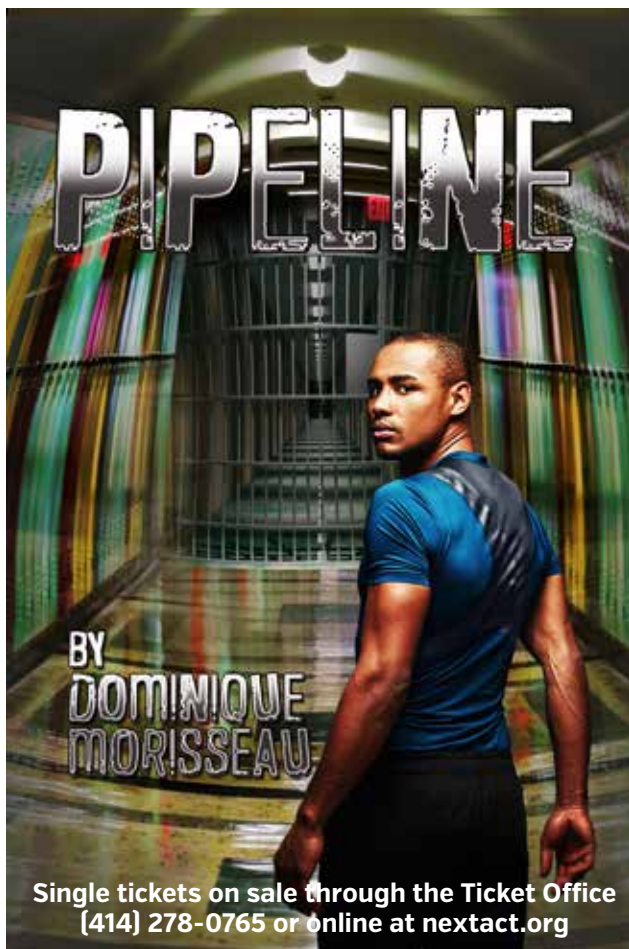


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Nya, a committed inner-city public high school teacher, is desperate to give her only son Omari opportunities her students will never have. When a controversial incident at his upstate private school threatens to get him expelled, Nya must confront his rage and her own choices as a parent. Morisseau pens an impassioned and compelling story of a mother's fight to give her son a future despite society's challenges stacked against them both.

FEBRUARY 10 - MARCH 6, 2022						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				10 Preview 7:30	11 Opening 7:30	12 4:30 8:00 P
13 2:00 T			16 1:30 7:30 P T	17 7:30 T	18 7:30	19 4:30 8:00
20 2:00 P T			23 1:30 7:30 T	24 7:30 P T	25 7:30	26 4:30 8:00
27 2:00 P T S	28 7:30 S		2 7:30 T	3 7:30 T	4 7:30 P	5 4:30 8:00
6 2:00	P Personal Preview (Begins 30 minutes prior to curtain) T Talkback S Sunday Night Insights \$ Pay What You Can					

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