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# IN THE BLOOD

By Suzan Lori-Parks

Directed by  
Dr. Rachel M.E. Wolfe



Original New York Production by  
The New York Shakespeare Festival  
George C. Wolfe, Producer

Utica University Performing and Fine Arts Department

PRESENTS

## IN THE BLOOD

By Suzan-Lori Parks

Director  
Rachel M.E. Wolfe

Stage Manager  
Shelby Deere

Assistant Stage Manager  
Kate Vaughan

Lighting Design  
Michael Diederich

Costume Designer  
Kristin Palazzoli

Set Design  
Alec Pease

Our play tonight deals with themes of homelessness, hunger, adult illiteracy, racism, sexism, and slut-shaming. If seeing this play moves you to action, the cast and crew would urge you to donate to any of the following charities, which address these problems in our area:

Thea Bowman House  
Compassion Coalition  
Evelyn's House  
House of the Good Shepherd  
Catholic Charities  
Connected Community Schools  
Rescue Mission of Utica  
Safe Inc. of Schenectady  
The Arc of Utica  
The Tangerine Grove

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Oneida County branch)



# Lafa

Do your community a favor,  
by eating bold flavor

Bring in this flyer or show it  
on your smartphone and  
we will donate **20%**  
of our sales to

**Utica Pioneer Players  
Theater Club**

**Tuesday, April 4  
4:00-8:00pm**



Lafa • 4666 Commercial Drive, New Hartford

Online orders will not be included in the fundraiser total. To ensure your purchase is counted in the fundraiser, be sure to order and pay in-restaurant.  
Gift card purchases during fundraisers do not count towards total donated sales, but purchases made with an existing gift card will count.

## Follow us on social media for updates on our department!

Instagram: @uticauniversitytheatre

Facebook: Utica University Theatre

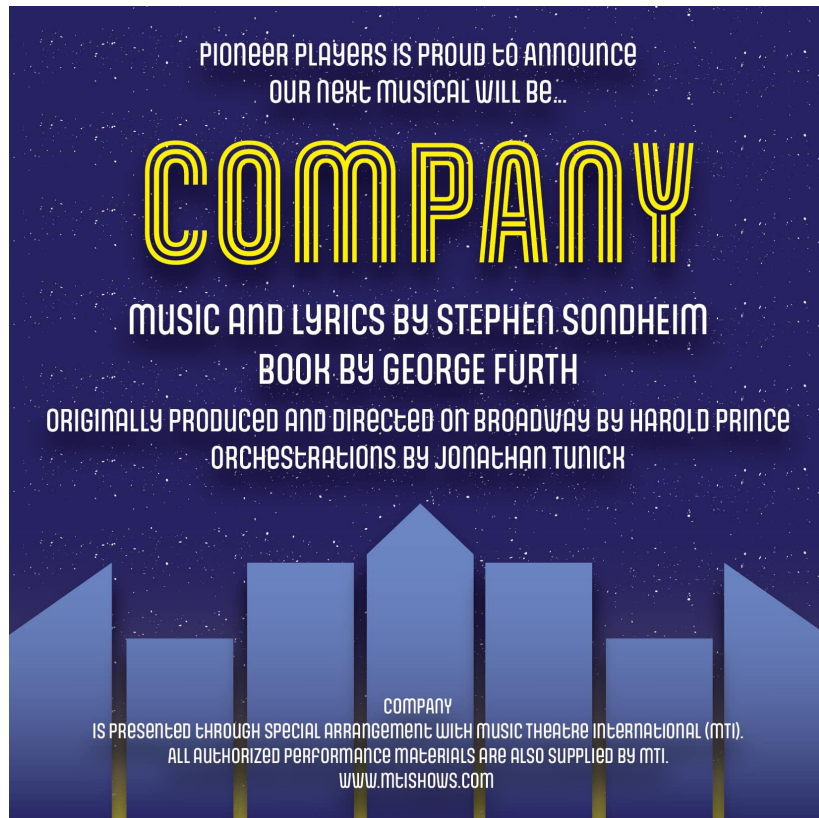
## For updates on Pioneer Players, follow their accounts!

Instagram: @uticapioneerplayers

Facebook: Utica Pioneer Players

## Be sure to come back for the Pioneer Players production of "Company" on April 20-22nd at 7:30pm!

Tickets are \$10 general admission and free for Utica University students!



## Cast List

Voertje Prather-Hester, La Negrita

Norman Booth - Chilli/Jabber, her oldest son

Tori Rentas - Welfare/Bully, her oldest daughter

Jonas America - Doctor/Trouble, her middle son

Marianne Tenney - Amiga Gringa/Beauty, her youngest daughter

Kevin Chambers - Reverend D/Baby, her youngest son

## Crew List

Director- Rachel M.E. Wolfe

Stage Manager- Shelby Deere

Assistant Stage Manager- Kate Vaughan

Light Design- Michael Diederich

Light Board Operator- Ethan Miller

Set Design- Alec Pease

Student Design Mentor- Laura Salvaggio

Costume Design- Kristin Palazzoli

Sound Design- Derek Corsner

Props Master- Jessilyn Pereira

Master Carpenter/Sfx- Patrick Hampe

Running Crew- Andi Spurr and Patrick Hampe

Social Media Manager/Program- Cailee Blackington

Photography- Anita Biernat

Dramaturgy- May Ambeau and Abbey Notar

Featured Music- Lil Moe J

Front of House- Brooke Wilson and Justin Jones

Additional Acknowledgements-

Amy Colocho, Ashley Tavarez, Quallan Brown, Andrew Clark, Jonas America, Quallan Brown, Isabelle Chambers, Angela Hawthorne, Dakota House, MaryGrace Kehrli, Kimberly Morton, Dante Palumbo, Shayla Pominville, Kira Seaman

## Director's Notes

In her contemporary riff on *The Scarlet Letter*, Suzan-Lori Parks explicitly names what Nathaniel Hawthorne's original was actually about but didn't have the words for yet: slut-shaming. Both her Hester and Hawthorne's are subjected to public shaming brought on by their motherhood, while their partners—guilty of the same sexual “crimes”—walk invisible in a world of unequal consequences for equal actions. In Park's hands, this becomes an extended meditation on intersectionality, a key term in the recently much-maligned Critical Race Theory that emerged out of Black feminism. Intersectionality means that people are treated differently based not only on their race, gender, social class, or any other category, but on how these identities intersect, such that a poor, illiterate, Black woman—like Park's Hester—is publicly shamed and disregarded in a way that the other poor characters, other illiterate characters, other Black characters, and other women (even mothers) are not.

In *In the Blood*, Hester is the connecting point for a whole circle of characters who are close reflections of Hester herself: Hester if she were middle class, Hester if she were educated, Hester if she were White, Hester if she were male. And every one of these reflections mistreats her and looks down on her even as they do the same things they condemn her for. These characters represent not only the religious establishment (as Hawthorne's Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale and Park's riff on him Reverend D. do), but several other major structures in our society, as well: the medical industry, the government, the economy, and the patriarchy. Not one of these structures values Hester's major gift to the world, her contribution to society: her capacity for love.

Hester loves dearly, fiercely, indiscriminately. Her love and care for others, whether sexual, familial, or platonic, is her most defining feature, and it is the feature that makes her the subject of shame and criticism by a society that does not value that. Instead, Hester's visibility makes her a target for the many abuses heaped on her by other characters throughout the play. And it is that neglect, that disregard of the gift of love that leads to tragedy, both onstage and in real life.

As you watch tonight, I expect audiences will be most shocked by the explicit sexuality in the play. I would urge you to push past that reaction, to find a way to be shocked not by the sex itself, but by its consequences. Because the fact that we live in a world where normal sexual activities engaged in by *most people* result in a total disregard of the needs, virtues, value, and humanity of some—who are forced to wear the title “slut” as surely as Hawthorne's Hester was forced to wear her “A”—is the thing that we ought to find truly shocking.

## Fall 2023 Arts Classes!!

### Theatre

THE 115- Introduction to Theatre (multiple sections) Fine Arts Gen Ed class. Covers how all the parts of theatre work together to make one cohesive piece of art

THE 136 Elements of Acting (multiple sections) Learn how to use your voice, body and imagination to communicate effectively

THE 300A Cabaret Workshop (CRN 9475) This T1 special topics class will help you polish a cabaret number or two and end with a Cabaret performance opportunity as part of Homecoming festivities.

THE 300 Z1 Developing and Performing Autodrama (CRN12821)

THE 320 Theatre for Social Justice (CRN 11857) DEI and Fine Arts for Gen Ed. Learn how theatre has been used to advocate for social justice, experience a range of plays in that area and experiment with how you might want to use theatre to make a statement for a cause of your choice.

THE 385 World Drama (CRN 13203) DEI and Fine Arts for Gen Ed. Learn how drama is used differently in cultures outside our own and experience examples of these differences on a personal level.

CMM 303 Storytelling (CRN 13232) Fine Arts for Gen Ed The performance and analysis of traditional storytelling.

### Music

MUS 115 Introduction to Music- Multiple Sections- Fine Arts Gen Ed.

MUS 110 Choir (CRN 8982) All are welcome to join!

MUS 120 Concert Band (CRN8335) Need to already play an instrument

MUS 170 Voice Lessons (CRN 9491) All are welcome!

MUS 230 Pep Band (CRN 13147) Need to already play an instrument, at least on a basic level.

MUS 260 String Ensemble (CRN 10920) Need to already play an instrument.

MUS 327 World Music (CRN13202) DEI and Fine Arts for Gen Ed. Discover music from cultures outside or our own and see how music is used to build a better world for all of us.

### Fine Arts

FIA 115 Introduction to Art- Multiple Sections- Fine Arts Gen Ed

FIA 245 History of Art I (CRN 10064) Fine Arts Gen Ed Learn about art from the beginning of time through the Middle Ages.

FIA 423 Art Theft and Art Fraud (CRN13201) Learn about all the ways art has been at the center of big crimes and how those crimes end up caught!

## Crew

**Dr. Rachel M.E. Wolfe** (Director) is an Assistant Professor of Theatre here at Utica University, where she teaches acting, directing, dramaturgy, play analysis, and theatre history. Her professional work as a director and dramaturg has been seen on stages in New York, California, and Seattle, WA. At Utica, she has directed *Arcadia*, *Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, *War of the Worlds*, *Trifles*, and *Chicago*. In the wake of a very warm reception for *In the Blood* from her “Black Feminisms Onstage” class, she is thrilled to finally be directing this important and timely show.

**Shelby Deere** (Stage Manager) is a graduate of UAlbany with a Bachelors in Theatre. She has previously stage managed for *Sweeney Todd* at Ilion little Theatre, *The Polar Express* at the Adirondack Scenic Railway, *Lovers & Lunatics* at UAlbany, *Pygmalion* through Connections Theatre, and *The Butler Did It* at Players of Utica. She has recently been in Players of Utica production of the one act play *Peace and Quiet* (Olive). Her past credits include *Jekyll & Hyde the Musical* (Nellie) and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Doc Robinson).

**Ethan Miller** (Light Board Operator) has been a lighting and sound tech since Junior High School, as well as been a part of various stage crews. This is his first production at Utica University. Ethan is in his third year and is studying Communications with a concentration in theatre. He has always loved working behind the scenes to help make the shows happen and run smoothly. That way it is as memorable as possible for everybody who comes to watch.

**Alec Pease** (Set Designer) is an alumnus of Utica University, and they are currently employed at Emerson College as the Assistant Technical Director for the Office of the Arts. They have been both a performer on the Utica University stage (*Cabaret*, *Arcadia*, *I Hate Shakespeare*, *Urinetown*, *The Ghost Stories at Yotsuya*, *Something Rotten*), and they have helped design and build several of these shows namely *Spring Awakening*, *Trifles*, and *Chicago*. Alec would like to thank Laura Salvaggio, Rachel Wolfe, and Kristen Palazzoli for encouraging their passions, and providing opportunities to learn and grow. They would like to encourage their friends back at school to keep at it! The world is wide after school, learn what you can now but remember you are not done learning when you leave.

**Kate Vaughan** (Assistant Stage Manager) is an undergraduate student at Utica University and studying Computer Science with a concentration in Cybersecurity. She has previously been a part of her high school's crew, choir and orchestra. Missing being part of the music department, she's happy to be given this opportunity to learn stage management. (And no Jonas, pineapple does not belong on pizza.)

## Dramaturg's Notes

*In The Blood*, written by Suzan-Lori Parks, is an adaptation of the American classic *The Scarlet Letter*. *In The Blood* tells the story of Hester *La Negrita*, a homeless, single, African-American mother attempting to raise her five children without any of their father figures present. Hester spends her days trying to make a better life for her family while dealing with the fact that her reputation in her society is that of an illiterate, uneducated “slut”.

One of the major themes of this story is the use of language and how lacking the ability to understand and use language properly can set one back in life. Hester's social ranking plays a key role in this story, due to her lack of knowledge and literacy abilities she is viewed in a much worse regard than most others in her society. This poor view of her directly affects her children, who are viewed in a similarly negative light. Over 20% (45 million) of Americans today are illiterate, adults who are unable to read and write are much more likely to experience long-term poverty and worse overall health throughout their lives. If children in low-income areas were able to receive the tools to have basic reading and writing skills, over half of the illiteracy in America would be eliminated.

Hester is a living example of how having a basic understanding of language could change one's life, as she would be much more likely to be able to get herself and her children out of poverty and get herself taken care of.

## Suzan-Lori Parks

Named among *Time* magazine's "100 Innovators for the Next Wave," Suzan-Lori Parks is one of the most acclaimed playwrights in American drama today. She is the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, is a MacArthur "Genius" Award recipient, and in 2015 was awarded the prestigious Gish Prize for Excellence in the Arts. Other grants and awards include those from the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts and New York Foundation for the Arts. She is also a recipient of a Lila-Wallace Reader's Digest Award, a CalArts/Alpert Award in the Arts, and a Guggenheim Foundation Grant. She is an alum of New Dramatists and of Mount Holyoke College.

Parks' project *365 Days/365 Plays* (where she wrote a play a day for an entire year) was produced in over 700 theaters worldwide, creating one of the largest grassroots collaborations in theater history.

Her other plays include: *Topdog/Underdog* (2002 Pulitzer Prize winner); *The Book of Grace*; *Unchain My Heart: The Ray Charles Musical*; *In the Blood* (2000 Pulitzer Prize finalist); *Venus* (1996 OBIE Award); *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*; *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom* (1990 OBIE Award, Best New American Play); *The America Play* and *Fucking A*. Her adaptation of *The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess* won the 2012 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical. Her newest plays, *Father Comes Home From The Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*—set during the Civil War—was awarded the Horton Foote Prize, the Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama as well as being a 2015 Pulitzer Prize Finalist.

## Cast

**Jonas America** (Doctor/Trouble) is a recent transfer into the theatre program at UU from across the Parkway at MVCC. He is very thankful for the opportunity to be part of the cast and work alongside the crew. Also, he can finally make his parents proud by saying, "I'm a doctor!" He thanks you for coming and hopes you enjoy the show! Also, for the record, pineapple does belong on pizza.

**Norman Booth** (Jabber/Chili) is a second-year student here at Utica University. He is currently a Construction Management major who plays on the football team and is a resident assistant as well. This is Norman's third major involvement in a play since he's been at college and his fourth overall. Norman has taken on roles in *Chicago* and *Almost, Maine*. He is very excited to take on the roles of Chili and Jabber in this performance.

**Kevin Chambers** (Reverend/Baby) is an English Major. He is a Sophomore and has previously worked on stage crew for Utica University's production of *Chicago*.

**Voertje Prather** (Hester) has been in many productions in the past, but her favorite is in *In the Blood*. It's one of those roles you can't help but to be excited about. What drew her to *In the Blood* and the character, Hester, was the message. Even though she cannot relate to Hester and her struggles, she understands them. A woman who wants to provide and wants the best for her children. While Hester seeks help from the system(s) in place to help women in her situation, the system(s) abuse and take advantage of her. Women of color in poverty have dealt with this for years. She is happy Dr. Wolfe chose this play to show awareness & hopefully the audience takes something away from this show.

**Tori Rentas** (Welfare/Bully) is a freshman and a health science major currently, but soon to be nursing major. This will be her debut play she will be performing in (and hopefully won't be her last). This is her first stage performance in her entire life, but she has been honored to be a former student of Director Rachel Wolfe in her acting class and theatre class with Laura Salvaggio. They have both been amazing professors and helped her learn about the arts of acting and theatre. Being an actress has always been a dream come true. Learning her character such as Welfare and, realized the hard truth women are faced with when it comes to judgmental caseworkers. She is so grateful to be given this opportunity and very happy to display the melodramatic acting skills her mother always talked about. Thank you.

**Marianne Tenney** (Amiga Gringa/Beauty) has always found herself on stage either acting, singing, or both. She has been in multiple productions, starting with *The Wizard of Oz* at the age of 6, and then doing drama club productions in high school and other performances of community theatre. Recently she played Matron Mama Morton in Utica University's production of *Chicago* last spring.