LAUREN A. WHITEHEAD

Lauren Whitehead is a writer, performer and MFA recipient in Dramaturgy (Columbia University). She writes in several forms including poetry, nonfiction, adaptations, and drama. Her writings have been published in *Apogee Journal, Winter Tangerine, HEArt Online Journal* and in selected anthologies including *Break Beat Poets, Vol. 2: Black Girl Magic*. Most recently, Lauren adapted Ta-Nehisi Coates’s award-winning memoir, *Between the World and Me*, for staging at the Apollo Theater and the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts (dir. Kamilah Forbes).

Lauren has performed her work in venues around the country including the Sundance Film Festival, the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and The Nuyorican Poets Café. Last fall, Lauren originated the leading role of “Un/Sung” in the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved* which she has performed at the Wilma Theater, the Apollo Theater, and at the Stadsschouwburg Theater in Amsterdam (dir. Bill T. Jones).

Lauren is a Sundance Theater Lab Fellow and she has worked as a dramaturg at Hedgebrook and at the Denver Center for Performing Arts. In addition to maintaining a long list of freelance dramaturgy clients, her work as a writing coach was featured in two documentaries, *Russell Simmons Presents: Brave New Voices* (HBO) and *Don’t Be Nice* (2018).

Lauren teaches dramaturgy and playwriting at The New School in New York.

Credits

*Blue*, commissioned by the Glimmerglass Festival, is a new co-production with Washington National Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. More info at glimmerglass.org/events/blue/

The theatrical adaptation of *Between the World and Me* was produced by the Apollo Theater in collaboration with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, who co-commissioned the work. More info at: apollotheater.org/event/between-the-world-and-me-2/

Special thanks to the Glimmerglass Festival and the Apollo Theater.

On behalf of NationalSawdust+, Elena Park and Jeff Tang would also like to thank Ta-Nehisi Coates, One World, Peoplmovr, City Center, All Arts, and McNally Jackson Books for their support.

About NationalSawdust+

NationalSawdust+, a lively performance and conversation series curated by Elena Park, brings together luminaries from across disciplines to share their passion for music and explore ideas, making surprising connections. The series taps artists and thinkers from theater, film, visual art, literature, science, and beyond to create insightful, often topical, programs.

Tuesday, May 14 at 7:30pm  An evening with Moby + John Hodgman

Thursday, May 23 at 8pm  Paul Muldoon’s *Against the Grain*
                      Min Jin Lee, Tracy K. Smith, and So Percussion
of Ta-Nehisi Coates’s New York Times. Approaching its 85th year, the Apollo Theater remains dedicated to the projection of the African-American narrative and its role in the development of American and global culture. Forbes’s recent projects include directing the sold-out world premiere and theatrical adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates’s New York Times best-selling book Between the World and Me.

Kamilah is noted for having a strong commitment to the development of creative works by, for, and about the Hip-Hop Generation. Prior to her tenure at the Apollo Theater, Forbes led the Hip-Hop Theater Festival, growing it from a fledgling project into an independent non-profit organization.

RICHARD GRAY
Richard Gray is the Deputy Director of Community Organizing and Engagement Programs at the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University (Metro Center), which provides support and strategic assistance to community and youth organizing public education campaigns and programs in New York City and nationally; it helps build alliances among CBOs, unions, and research/policy institutes. Richard also incorporates film in his work, serving as Executive Producer of Vision to Victory: An Education Roadmap for a New Mayor (2016) and Culturally Responsive Education: A Short Film Series (2018). As a lecturer at Columbia Law School, he helps students apply their legal training to advance authentic collaboration between educational institutions and communities.

Previously, Richard directed the Community Organizing and Engagement at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University and Annenberg’s Center for Education Organizing at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform; he also served as the Director of National Technical Assistance at NYU’s Institute for Education and Social Policy and the Co-Executive Director of the National Coalition of Advocates for Students, a network of child advocacy organizations that works to improve access to quality public education for traditionally underserved student populations.

Richard is a board member of Sweet Blackberry, which produces inspiring animated films for children about little-known African American achievements, and the Broadway Advocacy Coalition, which builds the capacity of advocates, students, artists, organizations, and communities to use the arts as an integral part of their social change work.

Richard has a B.A. in History from Brown University and J.D. from the University of California at Berkeley.

BRIANA ELYSE HUNTER
This summer Briana Elyse Hunter will create the role of Mother in the world premiere of Blue at the Glimmerglass Festival. Her previous credits include Carmen (Carmen, Mercédès), La Tragédie de Carmen (Carmen), Little Women (Jo), Xerxes (Arsamenes), Iolantha (Laura), La Fanciulla del West (Wowkle), and La Traviata (Flora). She won the 2018 EncoreMichigan Wilde Award for “Best Performance in an Opera” for her portrayal of Gertrude Stein in Ricky Ian Gordon’s 27. She has been on the rosters of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Santa Fe Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Knoxville Opera, UrbanArias, American Opera Projects, Opera in the Heights, I SING BEIJING, Sarasota Opera, El Paso Opera, and Music Academy of the West, where she sang the title role of Carmen under the tutelage of the great Marilyn Horne. She recently made her Lincoln Center Theater debut in their gala performance of Camelot starring Lin-Manuel Miranda, and completed a workshop of Intimate Apparel by Ricky Ian Gordon and Lynn Nottage, directed by Bartlett Sher also at Lincoln Center Theater. Next month she will make her role debut as Hannah after in Laura Kaminsky’s As One at Merkin Hall.

CHRIS JACKSON
Chris Jackson is the publisher and editor-in-chief of One World, a newly relaunched imprint of Random House. His work as an editor includes Ta-Nehisi Coates’s Between the World and Me and other titles, as well as a wide range of award-winning and best-selling authors, including Bryan Stevenson, Jill Leovy, Trevor Noah, Matt Taibbi, and Eddie Huang. One World’s forthcoming lists include Marwan Hisham, Molly Crabapple, Mona Hanna-Attisha, Jean Guerrero, Nikole Hannah-Jones, Ibram X. Kendi, and Valarie Kaur. His own writing has appeared in The Paris Review, Callalloo, The Atlantic.com, and other outlets. He was recently named one of “12 Leaders Who Are Shaping the Next Generation of Artists” in The Art of Optimism, a TIME Magazine special issue edited by Ava DuVernay. He lives in New York.

JEANINE TESORI
Jeanine Tesori won the Tony Award for Best Original Score with Lisa Kron for the musical Fun Home. She has also written Tony-nominated scores for Twelfth Night at Lincoln Center; Thoroughly Modern Millie (lyrics, Dick Scanlan); Caroline, or Change (lyrics, Tony Kushner); and Shrek The Musical (lyrics, David Lindsay-Abaire). The production of Caroline, or Change at the National Theatre in London received the Olivier Award for Best New Musical. Her 1997 Off-Broadway musical Violet (lyrics, Brian Crawley) opened on Broadway in 2014 and garnered four Tony nominations, including Best Musical Revival. Her operas include Blizzard on Marblehead Neck (Met/LCT Opera/Theater and Glimmerglass Opera commission) and The Lion, The Unicorn, and Me (libretto, J. D. McClatchy, Kennedy Center). Her upcoming collaboration with Tazewell Thompson, Blue, will premiere this season. Music for plays: Mother Courage (dir. George C. Wolfe, with Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline), John Guare’s A Free Man of Color (Lincoln Center Theater, dir. George C. Wolfe), and Romeo and Juliet (Delacorte Gala). Film scores: Nights in Rodanthe, Every Day, and You’re Not You. Jeanine is a member of the Dramatists Guild and was cited by the ASCAP as the first female composer to have two new musicals running concurrently on Broadway. She was the founding artistic director of Encores! Off-Center at New York City Center, and a lecturer in music at Yale University. She is the founding Creative Director of the non-profit A BroaderWay, an arts empowerment program for young women, and was given the Einhorn Mentorship Award by Primary Stages for her exceptional work with young artists. Most of all, she is the proud parent of Siena Rafter.