

# A PIONEERING COLLABORATION

ArtsEmerson Executive Director Rob Orchard, and Company One Artistic Director Shawn LaCount, welcome you to Jackie Sibblies Drury's humorous and harrowing *WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT A PRESENTATION ABOUT THE HERERO OF NAMIBIA, FORMERLY KNOWN AS SOUTHWEST AFRICA, FROM THE GERMAN SUDWESTAFRIKA, BETWEEN THE YEARS 1884-1915*, directed by Company One founding member, Summer L. Williams. The collaboration between these two organizations is an exciting first, celebrating the local and global at once. This performance is part of ArtsEmerson's Pioneers Series, celebrating a younger generation of artists dedicated to redefining the forms and charting a path to the future.

## ***How does Jackie's work fit under the "Pioneers" umbrella? How does the play chart new territory?***

SHAWN: Jackie is a playwright with an important and unique voice whose acclaim seems to be rising quickly in the American theatre. Her plays don't feel like plays, but rather like an audience has stumbled into a situation where a group of people are trying to do something of significance, together, against towering odds. Her work is simultaneously hilarious, political and fearless. She relies on the vulnerability and theatricality of the moment, the awkwardness of relationship, and the honesty of the performers. Company One Theatre is always interested in collaborating with a diverse group of exciting new playmakers dedicated to socially provocative work and the creation of unique theatrical events. We call it, simply: "What's Next."

ROB: I've always been curious about the term "metatheatre," not truly understanding its precise definition. It's likely a form that attracts a younger generation both as creators and spectators. There's a wink of sorts to this style of "play," where performers are aware of their own theatricality and levels of meaning emerge from stories within stories. The style toys with reality and revels in an appearance of confusion—even lunacy. Extremes of fun, and then not; comedy turning on tragedy. There's a display of virtuosity in the theatrical form where the audience is in on the joke, and then the joke is on them. That's when something truly profound emerges. It's pushing the boundaries and that's exciting to me.

***Company One is a small local theatre, committed to developing and producing new work that paints a picture as diverse and socially complex as the world we live in. ArtsEmerson presents the most compelling and dynamic contemporary work from around the world. Why is this the right project (or moment) to bring these two organizations together?***

ROB: Company One Theatre may be small but they are mighty, and celebrating their 15th year. Oftentimes we

equate small with young. This is a mature organization with a proven body of work dedicated to Boston and it's glorious complexity. I so much admire the clarity of their mission—what they say is what they do. We are honored to play a role in marking this anniversary year.

SHAWN: I am enamored of what ArtsEmerson has done to stretch and enrich Boston's cultural landscape since it began in 2010. I like to believe that Company One and ArtsEmerson have similar values within their programming, and it's an honor to represent the local theatre as part of ArtsEmerson's illustrious season. This play is perfect for our collaboration as it's a bit of a mirror to that relationship: a troupe of localized performers are daring to authentically explore major global issues.

## ***How is the spirit of this writer and play emblematic of what these two organizations are trying to do together, for Boston?***

SHAWN: Jackie's play is of enormous value. Her sense of humor is sharp and contagious, but in the end her play is poignant, relevant and challenging. How little do we know about history and unthinkable genocide around the globe? Who is allowed to investigate and create art based on the experiences of others? This play is strange and gritty and works best when serving a broad audience. Collaborating with ArtsEmerson helps to root a work that is inherently experimental and bold.

ROB: I want ArtsEmerson to be adding to the artistic choices for the community, to be filling programming voids. That's why doing international work from different cultures was important. Boston has rarely been on the world theatre circuit. I want to enhance Boston's reputation as a place where new work gets born and that means aligning a younger generation of artists with a youthful audience. We need to ignite interest in theatre, and that's what Jackie and Company One are doing.