THE NEGRO ENSEMBLE COMPANY, INC

PRESENTS

The House of the Negro Insane

BY

TERENCE ANTHONY

DIRECTED BY

DANIEL CARLTON

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– CAST –

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Attius	BENJAMIN C. ROWE
Henry	ROB PENTY
Effie	WADIAH WALIAH
Madeleine	SIDNEY HATCHER

– CREATIVE TEAM –

Playwright	TERENCE ANTHONY
Director	DANIEL CARLTON
Executive Producer	DOUGLAS WADE
Production Stage Manager	REGGIE WILSON
Scenic & Set Designer	CHRIS CUMBERBATCH
Master Carpenter	TONY DAVIDSON
Costume Design	KATHERINE ROBERSON
Sound Design	LINWOOD BOOKER
Lighting Design	ANTOINETTE TYNES
Property Master	MARLON CAMPBELL
Projections	LINWOOD BOOKER
Assistant Stage Manager/Stage Hand	RYAN SETT
Scenic Painters	TALIA CUMBERBATCH, SAHARRAH DUKES GABRIELLE-NICOLE DUKES, ANGEL SMITH
Fight Coordinator	REGGIE WILSON
Voiceovers	AARON GOLD, DANIEL CARLTON

Run time: 90 minutes with no intermission

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

It all began with *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, the story of the Black woman whose cells were harvested for cancer research without her consent. In a single chapter, the book focuses on Henrietta's daughter, who died at the Crownsville Hospital for the Negro Insane.

I'd never heard of a "Hospital for the Negro Insane" before, so I began researching. I started a long dive into the history of the psychiatric institutions established across the country in the early twentieth century to isolate and incarcerate African Americans.

Flash forward a few years: I'm reading old handwritten commitment papers at the Library of Virginia archives in Richmond and getting chased off the grounds of the long-shuttered hospital in Crownsville by a particularly testy security guard.

That journey of discovery became the play you are about to see. It draws from many histories to imagine the lives of the Black men, women, and children swallowed up by the state and, too often, forgotten by history.

— Terence Anthony

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

After several readings of this play, I kept asking myself why this environment—so unfamiliar to me—also resonates on many levels. The unfamiliarity lies in the setting: an institution that specifically focused on declaring African Americans insane and using this as an opportunity to perform layers of unspeakable experiments on them. The familiar is the insanity of racism, dehumanization, and how important (and difficult) it is to lift the veil enough to learn these hidden stories. How does one stage both the physical and psychological horror show of such a reality? I kept returning to the great poet Audre Lorde's poem, "A Litany for Survival," until it became the guiding light of my approach to the play.

Here is an excerpt from her poem:

"when we are loved we are afraid
love will vanish
when we are alone we are afraid
love will never return
and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid
So it is better to speak
remembering
We were never meant to survive"

My hope is that you bear witness not only with your eyes, but also from the perspective of the spark in these characters that refuses to die. In our collective seeing and hearing of their stories, we observe not just a horror show, but a testament to resilience against all odds. Humanity becomes a form of rebellion; connection becomes a radical gesture. Humor and music serve as the language of resistance, both internally and externally.

I hope that we continue to discuss within our communities how our witnessing can be:

A reminder of the past.
A warning for the present.
A question for the future

— Daniel Carlton

BENJAMIN C. ROWE
(Attius)



Benjamin C. Rowe is a New York-based actor working across stage and screen. A three-time AUDELCO nominee, he won Lead Actor in a Play for ***Day of Absence***, produced by The Negro Ensemble Company, Inc. in 2025. He extends heartfelt thanks to his wife, Dawn, and their children, Julian, Da'Wren, Jahanna, and Indirabelle, for their continued love, support, and sacrifices in sharing him with the creative world.

ROB PENTY
(Henry)



Rob Penty is excited to be working with The Negro Ensemble Company, Inc as Henry in ***The House of the Negro Insane***. Rob is an accomplished storyteller and has trained extensively in improv. He is currently part of the group Neptune at the Magnet Theater. He would like to thank his friends and family and dedicate this performance to his mother, Jene.

WADIAH WALIAH
(Effie)



Wadiah Waliah is an actor and writer from Newark, NJ. Theater credits include ***No Ordinary Days***, ***The Fire This Time*** (standby), ***Slow Bullet My Three Loves***, ***A Typical Sunday***, ***The Black Narrative***, ***Yellow Butterfly***, ***Zooman and the Sign***, and ***In Between Time***. Film credits include *Gazer*, which premiered at Cannes. She trained with Marishka Phillips, Charles Weldon, Arthur French, Anthony Abeson, and Petronia Paley, and is delighted to be working with The Negro Ensemble Company, Inc.

SIDNEY HATCHER
(Madeleine)



Sidney is a dynamic 11-year-old performer, actor, and dedicated honor student from Queens, New York. Her notable stage credits include ***Black Love***, ***The Block Association*** (young Pauline), ***Juneteenth-History Park***, and ***T'was the Night Before Kwanzaa*** featuring an excerpt showcase at the Schomburg Center, highlighting her versatile range in dual roles. Also a talented dancer with eight years of formal training, Sidney serves as captain of the Golden Dancerettes majorette team. She recently earned a national MVP title, led her team to Grand Champion, and opened for Rip Michaels' ***Wild 'n Out*** comedy show at the iconic Apollo Theater.

TERENCE ANTHONY
(Playwright)

Terence Anthony is a playwright and TV writer based in Los Angeles. Television credits include *Lawmen: Bass Reeves* for Paramount+ and an upcoming Netflix series. His plays have been developed and produced nationwide, including ***Godspeed***, ***The House of the Negro Insane***, ***Burners***, ***Euphrates***, and ***Tombolo***. His work has been featured by organizations including Denver Center, the Contemporary American Theater Festival, PlayPenn, and the Bay Area Playwrights Festival.

DANIEL CARLTON
(Director)

Daniel Carlton is thrilled to make his 59E59 directing debut with this production. Recent credits include ***Hero: The Boy From Troy***, Nambi E. Kelley's ***Jabari Dreams of Freedom***, and, with Mad River Theater Works, the national tours of ***Keep Marching***, ***Freedom Flight***, and ***Freedom Riders***. Additional credits include ***Night Train 57***, ***What If?***, ***Go Tell It From the Mountain***, ***Shelter: Refugees of the American Dream***, ***March On***,

Check Yo Invite Parts 1 & 2, ***Pigfoot Mary Says Goodbye to the Harlem Renaissance***, and ***This Ability***. He is also an actor and creator of work in schools, shelters, jails, and other community spaces.

DOUGLAS WADE

(Executive Producer)

Douglas Wade is delighted to be producing ***The House of the Negro Insane*** at 59E59 Theaters. Douglas' producing credits include ***Unentitled***, ***Fences***, ***The Piano Lesson***, ***The Meeting***, and ***Thurgood***. Douglas is also a multi-AUDELCO Award winner. As an actor, his credits include August Wilson's ***Fences***, ***Two Trains Running***, ***The Piano Lesson***, George Steven's ***Thurgood***, Levy Lee's ***Smell The Power***, and Jeff Stetson's ***The Meeting***. Douglas would like to thank this incredible cast, creative team, and his family & friends for their continued support.

REGGIE WILSON

(Production Stage Manager & Fight Coordinator)

Reginald "Reggie" Wilson began his career at The New Federal Theatre and is a multi-AUDELCO Award winner. Notable credits include ***Ma Rainey's Black Bottom***, ***Sugar Ray***, ***Fences***, ***Zooman and the Sign***, ***The Meeting***, and ***Black Angels Over Tuskegee***. He has also directed and assistant directed for NEC. Wilson's plays include ***Scrambled Eggs***, ***Da Rapture***, and ***Platinum Grilled and Spirit Filled***. He has a BA from Florida A&M University and an MFA from The University of Florida.

CHRIS CUMBERBATCH

(Scenic & Set Design)

Christopher Cumberbatch is an acclaimed artist and graduate of Art and Design High School and Parsons School of Design. A Local 829 Scenic Artists Union member for more than 20 years, he also operates a decorative paint company. His television credits include *The TV Glows*, *The Best Man 3*, *Michael Che's Comedy Show*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Nora from Queens*, *The Crew*, and *Prodigal Son*. Film credits include *Monster*, *Malcolm X*, *Crooklyn*, *Highest to Lowest*, and *A Bronx Tale*. A 2017 National Black Theater Festival Lifetime Achievement honoree, he has received six AUDELCO Awards.

KATHERINE ROBERSON

(Costume Design)

Katherine Roberson is pleased to return to work with The Negro Ensemble Company, Inc. Select credits include ***The Constant Wife***, ***Egg and Butter Man***, and NEC's ***Day of Absence***. She has also worked with The Public Theater, New Federal Theatre, National Black Theatre, and on ***Greenwood*** at the National Black Theater Festival, among many other productions.

LINWOOD BOOKER

(Sound Design & Projections)

Linwood Booker is a New York-based sound, video, and projection designer for theater, film, and live performance. Recent credits include NEC's ***Day of Absence/Remaining Absent***, Leila A. Wright's ***I Represent Queens, He Was Raised Out of Brooklyn***, Black Spectrum Theatre's ***History Park*** series, ***Black Love***, ***The Last Block Association***, and Michael Green's ***39 Steps***. He is also a musician, filmmaker, photographer, videographer, and editor.

ANTOINETTE TYNES

(Lighting Design)

Antoinette Tynes is a veteran lighting designer, Hampton University graduate, and member of United Scenic Artists. A recipient of the National Black Theatre Festival's Outstanding Achievement in Lighting Design Award, she has earned multiple AUDELCO Awards, including for NEC's ***Day of Absence***. Her extensive credits include productions with New Federal Theatre, Crossroads Theatre Company, Castillo Theatre, Lincoln Center's GospelFest, and national tours such as ***Mama I Want to Sing***. She is grateful to be part of this production.

MARLON CAMPBELL
(Property Master)

Marlon Campbell is a performer, production designer, and technical director with extensive experience in live performance. He served as technical coordinator of Bermuda's Ruth Seaton James Centre for the Performing Arts and developed theater production curricula in New Jersey and New York. As production stage manager and technical director for ***Mama, I Want to Sing!***, he oversaw productions worldwide. His Negro Ensemble Company, Inc. credits include ***Day of Absence***, ***Eminently Yours***, ***No Ordinary Day***, and ***Unentitled***. A recipient of numerous civic honors, he was named Executive Theatre Director of the Year by Success in the Arts in 2020.

SPECIAL THANKS

Marisa Louis and Bruce Hatcher, Vanessa Pringle, Karen Jean Radley, Tatiana Perry.

This production is in memory of Ralph McCain. Loving husband, father, grandfather, NEC Inc. Board Chairman; consummate professional actor; and friend to many. We remember Ralph as a film and theatre pioneer.

THE NEGRO ENSEMBLE COMPANY, INC.

The Negro Ensemble Company, Inc. (NEC) was established in 2005 as a restructured incarnation of the original Negro Ensemble Company, which was co-founded in 1967 by Douglas Turner Ward, Robert Hooks, and Gerald S. Krone. Having assembled a cadre of talented artists and craftspeople, the original Negro Ensemble Company provided visibility, training, and development for scores of gifted artists while presenting complex themes, international viewpoints, and works that comprised the canon of Black theatre going forward even as it set the stage for future artists.

As NEC Inc. approaches today's social and political parallels, rife with retractions of the very human rights at the centerpiece of the struggle of the souls of Black folks, NEC Inc.'s present mission remains steadfast in ensuring that important narratives stay at the forefront of American theatre. NEC Inc. champions the revival of significant works that have shaped American theatre and offers emerging artists opportunities to explore the depth of storytelling the original Negro Ensemble Company was known for. To learn more, attend a show, or support its mission, visit NECInc.org. NEC Inc. is a Co-Op Resident Company at 59E59 Theaters.

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Behind-the-scenes perspectives and experiences from our community

Callboard is a place for our producing theater companies, artists, and staff to share their thoughts on the inner workings of the Off Broadway scene.

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CURATOR'S NOTE

We are thrilled to welcome back our Co-Op Resident Company, Negro Ensemble Company, whose mission is to present live theater by and about Black people for a culturally diverse audience, often reaching those underserved by the theatrical community.

What drew me to program this play was not only the little-known history of a real institution, but also its profound humanity. The hope and resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable injustice stayed with me long after I first encountered this play. I knew it was a story that deserved to be shared with you.



Val

VAL DAY
Artistic Director,
59E59 Theaters

59E59 THEATERS STAFF

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ELYSABETH KLEINHANS

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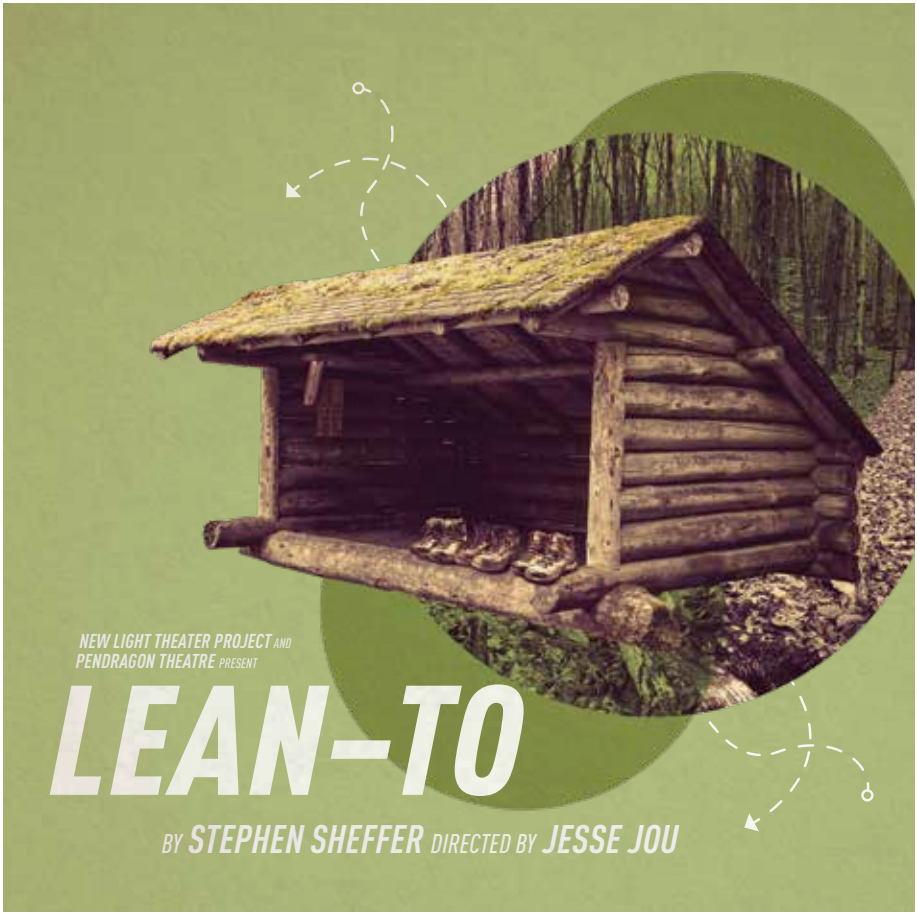
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OUR MISSION

59E59 Theaters was established by the Elysabeth Kleinhans Theatrical Foundation in 2004 to grant professional space and expertise to non-profit theater companies premiering their work in New York City. Under the leadership of Val Day, Artistic Director, and Brian Beirne, Managing Director, 59E59 Theaters presents a year-round curated program of Off Broadway plays and musicals that are nurtured and supported by providing performance spaces and equipment as well as production, ticketing, FOH, marketing, and press support. These theater companies receive 80% or more of the ticket revenue and pay no weekly rent to 59E59.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

59E59 Theaters reside on the traditional homelands of the Lenni-Lenape People on the Lenape Island of Mannahatta. We acknowledge the Lenni-Lenape as the original people of the land who were forcefully removed during colonization resulting in erased and excluded peoples and culture. We are grateful for the opportunity to work on the land and honor their elders, past and present alongside future generations for their stewardship and continuing relationship with their territory.

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