My Children! My Africa!

By Athol Fugard
Co-Directed by James A. Williams and Jamil Jude

NOV 11–29, 2015
on the Andy Boss Thrust Stage

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“What is wrong with this world that it wants to waste you all like that...my children...my Africa!” — Athol Fugard, My Children! My Africa!

Dear Park Square Patron,

How long must we wait for equality? How far can art and education really take us?

This play asks questions and doesn’t presume to give the answers. These characters say the things we may think, but don’t dare say ourselves.

We tell everyone what a smart audience you are. (And that goes for the teenagers coming with their schools during the day as well as the adults coming in the evening!)

You are willing to explore difficult questions. You work for change in your community. You don’t want theatre that tells you what to think, but instead sparks your thought process.

Enjoy your time today with the smart and active citizens on this stage. We believe that having this difficult conversation together in this beautifully intimate room can spark change – first within ourselves, and then in our community.

And to the 35,000 students who will see this production and many others this season at Park Square: You are of great value. Make the most of yourself. We can’t wait to see where you take us.

Gratefully,

Richard Cook, Artistic Director
651.767.8482 | cook@parksquaretheatre.org

C. Michael-jon Pease, Executive Director, CFRE
651.767.8497 | pease@parksquaretheatre.org

OUR MISSION is to enrich our community by producing and presenting exceptional live theatre that touches the heart, engages the mind and delights the spirit.
IN 1985, IN A SEGREGATED TOWNSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA, an idealistic teacher believes education – and poetry – can create a better future for his students. Amid anti-apartheid rioting, Mr. M hopes to offer reconciliation by forming a debate club between his black school students and the local white school students. But as neighborhood tensions escalate, students and teacher find themselves along the blurry line between revolution and terrorism. The shocking conclusion is a timely reminder that one person’s tragedy and a community’s deep sense of loss are inextricably linked.

THE PLAYWRIGHT ATHOL FUGARD is a South African director, actor, and writer of more than thirty plays. He is best known for creating works confronting the racial segregation of apartheid, and today continues to pen insightful plays addressing modern inequality.

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My Children! My Africa!

By Athol Fugard

Co-Director............... James A. Williams*
Co-Director............... Jamil Jude
Dialect Coach............. Lucinda Holshue
Dramaturg ................ Gina Musto
Scenic Designer........... Lance Brockman
Costume Designer......... Trevor D. Bowen
Lighting Designer......... Michael P. Kittel
Sound Designer........... Katharine Horowitz
Properties Designer....... Connor McEvoy
Stage Manager............ Megan Fae Dougherty*

CAST
Mr. M........................ Warren C. Bowles*
Thami....................... Cage Sebastian Pierre
Isabel....................... Devon Cox

SETTING
Camdeboo and Brakwater, South Africa, 1985

PERFORMANCE TIME
The performance will run 2 hours, 20 minutes (plus intermission).

“My Children! My Africa!” is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

As a courtesy to our actors and those around you, please DEACTIVATE all PHONES and ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

Park Square Theatre is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre.
At the beginning of Athol Fugard’s play, Mr. M feels the need to remind his boisterous students just what exactly a debate should be: “The orderly and regulated discussion of an issue with opposing viewpoints receiving equal time and consideration.” It’s a laudable goal, and it’s no coincidence the author places it among his play’s opening lines. Mr. M hopes his new debate club will help bring together a fracturing community, and he defines the goal on the basis of equality, comity, and peace. Fugard was well aware that Mr. M is an idealist, and, as the play’s central conflict suggests, perhaps there’s no better place for an idealist than in a school.

There is a significant tradition in the arts of works that take place in educational settings. From Goodbye, Mr. Chips (1934) to The Perks of Being a Wallflower (1999), schools are perfect environments to depict adolescent characters coming of age. They are also archetypical locations where people who have nothing in common are forced to share a space. Filmmakers have found success in exploring issues of social justice and reform inside high schools. Stand and Deliver (1988), Lean on Me (1989), Dangerous Minds (1995), and The Great Debaters (2007) are prominent examples that showcase educational settings as oases within landscapes of violence and prejudice.

The stories that make up this tradition often feature a heroic educator entering a disadvantaged environment, but Fugard’s play offers a powerful reversal. In contrast with the teachers in those films, Mr. M lacks the power to teach what he would like. In 1953, the apartheid government of South Africa passed the Bantu Education Act, which officially segregated schools and restricted the material that could be taught to non-white students. In mandating European-based material, the law sought to remove any trace of indigenous culture from the educational system. The students in Stand and Deliver and Lean on Me may not have thrived without their teachers’ valiant efforts, but in My Children! My Africa! it’s the efforts of the students and their almighty love of learning that make them the heroes.
Matt DiCintio was a producing director for Emigrant Theater and a dramaturg for Park Square and the Guthrie, among others. His writing has been published in the new Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy, Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama, American Theatre and City Pages. Matt is pursuing a PhD in Drama at Tufts University.

My Children! My Africa! is not unique within Fugard’s oeuvre, as it delves into issues the playwright has explored for more than five decades: racial justice, the effects of apartheid, the promise of the future. Fugard wrote the play in 1989, just one year before Nelson Mandela was released from prison amid a multi-year negotiation to end apartheid policies. In 1985, when the play is set, such progress was hardly imminent. Since the official institution of apartheid in 1948, South Africa had witnessed peaceful resistance and outright revolt against racist government policies. By the early 1980s, the African National Congress sought to topple local leaders through peaceful boycotts as well as violent action. It was hotly debated which form of protest would bring about the swiftest change. Unfortunately, it was not always a debate that followed Mr. M’s rules, which makes the setting of My Children! My Africa! tragically ironic.

It’s not difficult to see the parallels between Fugard’s play and the conversations that have arisen after the events in Ferguson. When a leader of Black Lives Matter interrupted Bernie Sanders at an August campaign event, some commentators and activists challenged the group’s methodology. The efforts of that group in no way approach the dire anti-apartheid activities in Fugard’s play, but Thami’s actions remind us that the greatest value of a debate may be its inherent peacefulness, just as Mr. M described.

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JAMES A. WILLIAMS*  
Co-Director  
James A. Williams is a founding member of Penumbra Theatre Company, where he helped create new works with noted playwrights Carlyle Brown and Charles Smith. His work at Penumbra also laid the foundation for lifelong relationships with celebrated director Marion McClinton and playwright August Wilson. During his four year stint in the Guthrie Theater’s Acting Company, Williams worked with a renowned group of directors including Doug Hughes, Bill T. Jones, Robert Woodruff and Bart Sher. He has worked Off-Broadway in Jitney, My Children! My Africa! and Wilson’s The Piano Lesson. The highlight of his stage career was having Wilson create a character for him (Roosevelt Hicks) in his final play Radio Golf. While establishing a national profile Williams has still managed to deepen his commitment to the Minnesota theater community. As an artistic associate with Pillsbury House Theatre, he served as Director of Teen Programming originating Power of Our Voices and Artistic Director of the Hennepin County Home School Theatre Project (a playwriting workshop for incarcerated youth). His recent performances include Dr. Larabee in Akeelah & The Bee (CTC), Ian Smithton in Sharr White’s The Other Place (Park Square Theatre), Mohammed in Sharif Abu-Hamdeh’s Habibi (MN Fringe), Uncle Tom in Carlyle Brown’s Abe Lincoln & Uncle Tom (Carlyle Brown & Company) Ogun Size in Tarell Alvin McRaney’s Brother/ Sister Plays (Pillsbury House Theatre), Othello (Park Square Theatre) and Troy Maxon in August Wilson’s Fences for which he received an Ivey Award for performance excellence and named Artist of the Year by the Minneapolis Star Tribune in 2008 and he received the 2012 Distinguished Global Citizen Award from Macalester College. He is a 2015 Fox Resident Acting Fellow and 2015 McKnight Theater Fellow.

WARREN C. BOWLES*  
Mr. M  

DEVON COX  
Isabel  
Park Square Debut Representative Theatre  
History Theatre: Hiding in the Open; Illusion Theater/Minneapolis Musical Theater: Bare; Youth Performance Company: Little Rock, 1957 Training B.F.A., Musical Theatre, Ithaca College; Acting Graduate of Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists (SPCPA)

CAGE SEBASTIAN PIERRE  
Thami  
Park Square Debut Representative Theatre Open Eye Figure Theatre (Driveway Tour): Tucker’s Robot Training University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater B.F.A. Actor Training program (class of 2016) Upcoming Projects Guthrie Theater (Dowling Studio): Earthquakes in London
JAMIL JUDE
Co-Director
Jamil is a freelance director and producer in the Twin Cities. He has directed for theaters across the Twin Cities and also in Washington, D.C. Locally he has directed for Theatre in the Round, Lakeshore Players, and Freshwater Theatre and has assistant director credits at the Guthrie Theater, Pillsbury House, and Mixed Blood Theatre. Future directing projects include History Theatre and Daleko Arts. In Washington, D.C., he has directed at Olney Theatre and Forum Theatre, with assistant directing credits at Arena Stage. Jamil is the co-producer of the New Griots Black Arts Festival. He is currently a TCG Leadership U[University] Grant Recipient, providing him the chance to be mentored by Park Square Theatre Artistic Director Richard Cook.

TREVOR D. BOWEN
Costume Designer
Park Square The Color Purple, The House on Mango Street Representative Theatre Theater Latté Da: Steerage Song: The Tour, Our Town; Mixed Blood Theatre: Colossal, Passing Strange; Macalester College: In The Blood; Pillsbury House Theater, Rolling World Premiere: the road weeps, the well runs dry; Contemporary American Theater Festival: Dead and Breathing (World Premiere), Modern Terrorism, The Exceptionals, Race, We Are Here, Inana and the Eelwax Jesus Pop-up Music Show, History of Light (World Premiere); Gateway Playhouse: Singing in the Rain, 9 to 5, Sunset Boulevard, Twist and Shout; Assistant Costume Design Guthrie Theater: 2012-2013 Season; The Public Theater: February House (Jess Goldstein, Costume Designer) Training M.F.A., Costume Design, West Virginia University

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Penumbra Theatre: numerous productions including Vera Stark; Minnesota Centennial Showboat: numerous productions Training
B.A./M.S., Kansas State Teachers College
Awards/Other Twin Scenic Collection and Theatre of the Fraternity Exhibits of historic scenic art sketches (in Spain)

MEGAN FAE DOUGHERTY*
Stage Manager
Park Square Elliot, A Soldier’s Fugue; The Other Place; The Color Purple; Sexy Laundry; Behind the Eye; Cyrano; Good People; Stick Fly; Or Representative Theatre TigerLion Arts: Nature, The Dragons Are Singing Tonight; Troupe America: A Christmas Carol; Utah Shakespeare Festival: 2007 Season; Santa Fe Opera: 2006 Season Training B.A., Theatre Administration, Bemidji State University

LUCINDA HOLSHUE
Dialect Coach
Park Square Good People, Mary T. & Lizzy K., Or, Oliver Twist Representative Theatre Guthrie Theater, Jungle Theater, Walking Shadow Theatre Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Children’s Theatre Company, Penumbra Training M.F.A., University of California, San Diego, Roy Hart Theatre, Canadian Voice Intensive Other Voice/Speech/Text faculty, University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater Actor Training Program

KATHARINE HOROWITZ
Sound Designer
Park Square Romeo and Juliet, Sexy Laundry, The School for Lies, Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Suicide Club, Stick Fly, Or Representative Theatre Pillsbury House Theatre, Mixed Blood Theatre, Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theatre (Wellfleet, MA), Girl Friday Productions, Mu Performing Arts,
Second City Theatricals (Chicago, IL) Training
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CONNOR McEOVOY
Properties Designer


GINA MUSTO
Dramaturg

Park Square Debut Representative Theatre Theatre Pro Rata: 1984 (Dramaturgy Intern); History Theatre: Dramaturgy Intern Training B.A., Psychology and Cultural Studies, University of Minnesota

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Wardrobe Assistant: Mercede Hanson
Technical Director: Rob Jensen
Assistant Technical Director: Ian Stoutenburgh
Paint Charge: Angelique Powers
Lead Carpenter: Matt Erkel
Carpenter: Trever Muller-Hegel
Master Electrician: Brent Anderson
Electrician: James Duncan

Special Acknowledgements
Park Square would like to thank: Tayler Loyd, Brandon General, Darrick Mosley, Ricky Morisseau, Isaiah Potts, Lauren Mounts, and Welile Zwane

*Members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Actors’ Equity Association (AEA) was founded in 1913 as the first of the American actor unions. Equity’s mission is to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Today, Equity represents more than 40,000 actors, singers, dancers and stage managers working in hundreds of theatres across the United States. Equity members are dedicated to working in the theatre as a profession, upholding the highest artistic standards. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions and provides a wide range of benefits including health and pension plans for its members. Through its agreement with Equity, this theatre has committed to the fair treatment of the actors and stage managers employed in this production. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. For information, visit www.actorsequity.org.
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