



CHICAGO PREMIERE

KILL MOVE PARADISE

by JAMES IJAMES

directed by WARDELL JULIUS CLARK

Timeline
Theatre Company

YOUR GUIDE TO TIMELINE PRODUCTIONS

BACKSTORY



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Chicago premiere of James Ijames' *Kill Move Paradise*, directed by TimeLine Company Member Wardell Julius Clark.

When Wardell introduced this play to our Company, we were knocked out. It was clear to our 17-member team that this play's urgent cry demanded an audience, presently. And it was also apparent that we'd found a kindred spirit in James, who asks, "Why not examine the road behind you to better understand the terrain ahead? I don't believe looking back prevents the march forward. I believe it makes our march forward one of gratitude."

Similarly, TimeLine's mission is not merely about looking back. Our gaze moves from past through present, toward what tomorrow might bring. While our plays often are rooted in, or were written in, days gone by, *Kill Move Paradise* is a contemporary work about issues all-too-current. Yet its historical lineage is undeniably apparent, illuminating the system that perpetuates an epidemic of lives tragically taken.

James has said that he writes "about the America I see, and the America I want to see." The impetus for *Kill Move Paradise* was stirred specifically in 2015, following the killing of nine Black parishioners at church in Charleston, South Carolina by a white supremacist. James' inspiration,

however, was already simmering from killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, and, in Chicago, Laquan McDonald, plus dozens of other senseless losses that perhaps had not captured the nation's attention.

"My approach to current events of things we don't want to talk about is find a way to elevate it to something more heightened, using theatricality—write something that must happen in a theater," James said. "I find it opens people up, and primes them to have a productive dialogue."

Set in an other-worldly, cosmic waiting room, *Kill Move Paradise* introduces us to four young men. All Black. All taken far too soon. And what transpires between them is both completely surreal and altogether all-too-real. It's astonishingly hilarious, utterly mesmerizing, and thoroughly theatrical.

"Every time I think we have reached a point where maybe this play is obsolete. It's suddenly not," James said. "And the violence with which that reality comes to me never ceases to take my breath."

Until that day when this play is obsolete, I am grateful for voices like James', for inspiring leaders like my colleague Wardell, for the impassioned team creating this production, and for plays like *Kill Move Paradise* to rouse us from complacency. And I thank you for joining us and for being active participants in the ensuing conversation this play will spark.

Lastly, as I write this letter, it is January 20—the MLK Day of Service—and I began the morning re-reading Dr. King's resounding "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Remembering that today is a call for service, not rest, I'll close with his letter's final, inspiring, and still-unfulfilled wish from 57 years ago:

"Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."

THE PLAYWRIGHT

JAMES IJAMES AND *KILL MOVE PARADISE*

"The past is always haunting the present—especially the past that hasn't changed very much."

— James Ijames

A self-described "messy writer" who strives for "excellence ... not perfection" and writing that is "wild and precise," playwright James Ijames has always been interested in creating stories that push audiences to work together toward examining our collective histories, reflecting on what we inherit from those who came before us, and considering what we will leave behind for future generations.

Ijames received his BA degree in Drama from Morehouse College and an MFA degree in Acting from Temple University. He is based out of Philadelphia, Penn., where, in addition to his writing, he maintains an active career as a performer and serves as an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Villanova University.

Ijames is a 2011 Independence Foundation Fellow and a 2015 Pew Fellow for Playwriting, and is the recipient of the 2011 F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist. He is a founding member of Orbiter 3, Philadelphia's first playwright producing collective and a company member with Chicago's Definition Theatre Company.

His plays include *Kill Move Paradise* (winner of a 2017 Whiting Award for Drama and a 2019 Kesselring Prize), *Youth, History of Walking, Matter Out of Place, White* (winner of the Terrence McNally New Play Award, which will receive its Chicago premiere later this season at Definition Theatre), *Moon Man Walk* (produced by Definition in 2018), *The Most Spectacularly Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington* (an honorable

An image from the Wilma Theater production of James Ijames' *Kill Move Paradise*. (Photo by Johanna Austin)



THE TIMELINE: THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA [ABRIDGED]

The history of Black people in the United States is taught and shared in ways that are often limited in scope, with just a handful of moments of excellence coming to represent the entirety of the Black lived experience. This timeline seeks to broaden the conversation by including lesser known "found" or "self-taught" moments of Black history that are less common to see in historical textbooks.

1508 Juan Garrido, a free Black man, travels to the "New World" with Spanish Conquistadors. Over the next 30 years, he makes many return trips alongside Juan Ponce de León and Hernán Cortés. He is the first recorded Black person to travel to the Americas.

1619 "20 and odd" enslaved Africans from present-day Angola arrive on the shores of Virginia, marking the start of slavery in what will become the continental United States.

1644 The first Black legal protest in America occurs when 11 Blacks successfully petition the government of New Amsterdam for their freedom.

1739 The Stono Rebellion, an early slave insurrection, leads to the deaths of at least 20 whites and more than 40 Blacks in Charleston, South Carolina.

1780 Pennsylvania becomes the first state to abolish slavery.

1827 *Freedom's Journal* becomes the first Black-owned and operated newspaper in the United States.

1837 Cheyney University of Pennsylvania (originally the Institute for Colored Youth) becomes the first Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the United States.

1847 Frederick Douglass begins publication of the abolitionist newspaper *The North Star*.

mention for the 2015 Kesselring Prize that will receive its Chicago premiere later this season at Steppenwolf Theatre) and *The Threshing Floor*.

His work has been produced nationally, including at The National Black Theatre (New York), Flashpoint Theater Company, Orbiter 3, Theatre Horizon, Wilma Theater (Philadelphia), Ally Theatre (Washington, D.C.), and Shotgun Players (Berkeley). He has received development opportunities with PlayPenn New Play Conference, The Lark, Playwrights Horizons, Clubbed Thumb, Villanova Theater, The Gulfshore Playhouse, Wilma Theater, Azuka Theatre, The National Black Theatre, and Victory Gardens.

Inspired by the words of Paula Vogel, who says the job of the artist is to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar, Ijames seeks to use theatre to expose “the American experiment and how imperfect this place

is, in an effort to make ... a more perfect union.” In this quest, Ijames hopes that his plays serve as catalysts for collective action, moments where individuals might start to begin to build community and a new kind of legacy. He recognizes that his plays may cause discomfort in audiences, and hopes that this discomfort will cause people to “talk to [other] people and maybe see where they are implicated in the state of race relations. We all think the work has been done, but there is more to be done.”

Kill Move Paradise was developed, in part, through Victory Gardens’ Ignition Fest, where it received a reading in the summer of 2016 under the direction of Marti Lyons. The play received its world premiere in 2017 Off Broadway at the National Black Theatre in Harlem, where it was a *New York Times* Critic’s Pick. *Kill Move Paradise* received a second production at Philadelphia’s Wilma Theater in 2018, where critics celebrated the theatricality of the piece and Ijames’ project of “building a ritual rather than a drama.” TimeLine Theatre’s production represents the Chicago premiere of this piece, as well as director and TimeLine Company Member Wardell Julius Clark’s mainstage directorial debut.



The nine Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church members killed on June 17, 2015, during a Bible study in Charleston, South Carolina.

The systemic nature of this violence is far from random though, and is in fact embedded in the institutions that currently make up the fabric of our society. According to a recent study released by the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* providing a new analysis of deaths involving law enforcement officers, about 1 in 1,000 Black men and boys in America can

expect to die at the hands of police officers. In fact, police use of force accounted for 1.6% of all deaths of Black men between the ages of 20 and 24. This same study showed that Latino men and boys, Black women and girls, and Native American men, women, and children are also killed by police at higher rates than their white peers.

Names like Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, and, here in Chicago, Laquan McDonald, represent high profile cases that have captured the national imagination. However, they represent just a fraction of the institutionalized violence that is the day-to-day reality for people of color living in this country. A *Washington Post* police-shooting database reported 933 individuals who were the victims of fatal shootings by a police officer in the line of duty in 2019 alone. Of these 933 individuals, 213 identified as Black.

In response to the events in Charleston, and in response to the epidemic of police shootings of people of color, specifically young Black men, James Ijames sat down and began to write what would eventually become the script for *Kill Move Paradise*. For Ijames, this story was a way to present “a portrait of the slain, not as degenerates who deserved death but as heroes who demand that we see them for the splendid beings they are.” For Ijames, “these characters embody all the ways in which [Black boys and men] try to be human. They are jealous, they are kind, they are maternal and paternal, they are pushed physically to the edge of something and then fall. You can’t deny their humanity. And they are all Black.”

While Ijames has spoken that he hopes the play will one day become obsolete, he also recognizes that with each new production, each new performance, the list of lives lost will have grown “unless we really begin to look at why this is happening. Structurally, psychically.”

He goes on to say, “I think it’s Mark Twain who said that history doesn’t repeat, but it rhymes. A repeat you know how to deal with ’cause you’ve seen it before. But rhyming just different enough to fool you into thinking it’s something new.”

1871 Tennessee passes the first of the “Jim Crow” segregation laws, segregating state railroads. Other Southern states will pass similar laws over the next 15 years.

1873 Physician Daniel Hale Williams, a Black man, performs the world’s first successful open-heart surgery.

1892 Ida B. Wells, a Black journalist, begins investigating the lynchings of African Americans after three of her friends are lynched in Tennessee.

1899 Pianist and composer Scott Joplin publishes “The Maple Leaf Rag,” a major hit that helps popularize ragtime music.

1900 On November 1, brothers James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson compose the song “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” commonly referred to as the Black national anthem.

1903 Sarah Breedlove MacWilliams, better known as Madam C.J. Walker, starts an African American hair-care business in Denver and eventually becomes America’s first self-made woman millionaire.

1909 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) forms. Its mission is “to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.”

1919 A series of race riots across the country leaves at least 100 people dead. Sparked by white resentment of African Americans working in industry, and their large-scale migration from South to North, they will come to be known as the Red Summer Race Riots.

1936 At the Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, Jesse Owens wins gold in the 100-meter sprint, 200-meter dash, broad jump, and 400-meter relay.

1947 Jackie Robinson becomes the first Black man to play baseball in the major league.

The Search for Freedom

Since arriving in this country through forced enslavement, Black Americans have been searching for freedom. Every movement of resistance has been propelled by this need for forward movement toward a place (both physical and metaphorical) free from the systemic, oppressive, and legal reality of the nation's history. As many of the earliest examples of Black resistance and liberation were steeped in the ethos of Christianity—a set of beliefs used as a tool of both oppression and liberation during slavery—this quest has often been described through religious imagery, with the end result of this journey of liberation often being referred to as “The Promised Land.”

The Impact of Slavery

As slavery quickly became an essential part of this country's economy, it became virtually impossible for an enslaved person to escape bondage and lead a free life. As a result, many slaves turned to death as an escape, believing that the soul would be free to return home to Africa and heaven—a destination devoid of bondage or servitude.

Slaves were often prohibited from gathering for funeral services unsupervised, out of fear that they would organize and rebel against their enslavers. However, many still found secret ways to mourn the fallen and celebrate their “homegoing,” a phrase still commonly applied to Black funerals today. To this day, for many, a homegoing represents the religious connotation of the deceased “going home,” to heaven and to glory, and to be with the Lord and ancestors in The Promised Land.

“We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop ... And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. And I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

These homegoing ceremonies, like many other African American rituals that still exist today, were a hybrid of old African traditions and newfound American experiences. The center of a homegoing ceremony was an opportunity to come together as a community and mourn, allowing family and loved ones to host an elaborate celebration of life featuring music, prayers, reading from scripture, and sharing stories and memory of the deceased.

The North

During the existence of slavery, the North became a physical manifestation of The Promised Land. Slaves would communicate information about the Underground Railroad (a network of abolitionists that assisted and harbored runaway slaves) through references to religious spirituals and Christian rhetoric. The Ohio River was commonly referred to as the “River Jordan” because just as the Israelites crossed the River Jordan into the Promised Land, runaway slaves could expect to find freedom after crossing it. However, the North still proved limiting in its ability to offer freedom, as Black people were restricted in the jobs they could take, and their freedom remained tenuous with the introduction of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850.

Artist Jacob Lawrence's *Harriet and the Promised Land*, No. 10 (1967) depicting Harriet Tubman leading a group of escaped slaves to freedom.



During the Great Migration—the mass exodus of Black Americans from the South to the North and West from 1916 to 1970—the North was again seen as a type of promised land for Black Americans. Black newspapers in northern cities, notably the *Chicago Defender*, began advertising the potential wealth and safety Black people could expect to find in the North, where there were higher paying jobs and no Jim Crow laws. In 1916 the *Defender* ran a poem called “Bound for the Promised Land” by M. Ward depicting the freedoms one could hope to find in the North. The paper estimated that 250,000 Black people left the South the following winter. Again, this Promised Land proved limited, as racial tensions rose with the influx of Black people into white neighborhoods, leading to numerous riots and deaths.

The Civil Rights Movement and Beyond

Through the Civil Rights Movement, a vision of a new Promised Land arose, this version much more metaphorical in nature: a country devoid of segregation and filled with equal opportunity.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. employed this metaphor in his famous and final speech where he boldly proclaimed that while he might not be there to see it, “we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land.” Dr. King was one of the most prominent Black public figures to give Black people hope in a better tomorrow. While unquantifiable progress was made in the Civil Rights Movement, there are still many aspects of institutionalized racism and police brutality that prevent us from truly being in the Promised Land he preached about.

In Ta-Nehisi Coates' book *Between the World and Me*, he refers to the entity of the Dream, another version of this unattainable Promised Land:

“And for so long I have wanted to escape into the Dream, to fold my country over my head like a blanket. But this has never been an option because the Dream rests on our backs, the bedding made from our bodies.”

The way racism is entangled in the fibers of this country make the metaphor of “The Promised Land” one that continues to live on in perpetuity. The influence of this hope for an unattainable haven can still be seen in Black art, literature, cinema, theatre, political movements, and everything in between.

1950 Ralph J. Bunche becomes the first Black Nobel Peace Prize recipient, for his role as mediator in the Palestinian conflict.

1957 Martin Luther King, Jr. and others set up the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a leading engine of the Civil Rights Movement.

1964 The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegation, led by Fannie Lou Hamer, is denied seating at the Democratic National Convention.

1965 Malcolm X is assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City.

1966 Stokely Carmichael becomes chairman of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and publicly embraces the concept of Black power.

1967 Thurgood Marshall is sworn in as the first Black Justice on the United States Supreme Court.

1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

1969 Chicago police kill Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clarke.

1970 The first issue of *Essence* magazine is published.

1971 1,200 inmates seize control of half of the New York State Prison at Attica, in what will become known as the Attica Prison Riot.

1972 New York Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm makes an unsuccessful bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. She is the first Black politician to campaign for the nomination.

1979 The Sugar Hill Gang records “Rapper’s Delight” in Harlem.

1982 Michael Jackson's album, *Thriller*, is released. It will eventually sell 45 million copies worldwide, becoming the best selling album in music history.

1983 Harold Washington is elected the first Black mayor of Chicago.

1984 *The Cosby Show* debuts. It will run for eight seasons and become the most successful TV series in history to feature a mostly African American cast.

In *Kill Move Paradise* there is a space that contains a myriad of items, many of which pertain to particular aspects of Black American culture. From the many significant contributions Black people have made to popular and political American culture, to the knowledge and practices that have been passed down through generations, Black American culture is a sprawling and multi-faceted institution. The following is a select list of categories within its spectrum that some of the items presented in *Kill Move Paradise* fall under, introduced by lines spoken by the character Daz in *Kill Move Paradise*:

The Complex History

“... a portrait of Abraham Lincoln randomly ... Saartjie Baartman’s ass ... Kunta Kinte’s toes ... tap dancing”

Black culture and history is full of contradictions. Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves, but only to win the Civil War. Saartjie Baartman was displayed and dehumanized throughout Europe for having a big butt, one of today’s most coveted standards of American beauty. The depiction of Kunta Kinte having his foot chopped off after attempting to run away from slavery is a part of *Roots*, one of the most significant masterpieces of American television. Tap dancing, a form of dance steeped in minstrelsy and blackface, has led to some of the most iconic dance performances of all time.

The Media Archives

“... all these newspapers and magazines and books ... boxes of VHS tapes of old

recorded re-runs of *A Different World*, *Living Single* and *Martin* ...”

A staple in many Black households and beauty salons is a stack of old *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines (even though *Jet* is no longer in print). *The Cosby Show* spin off, *A Different World*; *Living Single* (which the sitcom *Friends* arguably whitewashed); and the comedically explosive *Martin* are just a few of the Black TV shows to come out of the Black sitcom golden age of the 1990s and early 2000s.

The Hair

“... cornrows ... Jamaican fucking castor oil, Just For Me ... box braids ...”

One of the most visible and undeniable aspects of Black culture is the styling of hair. Cornrows and box braids are two examples of protective braiding styles that are best executed with a tightly coiled curl pattern. Jamaican castor oil is often lauded for its restorative, moisturizing and strengthening properties, and “Just for Me” is a line of hair products used mainly for detangling children’s hair (often featuring adorable little Black girls on the packaging).

The Cool

“... at least fifty pairs of Jordans ... a pimp cup ... Being cool is in there ... Stylin’ is in there, Profilin’ is in there ... They got soul in there ...”

As evidenced by Black American culture’s massive contributions to mainstream popular culture across the globe, Black people are pretty cool. From the Sunday promenades of the Harlem Renaissance to the Yard at any HBCU (Historically Black College or University), Black people have valued looking good and being seen or “stylin’ and profilin’.” Jordans and other brands of sneakers remain a status symbol in many Black urban neighborhoods and the popularization of sneaker brands through hip hop culture has created a multi-billion dollar industry. Hip hop culture is also responsible for the heavily decorated chalices known as pimp cups.

THE INTERVIEW

DIRECTOR WARDELL JULIUS CLARK



Director Wardell Julius Clark on the cover of Newcity’s January issue as Chicago theatre’s “Player of the Moment.”

During rehearsals for *Kill Move Paradise*, TimeLine (TL) chatted with director and Company Member Wardell Julius Clark (WJC) about choosing this play to direct now, and what audiences can expect on its ride.

(TL) Can you give us a little overview? How do you describe *Kill Move Paradise*?

(WJC) *Kill Move Paradise* is a play about a cosmic waiting room that four young Black men enter as they prepare to go to their final ascending place. And it is about four Black men who have been victims of police brutality and how they find their way at this particular waystation. It is a place prepared for by ancestors for new ancestors on their way to paradise. Inside, rules exist that allow those new victims to become their full new self, their spiritual ancestral selves, in paradise.

(TL) What was the process like to choose this play for TimeLine’s season?

(WJC) I saw a reading of the play at the Ignition Festival at Victory Gardens a few years ago and just fell in love. I thought it was pretty incredible and groundbreaking and powerful, so it’s the first play that I pitched to TimeLine as a director. We had Company discussions about the different textures of this play compared to work that we usually do. I thought it was important as we move forward as a company to bring this kind of work, because this too is our history and the whole of American history. And if we’re a theatre company that specializes in looking at the past to move forward, there is no better play for Black Americans at this moment.

(TL) This is not a play that is set hundreds of years in the past. It’s kind of in our current state, yet it *is* historical.

1986 Oprah Winfrey becomes the first Black woman to host a nationally syndicated talk show with *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

1987 August Wilson’s play *Fences* wins a Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award.

1989 General Colin L. Powell is named chair of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, the first Black man to hold the post.

1992 A Simi Valley, Calif. jury acquits the three officers accused of beating Rodney King. The verdict triggers a three-day uprising in Los Angeles that results in more than 50 people killed, 2,000 injured, and 8,000 arrested.

1993 Toni Morrison becomes the first Black writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature for her novel *Beloved*.

1995 After an eight-month trial, O.J. Simpson is acquitted of the charges of murder in the deaths of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman.

2002 Halle Berry (*Monster’s Ball*) and Denzel Washington (*Training Day*) win Oscars for Best Actress and Best Actor.

2005 Hurricane Katrina hits the Gulf Coast, taking an estimated 1,700 lives—the vast majority in Louisiana, including heavily African American New Orleans.

2009 Barack Obama is sworn in as the 44th President of the United States.

2013 The FBI promotes Assata Shakur, a former member of the Black Liberation Army granted political asylum and living in Cuba, to a list of “most wanted terrorists.”

2016 Beyoncé releases *Lemonade*, her sixth studio album, which critics and fans hold up as an unapologetic celebration of her Blackness.

2019 A Pew Center study shows that 78% of African Americans say the United States hasn’t gone far enough when it comes to giving Black people equal rights with whites, and 50% say it’s unlikely that the country will eventually achieve racial equality.

(WJC) I think it is a celebration and a call to action and a kind of living history of what is happening in our country.

This play is the opposite of a character assassination, which is often what young Black and Brown people experience when they are victims of police brutality. In this play, we get to experience them as full human beings.

Also, police brutality in America is a cancer and a problem. It's a very specific, acute problem for people of color, but it's also a problem at large for America. We need ways to receive that, understand that, digest that. One of our hashtags is "you have to be a witness." You can see this play and then go out and witness to other people about what the problem is and how we can collectively, as human beings, find a solution.

(TL) The play deals with real issues, but it is not a realistic play. What can audiences expect to experience?

(WJC) Our playwright is quoted as saying it is his "birthright to wrestle with form in the theatre." And so this play is not realism. It is completely expressionistic. There are moments of really intense emotion. We will see Black men be incredibly vulnerable and open and raw. And we as audiences are asked to watch,

Clark during a rehearsal for *Kill Move Paradise*.



and be, and experience that with them. There are lots of moments of silence in the play, moments where we just sit and exist in this world with our characters. There is quite a bit of direct address.

The audience in *Kill Move Paradise* is the final character. They are as much a part of the play as the actors on the stage. It's a play that literally cannot function without the audience, with moments unlike anything I've ever seen in the American theatre.

(TL) You mentioned that we get to see these fully realized humans. We're seeing more than just grief, sorrow, tragedy. We're seeing joy, laughter, silliness, all of these range of emotions.

(WJC) Yes. *Kill Move Paradise* is a complete roller coaster of a journey that has the full Black experience in some way microscopically throughout the play. Black people are filled with joy even in our worst moments. We have a kind of light and a vibrance that exudes from our pores about who we are as Black people, particularly Black people in America. And we experience so much of that in the play—that experience of persisting and rising above and celebrating ourselves. There is so much incredible laughter and silliness and goofiness.

It is a non-stop, powerful kind of thing—the ride of life. We get high highs of ecstasy, of celebration, and joy, and we get really really low lows, and back again. By the end, we arrive at a kind of literal paradise which is hopeful for everyone, but it is a ride. I think our audiences are gonna be jazzed by it.

(TL) Ultimately, what do you hope people get from seeing this play?

(WJC) I hope people are affected in a variety of ways. That regardless of their race, they'll be able to look at themselves and see how they view the average Black man they come in contact with on a daily basis, and self check, self-realize, self actualize what their biases are. I hope we can get our audiences to see our experiences, our joys, our pains, our laughter, our sorrows, our depression, our exhilaration—and that we all share those things collectively as human beings. And that people who leave this play will go into the world and see people of color, Black people, as human beings.

BACKSTAGE

MARIDEE QUANBECK AND JARED KAPLAN



Jared Kaplan and Maridee Quanbeck.

We're delighted to recognize Maridee Quanbeck and Jared Kaplan.

The couple was initially drawn to TimeLine by our 2010 production of *The Farnsworth Invention*. They quickly became subscribers, then donors, and in fall 2019 we welcomed Maridee to TimeLine's Board of Directors.

Maridee and Jared are avid arts supporters, and count Chicago Symphony Orchestra and The Art Institute among the many groups they champion. They regularly combine their love of travel and theater with trips to London, New York, and Canada's Shaw and Stratford festivals. "We saw *The Front Page* this summer at The Stratford Festival and thought how much better we liked TimeLine's in 2010. TimeLine's was funny without being farcical or slapstick. And we're always impressed by how TimeLine can cram so much action into such a small space."

Their broad-based love of fine arts informs their connection to TimeLine. "When people think of paintings or musical compositions, they naturally accept their understanding of the work is made deeper by placing it in historical context. TimeLine shows us how plays and the stories they tell are also enriched by that process. We always leave a TimeLine play aware that we learned a lot, but always so painlessly."

"We're always impressed by how TimeLine can cram so much action into such a small space."

Looking forward to TimeLine's future, Maridee and Jared are enthusiastic about the plans for a new home. "It's exciting to be part of this new phase of TimeLine's life. The new building is a huge challenge, but it feels like the right time. It's going to be fun to see it come together."

Maridee and Jared are already making plans to shape a new generation of arts aficionados by bringing their two grandchildren to shows in the new building after it opens. We can't wait to welcome them all.

BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

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Our Mission:

TimeLine Theatre presents stories inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues.

Our collaborative artistic team produces provocative theatre and educational programs that engage, entertain and enlighten.

THE BENEFIT

STEP INTO TIME: JUMPIN' JAZZ & BATHTUB GIN 1920

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timelinetheatre.com/step-into-time