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WOODIE KING JR.'S NEW FEDERAL THEATRE REVIVES "TWO CAN PLAY" BY TREVOR RHONE FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH AND WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH. A marriage is tested as a Jamaican couple risks everything to emigrate to the USA.

WHERE AND WHEN:

February 27 to April 5, 2020

Castillo Theater, 543 West 42nd Street

Presented by New Federal Theatre, Woodie King, Jr. Producing Director, in association with Castillo Theatre.

Thursdays through Saturdays at 7:30 PM, Sundays at 2:30 PM

Tickets \$40 gen. Adm., \$30 seniors and students. Group sales are available.

Box office: <http://www.castillo.org> and <https://ci.ovationtix.com/2912>, 866-811-4111

Producing company website: www.newfederaltheater.com

PLEASE LIST: OFF BROADWAY

Running time: 90 minutes incl. Intermission.

Critics are invited on or after February 27. Opens February 27.

Photos are available at: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/jc8X5CoVqFwQTxqYA>

NEW YORK, February 11 -- From **February 27 to April 5**, Woodie King, Jr.'s **New Federal Theatre** will celebrate both Black History Month and Women's History Month with an Off-Broadway production of "**Two Can Play**" by **Trevor Rhone**, directed by **Clinton Turner Davis**, at **Castillo Theater**, 543 West 42nd Street. In this two-act comedy, Gloria and Jim, a lower middle-class couple in Kingston, try their wildest schemes to escape gun crime and establish residence in the United States. They survive because they learn to communicate and rediscover each other. Playwright Trevor Rhone was the artistic giant of Jamaican theater. The play celebrates the pent-up need for self-discovery and personal development in Jamaican women, a theme which is also universal. Director is **Clinton Turner Davis**, who helmed the comedy's New York premiere in 1985.

The play was chosen for production by New Federal Theatre after it opened the company's Ntozake Shange November Readings Series in 2018. That series is devoted to brilliant one- and two-character plays, a dramatic form that most theaters neglect. It is used to develop African American writers and to select plays that New Federal Theatre may present as full productions in future seasons. The reading was directed by Clinton Turner Davis. Its actors, **Michael Rogers** and **Joyce Sylvester**, return for this production.

"**Two Can Play**" is considered a masterpiece of dramatic realism. In Rollington Town, a neighborhood of Kingston, Jamaica, Gloria and Jim are caring for his dying father while sheltering from unceasing gunfire and civil conflict. Their marriage is typically Jamaican: the husband is domineering; the wife is submissive and ripe for liberation. Their three children have been smuggled into the USA "to better themselves." After the old man dies and is buried amid a dangerous shootout between a civil faction and the police, Gloria and Jim resolve to seek better lives in America. They develop a complex and delightfully crooked scheme to obtain permanent visas: Gloria will legally divorce Jim, marry a US citizen, and then having obtained a visa, will divorce her new husband and remarry Jim.

Gloria wins in the first part of her assignment, but Jim is the loser. Through the confusions and hardships she meets in the US, she becomes assured in her own self-sufficiency and resourcefulness. The man she marries is honorable and respectful toward her. When she returns to Kingston from her new marriage, she has been emancipated by her journey of self-discovery. She holds all the cards in the marital power struggle now and Jim faces a seemingly intractable conundrum of how to win her back. Their marriage, previously one of domination for him and struggle for her, is now leveled. Their reconciliation scene at the end of the play--despair leading to eventual re-discovery of each other--is regarded as one of the most moving episodes in

Jamaican drama.

Rhone's dialogue is compact and colorful and his characters are funny. They are deliciously Jamaican, their humor is a well-known means of survival and their problems are bound to elicit laughs of deep recognition in all cultures. When "Two Can Play" was introduced to New York audiences in 1985 by The Negro Ensemble Company, with Clinton Turner Davis directing, The New York Times (Mel Gussow) called it "a boisterous two-character farce guaranteed to make theatergoers cheer the awakening wife."

Woodie King, Jr., Artistic Director of New Federal Theatre, points out that thematically, the play bridges Black History Month and Women's History Month. He adds that the couple's escape from their embattled country illustrates the determined idealism of the emigrant and the dangers they flee from. The play is also affirming to our national concept by showing how the treasured freedom for women in America can inspire and uplift women from other cultures who are held back by traditional roles.

Trevor Rhone (1940 – 2009) (www.trevorrhone.com) was an award-winning Jamaican playwright, director and actor who brought his island's culture to the world as a writer of the groundbreaking film "The Harder They Come" (1972). Renowned for plays like "Smile Orange" and "Old Story Time," Rhone helped pioneer Jamaica's indigenous theater with realistic comedies about Jamaican life that combine serious social criticism, astute use of dialect and buoyant humor.

The last child of 23, he grew up in a tiny town of Bellas Gate in Jamaica. After seeing his first play at age nine he was smitten with theater. He began his theater career as a teacher after three years at Rose Bruford College, an English drama school, where he studied in the early 1960s on scholarship. He helped produce the renaissance of Jamaican theater in the early 1970s, participating in a group called Theatre '77, which was founded in 1965 to stage local performances with the commitment, embedded in its name, of evolving to professional work by 1977. He is author of 16 published plays. His films included "Smile Orange" (co-author, 1974) based on his play of the same name, "Top Rankin'," "Milk and Honey" (1988) and "One Love" (2003). He received five prestigious awards for theater, four for film, and was named a Commander of the Order of Distinction by the Government of Jamaica.

Director **Clinton Turner Davis** is a prolific director Off-Broadway and in regional theaters and is a noted interpreter of August Wilson. He received the Lloyd Richards directing Award from the National Black Theatre Festival. His Off-Broadway credits include "Harriet's Return," "Joe Turner's Come and Gone," "The Conjure Man Dies" and "Divine Comedy" for New Federal Theatre, "Puppetplay," "Abercrombie Apocalypse," "Two Can Play," "House of Shadows" and "Box X Man" for The Negro Ensemble Company, "One Night" by Charles Fuller at Cherry Lane Theater and "The African Company Presents Richard III" for The Acting Company. He has also directed for Juilliard and NYU-Tisch. He has been a member of Negro Ensemble Company for 16 seasons. He is a PEW/TCG National Theatre Artist and recipient of NEA/TCG Director and Theatre Fellowships. He has served on the boards of SDC and its foundation, New Federal Theatre, National Black Arts Festival and National Theatre Training Committees of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), among others. He co-founded the Tony and Obie Award winning Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts/Non-Traditional Casting Project. He is an associate professor of drama at Colorado College in Colorado Springs and has been a guest lecturer at Yale, Dartmouth, Columbia, Ohio State University, and Howard University, among others. He received a Distinguished Alumni Award from Howard University. Other prizes include Dallas Theatre, Bay Area, Barrymore and Drama-logue awards. He lives in Brooklyn.

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