

For Immediate Release:
Live Arts announces Dominique Morisseau's
powerful drama PIPELINE opening January 14



Asyra Cunningham is Omari and Aiyana Marcus is Nya in PIPELINE at Live Arts. Photo by Will Kerner.

December 7, 2021

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Charlottesville, VA - The 2021/22 reIGNITE Live Arts Season continues with Dominique Morisseau's searingly emotional family drama, PIPELINE. PIPELINE will have 12 performances, January 14 through January 30, 2022, at Live Arts Theater, 123

E. Water Street, in Charlottesville. Tickets are \$25 for adults or \$20 for students and senior citizens, available through the Box Office at 434-977-4177 or livearts.org/tix. Special discounted tickets for educators are available for the entire run of PIPELINE upon request at boxoffice@livearts.org, and Pay-What-You-Can tickets sponsored by Allison Partners are available for Wednesday night and select Saturday night performances.

Live Arts will host three special events for PIPELINE: An opening night reception following the performance on January 14, 2022; a special pre-show Educator Reception and conversation following the performance on January 22, 2022; and a post-show audience talkback on Thursday, January 27, 2022 (7:30pm curtain).

PIPELINE will be performed without an intermission. Audiences are welcome to enjoy concessions one hour before and after performances.

PIPELINE at Live Arts

“... a lightning bolt production that shocks new life into the possibilities of the stage ...”

- *DCTheatreScene.com*

A mother’s choices. A son’s rage. A rigged system. In PIPELINE’s opening scene we meet Nya, a dedicated teacher in an inner-city public high school, who has just discovered that her son’s in trouble. After one impulsive act, Omari is in danger of being expelled from his upstate private school, and Nya’s hopes for his bright future are threatened. With language lyrical and potent, Morisseau’s deeply compassionate and dynamic new play dives into the painful truth of the “school-to-prison pipeline.”

The play is set both in an NYC-like inner city and in what MacArthur Genius Grant Fellow Morisseau calls “Undefined Space,” an alternate and isolated reality where location doesn’t matter. The rich, rhythmic poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks’ “We Real Cool: The Pool Players. Seven at the Golden Shovel” flows throughout the script. Exploring a swirl of emotions – exasperation, futility, guilt, anger – Morisseau bravely refuses to let audiences off the hook with easy resolutions, either for this family or for the overarching social issues rooted in the story.

“... Morisseau establishes the kind of mystery that has you wondering what’s been lost, or never even had a chance to grow, in this family. ... the playwright contributes some of her most incisive work in conjuring people pushed to an extreme ...” - *The Washington Post*

PIPELINE at Live Arts is directed by David Vaughn Straughn and showcases an impressive volunteer ensemble, some of whom are appearing with Live Arts for the first time: Aiyana Marcus as Nya, Asyra Cunningham as Omari, Tanaka Maria as Jasmine, Sarad Davenport as Xavier, and Jamie Virostko as Laurie. The production also features a top-notch creative team: Adrienne Oliver (producer consultant); Scott Dunn (stage management); Will Slusher (scenic design); Joshua Reid (lighting design); Becky Brown (sound design); Martha Adekunle (costume design); Kaneesha Lord (projections design); Daryl O’Connor (properties design and scenic dressing); and Laura Rikard (Intimacy Choreographer). Live Arts is thrilled to be collaborating with Light House Studio for videography support.

Playwright and Performance History

Dominique Morisseau is the author of *The Detroit Project*, a three-play cycle which includes *Skeleton Crew* (Atlantic Theater Company), *Paradise Blue* (Signature Theatre), and *Detroit ’67* (Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem and NBT). Additional plays include *Pipeline* (Lincoln Center Theatre), *Sunset Baby* (LAByrinth Theatre); *Blood at the Root* (National Black Theatre) and *Follow Me to Nellie’s* (Premiere Stages). She is also the Tony-nominated book writer on the

new Broadway musical *Ain't Too Proud – The Life and Times of the Temptations* (Imperial Theatre) and a recent MacArthur Genius Grant Fellow.

PIPELINE was commissioned by Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company. The play received its world premiere at Lincoln Center Theatre in July 2017, and Morisseau won the Obie Award for Playwriting for PIPELINE in 2018.



Asyra Cunningham is Omari in PIPELINE at Live Arts. Photo by Will Kerner.

About the Director

David Vaughn Straughn has been acting on various stages in the Virginia area since the age of 10. Along with his years of performing and teaching improvisational theater with the Bent Theatre, he has worked mostly with the Charlottesville Players Guild (*Fences*, *Jitney*, adaptations of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*) to bring BIPOC theater to the forefront of the community. He has also been featured in two off-Broadway works in New York City (*Four Men on a Couch*) and various short films (*The Joy Ride*, *Amanda*) He has recently been directing for the stage, including August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson*, and his first original piece, *Tanisha*. PIPELINE marks the first production he has directed for Live Arts.

About Live Arts

Live Arts is a nonprofit community theater powered by more than 1,200 volunteers. Founded in 1990, Live Arts is celebrating 31 years of forging theater and community in downtown Charlottesville. Live Arts is supported in part by the Virginia Commission for the Arts, which receives support from the Virginia General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The 2021/22 Season is also supported by the Bama Works Fund of Dave Matthews Band, the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, Albemarle County, and by philanthropic gifts from hundreds of theater lovers in our community.

For more information

Please contact Marketing & Design Coordinator Katie Rogers at katie@livearts.org or visit livearts.org.

CALENDAR Information for PIPELINE at Live Arts:

WHO: LIVE ARTS presents

WHAT: PIPELINE by Dominique Morisseau

DIRECTOR: David Vaughn Straughn

CAST: Asyra Cunningham, Sarad Davenport, Aiyana Marcus, Tanaka Maria, and Jamie Virostko

DATES: Friday, January 14, 2022 through January 30, 2022

SHOWTIMES: JAN. 14 – JAN. 30, 2022

- Wednesdays and Thursdays @ 7:30pm
- Fridays and Saturdays @ 8pm
- Sundays (January 23 and 30) @ 2pm

WHERE: Live Arts Theater, 123 East Water Street, Charlottesville, VA 22902

SPECIAL EVENTS:

- January 14, 2022: Opening Night
- January 22, 2022: Educators Reception
- January 27, 2022: Post-Show Audience Talk-Back

TICKETS: \$25 for adults, \$20 for students and senior citizens. Special educator discount available upon request through the Box Office.

BOX OFFICE: 434-977-4177 x123 or online at livearts.org/tix

INFO: katie@livearts.org or visit livearts.org.

SAFETY: Live Arts prioritizes the health and safety of our volunteers, patrons, and staff by requiring indoor masks and proof of full vaccination or negative COVID test result. Please visit livearts.org for our current COVID policies.