

## 2012 – 2013 Season

No Child, by Nilaja Sun

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### **THE READERS' THEATRE OPENS THIRD SEASON with OFF-BROADWAY HIT**

The Readers' Theatre of Ithaca is opening its third season with **NO CHILD, by Nilaja Sun**, a play that won Obie, Lucille Lortel, Helen Hayes, L.A. Ovation, and Outer Critics Circle Awards, as well as a John Gassner playwriting award for Outstanding New American Play. The lightning-paced **NO CHILD**, which opened Off-Broadway in 2006, will star **Cynthia Henderson**, acting professor from Ithaca College and will be directed by **Anne Marie Cummings**, Artistic Director of The Readers' Theatre, and assistant directed by **Tim Perry**, Associate Artistic Director of The Readers' Theatre.

**MAYOR SVANTE MYRICK** will speak following the **Friday, September 28th** performance reading of **NO CHILD**. One of the reasons he was interested in speaking: "Behind every successful person is a great teacher and that certainly was the case for me," said Myrick. "I had a teacher who believed in my potential despite my circumstances."

**Tompkins Learning Partners Incarcerated Youth Program** will be bringing resident students from Finger Lakes Residential Center to attend the Wednesday, September 26<sup>th</sup> performance. Said **Arline Woolley**, Incarcerated Youth Services Coordinator, "This is a unique opportunity for these young men to engage and participate in live theatre in the community in which they reside. Each young man will be given the chance to connect to this story, to himself, to others, and to the world while attending the performance. We are thrilled to be given this opportunity by The Readers' Theatre of Ithaca."

The main story of **NO CHILD**, a one-woman tour-de-force, is that of an idealistic young teaching artists who leads a class of rowdy Bronx 10<sup>th</sup> graders in a theatrical performance. A chameleonic Henderson will play 16 roles in this uplifting, and often funny play. She uses nothing but her flexible body and polychromatic voice to represent the characters that Sun created after spending nine years working in some of New York's toughest schools. Henderson will play students, teachers, administrators, a janitor, a wand-wielding security officer who inhabit a big-city school fictionalized as Malcolm X High.

**NO CHILD** is equipped with a dose of social criticism. The title refers to the Bush Administration's "No Child Left Behind" educational policy – which the playwright is ambivalent about. Sun was quoted in *The New York Times* as saying, "I wanted for those who weren't in the schools to see that the system really is breaking down, but also that there is still so much life and love there."

Speaking to the life and love in the school system, Cummings approached **Baruch Whitehead**, an associate music professor at Ithaca College, to introduce singing to this 90-minute play. Whitehead will be directing a small choir of students from Ithaca College who will sing spiritual songs (*acapella style*). **Elisa Sciscioli**, a supporting sponsor for **NO CHILD (Ithaca Bakery is NO CHILD's financial sponsor)** and a local lead singer and songwriter of the 6-9 piece classic and original soul band, Solstice, will join the choir with two of her singing students (**Travis Knapp and Shyla Foster**) and a back-up singer from Solstice (**Nikki Schwarz**).

Sciscioli, inspired by the Off-Broadway production in NYC, and a friend of the playwright – through her brother, was thrilled to share moments with Sun following Sun's performance at the Barrow Street Theatre, in NYC. "I believe the urban educational issues presented in this play need our attention," said Sciscioli. "Not only does this story depict various inner conflicts of a variety of students, but the struggle of educators to keep their own spirits lifted in the midst of great challenges."

Said Henderson: "Having courage and faith in what we have to offer, and in what our students can do, is a key element of **NO CHILD** and one of the reasons I want to help bring this play to life. The trick is to get our administrators, teachers, and families to raise their expectations and weather the storm that will occur as our students figure out how to adjust and find their way towards meeting the newer challenges."

Cummings began meeting with Whitehead eight months ago. "Spiritual music is music Baruch knows well and I felt that was the kind of sound best fitting for this story," said Cummings. "The spiritual songs I chose, interwoven throughout the play, represent the songs inside the hearts of the students, but more often the unspoken woes of Ms. Sun."

The Wednesday, September 26<sup>th</sup> performance begins at 8pm. Tickets for the 26<sup>th</sup> are at the discounted price of \$10 per person with a reservation and \$12 without a reservation (teachers and high school students are encouraged to attend this performance). The Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup> and Saturday September 29<sup>th</sup> performance readings begin at 8pm. The Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup> performance begins at 6:30pm. Tickets for the Friday through Sunday performances are \$12 with a reservation and \$15 without a reservation.

Reservations for **NO CHILD** can be made by calling 607.217.6272. For more details about the season visit

[www.thereaderstheatre.com](http://www.thereaderstheatre.com).

The Readers' Theatre is proud to announce their 2012-2013 supporting sponsor: **Student Team and Course Based Support through the School of Humanities & Sciences in the Department of Writing at Ithaca College**. Other supporting sponsors this season include **Center for Transformative Action, Cinemapolis, Finger Lakes ReUse, State of the Art Gallery, Red Feet Wine Market, and Sustainable Tompkins. Alternatives Federal Credit Union** is a financial sponsor for OLEANNA.

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