exploring the canon
What makes a play a classic?

The plays:

**Moon on a Rainbow Shawl** by Errol John, directed by Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway

**Borderline** by Hanif Kureishi, directed by Mukul Ahmed

**Death and the King's Horseman** by Wole Soyinka, directed by Tunde Euba

**The House of Bilquis Bibi** by Sudha Bhuchar, directed by Renu Arora

**To Rahtid** by Sol B. River, directed by Topher Campbell

**Calcutta Kosher** by Shelley Silas, directed by Trilby James

**Alterations** by Michael Abbensetts, directed by Josephine Melville

**Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White** by Alice Childress, directed by Katharine Armitage

The Artistic Directors from **The London Hub of Sustained Theatre** want to look beyond the plays that are generally regarded as classics to champion plays that they think should be accorded canonical status.

Theatre directors; Mukul Ahmed, Katharine Armitage, Renu Arora, Topher Campbell, Tunde Euba, Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway, Trilby James, and Josephine Melville have worked closely with Artistic Directors from Arcola Theatre, ATC, Collective Artistes, Kali Theatre Company, Talawa Theatre Company, Tamasha, Tara and The Red Room to direct a series of extracts from diverse plays that are often neglected for revival in the national theatre landscape.

**Exploring the canon** is a day of performance readings looking beyond the usual suspects to widen the repertoire of British Theatre.
Exploring the Canon

Wednesday 9 February 2011

ATC presents:

Moon on a Rainbow Shawl
by Errol John

Directed by: Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway
Artistic Director: Ramin Gray

Synopsis

Errol John’s Moon on a Rainbow Shawl is set in a back yard of a shantytown in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. It follows the life of 14 people whose conflicting dreams and desires create a fusion of high anger, frustration, disapproval and longing. The play won the Observer Play of the Year in 1957 and was produced by the Royal Court Theatre in 1958.

Why Moon on a Rainbow Shawl?

Errol John’s play Moon on a Rainbow Shawl is not only a superbly well crafted play but it allows us to experience a crucial time of both political and social change in Black history. Set in Port of Spain, Trinidad in the late 40s (two years post World War II), Moon reflects the change in mentality of the people who would later influence Trinidad independence and also those who would become apart of the Windrush generation. Previously produced in London and internationally, Moon on a Rainbow Shawl presents themes that are both universal and timeless.

As a Trinidadian born actor and playwright, Errol John wrote Moon on a Rainbow Shawl to increase the number of larger roles for black actors. With no compromises made, Moon has a staggering cast size of fifteen fully rounded complex characters, from every generation from baby to elderly who are all equally loveable and enjoyable to watch, direct and play. It is therefore no surprise that the play has attracted the attention of Victor Romeo Evans, Ram John Holder, Dystin Johnson, James Earls Jones and Cicely Tyson who have all starred in previous productions. John’s celebration of culture, style, music and the Creole language together with his ability to balance humour with tragedy allows us to effortlessly immerse ourselves in the world of the play. We instantly become one with the characters, as we laugh and cry with them.

Moon on a Rainbow Shawl won the Observer Prize for best new playwright in 1987 and became a part of the required reading for schools in the West Indies. I think it rightfully deserves to be considered by all as classical play.

Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway

Why was Moon on a Rainbow Shawl produced in London in 2011?

Moon on a Rainbow Shawl was produced in London in 2011 as part of the repertoire of Praktika Theatre. From 2000-09 Ramin was at the Royal Court Theatre, first as International Associate, then as Associate Director where he directed over fifteen world or British premiers, including Push Up by Roland Schimmelpenninck, Terrorism by the Presnyakov Brothers, Ladybird by Vassily Sigarev, Way To Heaven by Juan Mayorga, Woman and Scarecrow by Marina Carr, Just a Bloke by David Watson and Scenes from the Back of Beyond by Meredith Oakes. Internationally Ramin has directed two plays by Simon Stephens, the German language premiere of Simon Stephens’ Harper Reagan at the Salzburg Festival in a co-production with the Schauspielhaus Hamburg as well as On the Shore of the Wide World at the Volkstheater Wien where it won the Karl-Skraup Prize. In Moscow, Ramin’s production of Marius von Mayenburg’s The Ugly One is now part of the repertoire of Praktika Theatre. Future plans include Mark Ravenhill’s Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat in Budapest and the Austrian premiere of Dennis Kelly’s Orphans at Schauspielhaus Wien.

www.atc-online.com
Exploring the Canon

Tara presents:
Borderline
by Hanif Kureishi

Wednesday 9 February 2011

Directed by: Mukul Ahmed
Artistic Director: Jatinder Verma

Synopsis
Set during the riots in Southall in 1981. The play is about conflicting desires of different generations of immigrants. Amina is in love with Haroun who in turn is desperate to get out of Southall. Amina's parents want her to marry Farrukh from Pakistan and all this is happening while racists are beating on the doors in Southall.

Cast:
Richard Rees - Amjad
Jessica Manley - Susan & Yasmin
Farah Merani - Banoo & Amina

Why Borderline?
Hanif Kureishi's Borderline, written in 1981 and first produced by Joint Stock Theatre Group, remains one of a handful of post-war plays that will certainly be regarded as canonical. In part, this is because of its setting: Southall has become one of the symbols of post-War Britain. It has entered the modern mythology of the nation's transformation, along with Brixton and Notting Hill. It is from these centres in London that a Black and Asian presence burst into vibrant life, changing the country and its image of itself.

Kureishi's play, written over the 6-week period of research and rehearsal that was Joint Stock's method, is not only a fabulous document of a moment in our history, but also, 30 years on, a reminder of where we've got to. As Kureishi reflects in an article on the play a few years ago: 'what had protected the community from racism and disintegration [has come] to tyrannise it'

He means, of course, faith.

The unifying ideology of the early 80s was socialism, with very little talk of religion. In the current faith-dominated era, it is worth reminding ourselves that other visions of how to live our lives remain potent – and who can deny the continuing urgency of Yasmin’s fine last line, when asked if the lights should be turned off, 'No leave them on. So people know we're here.'?

Jatinder Verma
Jatinder Verma (Artistic Director)
Tara Arts marked its 30th year in 2007 with an acclaimed production of The Tempest. The company tours nationally and internationally, and co-producers with Tara Arts include the National Theatre, Jatinder first worked at the National in 1989, with his acclaimed version of Molière's Tartuffe. This was followed by a production of the Sanskrit classic, The Little Clay Cart and then Cyrano de Bergerac, in a version by Ranjit Bolt. In 2009, he directed Hanif Kureishi's The Black Album, in a joint NT-Tara Arts production.

In 2002 he produced Journey to the West for Tara Arts, a trilogy of plays which traced the story of Asian migration and settlement in the West over the 20th century. Based on oral testimonies given by three generations of Asians living and working in Britain today, the trilogy toured cities in the UK as a major day-long event.

Author of The Story of Diwali, a book for children, Jatinder has also published several articles exploring the nature of modern cross-culturalism. His frequent work on Radio and TV includes the Sony Award winning Ashes to the Ganges and the 3-part serialisation (with Claudia Mayer) of The Mahabharata (both for BBC Radio 4).

Jatinder holds Honorary Doctorates from York, Exeter and Leicester De Montfort Universities.

www.tara-arts.com

Mukul Ahmed
Mukul Ahmed graduated from London University with an MFA in theatre directing. Most recently he directed for Tara Arts and the British Council Julius Caesar which toured to Bangladesh and India in December 2010 and People's Romeo for Tara Arts, which toured the UK in 2010. He curated the HotBed Season, which saw the re-opening of Tara Studio and as part of the season, directed an adaptation of The Adventures of Baron Munchausen. Other directing credits include: Prints of Denmark (Tara Studio/ Edinburgh Fringe); The Girl and the Oil Pipeline; The Rape of Lucrece; Sonata; The Demon's Revenge (Tara Studio) and Bitesize (Theatre 503). Previous assistant director credits include The Black Album (Tara Arts & National Theatre), When the Lights Went Out; Marriage of Figaro; Merchant of Venice and The Tempest (Tara Arts), Mukul Ahmed has worked with LIFT and widely in Community Theatre.
Exploring the Canon of the Colonial Administration to Recognise}

comes not so much from difference as it does from similarity. It is the unwillingness and 'disrespect' Olunde refers to in this significant point. The 'cultural conflict' recent interpretation missed a very grievous omission. From the performance. In my view, this was an act of honour and the other a tragic waste of life?
Theatre has the capacity to change perceptions and ideologies through challenging the status quo. It provokes an audience, making people ask themselves profound questions that quite often initiate action. Some may argue that Death and the King's Horseman is already included in our national canon. But, without this central scene, I question if audiences are properly challenged by the questions posed in this moving tragedy. This scene particularly challenges us to consider what lessons can be learned from our similarities and what actions taken to promote social cohesion within our immediate and diverse communities.

Why Death and The King's Horseman?

Death and The King's Horseman was set in 1944, written in 1975 and is probably even more relevant today than it ever was. As a race, humans have sojourned in outer space and shrunken the world into a 'global village'. However, in spite of these strides we are still increasingly involved in scrutinising the differences, rather than the similarities between the various peoples that inhabit this 'village'.

In a recent production of the play, a significant part of the scene we are reading today, in which a comparison is made between a British captain going down with his ship and a Yoruba Chieftain sacrificing his life for the greater good, was omitted from the performance. In my view, this was a grievous omission.

Soyinka is adamant that this play is not a tale of the clashing of cultures. And though we might argue the opposite, I believe this recent interpretation missed a very significant point. The 'cultural conflict' comes not so much from difference as it does from similarity. It is the unwillingness of the colonial administration to recognise this similarity that creates the hypocrisy and 'disrespect' Olunde refers to in this scene with Jane Pilkings. Are not both the ship captain and the chieftain 'Captains of their Communities'? Why is one deed an act of honour and the other a tragic waste of life?

Tunde Euba

Tunde Euba is an actor/ director/ writer/ facilitator who has enjoyed a long and varied career in theatre. Starting out as an actor in Nigeria, where he trained, one of the first companies he worked for was Collective Artistes. A regular face in their theatre productions, Tunde also featured in their devised shows for the local community. It was this devised work that was the impetus for Tunde to direct the partially completed play Dawn of Decisions at the University of Lagos Main Auditorium, where he also directed Morning yet on Judgement Day and The Women in my Life. Tunde would later explore other “areas of artistic expression” and turn his hand to writing. His first play Gods & Bad Guys premiered at Oval House Theatre where he later became Writer-In-Residence and wrote his next play, Brand New Me, which was inspired by a one week workshop with young people. Over the coming years Tunde hopes to work his way through the Shakespearean canon!

Chuck Mike

Chuck Mike was born in Brooklyn, New York and has lived in Nigeria for over 30 years. A practical disciple of Wole Soyinka he is a distinguished actor, producer, director and social activist. Producer of four festivals/seasons of theatre for CAFTAN (Collective Artistes Festival of Theatre Arts Nigeria), he is founding Artistic Director of The Performance Studio Workshop (Nigeria) and Collective Artistes (Nigeria and UK). His forte is “devising” Theatre for Development. His work has inhabited spaces ranging from villages across Southern, Western, and Eastern Africa to formal western theatres such as The Kennedy Centre, Lincoln Centre (USA), West Yorkshire Playhouse, The Royal Court (UK), MUSON Centre, and The National Theatre (Nigeria). His recent plays produced in Britain include The Meeting, The African Company Presents Richard III, The Lion & The Jewel (Barbican/Young Vic), It’s Just a Name, Trojan Women/Women of Owu adapted by Femi Osofsan, Sense of Belonging devised by himself with the Performance Studio Workshop, Things Fall Apart (World Tour) and a Nigerian adaptation of Yerma (UK Tour) both adapted by Biyi Bandele. Other directing credits include; The Gods Are Not to Blame, A Raisin in the Sun, Fences, Home, The Crucible, Macbeth (after Macbeth), Tegonni (after Antigone) and Death and the Maiden.

www.collectiveartistes.co.uk
Tamasha presents:

The House of Bilquis Bibi
by Sudha Bhuchar
adapted from The House of Bernarda Alba by Federico García Lorca
Directed by: Renu Arora
Artistic Directors: Kristine Landon-Smith and Sudha Bhuchar

Synopsis
Bilquis Bibi rules over her household with a rod of iron and a stifling love which cages her five daughters. Like butterflies forever cocooned, they long to shimmer and show their true colours.

When her husband dies suddenly, Bilquis agrees for eldest girl Abida to become engaged to her nephew Pappo. He brings with him the hope of love and the American dream.

Bilquis turns a blind eye to the illicit nightly visits Pappo pays to his fiancée’s balcony. But what will happen when she realizes that more than one daughter is staying awake for him?

Set in the Punjabi town of Jhang, it tells a personal yet subtly political story of small town lives with global ties in present-day Pakistan.

Performed in English with some Urdu and Punjabi.

Cast:
Sudha Bhuchar - Bilquis Bibi
Vineeta Rishi - Fida
Shalini Peiris - Amana
Babita Pohoomull - Sumayyah
Youkti Patel - Aroosa
Rina Fatania - Bushra
Sheena Patel - Abida

Why Bilquis Bibi?
What inspired me was the absolute seamless transition from rural Spain to modern day Pakistan. The domestic details and cultural specifics of this new work took on a life of their own, and yet were still in perfect synergy with the original. I was heartbroken by how delicately these themes of honour and oppression, which still exist in rural Pakistani communities, were given a voice. For me, this was such a rich and meaningful piece of work, that I felt it was imperative to be included in this growing and exciting canon of work we’re exploring today. Renu Arora, Director

Renu Arora
Renu is a British-Asian Director and Actor. Her recent directing credits include: Eight, Kings Head, Tara Arts and tour; Aladdin, St James’s Piccadilly. She was a directing observer on The House of Bilquis Bibi, (Tamasha) Hampstead Theatre.

Renu is soon to be one of the featured directors of the second Fragments season, Riverside Studios, in February.

Kristine Landon-Smith and Sudha Bhuchar

Kristine Landon-Smith and Sudha Bhuchar are joint founders and Artistic Directors of Tamasha. Kristine is a writer and director and Sudha is an actor and playwright.

Kristine Landon-Smith
Her 1996 production, East is East, was nominated for an Olivier award and her original production of Fourteen Songs, Two Weddings and A Funeral won the Barclays Theatre Award for Best New Musical. Her production, Strictly Dandia, was a sell-out success at the Lyric Hammersmith in both 2004 and 2005.

Kristine’s freelance credits include directing with the Royal Court Theatre, Bristol Old Vic, Palace Theatre Westcliff, Nitro, Yellow Earth Theatre and more recently with the Royal Danish Theatre, where she directed the ConfUSIONS workshop in Autumn 2005, aimed at developing cultural diversity in Scandinavian theatre.

Kristine has also been a regular guest director at the Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama and has taught at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, Sydney, Australia, the National School of Drama in India, Central School of Speech and Drama, London and L’Ecole Philippe Gaulier, Paris.

More recently, Kristine has directed The Trouble with Asian Men (artsdepot, Soho Theatre and UK tours), A Fine Balance (Hampstead Theatre and UK tour), Tamasha’s first children’s play, Child of the Divide (Polka Theatre, artsdepot and UK and US tours) and Tamasha’s first play with a youth cast, Lyrical MC (London tour). In October 2008, she directed Sweet Cider, a new play by Tamasha Developing Artist Emteaz Hussain, the new musical Wuthering Heights (national tour March - June 2009) and most recently The House of Bilquis Bibi (national tour summer 2010).

Sudha Bhuchar
Sudha’s many acting credits include, Murder (BBC) by Abi Morgan, EastEnders (BBC), Doctors (BBC), Holby City (BBC) and Haroun and the Sea of Stories (Royal National Theatre), and she was a regular on the BBC Radio drama Silver Street.

Her writing credits for Tamasha include Balti Kings, Fourteen Songs, Two Weddings and A Funeral, Strictly Dandia and A Fine Balance in which she also performed, in May 2006, her first children’s play: Child of the Divide (Polka Theatre) and most recently her adaptation of Lorca’s The House of Bernarda Alba - The House of Bilquis Bibi.

She writes regularly with Shaheen Khan and their many credits include three series of Girlies for BBC Radio 4 and Balti Kings (the stage play, as well as a six part series for Radio 4). Their screenplay, The House Across the Street, has been shown on BBC4 as part of a new writers initiative, and they have co-written an episode of Doctors for the BBC. Sudha also co-wrote a short film Midnight Feast, which was screened at the 11th Raindance Film Festival.

In 2005 Kristine and Sudha Bhuchar won the Asian Women of Achievement Award for Arts and Culture.

www.tamasha.org.uk
Exploring the Canon

The Red Room presents:

To Rahtid

by Sol B. River

Directed by: Topher Campbell
Artistic Director: Topher Campbell

Synopsis
A lone voice screams from the depths of time.

Cast:
Sharon Duncan Brewster - Mouth

Why To Rahtid?
Sol River is a voice that many have not heard. Particularly in London. To Rahtid is that rare thing; an expression of a world view held in the aching belly of a race in pain. It speaks to all the unpalatable things about the Black Diasporic experience. The things we would rather not remember or feel. Namely the brutal assault on our soul and consciousness that has been going on for centuries. It speaks to both the unspeakable torture of the middle-passage and its subsequent degradation, the horror of systematic exclusion in western democracies and lastly and perhaps most tragically the way in which we turn on ourselves. But it is the WAY it speaks and the WAY Sol uses language, so condensed and so packed with emotion, that elevates beyond just a rant. Instead it becomes a plea for the human race itself.

Topher Campbell

Topher Campbell is a director of film, television and theatre. He has directed plays at numerous theatres across the country including West Yorkshire Playhouse, Young Vic, London, Derby Playhouse, Contact Theatre, Manchester, Talawa Theatre, London and Leicester Haymarket. As Diversity Director/producer for BBC Radio Drama he established the Norman Beaton Fellowship.

In 2000 alongside artist/photographer Ajamu he set up rukus! Federation Ltd (www.rukus.co.uk). A company dedicated to presenting the best in work by Black Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual, Transgender (BLGBT) artists. rukus! Current projects include the Play Mangina Monologues and the UK’s first and only BLGBT Archive now housed at the London Metropolitan Archive. In 2008 rukus! received the Archive Landmark Award by London Metropolitan Archive.

Between 2006-08 Topher was a Programmer for the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and is currently artistic director of The Red Room theatre and film company. For the Red Room he has directed four productions: Journeys to work; the acclaimed multi-media production Unstated written by Fin Kennedy, Oikos and Protozoa for the Oikos Project.

The Jellyfish Theatre part of the Oikos project has been nominated by What’s On Stage for the AKA Theatre Event of The Year.

www.theredroom.org.uk
Kali Theatre Company presents:

Calcutta Kosher
by Shelley Silas

Directed by: Trilby James
Artistic Director: Janet Steel

Synopsis
In a crumbling Calcutta home, two sisters are forced to come to terms with their mother’s secret history.

Cast:
Harvey Virdi – Esther
Shelley King – Sylvie

Why Calcutta Kosher?
This engaging play by award winning writer Shelley Silas examines how family and culture, time and distance, influence our sense of who we are. Set in the Indian Jewish community, it explores conflicts between old and new, east and west, tradition and truth. If the past is another country, where is home? The play is beautifully structured with strong female characters who have the power to both move and surprise an audience. The play has a timeless quality whilst being very much in the present and the themes explored appeal to a diverse audience. It was a joy to produce.

Trilby James
Trilby James graduated from RADA in 1990. Her theatre includes Eurydice (Chichester); The Winter’s Tale, Coriolanus (ESC, Aldwych Theatre and World Tour); The Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare’s Lovers (ESC); The Madras House, Orpheus (Lyric Hammersmith) Keyboard Skills (Bush Theatre); Hindle Wakes (Royal Exchange Manchester); Cigarettes and Chocolate, Bye Bye Blues, Selling Out (Stephen Joseph Theatre Scarborough); Mrs Warren’s Profession (Theatr Clwyd); As You Like It (Nottingham Playhouse); The Tempest (Derby Playhouse); Three Sisters, Absent Friends, A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Wolsey Ipswich). Trilby directed Rabbit at RADA in 2007 and Simon Stephen’s Motortown in 2009 and Pornography in 2010.

Since 2000, Trilby has worked as a freelance director at ALRA, Arts Educational, Central School of Speech and Drama, East 15 and Mountview. Her productions include As You Like It, The Tempest, The Winter’s Tale, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, King Lear, Hay Fever, Babies, The Orchestra, The Thickness of Skin, Rabbit, Happy Families, A Warwickshire Testimony, Women of Troy, The Last Night of Ballyhoo and DNA.

Janet Steel
Janet has been Artistic Director of Kali Theatre Company since 2003. She began her career as an actress. Her theatre work includes: Cinders, A Colder Climate (Royal Court Theatre), Blood Wedding (Half Moon), Romeo and Juliet (Sherman Theatre & Albany Empire), Oedipus Rex (Tara Arts). Television credits include: An English Christmas, The Bride, Gems, The Refuge and Shalom Salaam.

Janet began directing in 1988 as assistant to Tessa Schneiderman at Loose Change Theatre, producing UK premieres at BAC by Spanish authors, where she directed her first full-length piece, White Biting Dog. Her directing credits include: Behzti (The Birmingham Rep); April in Paris, Bretevski Street, A Hard Rain, Top Girls (Northampton Royal Theatre); Exodus (Millennium Mysteries at Coventry Belgrade); Brecht’s Antigone, The Mother, Orpheus Descending, An Ideal Husband, Romeo & Juliet, The Knock and Serious Money (Rose Bruford College). For Kali Theatre she has directed Sock ‘em with Honey by Bapsi Sidhwa, Calcutta Kosher by Shelley Silas, Chaos and Paper Thin by Azma Dar, Deadeye by Amber Lone, Zameen by Satinder Kaur Chohan, A Thin Red Line by Sonali Bhattacharyya, Another Paradise by Sayan Kent and, Behna by Sonia Likhari.

www.kalitheatre.co.uk
Talawa Theatre Company presents:

Alterations

by Michael Abbensetts

Directed by: Josephine Melville
Artistic Director: Patricia Cumper

Synopsis

Alterations by Michael Abbensetts was first produced at the New End Theatre in 1978 and then again at Theatre Royal Stratford East in 1986. The central character, Walker Holt, is a man determined to succeed, and success to him means owning his own tailor’s shop on Carnaby Street. As the play progresses everything that Walker holds dear is sacrificed to his dream of ownership: he no longer sees his wife and child, his sometimes girlfriend is angry with him. He even alienates his most loyal friend and only employee. By the time he looks around for someone to celebrate his achievements with him, he has driven everyone away.

Cast:

Victor Romero Evans – Walker Holt
Chris Tummings – Buster Gibbs
Anthony Ekundayo Lennon – Horace Moore

Why Alterations?

By turns Alterations is funny and angry, and often politically incorrect. Alterations deserves to be part of the canon of British theatre because of the universality of the questions it explores: what price success? Wave after wave of immigrants come to London looking to make a new life and chase their dreams. Is ownership the only way of really belonging? At the end of the play, Walker shouts out the window ‘I’ve beaten you, you bastards’. Is it a triumphal exclamation or a hollow declaration to an uncaring world?

Josephine Melville

Josephine is a dancer, actress, singer, producer, writer, director, archivist and mother.
She has had an extremely varied career. By the time he looks around for someone to celebrate his achievements with him, he has driven everyone away.

Patricia Cumper

Patricia Cumper has been writing for the theatre for nearly thirty years. Her plays have been produced throughout the Caribbean, in Canada, the US and the UK. Her radio work includes a RIMA winning drama series, a fifteen part serialization of Small Island, a Sony Silver award winning adaptation of The Color Purple and an original five part dramatization of letters from the Black Cultural Archives.

She is currently Artistic Director and CEO of Talawa Theatre Company and Trustee of English Touring Theatre and Standing on the Shoulders of Giants Theatre Company.

www.talawa.com

Wednesday 9 February 2011
Arcola Theatre presents:
Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White by Alice Childress

Directed by: Katharine Armitage
Artistic Director: Mehmet Ergen

Synopsis
Set in South Carolina in the summer of 1918, Wedding Band is the story of Julia and Herman and the impossibility of their marriage. Despite their ten-year relationship Julia, who is black, and Herman, who is white, still live in a state of danger and resentment. The play explores how the assumptions, prejudices and history of both the black and white communities disrupt and threaten the genuine love that Julia and Herman feel for each other. Julia is surrounded by women used to abusive or absent husbands and to the constant threat of the white community's racism. Herman's family experience greater freedom and prosperity but struggle to fit in; they are working class and paranoid about being thought German. However both the white and black communities are united in their shame and disapproval of Julia and Herman's relationship whose plans to escape to the north are tainted as the prejudices that surround them begin to infect their love. In a final turbulent scene between the two their anger and hate towards each other turns back towards love but Herman dies as his family wait outside to take his body away from the woman who is wife to him in everything except law.

Cast:
Ayesha Antoine - Julia
Michael Anthony Brown - Herman

Why Wedding Band?
We chose this play because, ironically, it doesn't deal with the issues involved in black and white. This is not a simple didactic tale of the facts behind interracial marriage but a portrait of two communities of people each full of their own personal mix of love and hate. Julia and Herman's relationship is so powerful because it is a constant confusing overlap of passion and resentment, their personal lives and those of the community become so interlaced that there is no clear path for them. The play explores prejudice in all its forms and in a way that reveals how inescapable it is. Wedding Band is a complicated and beautiful portrayal of love, as well as the hate that threatens to overwhelm it. Despite it being steeped in the history of the time it is completely resonant and relevant today but has been utterly overlooked, especially in this country. Alice Childress grew up in Harlem and became the first black woman to receive an Obie award, but felt this accolade (i.e. being the first) only proved how overlooked black writing was. We feel this is a hugely significant and powerful play which should be part of the canon. It has the potential to be interpreted over and over again and to create an enriching and potent experience for many different audiences.

Mehmet Ergen
Mehmet has been Artistic Director of Arcola Theatre since founding it in 2000. Previously he was Artistic Director of the Southwark Playhouse from 1993 to 1999 which he co-founded. Mehmet is also Artistic Director of Arcola Istanbul which he founded in 2008. He has won a variety of awards for his work including: the Time Out Award for Outstanding Achievement, the Peter Brook Empty Space Award (twice), a Time Out Award for Best Fringe Production, the Angela Carter Award and the Equity Award for Best Studio Theatre. Directing for the Arcola includes: Release the Beat by J. Johnson/ K. Lewkowicz, Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising by Gunter Grass, I Can Get It For You Wholesale by J. Wiedman/Harold Rome, Jitterbug by Bonnie Greer, Chasing the Moment by Jack Shepherd and Ibsen's An Enemy of the People. Mehmet directs extensively abroad in Israel, Ireland, Canada and Turkey. He is founder of Yeni Kusak Theatre in Istanbul and runs Turkey's only new writing programme Oyun Yaz with the British Council.

www.arcolatheatre.com