

WINE IN THE WILDERNESS

By Alice Childress

Directed by Jasmine B. Gunter

Synopsis

As a race riot rages on the streets of Harlem, artist Bill Jameson works on his latest masterpiece, a triptych depicting Black womanhood. However, the final piece of the painting is uncomplete, and Bill searches for a muse. Lucky for him, his friends, Sonny-man and his wife Cynthia, have found the perfect model in the form of Tommy, a woman burned out of her home and taking refuge at a bar. As Bill collides with the force of nature that is Tommy, his views on Black womanhood are challenged and the things he thought he knew are put to the test.

Note from the Director

The term Intersectionality wasn't coined until 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw. *Wine in the Wilderness* was written in 1969, eleven years beforehand, and yet Alice Childress's play was already talking about this idea of the overlap between our oppressed or privileged identities that shape the person we are and how the world interacts with us. Childress expertly uses discussions of race, sex, and class to show how all of these factors contribute to the oppression of Black women. Bill Jameson, a male artist, hopes to capture the essence of Black womanhood in his latest triptych. His first image depicts a little girl: the representation of childhood innocence. In the second painting, there is Wine in the Wilderness, an impossibly beautiful African Queen and the epitome of what the Black woman should strive to be. Bill's third canvas is blank as he searches for the perfect model to represent "the messed up chick" that society has created. She is coarse, vulgar, ignorant, and the opposite of everything Wine in the Wilderness represents. In comes Tommy, who destroys all of Bill's pre-perceived notions on blackness, womanhood, and who in our community is deserving of dignity. This play becomes a real conversation amongst the Black community about the vast identities that it holds and our perceptions of each other. With this play, I'm interested in having a dialogue about what is blackness, what are our unique perspectives on blackness, where do we overlap, where is there room for all of us to learn from each other's perspectives, and how do we give each other a little more dignity as the days pass by.

Character Breakdown

Bill Jameson- Black, male, an artist aged thirty-three. Intellectual bourgeoisie type. Gifted but a little narcissistic

Oldtimer- Black, male, a roustabout character in his sixties. Uneducated. Lower-class. A bit of a wino.

Sonny-man- Black, male, a writer aged twenty-seven (Will also play the off-stage voice) Intellectual bourgeoisie type.

Cynthia- Black, female, a social worker aged twenty-five. (Will also play off-stage Woman's voice) Intelligent. Diplomatic. She is Sonny-man's wife.

Tommy- Black, female, factory worker aged thirty. (Will also play off-stage girl's voice) Uneducated. Lower class. Possesses a romantic, sensitive heart

Stage Direction Reader- Will read stage directions for the performance

Intimacy Breakdown

Please note that this is a virtual performance and no moments of intimacy will be physicalized in the reading. This list is presented to make actors knowledgeable about what the play encompasses.

Moments of intimacy are listed in the order that they happen.

- Tommy and Bill are sitting on the bed together. Tommy massages Bill's head and neck.
- Bill kisses Tommy
- Tommy and Bill embrace before falling into bed together

Language

There is use of the N-word in this play. By no means is the word used as an offensive racial slur against a Black character nor is the word said by a non-Black character. However, it is important to note that the word is used in this play a lot. Characters who use the N-word are Tommy, Bill, and Sonny-man.

Callback Dates

Callbacks will take place individually via a live zoom session from October 8th-13th. The director will be in contact with an electronic signup sheet for actors to make callback appointments and will provide appropriate sides for actors to prepare beforehand.

Rehearsal, Tech, and Streaming Dates

Please note that this virtual production will be a recorded performance and available for a general audience to access and view.

Rehearsal Period: October 26th-November 1st 2020

Tech: November 2nd-November 5th 2020

Streaming Dates: November 6th-8th 2020

Contact Information (for script and questions)

Director-Jasmine B. Gunter, MFA Directing 2023

jasminegunter2023@u.northwestern.edu