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## 'black odyssey' back at Cal Shakes

By *Sophie Braccini*

"black odyssey" 2018 poster Photo provided

Last year Cal Shakes created a premier of Marcus Gardley's play, "black odyssey," re-set in Oakland. The epic story of Ulysses Lincoln, on his long journey home from the war in Afghanistan, was an all-time success both with the public and critics, winning the company numerous awards. Cal Shakes opens the adventure again, with a limited edition this year, from Sept. 25 through Oct. 7 with several innovative initiatives such as a "Pay What You Can" performance on Tuesday, Sept. 25.

Contemporary playwright Gardley wrote "black odyssey," a tale seeking the roots of the black ethos in America, transcending the race issue, reaching all of us, independently of background, wondering about redemption, about our roots and about what it means to be human.

The public did not miss the significance of this story of wanderings and longing built on Homer's ancient Greek myth. The success of "black odyssey" was record-breaking at the Bruns Theater and the production won a collective 16 Theatre Bay Area Award nominations, including nominations for Outstanding Ensemble, Production, and Direction.

Cal Shakes Artistic Director and "black odyssey" director Eric Ting said that he was thrilled to bring Gardley's enthralling journey back to the Bruns. "We're celebrating this homecoming in a few special ways," added Ting. "Marcus was the recipient of our annual Guiding Star award earlier this year, and the city of Oakland surprised him at the awards ceremony with the proclamation of Marcus Gardley Day on the reopening of the production, Sept. 26, 2018."

The "Pay What You Can" performance is a deliberate effort to make theater performances available to all, independent of economic situation. Tickets for the performance will be available starting at 10 a.m. on the day of the show through TodayTix and the Cal Shakes Box Office at (510) 548-9666.

Then on Sunday, Sept. 30, Cal Shakes will host a Second Line lesson and parade with "black odyssey" co-choreographer Latanya D. Tigner for community partners and audience members in conjunction with the 4 p.m. performance (lesson starts at 3:15 p.m.). Second Line is one of the cornerstones of the New Orleans parade tradition, and is featured in "black odyssey." The afternoon will feature a live New Orleans-style band playing before and after the show. The event is included in that day's ticket price.

This year's cast incorporates returning and new actors, such as JD Mollison as Ulysses Lincoln, and Tony Award winner Cleavant Derrick as Great Grand Daddy Deus.

Details and tickets are available at [calshakes.org](http://calshakes.org). Performances are held at the Bruns Amphitheater, 100 California Shakespeare Theater Way, Orinda.

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