

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
JUNE 2018

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## Shotgun Players presents *White*, written by James Ijames, directed by M. Graham Smith

**"*White* is a comedy with consequences—which is my favorite type of comedy."  
—M. Graham Smith, *White* director**

Berkeley, CA – Gus is a talented white male artist on the rise. His good friend Jane is the new curator at a prestigious museum. When Jane informs him he's the exact opposite of what she's looking for, Gus is crushed. Then he hires Vanessa, an African-American actress who agrees to an unconventional role. *White* navigates the treacherous waters of code-switching and cultural appropriation with biting wit and a splash of disco realism. ***White* begins previews on Friday, July 6; opens on Friday, July 13; and runs through Sunday, August 5, 2018, at the Ashby Stage.** Audience members are invited to participate in talkback discussions immediately following each performance.

In a conversation, Director M. Graham Smith, Dramaturg Lisa Marie Rollins, and Assistant Director Samira Mariama Hamid comment on how the comedy in *White* slows down those too often instantaneous, polarizing reactions to talking about racism.

SMITH: "One strategy that James uses is the jokes that shine through different lenses of coded language. I could be sitting in the audience laughing, and I realize, "Oh, there's a lot of people that don't get that joke." Or it may happen the other way around. We're hearing the exact same words, seeing the same performance, but there's a disconnect. I think going through *White* together is a really important lesson to learn about how code works, how language works, how privilege operates in everything—even a comedy."

ROLLINS: "*White* speaks to a frustration that many people have with facing whiteness. I think we're just starting to get to a moment of reconciliation, of acknowledging how our slave past is impacting our present. It's hard because it feels like an attack. And it's something that people of color are asked to speak to *all* the time."

HAMID: "*White* is a fresh, provocative play that uses the world of art and comedy to call attention to how whiteness has been historically normalized and persists to this day. It offers up something to audiences that usually do not have to focus on their positions and privilege as they move through different spaces in society. It ingeniously employs the power of self-image, the language of code-switching, and the intricacies of cross-cultural communication. *White* speaks to all these themes and more and is simultaneously funny, witty and thought-provoking."

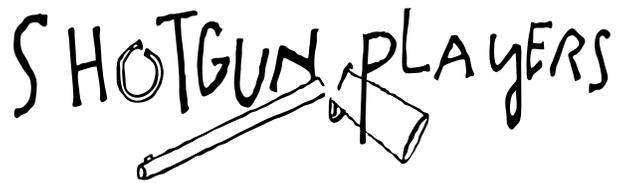
The cast of *White* features Adam Donovan, Santoya Fields, Luisa Frascioni, and Jed Parsario. The creative team features set design by Nina Ball, lighting design by Ray Oppenheimer, costume design by Ulises Alcala, costume assistance by Sandra Young-Cellilo, dramaturgy by Lisa Marie Rollins, assistant direction by Samira Mariama Hamid, stage management by Annette Koehn, props design by Devon LaBelle, video design by Erin Gilley, intimacy choreography by Kevin Clarke, sound design by Cliff Caruthers, and production assistance by Perry Fenton.

More at [shotgunplayers.org/online/article/white](http://shotgunplayers.org/online/article/white).

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## Artist Bios

### James Ijames, Playwright

James Ijames is a Philadelphia-based performer and playwright. He has appeared regionally in productions at the Arden Theatre Company, the Philadelphia Theatre Company, InterAct Theatre Company, The Wilma Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Mauckingbird Theatre Company, and People's Light and Theatre. James's plays have been produced by Flashpoint Theater Company, Orbiter 3, Theatre Horizon (Philadelphia, PA), the National Black Theatre (NYC), Ally Theatre (Washington DC) and have received development with PlayPenn New Play Conference, the Lark, Playwright's Horizon, Clubbed Thumb, Villanova Theater, the Gulfshore Playhouse, Wilma Theater, Azuka Theatre, and Victory Garden. James is the 2011 F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist recipient, and he also won two Barrymores for Outstanding Supporting Actor in *A Play for Superior Donuts* and *Angels in America* and one Barrymore for Outstanding Direction of a Play for *The Brothers Size* with Simpatico Theatre Company. James is a 2011 Independence Foundation Fellow, a 2015 Pew Fellow for Playwriting, the 2015 winner of the Terrance McNally New Play Award for *White*, the 2015 Kesselring Honorable Mention Prize winner for... *Miz Martha* and a 2017 recipient of the Whiting Award. James is a founding member of Orbiter 3, Philadelphia's first playwright producing collective and a mentor for the Foundry. He received a BA in drama from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA, and a MFA in acting from Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. James is assistant professor of theatre at Villanova University and resides in South Philadelphia.

### M. Graham Smith, Director

M. Graham Smith is a San Francisco-based director, educator, and Producer. He is an O'Neill National Directing Fellow, an Oregon Shakespeare Festival FAIR Fellow, and a resident artist at SF's Crowded Fire. He's directed around the country and at venues in San Francisco including A.C.T., Aurora Theatre, Central Works, Crowded Fire, EXIT Theatre, Brava, the Playwright's Foundation, Cutting Ball Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, Golden Thread, SF Opera, and New Conservatory/Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor. He directed the west coast premiere of *Jerry Springer: The Opera* in San Francisco and *Truffaldino Says No* at Shotgun Players, winning Best Director for the Bay Area Critics Circle. Recent credits include *Deal with the Dragon* at Edinburgh Fringe, Mia Chung's *You for Me for You* at Crowded Fire, and Qui Nguyen's *Beget's* at ACT's Strand Theatre. He teaches at A.C.T.'s actor-training programs and Berkeley Rep School of Theatre.

# SHOTGUN PLAYERS



## Calendar Listing

**WHAT:** Gus is a talented white male artist on the rise. His good friend Jane is the new curator at a prestigious museum. When Jane informs him he's the exact opposite of what she's looking for, Gus is crushed. Then he hires Vanessa, an African-American actress who agrees to an unconventional role. *White* navigates the treacherous waters of code-switching and cultural appropriation with biting wit and a splash of disco realism.

**WHEN:** Friday, July 6–Sunday, August 5, 2018

**WHERE:** [The Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley](#)

**TICKET PRICES:** Pay-what-you-can previews: July 6–12. Regular tickets: \$25–\$42. Advance reservations strongly advised. Shows will sell out!

**ARTIST TALK:** In partnership with Headlands Center for the Arts, Shotgun Players will host a free pre-show conversation with *White* playwright James Ijames and Bay Area critic John Wilkins on Saturday, August 4, 5–6pm.

For more information, go to [shotgunplayers.org/online/article/white](http://shotgunplayers.org/online/article/white)

## About Shotgun Players

Shotgun Players is a company of artists determined to create bold, relevant, affordable theatre that inspires and challenges audience and artist alike to re-examine our lives, our community, and the ever-changing world around us.

Nothing excites Shotgun more than taking on projects that other companies might deem too expensive, too unwieldy, or just plain impossible. Our commitment to new play development has made Shotgun Players a vital part of the arts community in the Bay Area and beyond. Shotgun celebrated its 20th anniversary with an entire season of new works, and put a stake in the ground by producing a year of all female playwrights in 2015.

More at [shotgunplayers.org](http://shotgunplayers.org).