



ONAJE by Robert Bowie, Jr.

ThePlayOnaje.com

Synopsis:

In *ONAJE*, an eccentric hitchhiker is picked up by a headstrong cowboy and spirited waitress, only to discover they are all inextricably linked by the past. *ONAJE* is about buried secrets, redemption, and the long journey from racism to the seed of a hopeful future. Set in two worlds — against the backdrop of the burning city of Cambridge during Maryland's race riots of 1967, and the American open road of the 1980s — *ONAJE* explores the fallout of racial violence, ultimately finding humanity, and hope.



About the Playwright:

Playwright and poet Robert Bowie, Jr. has had nine plays produced through The Baltimore Playwrights Festival (BFF). His political farce, *Crash & Burn P.A.*, was the only submission selected by the Festival in 2016 for a full production at Baltimore's Theatrical Mining Company. Bowie's most-recent play, *ONAJE*, was a semi-finalist for the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center 2018 season. It premiered in October to sold-out audiences and critical acclaim at The New York International Fringe Festival (FringeNYC). Bowie is also Poet Laureate of The Harvard Alumni Association (HAA).



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“ONAJE is a beautifully written, directed, and acted play that left me crying in the theatre by the end. It’s a call for change. It’s a reminder of the past. It’s a play about love and hate. In short, it’s theatre.”

— Christopher Peterson, *OnstageBlog.com*



“Best bet! The most dramatic, fleshed-out, near cinematic play I have seen at this year’s Fringe. *ONAJE* is a high-stakes story that shows the power of people standing up to racism.”

— Ed Malin, *Theatre is Easy (theeasy.com)*

“Bowie’s story belittles the ‘us versus them’ mentality that pits Americans against each other and disgraces those that adhere to it. *ONAJE* questions how much has changed since the 60s, and what might it take to finally heal.”

— *Opplaud.com*



Links to reviews & more photos at <http://thePlayONAJE.com/media>.

OnStage Blog

ON SCENE. ON POINT. IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Review: “Onaje” at FringeNYC

Christopher Peterson

Most people don't like to be reminded outright of the trouble in the world around them, even if everything is crumbling to the ground. As long as they aren't being hit with the debris, most people won't even acknowledge it's there. At its core that is one of the things that theatre is about, forcing an audience to witness, through the eyes of the play, the trouble that exists in the world every day. This is why *Onaje* is such an important piece of theatre. It tells a tragic story of riots, racism, and hate that, although it is set in both 1967 and 1980, is unfortunately still very relevant.

Onaje tells the story of a young African-American hitchhiker named Onaje (played by Curtis M. Jackson), who gets picked up on the highway in Reno by a white couple on the run. Through conversations of mutual fears, doubts, angers, and a shared home, the three become a unit and we get to witness their journey back home both literally and metaphorically. The play also takes us back in time from 1980 to 1967 to the time of the riots in Cambridge. We get to see this event through the eyes of Onaje and his family as well as the tragic story of how he became who he was.

Despite the tragedy in the subject matter, *Onaje* brilliantly brings a sense of warmth to an otherwise cold situation. There is a tremendous sense of family and community for the trio of travelers, for Onaje's family, for the town, and for the country. It's a story about family and what they do for each other, no matter how much it hurts them. It's about hope for their own lives, for forgiveness, and for the human race. These are ideas that anyone can find a connection to. Then when the ideas that some people might feel a little far away from come up, they are much more likely to want to hear and understand because they are already thoroughly invested. This is what change in the theatre is all about, and *Onaje* does it beautifully.

Onaje boasts an incredibly talented cast. This includes Curtis M. Jackson as Onaje, who was thrilling the whole way through, letting us feel the weight of all that he has been through as well as the determination of someone willing to fight for a change. Other standouts include Adam Couperthwaite and Sheila Joon Ostadazim as Richard and Belle, the other two in the trio. Working off of each other as well as Jackson beautifully, these two bring incredible depth to two people trying to figure out the strange hitchhiker they just encountered.

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ONAJE

A new play by
Robert Bowie, Jr.

Produced by
Sue Conover Marinello

Directed by
Pat Golden

fringe_{nyc}SM

OCT. 13 - 21



Starring Tinuke Adetunji, Adam Couperthwaite, John Dewey,
Curtis M. Jackson, Mary E. Hodges, Sheila Joon Ostadazim,
Bristol Pomeroy, Tim Rush, and Jay Ward

thePlayONAJE.com



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Fifty-one years ago, H. "Rap" Brown gave a fiery speech in Cambridge, Maryland, demanding equality for African-Americans on the Eastern Shore. In response, white folks lobbed Molotov cocktails into the black neighborhoods and refused to put out the fires for fear of snipers.

This year, a civil rights riot occurred in Charlottesville Virginia. A white protester was killed by white supremacists and President Trump said there were good people on both sides. We are as divided now as we were 51 years ago, but it's worse.

ONAJE is a play written exclusively from my perspective as an American citizen. It is about American sadism, whether it be the mass murder of children in our schools, police shooting unarmed black men, or the silent damage of #MeToo.

It is also a personal love story, written from my perspective as a citizen of the greatest country in the world, for its custom of conversation and then compromise, its ability to grow, mature, and change, and its huge and generous heart. It is dedicated to all those people who picked me up when I had nothing and was hitchhiking across this great country during my misspent youth. These people were universally generous and kind and from all genders, races, creeds, and colors. And though there were times we disagreed, together we were Americans.

— *Robert Bowie, Jr.*