

# Before the People Came



The Players.

ART Photo

Organizers of the 2009 National Black Theatre Festival reviewed hundreds of submissions from production companies and playwrights from around the world to pick the more than three dozen shows that will be staged during the weeklong event.

When actor, director and playwright Dr. jeff obademi carr (who does not capitalize his name), was notified that his play, "Before The People Came," was among the select few chosen, he was both excited and honored.

"I'm quite blown away with the selection of "Before The People Came" into this festival. This is, without a doubt, the most prestigious festival of Black Theatre in the world," he said. "Over the course of the last two decades, thousands of plays have been submitted and only a select few have been chosen. I'm humbled that the festival thought my words were worthy."

"Before The People Came" is a children's jazz choreo-poem that has won the hearts of audiences of all ages. Based on an African folk tale, the show centers around a group of animals dying of thirst on an African desert plain who must learn to put aside their differences in order to survive.

"Kids get the fun and the life lessons, and adults get the humor and a reminder of the simple things it takes to just get along in life," said carr, a graduate of Tennessee State University.

The Nashville, Tenn.-based Amun Ra Theatre, which carr founded, first staged the production in 2004 when it had its world premiere and soldout 38 consecutive shows. With the Amun Ra Theatre (or ART), carr has accomplished his mission of exposing audiences to the wealth of African-American culture. He has also helped shine the spotlight on the great, untapped talent of Nashville, a town known primarily for country music.

"Before The People Came" stars Jeff D. Boyet as monkey and the snakes, Elliot Robinson as griot and tiger; Shonka Durureh as eagle and owl; Aleta Myles as rabbit and giraffe; and Brett Wilson as elephant and tortoise.

"I'm excited to take with me a crew of the finest actors in this region to showcase what Amun Ra Theatre is producing right out of Nashville," carr remarked. "This is Music City, and a play with music, so we're going to show the world what we've been saying for the last seven years at ART. We're sparking a cultural renaissance."

Aug. 4 & Aug. 5  
at 1 p.m. & 3 p.m.  
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- The Chronicle



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