



Marylynn Melissa Gwatiringa and Sharisa Whatley.

Black Rep Photos

## *In the Continuum*

The Black Rep, the St. Louis-based theater company, is known for finding and nurturing great talent, staging unforgettable productions and leaving theatergoers in utter awe and amazement.

That well-earned reputation was first established in 1976 when visionary Ron Himes founded The Black Rep while he was still a student at Washington University. Today, it is the nation's largest professional black theater company and one of the most successful - entertaining more than 80,000 each year.

The Black Rep has brought numerous productions to the National Black Theatre Festival over the years. This year, festival-goers will be treated to the company's critically-acclaimed production of "In the Continuum," a powerful two-woman play written by Nikkole Salter and Danai Gurira.

"In the Continuum" tells the stories of Nia, a teenaged African-American girl, and Abigail Murambe, a pregnant, professional woman in Zimbabwe. Though miles and an ocean apart, the play follows both characters as they learn that the men in their lives have infected them with HIV.

When the play debuted off-Broadway in 2005, with writers Salter and Gurira playing the roles of the two women, it was hailed for its power and poignancy. The New York Times named it one of its 10 best plays of the year.

The Black Rep's production of "In the Continuum" played to packed houses earlier this year and earned kudos for director Lorna Littleway and actresses Sharisa Whatley and Marylynn Melissa Gwatiringa.

The role of Nia is played by Whatley, an Atlanta-based actress who is making her second appearance in a Black Rep show. Whatley first worked with the

company in "Godspell." Whatley has performed with theater companies from Holland to South Africa, but her home base is Atlanta's Freddie Hendricks Youth Ensemble, where she has appeared in productions such as "Class of 3000 Live," "In The Red and Brown Water" and "The Stinky Cheese Man."

A native of Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, Gwatiringa plays Abigail. She moved to the United States just five years ago and so far has spent much of her time in this country studying. Gwatiringa earned a musical theater degree from Missouri Valley College; she is now working toward her MFA at Lindenwood University (in St. Charles, Mo.). "In the Continuum" is Gwatiringa's first show with The Black Rep. She already has many children's theater credits under her belt with Minnesota's Climb Theatre.

Director Littleway is a favorite of The Black Rep. She steered the company's staging of August Wilson's "Radio Golf" last season. She has also directed The Black Rep's productions of "Ceremonies in Dark Old Men," "Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery," "7 Guitars," "Home," "Kingdom Come" and "Robert Johnson Trick the Devil." Littleway is also an educator. She designed the African American Theatre minor degree program at the University of Louisville, and she was Artistic Director of Minority Theatre Workshop at Iowa State University-Ames.

The show's costume designer is Linda Kennedy; Jim Burwinkel is the lighting designer, while Brian Purlee is in charge of scenic design. The sound designer is Ashley Turner; Patti Walley is the stage manager; Himes, in addition to being The Black Rep's founder, is the company's producing director; and Rudy Nickens is The Black Rep's executive director.

**Aug. 6  
at 8 p.m.  
Aug. 7 at 8 p.m.  
Aug. 8 at 3 & 8 p.m.  
at UNCSA The Thrust**

**Ticket Price: \$37**



Marylynn Melissa Gwatiringa plays one of her many characters.

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