

Sassy Mamas

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Elayn Taylor, Iona Morris and Denise Dowse are "Sassy Mamas."



Denise Dowse with Derek Shaun.

Sassy Mamas

**UNCSA's
Gerald
Freedman
Theatre**

Thurs, Aug. 6	8 p.m.
Fri, Aug. 7	8 p.m.
Sat, Aug. 8	3 p.m.
Sat, Aug. 8	8 p.m.

\$41

Festival-goers beware! Cougars will be on the prowl – at least on the stage, anyway. "Sassy Mamas" is a cleverly written, wickedly funny comedy about seasoned women who break all the dating norms by pursuing men half their age.

From the creative mind of Celeste Bedford Walker comes this two-act play that centers around three women – the very single Wilhemina "Wil" Sorenson, the deputy National Security Advisor to the President of the United States; Mary Wooten, who after 30 years has just divorced her ambassador husband; and the recently widowed Jo Billie Massey, a lead hospital administrator. They have been friends for decades and now live together in a very posh Washington, D.C., bachelorette pad. They have not had the best romantic experiences with men their own age. Younger men are now their preference, and their adventures with their handsome conquests are bawdy, brazen and hilarious.

The comedy debuted earlier this year in Los Angeles and was so popular that demand for tickets could not be met. Thirty folks a night had to be turned away because of space limitations. Eventually, matinees and evening shows were added. Celebrities were among those who flocked to the play. Blair Underwood called it "funny, poignant, sexy and right on time," while Wendy Raquel Robinson praised the three stars: "These phenomenal women bring the house down with such riveting performances that you'll laugh until you cry."

The phenomenal women in question are Denise Dowse (Wil), Elayn Taylor (Mary) and Iona Morris (Jo Billie), who also directs "Sassy Mamas." Morris has performed in a number of productions that have been featured at the National Black Theatre Festival, including M.O.I.S.T. in 2009 and 2011. Her long list of television credits include roles on "Moesha," "Lincoln Heights" and "The Soul Man." Taylor has appeared in films like "The Wood," "Dr. Dolittle 2" and "Something's Gotta Give." Dowse is best-known as a stage director. She has won four NAACP Theatre Award Best Director honors for her work. Three very talented actors also appear. Kareem Grimes, Jah Shams and Derek Shaun have won kudos for holding their own in the company of such vivacious and accomplished actresses.

Married couple Vanessa Paul and Alex Morris produce the play, via Los Angeles-based Sparkling City Entertainment. They have produced many popular productions, including "Camp Logan," another play written by Walker, for which they received five 2012 NAACP Theatre Award nominations. ■



The ladies of "Sassy Mamas" – Iona Morris, Denise Dowse and Elayn Taylor.