



P R E S E N T

BETWEEN HEAVEN & EARTHA

A NOT-SO-TALL TALE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA & SHARIA BENN

DIRECTED BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA





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Sankofa African American Theatre Company.

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EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SHARIA BENN



**"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."-
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Greetings and welcome to the opening play of the Sankofa African American Theatre Company's 2023 – 2024. I am delighted to share with you our vision and mission for this season.

Sankofa is a word from the Akan language of Ghana that means "go back and get it". It is often symbolized by a bird that flies forward while looking backward, carrying an egg in its mouth. The egg represents the future, and the bird reminds us to learn from the past to build a better future. This is the essence of Sankofa: to honor our history, celebrate our culture, and inspire our community. Theatre is a collaborative art form, and we are proud to partner with other local theatre companies to bring you stories that challenge, inspire, and entertain.

This season's plays reflect this essence in different ways. Our first play, "Between Hevan and Eartha a not-so-tall tale about climate change" was born out of a beautiful collaboration of playwrights, partnerships and artists who put the success of the project over personal pride and gain. This timely and relevant story explores the impact of climate change on our lives and our relationships. It is a play that challenges us to listen to each other, to understand each other, and to work together for a common cause.

EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SHARIA BENN

In December Sankofa will present "Black Nativity by Langston Hughes", the iconic gospel song play that retells the Christmas with an African American perspective. It is a play that celebrates the joy and hope of the Christmas season, as well as the rich and diverse traditions of the African diaspora. It is a play that reminds us of the power of faith, music, and community.

In February, Sankofa will collaborate with Gamut Theatre to produce "The Jackson Rooming House", "The Jackson Rooming House", is an original and new work set against the backdrop of a welcoming rooming house or Black travelers and entertainers coming through Harrisburg during the first half of the twentieth century. This play honors our local history, as well as the contributions of African Americans to the music, culture and hospitality industry of our nation and invites us to explore the stories behind the names and faces that shaped our society.

In June we will partner with Theatre Harrisburg to stage "Intimate Apparel" by Lynn Nottage in this moving drama that follows the life of Esther, a seamstress who makes lingerie for women of different backgrounds in New York City in 1905. It is a play that portrays the struggles and dreams of a woman who seeks love and fulfillment in a changing world. It is a play that challenges us to question the stereotypes and prejudices that divide us.

I wholeheartedly agree with the phenomenal playwright Lynn Nottage who said, "I think theater can be used as an instrument for social change because it's one of those rare places where people can gather together collectively and have their hearts opened." Sankofa African American Theatre Company is on a mission to open hearts, deepen understanding, foster healing, and create a truly inclusive community by bringing diverse voices and stories to the stage.

Thank you for being part of our Sankofa family. Enjoy the show!

Peace & Blessings,
Sharia Benn

FROM THE DIRECTOR

FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA



This script and this production are vibrant proof of the power of collaboration, of coming together, of listening to each other. When Sharia asked if I would work with her to create a play about climate change, I was both anxious and excited. In the weeks that followed, we imagined characters, exchanged ideas, drafted scenes, and what resulted from that work is something far better and more complex than either of us could have produced on our own. When Sharia had to switch gears and become an actor, I switched gears and became a director. Together, we pushed ourselves past our expectations and limitations, and (I hope) what we are sharing today is filled with additional layers of richness and resonance because of the journey the production—and everyone working on it—had to take to bring it to you.

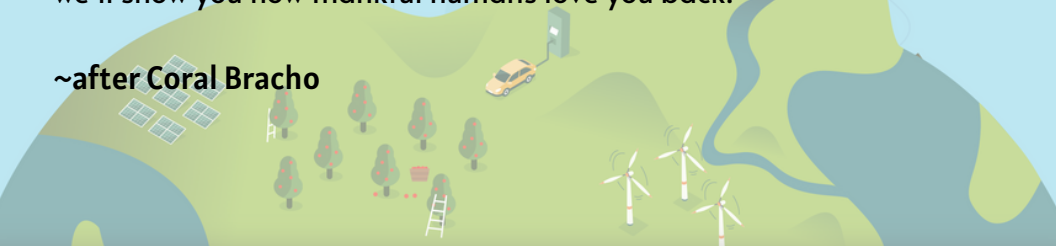
Climate change is terrifying, but together, we can make a difference. Together, we are so much more powerful than our solitary fears.

SHOW US, EARTH, YOUR DAY by Dana Kinsey

SHOW US, EARTH, YOUR DAY

under your cerulean umbrella where your silver spokes are blue jay roads. Open our eyes, Eos. Earth of jazzy ocean scattling & frolicking, give us your frothy-foam-daydream-mode. We'll open our jackets to take you in. Show us gospel choirs singing your canary song, grace notes we need to hum along. Lead us to your castle door, your disco floor, your rowdy parades that erupt into choreography. With watercolor we'll paint blank spaces, places where sadness plays hide-n-seek. We'll let our sorrows sink deep in your soil, savor your loyal embrace when we feel abandoned, Earth. Heaven knows you never leave us, perceive our deepest needs. We seek park bench nonchalance, greenness in abundance. Please grant us trees to teach us the posture of gods. We don't want to forget what you let us take even when we forgot to give, afraid to live with any inconvenience, hesitant to sacrifice our time, our luxuries, our tragedies if it means sharing them among your softest clouds. Allow us patience as we change. Into something kinder. Find our generosity renewed. May we listen to those who understand that we must care-take, share moments awake outside under your cathedral sky where we belong. Remind us your breeze is just the quiet way you appease us, please us when we're troubled. We look to you for inspiration, motivation, adulation in our darkest hours. Ours is a relationship that's not well-balanced, but we'll try to even the scales, even though we've neglected you too many times. Take our rhymes, our reasons as apologies, knowing we've let you down. We vow to do better. Letters from us will morph into actions. Factions of the world are slowly learning to mother you, Mother Earth. May we too. As we roam your dogwooded avenues, toss across rocks & rhythms; give us reasons to climb to rooftops; make us all lighthouses when you feel dim & in your sweet rain showers, drench us in powers & we'll show you how thankful humans love you back.

~after Coral Bracho



BETWEEN HEVAN & EARTHA

A NOT-SO-TALL TALE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA & SHARIA BENN

DIRECTED BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA

“Between Hevan and Eartha: A Not-So-Tall Tale About Climate Change” represents something unprecedented for WITF, StateImpact Pennsylvania and Climate Solutions: A partnership to produce a new creative work that’s informed by journalism. At a time when news organizations can and sometimes do contribute to polarization and conflict, our goals include modeling civil discussion and convening people to focus on nonpartisan problem-solving. As more and more people suffer from news fatigue, or simply don’t know where to turn for accurate information, we believe partnerships like this one with Sankofa can help connect communities in an effort to meet challenges presented by climate change. We are grateful for that partnership, and we hope “Between Hevan and Eartha” moves you to think ... and to listen.

Scott Blanchard,

WITF director of journalism, Climate Solutions editor



Scan QR code to complete a two question survey
and learn more about Climate Solutions.

BETWEEN HEAVEN & EARTH

A NOT-SO-TALL TALE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA & SHARIA BENN

DIRECTED BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA

PRODUCER.....SHARIA BENN
DIRECTOR.....FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA
STAGE MANAGER.....MICAH GANTT
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER.....NAJUMA NORMAN
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER.....JADE JARRELL
COSTUME DESIGNER.....SHARIA BENN
LIGHTING DESIGNER.....ALYX NORNHOLD
SOUND DESIGNER.....JOSH RHODES
VIDEO DESIGNER.....MITCH MATHIAS



BETWEEN HEVAN & EARTHA

A NOT-SO-TALL TALE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA & SHARIA BENN

DIRECTED BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA

CARPENTER.....CHRIS GIBSON
SCENIC DESIGNER.....SHARIA BENN
COSTUME DESIGNER.....NOVA LORAINE
SCENIC ART CURATOR.....NATHAN FOSTER
GAMUT THEATRE SET DESIGNER.....CLARK NICHOLSON
BUSINESS MANAGER.....DON ALSEDEK
BOX OFFICE.....CINDY SCALES
GRAPHIC DESIGN.....CHARITY KENNEDY BIXLER
PROGRAM DESIGN & MARKETING.....LYENEAL GRIFFIN
HOUSE MANAGER.....LATRESHIA LILLY

POST-SHOW FACILITATORS:

CLAIR A. JANTZ, NADINE GARNER, SCOTT BLANCHARD,
RACHEL MCDEVITT, & JENIFFER NUNEZ-ZAYAS



BETWEEN HEVAN & EARTHA

A NOT-SO-TALL TALE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

AMANDINE POPE.....	HOPE
SHARIA BENN.....	EARTHA
KENZA NOMA.....	HEVAN
PAULA LEWIS ROMAN.....	DANIELLA
AIDAN ROT.....	ALEX
RYAN HICKS.....	KYLE
DAVID PAYNE.....	JOHN
GERREN WAGNER.....	KIMORA



BETWEEN HEAVEN & EARTH

A NOT-SO-TALL TALE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

BY FRANCESCA AMENDOLIA & SHARIA BENN

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SETTING:

Scene 1: The Invitation

Six moments of decision

Six different places

Six people

Scene 2: The Conversation

One stormy evening

One Harrisburg waiting room

One group

TIME:

THE PRESENT

RUNTIME: 85 minutes

NO INTERMISSION

POST PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION IMMEDIATELY AFTER SHOW



SANKOFA

AFRICAN AMERICAN
THEATRE COMPANY

ABOUT SANKOFA AATC

Sankofa is an Akan (Ghana) word that means, "We must go back and reclaim our past so we can move forward;" so that we understand why and how we came to be who we are today, thereby gaining wisdom, power, and hope to make positive progress through the sharing of this knowledge.

MISSION

Sankofa African American Theatre Company exists to engage and enrich the Harrisburg region around the African American perspective on relevant issues through thought-provoking theatre that reflects artistic excellence.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Anne Alsedek
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Sunada Roberts
Valerie Gray
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Sharia Benn, Executive Artistic Director
Donald Alsedek, General Manager
Cindy Scales, Operations Administrative Assistant
Chudney Lewis, Financial and Development Administrator
Lyeneal Griffin, Marketing

MEET THE CAST



Sharia Benn- graduate of Towson University is President & Executive Artistic Director of Sankofa African American Theatre Company and is on a mission to create learning and healing spaces for theater artists and audiences to amplify and engage constructively with African American culture, history, experiences and perspective. Her recent credits include: Anne & Emmett (Mamie Till); Voices of the Eighth: Chronicles II (writer, director); Black Nativity (director), Crowns (director), Echoes of the Voices of the Eighth (writer, director), Pretty Fire (Charlayne Woodard), Voices of the Eighth (writer/director); Bridge (the gap) (writer/director); For Colored Girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf (director), Voices of F.E.W. (writer, director, role of Frances Harper). She won a Broadway World Best Actress Award for her portrayal of Ma Rainey in Ma Rainey's Black Bottom.



Ryan Hicks (KYLE) is pleased to be returning to the Gamut Theatre stage in my Sankofa African American Theatre debut. But enough about me. I'm far from interesting; on to you. Yeah, you! You have the power to make a profound impact in our collective fight to battle climate change. So, I beg of you friends, learn the facts, make a plan, get others involved, and take action. Climate Change is the single most pressing issue of our lives and YOU MATTER in the fight to save our planet. Don't know where to start? Check out two organizations I admire immeasurably and who are doing life-saving work: Urban Ocean Lab & GreenWave.



Kenza Noma (HEVAN) is a fifth grader at Elmwood Academy in Mechanicsburg, PA. She discovered her love of theater when she attended a summer theater camp. Her last performance was in an adaption of Tales of Myth and Magic. Kenza loves singing, dancing and playing the clarinet.



Amandine Pope (HOPE) was born in France and attended the Conservatory of Ferme d'Ayau, in Roissy-en-brie, France for stage theater. This is her debut with Sankofa AATC. She performs regularly as an improv artist with Harrisburg area improv groups and most recently performed in Cosmic Trash during Harrisburg Fringe and for Juneteenth Mashup at Narcisse.

MEET THE CAST



David Payne (JOHN) is excited to be making his debut with Sankofa African American Theater Company. David has appeared in numerous productions at theaters throughout central PA, most recently in "Beautiful—the Carole King Story" as one of The Drifters, and as Jake in "Side Show." Other favorite roles include Hoke in "Driving Miss Daisy," Booker T. Washington in "Ragtime," TonTon Julian in "Once on this Island," and El Gallo in "The Fantasticks." David has also acted in numerous productions written by Harrisburg-based playwright Dr. Dorothy King. A Philadelphia native, David has called Harrisburg home for 33 of the last 38 years.



Paula Lewis-Roman (DANIELLA) is back again for her fifth production with Sankofa African Theatre Company, which includes; "For Colored Girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf", "Crowns", "Voices of the Eighth", and "Black Nativity" by Langston Hughes, "The People Could Fly". Rose of the Danube (Princess Daisy); "Once on This Island" (Villager/Dancer/Singer); "Bodas de Sangre" (Muse); Coral Philharmonic of Puerto Rico (Mezzo-Soprano); Choir of the University of Puerto Rico (Alto I). Paula also holds a bachelor's degree of Arts with a concentration in Drama/Theatre.



Aidan Rot (ALEX) is a professional character/improv actor who's been working on his craft for the last 15 years. He got his start in acting at Gamut Theatre while still in high school and has been in productions almost yearly with the company ever since. This however is Aidan's first production with Sankofa and he couldn't be more blown away by the phenomenal experience he's had alongside his stellar cast/crew, they are all really wonderful to witness doing what they do respectively.



Gerren Wagner (KIMORA) is thrilled to be a part of this amazing production and such a talented cast in her first Sankofa African American Theatre Company appearance. She began acting with Theatre Harrisburg last year and has since been fortunate to also work with Pharmacy Theater and Narcisse Theatre. She is grateful for the loving support of her husband to run lines and take over household duties so she can indulge in this newfound hobby!

Post-Show Discussion Facilitator



Jeniffer Nunez-Zayas

Jeniffer Nunez-Zayas, a New Jersey native and graduate of Steelton-Highspire High School, began her remarkable journey at the age of 14, balancing multiple jobs throughout her life. Her diverse career spans business ownership, caregiving for hospice patients, insurance specialization, modeling, and a true passion for cosmetology, which she teaches while incorporating principles of learning and her hobbies like gardening.

In addition to her love for gardening, she also possesses a deep-seated passion for helping the environment, further enriching her commitment to making a positive impact on the world. Committed to community service since 2011, her involvement with The Bridge team reflects her dedication to positivity and knowledge sharing, with a focus on creating opportunities for underprivileged families.

Jeniffer Nunez-Zayas embodies resilience, a passion for personal growth, community betterment, and environmental stewardship.

Post-Show Discussion Facilitator



Rachel McDevitt

Rachel McDevitt reports on energy, the environment, and climate change for StateImpact Pennsylvania at WITF.

Rachel covers Pennsylvania state government's policy on climate change, its effects on people, and lawmakers' approach to the industries that generate many of Pennsylvania's greenhouse gas emissions. Her work through the collaborative Climate Solutions puts special focus on communities and individuals working to address the effects of climate disruption.

Her stories have aired nationally on the NPR shows *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, *Weekend Edition*, and *Science Friday*.

Rachel joined WITF in 2014 as a Radio Pennsylvania reporter before becoming the local host of *All Things Considered* in 2017. The western Pennsylvania native started her journalism career with the CBS affiliate in Bridgeport, West Virginia. Rachel holds a degree in Communications and Spanish from Temple University.

Post-Show Discussion Facilitator



Scott Blanchard

Scott Blanchard is Director of Journalism at WITF. He joined the public media station in 2017, moving from print/digital to radio/digital. He oversees Statelmpact Pennsylvania, a collaboration of public media stations covering the state's energy transition, and the collaboration Climate Solutions, which uses education, engagement and journalism to help central Pennsylvanians work toward solutions to climate challenges. Previously, he was enterprise editor at the York (Pa.) Daily Record, leading investigative and projects reporting. He and a YDR photographer worked with the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma to create a trauma-awareness/peer-support program for the YDR and sister newsrooms. That effort grew from Blanchard's experience as a 2013 Ochberg Fellow at Dart, where he was trained in PTSD science, self-help and peer support. He is a board member of the Trust for Trauma Journalism. He is a Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Foundation board member, and is a past president of the Pennsylvania Society of News Editors. A Rockville, Md., native, he is a graduate of the University of Missouri's journalism school.

Post-Show Discussion Facilitator



Nadine Garner, Ed.D., LPC

Nadine Garner, Ed.D., LPC is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Millersville University of Pennsylvania and the Director of two Trauma Institutes: Trauma-Informed Training for K-12 Educators and Trauma-Informed Training for Mental Health Professionals. She is a counselor educator and supervisor in the School Counseling M.Ed. and Certification programs.

Dr. Garner is the program coordinator for the Supervisor of Guidance Services certificate. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and holds certifications as a Professional School Counselor (PSC) and K12 Music Educator. Dr. Garner is the chair of the university's Sustainability Committee and founded and directed the Center for Sustainability.

Dr. Garner is a published author in professional journals and textbooks and is co-author of the book, *A School with Solutions: Implementing a Solution-Focused/Adlerian-Based Comprehensive School Counseling Program*. Dr. Garner is a Volunteer Land Steward at the Lancaster Conservancy and a Wilderness Advanced First Aid provider and assists with interpretive hikes through the Conservancy's preserves.

Post-Show Discussion Facilitator



Dr. Claire A. Jantz

Dr. Claire A. Jantz is a Professor and Chair of the Geography-Earth Science Department and Director of the Center for Land Use and Sustainability (CLUS) at Shippensburg University (<https://centerforlanduse.org/>). While earning her PhD in geography from the University of Maryland, she worked as a full-time research associate at the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Woods Hole, MA. In 2005 she joined the faculty at SU, and in 2015 became the director of the CLUS.

Dr. Jantz has spent nearly 20 years engaged in the interdisciplinary field of land use science and is recognized as a leader in land use and ecosystem change modeling. Under her leadership, the CLUS has become a widely respected applied research center that provides science to support sustainable land use decisions at local and regional scales. Central to the work of the CLUS is engaging students - as the next generation of productive citizens - in meaningful work that highlights the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary sustainability challenges.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION & THANKS

Penn National Insurance

Kelsey Benn

William Benn

Jada Gantt

Gamut Theatre

Latreshia Lily

Benjamin Krumreig

Sarah Sheehan

Doug Watson

Delany Butler

Liza Gross

Rachel McDevitt- for the powerful stories on climate change that inspired so much of the dialogue in the play.

Paula Lewis-Roman who opened her heart and poured out her story as a climate refugee, which is retold by Daniella in the play.

Professor Lindsey Lyons, Director of Sustainability Learning at Dickinson College

The Gamut Theatre family for reading aloud an earlier draft of the play and for offering feedback that changed it for the better; my three Webbs for listening, encouraging, critiquing, inspiring, and believing.

BETWEEN HEVAN & EARTHA

Art installed

Art is listed as it appears on stage from left to right

1) Peg Belcastro
Acrylic and wax on board
\$450

2) Martin Kainz
Floral Still Life
Watercolor on Paper
\$450 obo

3) Richard Haynes Jr
Sweetgrass Basket Maker
Artists Proof Print
\$150

4) Wei Guo Peden
Bountiful Garden
Chinese Watercolor Painting
\$300

5) Ernie Gutierrez
Tracy's Journey
Mixed Media
\$1000 obo

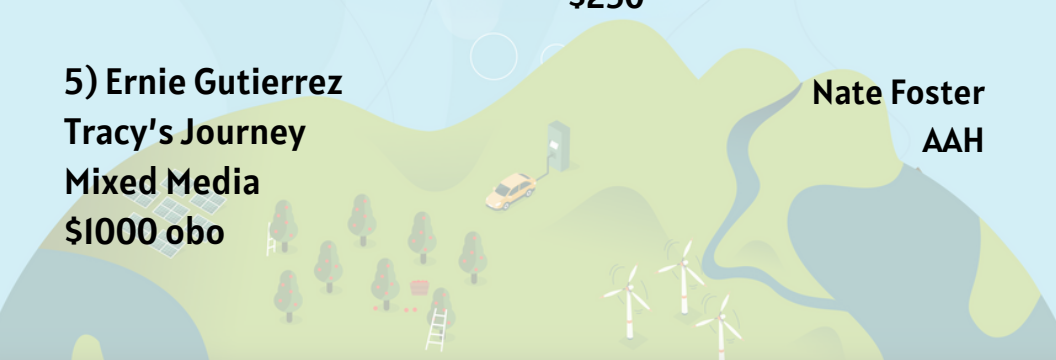
6) Hand Made Decorative
Indonesian Mask
\$100

7) Wei Gao Peden
Mystic Mountains
Chinese Watercolor
Painting
\$300

8) Li Hidly
Green Abstract
Acrylic
\$400

9) John R Jackson
Black Lady and Drum
Acrylic
\$250

Nate Foster
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