



‘Shakin The Mess Outta Misery’ Is A Much-Loved Contemporary Classic For Entire Family

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Does it really take a village to raise a child? This is evident with raising a daughter (Amber Iman) by Big Mamas, who are from the "ole school" (back in Jim Crow days) and who believe in the church, right from wrong, and determination. The loving Big Mamas in "Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery" are superb actors with a lot of expertise and talent. They bring a joyous performance and celebration of love and family to the Horizon Theatre. It will make you laugh, smile, sad, and make you think.

The play, written by Georgia-born Shay Youngblood, runs through Aug. 22 and is based on her own childhood experiences.

Youngblood is author of several novels and plays, including her popular children's play, "Amazing Grace," which rotates with "Shakin'" through Aug. 15 at the Horizon. "Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery" is directed by Tom Jones, who is co-founder of Jomandi Productions and who returns to Atlanta with the same commitment and talent he shared at Jomandi. Jones has written and appeared in more than 150 plays worldwide; this is his eighth production at Horizon Theatre.

His all-star cast features Andrea Frye (Big Mama); Aunt Mae (Margo Moore, Iman's real mother); Miss Mary (Tonia Jackson), who also plays Miss Tom and Miss Shine; Miss Corine (Marguerite Hannah); Miss Lamama (Nami Lavette), Maggie, who also plays Dee Dee and Miss Rosa (Cynthia Barker), and Fannie Mae (Danielle Deadwyler), who is daughter's mother in the play.

Jones, who finds them easy to direct because of their caring and loving attitudes, said, "They know what they're doing." The play takes place in the 1980s and mid- to late 1960s in a small Southern town.

Jones "is teaming up here with artists that live and work in Atlanta, enriching our community in so many ways," said co-artistic director Lisa Adler. "So you can see [at any age], it's truly a family affair, on stage and off. And you are part of it. Whether you have been with us for all 26 years or you're new to us, tonight, you are part of the Horizon family," Adler said.

These strong African-American women have a lot of religion in them, especially Andrea Fyre, who does an excellent job playing Big Mama in this 2010 version of the play that actually debuted here at the Horizon Theatre in 1988, when the daughter character was played by Moorer, Amber's real-life mother. Amber, who was only 18-months old in 1988, was at every rehearsal and show, mouthing all the lines (which she knew by heart), eating Horizon's cookies and telling charmed audience members, "That's my mama," said Adler.

Frye helmed the second production of "Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery" in 1989 as the director and recently did a superb job as director of "Black Pearl Sings" at Horizon. Now, as Big Mama, under the direction of Jones, Frye holds her own as a wise woman who is determined to raise a daughter, who is about 12 years old, after her mother passes, with pride and character with the help of others. The drama and history of this production will stay with you for a long time and its colorful and soulful celebration of a young girl's coming of age is a universal and insightful story that gives credit to both playwright and the director.

You don't want to miss this production, which is a classic fit for a new generation. "Shakin'" runs through Aug. 22 with mother-and-daughter night coming up Aug. 16. There is a matinee on Saturday at 4 p.m. with productions running Wednesday through Sunday. For ticket information contact the Horizon Theatre on Euclid Avenue in Little Five Points by calling the box office at 404-584-7450.