

Dust of Egypt in the Making



Desi Waters: Sojourner



Elliott Johnson: Robert and Thomas
Jade Cayne: Bell



Austin Iredale: Auctioneer
and Mr. Gedney



Desi Waters: Sojourner
Eric Ruffin: Peter

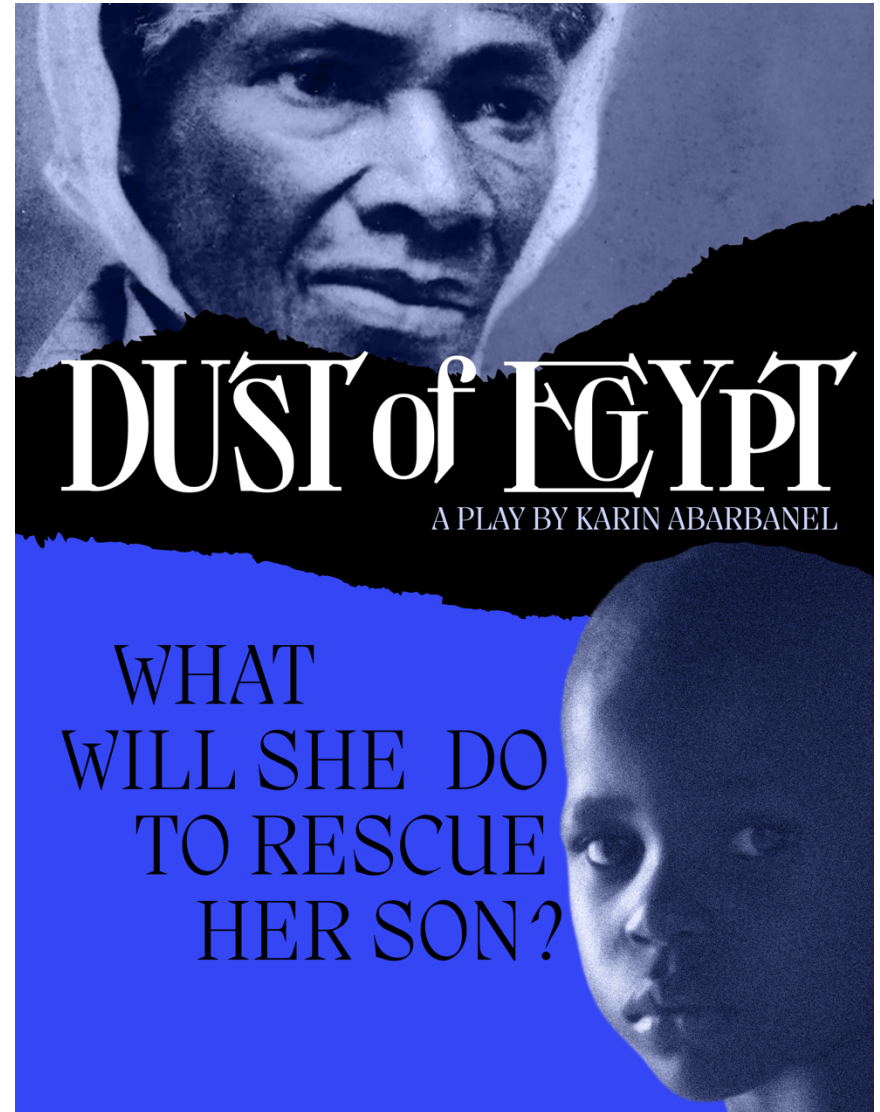


Daniel J. Martin: Mr. Romeyn
Jade Cayne: Bell



Jeanna Scheppe:
Mrs. Gedney

NEW YORK THEATER FESTIVAL



November 15, 18, and 19, 2022
Theater Latea, New York City

Sojourner Truth began her life as Isabella or Bell, a Northern slave. Born in about 1797, she was owned and sold by five different Dutch and English slaveholders in the Hudson River Valley in New York State.

In 1817, New York State passed a law that freed all enslaved adults born before 1799 on July 4, 1827. Bell's owner at the time, John Dumont, promised her that if she worked especially hard, he would free her a year early, but then refused to honor his word. In the fall of 1826, Bell began her "walk to freedom," defiantly and openly leaving Dumont's farm to find work and help her family. After she left, Dumont sold her 5-year-old son Peter to a neighbor and he was taken out of state.

New York State was one of a handful of states in which transporting slaves across state lines was illegal. Bell, with incredible courage and determination, impelled the New York legal system to recognize her claim to her boy Peter. She became the first Black woman of record to successfully wage a legal battle through the court system. Coming on the heels of significant new revelations about this series of events, including the discovery of original 1828 court documents about the case--previously thought to be lost forever--the time has never been better to put Sojourner Truth's extraordinary life in the spotlight.

~Karin Abarbanel~

“Truth is powerful and it prevails.”

~Sojourner Truth~

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Gordon K. Balkom

Mick Casale

reg e gaires

Kathleen Milburn

Joel Spector

Many Thanks to Our Generous Donors!

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DOMANI PRODUCTIONS

Presents

Dust of Egypt

By KARIN ABARBANEL

Director.....RHONDA PASSION HANSOME
Dramaturge.....JAYE AUSTIN WILLIAMS
Costume Designer.....MARY BLACKBURN
Stage Manager.....EMANI B. SIMPSON

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Sojourner Truth.....DESI WATERS
Auctioneer.....AUSTIN IREDALE
Bell.....JADE CAYNE
Peter.....ERIC RUFFIN
Robert.....ELIOTT JOHNSON
Thomas.....ELIOTT JOHNSON
Mr. Gedney.....AUSTIN IREDALE
Mrs. Gedney.....JEANNA SCHWEPPE
Mr. Romeyn.....DANIEL J. MARTIN

PLACE

Church hall, town of New Paltz, New York

TIME

1860s, the past and future

CAST

Desi Waters (Sojourner)



Desi Waters is an actor, singer, writer, and director. Her favorite roles include: Mrs. Corry in *Mary Poppins*, Mabel in *Fame: The Musical*, The Nurse in "Romeo and Juliet," Mariya in *Uncle Vanya*, and as a vocalist for *President Clinton's 50th Birthday Celebration at Radio City Music Hall*. TV credits: *The Big Help* for Nickelodeon, *The Blacklist*, *Harlem*, *CityKids: The TV Series*, *New Amsterdam*, and *Power*. She has just been named Artistic Director for CityKids Rep, a theater company that uses ARTivism and devised theater to help young people amplify their voices. Proud Mama. Member of SAG-AFTRA. www.desiwaters.com.

Jade Cayne (Bell)



Jade Cayne is an American actress, model, and voice-over performer who currently resides in Long Island, New York. She graduated from Binghamton University, where she studied acting and performed in her first stage production of *The Twilight Zone*. Jade holds a BA in Business Administration with a minor in Theatre and, after working in Marketing & Public Relations for three years, she decided to pursue acting professionally. She has since gone on to feature in commercials as well as TV series, such as *Homicide City*, *Evil Lives Here*, *Godfather of Harlem*, and *Blue Bloods*. When she is not performing, Jade writes original poetry and is currently working on her first short film.

CREATIVE TEAM

Domani Productions



Domani Productions was formed by wife and husband team Hannah Beck and Sean Hoagland. Since 2018, Domani has produced thought-provoking work for the stage and screen and collaborated with Emmy, Helen Hayes, Audelco and Obie winning writers and directors. Beck and Hoagland have several projects in development, including a new film by Risa Mickenberg (*Egg*). www.domaniproductions.com

Stage Manager | Emani B. Simpson



Emani B. Simpson is an actor, producer, director, playwright and the founder of the talent agency, The Real Artists (TRA). The mission of TRA is to create an inspirational environment where artists can hone their crafts, thrive and network to build a career out of their passions. Emani is passionate about collaborating on new works that make the audience think. Recent projects include: director for *SERIALS* with the Fled Collective, Associate Producer on *PEA Fest '22* with Breaking and Entering, House Manager at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center and Production Assistant for *ABC Prison Project* with Lone Wolf Media. Emani holds membership with the African-American Cultural Committee, was staff liaison at the Montclair Art Museum and served as the Education Coordinator of Studios, Supplies and Exhibitions.

CREATIVE TEAM

Dramaturge | Jaye Austin Williams



Dr. Jaye Austin Williams is Assistant Professor and Interim Chair ('22-'23) of the Department of Critical Black Studies at Bucknell University. A critically acclaimed actor, director, playwright and consultant for thirty years, she now specializes in the (often fraught) melding of drama, cinema, performance, queer and feminist theories with a critical analysis of the conditions that persist in plaguing Black "life," in what cultural historian and theorist Saidiya Hartman calls "the afterlife of slavery." Dr. Williams' research

and teaching focus on the structural and global implications of antiblackness, its emanation from the collective unconscious, and its myriad performances, both subtle and overt, within global modernity. She is the author of numerous publications, and is currently completing a monograph entitled, *Staging (Within) Antiblack Violence: Toward a Radical Black Dramaturgy*. <https://www.bucknell.edu/fac-staff/jaye-austin-williams>

Costume Designer | Mary Blackburn

Mary Blackburn was the founder and Artistic Director of the American Dance Ensemble in New York, and of Urban Artworks, a critically acclaimed presenting series at the NYC Pace Downtown Theater. She worked as a teaching artist with the Lincoln Center Institute and served on the faculty of the American College Dance Festival, Dance Space Studios and the Peridance International Dance Center. Additionally, Ms. Blackburn served as the Artistic Director of the Dance Company of the School of Visual and Performing Arts in Montclair, NJ and the choreographer/costumer for many SVPA musicals and plays including *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Cats*, *Ragtime*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Grease*, *Parade*, *Suessical the Musical*, *Ms. Saigon*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Urinetown*, *Hairspray*, *In the Heights*, *RENT*, *Pippin*, *A Chorus Line*, *Chicago*, *Oliver*, *Footloose* and *As You Like It*.

CAST

Eric Ruffin (Peter)



Eric Ruffin is pleased to make his stage debut in *Dust of Egypt*. Eric starred as Milo in *The Transfiguration* written and directed by Michael O'Shea. The film was an Un Certain Regard Official Selection 2016 Cannes Film Festival, won The Jury Award at 2017 Dublin Film Festival and was nominated for the John Cassavetes Award 2018 Independent Spirit Awards. Eric started acting in commercials at the age of 7 and made his TV debut recurring as Dylan Bishop in *The Good Wife*. His other TV credits include: *Hot Angry Mom (Pilot)*, *Wu-Tang: An American Saga*, *30 Rock*, *Person of Interest*, and *A Gifted Man*. IG: ericruffin_

Elliott Johnson (Robert, Thomas)



This is Elliott Johnson's first AEA Showcase in New York City and he is extremely thankful to be a part of the *Dust of Egypt* production. Past theater credits include the Midwest Primer of *Lombardi* by Eric Simonson, *Soldier's Heart* by Tammy Ryan and Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*. Television credits include guest star and co-star spots on *Chicago Fire*, *Empire* and *The CHI*, and supporting roles in the films *A Man of His Time* directed by Estelle Parsons and *Oranges* directed by Alaina Huffman. Elliott holds his MFA from the Actors Studio Drama School and studied at the British American Drama Academy (BADA).

Daniel J. Martin (Mr. Romeyn)



Daniel J. Martin is an up-and-coming actor/writer who can most recently be seen on *Law & Order: Organized Crime*, *The Blacklist*, and *Power III*. A born-and-raised New Yorker, Daniel's passions carry him through life. Keep an eye open for his soon-to-be published short story compilation *Seasons: A Story For Each Season*.

CAST

Jeanna Schweppe (Mrs. Gedney)

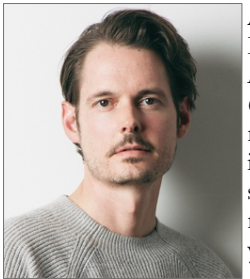


Jeanna Schweppe is originally from St. Louis, Mo. Her professional career started in the Broadway show *42nd Street* as Peggy Sawyer. In the Broadway revival of *Grease* she played Sandy, Rizzo and Cha Cha. She was also part of Trevor Nunn's production of *Starlight Express National Tour* in which she performed the roles of Dinah and Ashley.

Regional: *Animal Crackers* (Arena Stage/Goodspeed Opera House), *George M* (St. Louis MUNY, with Joel Grey) and the John Houseman's theatre production *Comfortable Shoes*. Film and Television: *In and Out* with Tom Selleck, *The Guru* with

Marisa Tomei, *A Chorus Line*, and Megan on *Another World*, *The Break In* ("Best Short" nomination Beaufort International Film Festival) and *The Woods* (official selections at the Brooklyn Horror Film Festival, New York Shorts International and Queen Palm Festival). Recently, Jeanna was seen in *Through Open Doors* at the New York Shorts International Film Festival. Jeanna is grateful for all the love and support of her family and friends. Special shout out to Neal for unwavering support, belief and guidance.

Austin Iredale (Mr. Gedney, Auctioneer)



Austin Iredale is a Brooklyn-based actor, writer and producer. Recent theatre performances include the role of Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles), Siggie in *Golden Boy* (Stella Adler Lab Theatre), and several original roles in new works by LA playwright Timothy McNeil, including Prischepa in *Isaac Babel & the Black Sea*. He can be seen in Showtime's *Let the Right One In*, and has costarred in recent episodes of *The Blacklist* and *FBI*, among others. This year, with his wife Maia Nikiphoroff, Austin cofounded Always Wild Content, a production company that develops

audacious narrative works that seek to reveal the wild within us. Their latest campaign is the Stories Unite Us Project, which partners with Women and Film Paraguay, to bring filmmaking education to young adult women in Asuncion, PY. Austin has also volunteered as director, actor, and producer for "A Light in Dark Places," a short play series based in Hollywood that works with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, an organization dear to his heart. www.austiniredale.com & www.alwayswildcontent.com

CREATIVE TEAM

Director | Rhonda PASSION Hansome



Rhonda PASSION Hansome is a critically acclaimed director, actor and comedian. She has directed over thirty-five production including: *Saviour?* (Dwyer Cultural Center), *Another Man's Poison* (Peter Jay Sharp Theater 42nd St.), *Antigone Asata Shakur* (Times Sq. Arts Center), *T'was The Night Before Kwanzaa* (Black Spectrum and Billie Holiday Theaters), *Real Black Men Don't Sit Crosslegged On The Floor* (New Federal Theater, Best Ensemble AUDELCO Award) and Melba Moore's *Sweet Songs of the Soul* (New Federal Theater, Best Solo

Performer AUDELCO Award). Rhonda has appeared on numerous TV shows including *Louie*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Arsenio Hall*, *Showtime at the Apollo* and *The Joan Rivers Show*. She is an Outstanding Comedian Backstage Bistro Award winner and has opened for the likes of Anita Baker, Diana Ross, Aretha Franklin, Smokey Robinson, Jackie Mason and The Pointer Sisters. She's held membership at the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab, the Women's Project Directors Forum and the Workshop Theater Company, and was Artistic Director of the NJPAC Young Writers Workshop for five years.

Playwright | Karin Abarbanel



A published writer, Karin Abarbanel pursued her training as a playwright at the T. Schreiber Studio and Theater's new playwrights program led by Mick Casale, an award-winning playwright and instructor. Karin created *Dust of Egypt* in a workshop setting and the T. Schreiber Studio and Gene Frankel Theatre both mounted staged readings of the play. Karin currently has several dramatic projects in development, including a screenplay, *Mr. Wilde Goes West*, about the infamous

Oscar Wilde; and *Walt and Private Hathaway*, a play based on an event in the life of Walt Whitman. Karin's nonfiction is published by Penguin Random House, Henry Holt, and McGraw-Hill. Her debut novel, a children's fantasy about a young tree whisperer who restores harmony to a fragile earth, was completed earlier this year.

Karin would like to thank our amazing director, Rhonda PASSION Hansome, Domani Productions, our fantastic cast and crew, and her family and friends for all their wonderful support and encouragement in bringing this play to life.