

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, PLEASE

**LINCOLN CENTER THEATER
ANNOUNCES COMPLETE CASTING
FOR
“FLEX”**

**BY CANDRICE JONES
DIRECTED BY LILEANA BLAIN-CRUZ**

**CAST TO FEATURE
BRITTANY BELLIZEARE, CHRISTIANA CLARK,
RENITA LEWIS, ERICA MATTHEWS,
CIARA MONIQUE, AND TAMERA TOMAKILI**

**PREVIEWS BEGIN FRIDAY, JUNE 23
OPENING NIGHT IS THURSDAY, JULY 20
AT THE MITZI E. NEWHOUSE THEATER**

Lincoln Center Theater (under the direction of André Bishop) is pleased to announce complete casting for the New York premiere of *FLEX* by Candrice Jones, directed by LCT Resident Director Lileana Blain-Cruz. *FLEX* will feature Brittany Bellizeare, Christiana Clark, Renita Lewis, Erica Matthews, Ciara Monique and Tamera Tomakili.

FLEX will begin previews Friday, June 23 and open on Thursday, July 20 at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater (150 West 65 Street).

FLEX tells the story of a girls' high school basketball team from Plainnole, Arkansas. It's 1997, and the women of the Lady Train team are inspired by the successes of the WNBA. With aspirations of going pro, they must first navigate the pressures of being young, Black, and female in rural Arkansas. Will their fouls off the court tear their team apart? Or can they keep their pact to stick together through hell or high water? This powerful play by Candrice Jones celebrates the fierce athleticism of women's basketball with all the adrenaline and swagger of a four-quarter game.

FLEX will have sets by Matt Saunders, costumes by Mika Eubanks, lighting by Adam Honore, and sound by Palmer Hefferan. Charles M. Turner III will be the Stage Manager.

Candrice Jones (*Playwright*) recently received the 2023 Kesselring Prize for Playwriting for *Flex*. She is a Steinberg playwright, and educator from Dermott, Arkansas. Candrice has been a fellow at Callaloo for poetry at Brown University and in London. She has also been a VONA Playwriting Fellow, and CalArts MFA Critical Studies recipient. Candrice's primary goal is to write love letters for and to women of the American South. From 2014-2018, she produced *Re-Imagining the Self*, a ten-minute play showcase hosted by Little Rock Central High National Historic Site and the Weekend Theater. She is the author of the full-length play, *Crackbaby* (Wasserstein Prize

Nomination) and *FLEX* (developed at the 2020 Humana Festival of New American Plays; co-world premiered by TheatreSquared and Theatrical Outfit). She has been a resident fellow at Ground Floor housed by the Berkeley Rep, the Bay Area Playwrights' Festival, and MacDowell's Colony of the Arts. She is scheduled to be a resident playwright at Djerassi's Colony of the Arts in the fall of 2024. Candrice was a 2019-20 Many Voices Fellow and 2020-21 Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. In 2022, she was awarded with the Celebrate! Maya award. Currently, Candrice lives in Little Rock where she is working on play and musical commissions, and raising her daughter, Zora.

Lileana Blain-Cruz (*Director*) is a director from New York City and Miami. As Resident Director of Lincoln Center Theater her credits include Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Tony nomination), *Pipeline* and the LCT3 productions of *Marys Seacole* (Obie Award) and *War* (also Yale Repertory Theatre). Recent projects include: *White Girl in Danger* (Vineyard / Second Stage); *The Listeners* (Opera Norway); *Dreaming Zenzile* (NYTW / National Black Theatre); *Marys Seacole* (LCT3, Obie Award); Wayne Shorter and esperanza spalding's ... (Iphigenia) (MASS MoCA, Arts Emerson, The Kennedy Center); *Hansel and Gretel* (a film for Houston Grand Opera); *Afrofemonomy* (PSNY); *Anatomy of a Suicide* (Atlantic Theater Company); *Fefu and Her Friends* (TFANA); *Girls* (Yale Rep.); *Faust* (Opera Omaha); *Fabulation, Or the Reeducation of Undine* (Signature Theatre); *Thunderbodies and Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.* (Soho Rep.); *The House That Will Not Stand, Red Speedo* (New York Theatre Workshop); *Water by the Spoonful* (Mark Taper Forum/CTG); *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World AKA The Negro Book of the Dead* (Signature Theatre, Obie Award); *Henry IV, Part One and Much Ado About Nothing* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *The Bluest Eye* (The Guthrie); *Salome* (JACK); *Hollow Roots* (the Under the Radar Festival at The Public). She is the recipient of the Drama League's 2022 Founders Award for Excellence in Directing. Lileana was named a 2021 Doris Duke Artist, a 2020 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist, and a 2018 United States Artists Fellow. Upcoming: *Stranger Love* (LA Philharmonic).

This season, in addition to **FLEX**, Lincoln Center Theater is also producing *Lerner & Loewe's Camelot*, featuring a book by Academy and Emmy Award-winning writer Aaron Sorkin, based on the original book by Alan Jay Lerner, and direction by Bartlett Sher, currently in performances at the Vivian Beaumont Theater; *Next@LCT3*, a series of concert performances featuring Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winner Michael R. Jackson, Melissa Li and Kit Yan, The Bengsons, and Tony Award-winner John Gallagher, Jr. beginning performances tonight at the Claire Tow Theater; as well as additional productions to be announced.

LCT's production season is generously supported by the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust. LCT also deeply appreciates the Howard Gilman Foundation's special generosity. This production is made possible in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and New York State Legislature.

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BRITTANY BELLIZEARE. LCT debut. Off Broadway: *sandblasted* (Vineyard). Other theater: *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *The Bluest Eye* (The Guthrie); *Fat Ham* (The Public); *Wine in the Wilderness*, *King Hedley II*, *Seven Guitars* (Two River); *RETREAT* (National Black Theatre); *Romeo & Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *The Magician's Daughter* (The Geva); *Skeleton Crew* (Baltimore Center Stage); *Sunset Baby* (TheaterWorks Hartford); *It's A Wonderful Life: A Radio Play*, *The Mountaintop* (Northern Stage); and *The Last Tiger In Haiti* (La Jolla/Berkeley Rep). TV: "The Equalizer," "American Rust," "The Blacklist," "Eye Candy," "The Knick." Film: *Honk for Jesus. Save Your Soul.*, *Everything Absolutely*. Education: MFA in Acting, The New School for Drama; BS in Mathematics, Spelman College. www.brittanybellizeare.com

CHRISTIANA CLARK. LCT debut. Off-Broadway: *Pure Confidence* (59E59). Regional: Christian Anderson's *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* (world premiere, Goodman/Berkeley Rep); Regina Taylor's *The Trinity River Plays* (world premiere, Goodman/Dallas Theater Center); *Into The Woods* (Oregon Shakespeare Theatre/Wallis Annenberg Center); *How To Catch Creation*, Idris Goodwin's *The Way The Mountain Moved* (world premiere), Robert O'Hara's *The Wiz*, Mary Zimmerman's *The Odyssey*, *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *UniSon* (OSF); *As You Like It* (Guthrie); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); *Fireflies* (South Coast Rep). TV: "Law & Order: Organized Crime." Film: Danielle Harrington in *Candyman*, *Stuck Between Stations*. Education: American Academy of Dramatic Arts, LA.

RENITA LEWIS. LCT debut. Theater credits: *Games* (Soho Playhouse); *The Virtuous Fall of the Girls from Our Lady of Sorrows* (The Flea); *Measure for Measure*, *Looking Through the Stained Glass Window* (The Playroom Theater); *LORDES* (New Ohio Theatre); *MacBeth* (14th St Y); *The Tempest* (Caliban); *Photo Play* (Dixon Place); *Year of The Monkey* (The Tank). Featured in iHeartRadio's scripted podcast, "Tampon Rock" (Deja). Film: *Eternal Buzz* (Emilia). Education: MFA in Acting The Juilliard School (currently).

ERICA MATTHEWS. LCT/NY debut. Theater: Starra Jones in the world premiere of *FLEX* (Theatre Squared); Hattie in *The Women of Lockerbie*, Martine in *The Learned Ladies* (Jones Playhouse); Egeus/Philostrate in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Meany Theatre); Abram/Friar, John/First Watchman in *Romeo and Juliet* (Seattle Shakespeare Company). TV: "Family Reunion" (Netflix). Film: *KIMI* (HBO Max). Education: MFA in Acting from the University of Washington.

CIARA MONIQUE. LCT/NY debut. TV: "Evil" (Paramount+), "Law & Order: SVU" (NBC). Film: *MAJOR*. Education: BFA in Acting from Virginia Commonwealth University; MFA in Acting from Yale School of Drama (Carol Finch Dye Award).

TAMERA TOMAKILI. LCT debut. TV: "Winning Time" (HBO); "Blindspotting," "Run the World" (STARZ). Film: *Fruitvale Station*. Education: MFA, Columbia University.