

# RED BULL THEATER

JESSE BERGER | FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JIM BREDESON | MANAGING DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

## KEENE

BY ANCHULI FELICIA KING

DIRECTED BY ETHAN MCSWEENY

PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH

AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

FEATURING

GRANTHAM COLEMAN | PAUL GROSS | CAROL HALSTEAD

JOHN HARRELL | CHRIS JOHNSTON | SAM LILJA | AMELIA PEDLOW

SAM SAINT OURS | ZOE SPEAS | SARAH SUZUKI | SARA TOPHAM

PRODUCING DIRECTOR | NATHAN WINKELSTEIN

ZOOM COORDINATOR | BETSY AYER

OBS COORDINATOR | JESSICA FORNEAR

OBS CONSULTANT | JENNA WORDEN

ASC VIDEO COORDINATOR | DAN HASSE

DRAMATURG | ANNE C. MORGAN

DRAMA LEAGUE DIRECTING FELLOW | EMMA ROSA WENT

READINGS ARE MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF

THE AXE-HOUGHTON FOUNDATION

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2020 | A LIVESTREAM PRESENTATION

A RECORDING OF THE LIVESTREAM WILL BE AVAILABLE UNTIL 7:00 PM EDT ON  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23 – THEN IT DISAPPEARS.

RED BULL THEATER WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS GRATITUDE TO THE PERFORMERS' UNIONS: ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION, AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS, AMERICAN GUILD OF VARIETY ARTISTS, AND SAG-AFTRA THROUGH THEATRE AUTHORITY, INC. FOR THEIR COOPERATION IN PERMITTING THE ARTISTS TO APPEAR IN THIS PROGRAM.

RED BULL THEATER IS SUPPORTED, 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 GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO AND THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE.

ADDITIONAL MAJOR FUNDING HAS BEEN GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY THE ACHELIS AND BODMAN FOUNDATION, THE AXE-HOUGHTON FOUNDATION, THE AMERICAN THEATRE WING, ROBERT BOYETT, DAVID DESJARDINS AND NANCY BLACHMAN, THE JAMES AND JUDITH K. DIMON FOUNDATION, FUND FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK, THE HOWARD AND MARCIA OWENS CHARITABLE TRUST, HOWARD GILMAN FOUNDATION, THE MARTA HEFLIN FOUNDATION, THE KAM FOUNDATION, NOAH MILLMAN AND CAROLYN SCHIFF, EVANGELINE MORPHOS, THE NOËL COWARD FOUNDATION, THE OFF-BROADWAY ANGELS, THE PRINCESS GRACE FOUNDATION-USA, BETTY AND MICHAEL RAUCH, PETER N. RIGBY, THE SHUBERT FOUNDATION, THE MICHAEL TUCH FOUNDATION, AND STEVEN AND JOAN YOUNG.

RED BULL THEATER IS A PROUD MEMBER OF THE ALLIANCE OF RESIDENT THEATERS/NEW YORK, THE OFF-BROADWAY LEAGUE, AND THEATER COMMUNICATIONS GROUP.



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**DONATE TODAY** TO SUPPORT RED BULL THEATER AND INVEST IN THE VITALITY OF CLASSICAL THEATER FOR A CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE. FOR NEARLY TWENTY YEARS, RED BULL THEATER HAS TRANSFORMED THE CLASSICAL THEATER EXPERIENCE WITH SPECTACULAR, HIGH-OCTANE PRODUCTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES, RAUCOUS READINGS OF RARELY-PRODUCED PLAYS, AND VIVID REIMAGININGS OF ICONIC WORKS.

WE'RE DEDICATED TO REVITALIZING THE CLASSICS FOR TODAY'S AUDIENCES, AND WHILE WE TREASURE THESE CLASSICS, OUR APPROACH IS ANYTHING BUT PRECIOUS. YOUR SUPPORT IS.

WE'RE COMMITTED TO CONTINUING CONNECTION DURING THIS HISTORIC TIME.  
YOUR SUPPORT WILL HELP MAKE THAT POSSIBLE.

[REDBULLTHEATER.COM/makeagift](https://REDBULLTHEATER.COM/makeagift)

# CAST

Kai (Margaret Gill)..... SARAH SUZUKI  
Tyler (Ira Aldridge)..... GRANTHAM COLEMAN  
Chorus 1 (James Wallack)..... PAUL GROSS  
Chorus 2 (Karen) .....SARA TOPHAM  
Chorus 3 (Rose).....CAROL HALSTEAD  
Chorus 4 (Dana/Margaret's friend) .....AMELIA PEDLOW  
Chorus 5 (Rob).....CHRIS JOHNSTON  
Chorus 6 (Alex).....ZOE SPEAS  
Chorus 7 (Bill)..... JOHN HARRELL  
Chorus 8 (Ian) ..... SAM LILJA  
Stage Directions/Harry Styles..... SAM SAINT OURS

—THERE WILL BE ONE 10-MINUTE INTERMISSION—



**THIS THURSDAY**

**OCTOBER 22, 2020**

**7:30 PM EDT | LIVESTREAM**

Join an interactive discussion with playwright ANCHULI FELICIA KING, director ETHAN MCSWEENY, scholar DAVID STERLING BROWN, and dramaturg ANNE G. MORGAN.

**REGISTER at [REDBULLTHEATER.COM](https://REDBULLTHEATER.COM)**

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

ANCHULI FELICIA KING is a playwright, screenwriter and multidisciplinary artist of Thai-Australian descent.

As a writer, Felicia is interested in linguistic hybrids, digital cultures and issues of globalization. Her plays have been produced by the Royal Court Theatre (London), Studio Theatre (Washington D.C.), American Shakespeare Center (Staunton), Melbourne Theatre Company (Melbourne), Sydney Theatre Company, National Theatre of Parramatta and Belvoir Theatre (Sydney).

As a multidisciplinary artist, Felicia has worked with a wide range of companies, including Punchdrunk, PlayCo, 3LD Arts & Technology Center, Roundabout Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, 59E59, Ars Nova, the Obie Awards, The Builders Association, Ensemble Studio Theater, NYTW, American Shakespeare Company and Red Bull Theater. She is a member of Ensemble Studio Theater's Youngblood Group and Roundabout Theater's Space Jam Program.

Formerly based in New York, Felicia continues to work internationally and is based between London, New York and her hometown of Melbourne, Australia.

## ABOUT THE PLAY

In this “post-postracial” world that too often conveniently equates blackness with race—and, in so doing, perpetuates the false notion that white people are raceless beings—it is not always the case that whiteness is rendered visible and thus presented through theater as a racialized category that necessitates critical examination. Yet, with *Keene*, Anchuli Felicia King accomplishes this difficult task by creating a deeply engaging play that is color-conscious, as opposed to “post-racially” colorblind, especially with respect to whiteness.

*Keene* follows Tyler, a Black ivy-league graduate student, through a three-day Shakespeare conference that is overwhelmingly white; and the play also follows Tyler into his historically informed dreams, where aspects of nineteenth-century Black actor Ira Aldridge's life appear in vivid detail, ultimately revealing life parallels of isolation and betrayal between Tyler and Aldridge, parallels that also resonate with the trajectory of Shakespeare's tragic Black protagonist Othello. When Tyler dreams, so, too, does Kai, a Japanese musicologist who instantly falls in love with Tyler and his blackness and who is the only other non-white person at this Shakespeare conference. It is in this sea of whiteness that Tyler and Kai stand out, paradoxically becoming visible and invisible in distinct dramatic moments emphasizing the kind of uncomfortable hypervisibility that is a byproduct of the psychologically and emotionally harmful racism, exoticism, exceptionalism and tokenism one can experience in predominantly white spaces.

With its emphasis on anxious early career researchers, in addition to its glimpse into the past through Aldridge and the significant challenges he faced because of anti-Black racism, colonialism and prejudice, *Keene* offers a powerfully serious critique of several relevant and fundamentally important issues that deserve centering in the arts and public discourse. These issues include but are not limited to the: objectification of Black men; instability of whiteness as a racial construct; marginalization of international scholars; limits and failures of allyship; white scholars', or white people's, presumed ownership of Shakespeare vis-à-vis bardolatry; elitism and toxicity of academia; gatekeeping in academic publishing; competitiveness of graduate program cohorts; commodification of blackness; peer pressure and anxiety permeating academic conference environments; and the consequences of racialized self-doubt and the resulting self-sabotage.

Through this satirical and timely play that occasionally alludes to American pop music, King invites her audience to consider identity and belonging as she highlights some of the negative and even damaging aspects of a profession—academia—that undoubtedly extend beyond Shakespeare studies and the theater world, beyond Tyler's and Kai's dreams, and into the real worlds of those who experience *Keene*.

DAVID STERLING BROWN, PhD  
Assistant Professor of English  
Binghamton University



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Shakespeare's New Contemporaries is a groundbreaking, industry-changing undertaking that is discovering, developing, and producing a new canon of 38 plays that are inspired by and in conversation with Shakespeare's work. It's an opportunity for playwrights of every background, perspective, and style to engage with Shakespeare and his stage practices. It's our chance to bring living writers into the world's only re-creation of Shakespeare's indoor theatre: the Blackfriars Playhouse.

Get info at [americanshakespearecenter.com/new-contemporaries](http://americanshakespearecenter.com/new-contemporaries)



JESSE BERGER | FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JIM BREDESON | MANAGING DIRECTOR

Red Bull Theater brings rarely seen classic plays to dynamic new life for contemporary audiences. Our work unites a respect for tradition with a modern sensibility.

Red Bull Theater is named for the rowdy Jacobean playhouse that illegally performed plays in England during the years of Puritan rule, and was the first London theater to reopen after the Restoration. This bold spirit is central to our identity. With the Jacobean plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries as our cornerstone, Red Bull Theater is New York City's home for dynamic performances of great plays that stand the test of time. The company also produces new works that are in conversation with the classics.

Red Bull Theater delights and engages the intellect and imagination of audiences. A home for artists, scholars and students, we strive to make our work accessible, diverse, and welcoming to all theatergoers. Educational as well as entertaining, our work keeps a rich and vital tradition thriving.

Red Bull Theater believes in the power of great classic stories and plays of heightened language to deepen our understanding of the human condition. We believe in the special ability of live theater to create unique, collective experiences. And we believe in the timeless capacity of classical theater to illuminate the events of our times.

Founded in 2003 with a production of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, Red Bull Theater has been acclaimed by *The New York Times* as "a dynamic producer of classic plays" and by *Time Out New York* as "the most exciting classical theater in New York."

Red Bull Theater serves adventurous theatergoers with OFF-BROADWAY PRODUCTIONS, REVELATION READINGS, and the annual SHORT NEW PLAY FESTIVAL. The company also offers outreach programs including SHAKESPEARE IN SCHOOLS, bringing professional actors and teaching artists into public school classrooms, BULL SESSIONS, free post-play discussions with top scholars, and MASTER CLASSES in classical actor training led by veteran theater professionals.

In our 16-year history, Red Bull Theater has produced 21 Off-Broadway Productions and nearly 200 Revelation Readings of rarely seen classics, serving 5,000 artists and providing quality artistic programming to an audience of 65,000. The company's unique programming has received ongoing critical acclaim, and has been recognized with Lortel, Drama Desk, Drama League, Calloway, Off Broadway Alliance, and Obie nominations and Awards.

Visit [REDBULLTHEATER.COM](http://REDBULLTHEATER.COM) for more information.

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