By Jackie Sibblies Drury  
Directed by Kevin Jones  
March 8 – April 3, 2016  

Time & Place: Right Now, Artists Repertory Theatre  

THIS PLAY HAS NO INTERMISSION AND RUNS APPROXIMATELY 2 HOURS.  

This play uses irony, satire, racially charged language and symbolic violence to examine power, racism and perspective.  

We recommend this play for patrons 16 and older.  

STUDY GUIDE
Cast

Chantal DeGroat..........................Actor 6/Black Woman
Joshua Weinstein^.....................Actor 1/White Man
Vin Shambry^............................Actor 2/Black Man

Chris Harder^..........................Actor 3/Another White Man
Joseph Gibson..........................Actor 4/Another Black Man
Rebecca Ridenour........................Actor 5/Sarah

^Artists Rep Resident Artist
Portland’s premiere mid-size regional theatre company is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodriguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. Artists Rep’s mission is to engage diverse audiences in fresh, thought-provoking and intimate theatre. We are committed to world-class acting, directing, design and stagecraft that support new playwriting and aspire to embody great literature, moving audiences to truly feel — to experience — storytelling in a way that only the best live theatre can.
Welcome to Artists Rep and to the 6th production of our 2015/16 season. I am indeed proud to present the Portland premiere of Jackie Sibblies Drury’s boldly funny, insightful, ironic, urgent, unsettling and electrifying We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884–1915.

Throughout each season, I strive to provide our audiences with a wide range of theatre experiences: from heartwarming to heartrending, from realistic to absurd, from linear to non-linear, from conclusive to purposely ambiguous. For many in the audience, today’s performance may be unlike any you’ve experienced. I think it best to avoid revealing details, but I propose that it will be difficult to walk away at the finish of We Are Proud… without engaging in an immediate conversation about the questions asked and the lines crossed during the course of the play. We’ll do our best to facilitate a productive dialogue following each performance.

As always, I hope you enjoy your experience at Artists Rep and that we’ll see you in the audience again this season, and beyond. We recently announced the 2016/17 season, please visit our website for titles, play descriptions and information on subscriptions. Thank you for joining us!

Warmly,

Dámaso
A multiracial cast of six idealistic actors sets out to improvise a story about the first colonial genocide of the 20th Century in Africa, but get lost in the reality of their undertaking. The unusual presentation, humor and inevitable discomfort of this provocative new play gripped theatre hubs like New York, Chicago, London, Washington D.C. and Seattle with its unique theatrical investigation of prejudice, power and perspective.

“We Are Proud to Present ... is “a genuine thunderbolt ... devastatingly funny ... dangerous and primal.”
- The Washington Post

“incendiary ... inventive ... impressively navigat[ing] the tricky boundaries that separate art and life, the haunted present and the haunting historical past ... Drury’s “breakout work.”
- The New York Times

“90 minutes of original, enlightening, pulse-pounding theater.”
- Backstage Magazine

“Incendiary results...consistently funny but ultimately discomfiting.”
- The New York Times

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Jackie Sibblies Drury is a Brooklyn-based playwright. Her plays include We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa, From the German Sudwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915, Social Creatures and And now I only dance at weddings. The presenters of her plays include Soho Rep, Victory Gardens, Trinity Rep, Matrix Theatre, Woolly Mammoth, Undermain Theatre, InterAct Theatre, Actors Theater of Louisville, Available Light, Company One, and The Bush Theatre in London. Sibblies Drury hasdeveloped her work at Sundance, The Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep, A.C.T., The Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, New York Theatre Workshop, PRELUDE.11&14, The Civilians, The Bushwick Starr, The LARK, The Magic Theatre, The Bay Area Playwrights Festival and The MacDowell Colony. She was a dramaturg for Zero Cost House by Pig Iron Theatre Company & Toshiki Okada and The Garden by Nichole Canuso Dance Company. She received the 2012-2013 Van Lier Fellowship at New Dramatists and was the inaugural recipient of the 2012-2014 Jerome Fellowship at The LARK. She is a NYTW Usual Suspect and is currently a member of The Writer’s Room at Manhattan Theatre Club and Ars Nova.
ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Most recently, Kevin Jones directed The Piano Lesson by August Wilson at Portland Playhouse, The Motherfucker With the Hat by Stephen Adly Guirgis and August Wilson’s Seven Guitars at Artists Rep, and at Profile Theatre Romulus Linney’s A Lesson Before Dying and Blood Knot by Athol Fugard, which won a Drammy Award for Best Actor in a Lead Role. Prior to that, Jones directed the highly acclaimed production of August Wilson’s Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom at Portland Playhouse. Kevin is the co-creator of The August Wilson Red Door Project – an organization that uses art as a catalyst to transform the racial ecology of Portland. He has enjoyed working on the American stage for more than 30 years. Regional theatres include American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St Louis, Asolo Theatre in Saratoga, Florida, Florida Studio Theatre, Fountain Theatre (LA Drama Critics Circle Award for Actor in a Lead Role); Los Angeles Theatre Center, East West Players (LA Drama Critics Circle award for Actor in a Supporting Role); Great Lakes Shakespeare, Magic Theatre in San Francisco, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Arkansas Repertory Theatre and The Stanford Actor’s Project. Locally he has performed at Artists Rep, Portland Center Stage, Third Rail Repertory and Portland Playhouse where he received a Drammy Award for Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role for his heartwarming performance of Old Joe in Radio Golf by August Wilson. His TV and film credits include Dr. Quinn, Say Uncle, Deadly Outbreak, War Games, Sweet Valley High and The Bachelor.
Jackie Sibblies Drury poses many questions for us to wrestle with and yet she offers very few answers. One of the questions Drury’s provocative play asks is: What is our responsibility as artists to the stories that we tell and to the owners of those stories? Is it actually possible in America, in the 21 Century, to tell a story about a distant genocide, without the story being appropriated by a contemporary conversation about race? In this day and age when we engage with information on a “sound byte” level, what is our role in sifting through the rhetoric and extracting useful meaning?

Drury gives the actor and audience member the opportunity to step out of the social labels and definitions that hold us all in place. I am grateful for the opportunity to get out from under our collective social agreements around race. I feel constrained by the myriad of projections put on to me as a middle-aged black man, an actor, a director, an activist and a social entrepreneur. I know I’m not alone. As much as we appear to need certain social agreements to function as a society, I am ready to free myself from the ways those agreements constrain us as human beings. The question is how.

How do we exit this social construct called race and all the other “isms” that keep us in check? Drury offers me an opportunity to challenge myself and everyone else to consider our commonality, and our membership in the same biological family, regardless of our external appearance. Perhaps one way out is to accept the notion that we all share the same DNA code. Genetically we are not very different. In fact, we humans are among the most similar of all species on the planet. Yet, we embrace this idea of diversity and difference with fervor and self-righteousness. Therefore, are we not culpable of perpetuating the construct of race by holding tightly to and defending our social identities? Do we justify our hurtful behavior by claiming that our selfhood is being threatened?

How do we help our audience navigate this seldom-chartered terrain? Theatre should mirror the culture from which it emerges and the culture should respond with commentary. To that end, how does theatre help people wake up and smarten up? How do we open ourselves to another context where we can imagine another world for ourselves?

I want to be challenged as an artist and social commentator to step out of pop culture’s narrative about race. One that says that there are bad people and there are good people – that the good people are getting hurt and it’s the bad people who are doing the hurting. This notion sets the stage for simplistic kinds of stories. I am bored with those stories. They’re neither integral to how we live our lives today nor are they socially responsible in their lack of complexity. The victim/oppressor discourse forces us to stay on the sidelines. It doesn’t speak to us personally and it’s not the kind of relationship that we’re reaching for in our lives today. It’s time for all of us to create a new story.

- Kevin Jones
Artists Rep’s *Fresh Eyes* program brings ‘civilians’ into the rehearsal process. On selected productions each season, we invite 4-5 volunteers from diverse backgrounds to join us for four rehearsals, and then to share their observations in the *Fresh Eyes* blog. No special knowledge or experience is required of these volunteers – just a bit of time and curiosity. We hope the new perspectives of our guests will illuminate the inner workings of a production for our audiences and community at large, while also helping us learn about the challenges and obstacles a production may present to audiences.

Fresh Eyes participants for *We Are Proud to Present* ... include:

- **Kate Duffly** is a scholar-director and community-engaged theatre artist
- **Lesli Mones** is the co-founder of Plural Consulting, an executive coaching and leadership company which focuses on breakthrough development
- **Roberta Hunt** has a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies, and is an Assistant Professor at PSU

These participants follow along as a production develops from the first reading and design presentations, through scene work, staging and technical rehearsals and first preview, and share their observations on the blog. Here are a few samples of what they have written about the production process so far:

- Some of the lines that are on the one hand comical, resonate so much with our struggle with who we are, how we make sense of race/identity in light of our own experiences, how we can feel scared of making mistakes and paralyzed by that not-knowing. One character says, “I don’t know what my character is doing! I don’t know how to do this right. Everything I say is somehow wrong.” This comment seems to reflect one of the central struggles of the play. – Kate Duffly

- As a black person watching this play I am uncomfortable. It speaks from a radical black political stance that asks us to confront the legacies of our racial past and how they operate in the present. It challenges the comfort of assimilation. This play is highly provocative. Elements of it are very raw. This is a timely play and offers a brilliant social critique. This play does what good theater is supposed to do. It inspires, and illuminates the present and the past. – Roberta Hunt

- The emotional quality that each character brings to the topics of sexism and racism are filled with nuance in a way that makes everything feeling so authentic-the body language, the subtle and not so subtle facial expressions-perfect. – Lesli Mones

Here is the text of General von Trotha’s proclamation to the Herero people issued on October 2, 1904, translated by Jan-Bart Gewald:

I, the great General of the German troops, send this letter to the Herero people.  
The Herero are no longer German subjects. They have murdered and stolen, they have cut off the ears, noses and other body-parts of wounded soldiers, now out of cowardice they no longer wish to fight. I say to the people: Anyone who delivers a captain will receive 1000 Mark, whoever delivers Samuel* will receive 5000 Mark.  
The Herero people must however leave the land. If the populace does not do this I will force them with the Groot Rohr [Cannon]. Within the German borders every Herero, with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot. I will no longer accept women and children, I will drive them back to their people or I will let them be shot at.  
These are my words to the Herero people.
*Samuel Maharero was the Herero paramount chief

Some historians have questioned the validity of this proclamation, and whether it was actually intended to be carried out, or whether it was just a tactic of psychological warfare. However, excerpts from von Trotha’s private journals confirm his desire to thoroughly destroy the Herero people.

“Now I have to ask myself how to end the war with the Hereros. The views of the Governor and also a few old Afrikaners (“alte Afrikaner”) on the one hand, and my views on the other, differ completely. The first wanted to negotiate for some time already and regard the Herero nation as necessary labour material for the future development of the country. I believe that the nation as such should be annihilated, or, if this was not possible by tactical measures, have to be expelled from the country by operative means and further detailed treatment. This will be possible if the waterholes from Grootfontein to Gobabis are occupied. The constant movement of our troops will enable us to find the small groups of the nation who have moved back westwards and destroy them gradually.” (Pool 1991: 272 – 273).

“My intimate knowledge of many central African tribes (Bantu and others) has everywhere convinced me of the necessity that the Negro does not respect treaties but only brutal force.” (Pool 1991: 274)
1840s: Germans (first missionaries, then settlers, then soldiers) begin arriving in South West Africa. The two main tribes are the Nama and the Herero, livestock farmers.

1880s: Germany makes South West Africa a colony. The military governor, Major Theodor Leutwein, knows nothing about Africa. He begins playing the Nama and Herero tribes off each other. White settlers continue to arrive and push tribesmen off their land with bribes and unreliable deals.

1889: The first German protective troops are sent to South West Africa in response to the Herero’s growing hostility. They are not meant for combat, but as a police force.

Late 1890s: A cattle-virus epidemic kills many of the tribe’s cows. The colonists offer the Herero aid on credit, and they amass huge debts.

1903: The Nama begin a rebellion led by Hendrik Witbooi and Jacob Morenga. Despite being greatly outnumbered, they use guerrilla tactics. They are joined by the Herero months later.

1904: The Herero rebel, attacking German outposts under the leadership of Samuel Maherero. The German Emperor replaces Major Leutwein with another commander, Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha, who had a reputation for brutally suppressing African resistance to German colonization in East Africa. German troops begin slowly driving the Herero into a position where they are surrounded on three sides. The fourth side offers escape only into the Kalahari desert, where they poison the few water-holes.

October 2, 1904: von Trotha issues his extermination order.

1904-1907: The Herero are systematically killed by the German soldiers and by disease and starvation in the desert. Survivors are sent to labor camps, where many women are raped and forced to perform sexual services for soldiers. Many Herero people in the camps are also used as human subjects for lab experiments designed to prove the racial inferiority of black people. The Nama are also put in camps at this point. It is estimated that 35-50% of their tribe is killed.

1907: von Trotha’s orders are cancelled in the face of criticism at home and abroad and he is recalled. It is too late for the Herero, however: before the uprising they numbered 80,000, and by 1907 only 15,000 remained.
Glossary of terms from the play...

German

- Guten Tag (p 8, 30, 32, 45) [GOOT-en tahk]: Good day! the typical “hello” in German
- Sudwestafrika (p 9, 20, 30, 32, 133, 109) [sood-vest-afrika]: South West Africa
- Karte (p 10) [cart-eh]: postcards
- Stukken van Document (p 10) [SHTOok-en fan dok-u-ment] parts of documents. Correct German spelling: Stuecken von Dokument
- Zwickau (p 30, 49) [tsvik-ow] A city located outside Leipzig and Dresden near the northwest border of the Czech Republic
- Das Innenraum (p 30) [dass in-en-raum] the interior
- Die Weide (p 31) [dee VYE-duh] the pasture
- Die Wueste (p 31) [dee VOO-steh] the desert
- Der Ozean (p 31) [der oht-zay-on] the ocean
- Ach! Liebe! (32, 46) [ach! Lee-buh!] Oh, my love!
- Köln (27, 38) [koh-in] Cologne
- Edelweiss (38) [Eh-dell-vise] a song from the Rogers and Hammerstein musical *The Sound of Music*
- Ich bin ein Berliner (38) [Ikh ben ine Ber-lin-er] literal: I am a jelly doughnut. A spoof– JFK famously said this post-WWII at the Berlin Wall when he meant to say “Ich bin Berliner” which means “I am an Berliner” (aka I am one of you)
- Spreken-ze deutsch (39) [shpreken zie doi-tsch] Do you speak German?
- Munchen (49) [MEWn-chen] Munich. Correct German spelling: München
- strassen (49) [STRAssen] streets
- streudelschnecken (49) [strew-del-shnek-en] (roughly) treats, pastries. Not a real German word
- Heiner (50) [HY-ner] nam
- Leipzig (50) lipe-tzig name
- ein tag (50) [ine tacg] one day
- grossest (50, 51) [groh-cest] biggest. Not a real German word, rooted in “gross” for large or tall
- drang (51) [drah-ng] (literal) stress. Here, the use of this word is more of a joke. There is a popular theme in German literature and art referred to as “sturm und drang” which roughly translates to “storm and stress.” Sarah pairs “shtomp und drang” here.

Various

- Afrikaans (p 7) [Af-ri-KAHNs]: a West Germanic language spoken natively in South Africa and Namibia, and other African countries to a lesser extent. It is an offshoot of several Dutch dialects spoken by settlers, but it began to develop independently throughout the 18th Century.
- Oshiwambo [oh-shee-FVAMH-boe] (p 7): a Bantu language spoken in Namibia and Angola
- Ongiini (p 7, etc) [on-GEE-nee [with a hard g]]: Oshiwambo for “hello”
- Oshindowishi (p 9) [oh-shin-doh-FVEE-shee]: Oshiwambo for “german”
- Ombapila (p 10) [ohm-ba-PEEL-a]: Oshiwambo for “paper”
- Population according to 2011 census = 2,113,077
- Official language is English though only about 3% of the population speaks it as a home language. According to the 2011 census, the most common languages are Oshiwambo (49%), Nama/Damara (11.3%), Afrikaans (10.4%), Kavango (9%), Otjiherero (9%).
- Namibia is the country with the least rainfall in sub-Saharan Africa.
- The Christian community makes up 80%-90% of the population.
- Life expectancy at birth is estimated to be 52.2 years in 2012 – among the lowest in the world. The AIDS epidemic is a large problem in Namibia, approximately 13.1% of the adult population is infected with HIV.
- About half of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood, About 4,000, mostly white, commercial farmers own almost half of Namibia's arable land.
Discussion Questions ...

- Does the play prescribe a way to move forward in the struggle with racism?
- Do the letters encourage sympathy with the German occupiers? Do the letters form a reliable basis for the presentation?
- The Herero and Nama people did not record their experiences in written form – does that render their experience less verifiable?
- What do you think of Black Man’s assertion that White Woman/Sarah can’t play an African? If you agree with his statement, does it follow that he cannot play a German? Why or why not?
- In an improv of the play, the grandma character says that it’s not really possible to walk in someone else’s shoes, that no matter how far you would walk, they would still not be your shoes. Do you agree with her position? What limits our true understanding of other people?
- This play discusses power, perspective and prejudice. Beyond racism, in what other ways are the characters in this play discriminated against and marginalized?
- How does this play speak to you beyond the historical story presented?

Resources ...

1. Article from the Daily Mail by Leon Watson, published March 1, 2013
   *The Namibians who STILL dress like their colonial masters: Tribe clings to 19th century dress 'to protest against the Germans who butchered them'*
2. Blog centered around a 2014 production at Emerson College: [https://weareproudtopresent.wordpress.com/](https://weareproudtopresent.wordpress.com/)
4. Suggested bibliography: *Black Boy by Richard Wright, Between The World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Moth Episode: The Birth of A Nation by Petinah Gappah*
6. You Tube video: *History of The Namibian Genocide and 2nd Reich*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhhOOPvDRQk&list=PLRI9v7hVMT-wUragdWkuDnD8m5yGHayvt&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhhOOPvDRQk&list=PLRI9v7hVMT-wUragdWkuDnD8m5yGHayvt&index=1)
7. You Tube video: *The Herero Today*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Klw-QL8xWwk&list=PLxB6vWp4r6FiEzAmMSZ_h6vKyuI9Xw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Klw-QL8xWwk&list=PLxB6vWp4r6FiEzAmMSZ_h6vKyuI9Xw)