



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye' opens 'Balancing Act' season at A Noise Within

PASADENA, Calif (July 18, 2023) — Three young Black girls in 1940s Ohio strive to make sense of love, sisterhood, abuse and hate. **A Noise Within** opens its 2023-24 “Balancing Act” season with *The Bluest Eye*, adapted for the stage by **Lydia R. Diamond** from the novel by Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning author **Toni Morrison** and directed by **Andi Chapman**. Performances take place **September 2** through **September 24**, with previews beginning August 27.

The Bluest Eye painfully exposes the poisonous effects of systemic racism and the heartbreak of shame, all the while retaining the distinctively rich and lyrical language of Morrison’s novel. Faced with constant ridicule and abuse, 11-year-old Pecola Breedlove blames her dark skin. If only she had blue eyes... surely love would follow?

“Morrison wants us to understand that racism hurts, and what transpires when it becomes internalized by the most vulnerable among us — a child,” says Chapman. “The ‘White gaze’ that we hoped to leave behind in the South, along with slavery, Reconstruction and Jim Crow, has followed these characters north, to Lorain, Ohio. Pecola grows up reading Dick and Jane, watching Shirley Temple movies, and ingesting an ideal she can never meet.”

Akilah A. Walker heads the A Noise Within cast as Pecola, alongside **Kacie Rogers** and **Mildred Marie Langford** as sisters Claudia and Frieda, from whose point of view the story is told. The rest of the cast includes **Julanne Chidi Hill** as Mrs. Breedlove, **Kamal Bolden** as Cholly Breedlove, **Crystal Jackson** and **Alex Morris** as Claudia’s and Frieda’s Mama and Daddy, and **Alex Metz** as classmate Maureen. The creative team includes composer and musical director **Maritri Garrett** and choreographer **Indira**



Tyler; scenic designer **Fred Kinney**; lighting designer **Andrew Schmedake**; sound designer **Jeff Gardner**; costume designer **Wendell C. Carmichael**; wig and Makeup designer **Shelia Dorn**; properties designer **Stephen Taylor**; and dramaturg **Dr. Miranda Johnson-Haddad**. The production stage manager is **Zaira Paredes-Villegas**.

“The origin of the novel lay in a conversation I had with a childhood friend in elementary school,” wrote Morrison in her author’s note. “She said she wanted blue eyes. I looked around to picture her with them, and was violently repelled by what I imagined she would look like if she had her wish. Implicit in her desire was racial self-loathing. Twenty years later, I was still wondering about how one learns that. Who told her? Who made her feel that it was better to be a freak than what she was? Who had looked at her and found her so wanting, so small a weight on the beauty scale? The novel pecks away at the gaze that condemned her.”

With its frank depiction of racism, domestic violence and alcohol abuse, the novel, first published in 1970, has appeared several times on the American Library Association’s annual list of top 10 most challenged books. According to PEN America, the book has been banned by 32 school districts across the country during the last two school years alone (2021-22 and 2022-23).

“Sharing a play as important as this is why we exist,” says A Noise Within co-artistic director **Geoff Elliott**.

A Noise Within has been called “an oasis for those who love classic stories” by the *Los Angeles Times* and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, California. Under the leadership Elliott and co-artistic director **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott**, the award-winning resident company is committed to representing the entire community at its state-of-the-art, 324-seat performance space. In addition to producing world-class performances of classic theater, the organization runs robust education programs with the goal of inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. ANW believes in working hard on its anti-racist practice across the whole organization. By interpreting its mission to fully engage audiences through community and artist-centered work in multiple creative disciplines, ANW is striving to be a theater that better serves the entire community. A Noise Within’s 2023-24 Season is presented by the **S. Mark Taper Foundation**.

Performances of *The Bluest Eye* take place **Sept. 2** through **Sept. 24** on **Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.**; **Fridays at 8 p.m.**; **Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.**; and **Sundays at 2 p.m.** (no 2 p.m. matinee on Saturday, Sept. 2; dark Thursday, Sept. 14; no evening performance on Saturday, Sept. 23). Four preview performances take place on Sunday, Aug. 27 at 2 p.m.; Wednesday, Aug. 30 and Thursday, Aug. 31 each at 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, Sept. 1 at 8 p.m.

Tickets start at **\$29**. Student tickets start at **\$18**. Tickets to the previews on **Wednesday, Aug. 30** and **Thursday, Aug. 31** will be **Pay What You Choose**, with tickets starting at **\$5** (available online beginning at 12 p.m. the Monday prior to that performance). Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more.

The preview on **Thursday, Aug. 31** will be **sensory-friendly**, with a handout providing advance warning and a discreetly-placed lantern offering visual indication of upcoming abrupt or intense moments of lighting, sound or on-stage action. An **INSiders Discussion Group** will tackle the subject of **banned books** on **Sunday, Sept. 3** from **12:30 p.m.–1:30 p.m.**, prior to the matinee performance (separate admission: **\$25**). The performance on **Thursday, Sept. 7** is “**Black Out Night**,” an opportunity for an audience self-identifying as Black to experience the performance as well as a post-show reception together. **Post-performance conversations** will take place **every Friday** (except the preview) and **Sunday, Sept. 10**. In addition, there will be **three student matinees** at **10:30 a.m.** on **Thursday, Sept. 14**; **Tuesday, Sept. 19**; and **Wednesday, Sept. 20**. Interested educators should email education@anoisewithin.org.

A Noise Within is located at **3352 E Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107**. *The Bluest Eye* is recommended for mature audiences ages 14 and up. For more information and to purchase tickets, call **(626) 356-3100** or go to www.anoisewithin.org

[Click here](#) to download high resolution photos.

Details for Calendar Listings 'The Bluest Eye'

WHAT:

A Noise Within presents *The Bluest Eye*, a haunting and tragic portrait of a Black girl's coming of age in the racially turbulent 1940s, adapted for the stage by **Lydia R. Diamond** from the novel by Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning author **Toni Morrison**. Faced with constant ridicule and abuse, 11-year-old Pecola Breedlove blames her dark skin. If only she had blue eyes... surely love would follow?

WHO:

- Adapted for the stage by **Lydia R. Diamond** from the novel by **Toni Morrison**
- Directed by **Andi Chapman**
- Starring **Kamal Bolden, Julianne Chidi Hill, Crystal Jackson, Mildred Marie Langford, Alex Metz, Alex Morris, Kacie Rogers, Akilah A. Walker**
- Presented by **A Noise Within, Geoff Elliot and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, producing artistic directors**

WHEN:

Previews Aug. 27–Sept. 1

Performances Sept. 2–Sept. 24

- **Wednesday** at **7:30 p.m.**: Aug. 30 ONLY (preview)
- **Thursdays** at **7:30 p.m.**: Aug. 31* (preview); Sept. 7[†] and Sept. 21 ONLY
- **Fridays** at **8 p.m.**: Sept. 1 (preview); Sept. 8^{††}; Sept. 15^{††}; Sept. 22^{††}

- **Saturdays at 2 p.m.:** Sept. 9; Sept. 16; Sept. 23 (no matinee on Sept. 2)
- **Saturdays at 8 p.m.:** Sept. 2 (Opening Night); Sept. 9; Sept. 16; (no evening performance on Sept. 23)
- **Sundays at 2 p.m.:** Aug. 27 (preview); Sept. 3^{**}; Sept. 10^{††}; Sept. 17; Sept. 24

*The preview on **Thursday, Aug. 31** will be **sensory-friendly**; a handout detailing when an abrupt or intense moment of lighting, sound or on-stage action will occur, and a discreetly-placed lantern will provide a visual indication of when these moments will occur.

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†The performance on **Thursday, Sept. 7** is “**Black Out Night**,” an opportunity for an audience self-identifying as Black to experience the performance together. Tickets include admission to a post-show reception.

††**Post-performance conversations** with the artists **every Friday** (except the preview) and **Sunday, Sept. 10**

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3352 E Foothill Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91107

TICKETS:

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- Wednesday, Aug. 30 and Thursday, Aug. 31 (previews): **Pay What You Choose** starting at **\$5** (available online beginning the Monday prior to that performance)
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OTHER:

Recommended for mature audiences ages 14 and up.

PHOTOS:

[Click here](#) to download high-resolution photos.

HOW:

www.anoisewithin.org
(626) 356-3100

A Noise Within’s 2023-24 Season is presented by the **S. Mark Taper Foundation**.

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