

NEW PLAY AWARD WINNER TAKES KING-SIZED SEAT AT THE FRINGE

"You could go whenever you wanted. I ain't holding you back."

TORONTO, May 26, 2017 | In September of 1964, a chance meeting in a public washroom between two men – one white and one black – reveals the bond they share and the ties connecting them to America's most powerful leaders in **Minmar Gaslight Productions'** presentation of **THE SEAT NEXT TO THE KING**, written by **Steven Elliott Jackson** and playing at **Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace, July 6th to 16th**.

Behind the door of a public washroom in a Washington, D.C. park, two lives linked to the country's most influential figures collide when a white man seeking a sexual encounter meets a black male stranger.

Winner of the 2017 Toronto Fringe Festival New Play Contest, this bold, affecting piece tackles race, sex, the meaning of 'manhood', and the cost of reconciling each for two disparate human beings with a shared innate need. Featuring blistering performances by **Kwaku Okyere** and **Conor Ling**, ***The Seat Next To The King*** is directed by Tanisha Taitt, following her extended hit production of *Sister Act* for the Lower Ossington Theatre and returning to the Toronto Fringe for the first time since 2010's stirring *The Whores*.

"I didn't plan to do the festival again," Taitt says. "I'd done six shows in three cities and was content with my Fringe experience. This beautiful piece brought me back. Steven's script is raw, with an external simplicity that belies its internal complexity. The characters are real historical figures, but the story is fact-meets-fiction. It's an unapologetic, sexy, heartbreaking, relevant work that holds me in its hands."

Jackson believes it is this relevance that impacted the New Play award jury, and will do the same to audiences. "Plays do not win prizes by separating us from times long ago, but by helping us connect with a time that may be closer to our current world than we realize," the playwright asserts. "By exploring issues of masculinity, racism and sexuality, this play searches for the connections between us in times when we feel lost, frightened and bewildered – reminding us that we are not alone and will persevere."

THE SEAT NEXT TO THE KING

By **Steven Elliott Jackson**

Directed by **Tanisha Taitt**

Featuring: **Kwaku Okyere** and **Conor Ling**

Presented as part of the **Toronto Fringe Festival**

Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace, 16 Ryerson Ave

**Performances: (Opening) July 6 @ 6:30pm, July 8 @ 11:30pm, July 10 @ 7:15pm, July 12 @ 12:00pm
July 13 @ 8:45pm, July 14 @ 1:45pm, July 16 @ 1:00pm**

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