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**A World Premiere!**

Persecuted over pigment



**MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels) presents**

**A Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre production**

#### Blind

Written by Lindsay Wilson**,** Directed by Alison Darcy

#### Thursday, April 3 - Sunday, April 13, 2014

*“The murders were the worst when the elections were at their most chaotic.*

*I know who can afford to buy albino body parts and it’s not maize farmers.”* – Christine

[**Click to see a brief *Blind* trailer**](http://www.scapegoatcarnivaletheatre.com/)

**Montreal, March 2014**- **Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre**, in collaboration with the **MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels)**, is privileged to present the world premiere of this significant new work, ***Blind.*** Playwright **Lindsay Wilson**, affected by an article about people with albinism in East Africa being hunted and violently murdered for their body parts, boarded a plane to Tanzania to volunteer and observe. This resulted in *Blind*, a new play directed by **Alison Darcy** which will be performed at the MAI from **April 3-13**. At its heart, *Blind* reflects our current climate- the debate around the ‘different other’. Throughout the run donations will be raised for Under the Same Sun, a charity working to improve the lives of people with albinism.

***Blind*** highlights the persecution of people with albinism (PWA) in Tanzania, including the trafficking and barbaric ritual killing for their body parts; their dismembered limbs are rumoured to possess magical properties and are used by some corrupt traditional healers to create expensive potions promising health and prosperity. In this fascinating encounter between documentary theatre and mythical, lyric storytelling, ***Blind*** follows Hannah during her stay in Tanzania where she does social aid work with children as an international observer of human rights violations. In Tanzania, children with albinism are housed in schools for the blind in order to keep them safe. Featuring testimonies from these children, *Blind* is also an unflinching account of the crisis of humanitarian aid in Africa. In everyone’s best efforts to help, we are often blind to the ways in which support is actually needed. When examining the issues of gathering testimony and of observation, how much should we interfere in the attempt to do good and bring aid to a foreign country?

Being a PWA can be a death sentence in Tanzania. Since 2006, over 70 people with no pigment in their skin, hair, or eyes have been killed and many others have been attacked and mutilated. In this East African nation, 1 in every 2,000 Tanzanians has albinism while the world average is 1 in 20,000. Nevertheless, misinformation abounds. Some locals believe PWA are ghosts that can’t die. More alarming, a complete albino set of body parts - ears, tongue, nose, genitals, all four limbs- can sell for $75,000.

In 2011, Montreal playwright Lindsay Wilson traveled to Tanzania and volunteered with Under the Same Sun, an NGO dedicated to assisting Tanzanian people with albinism. For Wilson, the story behind *Blind* is a universal one as the world figures out just how much one can intervene in another country’s politics, issues and needs: “With this play I’m trying to go beyond lurid documentary and show that a people’s culture- myths, stories, traditions, religion and politics- is integral to understanding and healing after traumatic events. I also want to investigate entrenched, clichéd stereotypes like the barbarous African savage and the Western white saviour. It is crucial to start incorporating a greater awareness into the aid process.” The work is pulled from true experience, but it is a fictional account.

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Director Alison Darcy was first drawn to the issue when she encountered the practice of witchcraft in South Africa with her father, actor and director Maurice Podbrey. They discovered it is not at all the way many Western people imagine it, “Traditional healing is a massive support to health care which can be severely limited in these areas. Though some practitioners are corrupt and cause harm, most traditional healers fill the role of doctor/priest/psychiatrist.” Traditional African medicine is a holistic discipline involving indigenous herbalism and African spirituality. Adherents of the country’s two major religions, Christianity and Islam, often syncretise their faith with traditional beliefs.

# Testimony is another big part of the healing process, which often begins once people speak their trauma, name their pain and see others being accounted for. For Darcy, this is inspiring, “We have seen nations start to heal with the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa and here with our First Nations, as well as the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda. Humanitarian aid workers find it hard to accept that sometimes bearing witness is all you can do; it is valuable to not always try to save, but to recognize.”

This poetic, theatrical presentation features a talented Montreal cast: Vladimir Alexis, Delphine Bienvenu, Saraah Hicks, Matthew Kabwe, Warona Setshwaelo, Jaa Smith-Johnson and Lydia Zadel. Audiences will be treated to a stylish hybrid- magic realism mixed with a representational Brechtian approach including a corrugated tin townscape, dried crackled earth, overhead projections, traditional Tanzanian music, birdsong and shadow work. Set and costume design by Logan Williams, lighting design by Jacynthe Lalonde and sound design by Emily Thorne. The stage manager is Rachel Dawn Woods.

*“You are always telling us how you will make things better and then the better never arrives.*

*How are* you*, Hannah, going to make things better?”* – Alex

Blind (9 shows only) April 3-13

### Scapegoat Carnivale at the MAI

3680 rue Jeanne-Mance

Showtimes:

**8pm**- Thurs. April 3 (preview), Fri. April 4, Sat. April 5, Sun. April 6, Fri. April 11, Sat. April 12 - Talkbacks on Saturday nights (Apr. 5 & 12) after the show

**3pm**- Sun. April 6, Sat. April 12, Sun. April 13

Special event on Fri. Apr. 11- After the show, keynote speaker Peter Ash from Under the Same Sun will talk about the work being done in East Africa. This is an important night to educate our society about what is going on over there.

**Tickets**: $22 regular, $18 seniors, $15 students, $14 group (10 or more), $12 school group

Preview Thursday, April 3 at 8pm, $15

**Reservations:** (514) 982-3386 or online - [m-a-i.qc.ca/en/upcoming/scapegoat-carnivale-en](http://m-a-i.qc.ca/en/upcoming/scapegoat-carnivale-en%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) (+ service charge)

**For bios and further information**- [www.scapegoatcarnivaletheatre.com/blind-cast-crew/](http://www.scapegoatcarnivaletheatre.com/blind-cast-crew/)

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**If you would like to interview playwright Lindsay Wilson, director Alison Darcy or any other company member-** **Media Contact**: Janis Kirshner (514) 287-8912 jkirshner@sympatico.ca