



**August 28, 2017**

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**Leimert Park Vision Theatre Consortium,  
City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs,  
LA STAGE Alliance,  
and  
City Council President Herb Wesson  
announce  
Vision Theatre Festival of Staged Readings 2017**

Part of the larger Leimert Park Unity Festival  
Thursday, August 24 to Sunday, September 3, 2017

4<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival featuring leading African American playwrights, directors, actors,  
productions, and the best reviewed shows of the  
2017 Leimert Park Vision Theatre Consortium Reader’s Theatre Season

17 unique productions held in various venues in Leimert Park,  
the historic home of L.A.’s vibrant African American community

2017 festival theme is the “State of Black Theater in Los Angeles”

Includes theater industry panels, educational tours, and networking mixers

All productions are followed by Q&As with the playwrights, directors, actors,  
and a  
Community Mixer at the California Jazz and Blues Museum

Los Angeles – The Leimert Park Vision Theatre Consortium (LPVTC) and  
the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) announce the  
4<sup>th</sup> Annual Vision Theatre Festival of Staged Readings. The Festival runs from Thursday,  
August 24 through Sunday, September 3 (Labor Day weekend),  
and features a wide range of performance events including staged readings, receptions,  
panel discussions, artist talk-backs, and educational events. All productions feature the  
finest talent on stage and behind the scenes that  
Los Angeles has to offer.

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The festival is produced by LPVTC, a group of cultural agencies based in South Los Angeles devoted to supporting culture and art-making in Leimert Park and South LA with an eye towards the African American experience and legacy. These institutions include DCA’s Vision Theatre, the Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center, Fernando Pullum Community Arts Center, KAOS Network, Regency West Los Angeles, Los Angeles Inner City Cultural Center, Theatre Perception Consortium, and the Bilingual Foundation.

“I am pleased to welcome the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Vision Theatre Festival of Staged Readings once again to Leimert Park Village,” said Los Angeles City Council President Herb Wesson of Council District 10. “It is the vision of my office and all of the cultural institutions in Leimert Park, that this Festival become an essential anchor for the City of Los Angeles, reminding us of the great theaters – once prominent in South Los Angeles – that no longer exist. I want to wish all of the writers, directors, actors, and producers a successful 2017 Festival.”

The Festival theme is “The State of Black Theater in Los Angeles” and several forums will be devoted to discussing the challenges and opportunities for LA’s Black community as it pertains to theater-making in the City. As part of this larger context, the Festival will be held at DCA’s historic Vision Theatre, currently under renovation and scheduled to re-open in 2020. The newly re-imagined Vision Theatre is designed to be the anchor organization for Leimert Park and the Black cultural community, and will be a resource for all Angelenos.

“The first Festival of Staged Readings brought attention to the hole left by the closure of a number of Black theaters. That selection of staged readings represented the best plays to pay tribute to those former theaters that called South Los Angeles home: Inner City Cultural Center, Marla Gibbs Crossroads Arts Academy, Ebony Showcase Theater, The Performing Arts Society of Los Angeles, Foxx Follies, Frances William Corner Playhouse, Inglewood Playhouse, and the Watts Mafundi Institute,” said James Burks, Manager of the Vision Theatre.

“As a celebration of the performing arts, the Vision Theatre Festival of Staged Readings presents a body of work from playwrights who represent different cultures and identities,” said Danielle Brazell, DCA General Manager. “The Festival highlights the best plays of the season, plus works from playwrights in Harlem, San Jose, and Chicago. This important collaboration between cities and communities is critical to building cultural vibrancy in Los Angeles.”

The Vision Theatre Festival of Staged Readings was born out of the Leimert Park Vision Theatre Monthly Reader’s Theatre Series founded in 2013 by James Burks, Manager of the Vision Theatre, and LPVTC as an avenue for playwrights to hear new works and receive feedback. The monthly series grew to include revivals, musicals, and previously produced plays re-read in hopes of mounting additional productions in Los Angeles. The Festival is now part of the [Leimert Park Unity Festival](#), a broader festival in Leimert Park happening throughout the month of August that showcases different South LA



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organizations such as the Gospel Festival, Jazz Festival, African Drum and Dance Festival, People Street's Programming, and more.

Historically, Leimert Park and the Vision Theatre have been incubators of Black voices in the regional artistic community and are considered the heart of the African American community in Los Angeles. The community collaborations between LPVTC's partners was created specifically to support and provide visibility to the important artists creating work in Los Angeles. They have steadfastly committed to telling the stories of the community, for the community, as well as for the broader city-wide theatre-going audience.

See below for a complete listing of the Vision Theatre Festival of Staged Reading events.

Tickets are on sale daily at the Vision Theatre Festival Box Office Monday to Saturday from noon to 6 p.m. at 3341 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90008. Cash or checks preferred, but credit cards accepted for advance sales only. For more information about ticket purchases, please call 323.290.2386 or visit: [dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org](mailto:dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org)

### **Partners and Sponsors**

Community Partners include: **Leimert Park Vision Theatre Consortium, LA STAGE Alliance, The California Jazz and Blues Museum, Friends of the Vision Theatre, and Los Angeles Church of Spiritual Living.**

Sponsors include: **City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), Office of Los Angeles City Council President Herb Wesson, and Leimert Park Stakeholders.**

### **About the Leimert Park Vision Theatre Consortium**

The festival is produced by the Leimert Park Theatre Consortium which is a group of South Los Angeles based cultural agencies devoted to supporting culture and art-making in Leimert Park and South LA with an eye towards the African American experience and legacy. These institutions include DCA's Vision Theatre, Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center, Fernando Pullum Community Arts Center, KAOS Network, Regency West Los Angeles, Los Angeles Inner City Cultural Center, Theater Perception Consortium, and the Bilingual Foundation.



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**About DCA’s Historic Vision Theatre**

The Vision Theatre, a large neighborhood movie palace, is a 1931 Spanish-tinged Deco wonder that has retained its importance to the community for over 80 years since it first opened as the Leimert Theatre. Built as a showcase theater for premieres, it became a neighborhood movie theater soon after opening and was operated by Fox West Coast Theatres. The theater was later renamed the Watchtower in the 1970’s, following its purchase and conversion to a Jehovah’s Witness Kingdom Hall. Designed in a classic southern California streamlined Spanish Colonial style, the tall steel frame on top of the lower stucco clad tower originally with the word LEIMERT, was later changed and renamed VISION

by Actress Marla Gibbs after purchasing the building in 1990. The City of Los Angeles has since acquired the property and is currently investing funds and resources to fully restore and convert the theater with the intention to mount full theatrical productions, produce major dance and music concerts, show films, as well as host conferences and conventions, to become the Center for Black Culture in Los Angeles. The full renovation is expected to be completed in 2020.

**About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)**

As a leading, progressive arts and cultural agency, DCA empowers Los Angeles’ vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists.

Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA’s residents and visitors, and ensure LA’s varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA’s mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike.

DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grant-making, public art, community arts, and strategic marketing and development. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other city agencies, artists, and arts and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles.

For more information, please visit [culturela.org](http://culturela.org) or follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/culturela](https://facebook.com/culturela); Instagram [@culture\\_la](https://instagram.com/culture_la); and Twitter [@culture\\_la](https://twitter.com/culture_la).

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### Opening and Closing Night Events

#### Opening Night Gala

**SOUL HERITAGE SAM COOKE REVUE**

**ICCC MUSICAL JUBILEE**

**A MEDLEY OF THE BEST MUSICAL PRODUCTIONS FROM ICCC**

Thursday, August 24, 8 pm

The Regency West Entertainment Center

Written and Directed by Chester Whitmore

Produced by The Los Angeles Inner City Cultural Center

Featuring Magnificent Seven Jazz Band, Vel Omarr, Bobby Womack Sisters, The Olympics, Chester Whitmore, and The Central Avenue Dance Ensemble

Tickets \$25.00; to RSVP email [dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org](mailto:dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org) or call 323.290.2386

#### Closing Night Gala

**GET READY**

Sunday, September 3, 7 pm

Regency West Los Angeles

Written by Jaye Stewart, Joe Plummer and Debi Stewart

Directed by Joe Plummer

Presented by Tri-Coastal Entertainment

An R&B musical with, "Catchy Tunes in the Motown mode, climaxing with a smart-stepping, hand clapping finale that had the house jumping." *Chicago Tribune*

Tickets \$25.00; to RSVP email [dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org](mailto:dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org) or call 323.290.2386

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#### **Vision Theatre Festival of Staged Readings 2017**

[Schedule and locations subject to change. Call 323.290.2386 and/or visit our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/thevisiontheatre/>.]

#### **Events In Chronological Order**

**FROG EYES**

Friday, August 25, 8 pm

The Vision Theatre

Written by James Bronson

Directed by Hawthorne James

Produce by Bronson Production Featuring Andre Henry and Lawrence Mandley

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On his last evening in New York, James Baldwin eagerly awaits a handsome lover while examining a painful journey through an America that rejects his color, looks, and intelligence.

**HOPERA: CHRONICLES OF A FALLEN HERO**

Sunday, August 27, 3 pm  
Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center  
Written & Composed by: Adrian L. Dunn  
Produced by: Byron Johns in partnership with HoperaWorld Entertainment  
In Partnership with the Fernando Pullum Performing Arts Center (FPPAC)

Featuring: Adrian L. Dunn, Cristina Fentress, Darshea Odom and members of the FPPAC

*Hopera: Chronicles a Fallen Hero* is a story of a young man, Obadiah King, growing up on the south side of Chicago in a single-parent household and his encounters with love, drugs, sex, heartbreak, and violence as he comes of age.

**A QUARTET OF ONE-ACT PLAYS**

Thursday, August 31, 7 pm  
The Vision Theatre  
**Part 1**  
**CALAFIA**  
Researched and Directed by Ursaline Bryant  
Produced by Theatre Perception Consortium

Featuring Jennifer Jones and Bobby Ellerbee

*Calafia* is a warrior queen who ruled over a kingdom of Black women living on the mythical Island of California. A definitive article by Diane Bailey Blackmon is the basis of this one-woman show that sheds light upon and uncovers what is known as the 'Spirit of California' through words, movement and sound. This Performance Art also honors the original founders and first people of the West.

**Part 2**  
**HORSE HAIR AND THE FROG**

Written by Preston J. Arrow-weed  
Produced by Preston J. Arrow-weed and Helena Q. Arrow-weed  
Read by Preston J. Arrow-weed and Helena Q. Arrow-weed

This Kamyá-Quechan playwright writes about his native culture as if he was there at that time long, long ago. Horse Hair was an actual person in history. He was a noted warrior, one of the last two warriors in the Quechan camp with



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whom the United States Army had to negotiate peace. History tells us that Horse Hair was not the chosen leader by the Army and died in obscurity because others betrayed him. In this play, Arrow-weed has brought Horse Hair back to life at the end of that heroic life. The play is a conversation he has with Frog, the daughter, and Kumat, the Creator.

**Part 3**

***ABIKA, SHE RUNS***

Written by James Bronson

Directed by Ursaline Bryant

Produced by Bronson Productions Featuring C.J. Williams and Tu’Nook Alexander

Music by S.H.I.N.E Muwasi and Rene’ Mims

*Abika, She Runs* is a lyrical story written. The poetry tells of a young Bantu woman named Abika who has discovered that her king is scheming with Europeans to sell her village into slavery. Although Abika is eight months pregnant she takes it upon herself to warn her people and nearby villages what is taking place within the king’s palace. Running with two heartbeats, Abika races against time to save generations that are destined to be sold away across the sea. Original poetry, movement and music is also presented making it an exciting and adventurous performance art presentation.

**Part 4**

***WHAT DEFINES YOUR BLACKNESS?***

Written by Tu’Nook Alexander

Directed by Tu’Nook Alexander

Produced by Theatre Perception Consortium

Featuring Melanie Haymon, Larney Johnson, Keturah McClendon, Katherine Parker, Andrea Ross, and Adrian Zeigler

A one act play that will keep you on the edge of your seat. Each character takes you on a journey of laughter, drama, tragedy, and historical fact to reveal their feelings as to what Blackness means to them. Have you ever thought about “What Defines Your Blackness?” THINK ABOUT IT!

***AARP... SILVER SNEAKERS... AND WE***

Friday, September 1, 6 pm

Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center

Scenes Written and Presented by the Vision Theatre Elders Acting Workshop;  
Instructor, Ursaline Bryant

Featuring Lonnie Calvin, Melvin Hampton, Louise Knapper, Charlene Limenih, Francine Lyles and Gloria Vinson



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Based on the idea of the 1970 Broadway musical, "The Me Nobody Knows," which gave voice to the lives, hopes, loves, and frustrations of inner-city youth, this version is told from the perspective of the silver sneakers....our Elders. From observation of self and recollection of stories that stood out in their memory they committed them to the written word and the art of storytelling to share their experiences encountered over a lifetime, paying homage to the Age of Wisdom.

**PAPA'S BATHTUB GIN**

Friday, September 1, 8 pm  
The Vision Theatre  
Written by Teddy Hayes  
Directed by Buddy Butler  
Presented by Buddy Butler & Foxx Follies

This is a story about 1931 bootleggers hiding in plain sight in an African American community in Cleveland Ohio. It was inspired by true events that took place during the time of prohibition and the great depression in the USA.

**VOICES OF THE UNHEARD**

Saturday, September 2, 4 pm  
The Vision Theatre  
Produced by Spirit Awakening Foundation - Akuyoe Graham, Founder/Director  
Directed by BT Taylor

Spirit Awakening Foundation presents an evening of spoken word written by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated children and young adults, with music and performances by formerly detained teens and young adults Spirit Awakening Foundation.

**WILD IN WICHITA/ LOCURAS EN WICHITA**

Saturday, September 2, 6 pm  
The Vision Theatre  
Written by Lina Gallegos  
Directed by Denise Blasor  
Spanish Translation by Denise Blasor  
Produced by Bilingual Foundation for the Arts

Featuring Denise Blasor\* and Sal Lopez\*

A bilingual romantic comedy that explores nursing homes, loneliness, mortality, cultural differences, Latin music and love at any age. \*Actors appear courtesy of Actors Equity Association.





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**BILLIE... MEMOIRS TO STAGE**

Saturday, September 2, 6pm  
Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center  
Written and Directed by Billie King Produced By King Film

Featuring: Janice Robinson, Bob Tennon, Gwen Mwanza, Diontae Simpson, Joyselyn Scales, James Malbrough, Erikka Dunn, Kaliah Harris, Kobe Davenport, and Johnathan Ethan

**LIIT POETRY: THE HIGH-FREQUENCY CHILL ZONE**

Sunday, September 3, 3 pm  
The Vision Theatre  
Directed by Billie King  
Produced by King Films

Featuring internationally renowned poet, K-Love (Million Dollar Melanin) and special guest performer Kevin Sandbloom and a host of other incredible poets, vocalists and live music.

**THE MEETING**

Sunday, September 3, 4 pm  
Regency West  
Written by Jeff Stetson  
Directed by Judyann Elder  
Produced by Los Angeles Inner City Cultural Center

Featuring Dejuan Christopher as Malcolm X and Lamont Young as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – a conversation between two civil rights giants of the 60’s.

**THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE**

Sunday, September 3, 5 pm  
Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center  
Written by Karani Marcia Leslie Johnson  
Directed by Windy Barnes Farrell  
Produced by Karani Marcia Leslie Johnson

A courtroom drama about racial stereotypes and their history, speaks to a neglected audience: black women. A struggling black businesswoman is suing the all-giving, malleable Mammy Louise and her sex-kitten daughter Safreeta Mae because their stereotypes hobble her progress.

**CALMING THE MAN**

Sunday, September 3, 5 pm  
The Vision Theatre  
Written and Produced by Anthony Lamarr (White), Antmar Entertainment



Produced in association with the Alliance Theatre Reiser Atlanta Artists Lab Fellowship - Alliance Theatre (Atlanta)  
Directed and Narrated by Keith Franklin

Featuring Lance Reddick, La'Tevin Alexander, Hassan Ashi, Jr., K. Sidney Bronson

Calming The Man is the story of two young men who are determined not to let their father's anger break them, regardless of the cost.

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**Industry Panels and Community Tours**

**THE STATE OF CULTURAL ENTERPRISES IN SOUTH LA**

Saturday, August 26, 10 am  
The Vision Theatre  
Admission: Free

This panel is aimed at creatively minded planners and producers concerned with changing economic dynamics of the urban environment in South Los Angeles with the goal of aligning with concerns about urban planning, event planning and production, public engagement, and branding Leimert Park Village as the hub of African American cultures in Los Angeles. Our ultimate success will be rooted in our willingness to partner with neighborhoods, nonprofits, foundations, adjacent cities, cultural institutions, developers and designers to create public programs and events that highlight the unique character and untapped potential of the South Los Angeles and the surrounding community to activate and create unique experiences where arts, culture, economics, community and civic life collide.

**THE STATE OF BLACK THEATRE IN LOS ANGELES**

Saturday, August 26, 12 noon  
The Vision Theatre  
Admission: Free

Theater within the Black community has been on the demise. This panel will examine the important legacy of Black theater making in LA, and discuss appropriate ways to build for its future. What began four years ago with a program that represented shows from a diverse collection of former South Los Angeles Theater companies has taken on new life as we raise our ambition of launching the fully restored Vision Theatre. Panelists will include educators, historians and social scientists.

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**CULTURAL WALKING TOUR:**  
**THE VISION THEATRE AND LEIMERT PARK VILLAGE**

Sunday, August 27, 2pm  
Sunday, September 3, 2pm  
Meeting Point: Vision Theatre Lobby by 1:45pm  
Admission: Free

Curated and hosted by James Burks, Manager of the Vision Theatre, enjoy a historic tour of the Vision Theatre (soon closing for renovations), and surrounding Leimert Park Village theatres and businesses.

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### General Information

**Festival Box Office:** The Festival Box office is located at the Vision Theatre, 3341 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Place Los Angeles, CA 90008 (located between Leimert and Degnan Boulevards)

The box office is open Monday through Saturday from 12 noon until 6 p.m.

**Tickets:** \$10 per ticket single admission; \$35 Multiple Plan (4 individual tickets); \$75 All Access Pass; \$25 tickets for the August 24<sup>th</sup> opening and September 3<sup>rd</sup> closing followed by receptions. Advance tickets are available on Eventbrite.com.

**Payment:** Tickets are available at the Vision Theatre Box Office from 12 noon to 6 p.m. Cash or check preferred. Festival venues will accept walk-ups for cash only. Credit cards will be accepted for advance sales only.

**Seating:** All seating is general admission, seating to capacity.

**Start Times:** For each event, tickets will be available at the venue door 30 minutes prior. Cash preferred. Seating will occur 15 minute before the play begins.

**Parking:** Parking is available at the Vision Theatre Parking Lot (at the rear of the theatre, enter from Degnan Boulevard or 43<sup>rd</sup> Street)

Metered street parking is available on Degnan and Leimert Boulevard.

Residential street parking surrounding the theatre.

Leimert Park Village is accessible by bus and is six (6) city blocks south of the Crenshaw Station exit on Metro Exposition line.

**Festival Eatery:** Adassa’s Island Cafe & Entertainment and Acai Bamboo (Carribbean Food), 4305 Degnan Blvd, Suite 103, Los Angeles, CA 90008  
Laid-back brunch destination offering breakfast burritos, sandwiches, salads, and smoothies. 323-295-0043

**Other Nearby Restaurants:** On Crenshaw: Taco Bell, Delicious (Soul Food), El Pollo Loco, and Happy Pizza. On Leimert Blvd: Pizza Hut, The Brooklyn Deli, Phillips BBQ, and Taco Mel.

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## Festival Venues and Contact Info

### Contact Information for the Festival:

Vision Theatre 323-290-2386 or [dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org](mailto:dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org)

#### Vision Theatre

3341 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
323-290-2386  
[dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org](mailto:dca.visiontheatre@lacity.org)  
[www.culturela.org](http://www.culturela.org)

#### Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center

4305 Degnan Boulevard, Suite 101  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
310-462-1439  
<http://www.barbaramorrison.com/>

#### Fernando Pullum Community Arts Center

3351 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
323-292-2700  
<http://pullumcenter.org/>

#### KAOS Network

4343 Leimert Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
323-296-5717  
[www.facebook.com/KaosNetwork](http://www.facebook.com/KaosNetwork)  
<http://kaos-network.business.site/>

#### Regency West Los Angeles

3339 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
323-292-5143  
[www.regencywestla.com](http://www.regencywestla.com)

#### The California Jazz and Blues Museum

4317 Degnan Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
(310) 462-1439  
<https://www.californiajazzandbluesmuseum.com/>

#### People's Street Plaza

3347 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Los Angeles, CA 90008  
[James.v.burks@lacity.org](mailto:James.v.burks@lacity.org)  
(323) 290-2386

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