

The Author

ALICE CHILDRESS (1916-1994) was celebrated in an obituary in Britain's *Guardian* newspaper as someone who was regarded as "a champion of impoverished black people, who used her writing to chronicle the exploitation of African-Americans." Born in Charleston, South Carolina, she was raised in Harlem by her grandmother (the daughter of a slave). Childress dropped out of high school following the death of her grandmother and took a series of low-paying jobs in New York. In 1934 she married an actor named Alvin Childress, with whom she had a daughter. She later joined a New York amateur theatre group, American Negro Theater, where she gained experience in a wide variety of theatrical activity, including acting and playwriting. Her Broadway acting debut came in 1944 in Philip Yordan's play *Anna Lucasta*, which, with an all-black cast, including her husband, ran for over two years at the Mansfield Theatre. Childress's early plays, such as *Florence* (1949), *Just a Little Simple* (1950) and *Gold Through the Trees* (1952), were all produced in Harlem under the auspices of the Committee for the Negro in the Arts. Her next play, however, *Trouble in Mind*, based in part on Childress's own experience of racial stereotyping in theatre, moved south to Greenwich Village, where it opened on November 3, 1955 at the 200-seat Greenwich Mews Theatre.

After her marriage to Alvin Childress ended in divorce in 1957, Alice Childress continued to act on-stage, in film and on television, while her writing for theatre took on new forms when, with her second husband, composer Nathan Woodward, she co-wrote several musicals, including *Young Martin Luther King* (1968) and *Sea Island Song* (1977). Her play *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White* (1966), about an interracial relationship in 1918 Charleston, was performed in Ann Arbor and Boston, but failed to find a New York producer until Joe Papp presented it at his New York Shakespeare Festival in 1972. A subsequent dramatization for ABC television was rejected by several ABC affiliates because of the play's controversial subject matter. Childress's *Wine in the Wilderness*, which addresses sexism within the African-American community, was first performed on WGBH television in 1969 as part of a series called "On Being Black." She added fiction to her accomplishments in the 1970s, her juvenile novel *A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich*, about teenage drug addiction, winning the American Library Association Best Young Adult Novel Award in 1973. She wrote the screenplay for the 1977 film version, directed by Ralph Nelson, starring Cicely Tyson and Paul Winfield. Her 1981 novel *A Short Walk*, which deals with the migration of American blacks from the rural south to the urban north, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1977. Among her other awards was the Paul Robeson Award for Outstanding Achievement in Theatre and the Harlem School of the Arts Humanitarian Award.

The multi-talented Alice Childress, whose playwriting is situated deeply in the Shavian tradition, died of cancer in New York on August 14, 1994.

TROUBLE IN MIND is generously sponsored by

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The Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre is sponsored by Paradigm Capital Inc

PREVIEW PROGRAMME

JACKIE MAXWELL STUDIO THEATRE, AUGUST 8 TO OCTOBER 9

SHAW 21
FESTIVAL

TIM CARROLL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | TIM JENNINGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NAFEESA MONROE, KIERA SANGSTER

and GRAEME SOMERVILLE in

TROUBLE IN MIND

by Alice Childress

with KALEB ALEXANDER, DAVID ALAN ANDERSON,

NEIL BARCLAY, KRISTI FRANK,

PATRICK GALLIGAN and PETER MILLARD

Directed by PHILIP AKIN

Set designed by RACHEL FORBES

Costumes designed by MING WONG

Lighting designed by MIKAEL KANGAS

Music direction and sound designed by RYAN deSOUZA

Dialect consultation by ALICIA RICHARDSON

We acknowledge and honour the land upon which we gather today as the historic and traditional territory of First Nations peoples. In particular, we recognize and thank the Neutral Nation, the Mississauga and the Haudenosaunee for their stewardship of these lands over millennia.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

Director's Note

by Philip Akin

What is an “even life”?

What would that look like and how would it manifest to others?

An “even life” to me is such a personal, idiosyncratic understanding that, when it intersects with others, we open the door to T.S. Eliot’s phrase “falls the shadow”. *Trouble in Mind* delves into that shadow and, through honest humour and courage, examines that collision of lives. And perhaps bring us all a greater insight into “even”.

Production History

Trouble in Mind premiered at New York’s Greenwich Mews Theatre on November 3, 1955, directed by Clarice Taylor and Alice Childress. It ran for 91 performances and won an Obie Award for best original off-Broadway play of the 1955-56 season. It was scheduled to move to Broadway in 1957, but, unwilling to accept script changes proposed by the director, Childress withdrew it. The play was shown on British television in 1965. The British stage premiere was at London’s Tricycle Theatre on October 12, 1992, directed by Nicolas Kent. This Shaw Festival production is likely the Canadian premiere.

Incidental Music

“Bye Bye Bird” by Sonny Boy Williamson

“I Just Want to be Free” and “She Said No” by Champion Jack Dupree

The curtain-call music, “And It Goes Like That”, was recorded by David Alan Anderson, Ryan deSouza and Eric Mahar.

THE CAST *In Alphabetical Order*

John Nevins	KALEB ALEXANDER
Sheldon Forrester	DAVID ALAN ANDERSON
Eddie Fenton	NEIL BARCLAY
Judy Sears	KRISTI FRANK
Bill O’Wray	PATRICK GALLIGAN
Henry	PETER MILLARD
Willetta	NAFEESA MONROE
Millie Davis	KIERA SANGSTER
Al Manners	GRAEME SOMERVILLE

A Broadway theatre in New York City.
Fall, 1957.

ACT I

Ten o’clock Monday morning.

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Ten o’clock Thursday morning.

Stage Manager	AMY JEWELL
Assistant Stage Manager	THÉA PEL
Production Stage Manager	MEREDITH MACDONALD
Assistant Director	ROB KEMPSON
Assistant Designer	BEYATA HACKBORN
Assistant Lighting Designer	JEFF PYBUS
Voice and Dialect Coach	JEFFREY SIMLETT

For Artist photo and bio information, please go to shawfest.com/trouble

Additional Scenic Art provided by Jana Bergsma.

UNDERSTUDIES

ANDREW BRODERICK, John Nevins, Sheldon Forrester;
PATRICK GALLIGAN, Al Manners; KIERA SANGSTER, Willetta;
SHAUNA THOMPSON, Millie Davis; JAY TURVEY, Bill O’Wray, Henry

Running time is approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes including one intermission