



Press Release
Tuesday 16 April 2024
[DOWNLOAD IMAGES](#)

X: [@LyricHammer](#) | I: [/LyricHammersmith](#) | F: [/LyricHammersmith](#) |

FULL CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR UK PREMIERE OF *WEDDING BAND: A LOVE/HATE STORY IN BLACK AND WHITE*



- **Monique Touko** returns to the **Lyric Hammersmith Theatre** with searing drama *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White*, written by award-winning American playwright **Alice Childress**.
- Leading the ensemble cast are **Deborah Ayorinde** (Prime Video series *Riches*, Universal Picture's *Harriet*) and **David Walmsley** (Apple TV's *Slow Horses*, *Blood Wedding* at Young Vic), who will play lovers Julia and Herman in this emotive and romantic production, set in 1918 South Carolina.
- Director **Monique Touko**, Set & Costume Designer **Paul Wills**, and the team behind the sell-out success of *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* last summer, return to bring Alice Childress' seminal play to London audiences.
- *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White* previews from **31 May** with **press night on 06 June**. The run must end **29 June**. Ticket are on sale now at www.lyric.co.uk

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre today announces the full cast and creative team for the UK premiere of **Alice Childress'** powerful masterpiece **Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White**, directed by Stage Debut Award winner **Monique Touko**, who returns to the Lyric after the smash-hit production of **School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play**.

Depicting an intense interracial romance, set in the deep south of the United States in 1918, this pioneering play examines the brutalising effect of anti-miscegenation laws and offers a stark reflection of Childress' reality as a writer working in the Civil Rights era. This major revival explores themes of race and class, questioning the devastating impact of unjust laws on ordinary human lives.

Starring in the production are **Geraldine Alexander** (*Bridgerton, Sea Creatures*) as Thelma, **Deborah Ayorinde** (*Riches, Harriet*) as Julia, **Lachele Carl** (*A Streetcar Named Desire, The Trick*) as Fanny, **Poppy Gilbert** (*Perfect Addiction, The Catch*) as Annabelle, **Diveen Henry** (*Hang, I Think We Are Alone*) as Lula, **Patrick Martins** (*Small Town Big Story, Falling For the Life of Alex Whelan*) as Nelson, **Bethan Mary-James** (*Meetings, Trouble in Butetown*) as Mattie, **David Walmsley** (*Slow Horses, Blood Wedding*) as Herman and **Owen Whitelaw** (*Get Millie Black, My Son*) as Bell Man.

Children's roles are shared by **Lylianna Eugene** (*Secret Invasion*) as Teeta, **Poppy Graham** (*Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite*) as Princess, **Saskia Holness** (*Champion*) as Teeta, and **Wren Stembridge** (*Leonora In The Morning Light*) as Princess.

Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White has Set & Costume Design by **Paul Wills**, Wigs, Hair & Make-Up Design by **Cynthia De La Rosa**, Lighting Design by **Matt Haskins**, Sound Design by **Elena Peña**, Music by **Shiloh Coke**, Choreography & Movement by **Aline David**, Wigs, Hair & Make-Up Associate Design by **Keisha Paris-Banya**, Casting by **Sophie Parrott CDG**, and Dialect & Voice Coaching by **Joel Trill**.

Monique Touko, Director, said:

"Wedding Band: A Love Hate/Story in Black and White by Alice Childress is my first attempt at an African American classic, told by a writer ahead of her time, who centred Black Women and exposed the highs and lows of the human condition.

I feel a big responsibility with this revival to ensure it is handled with care and speaks to contemporary audiences. This is my second show at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre and the opportunity to return with such a gift of a play feels timely. We have assembled a talented group of actors and a superb returning creative team to create the world of 1918 South Carolina and ensure the piece speaks to now.

This is a show about interracial love, but also class, community and how much the harsh context of living in the US during the First World War in the midst of the Spanish Flu pandemic impacted one's soul. Childress' words are lyrical, witty and intentional – I hope audiences are moved and made to question themselves and how far we have come, if at all.”

Rachel O’Riordan, Artistic Director & CEO of Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, said:

“Alice Childress was a pioneering American playwright whose work examining interracial politics, intolerance and alienation produced some of the greatest plays of our time. Her extraordinary work celebrating the lives of ordinary people is without doubt in the league of great writers such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. She was a brave, bold artist who deserves celebration.

We couldn’t be happier to welcome back Monique Touko in her revival of this incredibly moving drama after her incredible production of the smash hit comedy School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play last summer.

We are thrilled that Lyric audiences will get to experience this powerful and poignant story unfold in our beautiful Frank Matcham auditorium and immerse themselves into the epic love story of Julia and Herman.”

Set in the deep south of the USA in 1918 when interracial marriage was illegal, Julia, a black seamstress, and Herman, a white baker, are defying all odds with their secret love. They face vicious judgement not just by society but also their closest friends and family. As they finally begin to believe their dreams for a future together are possible, Herman becomes a victim of the Spanish flu. Determined to save him, Julia is faced with decisions that will change her life.

Biographies

Alice Childress (Writer), born in 1916 and raised during the Harlem Renaissance under the watchful eye of her beloved maternal grandmother, Childress grew up to become first an actress and then a playwright and novelist. A founding member of the American Negro Theatre, she wrote her first play, *Florence*, in 1949. The script was written in one night on a dare from close friend and actor Sidney Poitier, who had told Alice that he didn’t think a great play could be written overnight. She proved him wrong, and the play was produced off-Broadway in 1950.

In 1952 Childress became the first African-American woman to see her play (*Gold Through The Trees*) professionally produced in New York. In 1955, Childress’ play *Trouble In Mind* was a critical and popular success from the beginning of its run off-Broadway at the Greenwich Mews Theatre. The play immediately drew interest from producers for a Broadway transfer. In an ironic twist echoing the tribulations of the characters in the play itself, the producers wanted changes to the script to make it more palatable to a commercial audience. Childress refused to compromise her artistic vision, and the play didn’t open on Broadway. If it had, at that time Childress would have been the

first African-American woman playwright to have a play on Broadway. *Trouble In Mind* received a well-reviewed off-Broadway revival in 1998 by the Negro Ensemble Company and has since been produced by Yale Repertory Theatre, Centerstage, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage. *Trouble In Mind*, directed by Charles Randolph Wright, produced by the Roundabout Theatre Company, opened on Broadway in November 2021.

Childress is perhaps best known today for *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But A Sandwich*, her 1973 novel about a 13-year-old black boy addicted to heroin, which was subsequently made into a movie in 1978. Other plays written by Childress include *Just A Little Simple* (1950), *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story In Black And White* (1966) and *Gullah* (1984).

Alice Childress died in New York in 1994. Throughout her career, she examined the true meaning of being black, and especially of being black and female. As Childress herself once said, "I concentrate on portraying have-nots in a have society."

Monique Touko (Director) is a London based multidisciplinary artist working in theatre, radio, TV and film. Following the success of critically-acclaimed and sold-out hit *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, Monique returns to the Lyric to direct Alice Childress' seminal play *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White*.

Recipient of 2022 Stage Debut Award for Best Director for *MALINDAZIMU*, her directing training includes Regional Theatre Young Directors Scheme at Royal Exchange Manchester. At the Young Vic, her training has involved the Intro to Directing course led by Sacha Wares, Boris Karloff Trainee Assistant Directors Programme and the Jerwood Assistant Director Scheme. In 2022, Monique was selected to take part in the National Theatre's annual Directing Course. Her assisting credits include *Wishlist* by Katherine Soper, directed by Matthew Xia at Royal Exchange Manchester and Royal Court, HighTides' touring production of *Kanye The First* by Sam Steiner directed by Andrew Twyman, *Yellowman* by Dael Orlandersmith directed by Nancy Medina at Young Vic, China Plate's *On the Exhale* by Martin Zimmerman directed by Christopher Haydon at Traverse Theatre, *Cock* by Mike Bartlett directed by Kate Hewitt at Chichester Festival Theatre, Shakespeare's *Richard II* directed by Lynette Linton and Adjoa Andoh at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* adapted by Duncan Macmillan, directed by Ian Rickson at Duke of York Theatre and Lorca's *Blood Wedding* adapted by Marina Carr, directed by Yael Farber at Young Vic.

Monique's skill set includes Facilitation, Devising, International Work, New Writing, Script Reading, Drama School Shows and Projects, Training Actors and Working with Young People.

She is also part of The Ubunifu Space - A definitive guide to music and culture from the youth of Africa and the diaspora - the Ubunifu way. Monique is project manager for the Space and regular member of the UK reaction team on the

YouTube channel which has a global following of 320K+ subscribers and over 50 million views.

Further biographies for the cast and full creative team are available to download [here](#).

- ENDS -

Press contact at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre:

Burte Tsogbadrakh / 020 8741 6822 (ext. 403) / burte.tsogbadrakh@lyric.co.uk



Notes to Editors

IMAGES and BIOGRAPHIES available to download [here](#).

ABOUT THE LYRIC HAMMERSMITH THEATRE

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre produces bold and relevant world-class theatre from the heart of Hammersmith, the theatre's home for nearly 130 years. Under the leadership of Artistic Director and CEO Rachel O'Riordan and Executive Director Amy Belson, it is committed to being vital to, and representative of, the local community. A major force in London and UK theatre, the Lyric produces adventurous and acclaimed theatrical work that tells the stories that matter.

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre has a national reputation for ground-breaking work to develop and nurture the next generation of talent, providing opportunities for young people to discover the power of creativity and to experience the life changing impact of theatre.

We are the creative heart of Hammersmith, proud of our history and ambitious for our future.

Listings

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre
Lyric Square, King Street, London, W6 0QL
Tickets from £10
Box office: 020 8741 6850
www.lyric.co.uk

X: [@LyricHammer](https://twitter.com/LyricHammer)

Instagram: [/LyricHammersmith](https://www.instagram.com/LyricHammersmith)

Facebook: [/LyricHammersmith](https://www.facebook.com/LyricHammersmith)

Wedding Band:

A Love/Hate Story in Black and White

A Lyric Hammersmith Theatre production

By **Alice Childress**

Directed by **Monique Touko**

Set & Costume Design by **Paul Wills**

Wigs, Hair & Make-Up Design by **Cynthia De La Rosa**

Lighting Design by **Matt Haskins**

Sound Design by **Elena Peña**

Music by **Shiloh Coke**

Choreography & Movement by **Aline David**

Wigs, Hair & Make-Up Associate Designer **Keisha Paris-Banya**

Casting by **Sophie Parrott CDG**

Dialect & Voice Coach **Joel Trill**

Dates: Friday 31 May - Saturday 29 June

Press Night: Thursday 06 June, 7pm

Audio Described Performance: Monday 17 June, 7.30pm

Chilled Environment Performance: Wednesday 19 June, 2.30pm

BSL Performance: Friday 21 June, 7.30pm

Open Captioned Performance: Tuesday 25 June, 7.30pm