



American Repertory Theater

LOEB DRAMA CENTER
64 brattle street,
cambridge, ma 02138

OBERON
2 arrow street
cambridge, ma 02138

617•495•2668 TEL
617•495•1705 FAX
617•547•8300 TICKETS

americanrepertorytheater.org

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Contact: Rebecca Curtiss 617.872.8254 | rebecca_curtiss@harvard.edu

AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER TO WELCOME AUDIENCES BACK TO THE LOEB DRAMA CENTER SEPTEMBER 25 FOR “AYODELE CASEL: CHASING MAGIC”

TICKETS NOW ON SALE FOR CELEBRATION OF JOY OF CONNECTION EXPRESSED THROUGH TAP DANCE AND MUSIC

Company of Artists Now Announced | [Production Photos Available](#)

Cambridge, MA—American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) at Harvard University announced today the creative team and company of artists for the live premiere of **Ayodele Casel: Chasing Magic**. Tickets are on sale for *The New York Times* Critic’s Pick featuring Casel and an ensemble of dancers and musicians and directed by Torya Beard.

Chasing Magic will play at the Loeb Drama Center in Harvard Square September 25 - October 9, 2021. Ticketing information is below.



“A tap dancer and choreographer of extraordinary depth” (*The New York Times*), trailblazing tap dancer Ayodele Casel captures the spark of connection and creation in **Chasing Magic**, performed live on stage for the first time since its virtual premiere in spring 2021. “A triumph” (*The New Yorker*) exploring the magic of tap dance and everyday life, this joyous production celebrates gratitude, friendship, trust, legacy, culture, ancestors, and collaboration.

“Astonishing! Casel’s joyful and generous spirit is as vivid as ever. The theater has never looked so fresh, so full of promise.” - *The New York Times* Critic’s Pick

“★★★★★. The magic is real.” - *DanceTabs*

“My mission is always the same, and that is for people to feel the love that I have,” says Casel. “I want to invite people to feel what I feel, and to appreciate it and to recognize it in themselves. If you see joy in me, it’s because you have that in your life or you want that in your life. That’s the magic that I’m chasing, that I think we’re all chasing. We have it in us, and it’s worthy of pursuit. It’s worthy of acknowledgement. It’s worthy of our attention. That our show will be the first in that space since the pandemic closed A.R.T.

is so special to me. I know I'm going to feel really grateful to be in a theater with folks, and I hope the audience feels the same exact way."

Casel will be joined on stage by the dancers who performed in the virtual premiere:

- **Amanda Castro** (*West Side Story* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Atlanta Opera, and The Glimmerglass Festival; 2016 champion of "Run the Night" at New York's Highline Ballroom; *In the Heights* at Geva Theater)
- **Naomi Funaki** (Chicago's Rhythm World festival; Dorrance Dance Second Company; Caleb Teicher & Company; Music From The Sole)
- **John Manzari** (Ovation and Helen Hayes Award nominations; *Maurice Hines: Tappin' Thru Life* Off-Broadway at New World Stages; *The Wiz Is 40: A Celebration In Dance and Music* in Central Park; and *Duke Ellington's Sophisticated Ladies* at Lincoln Theater)
- **Anthony Morigerato** (*So You Think You Can Dance*, Emmy Award nominee; executive producer and artistic director for AM Dance Productions; Michael Minery's *Tapaholics*; Stacey Tookey's *Still Motion*)
- **Kurt Csolak** - dancer swing (NBC's *World of Dance*; Joffrey School Miami Tap Intensive; International Tour of Tap Dogs; Dorrance Dance; Caleb Teicher & Co.)

Ayodele Casel: *Chasing Magic* features live musical performances from:

- Vocalist **Crystal Monee Hall** (*Rent* and *For the Girls* on Broadway; *Saturday Night Live*; *If You Breathe* EP called "riveting" by *Billboard*)
- Percussionist **Senfu Stoney** (*Witness Uganda* at A.R.T.; performances with Leslie Odom, Jr.)

And at select performances:

- Pianist **Arturo O'Farrill** (winner of 2016 Grammy and Latin Grammy Awards; Founder of the Afro Latin Jazz Alliance; leader of Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra and Arturo O'Farrill Sextet; *Virtual Birdland* named top Quarantine Concert by *The New York Times*)
- Pianist **Anibal Cruz** (recent Berklee College of Music graduate)

Chasing Magic will be performed on the set of ***Macbeth In Stride***, designed by Dan Soule (*Drunk Shakespeare* Off-Broadway; *Othello* at Trinity Rep. Lighting design is by Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew (***ExtraOrdinary*** at A.R.T.; *Gloria: A Life* Off-Broadway), and sound design is by Alex Giorgetti (Sound Supervisor and Recording, Mixing, Mastering Engineer for ***Jack and the Beanstalk*** at A.R.T.). Temma Richardson serves as the wardrobe stylist (clients include Ayodele Casel and international DJ Ryan Vandal).

Ayodele Casel, "a tap dancer and choreographer of extraordinary depth" (*The New York Times*) and one of *The New York Times*' Biggest Breakout Stars of 2019, is currently serving as the artist-in-residence at New York's Little Island and its co-curator of September's Little Island Dance Festival with collaborator Torya Beard. A frequent New York City Center collaborator, she served as choreographer for *Really Rosie* for Encores! Off Center, a soloist for Jeanine Tesori's *Jamboree*, a soloist at *Fall Into Dance*, and was the inaugural artist for their "On the Move" series. Her one-woman show *While I Have the Floor* premiered at the Spoleto Arts Festival to rave reviews. Born in The Bronx and raised in Puerto Rico, Casel began her professional training at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Her origins in theater and love for storytelling and tap dance have significantly contributed to the narrative nature in her work, which is rooted in the expression of identity, culture, language, and communication. She is the recipient of the 2018 Artsmith Transcendence Award for championing arts education and the 2017 Hooper Award. She was the 2019-2020 Frances B. Cashin Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University and was the 2018-2019 dance artist in residence at Harvard. Casel was recently featured on a US Postal Service Forever Stamp and will provide tap choreography for the upcoming Broadway revival of *Funny Girl*.

Torya Beard is a New York-based director, creative consultant/strategist, choreographer, and producer specializing in dance and theater. Her curvy professional path reflects a deep curiosity about belief in the

boundless possibilities at the intersection of curiosity, creativity, artistic expression, and social justice. She studied dance at The University of Michigan and toured as a dancer with Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, David Rousseve/Reality, The Kevin Wynn Collection, Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, Earl Mosley's Diversity of Dance, Deeply Rooted Chicago Dance Theatre, the National Tour of Donald Byrd's *The Harlem Nutcracker*, and was a featured dancer in the film *Idlewild*. She made her Broadway debut in Disney's *The Lion King* (swing, dance captain, understudy Sarabi) and her favorite regional credit is *The Wiz* at Arkansas Repertory Theater. Recent projects include the Broadway remount of **Waitress** with Sara Bareilles and directed by Diane Paulus (assistant director), YoungArts (Regional Multidisciplinary Co-Director, NYC 2019-2021), Classical Theatre of Harlem's *The First Noel* (associate choreographer), and Idina Menzel's 2017 World Tour (Creative Director).

Casel and Beard are co-curating September's Little Island Dance Festival. Together, recent projects include **Chasing Magic** and *Ayodele Casel + Arturo O'Farrill* The Joyce Theater, *Diary of a Tap Dancer V.4* at Royal Family, *Diary of A Tap Dancer V.6* commissioned by New York City Center, *Really Rosie* for City Center Encores!, and *Rooted* for the inaugural five-borough tour of New York City Center's On The Move. They are the Resident Directors of Dance Lab New York's inaugural Tap Project.

American Repertory Theater 2021/22 Programming support is provided by **Harvard University, The Bob and Alison Murchison New Work Development Fund, The Shubert Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Bank of America, Barton & Guestier, Meyer Sound, and JetBlue.**

A.R.T. 2021/22 Programming is dedicated to the memory of Karen Mueller in recognition of her many contributions to the theater.

TICKETING INFORMATION

Tickets from \$25 are available at AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/ChasingMagic. Discounts are available to students and ticket-buyers under age 25, Blue Star families, EBT card holders, seniors, Harvard faculty and staff, and others. More information at AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/PlanYourVisit.

Audience, artist, and staff safety is A.R.T.'s top priority. The theater is taking many steps to protect against COVID-19. Enhanced ventilation, universal masking, vaccination, and testing are critical cornerstones of our multi-layered mitigation efforts that prioritize the safety of our community. Visit A.R.T.'s website for a full list of current ticketing and attendance protocols and procedures: AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/Covid19Protocols.

PERFORMANCE DATES

AYODELE CASEL: CHASING MAGIC						
IN PERSON: SEP 25 - OCT 9, 2021						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						25 SEP 7:30PM
26 4PM	27	28 7:30PM	29 7:30PM	30 7:30PM	1 OCT 7:30PM	2 2PM 7:30PM
3 2PM 7:30PM	4	5 7:30PM	6 12PM 7:30PM	7 7:30PM	8 7:30PM	9 2PM 7:30PM

Press Performance: Wednesday, September 29 at 7:30PM

Press tickets are available upon request. Contact Rebecca_Curtiss@harvard.edu for more information.

Relaxed Performance: Sunday, October 3 at 2PM

Open to all audience members who could benefit from a more relaxed atmosphere at the theater

Morning Matinee Performance: Wednesday, October 6 at 12PM

For booking availability for student or other group tickets contact Groups@amrep.org or call 617.547.8300.

Audio Described Performance: Friday, October 8 at 7:30PM

ABOUT AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER

The American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) at Harvard University is a leading force in the American theater, producing groundbreaking work that is driven by risk-taking and passionate inquiry. A.R.T. was founded in 1980 by Robert Brustein, who served as Artistic Director until 2002, when he was succeeded by Robert Woodruff. Diane Paulus began her tenure as Artistic Director in 2008.

A.R.T. acknowledges that its theaters are situated on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the [Massachusetts Tribe](#).

MISSION

The American Repertory Theater is dedicated to expanding the boundaries of theater, always including the audience as a partner.

VISION

We focus on the research and development of groundbreaking theatrical experiences that catalyze dialogue and transformation. We believe that by engaging our hearts, minds and bodies, theater has the power to heal and imagine collective pathways forward.

We commit to advancing public health in our practice and our programming, recognizing that racism in America is a national public health crisis. Our new home in Allston will be a breathable and healthy building envisioned as a town hall for the twenty-first century. Inspired by the model of a teaching hospital, the building will be a vibrant center for research, experiential pedagogy, and performance.

We build community with our audiences, artists, students, staff, and neighbors across Greater Boston, embracing theater's power to cultivate the full breadth and beauty of our shared humanity. We affirm and celebrate a multitude of perspectives and experiences that reflect the diversity of our country and world. We are dedicated to making a welcoming and accessible space for people of any identity, background, or ability.

VALUES

We hold the institution and each other responsible and accountable for living our shared values. There is no hierarchy to these values; they are all equally important and interrelated. We acknowledge that as an institution we must devote time to implementing and sustaining these values:

We center anti-racism

Habituate anti-racist practices in our policies, structure and culture.

We lead with inquiry

Ask questions in a spirit of brave curiosity in our never-ending journey of learning and growth

We believe in collaboration
Work together with trust and respect to unlock collective creativity

We practice adaptability
Challenge assumptions and create capacity to support “next” practices

We embrace regenerative practice
Promote the health and vitality of our planet, our organization, and each other

HONORS & AWARDS

Throughout its history, A.R.T. has been honored with many distinguished awards including the Tony Award for Best New Play for ***All the Way*** (2014); consecutive Tony Awards for Best Revival of a Musical for ***Pippin*** (2013) and ***The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess*** (2012), both of which Paulus directed, and sixteen other Tony Awards since 2012; a Pulitzer Prize; a Jujamcyn Prize for outstanding contribution to the development of creative talent; the Regional Theater Tony Award; and more than 100 Elliot Norton and IRNE Awards. Additional Broadway productions include ***SIX***; ***Jagged Little Pill***; ***Waitress***; ***Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812***; and ***Finding Neverland***. Since their premieres in Cambridge, A.R.T. productions have also [gone on](#) to reach audiences Off-Broadway, on US National Tour, and at partner theaters across the country, as well as in London’s West End, Tokyo, and Sydney. Under Paulus’s leadership, A.R.T.’s club theater, OBERON, has been recognized annually as a top performance venue in the Boston area, and has attracted national attention for its innovative programming and business models.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

As the professional theater on the campus of Harvard University, A.R.T. is committed to playing a central role in the cognitive life of the University, catalyzing discourse, interdisciplinary collaboration, and creative exchange among a wide range of academic departments, institutions, students, and faculty members. A.R.T. plays a central role in Harvard’s undergraduate Theater, Dance & Media concentration, teaching courses in directing, dramatic literature, acting, voice, design, and dramaturgy. A.R.T. staff also mentor students in the Harvard Radcliffe Dramatic Club working at the Loeb Drama Center and OBERON.

A.R.T. is also engaged in a number of multi-year initiatives with partners at Harvard that explore some of the most pressing issues of our day. Current work includes collaborations with the Harvard University Center for the Environment (to commission and develop a series of new works that address climate change and the environment), the Healthy Buildings Program at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (to develop a [Roadmap for Recovery and Resilience for Theater](#)), and the Initiative for Racial Equity at Harvard Business School (to pilot the Program in Arts and Culture Organization Management).

ENGAGEMENT

Dedicated to making great theater accessible, A.R.T. actively engages community members and local students annually in project-based partnerships, workshops, conversations with artists, and other enrichment activities both at the theater and across the Greater Boston area.

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