

DONNA-MICHELLE ST. BERNARD'S

3 FINGERS BACK

CO-DIRECTED BY COLE ALVIS & YVETTE NOLAN



A Co-Production by Tarragon Theatre
and lemonTree Creations.

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CREATIONS

TARRAGON THEATRE
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Extraspace

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Please Note: icons highlighted in yellow may be of particular interest to educators.

About the Playwright



DONNA-MICHELLE ST. BERNARD, aka Belladonna the Blest, is an emcee, playwright, administrator, and agitator. She is a coordinator with the AdHoc Assembly, artistic director of New Harlem Productions, and former General Manager of Native Earth Performing Arts. Her work has been recognized with nominations for the Governor General's Award, Siminovitch Prize, KM Hunter Award, Herman Voaden Award, Enbridge PlayRites Award, & Dora Mavor Moore Award. She is co-editor with Yvette Nolan of the Playwrights Canada Press anthology Refractions: Solo and the upcoming *Indian Act*. DM is currently the emcee-in-residence at Theatre Passe Muraille and playwright in residence at lemonTree Creations.

Creative Team

Cole Alvis - Co-Director

Yvette Nolan - Co-Director

Aria Evans - Associate Director

César El Hayeck - Set Designer

Des'ree Gray - Costume Designer

Michelle Ramsay - Lighting Designer

Janice Jo Lee - Composer & Sound Designer

Katie Fitz-Gerald - Stage Manager

Kayleigh Mundy - Apprentice Stage Manager

About the Play

Synopsis

Where stakes are high and kindness is in short supply.

3 Fingers Back is a double bill with a panoramic view of how we choose to treat each other: the captive, their captors and those who bear witness.

When we run out of options, we find out who we really are. In *Give It Up*, two women strategize to survive interrogation, and the cost of freedom. In *The Smell of Horses*, three soldiers plot to extract information through their humanity and the confines of duty.

From celebrated artist Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, this double bill of plays from her *54ology* occupies different vantages on the same world.

Playwright's Note

This pairing of plays bring two different stories into one world.

It is rife with deceptive binaries. Hunter/prey.
Innocence/guilt. Friend/foe. Win/lose. Here/there.
You/me.

I wrote this. Because I am called to witness that which might go unseen. It is not always clear whether the door is closed to keep us out, or to preserve our plausible deniability. Are we straining at the keyhole, or gratefully turning away from what might be happening over there/over here?

By going inside the Cariguna Outpost, Three Fingers Back fails to convey the day to day existence of Angolans, of Guineans. We will not show you the vibrant life of those communities, though we know that they are there, just beyond the gate. We could choose to look.

Searchthelandfill.

Search the landfill.

Search. The. Landfill.

-DM

Notes on Movement from Associate Director Aria Evans

All of the movement lives within a contemporary context. The movement has been built through actioning text in the script as well as using storytelling prompts and from there built collaboratively from the different actors' relationships to dance that I have finessed. I have also tried to relate gestures across actors and between acts to build a cohesive world. Some of the actors have a background in contemporary dance, some have practised street styles and others grew up doing various styles of African dance, these have all been embedded into the movement vocabulary. Additionally there is a movement dramaturgy for the moments of violence where we didn't want to portray actors realistically enacting violence on one another so all of those moments happen in separation using momentum. The moments of intimacy however do engage touch to contrast the violence. I would also say that the way we use the [set] lives and exists within a physical language.

For the ritual dance that Saad learns from a library I asked the actor what ritual represents to him and we built movements that relate to the meaning the script offers: "I am strong, I can protect you. Don't be afraid." Those gestures also appear in other places to connect that dance to other aspects of the character.



 [Click here](#)

Bonus!

Kissidugu School in Guinea

Check out the Dance Library mentioned by Saad.

Angolian Civil War & Its Girl Soldiers

1

A Brief History of the Angolan Civil War



From *African Biographics* in 10 minutes.



From *South African History Online*

2

Thirty Years After Cuito Cuanavale

A photo series of the contemporary sites of this decisive battle.



3

Breaking the Silence: The Voices of Girls Forcibly Involved in Armed Conflict in Angola
Based on in-depth interviews, this study examines the roles of women and girls in Angola's civil war.



4

From Military Peace to Social Justice?
The Angolan peace process.



5

Child Soldiers in Africa

Scholar Alcinda Honwana draws on her experience with children of Angola and Mozambique.



Corruption & Coups in Guinea-Conakry



1

The Historical Roots of Guinea's Latest Coup
French colonialism, exploitation by international mining companies, and Western counterterrorism initiatives have played critical roles.

2

Military Coup in Guinea and the Arrest of President Alpha Condé

Professor Mohamed Saliou Camara discusses the recent coup and its historical context since Guinea's 1958 independence.



3



Conakry Trial: Torture and Arbitrary Detention in Military Camps
Victims speak out at trial.

4

Guinea's Court Charges Governor Over Torture of Civilians

Human rights advocates are hailing the move as a significant step in Guinea's long fight against impunity.



5

Guinea Shaken By Wave Of Rapes During Crackdown

Guineans are struggling to deal with the trauma of a deadly military crackdown on a pro-democracy rally.



Toxic Masculinity and Control

1



The Influence You Have

Hidden Brain explores a phenomenon called “egocentric bias” and how it can lead us astray.



Check out an in-depth debunking of The Stanford Prison Experiment.

2

Hazing



Soldier Suicide Reveals Hazing & Harassment



Why Frat Boys Like Hazing If They Live Through It

3

It Took Going To Prison To Recognize My Toxic Masculinity

A personal story from an incarcerated activist.



4

New Folsom



On Our Watch investigates what happens to two whistleblowers in California’s most dangerous prison.

5

Further Reading



Manly States: Masculinities, International

Relations, and Gender Politics



Macho Men: How Toxic Masculinity Harms Us All and What To Do About It

Torture

1

An Introduction



5 Reasons Why Torture Does Not Work and Can Never Be Justified



Why Do People Use Torture?
From NPR's *Day to Day*. 4 min.

2

CIA Psychologist's Notes Reveal True Purpose Behind Former President Bush's Torture Program

Hand written notes tell a dramatically different story than that of the government.



For a more personal discussion of imprisonment at Guantanamo Bay check out *The Other Latif*



3

Why Torture Doesn't Work

The neuroscience of interrogation.



Some keys points from the book are discussed in this *NewScientist* article.



4

Torture and the Canadian Military



Recruits Starved and Humiliated as Part of Military Training



Canada's Shameful Legacy of Torture in Afghanistan

Incarceration

1

The Prison Abolition Issue

Award-winning magazine *Briarpatch* asks prisoners "Can you imagine a world without prisons?"



2

Stages of Transformation

Research, rumination, and conversation from creatives exploring abolitionist movements, with contributions from playwright Donna-Michelle St. Bernard and co-director Cole Alvis.



3

Free Them All

A feminist call to abolish the prison system.



Writer, filmmaker, and theatremaker Drew Burnett Gregory, shares her thoughts on "Free Them All" in this *Autostraddle* article.



4

Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project

This webinar series features academics and activists exploring a variety of topics.



5

An Action Plan for Decarceration
From the Canadian Bar Association.



Conversation Starters

How are hierarchies disrupted throughout the play? What is sacrificed to achieve these disruptions?

What (if anything) did you find redeemable about each character?

What might justice look like in this situation?

How would you answer Saad's question: "What do you think does more damage? Poor leadership from a good person, or strong leadership from a bad one?"

Discuss the following quote: "You are definitely going to abuse the power you refuse to acknowledge that you have" *

* from @consent.wizardry

Generative Activities

Identify a moment in the play(s) where a different choice could have been made. Write the scene that would follow if that choice was made differently.

Saad mentions getting a dance from the dance library (pg. 12). What are some ways your community shares resources?

Yol loves a tree so much that Saad can see it. What are some ways that love for others is made visible?
[Go do that.]