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# resurrection

Now playing at Arena Stage at Crystal City

August 29 – October 5, 2008

Written by Daniel Beaty

Directed by Oz Scott

A co-production

with Hartford

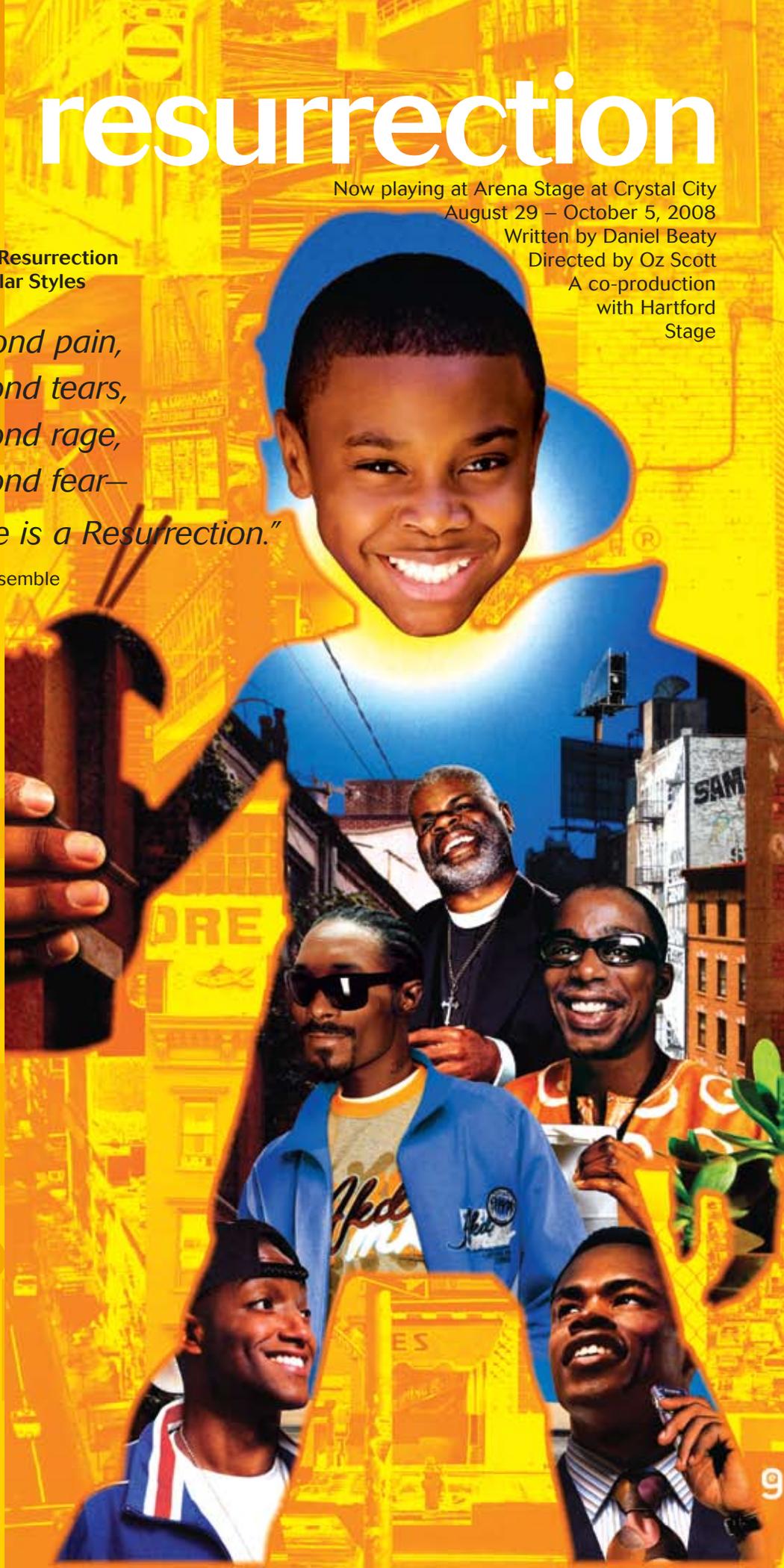
Stage

*“Beyond pain,  
Beyond tears,  
Beyond rage,  
Beyond fear—  
There is a Resurrection.”*

—The Ensemble

## the play

“Resurrection first requires being low down, else there’s nothing to rise above”. In a contemporary, urban setting six African-American men at six different stages in life deal with issues that could cause despair. Life after prison, failing businesses, poor health, difficulties with education, family secrets: these men understand struggle. But “resurrection” means rising from decay and even the dead. The characters in *Resurrection* work to rise above these challenges through their belief in themselves and their faith in each other as a community. Blending music, poetry and dance, *Resurrection* is like a building-sized mural of the struggles and triumphs of African-American men in urban America.



## meet the playwright



"As an artist I am interested in how we transform pain into power. The intent of this work is to remind us all through the lens of the black male experience that no matter the difficulties we may be facing, there is always hope and the possibility to overcome... Resurrection requires being low down, otherwise there's nothing to rise up from."

—Daniel Beaty

Daniel Beaty is an award-winning actor, singer, writer, composer and poet. His critically acclaimed solo play, *Emergence-SEE!* played at Arena Stage in 2007 and received an **Obie Award**. Beaty began writing and giving inspirational speeches in third grade, and by sixth grade he had spoken in many different locations throughout the U.S. at various civic organizations. After receiving a scholarship to a private school, Beaty went on to college at Yale and graduate school at the American Conservatory Theatre.

Both his plays *Emergence-SEE!* and *Resurrection* explore the world through the perspective of black men. They also explore challenging themes with humor, thoughtfulness, and heart, because Beaty believes that laughter helps people to examine issues that might otherwise be too difficult for them to consider. Ultimately, Beaty wants to leave his audience with a message of hope.

● **Obie Award** — an annual award for excellence given to off-Broadway plays

# Contemporary Issues in resurrection

*Resurrection* presents issues that have particular resonance in urban African-American life. As you read about them, consider why the playwright has chosen to address these particular issues and how the characters and society can rise above them.

**a!** **Activity!** Find a magazine or newspaper article about one of the issues in *Resurrection* and present it to your class. Discuss how should individuals, communities and lawmakers respond to these issues.

## The Future—10



**Eric** — The 10-year-old son of Mr. Rogers, Eric works to perfect the recipe for his Special Herbal Iced Tea, which his father allows him to sell in his struggling health food store.

"People in the neighborhood buy it because I'm a kid—but I'm on a secret mission. Every time they drink it, I'm watching to see if it works..."

As the youngest character in the play, Eric has the most to learn, but he also has the most time to grow. Eric is both intelligent and determined—attributes that will serve him well as he navigates the complicated road of life. If Eric represents the future, what future lies in store for urban, African-American men? What obstacles might he face?

## First-Generation College Students—20



**Twon** — A 20-year-old man who struggled in high school, Twon dreams of being the first person in his family to go to college.

"If it wasn't for Isaac and my moms, I would've gotten lost in the system."

According to *Education Statistics Quarterly*, students like Twon, whose parents did not attend college, are more likely to be academically unprepared for college, to have less knowledge about how to apply for college and financial aid assistance, and to have more trouble adjusting to college, compared to students whose parents are college-educated. Twon has a mentor, Isaac, and this relationship can make all the difference. Having a mentor or a support group can help first generation students prepare for college, providing important information and support.

**a!** **Activity!** **When have you been a mentor or been mentored by someone? How did the experience help you? What are the challenges associated with being a mentor? Write a story that is fictionalized or from your own life about being a mentor, or about a situation in which a mentor could have a meaningful impact on your life.**

## In and Out of Prison—30



**Dre** — Though he has spent time in prison, this 30-year-old is trying to turn his life around by working with the prison ministry of his mentor, Bishop.

"Thirty years old, been headed the wrong way most of my life - my vision is blurry, ain't got no business givin' directions. But Bishop, he got a way with words..."

According to Human Rights Watch, although African Americans account for only 12 percent of the U.S. population, 44 percent of all prisoners in the United States are black. The Urban League's 2007 Report, *Portrait of the Black Male*, states that one in three black boys born in 2010 will spend time in prison. Communities, special interest groups and government officials are trying to address these troubling statistics. Dre is intent on turning his life around after serving his prison sentence. However, many people struggle to get jobs or stay out of prison when they are back on "the outside."

## Homophobia and The Closet—40



**Isaac** — This 40-year-old feels trapped by his career as a record executive and by a secret that he has been carrying his entire life.

"So I live my life in disguise, a grown man acting like a scared little boy, afraid to disappoint his father."

Isaac deals with the fear of being perceived by others—especially his father—as gay. Isaac is "closeted" or "in the closet" because, while he acknowledges that he is attracted to men, he keeps this a secret from everyone important in his life. He even pursues a relationship with a woman so others won't know he's gay. He fears others' homophobia. Homophobia is an intense, irrational fear of lesbians and gay men, and the prejudice that is fostered by that fear. Isaac is afraid to tell the truth about his sexuality because he doesn't believe that his father, Bishop, or Twon, his mentee, can accept his secret. This fear of others' homophobic reactions has led many gay people, like Isaac, to stay in the closet.

## Small Business Struggles—50



**Mr. Rogers** — The father of Eric, Mr. Rogers struggles to keep his health food store open. He opened it to promote an alternative to the popular, but unhealthy, food eaten in his neighborhood.

"I've had this business a little over 10 years...and it's been a constant fight to keep it open; a health food store in the hood is like a fried chicken joint in a **vegan** compound—all you see in the ghetto is fried food, fast food, & liquor..."

People in Mr. Rogers' neighborhood are not interested in buying health food products, which puts his business—and therefore his family—under great financial strain. He faces a common dilemma of small business owners during hard times: the debate between living the dream of owning his own business and knowing when to close up shop. How might being a father and a man affect his feelings and decision?

**vegan:** A vegetarian who eliminates all animal products (including things like egg and cheese) from his or her diet.

## Diabetes and Overeating—60



**Bishop**—The leader of a congregation of thousands, Bishop struggles to keep his weight under control.

"When people reminisce about me when I die, I don't want them seeing a fat man—I want them to say he was a great man of God."

The idea of a person being "addicted to Ho-Ho's," as Bishop claims to be, might sound funny, but obesity is a serious and growing problem in the U.S. Obesity (being extremely overweight) can lead to high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and clinical depression.

Bishop has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease. Type 2 diabetes means the body cannot properly process sugars. Although there is no cure for diabetes, diabetics can live a normal life with the proper diet, exercise and monitoring.

**a!** **Activity!** **What is something that you struggle with, perhaps on an ongoing basis? Discuss a time you had to overcome a challenge. What obstacles did you overcome? How did you overcome them? What role did others play in your success?**

# Powerful Stories, Particular Styles

**D**aniel Beaty's *Resurrection* can be seen as a contemporary, male response to Ntozake Shange's 1975 OBIE Award-winning play *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf*. In *For Colored Girls*, different women share their experiences with difficult issues such as rape, abortion, love and abandonment through poetic monologues. Shange describes her play as a "choreopoem"—choreography and poetry, in which stories are told in a non-linear fashion through movement and poetic language. *Resurrection* blends music, poetry and dance to tell its characters' stories. The director of *Resurrection*, Oz Scott, originally directed *For Colored Girls*... on Broadway.



**a!** **Activity:** Some plays are more like collages than stories with a beginning, middle and end. Choose an important issue or part of your life and create a collage that shows its story. Use images, words, poetry and even sound to convey the event.

## Understanding HIV/AIDS

In *Resurrection*, Dre contracts HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, while in prison. HIV attacks and destroys cells that are part of the body's immune system, the defense system that fights diseases. As HIV destroys the cells, people with the virus begin to get serious infections as their immune system becomes deficient. Although the medical community has made significant progress over the years in understanding and treating HIV and AIDS, there is still no cure—AIDS is eventually fatal.

Dre transmits HIV to his girlfriend Kim when he gets out of prison. Unaware of her HIV status, Kim becomes pregnant. If a woman is HIV positive and the doctors know about her HIV status, they can usually prevent the spread of the virus from mother to baby.

## HIV Transmission & Prevention

HIV is transmitted through body fluids such as blood, semen, and vaginal fluids and is spread through high-risk behaviors such as having sex without a condom. It can also be spread through sharing needles used to inject drugs, which is how Dre got the virus in prison. HIV can be prevented by abstaining from sex, always using a condom during sex, never sharing needles, and avoiding the bodily fluids through which HIV is transmitted.

## Helpful Hints for Theater Audiences

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience. To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

Arrive at least 30 minutes early.

Visit the restroom before the show starts.

Before the show begins, turn off your cell phone, watch alarms, pagers, and other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, shut it off immediately.

Save food and drinks for the lobby. There is no eating or drinking inside the theater.

Walk to and from your seat - no running in the theater!

Do not talk, whisper, sing, or hum.

Keep your feet on the floor, not on the seat in front of you.

Avoid getting up during a show because it distracts your neighbors and the performers. If you must leave, wait for a scene change, then exit quietly and quickly.

Performers appreciate enthusiastic applause rather than whistling or shouting.

Cameras and videotape are prohibited because they are distracting to the performers.

**Enjoy the show!**



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Visit [www.arenastage.org](http://www.arenastage.org) for more information on Arena Stage productions and educational opportunities.

## Additional Resources

### Books/Plays:

*For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* by Ntozake Shange  
*Emergence-SEE!* by Daniel Beaty  
*Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

### On the Web:

New York Online Access to Health:  
[www.noah-health.org/en/infectious/aids/concerns/teens.html](http://www.noah-health.org/en/infectious/aids/concerns/teens.html)  
First-Generation College Students:  
A Literature Review: [www.tgslc.org/pdf/first generation.pdf](http://www.tgslc.org/pdf/first%20generation.pdf)  
American Diabetes Association: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

### Videos:

*For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*