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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Horizon Theatre Company Presents the World Premiere of

## ***Square Blues***

*A play about love and revolution*

by Shay Youngblood

**ATLANTA (JULY 2022) – Love and revolution are at the center of the world premiere of acclaimed Shay Youngblood’s play, *Square Blues*, about three generations of a southern Black family who share a passion for activism, art, and following your heart.** But they don’t always agree on the methods, especially when their protests threaten their freedom and safety. *Square Blues* makes its premiere on the Horizon stage from July 22 – August 21 (Press Opening July 29). In this **expansive, timely, and magical comedy-drama**, the Blue family faces a crossroads. Only together can they find the courage to stand up for their beliefs as they redefine what makes a family and what holds it together. Horizon is located in Little Five Points/Inman Park (1083 Austin Avenue N.E., Atlanta, GA 30307, at the corner of Euclid and Austin Avenues). Free parking. Performances are Wed through Fri at 8 pm, Saturdays at 3 and 8 pm, Sundays at 5 pm. Tickets and information are available at [www.horizontheatre.com](http://www.horizontheatre.com) or 404-584-7450.

Directed by Thomas W. Jones II (Horizon Artistic Associate, *Blackberry Daze*, *Da Kink in My Hair*, *Sweet Water Taste*), *Square Blues* has “...a virtue of gut, urgency, and necessity...unadorned honesty...” (Edward Albee, Judge for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Playwrights Award). Shay’s first play *Shakin’ the Mess Outta Misery* premiered at Horizon in 1988 and has been seen all over the world in the past three decades. This production features a cast of Atlanta-based professional actors and designers from theatre and TV, including multi-award-winning resident set designers Moriah and Isabel Curley-Clay.

**Welcome to the Fifth Avenue Happy Café, an Atlanta kosher soul food restaurant and meeting place for civil rights activists in the 60s.** It’s now the early 90s and the Blue family, matriarch **Odessa**, son **Square** and granddaughter **Karma** are still serving up fried catfish and lemon pound cake and working for social change. Square (played by Jay Jones) has been collecting names on petitions demanding financial reparations and a public apology for slavery for decades. But now he’s holding a large (and illegal) tax refund received by claiming a Black Reparations tax credit. His mother Odessa demands he pay it back before he is arrested. So does his long-time girlfriend and fellow activist **Miss Tuesday**. Odessa doesn’t want to risk losing the cafe, which she was given by her great love, Blue’s father, a white Jewish Russian. They were rebels too, an interracial couple deeply in love in the 40s and 50s when intermarriage was illegal. Odessa’s granddaughter Karma (played by Chantal Maurice) continues the activist tradition today in a new form, creating provocative public performance art with spray paint and nude models to bring attention to homelessness, LGTQ rights and AIDS/HIV. She’s in love with partner-in-crime **Lola** (Patty De La Garza), a Latinx poet who is coaxing her to move away to in California. But when Karma ends up in jail for her “art actions” and Blue risks prison with his “black payback”, the three generations of the family must decide how to move forward – together or on different paths — and how much to risk in their quest for change.

**“We are thrilled to be premiering Shay’s play about passionate activists from three generations at this time of upheaval and change in our world.** With the great racial reckoning over the past two years, *Square Blues* is current and urgent,” comments Horizon Co-Artistic/Producing Director Lisa Adler. “The play looks at how activism changes as we age and the need for each generation’s work and perspective. What can we learn from the past? What needs to change to make progress? What is the future of activism? How can different generations work together to make progress? We hope that the play sparks discussion about how we can work together across generational divides to find common ground that unites and amplifies our effort for change.”

**Horizon has a long history of collaboration with Shay Youngblood, having produced the World Premiere of her first play, *Shakin’ the Mess Outta Misery*, in 1988.** It went onto many productions across the country including Ensemble Theatre of Houston, Pegasus in Chicago, Vital in NYC and was reprised at Horizon in 2010 (directed by *Square Blues* director Tom Jones), winning Atlanta’s Suzi Award for Best Production of a Play. Horizon also produced her *Talking Bones* and *Amazing Grace*, and workshopped many of her plays, including *Square Blues*. A fiction writer who turned her *Big Mama Stories* into her first play, she subsequently received her MFA in playwriting from Brown under Paula Vogel. She has had a long career as novelist (*Black Girl in Paris*; *Soul Kiss*), teacher, playwright, and visual artist, living all over the world. She was born and raised in Columbus, GA, went to Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University), and recently returned to live in Atlanta, GA. Shay is currently one of our Black Women Speak writers, commissioned to write a new work about Black Southern women.

**“With *Square Blues*, I am looking at the very different strategies of three generations in a family confronting racism, oppression, injustice, and how they each stood up for their beliefs.”** Shay wrote of the play recently. “Naked protesters, a wall mural created during the course of the play, interracial, intergenerational, racism, classism, sexism, homophobia and redefining what makes a family were all ingredients that made this my most topical play. Reparations for Black, Brown, and Indigenous people is a big part of the conversation in the play. I also wanted to show sensuality between these Black characters and how they dealt with the reality of their lives with a sense of humor and grace.”

“I love *Square Blues*’ vivid, passionate characters, the magic realism, the musicality of the language, the high theatricality of performance art protests on stage and creating a mural of famous Black leaders every night, the deep love between grandmother, father and daughter, and how different generations approach the call for change,” continues Lisa Adler. **“It’s thrilling to see Shay bring the craft she has learned as a writer over the last three decades to this deep, funny, and moving work.”**

Horizon Theatre Company’s performances of *Square Blues* start July 22, 2022 (Press Opening July 29, 2022) and run until August 21, 2022 (possible extension through August 28) at Horizon in Little Five Points/Inman Park (1083 Austin Avenue N.E., Atlanta, GA 30307, at the corner of Euclid and Austin Avenues). Free parking. Performances are Wed through Fri at 8 pm, Saturdays at 3 and 8 pm, Sundays at 5 pm. Tickets start at \$30 for weekdays and \$35 for weekends. (\$20 for full-time students under 25 with a valid student ID and \$3 off full-price tickets for Seniors). *Prices are subject to change and will rise as performances fill up.*

**For tickets and information, visit [www.horizontheatre.com](http://www.horizontheatre.com) or call 404-584-7450.**

### **CREATIVE TEAM**

Playwright	Shay Youngblood
Director	Thomas W. Jones II
Co-Artistic Director	Lisa Adler
Set Designers	Isabel and Moriah Curley-Clay
Costume Designer	Dr. L. Nyrobi Moss
Lighting Designer	Mary Parker
Sound Designer	Johnathon Taylor (Multiband Studio)
Projection Designer	Robbie Hayes

Props Master                Dionna Davis  
Technical Director        Jeff Adler  
Asst. Technical Director Noah Auten

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**Horizon Theatre Company** connects people, inspires hope, and promotes positive change through the stories of our times for our diverse audiences. Now in our 38<sup>th</sup> season, we produce professional area and world premieres of smart, funny, and provocative contemporary plays. We also develop the next generation of diverse artists and audiences for theatre.

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For more information about Horizon Theatre Company, call 404.584.7450, email [boxoffice@horizontheatre.com](mailto:boxoffice@horizontheatre.com), or visit [horizontheatre.com](http://horizontheatre.com).