

NEW PLAYS NEW WAYS

UMBC DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

Shakespeare in Harlem

A New Play Reading

By Langston Hughes

Adapted and Directed by Gerrad Alex Taylor

Shakespeare in Harlem is a rarely performed collection of monologue poems by Langston Hughes. It returns to the themes and vibrant style that defined his poetry in the 1920s, exploring the rhythms of jazz, the blues, Black love, and the daily struggles and joys of life in Harlem. The poems capture the spirit of a Harlem street corner and the rich dialect of its people, offering an evocative "day-in-the-life" portrait of the neighborhood. Director Gerrad Alex Taylor's adaptation brings this piece to life as a dynamic full-length play, weaving Hughes' poems with scenes inspired by his writings and integrating music and dance to immerse audiences in the exuberant world Hughes celebrated.

Shakespeare in Harlem will premiere in association with [Chesapeake Shakespeare Company](#) at UMBC Theatre in Fall 2025 and at Chesapeake Shakespeare Company in Winter 2026. This ambitious project advances UMBC Theatre's mission to uplift the work of Black and African American theatre-makers and strengthen our connection with the Baltimore theatre community. In addition to fostering a strong departmental presence in Baltimore's theatre scene, our partnership with Chesapeake Shakespeare Company will serve as a model of synergy between university, community, and professional theatre.

To follow the development of this project or to inquire further about anything you experienced during today's reading, please reach out to Gerrad at gtaylor@umbc.edu. We welcome any and all feedback about the show as we enter the final leg of its development before public performance.

Cast

GRIOT - Vicky Graham +

MADAM K - Franchesca Parker

SIMPLE - Terrance Fleming *^

COUSIN MINNIE - Jazmine McDonald

LEONARD - LaTrelle Makle

LULU - Amani Abdullah

BRUCE - Ifechukwu "Ife" Alachebe

ALEX - Christian Price-Burnett

STAGE DIRECTIONS - Nia Zagami

Production Assistants: Mady Sims & Nia Zagami

This reading will have no intermission.

Content Transparency: The play may contain racial and gender-based epithets of the time period and place.

*Actors' Equity Association Member ^Chesapeake Shakespeare Company Member
+Black Classical Acting Ensemble at CSC Member