

BLACK ON STAGE BIOS

Soprano Ruth Acheampong hails from Toronto. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Guelph under the tutelage of tenor Glyn Evans. During her time in Guelph, she performed the roles of Frasquita and April in excerpts from Bizet's *Carmen* and Sondheim's *Company*, respectively.

In 2019, Ruth took part in a table read for a new chamber opera by Elora composer, Peter Skoggard and librettist, Jerry Prager called *Covenant Chains: A New Canadian Chamber Opera*.

This past season, Ruth sang the role of Jeannette in the Canadian premiere of Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges', "*L'amant anonyme*." She was also part of the workshop of a new opera called "Vanishing Point" by Parisa Sabet and Nika Khanjani in a collaboration between Opera McGill and Musique 3 femmes. This season Ruth will be singing the role of Dorinda in Opera McGill's production of Handel's "*Orlando*".

Samson Bonkeabantu Brown is a South African-Portuguese T'koronto-based Sangoma, Inyanga & Hoodoo, Ancestral Anthropologist, and Playwright. His primary focus is on spiritual healing, ancestral veneration and anthropology, trans advocacy and the arts. He has been tasked by his Ancestors to shed light on how ancestral veneration can assist with healing the self and living in one's purpose. A multidisciplinary artist, imbonji, author of two published plays (11:11 - A Monodrama in 7D, and 11:11) respectively, and widely known for his presence in the viral Gillette "First Shave" ad, Samson's presence in the arts and media creates visibility for men of trans experience while educating the general public on trans issues.

CJ (he/him) is a 22 year old Haitian-Canadian artist from Algonquin territory also known as Ottawa, Ontario. He just graduated from the Sheridan Music Theatre Program and loves Rap, R&B and gospel music. Listen to CJ's group CZN on all streaming platforms

Germaine Konji (she/they) is a Kenyan-Canadian actor, singer, writer and activist. Her artistry lives where the theatrical, cultural, and political intersect. They're co-founder of The And, Stage Company, a not-for-profit creating opportunities for women and members of the trans community. **Training:** 2020 graduate, Sheridan Music Theatre Performance Program **Awards:** 2020 Musical Stage Company Banks Prize, 2020 Outstanding Contribution to the Canadian Music Theatre Project-Sheridan College, 2019 Highest Achievement in Acting Performance-Sheridan College, **Writing credits:** *After the Reckoning*, Centaur theatre 2020. *The Rising*, 2021 Confederation Centre of the Arts Young Company, *The Lobster Who Cried Person*, Bad Hats Theatre 2021, *The Smearing of Silent Blood*, Stratford Festival- Finally There's Sun

Dr Clem Guracha Marshall is a Canadian educator and writer whose work focuses on race, language, culture, and ancestry.

- Ph.D. (Summa cum laude), European Graduate School, Media & Communications, Saas Fee, Switzerland Dissertation Title: "Transcendent Cheddo: PanAfrikan Ritual Rhythm Reasoning & Rebirth" (2011)
- Faculty – European Graduate School

Dr. Marshall, author of *Talking Cheddo: Liberating Panafrikanism*, makes a point of publicly confessing his love for Black Peoples in open rebuke to ongoing experiences of perennial global hate. Dr. Marshall moves through life as a son of stolen Afrikans born into a history of forced

Caribbean exile on stolen Indigenous land, and he gratefully celebrates his adoption into the familyhood of East Afrika's Oromo Peoples, which he deems a matchless joy. Roots matter most to this uprooted Afrikan, who determined to remain true to a recovering selfhood while growing up in Georgetown, Guyana, studying at the U of T or the Sorbonne, acting on the Paris stage or immersing himself in Motherland culture while living in Senegal.

Dr. Marshall is a bilingual, Afrikan-centred scholar and anti-racism trainer, who, in an earlier Ontario, was contracted to train all leadership and staff at the Ontario Ministry of Education. He based his approach on the principle of equity, a commitment to fairness that transcends written codes. Incorporating experiences gained with diverse learners, he crafted innovative university courses like, "Video in Anti-racist Pedagogy", a prescient fit for populations seeking meaning amidst the tumult of today's social media. True to ancestral traditions, Dr. Marshall puts rhythm, ritual and reasoning, Afrika's cultural medicine bush for global healing, at the centre of his practice. He has also been a lecturer at the European Graduate School and invited to present at the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario, often illustrating his insights with footage from *All Eyes on Africa*, his video inviting the world to love Afrika and discover Afrikan artists through their art.

Through his weekly column in *Share Newspaper* over four years, Dr. Marshall embraced every opportunity to reflect on the intersection of Indigenous and PanAfrikan issues, and in 2012, he found himself bearing witness to a stirring ceremony in which Chief Leo Shetush welcomed Haitians into the Algonquin family. Dr. Marshall was a founding member of several transformative, ovarian organizations including "The Black Education Project" and "The Toronto Anti-apartheid Coalition". He is also the recipient of a community award from "BADC, The Black Action Defense Committee". Reflecting on his own growth, Dr. Marshall gives credit to the chances his community provided to serve and learn, such as being Chair of "The Black Secretariat". He also reflects on his seasoning in Black consciousness in Toronto, Montreal and Halifax, where he edited *Who We Are Is What We See*, a collection of Afrocentric Nova Scotian essays. Inter alia, he coordinated a 3-yr tri-city community-driven project designed to unravel Black enslavement and combat its impact on the mental health of Afrikan Canadian populations. Dr. Marshall examines our world through the lens of a "Cheddo", those Afrikan Ancestors who resolutely distilled answers to life's unknowns by relying on the chemistry of their own creative minds. To dismantle vulnerabilities of caste intensified by anti-Black racism, Dr. Marshall is in constant search for an inventive language of liberation. He encourages us, as Indigenous and Afrikan Peoples, to grapple with tough questions that we often find hard to hear, while never letting go of each other as we keep on searching for answers anchored in granite to pillars of joy, justice and peace.