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Karissa Murrell Myers'
Black Bear Island
April 17 - 27, 2024



A Workshop Production
Written by Karissa Murrell Myers
Co-Directed by Jonathan Shaboo and Dan Washelesky
Co-Produced by Silk Road Cultural Center &
Stage Center Theatre at Northeastern Illinois University

After four and a half years, we're proud to announce our return to live theatre with a workshop production of the riveting new gothic magical-realism thriller, *Black Bear Island*, co-produced with [Stage Center Theatre at Northeastern Illinois University](#).

This will be our first event as the newly rebranded Silk Road Cultural Center. A beautiful way to kick off this exciting new vision!

About *Black Bear Island*

Amitra never believed the myth about her old island hometown. But when Warren, her estranged childhood sweetheart, dies mysteriously and bequeaths her everything he owned, she returns to the island one last time. As the forest begins to engulf the house and the past collides with the present, Amitra is determined to discover the truth about who Warren really was and what actually happened to him.

Performance Schedule

Wednesday, April 17 at 7:30 PM
Thursday, April 18 at 7:30 PM
Friday, April 19 at 7:30 PM
Saturday, April 20 - Private Event
Wednesday, April 24 at 7:30 PM
Thursday, April 25 at 7:30 PM
Friday, April 26 at 7:30 PM
Saturday, April 27 at 3:00 PM

*Live streaming will be available on April 20th and April 27th

Performance Venue

Stage Center Theatre
Building F
Northeastern Illinois University
3701 W Bryn Mawr Ave, Chicago, IL 60625

Purchase Your Tickets Here!

Watch "A Hybrid Collaboration"



An Interview with playwright Karissa Murrell Myers

This interview was conducted by dramaturg Yiwen Wu.



Yiwen: What attracted you to write this story?

Karissa: I started writing this play back in fall 2021, when I went to visit my best friend, who lives in the Pacific Northwest area—she lives in a forest, which is amazing. I was like: “Hey, I’m gonna go work out on your back patio for a little bit.” And she goes: “Okay, well, that’s fine, just be sure to watch out for the bear.” And I looked at her, and I was like, “WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?” “Well, in the forest, there’s a bear, so if you see him, just come inside.” I was sitting on the patio, and it was just this strange experience.

We were in the middle of the forest, and I would hear voices in the woods. Every time I heard something, my heart would just, like, burst, and I felt this very intense fear. I was really intrigued by that feeling, like, warning, warning, there’s something out there.

I was also curious about this deep-seated fear that I almost

couldn't comprehend intellectually. I noticed that the only time I've really felt this way in my life was when I walked around alone in the night, as a woman. It was like the sixth sense that your body and your brain is processing information, and it's really a deep and eerie feeling I have for potential male violence or male-created violence, so I was curious about that, and that's where the story started for me.



A meeting of great minds during our first table read of *Black Bear Island* on February 20 at Northeastern Illinois University.

Yiwen: Your play really delves into grief and anger. What are some of your thoughts on these expressed and unexpressed emotions?

Karissa: I thought that having feelings of any kind is a weakness. Strength equals not allowing people to see how much they hurt you. I think that for Amitra (the lead character of the play), that mirrors my own experience: not having any emotion, whether good, bad, nothing completely, which is not true. As Asian women, we are afforded much less rights when it comes to us expressing our emotions, if it's not something that's automatically positive. Therefore, expressing hurt, frustration, or anger, or rage at the system, at other people, at injustice, all those things are not widely acceptable, because

rage is not seen as feminine.



A model of the scenic design created by NEIU professor Sarah Fabian.

Yiwen: There's something beautiful but mysterious about the black bear being the central image in your play. I'm also curious about the gender aspect you just talked about. Can you expand on that?

Karissa: I can only speak from my personal experience of being a woman. I find it unfair that I'm scared when I'm walking to my apartment, and that my husband, who's a tall white man, does not feel fear. At the same time, I really do believe that everyone, regardless of gender, has the capacity to be a monster or to do monstrous things. I think there is a beast deep inside all of us. It's just whether we allow it to control us or allow it to break free of the chains inside the brain. It's a part of you, and I am curious about what happens when we let that beast out.



NEIU faculty and students raising the roof on the set of *Black Bear Island*.

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