

UMass Department of Theater Presents:

VENUS

Sara Baartman.

Saartjie. "Little Sarah."

Khoekhoe. Coast of Eastern

Cape, borders of Caffraria. Hankey.

BY SUZAN-LORI PARKS

South Africa. Taken. Do I have a choice?

Put on display. "African Dancing Princess."

Europe. London. England. Paris. France. Whirl-

wind Tour. Human exhibition. Freak. Curiosity. Odd-

ity. Missing link. The "Negro" question. Have you ever

been indecent? Nasty? Indecent. To hide yr shame is evil.

DIRECTED BY JUDYIE AL-BILALI

I show mine. Anatomical Columbus. Baron Cuvier. Figure

drawings. Dissection. Medical autopsy. Presenting: "The Venus

Hottentot." Do I have a choice? Black Venus. Tail end of r tale.

Steatopygia. Booty. Heinie. Toosh. Fanny. Derriere. Yam. Rump.

Moneymaker. Keester. Spanker. Cheeks. Past tense. Ba-dunk-a-

dunk-dunk. Buns (Hot cross). Hindquarters. LedgeBUTT. Bustle.

Posterior. *Gluteus maximus*. Blackside. Rear end. Behind. M & M

(Main Muscle). An ass to write home about. Hotsey-totsey.

Au naturel. Hubba-hubba-hubba. Hot for your tot-tot.

Hottentot-amour. Chockluts. Love me? *Petits Cœurs*.

"Little Hearts." *Enfant de Bruxelles*. Do I look like one

of these chocolate infants from Brussels? *Capezzeoli*

di Venere. "The nipples of Venus." Love Deathd

love and Death deathd love. Loves corpse on

display. Please visit. Kiss me. Kiss me. *Kiss*.

Presented in The Curtain Theater

SPRING 2013

Thurs 3/28 8 PM

*Fri 3/29 8 PM

Sat 3/30 2 PM

Tues 4/2 8 PM

Wed 4/3 8 PM

Thurs 4/4 8 PM

Fri 4/5 8 PM

Sat 4/6 2 PM & 8 PM

***POST-SHOW TALKBACK**

CAST

The Girl/Venus
The Man/Baron Docteur
The Man's Brother/ Grade School Chum
The Mother-Showman
The Negro Resurrectionist
The Chorus of the Human Wonders,
The Spectators, the Court and the Anatomists

Corrina Parham
Michael Schurter
Alex Dunn
Erin Wholley
Fatima Cadet-Diaby
Toney Brown
Conor Dennin
Ben Finn
Becca Griffing
Christina Mailer
Annelise Nielsen
Michael Seavey
Shailee Shah

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director
Dramaturg
Scenic Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Sound Designer
Props Master
Stage Manager
Assistant Director
Assistant Dramaturg
Assistant Scenic Designer
Assistant Stage Manager

Judyie Al-Bilali
Adewunmi Oke
Miguel Romero
Evan Laux
Evan Kerr
Amy Altadonna
Lila West
Axel Cruz
Jared Culverhouse
Katie Prendella
Stacie St. Louis
Peter Vaiknoras

PRODUCTION STAFF & ADVISORS

Production Manager
Assistant Production Manager
Technical Director
Costume Shop Manager
Lighting Supervisor
Directing Advisor
Dramaturgy Advisor
Costume Advisor
Lighting Advisor
Stage Management Advisor

Julie Fife
Glenn Proud
Michael Cottom
Kristin Jensen
Michael Dubin
Gilbert McCauley
Megan Lewis
June Gaeke
Margo Caddell
Julie Fife

IMAGE: "Femme de race Bochesmanne" by Leon de Wailly (France, 19th c.)

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

SCENIC DEPARTMENT

Scenic Construction Director

Brandon Hall

Scene Shop Teaching Assistants

Thom Barry, Patrick Kitzmiller

Scene Shop Staff

Emily Berge, Jessica Braccia, Devon

Drohan, Anna Engelsman, Katherine

Fontes, Luke Haskell, Ben Katz

Deck Crew

Daniel Kadish, Meghan McNeil,

Jennifer Sylvia

Scenic Construction Crew

Jennifer Chan, Nick Cline, Victoria Clough,

Beth Codey, Alan Couture, Erica Davignon,

Julie DiGiusto, Chris Faria, Alyssa Gallo,

Arielle Herold, Alissa Mesibov, Shaelyn

McGrory, Devyn Yurko

Projection Engineer

Katie Prendella

Projection Operator

Genevieve Shepard

LIGHTING DEPARTMENT

Electrics Shop Graduate Assistants

Michael Blagys, James Horban

Electrics Shop Assistants

Jared Beaulieu, Dan Bersano-Hayes, Axel

Cruz, Dana DeLise, Cassandra Eaton, Evan

Kerr, Annelise Nielsen, Zachary Smith,

Slava Tchoul

Production Master Electrician

Cassandra Eaton

Console Operator

Geehae Moon

Additional Lighting Work

Theater 361

SOUND DEPARTMENT

Sound Engineer

Tyler Rioux

Board Operator

Monica Giordano

Sound Crew

Sound Design I

COSTUME AND MAKE-UP DEPARTMENT

Assistant Costume Shop Manager

Felicia Malachite

Draper

Felicia Malachite

First Hands

Ethan Berube, Evan Laux, Emily Taradash,

Elizabeth Pangburn

Costume Build Crew

Alex Bilodeau, Sean Buenaventura,

Mollie Cook, Colleen Fitzgibbons

Costume Crew Chief

Ellen Birmingham

Costume Run Crew

Victoria Clough, Griffith Lyons,

Nathan Murphy, Jacqueline Tremblay

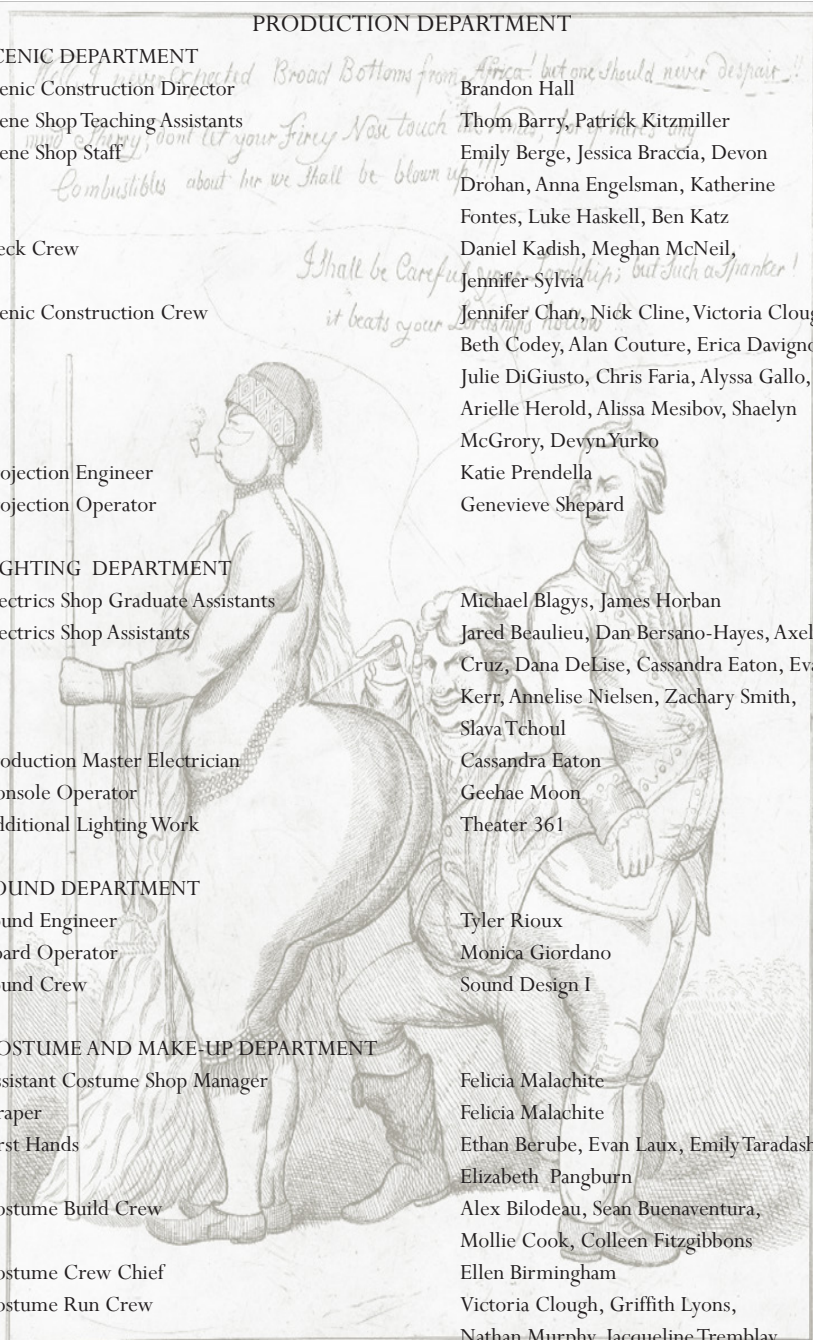
Make-up Crew Chief

Tiahna Harris

Make-up Run Crew

Sophia Lalli, Victoria Montagna

A PAIR OF BROAD BOTTOMS



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Public Relations Assistants

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Poster Template

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Box Office Manager

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Administrative Assistant

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General Manager

Anna-Maria Goossens

Julia Lisa, Alissa Mesibov, Sam Warton

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Rob Kimmel Design

Jon Crispin

Derek Johnson

Sara Apple, Beth Cody, Dillon Crocket,

Axel Cruz, Ivy Ebanks, Ben Finn, Clayton

Luopa, Erin Mabee, Pamela McCaddin,

Shaelyn McGrory, Julia Piker, Meghan Ryan

Elaine Stoneham, Daniel Squizzero

Glenn Proud

Joanne Corbeil-Harper

Bethany Sherwood

Jackson Alexander, Ruby Sangha

Penny Remsen

Willow Cohen

Special Thanks:

Black Mass Communications Project

Black Student Union

Rosa Clemente

Ellen Eisenman (<http://ellenfoto.blogspot.com/>)

Emancipated Voices

Prof. Chris Grobe

Dean Julie Hayes

DJ Reborn

Nicole Young

the UMass Arts Council



IMAGE: (previous page): "A Pair of Broad Bottoms" by William Heath, 1810

IMAGE: Figure drawing of "The Hottentot Venus" by Georges Cuvier, from *The New York Medical Abstract* Vol. 3 No. 1 (1883)

Oh have you been in London towne,
Its rareties to see:
There is, 'mongst
ladies of renown,
A most renowned she
In Piccadillie streete
so faire,
A mansion she has got;
On golden letters
written there,
"The Venus
Hottentot."
But you may
ask, and well
I ween,
For why she
tarries there;
And what, in her
is to be seen,
Than other folks
More rare.
A rump she has
(though strange it be,)
Large as a
cauldron pot,
And this is why men
go to see
This lovely Hottentot.¹



1 Broadside reprinted in R.
Toole-Scott's Circus and Allied
Arts: A World Bibliography, 1500-
1962(1962)

IMAGE: "Sartjee, the Hottentot Ve-
nus" by Frederick Christian Lewis,
1810

SARTJEE, THE HOTTENTOT VENUS.

A Note from the Director

When I first visited South Africa in 2002, the controversy over the repatriation of Sara Baartman's remains was front-page news. At that time I met Diana Ferrus, noted writer and activist, whose beautiful poem "I've Come to Take You Home" had been widely shared on the internet to the extent that it influenced the debate in the French Parliament. The day before I left South Africa, Diana and friends were planning a ceremony to manifest the return of their revered ancestor. Hearing about this event was among my first and deepest impressions of a country and a culture that continues to shape me profoundly as an artist. Her poem has become a touchstone in my process of directing Suzan-Lori Parks' raw, exquisite, brutal and lyrical play, *Venus*.

Parks' re-visioning of Baartman's saga remains painfully relevant in terms of the international marketing, misrepresentation and abuse of the Black female body. Ironically, Parks describes the play as a love story and it is our work as a company to illuminate that tale in all its insight, pain, humor and pathos. As we worked on the script, a fundamental question arose: is the play about the horrors of colonialism, sexual exploitation, patriarchy and white world supremacy or is it about the legacy of one woman and how she survived what for us is unthinkable? The play's brilliance is that it is about it all.

I have come to appreciate Baartman as my spiritual ancestor; her choice to travel and "make a mint" as a performer is the same choice I made at her age. She has re-connected me to my Valley artistic community, creatively interwoven my South African and North American experiences, and daily reminded me to trust my own Black, female body. Ultimately, any love story is about self-love and as we excavated the script and committed to its complexities and contradictions I realized that Sara Baartman, Saartjie, the Venus Hottentot had indeed come to take me home.

~Judyie Al-Bilali

A Note from the Dramaturg

In her Obie Award-winning play *Venus* (1996), Suzan-Lori Parks retells the story of historical figure Sara Baartman, known to the world as “The Hottentot Venus.” Baartman, a Khoisan woman taken from her home in South Africa, was on display in human zoos across Europe during the early 19th century. Problematically, 19th century human zoos exploited indigenous people for the commercial success of the “sideshow” and the advent of scientific discovery. Like many indigenous people, Baartman was framed as Charles Darwin’s “Missing Link” in the Great Chain of Being, which ordered the living world from the civilized European to the animal kingdom. In other words, she was considered closer to a primate than a human being.

During her short-lived “career,” Baartman’s most talked about assets were her large buttocks, created by an accumulation of fat known as *steatopygia*. Spectators viewed Baartman as a freakish entity in the confines of the sideshow. Nineteenth century advertisements and political cartoons of Baartman depict a Black female body that is seemingly nude with the markings and attire of an African. Then, medical anatomists, led by Baron Georges Cuvier, observed her as a biological anomaly after her death, paying special attention to her sexual organs. Cuvier dissected Baartman’s body and preserved her genitals and her brain to be on display at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris for over a century. Ultimately, these historical artifacts play into the European social thought and politics of the period: indigenous people were subhuman “freaks” and biologically different from Europeans.

Since her death, dominant society has replicated and reproduced Baartman’s body in the name of social theory and medical science. The historicity of Baartman’s body still haunts us today, particularly women of color. Baartman’s image as “the Hottentot Venus” perpetuates a stereotype of hypersexuality associated with Black female bodies, which is evident in how mainstream culture depicts women of color. Clearly, Suzan-Lori Parks recognizes this stereotype because she challenges her audiences to re-imagine and re-member Sara Baartman through a critical lens that questions historical perceptions of people of color.

~Adewunmi Oke

“The Hottentot Venus” drawn from a wax cast made by Georges Cuvier after her autopsy in Paris, 1815. From Louis Figuier’s *The Human Race* (1873).



To learn more about the life of Sara Baartman, visit our digital dramaturgical research site on *Venus* at www.umassvenus.weebly.com

Join us for the special event “Sampling and Remixing *Venus*,” a free panel discussion and live demonstration featuring Rosa Clemente and DJ Reborn.

The event will be held in the Fine Arts Center Atrium lobby on April 5th, 2013 at 4 PM.

Support the Department’s efforts to “Shed the Shag” in the Rand Theater lobby! Visit our DONATE page on our website.



www.umass.edu/theater/donate.php

PROGRAM DESIGN BY ADEWUNMI OKE