

RED BULL THEATER

JESSE BERGER | FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JIM BREDESON | MANAGING DIRECTOR

PRESENTS

THE WONDER OF WOMEN

BY JOHN MARSTON

DIRECTED BY NATHAN WINKELSTEIN

FEATURING

RO BODDIE

ROBERT CUCCIOLI

REYNALDO PINIELLA

CARA RICKETTS

DEREK SMITH

SARIN MONAE WEST

ZOOM COORDINATOR | BETSY AYER

OBS MANAGER | JESSICA FORNEAR

GENERAL MANAGER | SHERRI KOTIMSKY

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR | LANISE A. SHELLEY

PRODUCING DIRECTOR | NATHAN WINKELSTEIN

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2022 | LIVESTREAM BROADCAST

THE RECORDING WILL BE AVAILABLE UNTIL 7:00 PM EST ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2022 –
THEN IT DISAPPEARS.

RED BULL THEATER WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS GRATITUDE TO THE PERFORMERS' UNIONS: ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION, AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS, AMERICAN GUILD OF VARIETY ARTISTS, AND SAG-AFTRA THROUGH THEATRE AUTHORITY, INC. FOR THEIR COOPERATION IN PERMITTING THE ARTISTS TO APPEAR IN THIS PROGRAM.

RED BULL THEATER IS SUPPORTED, IN PART, BY PUBLIC FUNDS FROM THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY COUNCIL, AND THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO AND THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE.

ADDITIONAL MAJOR FUNDING HAS BEEN GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY THE ACHELIS AND BODMAN FOUNDATION, , ART LAB | MEG FOFONOFF, THE AXE-HOUGHTON FOUNDATION, THE AMERICAN THEATRE WING, ROBERT BOYETT, DAVID DESJARDINS AND NANCY BLACHMAN, THE JAMES AND JUDITH K. DIMON FOUNDATION, FUND FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK, THE HOWARD AND MARCIA OWENS CHARITABLE TRUST, HOWARD GILMAN FOUNDATION, THE MARTA HEFLIN FOUNDATION, THE KAM FOUNDATION, NOAH MILLMAN AND CAROLYN SCHIFF, EVANGELINE MORPHOS, THE NOËL COWARD FOUNDATION, THE OFF-BROADWAY ANGELS, THE PRINCESS GRACE FOUNDATION-USA, BETTY AND MICHAEL RAUCH, PETER N. RIGBY, THE SHUBERT FOUNDATION, THE MICHAEL TUCH FOUNDATION, AND STEVEN AND JOAN YOUNG.

RED BULL THEATER IS A PROUD MEMBER OF THE ALLIANCE OF RESIDENT THEATERS/NEW YORK, THE OFF-BROADWAY LEAGUE, AND THEATER COMMUNICATIONS GROUP.



Council on
the Arts



DONATE TODAY TO SUPPORT RED BULL THEATER AND INVEST IN THE VITALITY OF CLASSICAL THEATER FOR A CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE. FOR NEARLY TWENTY YEARS, RED BULL THEATER HAS TRANSFORMED THE CLASSICAL THEATER EXPERIENCE WITH SPECTACULAR, HIGH-OCTANE PRODUCTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES, RAUCOUS READINGS OF RARELY-PRODUCED PLAYS, AND VIVID REIMAGININGS OF ICONIC WORKS.

WE'RE DEDICATED TO REVITALIZING THE CLASSICS FOR TODAY'S AUDIENCES, AND WHILE WE TREASURE THESE CLASSICS, OUR APPROACH IS ANYTHING BUT PRECIOUS. YOUR SUPPORT IS.

WE'RE COMMITTED TO CONTINUING CONNECTION DURING THIS HISTORIC TIME.
YOUR SUPPORT WILL HELP MAKE THAT POSSIBLE.

REDBULLTHEATER.COM/makeagift

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SophonisbaCARA RICKETTS

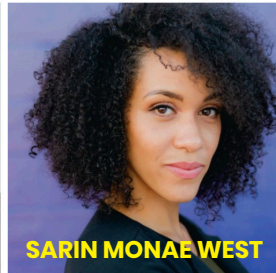
Massinissa.....RO BODDIE

Syphax.....DEREK SMITH

Player 1.....REYNALDO PINIELLA

Player 2.....SARIN MONAE WEST

Player 3.....ROBERT CUCCIOLI



POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

This Thursday, February 3, 2022

7:30 PM EST | LIVESTREAM

Join an interactive online discussion about the play with director NATHAN WINKELSTEIN, scholar TONYA POLLARD, and members of the company.

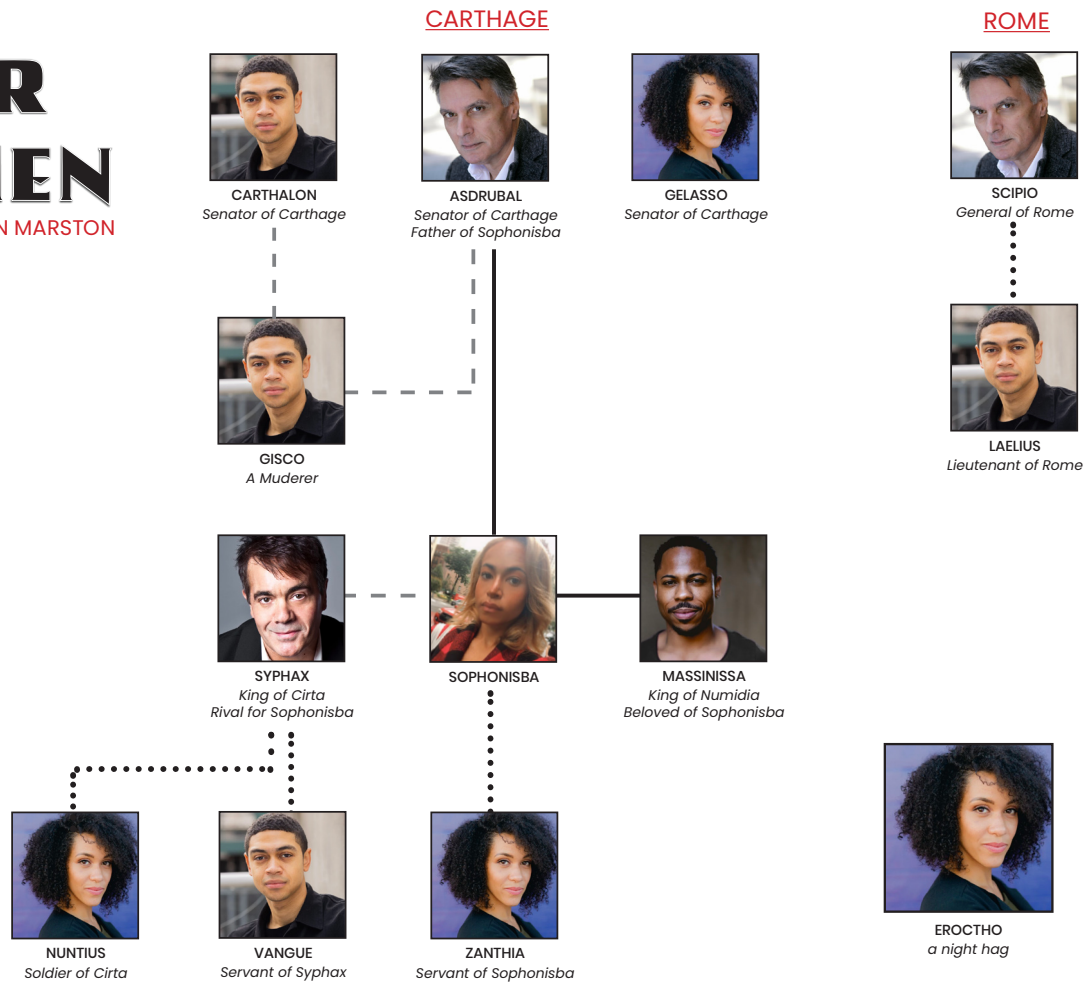
TUNE IN ON YOUTUBE OR FACEBOOK.

THE WONDER OF WOMEN

BY JOHN MARSTON

CHARACTER MAP

RED BULL
THEATER



ABOUT THE PLAY

The Wonder of Women; or The Tragedy of Sophonisba (1606) showcases Marston's penchants for sensational melodrama, overt eroticism, and splashes of wry wit. The play dramatizes a contest for the hand of the Carthaginian princess Sophonisba during the Punic Wars, drawing on a wide and often conflicting range of sources including Polybius, Livy, Petrarch, and many Renaissance playwrights. In their bedchamber on their wedding night, Sophonisba and her new husband Massinissa, King of Libya, are interrupted by the announcement that the Roman general Scipio is preparing to attack Carthage. Like Othello, another North African newlywed, Massinissa responds heroically to the threat by rushing off before consummating his marriage. Complications ensue: conspiracies, threats of poisoning, obligations to military honor, and an attempt by the rival suitor Syphax to win Sophonisba by commissioning a witch to drug her into compliance.

Written and staged between severe plague outbreaks, *The Wonder of Women* joins a cluster of contemporary tragedies in abandoning England for remote worlds. Like *King Lear* (1606), *Timon of Athens* (1606), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), and *Pericles* (1607), it takes place in a distant pagan past; like some of these plays, as well as *Othello* (1604), it also conjures the foreign spaces of the Mediterranean basin and North Africa. These plays offer, in the words of *Coriolanus* (1608), the possibility of "a world elsewhere" – an alternative to the claustrophobic urban spaces of plague-ridden London. For better and for worse, these other worlds prove unruly, racially mixed, and unbound by conventional gender norms. Among their marvels – especially in *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* – is a new model of heroism embodied by women.

Borrowing elements of Cordelia, Cleopatra, Marina, and Desdemona, Marston's Sophonisba is bold, passionate, and defiant. Although she is virtuous, she revels in frank proclamations of lust, like the witch Erichtho, who briefly becomes her uncanny body double. Sophonisba offers a new hybrid merger of classical female icons: her battle-provoking beauty recalls Helen of Troy, while her steadfast response to the threat of rape echoes Lucretia, and her instinct for grandeur aligns her with Shakespeare's Cleopatra. Closer to home, her chastity and fearlessness evoke Elizabeth I, whose death three years earlier had marked the end of an era already viewed with nostalgia by the plague-weary English. For all its dark tragic turns, *The Wonder of Women* sounds a note of triumph in its portrait of a woman whose glory cannot be dimmed. Originally performed by child actors playing incongruously adult roles, the play offers a model of tragedy both familiar and strange, inviting its audiences to revisit their own recent past alongside remote foreign worlds.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

JOHN MARSTON (1576–1634) brought to his writings an elite education, a sardonic wit, and a taste for sexually explicit banter. An Oxford graduate and member of Middle Temple of the Inns of Court, he made his mark first with nondramatic poetry – the pornographic *Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image* and the satiric *Scourge of Villainy* – before turning to plays after the 1599 Bishops' Ban on verse satire. Marston wrote primarily for the boys' companies, especially the edgy, sophisticated Children of the Queens Revels. Both writer and shareholder in the company, he had an important role in developing the dark, experimental wit that came to distinguish their upmarket Blackfriars Theater from the more inclusive open-air amphitheaters like the Globe. Like many of his characters, he had an antagonistic streak. He has been credited with sparking the feud known as the war of the theaters, and he and Ben Jonson notoriously attacked each other both onstage and off; at one point Jonson claimed to have physically beaten him and taken his pistol. Yet Marston also praised Jonson in print, and worked collaboratively with him and George Chapman on the 1605 comedy *Eastward Ho*, which got all its authors except Marston in prison for libel. The near escape didn't stop him from continuing to court controversy; in 1608 James I had Marston imprisoned after further theatrical scandals and offenses. Around this time, Marston retired from writing for the theater, and surprised his contemporaries by spending the rest of his life as a priest. With its unpredictable mix of competition, friendship, aggression, and reflectiveness, his life – like his writings – embraced contraries.

–**TANYA POLLARD**

Professor of English, Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, CUNY



JESSE BERGER | FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
JIM BREDESON | MANAGING DIRECTOR

Red Bull Theater brings rarely seen classic plays to dynamic new life for contemporary audiences. Our work unites a respect for tradition with a modern sensibility.

Red Bull Theater is named for the rowdy Jacobean playhouse that illegally performed plays in England during the years of Puritan rule, and was the first London theater to reopen after the Restoration. This bold spirit is central to our identity. With the Jacobean plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries as our cornerstone, Red Bull Theater is New York City's home for dynamic performances of great plays that stand the test of time. The company also produces new works that are in conversation with the classics.

Red Bull Theater delights and engages the intellect and imagination of audiences. A home for artists, scholars and students, we strive to make our work accessible, diverse, and welcoming to all theatergoers. Educational as well as entertaining, our work keeps a rich and vital tradition thriving.

Red Bull Theater believes in the power of great classic stories and plays of heightened language to deepen our understanding of the human condition. We believe in the special ability of live theater to create unique, collective experiences. And we believe in the timeless capacity of classical theater to illuminate the events of our times.

Founded in 2003 with a production of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, Red Bull Theater has been acclaimed by *The New York Times* as "a dynamic producer of classic plays" and by *Time Out New York* as "the most exciting classical theater in New York."

Red Bull Theater serves adventurous theatergoers with OFF-BROADWAY PRODUCTIONS, REVELATION READINGS, and the annual SHORT NEW PLAY FESTIVAL. The company also offers outreach programs including SHAKESPEARE IN SCHOOLS, bringing professional actors and teaching artists into public school classrooms, BULL SESSIONS, free post-play discussions with top scholars, and MASTER CLASSES in classical actor training led by veteran theater professionals.

In our 17-year history, Red Bull Theater has produced 21 Off-Broadway Productions and nearly 200 Revelation Readings of rarely seen classics, serving 5,000 artists and providing quality artistic programming to an audience of 65,000. The company's unique programming has received ongoing critical acclaim, and has been recognized with Lortel, Drama Desk, Drama League, Calloway, Off Broadway Alliance, and Obie nominations and Awards.

Visit REDBULLTHEATER.COM for more information.

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