



THEATRE THREE'S 34TH SEASON

Music, Murder & Mirth



MANCHILD IN THE PROMISED LAND

Stage Adaptation by Robert Earl Price
Based on the autobiography by Claude Brown

FIRST BONUS PREMIUM ATTRACTION

October 14, 15 & 16, 1994



THEATRE THREE

In The Quadrangle
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Dallas, Texas 75201

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Executive Producer-Director

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the Season also includes
two Premium Attractions,
two Bonus Attractions, and
a Holiday show, *The Fantasticks*.
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FIRST BONUS PREMIUM ATTRACTION
34th Season, No. 5
October, 1994

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Theatre Three and Vivid Theater Ensemble

present
a joint production of

MANCHILD IN THE PROMISED LAND

Stage Adaptation by Robert Earl Price
Based on the autobiography by Claude Brown

Jac Alder, Executive Producer
Michael Skipper, Buzz Hirsch, Tom Stovall
Co-Producers

Akin Babatunde, Director

Featuring (in alphabetical order)
Vic Amos, Rodney Ayers, Sa'Mi Chester, K. Danor Gerald, Billy Jones, Liz Piazza Kelley,
Frank Manuel, Jr., Randle Michael, Liz Mikel, Jason Mosely, Thurman Moss, Connie Nelson,
William Earl Ray, Jeanine Rogers, Jason Smith, Ptosha Storey,
Michael Washington, Brent Wilson, Johnny Wimbrey

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FIRST BONUS PREMIUM ATTRACTION of 94/95 Season
Four Performances - October 14, 15 & 16, 1994

Major support for this joint production between Theatre Three and Vivid Theater Ensemble has been
generously provided by Michael Skipper. Additional support comes from the proceeds
of a grant for the Season's Bonus Premium Attractions provided by Exxon.

The Dallas Morning News
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MANCHILD IN THE PROMISED LAND

Stage Adaptation by Robert Earl Price
Based on the Autobiography by Claude Brown

The Cast (in alphabetical order)

Young Knoxie.....	Vic Amos
Young Sonny.....	Rodney Ayers
Johnny D.....	Sa'Mi Chester*
Danny.....	K. Danor Gerald
Sonny.....	Billy Jones*
Judy.....	Liz Piazza Kelley
Turk.....	Frank Manuel, Jr.
Young Sonny.....	Randle Michael
Mrs. Brown.....	Liz Mikel*
Young Turk.....	Jason Mosely
Papaneck.....	Thurman Moss*
Mrs. Meitner.....	Connie Nelson*
Mr. Brown.....	William Earl Ray*
Sister Rogers.....	Jeanine Rogers
Knoxie.....	Jason Smith
Sugar.....	Ptosha Storey
Narrator/Young Claude Brown.....	Michael Washington
Limp.....	Brent Willson
Pimp.....	Johnny Wimbrey

*Appears at Theatre Three through the courtesy of Actor's Equity.
The Ensemble will also represent, vocally or visually, additional characters in the autobiography.

The Time: Late 1940's through Late 1950's

The Setting: Harlem

Opening Prologue: The migration of African Americans and the Brown family from the South to Harlem.

ACT I The action takes place in Sonny's mind and in present reality. Scenes are variously located on a rooftop in Harlem, a train to Wiltwyck, an alley, street corners, a detention office and dorm room at Wiltwyck, Mrs. Meitner's bedroom at Wiltwyck, a bar, and the Brown's kitchen.

There will be one 15 minute intermission.

ACT II The action takes place within Sonny's memory and in present reality. Scenes are variously located on a rooftop, a tenement corner, an alley, Sonny's Village digs, night school at Washington Irving High School, a bar, Papaneck's office, and a jail.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

ROBERT EARL PRICE, Stage Adaptator for *Manchild In The Promised Land*, is a Georgia-based poet, writer, director and film maker with professional writing credits in every genre except the novel and over twenty years of public poetry readings. Mr. Price attended Clark College in Atlanta and the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. He has lived in Atlanta since 1985.

His teleplay credits include Alex Haley's *Palmerstown, USA*, *The Boy King* and *Freedom Road*. He is the author of three books of poetry: *Bloodlines* (1984); *Blood Elegy* (1987); and *Blues Blood* (1994). Mr. Price is the recipient of the Broadside Press Award for Poetry (1975), the William Wyler Award for Screenwriting (1976) and the Bronze Jubilee Award for Literature (1989). In 1990, he and composer Fuasi Abdul Khaliq were awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to develop their play, *Yardbird's Vamp*, which was subsequently produced at Atlanta's Seven Stages Theater, where Mr. Price is currently playwright-in-residence. His plays, *Black Cat Bones for Seven Sons* and *Cane's Theme*, were also produced at Seven Stages.

In Atlanta, Mr. Price has been on the Literary Review Panel for the Georgia Council for the Arts, a board member of the Atlanta Media Project, a member of First World Writers Collective and an advisory board member of the Third World Film Festival. During the last six years, he has presented over one hundred public readings of poetry in many different venues. He is a current NEA Literature Fellow and recently completed a new play, *Names and Numbers*. Theatre Three is proud to welcome Mr. Price as its honored guest for the opening night performance of *Manchild In The Promised Land*.

THE AUTHOR

CLAUDE BROWN, Author of the best-selling autobiography, *Manchild In The Promised Land*, which was published in 1965 by McMillan Publishing Company. The book is the story of Mr. Brown's life in Harlem and life in the ghetto during the 1940's and 1950's. During that time he was a member of the Harlem Buccaneers gang and later the Forty Thieves, an offshoot of the former gang which specialized in stealing. He was sent to the Wiltwyck School, an institution for emotionally disturbed and deprived boys and later to Warwick Reform School (three times). He eventually moved to a small loft apartment in Greenwich Village and, in an effort to change his life style, completed his high school education. Mr. Brown graduated from Howard University in 1965 as well as graduating from Rutgers Law School in the late 1960's.

Mr. Brown began work on *Manchild...* in 1963 and eventually produced the finished product over a two year period. In 1976, he published *The Children of Ham*, the story of a group of young blacks living as a family in a condemned Harlem tenement, doing whatever was necessary to survive. Mr. Brown is also the author of an essay, *The Language of Soul*, originally published in 1968 in *Esquire Magazine*. A renowned lecturer, he has appeared at over 400 colleges and universities across the United States. In addition to his many awards he has also narrated a one-hour PBS documentary, *Crime In America*, and is currently completing a non-fiction work on violent crime in America. Theatre Three is proud to welcome Mr. Brown as its honored guest for the opening night performance of *Manchild In The Promised Land*.

CAST PROFILES

Vic Amos (Young Knoxville) has never been a part of any big time play such as *Manchild In The Promised Land*, except for the time when he was a part of the Theatrical Star Club and did a play called *Growing Up In Brick City*, which had to do with black teenagers growing up in the Projects.

RODNEY AYERS (Young Sonny), age 9, is a Dallas native and currently attends the Ettie E. Toler School in Garland. Best known for his double role (The Bailiff and Greta) in *The Witches On Trial*, he is also a member of Magnolia C.M.E. and a previous participant in the *We Are The World* program: *Hands Across America*. Previous acting credits include *The Magic Well*, *The Fox and The Bunny* (The Hunter), *The Sun and The Moon*, and *The Lion and The Rabbit*.

SA'MI CHESTER (Johnny D., an experienced gangster degreed from Sing-Sing; serves as Sonny's mentor in the school of streetlife) Thank u's 2: The Creator, Ma and Pa Chester and the Family Chester, Madison - my love, my life. 4 ever. Debi Moore, Yvonne Wright, the family Small - we'll miss u Dad, Kim Dawson - u r the best, HWA - 4 the patience and understanding, Andre DeShields, Red, Bob Ray Sanders - I ain't 4got! Molly Shepard, T.A. Taylor. The Family Semon - welcome Paden...the Variety Pak, Miles Davis, Claude Brown...Theatre Three...and 2 u. Enjoy. P.S. 4 Shirley McFatter.

K. DANOR GERALD (Danny, who moves from gangster to junkie and finally, pusher), now a third semester student at KD Studio, has attended Ouachita Baptist University where he was a recipient of the Dennis Holt Drama Scholarship. He has appeared in *Rouge Et Noir* as Jason Samuels, an original play performed at Old Washington State Park in Arkansas. You can also spot him at the DART Interactive Booth at the State Fair of Texas Auto Show.

BILLY JONES (Sonny. This is his story) returns to Theatre Three's stage having previously appeared in *Stringbean* with Leslie Uggams. He just completed *Ain't Misbehavin'* for Casa Manaña. Mr. Jones has performed on all of Dallas' mainstages and holds a Bachelors Degree from Prairie View A & M University. He is a founding member of the Vivid Theater Ensemble.

LIZ PIAZZA KELLEY (Judy, Sonny's girlfriend - until her parents cut short their budding romance) was last seen as Winnie Ruth Judd in Theatre Three's production of *Tiger Lady*. Other T3 credits include Isabelle in *The School For Husbands*, Cecile's maid in *The Imaginary Cuckold*, Tina in *A Small Family Business*, and Emma Goldman in *Assassins*. She recently appeared in *Tumbling After*, an intern project for the Dallas Theater Center and at Stage West as Marcela in *A House With Two Doors Is Difficult To Guard*.

FRANK MANUEL, JR. (Turk, a tough, yet sensitive gang member) attended Southern University from 1992-1993 and was a member of the LaCumba Players. He is currently a fourth semester student at KD Studio Actors Conservatory of the Southwest. His favorite role thus far is Charles Aarons in the play, *Up The Down Staircase*.

RANDLE MICHAEL (Young Sonny) As a native of NYC, he is no stranger to the theatre and made his acting debut for the Dallas Theater Center in *A Christmas Carol*. As Whitley, he was directed by Akin Babatunde in *Whitley and the Hairman*. He appeared as Antonea Stewart in the television series *In The Heat Of the Night*. Randle is currently a proud freshman at the Arts Magnet High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. As most of us, he has starred in many church plays.

LIZ MIKEL (Mrs. Brown, Sonny's mother), making her Theatre Three debut, was last seen in *Ain't Misbehavin'* at Casa On The Square. Dallas Theater Center credits include: *A Christmas Carol*, *Mustardseed* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Eunice Hubbell in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Sojourner Truth in *Sojourner*. Regional theater credits include *Nunsense* (Live Oak Theater, Austin) and *Once On This Island* (Arkansas Rep). She is a member of the Vivid Theater Ensemble.

JASON MOSELY (Young Turk), age 14, is a native Houstonian and currently attends Lakeview High School in Garland. He is a member of the Magnolia C.M.E. and was a participant in the *We Are The World* program: *Hands Across America*. He received critical acclaim for his solo performance in *Dreams* by Langston Hughes and has also appeared in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Puck (Best Actor for

CAST PROFILES

the City of Dallas Parks and Recreations District-Exall Park), *The World's A Stage*, *The Lion and The Rabbit*, and *The Magic Well*.

THURMAN MOSS (Papanek, director of the Wiltwyck School for Boys) has worked as an actor, director or playwright in theatres across the country. Theatre Three acting credits include *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, *Eden Court*, *True West*, *The Wake of Jamey Foster*, *The Show-Off*, *Season's Greetings*, *The Canterbury Tales and Safety*. He has directed Theatre Three productions of *A Small Family Business* and *Shadowlands* ('93/'94 season) and *Tiger Lady* ('94/'95 season). As co-founder of The Lean Theatre, Mr. Moss produced and directed the production of Dario Fo's *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* and acted the role of Giovanni. He also directed the premiere of *...And Miss Reardon Drinks A Little*.

CONNIE NELSON (Mrs. Meltner, Sonny's dorm mother) has appeared in over twenty Theatre Three productions. Locally, Ms. Nelson has appeared with the Dallas Summer Musicals, Dallas Theater Center, Stage 1, Shakespeare in the Park, Stage West and Casa Manaña. New York stage appearances include John Houseman's Acting Company, Ensemble Studio Theatre's One-Act Play Marathon and Off-Broadway as Wanda in *Kennedy's Children*. Regional theatre appearances include The Guthrie Theatre, Arena Stage and American Repertory Theater. Ms. Nelson is a recipient of the Dallas Theater Critics Forum Award for Best Actress and was voted Best Local Actress by the Dallas Observer.

WILLIAM EARL RAY (Mr. Brown, Sonny's father) who has many directing, film and television credits, makes his debut at Theatre Three. Mr. Ray was last seen as Memphis Lee in *Two Trains Running* (Stage West). He has worked for the Seattle Repertory Theatre, ACT-Seattle, The Group Theatre, Portland Black Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Tacoma Actors Guild. Favorite roles include Walter (*Raisin in the Sun*), Brewmaster (*The Audience*), Boy Willie (*Piano Lesson*), and Paul Stanton (*Fraternity*).

JEANINE ROGERS (Sister Rogers) has a BA. in Theatre Arts from Southwest Texas State University. She has appeared in *Ananse*, *The Spider* (Dallas Children's Theater), *Reveal* (Dallas Theater Center), and *West Side Story* (Dallas Alliance Theater). Ms. Rogers has a professional children's theater company, Jill In The Box Productions.

JASON SMITH (Knoxie, a slick gang member, evolving from a snivelling junkie to a Muslim), born in Pittsburgh, has lived in Dallas since he was eight. He has numerous radio, television, theater and feature film credentials, including the role of Melvin in Universal Studio's feature film, *Dazed and Confused*. Previous theater performances include *A Soldier's Play*, *Mr. Flannery's Ocean* and *Daddy's Maybe* (Dallas Drama Company). This is Jason's first time to work at Theatre Three.

PROSHA STOREY (Sugar, Sonny's first love interest - also Mr. Brown's "lady friend") is a graduate of SMU with a double major in Theatre and African-American history. Stage credits include Laura in *Tamberlaine To Glory*, Doris in *Barbershop*, Veria in *Guns, Rope & Lies*, and Annette in *When Effie Burle Passed*. She was last seen in NBC's season finale of *Unsolved Mysteries*. Ms. Storey is a founding member of the Vivid Theater Ensemble.

MICHAEL WASHINGTON (Narrator/Young Claude Brown) is very happy to join the cast of *Manchild in the Promised Land*. He is a sophomore honor student at Shepton High School in Plano. Mr. Washington has been in television pilots, and regional and national commercials. His theatre credits include *Rehearsal For Murder*, *Count Dracula* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

BRENT WILSON (Limpy, a shadowy junkie), age 15, attends the Arts Magnet School in Dallas. This is Brent's first professional acting debut, but he has appeared in numerous school plays. Brent's family and friends wish him luck.

JOHNNY DEWAYNE WIMBREY (Pimp, Sonny's younger brother), age 19, is the youngest of three brothers. He just graduated from Trimble Tech High School in Fort Worth and now attends the KD Studio, working on his associates degree in acting. He's very excited to be making his first professional theater performance at Theatre Three.

THE DIRECTOR

AKIN BABATUNDE, Director, is Founder and Artistic Director of Vivid Theater Ensemble. He most recently directed *The Taming of the Shrew* for the Dallas Shakespeare Festival. His acting credits include *The Cherry Orchard*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Miss Evers' Boys* (Dallas Theater Center). Most recently he played Troy in *Fences* at the Newstage in Jackson, MS, where, in January of 1995, he will direct *Piano Lesson*.

Mr. Babatunde has directed extensively throughout the Southwest, including: *Voices Unsilenced* (Theatre Three), *Blues In The Night*, *Fences* (Dallas Repertory Theater), *Sojourner Truth* (Dallas Theater Center/Teen-Children's Theater), and *Toast, Hunter, Of Guns, Ropes and Lies*, and *Tambourines To Glory* (Vivid Theater Ensemble).

Akin serves on several boards of directors for various arts organizations and was recently appointed to the boards of directors for Booker T. Washington Arts Magnet High School and the Dallas Theater League. He currently teaches acting at KD Studio. *Manchild In The Promised Land* is dedicated to the spirit of his Uncle Bo (Carlton Allen II), a product of Wiltwyck.

VIVID THEATER ENSEMBLE

In the past several years, attempts have been made to form theater companies in Dallas to present African-American dramas. While each of these companies has attempted to meet the widely recognized demand for a professional African-American acting company, none has managed to sustain a long life or a high profile.

In the summer of 1990, Akin Babatunde, a respected actor and director in the Dallas community, saw an opportunity to create a professional ensemble of African-American actors. Initially, the small group met in Babatunde's apartment to read and rehearse plays. Out of these meetings, and with the support of the Dallas Theater Center, the Vivid Theater Ensemble was formed. Babatunde and the company members remain dedicated to a three-fold mission: to educate actors, playwrights and other theatrical personnel through workshops and seminars; to enrich the cultural life of the Dallas community through touring and outreach; and, to enlighten and entertain through full productions of plays dealing with the African-American perspective as well as that of other minorities.

THE PRODUCERS

JAC ALDER, Executive Producer and Set Designer for Manchild..., is the Executive Producer-Director of Theatre Three. He is proud to be associated with this development of a new stage work on the African American experience, a special personal interest he most recently explored as the producer of Lanie Robertson's biographical play on the young Ethel Waters, *Stringbean*. Mr. Alder pursues a busy schedule of teaching, directing and designing as well as being Theatre Three's chief administrator. His next assignment at Theatre Three is directing *The Frogs*. Its composer-lyricist, Stephen Sondheim, will visit Theatre Three during the play's run (courtesy of SMU's Meadows Award Activities Committee) and Mr. Alder will moderate a question and answer session between theatre professionals and the celebrated Mr. Sondheim.

MICHAEL SKIPPER, Co-Producer, has been involved in virtually every aspect of theatre and film, from directing and acting to development and financing. He recently served as co-executive producer on the Paul Rudnick film, *Jeffrey*, to be released this Spring. Mr. Skipper was also instrumental in helping mount the smash hit revival of *Damn Yankees* on Broadway. A native of Fort Worth, he lives there with his wife, Anne, and his two children, Graham and Emily. Mr. Skipper's relationship with Buzz Hirsch and Tom Stovall began in Los Angeles in the early '60's. After completion of *Silkwood*, Buzz and Tom teamed with Mike in the formation of a film development company, Calliope Productions, which develops screenplays for motion picture release. The film of *Manchild In The Promised Land* is currently in development with Spike Lee's production company, Forty Acres and a Mule, in association with Universal Studios.

BUZZ HIRSCH, Co-Producer, developed, packaged and co-produced *Silkwood*, which starred Meryl Streep, Cher and Kurt Russell and was directed by Mike Nichols. *Silkwood* was nominated for five Academy Awards and five Golden Globe Awards including Best Picture. Hirsch is in co-production with Mr. Skipper, Tom Stovall and Spike Lee of an adaptation of Claude Brown's classic autobiography about life in Harlem, *Manchild In The Promised Land*. He is currently full time visiting professor in the performing arts department at Washington University in St. Louis, MO.

TOM STOVALL, Co-Producer, has an extensive and prestigious career in ballet and theatre. He and Buzz Hirsch are currently producers of the feature film, *Caldo Largo*, to be directed by Dennis Hopper (*Easy Rider*, *Colors*), starring Tom Berringer (*Platoon*) and Angelica Huston (*Prizzi's Honor*), scheduled for production in August, 1995, in Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico. He is also joining Mike Skipper and Buzz Hirsch in bringing *Manchild In The Promised Land* to film.

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TECHNICAL STAFF for MANCHILD...

VERN MCKINNEY, Technical Director, is in his fourth season at Theatre Three. A graduate of Angelo State University, Mr. McKinney has acted, directed and designed numerous shows. As an actor, he was last seen at Three Below in Mamet, *Dammit!* His most recent design work includes *Bx10*, *Vital Signs*, *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Into The Woods*. He has directed *The Woods*, *Sexual Perversity In Chicago*, *No Sex Please...We're British*, and *Grandma Duck Is Dead*.

ROBERT G. McVAY, Lighting Designer. Robert is pleased to be working again with Akin (for whom he designed lights at the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas last summer) and at Theatre Three (where he was Assistant Technical Director and Lighting Designer a few seasons ago). Thanks, Vern!

DEBRA WASHINGTON, Costume Designer, formerly of New York City, is a respected free-lance costumer in the Dallas area. Her most recent project was for the Addison Theater production of *The Lion and The Jewel*. She is pleased to be joining Theatre Three for *Manchild...*

GABRIELLE SUZETTE WEST, Sound Designer, has appeared in Theatre Three productions of *Little Shop of Horrors*, *For Colored Girls...*, *Strider* and *Working*. Stage and film credits include *Nunsense*, *World Goes Round*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and as lead singer in *Leap Of Faith* with Steve Martin. Gabrielle is the morning music personality on KERA 90.1. She performs original music in various DFW venues and is a member of the local jazz trio, *In The Mood*.

PAULA MORELAN, Choreographer, is resident choreographer at Garland Civic Theater. She holds a BFA from Texas Christian University and has studied with Nathalia Krassovska, Victor Moreno and Fernando Schaffenburg. Citing numerous choreographer credits, she has also worked with Theatre Three's production of *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum*. She has completed two original works with Akin Babatunde: *Reveal and Song Un-Told*. Her next choreography project will be *A Concert Evening of Musical Theatre* (Stage Productions) and *Nunsense II* (GCT).

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SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT THEATRE THREE

Even before the Civil Rights legislation of the early '60's, Theatre Three began championing the work of African American actors, writers, directors and musicians. Theatre Three has introduced Dallas to imminent black playwrights like August Wilson (whose plays, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and *The Piano Lesson*, received Southwestern premieres here); Ntozake Shange (*For Colored Girls...*); and, Ossie Davis (*Purlie Victorious* and the book for the subsequent musical, *Purlie*). Theatre Three staged the world premiere of *Stringbean*, which starred Leslie Uggams, a play-with-music biography of the young Ethel Waters (written by Lanie Robertson, author of *Lady Day at the Emerson Bar and Grill*).

Because Dallas is the home of so many superbly talented black performers, those artists have been featured at Theatre Three in numerous "non-traditional" roles as well. In addition, Theatre Three has had previous joint ventures with Dallas Black Dance Theatre, with Houston's Ensemble Theatre, and with New Arts Six (with whom it will co-produce Langston Hughes' *Black Nativity* this December). Theatre Three is proud to join with the Vivid Theater Ensemble for this latest joint venture.

THANKS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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