



Presents

A staged reading with songs from the riveting new work in progress

SAVAGE

An Original Musical Conceived by Karla Koskinen

Book and Lyrics by Tommy Newman

Music by Jaime Lozano and Tommy Newman

Translations provided by Dr. Kazadi Wa Mukuna

Produced by Valerie Accetta

This reading was made possible in part by a
UAB Faculty Development Grant

Saturday, May 5, 2018 7pm

The Hulsey Recital Hall

A brief talk back will follow the reading. Feedback is encouraged.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Directed by Karla Koskinen & Valerie Accetta
Assistant Director—Camilla Almond
Musical Direction/Accompanist—Carolyn Violi
Stage Manager—Addie Counts

CAST

Ota Benga.....Royzell Walker
Samuel Verner.....Chance Novalis
Storyteller.....Victoria Cruz
Hattie Verner.....Peyton Overstreet
Mrs. Guggenheim.....Clara Holmes
Anne Spencer.....Ebony Booker
Batwa Girl.....Amyna Price
John Kondola.....Antonio Mitchell
Reverend Gordon.....Jeremy Richardson
King Leopold II / Mr. Guggenheim.....Dennis McLernon
William McGee / Bumpus / Hornaday / Zookeeper.....Brian Wittenberg
Reverend MacArthur.....Diego Villanueva
Stage Directions / Ensemble.....Ben Lundy

SYNOPSIS

In the early 1900's American Samuel Verner was hired to travel to the Congo and acquire "pygmies" to be displayed with other indigenous people at the St. Louis World's Fair. One of the forest people Verner secured was a man named Ota Benga, who was not only put on display in St. Louis, but two years later was also exhibited at the Bronx Zoo. Here he was put in a cage with an orangutan, labeled a cannibal and billed as "the missing link". Thousands of people came to gawk at him and after a month he was released due to the work of outraged black ministers. He was then sent to a black orphanage in NY and finally to Lynchburg, Virginia where on March 20, 1916 he took his own life.

This musical traces the very different lives of the African Ota Benga and his American handler Samuel Verner as they illuminate the racial climate of America in the early 1900's. Many important events collide during this time to make Ota Benga's degrading display possible. The burgeoning field of Anthropology that professed the superiority of the white man; Leopold's hideous rule of the Congo; science as a justification for racism; Samuel Verner's bizarre past and bouts of madness; Anne Spencer, a black renaissance poet who interacted with Ota Benga in Virginia; and finally, Ota Benga's inability to return to his homeland.

The World Premiere of SAVAGE will be April 2019 in the Sirote Theatre.