



**BLACK N
BLUE BOYS /
BROKEN MEN**

BY DAEL ORLANDERSMITH



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

BLACK N BLUE BOYS / BROKEN MEN
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BLACK N BLUE BOYS / BROKEN MEN received its world premiere at the Goodman Theatre (Robert Falls, Artistic Director; Roche Schulfer, Executive Director) in Chicago, Illinois, on October 7, 2012. It was directed by Chay Yew; the set design was by Daniel Ostling; the costume design was by Anita Yavich; the lighting design was by Ben Stanton; the sound design was by Mikhail Fiksel; the dramaturg was Tanya Palmer; and the production stage manager was Kimberly Osgood. All roles were performed by Dael Orlandersmith.

SCENES

Mike

Flaco

Larry

Ian

Timmy

Flaco 2

Tenny

Ian 2

Mike 2

NOTES

BLACK N BLUE BOYS / BROKEN MEN can be done by any race/gender and can be performed as a solo or multi-character work.

Characters are ALL male. Their ages range from eleven to fifty. Each of them has had a history of abuse.

Stage should be bare except possibly for chairs and a table.

BLACK N BLUE BOYS / BROKEN MEN

MIKE

Narrator moves from cell talking/becoming Mike/once in the spotlight has become Mike/black/thirty-eight/he's worked up/upset.

I'm a writer AND a social worker / I got my high school Diploma / went to college / I DID THAT / I did not let what my parents did take that away

I got my high school diploma / went to college

I did that

I did NOT let what my parents did take that away from me

I remember this one fight they had ... Man this was a HORROR, man / It really was ... she had given birth to my baby sister two weeks before / and both of them had been drinking and she and she said (*Does her.*) "I need money"

he gave her money / and she said (*Does her.*) "This ain't enough for seven kids — there's seven kids here" (*Becomes self.*) and he would say (*Does him.*) "Well ALL those motherfuckin kids ain't mine — that baby girl ain't mine — and there's ONE I know for sure ain't mine" (*Voice trails off. Becomes self.*)

and

ANYTIME he said that / He looked at me

(*Beat.*)

he went outside and was standing on the corner with some other guys / they all had plastic cups and they were passing a bottle around between them in a paper bag and I was about seven and I remember looking out the window / looking at all of these guys but especially him

And

they were all wearing these loud colored suits / these played out
popcorn pimp suits / they wore their hats at a rakish angle / and
they all got their shoes from Regal Shoes stores / or Florsheims /
shiny patent leather shoes or platforms

they're saying shit to all these young women walking past / a lot of
the time they don't even talk TO the women / they refer to a body
part (*Does a voice.*) "Oh man look at that ass / would love to ride
that ass / would love to EAT her all night long"

they would look at the girl and say it while talking to each other as
if she were an inanimate object

(Becomes self.)

My mother would look out the window watchin all this and she
would say "Motherfucker I'll snatch you out your pants and I'll
disconnect that bitch from her asshole"

Then she would sit at the kitchen table holding my baby sister and
giving her a bottle and she was drinking and smoking cigarettes with
a friend of hers and I said (*As if to her.*) "Mom you shouldn't be
smoking / it's not good for the baby and also you've been drinkin —
you may drop her" (*Becomes self.*)

And my older brother — he was home and he said (*Does him.*)
"Yeah Mom / Mike is right"

(Becomes self.)

And she said (*Does her.*) "Let me tell you two no-good lil NIGGAS
something / YOU don't tell me SHIT / you don't tell me a fuckin
thing" /

(Becomes self.) then she looks at ME and says "SPECIALLY YOU
NIGGA"

I HATE being called that / NIGGER — I HATE IT

They both called us that / NIGGER and they called my Sisters
"Nigger Bitches"

(Beat.)

So this day / he was standing on the corner drinkin / she was inside
sittin at the table drinkin / fuming / gassin herself up / using what
he said about me and my new little sister maybe not being his / I
was watching her work herself up / she actually MADE herself
breathe heavy / she was prepping herself / giving herself permission
to drink more and fight him

She and her friend almost finished a fifth of scotch

It was about one o'clock in the afternoon

She handed my sister to her friend and she went outside with a butcher's knife. She stood at the top of the stoop.

we watched from the window as she yelled at him saying (*Does her.*) "NO GOOD NIGGA BASTARD / YOU THE ONLY NIGGA I BEEN WIT FOR EIGHT YEAR / HOW YOU GONNA SAY THAT BABY GIRL AIN'T YOURS"

(*Becomes self.*)

He looked up at her and said (*Does him.*) "You need to take yo ass back in the house and stop fucking wit me" (*Becomes self.*)

And she is REALLY breathing heavy now and yells (*Does her.*)

"FUCK YOU / YOU NO-GOOD BLACKASS MOTHER-FUCKER"

(*Becomes self.*)

She runs down the steps with a butcher's knife / and goes straight for him / Some of the men try to stop her / but she swings the knife in their direction / they back away

(*Slight pause.*)

They back away laughing

My father goes to grab her / she cuts him across the palm of his right hand / he jerks back and raises his left hand to block her again / he grabs her hand / she breaks loose / she goes to cut him across his torso / he jumps back and kicks her in the stomach / she goes down

He gets on top of her / grabs her by the hair / and slaps her face side to side / she's screaming / screaming her lungs out / some of his friends try to pull him off / but he shoves them back

Then

He bangs her head against the pavement screaming (*Does him.*)

"I TOOK YO ASS IN WHEN NOBODY WANTED YOU / ALL THEM KIDS YOU GOT / YOU WAS OUT THERE HOEIN AND ON DOPE / I ACCEPTED THAT TRICK BABY MICHAEL / HOW MANY MEN WOULD DO THAT BITCH"

(*Becomes self.*)

My older brother looked down at me and said (*Does him.*) "Come on Mike / get away from the window."

(*Becomes self.*)

Later that night I asked him "What's a trick baby?"

My older brother said (*Does him.*) "It means a baby born from a hoe / the father is one of the men she picks up for money"

(*Becomes self.*)

And

I asked (*As if to them.*) “is that what I am?”
They all got quiet
My older brother said (*Does him.*) “yeah Mike / that’s what you are”
(*Back to audience.*)
I didn’t fully understand what that meant — sex / I didn’t know / I
was seven but then again / I DID know
I saw the women standing outside the train station on Junius Street
I knew what they were doing was bad
Therefore
I knew I must ALSO be bad
(*Beat.*)
But I knew there was MORE
I knew I didn’t want to live like this
I KNEW that at SEVEN
I loved to read
I’d tried to stay away from the house as much as I could
I spent lots of time at the library
I would actually be excited to go
By the time I was ten / I read Charles Dickens and I thought “Man,
he lives just like me except he’s English.”
Those words would hit Me and I could see me and Pip running
down Brooklyn streets hand in hand finding then beating DOWN
my FAKE father and we’d laugh / sidestep / slide past the Artful
Dodger and slap five
Later I read Claude Brown and Piri Tomas and Tasted / smelled /
walked Sal / soul / be bop / hip hop / ditty bop NOISE
Even later
I read Dostoyevsky understanding the need FOR SOMETHING
PURE / understanding the need to kill to make it all PURE
I read them and knew I wasn’t alone
I reached for THEM — those writers when I got / slapped / kicked /
punched and called NIGGER from them — my mother and HIM
I reached for them / wondering who my REAL Father was
And
Did he know I existed
I reached for THEM when my two brothers went to jail
I reached for THEM when two of my sisters got hooked on drugs
and when the youngest one got lost in the bottle
I kept REACHING FURTHER
Tolstoy

Baldwin

Morrison

Henry James

When I reached for THEM I was in Brooklyn but I was also
BEYOND Brooklyn / I was BEYOND rat filled tenements and
popcorn pimps and nickel and dime whores and worn down rattling
train stations / I reached for them / kept reaching for them and others /
I kept reaching and reaching and KNEW I was not a NIGGER
TRICK BABY / I was NOBODY'S NIGGER / I was NOT

I was BEYOND

I KNEW I was gonna write about kids like me

I KNEW by writing that it would help kids like me

I KNEW I would NEVER treat a kid the way I was treated

I KNEW

(Beat.)

By the time I was Fifteen / HE had left for good and mother was
NEVER sober and would say *(Does her.)* "ALL that money you
makin / you ain't bringin none in heah / he left me cuz a YOU /
Cuz you wasn't HIS"

(Becomes self.)

I see her / I hear her but I'm BEYOND her

My English teacher helps me with colleges and I get into City
College

I get into a private room at the Dorm

(Slight pause.)

It was like having my own apartment

It was INCREDIBLE

It was my OWN space and I filled it with books

And

Even though I was a full time student and working part time / I still
wrote

I wrote poems/stories about Brooklyn

I dug into those words trying to make the stink of booze come on
to the paper itself

I wanted to use words so the feel of slaps and punches would jump
off the page

I tried to arrange/rearrange those words to picture the man that
planted his seed in my mother

How he did it

I used words to try to imagine him throwing money on that BED

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In an arresting one-woman show, Dael Orlandersmith gives us five unforgettable male characters whose outward dissimilarities belie their inescapable link: a traumatic past plagued by a cycle of violence and abuse. Taking us from Coney Island to Manchester, England and back, Ms. Orlandersmith brings to life a series of harrowing stories that weave together each character's friends, family, lovers, and counselors into an explosive narrative that uncovers the darkest corners of humanity — and shatters our notions about predators and their victims. At once powerful and heartbreakingly poetic, *BLACK N BLUE BOYS / BROKEN MEN* will leave you breathless.

“... a relentlessly intense and deeply disturbing charting of the broad swath cut when adults abuse young men, whether they do so physically, sexually, or through sheer selfish neglect ... The question of the night, really, is whether such victims are able to throw off those bruises of the body and soul and react to the world around them with functional kindness ... These are very difficult topics to bring up in the theater, as in life, and there is only one way to do so, which is directly and honestly, letting the aesthetic, political, critical, and box-office chips fall where they may. That is what Orlandersmith is doing, and it is gutsy, admirable, and the only way to make such a piece work.”

—The Chicago Tribune

“... extraordinary writing ... [Orlandersmith's] efficient, carefully observed portraits are horrifying, pathetic, and dishearteningly familiar.”

—The Chicago Reader

“... a series of monologues that are riveting in their candor and devastating in their impact ... Orlandersmith approaches her characters with boundless empathy and fearlessness when it comes to uncovering ugly truths. She is especially good at conveying the coarsening effects of growing up in an environment of violence. In the process, she makes a convincing case for a masculinity that combines both strength and tenderness.”

—Time Out (Chicago)

Also by Dael Orlandersmith

STOOP STORIES
HORSE DREAMS
YELLOWMAN
and others

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