



MANOHLA DARGIS | FILM REVIEW

These Sands Constantly Sift and Shift

This adaptation of 'Dune,' Frank Herbert's science-fiction epic, is equally sweeping and intimate.

CHIA BELLA JAMES/WARNER BROS.

IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY, a young man in a sea of sand faces a foreboding destiny. The threat of war hangs in the air. At the brink of a crisis, he navigates a feudalistic world with an evil emperor, noble houses and subjugated peoples, a tale right out of mythology and right at home in George Lucas's brainpan. But this is "Dune," baby, Frank Herbert's science-fiction opus, which is making another run at global box-office domination even as it heads toward controversy about what it and its messianic pro-

tagonist signify.

The movie is a herculean endeavor from the director Denis Villeneuve ("Arrival"), a starry, sumptuous take on the novel's first half. Published in 1965, Herbert's book is a beautiful behemoth (my copy runs almost 900 pages) crowded with rulers and rebels, witches and warriors. Herbert had a lot to say — about religion, ecology, the fate of humanity — and drew from an astonishment of sources, from Greek mythology to Indigenous cultures. Inspired by government ef-

forts to keep sand dunes at bay, he dreamed up a desert planet where water was the new petroleum. The result is a future-shock epic that reads like a cautionary tale for our environmentally ravaged world.

Villeneuve likes to work on a large scale, but has a miniaturist's attention to fine-grained detail, which fits for a story as equally sweeping and intricate as "Dune." Like the novel, the movie is set thousands of years in the future and centers on Paul [CONTINUED ON PAGE C10](#)

Dune
 Directed by
 Denis Villeneuve

Timothée Chalamet and Rebecca Ferguson in "Dune," a herculean endeavor by its director with a starry and sumptuous result.

HOLLAND COTTER | ART REVIEW

After Years in Limbo, a Revelation

The Hispanic Society Museum and Library reopens with a radiant display of religious sculptures.

THE HISPANIC SOCIETY MUSEUM and Library, founded in 1904, is one of New York's cultural gems and, of late, one of its mysteries. Housed in a Beaux-Arts enclave called Audubon Terrace overlooking the Hudson in Washington Heights, its gallery walls are famously hung with paintings by Goya, Velázquez and Zurbarán. But the institution has been closed to a walk-in public for nearly five years.

Rumors have swirled; people have worried. Located outside the art mainstream, the Society is known to have had a hard time pulling foot traffic. And the term "Hispanic," which to the Society's founder, Archer M. Huntington, primarily meant Iberian, has majorly changed in scope and meaning in recent decades. Given all this, could the institution hope to survive, economically and politically?

Apparently, yes. The Society plans to be fully up and running again after an interior overhaul, to be completed in 2022. And in the present, it's staging a sort of soft reopening with a terrific teaser show of historical sculptures from Spain and the Spanish-speaking Americas at its Washington Heights home, and a survey of archival material at the Grolier Club on the Upper East Side.



HISPANIC SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY

At the new Hispanic Society Museum & Library exhibition, Gil de Siloé's altarpiece (1480-1500) depicts the Resurrection taking place in a gilded world.

The sculpture exhibition, called "Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh," is an operatic eye-filler of some two dozen religious works — seven by women — dating from the 15th through 18th centuries, all brilliantly colored and all but one from the Society's holdings. Italy was the stylistic source for most of this work; many Spanish artists did an apprenticeship there. But the Roman Catholic art developed in Spain, and later passed on to, or imposed on, the Americas, was, formally and emotionally, a world of its own, a world little acknowledged by major museums.

To put distinctions too simply, Italian artists of the Renaissance and beyond favored what they imagined to be a Greek "Classical" tradition of idealized figures carved in pure white marble (though, in fact, ancient Greek sculpture was painted). Sculptors in Spain went for more perishable media, like wood and ceramic, and for expressive realism, the more naturalistically detailed and colorful the better. [CONTINUED ON PAGE C14](#)

Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh
 Hispanic Society Museum & Library

Treasures From the Hispanic Society Library
 Grolier Club



DOUGLAS SEGARS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A New Play's Path To Broadway

Keenan Scott II, left, wrote 'Thoughts of a Colored Man,' and Steve H. Broadnax III directs. [Page 5.](#)

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How 'Thoughts of a Colored Man' Evolved

Keenan Scott II has deepened the characters' connections in its 15-year path to Broadway.

By ERIC GRODE

Plays by August Wilson were nowhere to be found in the syllabuses of Frostburg State University's theater classes when Keenan Scott II attended that Maryland school in the mid-2000s. Nor were works by Lorraine Hansberry, Amiri Baraka, Adrienne Kennedy or Lynn Nottage.

But there was Ntozake Shange's pioneering "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf," from 1975.

Scott, who is making his Broadway debut as the author of the recently opened "Thoughts of a Colored Man," said a class screening of the Shange work was his first — and essentially his only — exposure to theater by Black playwrights in college. And just as Shange coined the term "choreopoem" for her hybrid form, Scott began to describe "Thoughts," his senior project, as "slam narrative."

The word "colored" brings with it a very different set of associations now than it did in 1975, when segregated drinking fountains and restrooms were only a decade in the past. And yet that word is both in the title of Scott's play and more than 21 feet wide on the billboard at the center of Robert Brill's set at the John Golden Theater.

Like Shange (whose "choreopoem" is heading to Broadway next year), Scott has created a mosaic of speeches, poems and songs for seven performers of color. (And neither playwright identified their characters by name; Scott instead calls them such traits as Happiness, Love and Depression.) But when "Thoughts of a Colored Man" premiered in 2019 at Syracuse Stage in New York and then moved to Baltimore Center Stage, it also featured two female dancers and an onstage D.J. All three are gone, as are swaths of the original text. Only the Tony Award nominee Forrest McClendon ("The Scottsboro Boys") remains from that cast.

Scott and McClendon recently sat down with the "Thoughts" director, Steve H. Broadnax III, and Brian Moreland, a lead producer of the show, to discuss how the play has evolved, especially in the last two years. Their interviews have been edited and condensed.

Is "Thoughts of a Colored Man" on some level a response to "For Colored Girls"? Or is it its own thing?

KEENAN SCOTT II I'm inspired by the works of Ntozake and many others, but it's completely its own thing. I liked the word "colored" because it causes a visceral response. To this day, people ask: "Why say 'colored'?" Why use "colored"? We don't use that no more." But that is the point. There was a time when we were labeled "colored." And through the journey of the piece, you see why these men shouldn't be labeled.

FORREST MCCLENDON Ntozake was writing for colored girls to have something to do. And Keenan was writing for colored men to literally have something to do. For us to be represented onstage.

STEVE H. BROADNAX III The genre that Keenan coined, "slam narrative," is loose plot — that's the difference. You can take, say, "Def Poetry Jam" on Broadway, which is a bunch of poetry and poets that you can put in any type of mixture. But here, if you take one out, it starts to mess up the loose plot. So he's really created something new. "For Colored Girls" doesn't have a loose plot to it, but this does.

If I'm understanding the title correctly, do these seven men also add up to, essentially, one human?



SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

SCOTT Absolutely. These are, these could be, seven parts of the same man. We can all be some of these things. We can all be all of these things.

How much has the piece changed since Syracuse and Baltimore?

SCOTT It's really just a re-investigation of these characters, to make sure they all had their individual journeys. Some monologues have been added. A new scene here and there. We knew that some characters were a little more shallow than others, and we wanted to make sure that all of them are equally robust.

Can you point to any specific examples?

SCOTT I started writing this piece when I was 19, so originally these characters all hovered around 20 years old, because that's where I was in life. Fifteen years later, being a 34-year-old man who's married with a child, my sense of the world has deepened. I've been with this piece so long that I've literally grown up with these characters. And through development, the characters started to grow as well. So now the characters range from 18 to 65 years old.

BROADNAX The connections between each of the characters have changed. We discovered, for instance, how Love and Lust connected with each other. You now have all of these "aha" moments to see how they are all interconnected.

Do you think the piece would look or feel different if you had opened on Broadway directly from Baltimore, which was the plan before the shutdown?

SCOTT As Steve says all the time, everything happens in divine order. I think the show would have been just as great. But it would have been different.

BRIAN MORELAND After Baltimore, Keenan went through a private workshop with himself, writing.

SCOTT We moved to Baltimore so quick after Syracuse. I was taking notes, and there were certain things that just couldn't be implemented quick enough. So that's when I went into that private workshop. And then Covid happened, and we had all the time in the world.

When I saw it in Syracuse, there were also two women in the cast. What happened to them?

BROADNAX We discovered that this was a story, and a space, for these Black men. The women are still very much a part of their worlds. They are there in media; they are there in spirit; they are there in language. But we thought this was a space for the men.

MORELAND You go out of town so you can have a safe space to experiment. In addition to the female dancers, there was also a D.J. who was originally part of the production. All of these elements kept evolving and changing.

McCLENDON Music and movement and media are all super important in terms of this play, but the star of this play is the text. And anything that in any way upstaged the text — including the actors — had to take its rightful place on the periphery. For me, in both Syracuse and Baltimore, the discovery about the women came from women in the audience. They felt it was a story really about men.

SCOTT I've known from Day 1 that the spectrum of the Black man is rarely, rarely shown, especially on Broadway. We don't have that space. That's what I wanted to create 15 years ago for myself and my peers who felt excluded from an art form we were studying.

You were scheduled to open Oct. 31, and then opening night suddenly moved up by two weeks. Openings shift all the time, but

Forrest McClendon, second from right, with, from left: Tristan Mack Wilds, Dyllón Burnside and Da'Vinchi in "Thoughts of a Colored Man," now on Broadway at the John Golden Theater.

in the other direction. What prompted the move?

MORELAND Their dress rehearsal. Their first preview. Their second preview. The audiences clamoring to see these men, hear these stories, hear Keenan's words. That's what prompted the change. Because it was ready.

When you sat back down to write, Keenan, did you feel like the play needed to be different because the world felt different?

SCOTT That's a tricky question for me. I started writing this play when George W. Bush was president. So that's three administrations ago. A lot has changed, and a lot hasn't. People often ask me how the events around George Floyd affected me. For the Black community, George Floyd wasn't new. When I started writing this piece, I was loosely inspired about what was going on in my community in Queens when Sean Bell was killed [in a police shooting]. A lot of the themes that I cover in the play are as ever-present as they were 15 years ago. I feel like I created a timeless piece that can live, but it saddens me as well, because I would have hoped that these issues would have been solved by now.

Do you feel as if a lot of people in the audience on Broadway are only now beginning to understand what you have known this whole time?

McCLENDON The thing that radically shifted is that the American theater shut down. Audiences had an opportunity to step back and really ask themselves about what they'd been consuming. We're dealing with longstanding, oppressive practices, but this is an industry that is usually willing to look in the mirror. To look at itself and stare. In what ways are we complicit? I think we're in a new moment. And I think the play is a huge part of representing that.