

I AM AN UNABASHED FAN OF ALICE

Childress. Why do I love her work so much? Simply put, she writes the kinds of plays I want to direct. Passionate. Tender. Fierce and funny. It is fitting that she is included in a festival taking on race, sex, politics and money. Ms. Childress writes about them with such deftness that we are thoroughly entertained even as she pricks our conscience.

With *Trouble In Mind*, Ms. Childress takes on race and representation in the American Theatre. Ultimately, the play is a call for all of us to stop playing roles and get real with each other, to tell some “unvarnished truths” and reach some new understandings. Childress knew well the double bind of seeking “mainstream” success while hoping to speak some “unvarnished truths” about one’s own ethnicity. *Trouble In Mind* would make her the first African American woman writer to receive an OBIE award. But ironically, none of her plays ever reached Broadway because like *Trouble In Mind*’s Wiletta, she would not change them to satisfy producers. That *Trouble In Mind* feels so relevant now, nearly 60

years later, is both a testament to Ms. Childress’ insight and an invitation to continue the conversation.

In a 1969 essay published by the *New York Times*, Ms. Childress wrote:

“I have a play to write that may never be seen by any audience anywhere, but I do my thing. Who has ears to hear, hear . . . all others, later.”

Alice Childress was not wrong; there are many audiences who have never seen her plays. I am so pleased that we are part of a movement focusing light on Childress and her work. Thanks for hearing.

—**VALERIE
CURTIS-NEWTON,
DIRECTOR**



Photo © Joanna Brooks