

Interview: FREIGHT: THE FIVE INCARNATIONS OF ABEL GREEN's Not A Heavy Load for J. Alphonse Nicholson

The West Coast premiere of Howard L. Craft's *Freight: The Five Incarnations of Abel Green* begins November 12th @ the Fountain Theatre

By Gil Kaan



The West Coast premiere of Howard L. Craft's *Freight: The Five Incarnations of Abel Green* begins November 12, 2023, at The Fountain Theatre. Joseph Megel directs this one-man outing starring J. Alphonse Nicholson. J. Alphonse made some time out of his rehearsals to answer a few of my queries.

Thank you for taking the time for this interview, J. Alphonse!

What initially brought you into the *Freight: The Five Incarnations of Abel Green* universe for its off-Broadway production in 2017?

The first production of *Freight* was done in 2014 in Chapel Hill North Carolina. I had worked with Howard Craft and Joseph Megel multiple times prior to *Freight*. Howard's writing and Joseph's direction are the first two things that drew me to this

wonderful play, along with the amazing challenge of being on stage for 90 minutes, by myself, telling the journey of five Black men from 1910 to 2010. Each iteration has been an amazing experience. From North Carolina to New York, now Los Angeles.

Has stepping back into the five incarnations of Abel Green been like slipping on comfortable slippers? Or for this west coast premiere, starting from scratch?

Stepping back into *Freight* has been very rewarding for me, especially during the SAG strike. Being able to return to the stage, to a piece that is fulfilling to me as an artist on multiple levels, is amazing. We are very comfortable with the work we are creating but allowing ourselves to explore new choices and new ideas. I have grown a lot as an actor since 2017, so it's nice to be able to bring new tools to my process.





Has the script been tweaked since the 2017 production?

The script has remained the same, but we have added an additional stage hand to help with transitions and changing of clothes.

What would your one-word description of each of your five characters be?

Courageous, lover, lost, beautiful, Black.

Do you and Joseph Megel have a shorthand in artistic communications since he is directing you again in your reprise of Abel Green?

Joseph and I have a great relationship as actor/director, and an even better relationship as mentor/mentee and friends. It allows us to be able to move through our work with a transparency that's needed. Joseph is a great ally of the story that we are telling, and he has a huge heart when it comes to collaborating.



What would your three-line pitch for Freight be?

Relaxed. Precise. Fierce.



What made you choose Fountain Theatre as the venue to west coast premiere it?

We were looking for a West Coast home for Freight, and the Fountain Theater was the first theater to respond to my team. We are very grateful to be producing this iteration of Freight with a company that has been around as long as the Fountain Theater!

How do you think your character Private C.J. Memphis in Roundabout Theatre's A Soldier's Play would interact/react with your five incarnations?

I think CJ Memphis would fit right in with all five Abels — understanding their traumas, as well as being able to share some of his own.

What's next after Freight for J. Alphonse Nicholson?

Hopefully the strike is over soon and I'm able to get back to some TV and film productions I need to complete, but looking forward to stepping onto a stage again soon as well.

Thank you again, J. Alphonse! I look forward to meeting your five characters.

Thank you, Gil!



For tickets to the live performances of Freight: The Five Incarnations of Abel Green through December 16, 2023; click on the button below:

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