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Veralyn Jones, Gregg T. Daniel, John Prosky and Leo Marks in rehearsal (photo by Geoffrey Wade Photography)

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Alice Childress's Little-Seen 'Wedding Band' Gets the Classic Treatment

BY ROB WEINERT-KENDT

LOS ANGELES: A classic is generally defined as a work that's stood some substantial test of time. But what about a little-known gem that never really got a fair shake in its day? That's the thinking behind the [Antaeus Company](#)'s new production of Alice Childress's *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White*, a 1962 play whose subject—interracial marriage—meant it didn't get a production until 10 years after it was written, at the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1972. In staging a seldom-revived play by a too-little-known African-American playwright, Antaeus—a classical troupe best known for productions of Shakespeare and Chekhov and Brecht—is making a “very deliberate” statement, asserts director Gregg T. Daniel. “We’re saying this play is an American classic.” The play runs Oct. 18-Dec. 7.

Its scarcity onstage, admittedly, may have as much to do with the play's combustible tone as its miscegenation theme. Set in WWI-era South Carolina, *Wedding Band* features a couple almost designed to complicate our responses: Julia, an intelligent if prickly black seamstress, and Herman, a German-American handyman who faces his own unique form of war-related discrimination, are celebrating 10 years together, though not as legal spouses.

Childress may be best known for the 1950s backstage comedy *Trouble in Mind*. And though *Wedding Band*—set in a Gullah section of Charleston not far from the Catfish Row of *Porgy and Bess*—has its share of rich comic characters, it's ultimately closer to a tragedy.

“It's no *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*—it does wake you up,” cautions Daniel. “It's so stark in saying things that are on your mind, but that you've never said out loud. It makes you uncomfortable in just the right way.”