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## One-Man's Journey Through Life and Art Returns to Railroad Playhouse.

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Iyaba creates a self-portrait that is different in each performance.

By Nancy Peckenham

From the freedom of the warm streets of a Caribbean island to the depths of detention in an immigration jail, awaiting judgement, Iyaba Ibo Mandingo's life story takes over the stage in a one-man performance that returns this weekend for two final shows at the Railroad Playhouse.

In the show, Iyaba shares his anger at the politics of 21st-century America, his

disappointment with a brother who committed a violent crime and the poetry inside his head that helps him make sense of it all.

But with a gentle smile, gently rolling bare feet on stage, Lyaba finds his first breath as a child in Antigua where the words of his grandma carved his consciousness that follows him through life. Lyaba creates vivid images of how he went from carefree boy to studious son who immigrates to New York City to find that his father, who came before him, already had another family and wife.



As he talks, Lyaba parcels out small pieces of his life experience on a large canvas where he begins, flowing line by line, to paint a self-portrait, broad nose, full cheeks and flowing dreadlocks.

It's not hard to see how his expressive love conquered women and found form in poetry. Lyaba illuminates the stage and carries you with him as he is deflated by a harsh bureaucracy and discrimination that has stopped others in their tracks.

Brent Buell directs this one-man performance and is on hand with Lyaba after the show to talk with the audience about how it came to be after a chance meeting of the two. Executive producer Jane Dubin, a Tony Award winner, joins them to talk about she was quickly taken in by this riveting performance melding theater, art and poetry.



Iyaba and director Brent Buell.

At last Friday's show, the Railroad Playhouse executive director Jen Soloway also introduced a representative of Mothers & Others for a Better Newburgh (MO'Betta) and announced a raffle going on at the playhouse to benefit the organization. Soloway said later that this is part of the playhouse's efforts to reach and benefit the Newburgh community through the theater and arts.

To find out how to get tickets for the performance this Friday and Saturday, May 20 & 21, visit [rrplayhouse.org](http://rrplayhouse.org).