

The latest production by the ETA Creative Arts Foundation, "Living in the Wind," blends multifaceted characters in a tale of love, slavery and emotional relationships.

The play, written by Michael Bradford and directed by Runako Jahi, runs to June 17 at ETA Square in Chicago.

Bradford's drama tells the story of former slaves Sarah and Isaiah, who must get reacquainted after being separated for 12 years. They were married while enslaved, and, on the night of their marriage, Isaiah disappeared.

Set in the late 1800s during Reconstruction, the play not only examines the fragile relationship between the two lovers but also makes comments on the "ghosts" and memories of their former lives, and the tragedies and injustices of slavery.

We're introduced to the couple on Sarah's porch as Isaiah, who's given himself the new last name of Freeman, makes his first appearance back into her life.

They struggle with the problems and confusion his disappearance caused, the heartbreak and scars of their former lives and trying to rebuild a tender yet strained relationship.

Actress Lolita Brinkley offers a strong portrayal of the stalwart Sarah, who suffered abuse by her former master and also has terrible memories ("ghosts") of her sister Mary's tragic life.

"You've got to have a strong constitution to have a good remembrance," she says.

As Isaiah, Jonathan Kitt, provides a dramatic and, at times, a gentle, humorous edge to the emancipated character.

Brinkley and Kitt interact well together, whether they're lashing out at each other with biting comments or coyly and sweetly showing affection.

It's a bittersweet relationship that's seen in their "struggle to give up the ghosts."

Throughout the play, Sarah is haunted by those ghosts in scenes depicting her life of slavery. We meet her sister Mary, played by Lauren Wells, and Mary's lover, Jo-Jo, played by Calvin Dutton, whose fates are doomed.

As Mary, Wells offers one of the most memorable scenes when she breaks into a sad and impassioned monologue on the injustices of life.

Kudos to director Jahi, who also designed the set, for his use of interesting backdrop music and a detailed, colorful and authentic period set.

While playwright Bradford has crafted some interesting characters in the drama, the production, which is much longer than two hours, goes on a little too long.

Those attending a performance of the play shouldn't miss the latest exhibit at ETA Square, which runs in conjunction with the production. In the exhibit, Jahi shows another side to his art with "Asante: A Visual Appreciation of Heritage by Runako Jahi and Quinton Foreman." The work will be displayed to June 17.

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If you go ...

**What: "Living in the Wind"**

**When: 8 p.m. Thursdays to Saturdays, 3 and 7 p.m. Sundays, through June 17**

**Where: ETA Square, 7558 S. South Chicago Ave., Chicago**

**Tickets: \$25, with discounts for students, seniors and groups. Two-for-one tickets are available for shows at 8 p.m. Thursdays and 7 p.m. Sundays, excluding closing night.**

**Information: Call (773) 752-3955**