



Project Y Theatre Company presents
The 5th annual Women in Theatre Festival (Live and Online!) 2020



ALL HANDS ON DECK

a new series created and curated by Antu Yacob
featuring plays by France-Luce Benson, Nikkole Salter, Banna Desta,
and Sienna L. Jones
directed by Shariffa Ali and Lisa Strum

IDALTU

Opening Song by Munit Mesfin
(Lyrics are below for you to sing along)

Idaltu is an Afari word from Ethiopia that means "first born" or "elder". It was the name given to fossils found in Herto Bouri, Ethiopia that were around 160,000 years old. These fossils are considered our immediate and common ancestors of modern humans - our common source!
Idaltu was inspired by the plays and written for this program.

1.

NANĀ

Written by France-Luce Benson
Directed by Lisa Strum
Cast: Juliette Jeffers, Terry Burrell, Jazmine Stewart
Stage Directions: Chantal Jean-Pierre

Musical Interlude by Kena Anae

2.

BYGONE FRUIT

Written by Banna Desta
Directed by Shariffa Ali
Cast: Antu Yacob, Landon Woodson
Stage Directions: Hadley Evans Nash

Musical Interlude by Kena Anae

3.

THEY LIVE IN YOU

Written by Sienna Jones

Directed by Lisa Strum

Cast: Candyce Adkins, Brenna Power, Jazmine Stewart, Chantal Jean-Pierre

Stage Directions: Landon Woodson

Musical Interlude by Kena Anae

4.

WAYS AND MEANS

Written by Nikkole Salter

Directed by Shariffa Ali

Cast: Jazmine Stewart, Chantal Jean-Pierre, Candyce Adkins, Terry Burrell, Juliette Jeffers

Stage Directions: Antu Yacob

Musical Interlude by Kena Anae

MAYBE THEN

Closing Song by Munit Mesfin

(Lyrics are below for you to sing along)

“Idaltu” Lyrics:

I am from a line so deep
Stardust – in my bones
From a line that’s strong
And steeped
With history known unknown
Million years & millions more
It took to get me here
Memory is in flesh and bone
In blood & in our tears

I say this about you
I say this about me
Cause I know I’m in you
I know you are in me
It seems we have forgot
About where we came from
One blood - yon sèl san
One heart - yon sèl kè
And leb - And dem!

So I call out to!
Idaltu – Idaltu
Oh oh oh
Elders I call to you
Idaltu – Idaltu
Oh oh
Remind us what we knew
Unite us now
Can you, idaltu

Sou de Nanã Ê UÁ Ê UÁ Ê UÁ Ê

Seems like we can’t
Understand

The creator’s
Master Plan
Peace and love
Throughout the land

Think how long
We’ve wailed and cried
Believing in the wicked lies
That one is better than other
Look how we destroy each other
I say!

“Maybe Then” Lyrics:

Come & talk to me
Come & talk to me
That’s all I need for you to do
Is come and talk to me

Come & hear my song
Come & hear my song
Bring back memories
Of where I belong

And you’ll see that I’m your
Sister, my dear brother

We can break down walls
And let the air rush through

Maybe then,
We will see the truth

Come & see my soul
Come & see my soul
I’m so young and yet feel so old

Come & set me free
Come set me free
Let me be
Who I need to be
Let me be

(singing Tizitaye)	Love (x3) Everyone needs it Everybody feels it Everybody's got it	Who I'm meant to be And maybe then I can change the world for better
Come & taste this spice Come & taste this spice Of when everything Felt sweet and nice	Love (x3) give it and receive it then you will believe it That's how we can make it	Shine my light On love To my neighbor
Come & take a sip Come & take a sip Of this honey wine Let it drip Into your heart	Come hold my hand Come hold my hand So we can walk hand in hand Together	Maybe then You'll know me And I will know you
And maybe then Your heart will Open up And we can hear Each other	Come & hear my cry Wipe my tears & hear my cry The longing That just won't die	Maybe then, We will see the truth

CAST AND CREATIVES

France-Luce Benson (Playwright, *Nanã*) Named "Someone to Watch" in 2019 by American Theatre magazine; Honors include: Zoetrope Grand Prize - *Caroline's Wedding*; Bay Area Playwrights Festival 2020 Finalist - *Tigress of San Domingue*; Miranda Foundation Grant - *Detained*, Princess Grace Award runner up - *Boat People*. Dramatists Guild Fellow, Sam French OOB Festival Winner, and Kilroys List. Residencies include Djerassi, the Camargo Foundation, and Instituto Sacatar in Brazil. Productions and workshops at Ensemble Studio Theatre NY, Billie Holiday Theatre, Crossroads Theatre, City Theatre of Miami, The Playwrights Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and the New Black Fest at The Lark. Publications: Sam French, Routledge Press; MFA in Dramatic Writing: Carnegie Mellon University. She is the Community Engagement Coordinator at The Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles, and was just appointed a Board member for Every. Last. One. - an immigration rights organization dedicated to expediting the release of all *immigrant* children from the trauma of government detention.

Banna Desta (Playwright, *Bygone Fruit*) is an Eritrean & Ethiopian-American playwright and screenwriter, who crafts stories about and for the African diaspora. Her short play, *Pining*, premiered at Rattlestick Playwrights Theater and was published by Samuel French in 2019. She assistant directed the 2018 production of *Thom Pain: based on nothing* at the Signature Theater in New York. She has assisted multiple television series (*Filthy Rich*, *This Is Us*) and is currently the

showrunner's assistant for the BET+ series *First Wives Club*. She was awarded the John Golden Prize for excellence in playwriting at NYU, where she received her MFA in Dramatic Writing.

Sienna L. Jones (Playwright, *They Live in You*) is currently pursuing her MFA for Dramatic Writing at NYU. During her undergraduate years at Rutgers University, she created, wrote, directed and starred in three web series, which are all available on YouTube. Sienna loves all the different aspects of telling a story, whether it's from a camera lens or a stage. She would like to thank Antu, for believing in her, and of course her family for their constant support.

Nikkole Salter (Playwright, *Ways and Means*) is an award winning actress, playwright, educator and arts advocate. For her work she has received the OBIE, a, Outer Critics Circle Award, a Global Tolerance Award from the Friends of the United Nations a Selfdes-Kanin fellowship from the Theatre Hall of Fame, and most recently a Lily Award for her contributions to the betterment of the theatre field. Her writing has been produced on 3 continents in 5 countries, and been published in 12 international publications and has been featured on the WNET program "Theatre Close-Up." She is a graduate of Howard University and NYU.

Lisa Strum (Director, *Nanã and They Live in You*) is an educator, actress, playwright, producer, casting director, director, singer and a certified wedding officiant! She received an MFA in Acting from the University of Washington in Seattle and has performed in regional theatres all across the country. She directed *For Colored Girls...* at Five Towns College in Long Island (Region 1 Kennedy Center Award Winning Production), FALL for the Marathon 2019 One Act Play Festival with Ensemble Studio Theatre and starred as Rose in *FENCES* with the REP at The University of Delaware and Virginia REP. Lisa also starred in the Michigan Premiere of Dominique Morisseu's *PIPELINE* at the Detroit Public Theatre, and *SWEAT* at People's Light. Her solo play, *She Gon' Learn* premiered at the Emerging Artist Theatre Festival at TADA!, followed by sold out performances at the United Solo Festival on Theatre Row in NYC where the play received one of the festival's Best Solo Show Awards. Lisa was a Finalist for the Doric Wilson Independent Playwright Award, was the recipient of the Playwrights Initiative Fellowship at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program, was nominated for a New York Innovative Theatre Award for Best Outstanding Actress in a Play, and received a Broadway World Award for Best actress in the Regional production of *FENCES*.

Shariffa Chelimo Ali (Director, *Bygone Fruit and Ways and Means*) is an international creative leader committed to working with an open heart at the intersection of the performing arts and humanitarianism. Originally from Kenya and raised in South Africa, Shariffa has been a New York resident since 2013, working primarily as a director, community organizer and administrator at The Public Theater and The New Group, among others. She has lectured and directed at NYU, Brooklyn College, Yale University and Princeton University, where her productions include *Eclipsed*, *Detroit '67*, *Intimate Apparel*, *We Are Proud to Present* and an original new musical, *We Were Everywhere*. Shariffa also served as assistant director to her mentor Cynthia Nixon for *Rasheeda Speaking*, *Steve* (The New Group) and *Motherstruck!* (Culture Project). Shariffa's debut Virtual Reality short *ATOMU* is part of the official selection at the Sundance Festival 2020.

Off-Broadway: *Mies Julie* (Classic Stage Company). Regional: *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* (Pittsburgh Public Theatre), *The Copper Children* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). Honors: New Frontier Fellow at Sundance Institute Lab and the Royal National Theater (UK); POV/PBS Spark Grant. Education: BA with honors, Theatre and Performance, University of Cape Town. South Africa

Antu Yacob (Associate Producer, Actor in *Bygone Fruit*) was born in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia and raised in California and Minnesota. She is an actor, playwright and producer. She was last seen onstage in *The Fire This Time Festival Season 11*. Her solo show *In The Gray* was featured in the United Solo Theatre Festival and the Symposium on African Global Migration. Her plays have been produced at Kampala International Theatre Festival (Uganda), Project Y Theatre, Theatre167, and Mile Square Theatre. Her work has been read in the NowAfrica Playwrights Festival, The Playwriting Collective/NY Madness, Crossroads Theatre and CoLABArts. Her theater acting credits include work with American Slavery Project, Primary Stages, Crossroads Theatre, Luna Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse, Philadelphia Theatre Co, Mixed Blood Theatre, Pangea World Theatre and Pillsbury House Theatre. Her tv/film acting credits include *Night Comes On*, *Daredevil*, *Gypsy*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Brooklyn Park*, *Conjure* and *Adieu Lacan*. Her original film *Love in Submission* is currently in post-production. Antu teaches at Baruch College and Rutgers University. She received her MFA in Acting from Rutgers University.

Candy Adkins (Actor, *They Live in You, Ways and Means*) New York: *Uncle Vanya* (Columbia University), Television: "Homicide City". Candyce works as an actor/trainer for NYPD officer trainings. Candyce is a teaching artist & director at On Broadway Performing Arts Training Program, founded by Broadway veteran Rema Webb & Daniel Siford. Through this program she has directed 4 musicals: *Hairspray*, *High School Musical*, *Rent* & *Spamalot*. She is also a member of Quick Silver Theater Company.

Terry Burrell (Actor, *Nanã, Ways and Means*) is an actor and musician whose one woman show "ETHEL" was last seen at The Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, GA; Spring of 2016. Broadway credits include, *Three Penny Opera*; *Thoroughly Modern Millie*; *Swinging On A Star*; *Into The Woods*; *Just So Stories*; *Dreamgirls*; *Honky Tonk Nights*; *Eubie*; and *Show Boat (London 1998 Original Cast)*. Her Off-Broadway credits include, *Almost Heaven*; *Lady Day*; *Taking A Chance On Love*; and *The World Goes Round*. National tours include, *Copacabana*; *Grand Night For Singing*; *Bubbling Brown Sugar*; and *Showboat*. Regional credits include, *Ethel*; *Ever After*; *Angry Raucous And Shamelessly Gorgeous*; *Hospice/Pointing At The Moon*; *Lady Day At Emerson's Bar And Grill*; *Candide*; *Cinderella And Fella*; *Crowns*; *Man Of La Mancha*; *Up From Paradise*; *Sophisticated Ladies*; *Ain't Misbehavin'*; *A Christmas Carol*; *Oklahoma*; *The Women Of Brewster Place*; *Thunder Knocking At The Door*; *Cinderella*; *Smokey Joe's Café*; *Time And Again*; *Jar The Floor*; *Brownie Points*; *Mahalia, Boys From Syracuse*; *Sheila's Day*; and *Da Kink In My Hair*. Concerts include, *Duke Ellington Orchestra Venice*; *Oslo Norway Jazz Festival*; and *Portland Oregon Jazz Festival*.

Chantal Jean-Pierre (Actor, *They Live in You, Ways and Means*) is an accomplished actress and a guest collegiate instructor. She has graced the stages of several reputable regional theater companies around the country. Chantal has also guest starred on a number of television shows such as *New Amsterdam*, *The Good Fight*, *Law & Order* and many more. She taught for many years at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, Brown/Trinity MFA Program, SUNY/Purchase, and Montclair State University. She has an MFA in acting from Rutgers University and a BFA from Florida International University. Please visit her website at www.chantaljeanpierre.com if you want to know more.

Juliette Jeffers (Actor, *Nanã, Ways and Means*) is a Caribbean-American actor, writer, director, producer and teaching artist. On screen, Juliette has appeared in eighteen films, thirty-three guest star TV roles and over sixty national commercials. Some of her notable credits include, “Chicago Med”, “Snowfall”, “Criminal Minds” and “Grey’s Anatomy.” Some of her theatre highlights include five solo plays that she wrote and performed in ...“BATMAN AND ROBIN IN THE BOOGIE DOWN” (Bronx Council on the Arts Award, Drama Desk, NAACP nominations), “CHOCOLATE MATCH.COM”, “PAN GYUL”, “JUDGMENT DAY” and “TIO PABLO” (In English & Spanish - Best Play and Best Actress awards-Hollywood Short & Sweet Fest.). Juliette helps develop and directs solo shows and is an Advisory Board Member of the L.A. Women’s Theatre Festival. For more information on Juliette, go to www.juliettejeffers.com.

Brenna Power (Actor, *They Live in You*) is excited to play the role of “Krissy” for her first time working with Project Y! Brenna currently lives in Los Angeles, but has spent most of her recent time in Pittsburgh at Carnegie Mellon University, where she received her BFA in acting in 2019. Recently, she has guest starred on Season 4 of “*Betrayed*” as well as Season 4 of “*People Magazine Investigates*.” She also is currently working on the last edit of her web series, “Street Voices,” for her directorial debut.

Jazmine Stewart (Actor, *Nanã, They Live in You, Ways and Means*) is an artist of Jamaican descent, born and raised in New York City. She started her pursuit of acting by going to the Professional Performing arts High School. From there she attended Rutgers BFA acting program. Since graduating in 2019 she has gone on to perform in regional and Off- Broadway shows such as: Kenny Leon’s production of *Much Ado About Nothing* (Shakespeare in the Park), *Citrus* (Northern Stage), *Henry IV part One* (The Folger Theater). Jazmine is thrilled to be working with Project Y, and to collaborate with some amazing female playwrights!

Munit Mesfin is an Ethiopian-American singer, songwriter! She was part of a duet, Munit and Jorg, that toured globally and changed the contemporary Ethiopian music scene, bringing forth a new wave of modern acoustic style groups. Munit also works as a teaching artist at the Wolf Trap Center for Performing Arts, and as the Youth Programs Coordinator for the Ethiopian Community Center in Washington DC. She uses arts integration (music, movement, play) to teach children African history, language, culture and more! She has also started work on a series of children’s books on African and African Diaspora history. Munit is currently working on her third album (solo project) that pushes Ethiopian music forward in a new tradition infused pop

sensibility through songs for positive social change in Amharic and English.

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Kena Anae is an actor, singer/songwriter and musician based in New York City, USA. Over the years, he has worked in regional theatres, film/television and the recording industry. You can hear his music on reverbNation.com/kenanaae, youtube.com/kenanaae facebook.com/kenanaemusic.

Landon G. Woodson (Actor, *Bygone Fruit*) is a native of Passaic, NJ, and a graduate of Rutgers University where he earned an M.F.A. in Acting. Previous credits include *Back to the Real* (Crossroads Theatre Company) *Soldier's Heart* (Premiere Stages) *The Mountaintop* (Kitchen Theatre Company), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Syracuse Stage), *This is Modern Art* (Blessed Unrest), *Intimate Apparel* (Sierra Repertory Theatre) and *The Whistleblower* (Denver Center for the Performing Arts) www.landongwoodson.com.

Andrew W. Smith (WIT Festival Producer) is a professional Actor, Director, and Producer whose work has been seen throughout New York City, regionally, and internationally. He is also the Co-Founding Artistic Director of award-winning Project Y Theatre Company in New York City. Selected regional acting work includes: Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Pittsburgh City Theatre, Quantum Theatre, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Roundhouse Theatre, Potomac Theatre Project, Ars Nova, Studio Theatre, and Olney Center for the Arts. He toured with The National Players on their 50th anniversary as Cyrano in *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Filmwork includes *Lucid*, *Shooting Script*, *Death of a Nation* (Winner: Best Short, IndieFest 2011; Best in Show, Best Shorts Competition 2011), *Under-Ground*. Television work includes *GONE*, *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*, *One Life to Live*, *As the World Turns*, *Guiding Light*. Andrew is currently an Associate Professor of Acting at the Carnegie Mellon School of Drama. He also spent two years as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre at Middlebury College, Vermont, from which he also received his BA in theatre. He is also a graduate of the MFA Acting program at the University of California, San Diego, from which he received the Teaching Excellence Award upon graduation. www.smithandrewwilliam.com.

Michole Biancosino (WIT Festival Producer) is the Co-Founding Artistic Director of Project Y Theatre Company, where she has developed and directed new work in Washington, D.C. and New York City over the past 20 years. With Project Y, she has led various professional productions, as producer, director, and writer. Credits included the long-running shows, *Trump Lear* (co-created and directed) and the award-winning, *Gary Busey's One Man Hamlet (as performed by David Carl)*, both of which toured regionally and performed at Edinburgh Fringe, as co-productions with Richard Jordan Productions (UK), The Pleasance, and Underbelly. She directs solo artist Peter Michael Marino's long-running solo shows, *Show Up!* and *Show Up.. Kids!*, both of which have toured regionally and internationally. Recipient: SDC Gielgud Fellowship for classical directing. Her work with Project Y Theatre has been supported by grants from The Puffin Foundation, ART/NY, NY Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), The Dramatists Guild, LitNY Fund, EAG Open Space Grant, and New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). She holds an MFA in Directing

from Rutgers University, Mason Gross School of the Arts. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Middlebury College. For more information: www.micholebiancosino.com.

Christopher Ulloth (Graphic and Website Designer) is a New York City based playwright, producer, and graphic/web designer. Recent Producing, Graphic/Web Design credits include: WOMEN IN THEATRE FESTIVAL (Project Y Theatre Company, NYC, 2016-2020); THE FIFTH VITAL SIGN (Elephant Room Productions, NYC, 2019); SALAMANDER by Lisa VillaMil (Elephant Room Productions, Philadelphia Fringe Festival 2018); SUICIDE STORIES: GALLERY OF THE UNTOLD (Elephant Room Productions, Philadelphia Fringe Festival 2017); VENTILATOR BLUES by Robert Kerr (Staged Reading, Elephant Room Productions, 2017); BEAUTIFUL AMERICAN SOLDIER by Dano Madden (Staged Reading, Elephant Room Productions, 2016). B.A.: Bloomsburg University.

Gabrielle Martin (Assistant to the Producers) is a senior theatre major and music minor at Middlebury College. In addition to her acting credits, she recently directed a devised multimedia theatre piece, *I Like You (A Lot)* at Middlebury College. She has also held a Shakespeare artist in residency position at Berridge Programs in Normandy, France; teaching original practices and text work to high school students.

Hadley Evans Nash (Assistant to the Producers, Production Coordinator, Stage Directions in *Bygone Fruit*) is a director/playwright who is so honored to be working with Project Y. She is an alumnus of the National Theatre Institute as well as Shakespeare and Company's Training Intensive. She will graduate from St. Olaf College next year with a theatre major and hopes to start a small theatre company in Minneapolis.

Project Y Theatre Company is an outside-the-box theatre company that supports the creation, development, and production of new works for the stage in New York City. 2020 marks our 20th year as an award-winning company committed to supporting playwrights and their plays, and with a focus on women and LGBTQ voices. Project Y positions new plays and new voices to be part of the theatrical conversation. www.projectytheatre.org.

Creative Team and Staff

Michole Biancosino & Andrew W. Smith, Co-Artistic Directors

Lia Romeo, Associate Artistic Director

Antu Yacob, Associate Producer

Hadley Evans Nash & Gabrielle Martin, Assistants to the Producers

Amit Prakash, Resident Sound Designer

Neel Murgai, Digital Technician

Christopher Ulloth, Graphic Designer and Company Member

ALL HANDS ON DECK is a FREE event!
If you want to make a donation, please consider a gift to:

The Fire This Time Festival
American Slavery Project
National Black Theatre

LINKS to these organizations can be found on our website: www.projectytheatre.org

The work was supported in part by funding from the College of Fine Arts
Fund for Research and Creativity, Carnegie Mellon University.

Our 2020 season has been supported by the Dime Community Grant Fund/A.R.T. New York



UPCOMING PROGRAMMING

The One & Only Amanda Palmer

by Kat Mustatea

directed by Michole Biancosino

featuring Natalie Nankervis, Saran Bakari, and Meghan Wright.

LIVE ONLINE -- AUGUST 9th, 2020

Amanda Palmer's world comes undone when she discovers she is not the only Amanda Palmer in the world who can turn into a cat at night.

ZOOM PLAYS

In March we put out an open call for plays written to be performed on the Zoom platform, and now we have over 300 submissions. Two teams of readers read every single play, and in early September stay tuned for the world premiere of:

Close (But Not Too Close!) written by Paloma Sierra,

Music by Dusty Sanders, Lyricist Julia Koyfman

Missing Ingredient, by Colleen Nicole O'Doherty

Soup, by Rachel Carnes

Cliffhanger, by Catalina Florina Florescu

