

STUDY GUIDE



THE MCC THEATER PRODUCTION OF

# TABLE 17

WEST COAST PREMIERE

11.05 – 12.07.2025

GIL CATES THEATER

*Commissioned and developed by New Works Provincetown, Mark Cortale, Jonathn Murray & Harvey Reese, Producing Partners.*

*Produced at MCC Theater, September 2024.  
Artistic Directors: Bernard Telsey & William Cantler; Executive Director: Blake West.*

**THANK YOU**

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**ACCESSIBILITY AT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE**

The theater has wheelchair and scooter-accessible locations where patrons can remain in their wheelchairs or transfer to theater seats.



**OPEN CAPTION PERFORMANCE**

An LED sign will display the text of the play in sync with the live performance.

Saturday, November 22, 2025 - 3:00 pm

**AD))) AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCE**

Patrons who are blind or low-vision may listen to an audio describer give live, verbal descriptions of actions, costumes, scenery, and other visual elements of the production. Patrons who wish to listen to the audio description can pick up a listening device from the concierge in the lobby.

Sunday, November 23, 2025 - 2:00 pm



**ASL INTERPRETED PERFORMANCE**

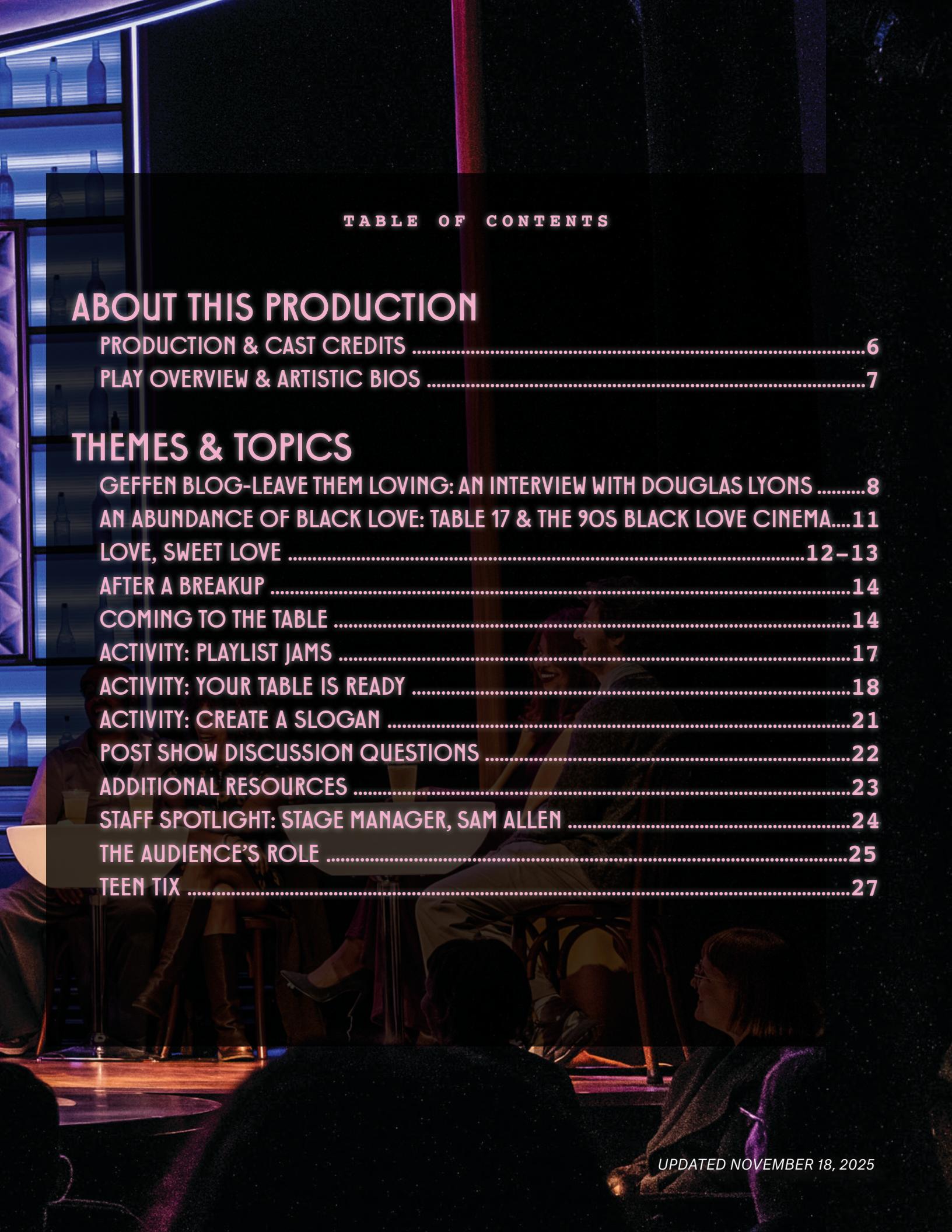
An ASL interpreter will be present in the house left.

Sunday, November 30, 2025 - 2:00 pm





L-R: MICHAEL RISHAWN AND GAIL BEAN  
PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

# ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION & CAST CREDITS .....	6
PLAY OVERVIEW & ARTISTIC BIOS .....	7

# THEMES & TOPICS

GEFFEN BLOG-LEAVE THEM LOVING: AN INTERVIEW WITH DOUGLAS LYONS .....	8
AN ABUNDANCE OF BLACK LOVE: TABLE 17 & THE 90S BLACK LOVE CINEMA....	11
LOVE, SWEET LOVE .....	12-13
AFTER A BREAKUP .....	14
COMING TO THE TABLE .....	14
ACTIVITY: PLAYLIST JAMS .....	17
ACTIVITY: YOUR TABLE IS READY .....	18
ACTIVITY: CREATE A SLOGAN .....	21
POST SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS .....	22
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES .....	23
STAFF SPOTLIGHT: STAGE MANAGER, SAM ALLEN .....	24
THE AUDIENCE'S ROLE .....	25
TEEN TIX .....	27

GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS  
THE MCC THEATER PRODUCTION OF

# TABLE 17

WRITTEN BY  
**DOUGLAS LYONS**

DIRECTED BY  
**ZHAILON LEVINGSTON**

PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
**MARK CORTALE**

SCENIC DESIGNER  
**JASON SHERWOOD**

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**BEN STANTON**

HAIR & WIG DESIGNER  
**NIKIYA MATHIS**

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
**ROSALIND BEVAN**

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER  
**SAM ALLEN**

COSTUME DESIGNER  
**DEVARIO D. SIMMONS**

SOUND DESIGNER  
**CHRISTOPHER DARBASSIE**

COMPOSER  
**TRE MATTHEWS**

INTIMACY DIRECTOR  
**JOY DEMICHELLE**

CASTING DIRECTOR  
**PHYLLIS SCHURINGA, CSA**

## CAST



**GAIL BEAN**  
JADA



**BIKO EISEN-MARTIN**  
DALLAS



**MICHAEL RISHAWN**  
RIVER, ERIC & OTHERS



**IMANI BRANCH**  
U/S JADA



**CALVIN M. THOMPSON**  
U/S DALLAS / RIVER, ERIC &  
OTHERS

# ABOUT THE PLAY

**OVERVIEW:** If your ex called, would you answer? Jada and Dallas were once engaged—now, they're meeting for dinner to untangle the past. Between cheeky waiters, old wounds, and the undeniable spark that still lingers between them, their “casual” reunion may ignite a bomb neither of them can defuse. Fresh off its hit Off-Broadway debut and from the creative minds of Douglas Lyons (*Chicken & Biscuits*) and Zhailon Livingston (*Cats: The Jellicle Ball*), this witty new play serves up romance, regrets, and the unexpected possibility of second chances..

**SETTING/TIME:** Yesterday, Today & Forever.

**RUNNING TIME:** 85 minutes, no intermission.

**AGE RECOMMENDATION:** 12+

**WARNINGS:** Strobe Lighting Effects • Loud Music • Theatrical Haze

**CONTENT ADVISORY:** This production contains profanity & mature content.

# ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES



## DOUGLAS LYONS *Playwright (he/him)*

Douglas Lyons is a two-time Emmy-nominated multi-hyphenate artist. As a writer, he earned a GLAAD Media Award nomination for his Broadway playwriting debut, *Chicken & Biscuits*, which was the second-most produced play in America in 2022-2023. His most recent play, *Table 17*, which premiered Off-Broadway at MCC Theater, was deemed a New York Times Critic's Pick and won two 2024 AUDELCO Awards for Best Playwright and Outstanding Ensemble, two Lucille Lortel Awards, and an Outer Critics Circle Award. Douglas served as a writer on both seasons of Apple TV+'s *Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock*. His Broadway acting and touring credits include *The Book of Mormon*, plus the original casts of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, the recent Tony Award-winning Broadway revival of *Parade*, *RENT*, and *Dreamgirls*. As a composer-lyricist, his music and lyrics have been featured on Nickelodeon, BET+, Apple TV+, CBS, Audible, and more. His other written stage works include *Don't Touch My Hair* (IAMA Theatre Company), *Polkadots* (Off Broadway Alliance Award Winner Best Family Show, Atlantic Theater Company), *Beau the Musical* (Out of the Box Theatrics), the world premiere of *Five Points* (Theater Latté Da), and more. He is currently developing television with Skydance and Ryan Reynolds' Maximum Effort. [www.douglaslyons.net](http://www.douglaslyons.net) IG: @chocolatehipster



## ZHAILON LEVINGSTON *Director (he/him)*

Zhailon Livingston is an Obie and Lucille Lortel Award-winning storyteller and director. He is a board member for the Broadway Advocacy Coalition, which received an honorary Tony Award in 2021. Zhailon is also the Artistic Director of Inheritance Theatre Project. Select credits include: *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical* (Broadway), *Hadestown* (Korea), *The Wiz Jr.* (The Children's Theatre of Cincinnati), *Chicken & Biscuits* (Broadway), *Patience* (Second Stage Theatre), *Little Miss Perfect* (Goodspeed Musicals), *Cats: The Jellicle Ball* (Perelman Performing Arts Center).

# LEAVE THEM LOVING

AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT  
DOUGLAS LYONS

SCAN THE QR CODE TO read an interview from the Geffen Playhouse Blog with Playwright Douglas Lyons and Geffen Playhouse Associate Artistic Director Amy Levinson, where they discuss the inspiration and development of the play *Table 17*.



“LAUGH OPENLY WITH US.  
LOVE WITH US.

LET THIS PLAY REMIND YOU OF  
THAT EX YOU WANNA STRANGLE  
AND THE ONE YOU CAN’T STOP  
THINKING OF.

UNBUTTON YOUR TOP BUTTON, THE  
PANTS TOO, AND BE FREE.  
THE CHARACTERS WILL ASK YOU FOR  
ADVICE, DON’T BE SHY, TALK TO ‘EM.  
THIS RESTAURANT IS LIVELY A  
ND WE’RE OH SO GLAD YOU’RE HERE. ”

- DOUGLAS LYONS, PLAYWRIGHT



DOUGLAS LYONS, PLAYWRIGHT, TABLE 17.  
PHOTO BY COREY OLSEN.



L-R: GAIL BEAN AND BIKO EISEN-MARTIN  
PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH.

# AN ABUNDANCE OF BLACK *Love*

TABLE 17 AND THE 90'S  
BLACK LOVE CINEMA



SCAN THE QR CODE TO see the  
48 Black Love films curated  
by Team Array on [letterboxd.com](http://letterboxd.com).  
What would be on your list?



BY PARIS CRAYTON III, GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE TEACHING ARTIST

Growing up as a Black kid in the 90's, there was no shortage of Black love on movie screens. It seemed as if though each year, another Black romcom or drama would be headed to a theatre near you, and I welcomed all of them. From the poetry infused stylings of *Love Jones* (1997), to the college friends and lovers with secrets in *The Best Man* (1999), all the way to the beautiful, sports centered romance of *Love and Basketball* (2000), these movies shaped an entire cultural language around love, heartbreak, desire, and ambition. They showed what Black love could be when it is allowed to be free and vulnerable.

With *Table 17*, Douglas Lyons is explicitly paying homage to those films. The hilarious three-hander feels like a direct conversation with those films, while at the same time reimagining them for an audience of today. Like *Jason's Lyric* (1994) and *Brown Sugar* (2002), *Table 17* explores what intimacy means, and how it must be compromised when in a relationship.

A clear hallmark of 90's Black love cinema is poetic, confident dialogue that dialogue, that is charged with sexual electricity. *Table 17* masters this. The opening monologues where the characters Jada and Dallas prepare to reunite, echo the same energy and wit of Nia Long and Larenz Tate sparring in smoky Chicago bars in *Love Jones*. The direct addresses to the audience, breaking the fourth wall, mirror the comedic stylings of Vivica A. Fox in *Two Can Play That Game* (2001), where Shante stares at the camera and into the eyes of her audience, reminding us that love stories are not private but communal experiences, shared and witnessed by the culture.

Another similarity, but beautiful departure that *Table 17* makes from those films is in the voice of the character River, a queer server at the restaurant where most of the play takes place. Queer characters of the 90's were often only the comic relief, with over the top personalities and catty behavior. While River is indeed funny, he is also human. Both hilarious and heartbreak, his direct addresses turn him into a kind of Greek chorus for the new age of Black love, making him a well rounded and three dimensional character that gives queer characters a much needed voice.

I FELL DEEPER IN LOVE WITH HIM  
CAUSE HE WOULDN'T ALLOW ME TO  
LOVE HIM MORE THAN I LOVED MYSELF...  
HIS WORDS WRAPPED AROUND ME LIKE  
A SILK SCARF- SWEEPING ME INTO THE AIR  
AND EVERY TIME I DESCENDED  
FROM HIS VERBAL ECSTASY,  
HE'D BE RIGHT THERE TO OFFER MORE.

-JADA, TABLE 17



PHOTOS: (Clockwise from top) ANGELA BASSET AND TAYE DIGGS, HOW STELLA GOT HER GROOVE

BACK, DIR. BY KEVIN RODNEY SULLIVAN (1998, 20TH CENTURY FOX); SANAA LATHAN AND OMAR EPPS, *LOVE & BASKETBALL*, DIR. BY GINA PRINCE BYTHEWOOD (2000, NEW LINE CINEMA); VIVICA A. FOX AND MORRIS CHESTNUT, *TWO CAN PLAY THAT GAME*, DIR. BY MARK BROWN (2001, SONY PICTURES); JANET JACKSON AND TUPAC SHAKUR, *POETIC JUSTICE*, DIR. BY JOHN SINGLETON (1991, COLUMBIA PICTURES); LARENZ TATE AND NIA LONG, *LOVE JONES*, DIR. BY THEODORE WITCHER, (1997, NEW LINE CINEMA.)

The one thing that you can't escape while watching the 90's Black love films is the music. The smooth and melodic soundtracks were the backbone to each movie. Right when you thought the characters would call it quits for good, a silky smooth voice would vibrate your ear drums and remind the characters on screen that they can't live without one another. Lyons' & Levingston's use of music resurrects the sonic palette of those films. *Table 17* lets music score hesitation, nostalgia, and the possibilities that hang between our lead characters.

Lyons has created a beautiful tribute that isn't just for nostalgia's sake, but a reclamation of what black love looks like unfiltered. It mirrors the emotional depth and sexuality of the 90's romance, and filters it through a contemporary lens of therapy, accountability, and queer inclusion. It asks the hard questions that always tend to arise in relationships, and doesn't give easy answers. These are the kind of stories the world needs to hear. Black love exists, and it should always have a seat at the table.

OPPOSITE PAGE: GAIL BEAN AND BIKO EISEN-MARTIN  
PHOTO BY COREY OLSEN

# LOVE, SWEET LOVE

It was the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and ninety-three, when Nestor Alexander Haddaway famously pondered, at 124 BPM, "What Is Love?"

Prior to and continuing since, many have tried to answer that exact same question. Below are a few writers, poets, and philosophers exploring to explain, trying to define, and attempting to answer the age-old question of what exactly is love. Is it a chemical? Is it a feeling? Is it all you need?

“

Two hearts in love  
need no words.

MARCELINE DESBORDES-VALMORE  
FRENCH POET

”

“

Love is the whole thing.  
We are only pieces.

RUMI  
PERSIAN POET AND THEOLOGIAN

”

“

This fire that we call Loving is  
too strong for human minds.  
But just right for human souls.

ABERJHANI  
AMERICAN WRITER



“

To return to love, to get the love we  
always wanted but never had, to have  
the love we want but are not prepared  
to give, we seek romantic relationships.  
We believe these relationships,  
more than any other, will rescue and  
redeem us. True love does have the  
power to redeem but only if we are  
ready for redemption. Love saves us  
only if we want to be saved.

bell hooks  
AMERICAN WRITER

”

“

What greater thing is there for two  
human souls than to feel that they are  
joined to strengthen each other and  
to be at one with each other in silent  
unspeakable memories.

GEORGE ELLIOT  
ENGLISH WRITER

”

“

In all the world, there is no heart for me like yours. In all the world, there is no love for you like mine.

MAYA ANGELOU  
AMERICAN POET



“

“AND I HAVE YOU”

Rain has drops

Sun has shine

Moon has beams

That make you mine

Rivers have banks

Sands for shores

Hearts have heartbeats

That make me yours

Needles have eyes

Though pins may prick

Elmer has glue

To make things stick

Winter has Spring

Stockings feet

Pepper has mint

To make it sweet

Teachers have lessons

Soup du jour

Lawyers sue bad folks

Doctors cure

All and all

This much is true

You have me

And I have you.

NIKKI GIOVANNI  
AMERICAN POET

“

We are asleep until we fall in love.

LEO TOLSTOY  
RUSSIAN WRITER

”

“

I have to learn to love myself before I can love you or accept your loving. You have to learn to love yourself before you can love me or accept my loving. Know we are worthy of touch before we can reach out for each other.

AUDRE LORDE  
AMERICAN WRITER

”

“

Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.

LAO TZU  
CHINESE PHILOSOPHER

”

“

Soul meets soul on lover's lips.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY  
ENGLISH ROMANTIC POET

”

“

The moment you have in your heart this extraordinary thing called love and feel the depth, the delight, the ecstasy of it, you will discover that for you the world is transformed.

JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI  
INDIAN PHILOSOPHER

”



# AFTER A BREAKUP

BY BRIAN ALLMAN, GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE DIRECTOR OF  
EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Getting through a breakup can be really...really... tough.

But it's also a chance to grow, and reflect, and to learn more about yourself. The most important thing is to give yourself permission to feel whatever comes up, (including men). Don't bottle-up your emotions. Acknowledge your sadness, your anger, your confusion, or even any relief. All of these are normal reactions to a break-up. Instead of pretending everything's fine, try writing down your thoughts in a journal. Some people find it helpful to write a letter to their ex, not to send, but rather, to release everything you didn't get to say. It's a safe way of processing your feelings, and beginning to move forward. If needed, rip up the letter and flush it down the toilet, safely dispose of it in a firepit or fireplace, or save it and re-read it, as needed.

Once you've faced your emotions, start creating some d...i...s...t...a...n...c...e. This might mean deleting old photos, putting away gifts, or unfollowing your ex on social media. Constant reminders can make it harder to heal. It's also okay to limit contact, giving yourself some space helps you regain balance, independence, and even clarity.

## COMING TO THE TABLE...

SCAN THE QR CODES TO THE LEFT to watch deep conversations from The Skin Deep on YouTube. The Skin Deep celebrates and amplifies real connections in increasingly disconnected world by capturing genuine, heartfelt conversations between two people. Who would you want to have a deep connected conversation with and why?



1. "EXES MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER 3 YEARS": KRYSTAL & STEVEN — The inspiration for the play, *Table 17!* It's been three years since Krystal & Steven ended their relationship of two years. Now, after living in different cities and barely speaking, they sit across from each other in a special two-part conversation to vulnerably explore the love they once shared, aftermath of their breakup, and what truly forced the couple apart.



2. "WHAT IF I HAD PROPOSED BEFORE WE BROKE UP?": ELON & LEWIS — Exes Elon (she/her) and Lewis (he/him) have transitioned their relationship into one as best friends. The two are still supportive and in each other's lives, even feeling as though at times they are the same person. During their conversation Lewis reveals to Elon that he was considering proposing to her before their last break up.



3. "TWO TOUGH WOMEN LEARNING TO LOVE GENTLY": TALECIA & NEDRA — Together for two years, Talecia (she/they) and Nedra (she/her) met online and built a connection through humor, travel, fashion, and a shared love for good food. Their conversation is open and full of care. They talk about patience, vulnerability, and how they keep showing up for each other through challenges and change. This episode is an intimate look at Black queer love, real communication, and the strength that comes from choosing softness.



4. "EXES: IS THIS OUR LAST CONVERSATION EVER?": ANNALISA & JERON — Exes Annalisa and Jeron see each other for the first time since the couple broke up. The two talk about how they got to the space they are in and the forgiveness they have achieved. Annalisa and Jeron discuss their past, present, and if they will have a future.



During this time focus on your well-being: eat real meals (not fast food, junk food, energy drinks or excessive amounts of sugar or caffeine), get enough sleep, drink water, and move your body, even if it's just a short walk or stretching. Physical care can make a big difference in how you feel emotionally.

Be gentle with yourself and with others. First, healing isn't a race, and there's no specific timeline for feeling "better." You're allowed to have good days and bad days. Try not to judge yourself for feeling juxtaposing emotions. Surround yourself with people who genuinely care about you, like friends, family, or even a teacher or coach you trust. Sharing with others about what you're going through can remind you that you're not alone.

Avoid coping in ways that might make things worse or put you in danger, like drinking or using substances to numb the pain, or even getting into a new relationship too soon. Instead, look for healthy distractions. You might pick up a new hobby, join a club, volunteer, or take a workshop that excites you. Keeping your mind active during this time helps you rebuild a sense of self, purpose, and identity.

Finally, turn your attention to the future. Think about your personal goals. Maybe you want to focus on school, learn something new, travel, or explore a dream you've been putting off. Plan a solo adventure, even if it's just a day trip or a walk somewhere new. And if you find that any sadness starts to feel too heavy to handle on your own, reaching out to a counselor or therapist is a strong, healthy step toward healing.

# Biancas



L-R: BIKO EISEN-MARTIN AND GAIL BEAN  
PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH.



L-R: GAIL BEAN AND  
BIKO EISEN-MARTIN  
PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH.

# ACTIVITY:

## PLAYLIST JAMS

**ACTIVITY TIME:** Up to 30 minutes.

Douglas Lyons' Table 17 leans into pop culture references from the 1970's, 80's, 90's, including the first 2 ½ decades of the 21st Century. This encompasses a number of musical artists, including references, and heard in the music used within the show.

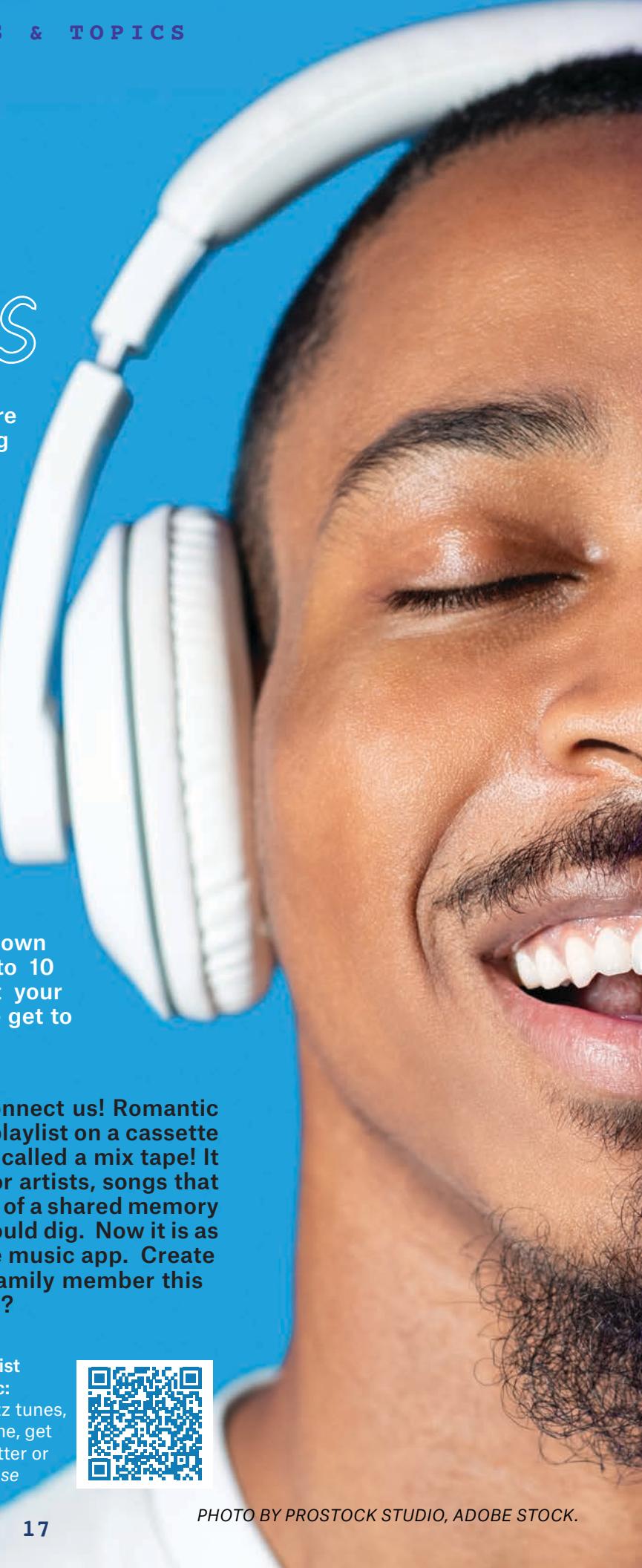
Most movies and some theater pieces utilize music to enhance the overall impact of a text on an audience. The compilation of songs and music for a film or play is known as a soundtrack. The collection of songs, music, and instrumental pieces are used to help set the mood, tone, or even the decade in which the piece takes place. The use of music gives atmosphere to the text, and helps give context, including historical, thematic, and even cultural clues and context, so the overall film or play connects directly with an audience's emotions, attention, and enjoyment.

In this activity, brainstorm and develop your own personal soundtrack or playlist. Choose up to 10 songs or musical pieces that actively reflect your lived experiences, that would help an audience get to know you better.

**BONUS- MAKE IT A MIX TAPE!** Music can connect us! Romantic partners and friends used to create a curated playlist on a cassette or burning a CD to share with their loved one- called a mix tape! It could include a shared love for certain songs or artists, songs that evoke a feeling or mood, songs that remind you of a shared memory together or new songs you think this person would dig. Now it is as easy to create a digital playlist on your favorite music app. Create and share a special playlist with a friend, or family member this holiday season. Who would you share one with?



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO** listen to the playlist  
**"Table 17: The Rekindling "** on Apple Music:  
 A smooth collection of 17 R&B, soca, and jazz tunes, designed to take you back down memory lane, get you in your feelings, and call your ex...for better or for worse. Playlist curated by Geffen Playhouse Teaching Artist Ashley Denise Robinson.



# ACTIVITY: YOUR TABLE IS READY

Douglas Lyons sets our star-crossed lovers Jada and Dallas, continuing to meet at Table #17 inside Bianca's, a restaurant & bar. At the table, Jada & Dallas talk about their relationship, love, life, sports, and everything in between. They drink, order food, and find themselves sharing both laughter and tears, as the music pulses, and those around them dance.

Bianca's is a happening spot, and River, the Host, has a full reservation list for the evening. Who else is at Bianca's and why are they there? Come up with their names, ages, occupations, their relationship to each other and why they are at Bianca's tonight. Is it a first date? Is it a "Date-a-versary"? Is it just a group of friends there to dance and have fun? What are their stories?



## BIANCA'S RESERVATION LIST

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_, 2025



Choose one of the tables from above and write a first draft of a 3-page scene about these characters. Start off by writing down the characters names, ages, occupations, and a 1-2 sentence description of the characters. Then brainstorm how they met, the reason or occasion they are at Bianca's, and the current relationship status between the characters. What song is a good representation of their current emotional states. You can write a scene from their past, a scene of them getting ready for their dinner, a scene at the table, or a scene of what happens after they leave Biancas!

# Bianca's

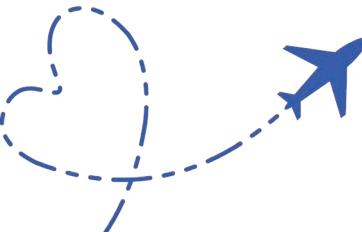


MICHAEL RISHAWN IN TABLE 17 AT MCC THEATER  
PHOTO BY DANIEL J. VASQUEZ, COURTESY OF MCC THEATER.



MICHAEL RISHAWN  
PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH.

# ACTIVITY: CREATE A SLOGAN



As Eric puts it, Jada and him are both "delectable" flight attendants, working for SkyFly Airlines. When Eric shares the pre-flight announcements with the passengers, he peppers his speech with the slogan, "SkyFly Airlines, where we never have to try, cause we always stay fly." Though Jada dismisses his whack slogan as Extra, slogans can help a brand easily define their identity and purpose, and Eric explains that if you, "butter them up at the top of a flight, [passengers] are more likely to be courteous".

In this activity, you can create your own original advertising slogan. Practice being creative using persuasive writing skills and communicating with others by brainstorming your own slogans.

## RESEARCH: WHAT MAKES A GOOD SLOGAN?

Research these well known brands and find their slogans/catchphrases. What makes them memorable? How do they make you feel? What do you think makes a good slogan? What other brands and slogans do you know?

Nike: \_\_\_\_\_

Apple: \_\_\_\_\_

Subway: \_\_\_\_\_

State Farm: \_\_\_\_\_

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

## CRAFT YOUR BRAND

Create a brand by choosing from one of the three:

- A business idea you might start some day
- An industry you might work in
- A future career or occupation

What is the name of your business or product?

What makes your business, industry, or job valuable or unique?

Who are you trying to reach? Who are your customers?

What feelings you want people to remember about your product?

Brainstorm and write down some key words or phrases about your brand, item, or product that reflect its values, views, and features.

## CREATE YOUR SLOGAN

Now that you know your brand, brainstorm 5-10 different ideas for a slogan.

Keep it short (less than 10 words total).

Make it catchy - use rhythm, rhyme, or repetition.

Focus on emotion, benefits, and feelings - not just description of the product.

Avoid cliches like "We're the best!", "We're #1!".

Try starting with an action verb! Examples: "Discover...", "Choose...", "Build...", "Look..."

What made some of your slogans more memorable than others?

How does your slogan reflect your personal values or work ethic?

What kind of visuals or tone (funny, serious, inspiring) would you pair with your slogan?

Who would you cast as your spokesperson?

What's one thing you learned about persuasive communication through this activity?

## BONUS ACTIVITY:

Using the brands listed above, research what makes a good logo!

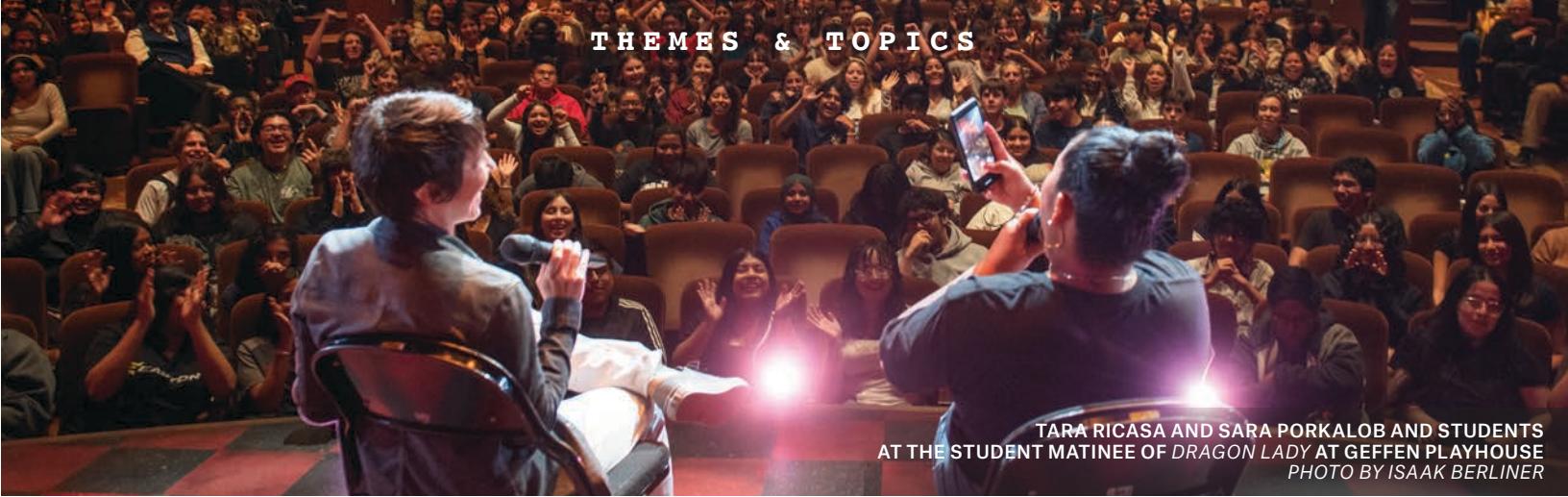
If you are a visual artist, design:

- A logo and print ad to go along with the slogan you just created.
- A logo and print ad for SkyFly Airlines.
- A logo and menu for Bianca's restaurant.



Scan the QR Code to the left to watch "How To Write A Memorable Tagline, Slogan or Online Course Name" by Alex Cattoni on YouTube, where she explains her creative process for coming up with memorable brand names, course names, taglines and slogans.





TARA RICASA AND SARA PORKALOB AND STUDENTS  
AT THE STUDENT MATINEE OF *DRAGON LADY* AT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE  
PHOTO BY ISAAK BERLINER

# POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Depending on the time available and your participants' interests, guide them to respond to the suggested questions below. Encourage everyone to participate, and respect differing opinions. Individuals can share their thoughts with a partner, in a small group, as part of a bigger group discussion, or as written responses.

- What are some images and moments from the production that stood out or resonated with you? What was meaningful, stimulating, surprising, evocative, memorable, interesting, exciting, striking, touching, challenging, compelling, delightful, different, or unique?
- Overall, how did you feel while watching this show? Engaged? Amused? Inspired? Provoked? Uncomfortable? What made you feel this way?
- Did you identify or empathize with any of the characters in the play? If so, which character(s) and when? If not, why not? Which characters remind you of someone in your life?
- What did you appreciate most about the performance by the actors?
- Who in your family or friend circles do you feel most comfortable talking to about dating and/or relationships? Why or why not?
- What's your favorite spot to go to on a first date? Where would you not want to go on a first (or any) date? If you're comfortable, share a story about a date that you've been on!
- Where do you see Jada & Dallas in: 2 years later? 4.5 years later? 7 years later? Are they still together or not? Why or why not?
- What words, phrases, or behaviors come to mind when you think about what a healthy relationship looks like?
- How familiar are you with the following recording artists: Chaka Khan, Usher, Jodeci, Run DMC, Kanye, Dilla, Dr. Dre., Babyface, Dionn Warwick, Roberta Flack? Look them up and listen to some of their songs. Which of these, previously unknown to you - if any - did you enjoy the most?
- Describe the design elements from the show: set, props, costumes, music. Be specific as possible: what did you see, hear, feel and experience? How do these design elements inform the storytelling and how do they make you feel as an audience member?

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**BUILD** your “Best of Black Love Stories” List on letterboxd.com. See a list of 48 films featuring Black love stories, curated by Team ARRAY here: <https://letterboxd.com/arraynow/list/black-love-stories/>.

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**CALL** the National Drug Hotline at 1-844-289-0879 if you or a family member needs help.

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**CONNECT** with others. Dallas begins to go to a group called Alcoholics Anonymous to help with his alcohol dependence after the breakup . If you or someone you know is struggling with alcohol dependence visit [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) to learn more or find a meeting near you.

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**DISCOVER** the best prom-posals at <https://tinyurl.com/3ex5vuuv> .

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**FIND** more information about the history of dating in America throughout the decades at <https://tinyurl.com/3v5x3wpv> .

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**LEARN** how to wrap presents this coming holiday season at <https://tinyurl.com/s69brkxv> .

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**LOCATE** your local library to read more plays at [www.lacountylibrary.org](http://www.lacountylibrary.org) .

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**TEXT** or **CALL “988”** nationwide to connect directly to the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

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**WATCH** 90’s Black rom com movies at <https://tinyurl.com/24j4awrr> .

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**VISIT** <https://www.geffenplayhouse.org/blog/> to learn more about what’s happening this season at Geffen Playhouse and read articles from previous shows,

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## LEARN MORE ABOUT A CAREER IN THE ARTS



SCAN this QR code to watch videos from American Theatre Wing’s Masterclass series on different jobs in American Theater. Stage Managers, Wig Makers, Scenic Designers, Front of House staff, Marketing Directors and many other people work behind the scenes to bring a show to life! If you are interested in a career in the arts and work behind the scenes, learn more here. #theater #jobs #alifeinthearts #getintotheatre #americantheatre #americantheatrewing #career #behindthescenes

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## AN INTERVIEW WITH AEA STAGE MANAGER, SAM ALLEN

### What is your position at Geffen Playhouse and how long have you been at the Geffen?

My name is Sam Allen (*They/Them*) and my position at the Geffen Playhouse is Production Stage Manager and I have been at the Geffen since 2024, having the privilege of stage managing four productions in the last two seasons.

### What educational, artistic, and professional experiences led to you working at the Geffen?

I am an alumni of Westminster University's BFA in stage management and directing program. While in the program, I began working professionally which would ultimately lead me to seek further education / mentorship in stage management at the University of California - Irvine for my MFA in stage management. I am a firm believer that both practical / theory based training provides you with the full scope needed to confidently stage management in the professional and academic sectors.

### What are your primary responsibilities as Production Stage Manager?

My primary responsibilities as a Production Stage Manager are maintaining the integrity and safety of the company and the show that is being created. As stage managers, we are lead communicators, active program solvers, and must also understand the humility and human engagement needed to support fellow artists.

### What key skills and disposition does a Production Stage manager need to possess?

In this day and age, Stage Managers are beyond any paperwork metric, and the role will continue to evolve each time you step into a rehearsal room. It's in how you show up within yourself each day. That is the defining factor in a leadership role such as this. Willingness to adapt and meet the needs of your company will always take priority.



PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH

### Was there a pivotal moment when you realized you wanted a life in the arts?

The first time I got to watch a Stage Manager call a show (various light/sound/ automation cues), for the musical *Spring Awakening* - I was floored. I never understood who / what was supporting these shows to effectively run, with all technical nuances, and knew I needed to be a part of it!

### What do you find most challenging about your work?

The most challenging aspect of the work is the active drive as a freelance employee. Although it provides immense flexibility, it does actively challenge you to be continuously looking for employment at any given point. There will inevitably come highs and lows, but it is how you respond, how you engage in the materials, and show up for your fellow collaborators that can help you maneuver through these challenges..

### What do you find most rewarding?

The most rewarding part of the work I do is the people and community you build each and every time you join a production process.

### What was one of your favorite shows to work on?

*The Brothers Size*. From the language that actively resonates to who I am and my community. The connections and bonds built over two production processes on various sides of the coasts (LA / NYC). Truly a master-class within its own right in the capabilities of audience engagement, text, movement, and sound. Simply put - brotherhood and the willingness to do what is needed for those you love.

# THE AUDIENCE'S ROLE

## What is your important role as an audience member?

Seeing live theater is different from going to a movie theater, watching something at home on your TV, or attending a live sporting event or concert. You are an important part of the experience- just as much as the performers on stage!

What are some things we should keep in mind to ensure that we, other attendees, and the performers have a great experience?

## THE THREE R'S

### Please be **RESPECTFUL**!

- Respect the space, the work, and one another.
- Silence phones and put them away during the show.
- Unwrapping candy or cough drops before play begins.
- Respect the artists by not taking pictures or videos during the performance.

### Please be **RESPONSIBLE**!

- Arrive early to the theater! It can be disruptive to enter the theater after the show has already started, and you will miss some great moments and important parts of the story!
- Remain seated until the end of the show (unless it is a true emergency).
- Eating or drinking before or after the show, or during intermissions.
- Please visit the restroom before or after the show, or during intermissions.

### Please be **RESPONSIVE**!

- Respond genuinely! For example, if you find something amusing, funny, feel free to laugh and react.

## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

We appreciate you sharing your Geffen Playhouse experience via social media, and kindly request that you do not do so inside the theater, where the use of electronic devices is prohibited.

We recommend that you post your responses and thoughts in the lobby after the performance, and invite you to tag @GeffenPlayhouse and use #GeffenPlayhouse to share your experience and to continue the conversation with us online.



L-R: GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TARELL ALVIN MCCRANEY, ANGELA LEWIS, AKILAH A. WALKER, KIMBERLY SCOTT AND ASIA MARTIN DURING A TALKBACK FOR A STUDENT MATINEE OF *BLACK CYPRESS BAYOU*. PHOTO BY ISAAK BERLINER.



LAUSD STUDENTS AT THE STUDENT MATINEE OF *THE LEGEND OF GEORGIA MCBRIDE*. PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH



DANIEL K. ISSAC AND AUDIENCE AT *EVERY BRILLIANT THING*. PHOTO BY ISAAK BERLINER



LAUSD STUDENTS AT THE STUDENT MATINEE OF *THE LEGEND OF GEORGIA MCBRIDE*. PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH

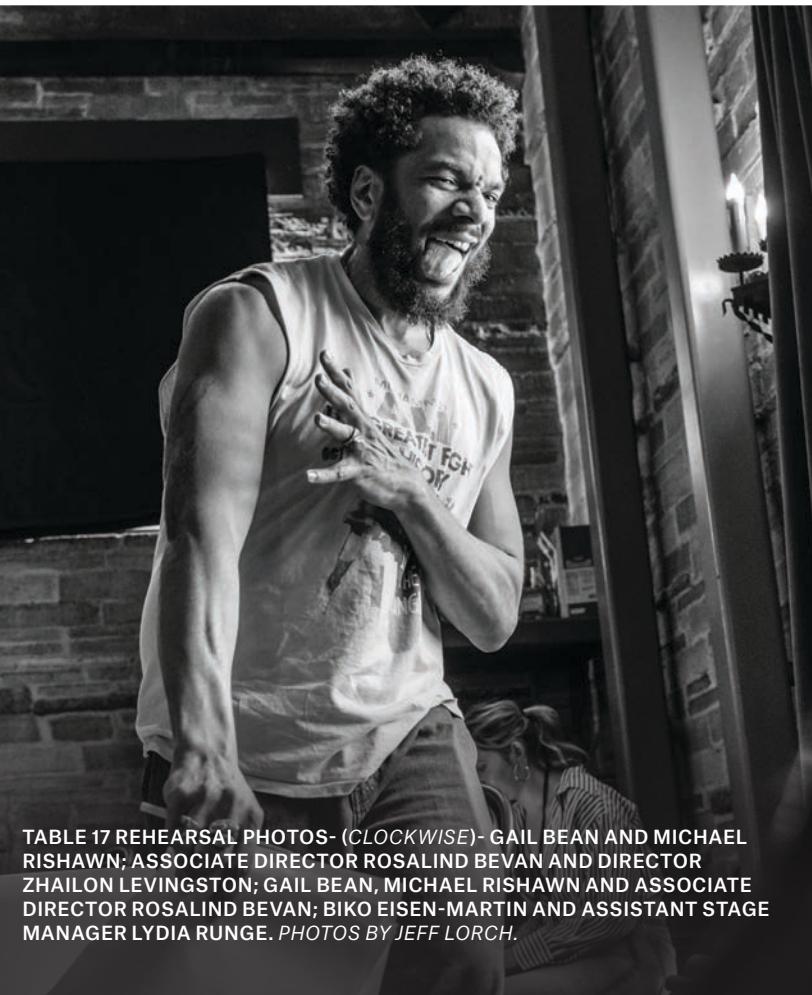


TABLE 17 REHEARSAL PHOTOS- (CLOCKWISE)- GAIL BEAN AND MICHAEL RISHAWN; ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR ROSALIND BEVAN AND DIRECTOR ZHAILON LEVINGSTON; GAIL BEAN, MICHAEL RISHAWN AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR ROSALIND BEVAN; BIKO EISEN-MARTIN AND ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER LYDIA RUNGE. PHOTOS BY JEFF LORCH.

# TeenTix

Wanna see more theater?

Sign up for the TeenTix LA Pass at  
[LA.TEENTIX.ORG/SIGN-UP](http://LA.TEENTIX.ORG/SIGN-UP)

A program for anyone ages 13-19! Once you're registered, you'll get access to \$5 tickets at over 40 arts organizations, including Geffen Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse, and Center Theatre Group, and many more. Check out the full list of TeenTix-eligible events at [la.teentix.org/calendar](http://la.teentix.org/calendar)!

Community  
PARTNERS

## HOW TO GET \$5 ARTS TICKETS

1

Sign up for a FREE  
TeenTix Pass at  
[LA.TEENTIX.ORG/SIGN-UP](http://LA.TEENTIX.ORG/SIGN-UP)

2

Check out  
TeenTix LA's  
Events Calendar  
and find a show  
to see.

3

Go out and see  
art - Tickets are  
ALWAYS \$5  
(or sometimes  
free!)

With our free Pass, teens get access to LA's coolest arts events.

Our 35+ partners include: Geffen Playhouse, Skirball Cultural Center, Pasadena Playhouse, Latino Theatre Company, and East West Players!



Sign up for a FREE Pass!

@TeenTixLA

/TeenTixLosAngeles

@TeenTixLA

### PHOTOS:

TOP, L-R: BILLY EUGENE JONES, MATTHEW ELIJAH WEBB,  
CHRIS HERBIE HOLLAND, FAT HAM. PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH  
MIDDLE, L-R: AUDREY FRANCIS & JAMES VINCENT MEREDITH  
IN NOISES OFF. PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH

BOTTOM, CLOCKWISE: MARCEL SPEARS, MATTHEW ELIJAH  
WEBB, CHRIS HERBIE HOLLAND AND LAUSD STUDENTS AT  
THE STUDENT MATINEE OF FAT HAM. PHOTO BY JEFF LORCH



# **GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE**

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