

BLAKE ZIDELL & ASSOCIATES

For Immediate Release
August 13, 2025

Yale Repertory Theatre Opens 2025-26 Season with First Full Staging of Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk*, A Play with Traditional Music and New Songs, Arrangements, and Music Supervision by Nehemiah Luckett; and Choreography by niHi douglas; Directed by Tamilla Woodard, October 3–25

Adapted by Hurston in 1935 from Her Own Short Story, *Spunk* Reaches the Stage for the First Time Ever in Resident Director Woodard's Vital Production

Cast Includes Jeannette Bayardelle, Shawn Bowers, Tyler Clarke, Alaman Diadhiou, Amahri Edwards-Jones, Janiah-Camile François, Charlie Hudson III, J. Quinton Johnson, Naiqui Macabroad, Kimberly Marable, Christian Pedersen, Isaiah Reynolds, Kimber Elayne Sprawl, Matthew Elijah Webb, and Correy West

Yale Repertory Theatre kicks off its 2025-26 season with the first-ever full staging of **Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk***, adapted in 1935 by the legendary author and playwright from her own short story of the same name—and lost until it was uncovered by the Library of Congress in its unpublished manuscripts division in 1997. Yale Repertory Theatre's Resident Director **Tamilla Woodard** brings the epic tale to vibrant life, with traditional music as well as new songs, arrangements, and music supervision by **Nehemiah Luckett**, and choreography by **niHi douglas**, October 3-25.

In *Spunk*, a tall, handsome stranger strolls into town looking for work. With undeniable charisma and divine musicianship, Spunk sets tongues to wagging with admiration and envy. The laws of man, the power of hoodoo, and the divinity of love all collide when he locks eyes with Evalina, already married to the local conjurer's son. A fable about the triumph of love, Zora Neale Hurston's play reaches the stage for the first time, brimming with humor, romance, and music.

Written amidst the Harlem Renaissance while she was studying anthropology at Barnard, Hurston set *Spunk* in a small Florida town resembling her own hometown of Eatonville, one of America's first incorporated Black townships. Already writing plays when the short story "Spunk" was published in *Opportunity Magazine* in 1925, Hurston penned this adaptation a decade later. It was never produced. The script, one of numerous unpublished full play texts found in the Copyright Deposit Drama Collection in 1997, vastly added to Hurston's theatrical work. This production preserves Hurston's vivid book and lyrics, setting her words to traditional found music from Florida (from Hurston's own ethnomusicology work) and new songs and arrangements by Nehemiah Luckett.

Woodard said, "There's such a profound feeling of celebration around giving life to a text that has been waiting for nearly a century to receive a full staging. *Spunk* is a singular work and a gorgeous synthesis of Zora Neale Hurston's passions: Black folk music, mythology, oral storytelling and putting black vernacular on the page as it was spoken in these rural places at the time. Nehemiah builds the play's musical world from Hurston's own cultural anthropology, recordings and the clues she left behind in her extensive body of work and niHi's choreography meets the musical landscape with vibrancy and celebration. Finally, Zora gets to be a celebrated playwright alongside her other celebrated writerly identities. We're aiming to give Hurston's words the breadth of theatrical life she imagined. It's exhilarating to lead this historic production."

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James Bundy, Artistic Director of Yale Repertory Theatre, who announced earlier this year that he would be stepping down June 30th, 2026, said, "We are thrilled to open our 2025-26 season with *Spunk*. The play feels so alive it's hard to imagine it sitting in obscurity for most of a century, and it is inspiring to witness Tamilla, Nehemiah, and nicHi bringing to life the vitality of Hurston's voice and the specificity of the (sometimes perilously) tight-knit community she depicts. This largely unknown play from such a powerful literary force is a joyful, resonant story that embodies the spirit of our commitment to championing both new and rediscovered work."

Spunk's cast includes **Jeannette Bayardelle** (Broadway: *& Juliet*, *Girl From the North Country*, *Hair*, *The Color Purple*) as Mrs. Watson, **Shawn Bowers** (Broadway: *Ain't Too Proud*; Off-Broadway: *Jelly's Last Jam*, *The Harder They Come*) as Willie Joe/Ensemble, **Tyler Clarke** (*Macbeth* and *Ain't No Mo'* at David Geffen School of Drama) as Teazie/Ensemble, **Alaman Diadihou** (Off-Broadway: *Jelly's Last Jam*) as Blue Trout/Ensemble, **Amahri Edwards-Jones** (tours: *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*, *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical*) as Maggie Mae/Ensemble, **Janiah-Camile François** (Broadway: *McNeal*; Yale Rep: *The Salvagers*) as Daisy/Ensemble, **Charlie Hudson III** (Off-Broadway: *Nollywood Dreams*, *Hurt Village*, *White Woman Street*) as Hodge Bishop, **J. Quinton Johnson** (Broadway: *Choir Boy*, *Hamilton*; Regional: *Footloose*) as *Spunk*, **Naiqui Macabroad** (*I Am Delivered't*, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*) as Jim Bishop, **Kimberly Marable** (Broadway: *Chicago*, *Sister Act*, *The Lion King*) as Ruby, **Christian Pedersen** (Broadway: *Ohio State Murders*, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*; Off-Broadway: *Vieux Carré*) as Captain Hammer/Ensemble, **Isaiah Reynolds** (regional: *Beautiful the Carole King Musical*, *Choir Boy*, *Five Guys Named Moe*) as Nunkie/Ensemble, **Kimber Elayne Sprawl** (Broadway: *Othello*, *Girl from the North Country*, *A Bronx Tale the Musical*) as Evalina, **Matthew Elijah Webb** (Broadway: *Our Town*, *Fat Ham*) as Admiral/Ensemble, and **Correy West** (Broadway: *Ain't Too Proud*, *South Pacific*; tours: *Love Never Dies*, *Anything Goes*) as Oral/Ensemble.

The creative team also includes **John Bronston** (Music Director), **Karen Loewy Movilla** (Scenic Designer), **Kristen Taylor** (Costume Designer), **Gib Gibney** (Lighting Designer), **Justin Ellington** (Sound Designer), **Ke Xu 许可** (Projection Designer), **Matthew Armentrout** (Hair Designer), **Eric M. Glover** and **Catherine Sheehy** (Production Dramaturgs), **Tom Minucci** (Technical Director), **Kelsey Rainwater** and **Michael Rossmly** (Fight and Intimacy Directors), **Julie Foh** (Vocal Coach), **Stephanie Rolland** (Associate Director), **Calleri Jensen Davis** (Casting Director), and **James Mountcastle** (Stage Manager).

Development and production support for *Spunk* are provided by Yale's Binger Center for New Theatre.

Spunk Performance Schedule & Ticketing

Subscriptions for Yale Rep's 2025-26 Season are now on sale online at yalerep.org, by calling (203) 432-1234, and in person at the Yale Rep Box Office (1120 Chapel Street).

Tickets for *Spunk* will be available beginning August 25: \$15 and \$35 (all previews), \$15 and \$50 (weeknights), and \$15 and \$65 (weekends and matinees). Student tickets are \$15 for all performances.

Performances take place:

- Thursday, October 3, at 8pm (Preview)
- Friday, October 4, at 8pm (Preview, Post-Show Discussion)
- Saturday, October 5, at 8pm (Preview, Post-Show Discussion)
- Tuesday, October 7, at 8pm (Preview)
- Wednesday, October 8, at 8pm (Preview)
- Thursday, October 9, at 8pm (Opening Night)
- Friday, October 10, at 8pm (Black Theater Night)
- Saturday, October 11, at 2pm
- Saturday, October 11, at 8pm
- Tuesday, October 14, at 8pm
- Wednesday, October 15, at 2pm (Pre-performance Discussion)

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- Wednesday, October 15, at 8pm
- Thursday, October 16, at 8pm
- Friday, October 17, at 8pm
- Saturday, October 18, at 2pm (Audio Description; Post-Show Talk Back)
- Saturday, October 18, at 8pm (ASL Interpreted)
- Tuesday, October 21, at 8pm
- Wednesday, October 22, at 8pm (Spanish Captioning)
- Thursday, October 23, at 8pm
- Friday, October 24, at 8pm
- Saturday, October 25, at 2pm (Open Captioning; Relaxed Performance)
- Saturday, October 25, at 8pm

Education and Community Events

Yale Rep joyfully invites Black theatergoers to experience Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk* in community on **Black Theater Night** (October 10 at 8PM). All tickets for this performance are only \$35 (reg. \$65).

Yale Rep's 2025–26 **WILL POWER!** education program will include 10am performances of *Spunk* on October 21 and 22 for high school students from New Haven Public Schools, entirely free of charge. Education booking, available to New Haven Public School students, will begin in early September. Teachers may contact Senior Artistic Producer Amy Boratko at amy.boratko@yale.edu for more information.

Local library events celebrating Zora Neale Hurston's work include:

Yale Rep at The New Haven Free Public Library

Stetson Branch, 197 Dixwell Avenue

A community conversation about the production and Zora Neale Hurston's legacy. Free and open to the public. More details to follow.

Zora Neale Hurston Pop-Up

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 121 Wall Street

Sunday, October 26th from 1PM-4PM

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library will offer a sharing of materials related to Zora Neale Hurston in the Beinecke reading room. Free and open to the public.

About the Creative Team

Biographies are submitted by the artists and edited for common house style by Yale Rep.

Zora Neale Hurston (Playwright) (1891–1960), one of the foremost writers of the 20th century, was raised in Eatonville, Florida, one of America's first incorporated Black townships. She was a major force in the Harlem Renaissance documenting African American life in the South. Hurston, an alumna of Howard University, co-founded the school's historic newspaper *The Hilltop*; later, she became the first Black graduate of Barnard College. In 1939, she joined North Carolina Central University's drama faculty. In 1997, the Library of Congress's librarians found Hurston's unpublished cache, including *Spunk*, in their holdings. Hurston co-wrote sketches, performed in *Fast and Furious* (1931), and choreographed *The Great Day* (1932) on Broadway. In 1936 she wrote her most famous work, the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Hurston died in January 1960, consigned to an unmarked grave. In 1971, writer Alice Walker commissioned a gravestone for Hurston which now reads "Zora Neale Hurston: 'A Genius of the South': Novelist, Folklorist, Anthropologist."

Tamilla Woodard (Director) is the Chair of the Acting program at David Geffen School of Drama and a resident director at Yale Repertory Theatre. Tamilla has directed at theaters nationally including at the Alliance Theatre, the Guthrie,

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Baltimore Center Stage, American Conservatory Theater, Folger Theatre, WP Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem, and Clubbed Thumb among others. At Yale Rep: *the ripple, the wave that carried me home*. Tamilla is a proud board member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers and alumni of the Acting program at David Geffen School of Drama.

Nehemiah Luckett (New Songs, Arrangements, and Music Supervisor) creates music that bridges sacred and secular, with works ranging from pop songs to operas. His original musicals and operas include *Hamlet: Prince of Funk*, *Brick by Brick*, *jazz singer*, *A Burning Church*, and *Love Out of Time*. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, Nehemiah has deep roots in Jackson, Mississippi's arts community. He is the Founder/Chief Dreaming Officer of Dreaming The Future Together and a member of The Dramatists Guild, ASMAC, ASCAP, and AFM NYC Local 803. He currently lives in the Bronx with his husband. NehemiahLuckett.com dreamingthefuturetogether.com

nicHi douglas (Choreographer) is an OBIE Award-winning Brooklyn-based experimental theater and dance maker who is interested in leading community care-centered creative processes. you can refer to her/them/him/us using any pronouns said with Respect. nicHi is currently a resident artist at HERE Arts Center in NYC. her work has been developed and/or produced at MacDowell, the Hermitage Artist Retreat, Lincoln Center, The Public Theater, The Shed, and The National Black Theater, among others. they are an Assistant Arts Professor at NYU/Tisch where they teach dance and movement methodologies. Additional awards include Lucille Lortel Awards for Best Director and Best Musical, the Callaway Award for Choreography, an AUDELCO Award for Choreography, and a Princess Grace Award for theatermaking. Upcoming: *ReCONSTRUCTING* at BAM. mynameisnichi.com

John Bronston (Music Director) served as Music Direction Fellow, rehearsal pianist, and sub Key II player on *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical* on Broadway. Off-Broadway he was the musical director on *The Harder They Come* (The Public Theater) and associate music director for *A Man of No Importance* (Classic Stage). Additional New York credits include developmental work at Roundabout Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, and Prospect Musicals. Touring credits include *Hair*, *Five Guys Named Moe*, and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Favorite regional credits include *Macbeth in Stride* (Yale Rep), *Smokey Joe's Café* (Long Wharf), and *The Color Purple* (Goodman Theatre).

Karen Loewy Movilla (Scenic Designer) is a Colombian multi-hyphenated artist and a third-year set designer at David Geffen School of Drama, where she designed *Kilele* and *Macbeth*. Select design credits include *S'Mores* (Yale Cabaret), Aya Ogawa's *Meat Suit* (Mercury Lounge), *New England Summer Storms* (Columbia University), *Our Bodies like dams* (Mabou Mines, The Brick), and *The Night Alive* (Chain Theatre). Assistant credits: *Uncle Vanya* (the Geffen School), Ogawa's *Nosebleed* (Lincoln Center), *Zoetrope* (Abrons Arts Center), *Rubalee* (New Ohio Theatre), *Kiss* (Wilma Theatre). She was part of Ars Nova's 2021 ANT Fest, The Tank's Core Productions in 2023 with *Tia Talk*, and an Object Movement Puppetry Residency in 2023.

Kristen Taylor (Costume Designer) is from Celebration, Florida, and has a B.F.A. in costume design and technology from the University of West Florida. She is an M.F.A. candidate at David Geffen School of Drama, where her credits include *Ain't No Mo'*. Other credits include *Pride of Doves* (Yale Cabaret Spring 2024), *These Shining Lives* (Studio Theatre Tierra Del Sol, 2023), and *Xanadu* (Emerald Coast Theatre Company 2022).

Gib Gibney (Lighting Designer) is a third-year M.F.A. candidate at David Geffen School of Drama, where his credits include *Silence/The Village*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Measure for Measure*. Other select credits include *Into the Woods* and *Blood at the Root* at Penn State Centre Stage as well as associate lighting designer on *Invasive Species* at the Vineyard Theatre and *Chiaroscuro* at The Flea Theater (NBT). Originally from Long Island, he is a graduate of SUNY Suffolk and Penn State University.

Justin Ellington (Sound Designer) is an award-winning composer and sound designer whose work spans Broadway, Off-Broadway, film, and radio with credits both nationally and internationally. He is the recipient of an OBIE Award, an AUDELCO Award, the Henry Hewes Design Award, and multiple Tony Award nominations. Broadway: *Pass Over*, *Other Desert Cities*, *Othello*, *Our Town*, *McNeal*, *Topdog/Underdog*, *Clyde's*, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, and *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*. Off-Broadway: *Heroes of the Fourth Turning*

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(Playwrights Horizons); *The Rolling Stone*, *Pass Over*, and *Pipeline* (Lincoln Center Theater); *Mrs. Murray's Menagerie* (Ars Nova); *The House that will not stand* and *Fetch Clay, Make Man* (New York Theatre Workshop); *He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box* and *The Winter's Tale* (Theatre for a New Audience). He has worked with renowned regional and international theaters such as Steppenwolf, Goodman Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Alliance Theatre, Guthrie Theater, The Stratford Festival (Canada), The Royal Shakespeare Company, and The Old Vic. Ellington has also been recognized by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and the Grammy Foundation for his work in the recording industry. He received a Cinema in Industry Award for his original score to *MOVE ACT FREE*, an exhibit at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta.

Ke Xu 许可 (Projection Designer) is a multidisciplinary theater designer. She graduated from Central Saint Martins (UAL) with first-class honors in product design and is currently a projection design M.F.A. candidate at David Geffen School of Drama, where her credits include *Silence/The Village* and *Ain't No Mo'*. She was working professionally in China before coming to Yale and is passionate about exploring new theatrical language that integrates digital media with physical space. Recent credits include video and set design for *Detective Zhao Gan'e* (Beijing 77 Theater); projection design for *And the Beetle Hums* and *Can the Peruvian Speak?* (Yale Cabaret); *Miss Julie* (Beijing Star Theatre); *10:59* (Off Broadway Theater). behance.net/kxu

Matthew Armentrout (Hair Designer) Broadway: *Redwood*, *A Wonderful World*, *The Mother Play*, *Paradise Square* (Drama Desk nominee), *Birthday Candles*, *Flying Over Sunset*, *The Sound Inside*, *Bernhardt/Hamlet*. Off-Broadway: *The Last Bimbo of the Apocalypse* (The New Group); *The Gardens of Anuncia* (Lincoln Center Theater); *Dear World* (NYCC Encores!); *Suffs*, *The Visitor* (The Public); *Merrily We Roll Along* (Roundabout); *Othello* (NY Stage and Film). National Tour: *Jitney*. Regional: *The Untitled Unauthorized Hunter S. Thompson Musical* (Signature Theatre); *The Inspector*, Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Yale Rep); *3 Summers of Lincoln* (La Jolla Playhouse); *Midnight in The Garden of Good and Evil* (The Goodman Theatre); *Gatsby* (A.R.T.); *A Transparent Musical* (Center Theatre Group); *Ava: The Secret Conversations* (Geffen Playhouse); *Bliss!* (The 5th Avenue). Television: *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel* (Emmy Nominee).

Eric M. Glover (Production Dramaturg) is an Associate Professor Adjunct at David Geffen School of Drama and a Faculty Fellow in the Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration. Glover was also a production dramaturg for *Ain't No Mo'* at the Geffen School and *The Salvagers*, *the ripple*, *the wave that carried me home*, *Choir Boy*, and *A Raisin in the Sun* (canceled due to COVID-19) at Yale Rep. Glover is the author of *African American Perspectives in Musical Theatre* (Bloomsbury, 2023), "1991: Original Broadway Production of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston's Antimusical *Mule Bone* Is Presented" (*Journal of American Drama and Theatre*, 2021), and "Joy and Love in Zora Neale Hurston and Dorothy Waring's 1944 Black Feminist Musical *PolkCounty*" (*TDR*, 2021). Glover is an At-Large Member in the International Society for the Study of Musicals and the Secretary of the American Society for Theatre Research.

Catherine Sheehy (Production Dramaturg) is Resident Dramaturg at Yale Repertory Theatre and the Chair of Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism at David Geffen School of Drama. Her Yale Rep credits include *Escaped Alone*, *Father Comes Home From the Wars*, *Parts 1, 2 & 3*, *Happy Days*, *Elevada*, *These Paper Bullets!*, *In a Year with 13 Moons*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Bossa Nova*, *POPI*, *Trouble in Mind*, and *The King Stag* (which she also co-adapted with Evan and Mike Yionoulis). She's a founding member of Rolin Jones's Dwight Street Book Club and New Neighborhood. Her television work with Rolin includes HBO's *Perry Mason* and AMC's *Interview with the Vampire*. Her adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* has been produced at Asolo Repertory Theatre and Dallas Theater Center. She has worked at the Royal Shakespeare Company, The Public Theater, Yale Institute for Music Theatre, the Signature Theatre, O'Neill Playwrights Conference, Center Stage, and in New York and Ireland with the late Joseph Chaikin. For four seasons she was Festival Dramaturg at Shakespeare Santa Cruz. She is a former associate editor of *American Theatre* and a former editor of *Theater* magazine.

Tom Minucci (Technical Director) Originally from New Jersey, Tom is a third-year M.F.A. candidate at David Geffen School of Drama, where his credits include *Kilele*, The Carlotta Festival (2024, co-production electrician), and *Hamlet, princessa de Dinamarca* (properties manager). He was also technical director for *falcon girls* and assistant technical director for *The Salvagers*, both at Yale Rep. Prior to Yale, he served as the Technical Director for DeSales University

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and Barrington Stage Company. Other credits include Technical Director for the Berkshire Theatre Group, Assistant Technical Director for the Virginia Opera Association, and an engineering intern at Hudson Scenic. B.F.A., Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University.

Kelsey Rainwater (Fight and Intimacy Director) is an intimacy and fight director, and actress based out of the ancestral lands of the Quinnipiac people. Kelsey's work was recently seen in *Liberation* at Roundabout and *Hell's Kitchen* on Broadway. Some of her other credits include *Walden* at Second Stage; *Hot Wing King* at Hartford Stage; *In the Southern Breeze*, *Measure for Measure*, *Jordans*, *Manahatta*, and Suzan-Lori Parks's *Sally and Tom* and *White Noise* at The Public Theater; *Blues for an Alabama Sky* with the Keen Company; *Notes on Killing...*, *The Inspector*, *Wish You Were Here*, *Between Two Knees*, Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles*, and *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* at Yale Rep. Film and television: *Baby Ruby*, *The Green Veil*. She is a Lecturer in acting at David Geffen School of Drama, co-teaches stage combat and intimacy, and is a Resident Fight and Intimacy Director for Yale Rep.

Michael Rossmly (Fight and Intimacy Director) is a Resident Fight and Intimacy Director for Yale Rep, a lecturer in acting at David Geffen School of Drama, and Stage Combat and Intimacy Advisor for Yale College. Broadway credits include Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's *Purpose* directed by Phylicia Rashad, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Cymbeline*, and *Superior Donuts*. Regional theater credits include The Public Theater, Roundabout, The Atlantic, Primary Stages, Westport Country Playhouse, Goodspeed Musicals, Paper Mill Playhouse, Asolo Rep, The Old Globe, TheaterWorks Hartford, Princeton University, The Acting Company, Soho Rep, the Geffen Playhouse, Long Wharf Theatre, McCarter Theatre, Kansas City Rep, People's Light & Theatre, and others. He was nominated for a 2017 Drama Desk Award for The Public's production of *Troilus and Cressida* and is a 2024 Barrymore Award nominee for *Bonez* at People's Light.

Julie Foh (Vocal Coach) is a voice, text, and dialect coach and Associate Professor Adjunct of acting at David Geffen School of Drama. Previous coaching credits include *falcon girls*, *Escaped Alone*, and *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* (Yale Rep); *Hurricane Diane*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *All My Sons*, *The Winter's Tale* (Hartford Stage); *The Woman in Black* (Weston Theater Company); *A View from the Bridge* (Long Wharf Theatre); *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Othello*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Measure for Measure*, *Henry V*, *Twelfth Night*, *Coriolanus* (Next Chapter Podcasts); *A Christmas Carol*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *As You Like It*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *And a Nightingale Sang*, *The Caretaker*, *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey); *Belfast Girls* (Irish Rep); *Mlima's Tale* (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and Westport Country Playhouse); *Ride the Cyclone: The Musical*, *Sleuth* (McCarter Theatre Center); *Wolverine: The Lost Trail* (Marvel podcast); *As You Like It*, *King Charles III* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *Sherwood* (Cleveland Play House); *Pygmalion* (BEDLAM); *Familiar* (Woolly Mammoth); *Trans Scripts*, *Cardenio* (American Repertory Theater); *The Tallest Tree in the Forest* (Tectonic Theater Project); and others. She is an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework, a Master Teacher of Knight-Thompson Speechwork, and co-author of *Experiencing Speech: A Skills-Based, Panlingual Approach to Actor Training*.

Stephanie Rolland (Associate Director) is a director, curator, and Lilly Award-winning creative producer. Teaching Artist-in-Residence, the Film Over Gun Violence Program (CMCArts, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands); Director, SCC Redux (staged reading, New Black Fest); Associate Director, *Our Town* (Broadway); Assistant Director, *Eden*, *Spunk* workshops (Yale Rep); Visiting Director, "Collaboration Reloaded" led by Oskar Eustis and Suzan-Lori Parks (Tisch at NYU); Associate Director, *Hamlet* (The Public Theater). Select curating and producing credits include Theater Curator and creator/director/producer of the Beyond the Red Door theatrical event series (August Wilson African American Cultural Center); Producing Fellow, Urban Bush Women Choreographic Center Initiative; Producing Faculty (Why Not Theatre); 2018–20 WP Theater Producing Fellow; Co-Founder, Interfest. B.A., UPENN; M.F.A., David Geffen School of Drama.

Calleri Jensen Davis (Casting Director) is a creative casting partnership among James Calleri, Erica Jensen, and Paul Davis of over 20 years. They began their collaboration with Yale Rep in 2023 with *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles* and *the ripple, the wave that carried me home*. Broadway credits: *The Piano Lesson*, *Topdog/Underdog*, *for colored girls...*, *Thoughts of a Colored Man*, *Burn This*, *Fool for Love*, *The Elephant Man*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *Of Mice and Men*,

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Venus in Fur, A Raisin in the Sun, 33 Variations. Television: *Love Life, Queens, Dickinson, and The Path*, to name a few. callerijensendavis.com

James Mountcastle (Stage Manager) has been at Yale Rep since 2004, where he has stage managed productions of *Wish You Were Here*, Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; *Girls*; *An Enemy of the People*; *Scenes from Court Life, or the whipping boy and his prince*; *Arcadia*; *A Streetcar Named Desire*; *American Night: The Ballad of Juan José*; *Three Sisters*; *The Master Builder*; *Passion Play*; *Eurydice*; and the world premiere of *The Clean House*. Broadway credits include *Damn Yankees*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *The Boys from Syracuse*, *The Smell of the Kill*, *Life (x) 3*, and *Wonderful Town*, as well as *A Christmas Carol* at Madison Square Garden. National tours include *City of Angels*, *Falsettos*, and *My Fair Lady*. He was Production Stage Manager for *Damn Yankees* starring Jerry Lewis for both its national tour and at the Adelphi Theatre in London's West End. In addition, Mr. Mountcastle has worked at the Kennedy Center, Center Stage in Baltimore, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and elsewhere. M.F.A., David Geffen School of Drama, 1990.

About the Cast

Jeannette Bayardelle (Mrs. Watson) From the Bronx to Broadway and beyond, Tony nominee Jeannette Bayardelle has traveled to over fifty countries throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and the Caribbean, sharing her gift. She is the founder and CEO of Broadway to Wall Street. Jeannette wrote and starred in *SHIDA the Musical* and the web series *I Take Thee Zoe*. Broadway: *& Juliet* (Angelique), *Girl from the North Country* (Mrs. Neilsen), *Hair* (Dionne), *The Color Purple* (Celie). Off Broadway: *The Harder They Come*, *Girl from the North Country* (The Public Theater); *Rock of Ages* (New World Stages); *SHIDA* (Ars Nova). National tours/Regional: *Gun and Powder* (Paper Mill Playhouse) *The Untitled Unauthorized Hunter S. Thompson Musical* (La Jolla Playhouse), *The Color Purple*, *Deaf West's Big River*, *Rent*. Film: Walt Disney's *The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Beginning*.

Shawn Bowers (Willie Joe/Ensemble) is a second-year M.F.A. candidate at David Geffen School of Drama. Yale Rep: *The Inspector* (understudy). Broadway: *Ain't Too Proud—The Life and Times of the Temptations*. Off-Broadway: *Jelly's Last Jam* (City Center Encores), *The Harder They Come* (The Public Theater). Additional credits: *Ragtime*, *Rent*, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *After Midnight*. Film: *Rio Uphill* (musical adaptation). Television: Tony Awards and Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade with the original cast of *Ain't Too Proud*. He would like to thank his family and friends for their continuous love and support.

Tyler Clarke (Teazie/Ensemble, u/s Ruby) is a third-year actor at David Geffen School of Drama, where her credits include *Macbeth*, *Ain't No Mo'*, and *rent free*. She also understudied *Eden* at Yale Rep. @TylerI_clarke

Alaman Diadhiou (Blue Trout/Ensemble) is a singer, dancer, songwriter, and entertainer from Leimert Park, Los Angeles. Alaman aspires to be one of the world's premier live performers, carrying the traditions of legendary artists who precede him while innovating with his own voice. Trained at the Debbie Allen Dance Academy, Alaman is a 2019 Presidential Scholar in the Arts (tap dance), and a 2023 graduate of Yale College (B.A., comparative literature). Recent features include starring as Young Jelly in *Jelly's Last Jam* (New York City Center) and guest-starring as Damian in ABC's *High Potential*. National Tours: MJ/Michael Standby in *MJ the Musical*. Regional: *Twist* (Pasadena Playhouse), *3 Summers of Lincoln* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Anything Goes* (The Muny).

Amahri Edwards-Jones (Maggie Mae/Ensemble) makes her Yale Rep debut with *Spunk*. Her credits include the first National Tour of *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*, Duckling Donna in the National Tour of *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical*. Regional: Goodspeed Musicals (*Gypsy*), Denver Center for the Performing Arts (*Little Shop of Horrors*), Virginia Musical Theatre (*Freaky Friday*, *Mamma Mia*, *Chicago*), Virginia Stage Company (*Matilda*). All thanks to God, her lovely parents, Bloc, family and friends for their unconditional support! @amahri_e_j

Janiah-Camile François (Daisy/Ensemble, u/s Evalina) returns to Yale Rep with *Spunk*, having recently been part of the company of *The Salvagers*. Broadway: *McNEAL* (Lincoln Center Theater). Regional: *Thumbelina: A Little Musical*

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(A.R.T.). Janiah was also seen in *Furlough's Paradise* at David Geffen School of Drama, where she received her M.F.A. B.A., Harvard University.

Charlie Hudson III (Hodge Bishop) Broadway: *A Raisin in the Sun*. Off-Broadway: *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC Theater), *(A) Loft Modulation* (American Vicarious), *Hurt Village* (Signature Theatre). Regional: *Welcome to Matteson* (New Jersey Repertory); *King Hedley II*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Seven Guitars* (Two Rivers Theater); *Detroit '67* (Playmakers Rep); *The Mountaintop* (Northern Stage); *Father Comes Home From the Wars* (American Repertory); *Clybourne Park*, *Beneatha's Place* (Baltimore Centerstage); August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* (Yale Rep); *'Master Harold'...and the boys* (Portland Stage Company); *Fly* (Crossroads Theater); *Richard III*, *All the King's Men*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Trinity Rep); *Mother Courage and Her Children* (The Public Theater/NYSF); *The Threepenny Opera* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). Television: *Archive 81* (Netflix); *Daredevil: Born Again* (Disney); *Manifest*, *Shades of Blues* (NBC); *The Night Of* (HBO); *NCIS: Hawaii*, *The Good Fight*, *Unforgettable*, *The Rosa Parks Story* (CBS); *Forever* (ABC); and *A Raisin in the Sun Revisited: The Raisin Cycle at Center Stage* (PBS). Film: *Roxanne*, *Roxanne*; *A Complete Unknown*; *Twelve*; *Newlyweeds*; *Lillian*. Training: Alabama State University and Brown University/Trinity Repertory Consortium. I would like to thank my family for their love and support.

J. Quinton Johnson (Spunk) is a multi-hyphenate from the small town of Athens, Texas. He studied musical theater at the University of Texas at Austin, where he was discovered by Richard Linklater for the film *Everybody Wants Some!!*. He also appeared in Linklater's *Last Flag Flying*. Other screen credits: ABC's *Dirty Dancing*, *The Son*, *We Can Be Heroes*, and *The Summoned*. Quinton made his Broadway debut in *Hamilton* as the first replacement for Hercules Mulligan/James Madison. He was in the Tony-nominated play *Choir Boy* and productions of *Footloose* and *In The Heights* at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Quinton combined many of his musical passions in *Alice's Wonderland* when he co-wrote the music, book and lyrics, and did the orchestrations and produced the tracks for licensable productions.

Naiqui Macabroad (Jim Bishop) is an actor, writer, musician, and graduate of Howard University, where he obtained his B.F.A in acting. Stage/Screen: *I Am Delivered't* (Irma P. Hall Award nomination), *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Long Way Down*, *Power* (STARZ), *Timeless* (NBC), *Start-Up* (Netflix). *Spunk* marks Mr. Macabroad's Yale Rep debut.

Kimberly Marable (Ruby) recently starred as the iconic Velma Kelly in *Chicago* on Broadway. Additional Broadway credits include *Hadestown* (original company), *The Lion King*, and *Sister Act*. International and North American Tours include *Hadestown* (Persephone), *Sister Act* (Deloris van Cartier), *The Book of Mormon*, *Dreamgirls*, *Hairspray*, and *The Wedding Singer*. Television/streaming: *FBI*, *Bull*, Netflix Anime's *Cannon Busters* (Lorelai), NPR Music's Tiny Desk Concert series, and promo voice for various networks. Kimberly co-founded Broadway Serves, which connects theater professionals with community service opportunities. Love always to Fam, CLA Partners, and MA. Salaams! [@misskimizzo](http://kimberlymarable.com)

Christian Pedersen (Captain Hammer/Boss) most recently appeared in *Boeing Boeing* and *Dial M for Murder* at Peterborough Players in New Hampshire. Earlier this year, he was seen at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in *Hamlet* and Ken Ludwig's *Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Other recent credits include Florida Repertory Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Workshop Theatre of Nantucket, and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* in San Francisco. He made his Broadway debut in *Ohio State Murders* opposite Audra McDonald at the James Earl Jones Theatre. Television credits include *This Is Us*, *SEAL Team*, *The Offer*, *Superstore*, *The Good Wife*, and *One Life to Live*. Graduate of the University of Richmond and The New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts.

Isaiah Reynolds (Nunkie/Ensemble, u/s Oral) is excited to be making his Yale Rep debut. Isaiah has had the privilege of traveling all over the country performing. Some favorite credits include *Beautiful: the Carole King Musical* (Paper Mill Playhouse), *Sweeney Todd* (Portland Center Stage), *Choir Boy* (Speak Easy Stage), *Five Guys Named Moe* (The Fulton), *Buddy* (Cape Playhouse), and *Hairspray* (Theater Aspen). B.F.A., Boston Conservatory. He would love to thank his friends, family, and DGRW for their love and support. @Isaiahreynolds55.

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Kimber Elayne Sprawl (Evalina) most recently played Emilia in *Othello* on Broadway (Joe Callaway Award recipient). Additional Broadway credits: Marianne Lane in *Girl from the North Country* (OBC); Nessarose in *Wicked* (20th anniversary cast); Jane in *A Bronx Tale, Home* (Roundabout); *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. National tour: Sarabi in *Disney's The Lion King*, Regional: Zoe in *The Niceties* (Milwaukee Rep). Television appearances include *East New York* (CBS), *That Damn Michael Che* (HBO Max), *Inside Amy Schumer* (Paramount +).

Matthew Elijah Webb (Admiral/Ensemble) is a dynamic performer and storyteller committed to creating art that uplifts, empowers, and inspires. Whether acting, writing, or building new work, Matthew seeks to tell stories that matter. Broadway: *Fat Ham* and *Our Town*. Off-Broadway: *Fat Ham*. He continues to explore the transformative power of performance to reflect, heal, and spark change. MFA, David Geffen School of Drama. @matthewelijahwebb

Correy West (Oral/Ensemble) Broadway: *Ain't Too Proud, Nice Work If You Can Get It*, and Lincoln Center Theater's *South Pacific*. National Tours: *Love Never Dies* (first national U.S. premiere), *Anything Goes* (first national), *42nd Street*. New York: The Radio City Christmas Spectacular (Chicago/Toronto), PBS Great Performances Season 50: *Celebrating 50 Years of Broadway's Best* (Live from Lincoln Center), *Showboat* (New York Philharmonic/Live from Lincoln Center). Regional: *The Ballad of Johnny and June* (La Jolla Playhouse, Citadel Theatre); *American Prophet* (Arena Stage Company); *Mary Poppins, Primary Trust* (Hope Repertory); *Beautiful* (Theatre Aspen, the REV); *Oliver!* (Virginia Stage Company), *The 25th Annual Putnam Spelling Bee* (Arkansas Repertory); *Kiss Me, Kate* (Cape Playhouse); *Guys and Dolls* (Barrington Stage Company); *Paint Your Wagon* (Pioneer Theatre Company); *Shrek* (North Shore Music Theatre).

About Yale Repertory Theatre

Yale Repertory Theatre, the internationally celebrated professional theatre in residence at David Geffen School of Drama, has championed new work since 1966, producing well over 100 premieres—including two Pulitzer Prize winners and four other nominated finalists—by emerging and established playwrights. Seventeen Yale Rep productions have advanced to Broadway, garnering more than 40 Tony Award nominations and 10 Tony Awards. Yale Rep is also the recipient of the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. Established in 2008, Yale's Binger Center for New Theatre has distinguished itself as one of the nation's most robust and innovative new play programs. To date, the Binger Center has supported the work of more than 75 commissioned artists and underwritten the world premieres and subsequent productions of nearly 40 new plays and musicals at Yale Rep and theaters across the country.

Press Contact

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