

A powerful play seeking truth
in Pittsburgh's past

FEB 15+16

TEAIRA WHITEHEAD

by **Melannie Taylor**



COMMUNITY
SUPPORTED
ART
23+24 SEASON

**new
Hazlett
theater**

Directed by **Kim El**

Teaira Whitehead

A powerful play seeking truth in Pittsburgh's Past

FEBRUARY 15+16
NEW HAZLETT THEATER

Melannie Taylor, Creator, CSA Artist 23+24

Kim El - Director

Rikia Davenport - Choreographer

Lauren N. Wijangco - Stage Manager

CAST

Win Nunley - Ayanna/Femme Wall

Cayah Leavy - Rose

Tyler Ray Kendrick - Coach/Hustler

Ameriah Fisher - Diamond

Charlese Dawson - Sunny

Lee Richardson - Dante/Masc Wall

Mokah Malandro - Teaira/Shadow

DESIGNERS

Rianne Lindsey - Lighting Designer

Jeremy Pitzer - Costume Designer

Melannie Taylor - Scenic Designer & Props

Aaron Henderson - Media Designer

Frames - Music Production & Sound Design

ABOUT the SHOW

Teaira Whitehead follows three best friends as they experience the perils of relationships, crime, and racial injustices. Based on real events, Teaira Whitehead is a search for answers that leads to even more complex discoveries. This is the story of finding yourself with the guidance of the community while being blinded by a sea of red and blue lights.

CONTENT WARNING

References to sexual assault, police brutality, marijuana use, descriptions of violence

SPECIAL THANKS

Bekezela Mguni, Dreams of Hope, Boom Concepts, Assemble, Throughline Theatre, Prototype PGH

“As an artist, it is my job to speak on what the community needs.”

-Melannie Taylor



ARTIST STATEMENT

The ideal vision of thriving in the arts and culture ecosystem is creating art for all people and to speak to everyday issues with art in sought of liberation in this system of American culture.



Teaira Whitehead the play is my personal message to Pittsburgh, my hometown. This play is a capsule of emotions I carried as a child. Teaira Whitehead's death and the way the city ignored it not only impacted me but a larger community in Pittsburgh. In creating this play I have aligned myself with those who feel the city should have done more or at least investigated it. Black children here in Pittsburgh face such a high degree of racism. This is my way of fighting back against that racism. Black children are the future. In capturing the humanity and joy Black children naturally have in this play, I place different memories, games and the way I use to play with my friends in this production. I wanted to capture how important friendships are and the strength of empathy.

In partnership of this play, The Afro Healing Tree is a Traveling Community Tree House. My goal for the tree is to hold space all over the City of Pittsburgh, to hold space dedicated to the mental health of Black children. Currently this tree was able to serve over 500 people in holding physical space for Black children's mental health at Assemble Pgh, The Mattress Factory educational program and Art All Night.

Melannie

WHO'S WHO



**Melannie Taylor | Writer, Scenic & Props Designer,
CSA Artist 23+24**

(she/they) is a playwright, sculptor, and teaching artist. Melannie's work seeks to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about the black femme experience, weaving mysticism, poetry, and storytelling into a beautiful tapestry that showcases the humanity of the black experience. She has aligned herself with multiple different nonprofit Pittsburgh organizations: Dreams of Hope, The City Theatre, The Mattress Factory, Assemble, Let's Get Free, Boom Concepts, and BTAN. In this work, Melannie has been able to connect to her community through theater in so many unique ways.



Kim El | Director

(she/her) is an award-winning Pittsburgh-born playwright, poet, actor, and educator who uses words and movement to stimulate human consciousness. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from Duquesne University. Her memberships include The Dramatist Guild and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and she is also included in the 2013 *New Pittsburgh Courier's* 50 Women of Excellence. Kim has had 13 of her 20 plays produced and is best known for the production of her one-woman show, *Straightening Combs*. kuumbakim@gmail.com



Rikia Davenport | Choreographer

(she/her) is a native of Pittsburgh's Hill District who has taught dance for 12 years. Rikia attended Potomac State College in West Virginia and has a strong background in Hip Hop, Ballet, and Contemporary Dance. Currently, she serves as the Arts Education director with K-Theatre Dance Complex and is a lead dance instructor for Propel Charter Schools. In addition to dance, Rikia is also the proud CEO of Kai FiTT.



Lauren N. Wijangco | Stage Manager

(she/her) is excited to be working on her 9th CSA with the New Hazlett Theater! Previously, she stage managed *One Log Bridge*, *Himbos*, *Morning Reckoning*, *Painting Lessons*, *Ignite*, *Perdita*, *Somewhere Strange*, and *Papa*. Regionally, she has also worked with Prime Stage Theatre, Quantum Theatre, City Theatre, Kinetic Theatre Company, Pittsburgh Fringe Festival, Mountain Playhouse, and A.D. Players Theater.



Win Nunley | Ayanna/Femme Wall

(all pronouns) is an artist who uses music, spirituality, storytelling, and horticulture to connect our shared humanity. They are an active member of Dreams Of Hope. In 2018, they and Onika Reigns co-founded Black Dream Escape, a therapeutic arts practice that centers on Black and Indigenous rest and sleep. Black Dream Escape released their album *All This Beauty*, which is available on all platforms.



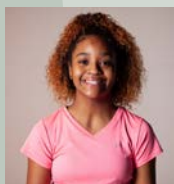
Cayah Leavy | Rose

(she/her) is a sophomore at Shady Side Academy. She's been involved in performance since she was 8 years old. She's been performing with Alumni Theater Company for four years. Cayah enjoys singing, writing, and acting. She loves poetry, affirmations, cooking, and playing varsity soccer/softball. Outside of theater, Cayah participates in internships with the public youth of Pittsburgh. Cayah loves to have deep conversations about anything and is excited to participate in her 2nd show with New Hazlett Theater.



Tyler Ray Kendrick | Coach/Hustler

(he/him) What can be said about Tyler Ray Kendrick that hasn't already been said about the Arby's on McKnight Road? In the last several years, he has performed in all the major comedy markets in the US: New York City, Los Angeles, and Bridgeville, Pennsylvania. Mr. Tall, dark, and grandson himself. He's a lover and a fighter. A lover of pho and a fighter for human rights. Just a real Gen X'er trapped in a millennial's body. He was voted Best Comedian in 2022 & 2023 Pittsburgh Magazine's *Best of the 'Burgh*.



Ameriah Fisher | Diamond

(she/her) is a Pittsburgh Capa 6-12 senior, and enjoys singing dancing, acting, and being goofy around her friends. She loves having fun with the people she loves. She'd like to thank her family, friends, and teachers for the love and support that they have given her. Ameriah has sang in *Another Brick Wall* with Pink Floyd's Roger Waters. She has also been in the following: Joe Turners *Come And Gone* (Zonia Loomis), *The Wizard Of Oz* (Ensemble), *Songs For A New World* (Ensemble), *Hairspray* (Lorraine/Ensemble), *Children of Eden* (Ensemble), and *The Prom* (Ensemble). She also recently did *Pippin* which she played Berthe and will be in *Sweeney Todd*. She would like to thank everyone that has been in her life and she can't wait to perform for you all!



Charlese Dawson | Sunny

(she/her) is extremely excited to be a part of *Teaira Whitehead*. Her most recent credits include Hattie Mae Wilkes in *Kalopsia*, Aunt Em in *The Wiz* and an ensemble member in Alumni Theater Company's *New Works Showcase*. She studied musical theater at AMDA New York and went on to become the stage manager & arts management fellow at ATC for two years. She would like to thank her family, her ancestors, and God for blessing her with this opportunity and the many to come.



Lee Richardson | Dante/Masc Wall

(he/they) is a Pittsburgh native and occasional creative. Lee has done creative works and performances with Dreams of Hope and enjoys creating/being involved in queer and trans performance art. Lee is a curious soul attempting to dive into a mix of cool stuff. His interests are all over the map, showing their interest for digging into human behavior, cultural quirks, and where science and creativity collide.



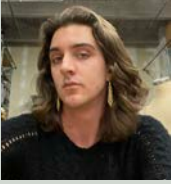
Mokah Malandro | Teaira/Shadow

(she/her) is a nineteen-year-old inspiring actress from Pittsburgh. She studied at Westinghouse Arts Academy, a performing arts high school. Surprisingly, she enrolled for studio arts but decided to enroll in mixed choir as she has a love for singing. Everything came full circle once she decided to take an acting class. She always knew that acting was a passion of hers, and she grew up playing various roles and characters as her grandmother performed in the original cast of the August Wilson Theater at age 15. Mokah has a love for African American studies and world activism. She is always learning something new and improving her skills as she's multi-talented in improvisation, cosmetic, studio artistry, dancing, and modeling.



Rianne Lindsey | Lighting Designer

(she/her) is a local freelance lighting designer. She has had the honor of designing at the Pittsburgh Playhouse, The New Hazlett Theatre, and Throughline Theatre Company. As well as the New London Barn Playhouse in New Hampshire. Design credits include *One-Log Bridge* (2023), *Himbos* (2023), *Newsies Jr.* (2023), *Living News Fest* (2023), *Uncle Vanya* (2023), *Lavender Terrace* (2021), *Good Grief* (2019), and *The Somewhat True Tale of Robin Hood* (2019). Rianne holds a BFA in Theatre Production: Design from Point Park University | riannelindsey.com



Jeremy Pitzer | Costume Designer

(he/him) is a maker designer currently pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in costume design at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA. Recent credits CMU's *Put Your House in Order* (2023) *Micromégas* (2023) *Surrender the Sun* (2023) and *Rebirth* (2022). He is thrilled to work with the New Hazlett and Melannie Taylor on their first collaboration with this beautiful, heartfelt piece.



Aaron Henderson | Media Designer

(he/him) Aaron's videos and installations are inspired by a visceral and intellectual interest in how we act and interact with the world around us. His current project, Future Studio, focuses on collaborations between artists and communities. These collaborations seek to foster inspiration, dialogue, and change by supporting and engaging with local communities and their ideas and concerns. www.future-studio.org



Frames | Music Production & Sound Design

(he/him) is a rapper-producer raised in Queens, NY, and now living in East Liberty, Pittsburgh. Frames has spent years developing his craft in order to live up to these three values, which are core to his artistic philosophy. Our words hold power, Truth is sacred, and "Music is a spiritual t:ing" (to quote Fela). Utilizing both MIDI-based and sample-based production methods, he endeavors to create music that both impacts listeners sonically and raises our collective consciousness.

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Interim Executive Director Sadie Treese
Director of Operations Scott Conklin
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Production Manager Dylan Baker
Program and Events Manager Allyson King
Communications Coordinator Krista Ream
Patron Services Coordinator Kevin Rabbits
Audio Technician Adam Davy
Lead Lighting Technician Peter Gustafson
Box Office & Development Coordinator Nathan Wagner
Stage Manager Lauren N. Wijangco
Building Maintenance Technician Zach Pyatt

FRONT OF HOUSE STAFF

David Balint, Eli Plummer, Rebecca Hurlbert, Tracee Imai, Hazy Jordan, Zoë Pienkoski, Eva Resnick-Day, Alexis Retcofsky, Jasmine Roth, Robin Treybig, Lauren N. Wijangco

SPECIAL THANKS FROM NEW HAZLETT THEATER

Petrichor, Renee Rosensteel, Saturday Light Brigade

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Coming Up....

A theatrical dance journey
down the rabbit hole

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UNDERLAND X ALICE

by **Kontara Morphis**



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