

WILMABILL

THE HALF-GOD OF

RAINFALL

ON STAGE FEB 11 – MAR 2, 2025



BY INUA ELLAMS
DIRECTED BY LINDSAY SMILING

wilmatheater.org

WILMA
THEATER



Co-Artistic Directors Morgan Green Lindsay Smiling Yury Urnov
Managing Director Leigh Goldenberg

THE HALF-GOD OF RAINFALL

BY INUA ELLAMS
DIRECTED BY LINDSAY SMILING

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Jessica Johnson Modúpe
Anthony Martinez-Briggs Demi
Suli Holm Hera
Damien J. Wallace Òrúnmilà/Elégba
Keith Conallen Zeus
Brett Ashley Robinson..... Osún
Brandon J. Pierce Sàngó

Assistant Director & Choreographer Ontaria Kim Wilson

Set Designer Dahlia Al-Habieli

Assistant Set Designer Jonas Harrison

Lighting Designer Thom Weaver

Assistant Lighting Designer Lily Castiglione

Costume Designer LeVonne Lindsay

Assistant Costume Designer Jessica Utz

Sound Designer & Co-Composer Jordan McCree

Co-Composer Elle.Morris

Dramaturg Brittany Onukwugha

Dialect Coach Dr. Amy Dean

Resident Stage Manager Patreshettarlina Adams

Assistant Stage Manager Matt Melchior

Production Manager Matthew J. Zumbo

Technical Director Benny Henry



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

LINDSAY SMILING

Myths posit what is good or bad, where we come from, who has authority, what is our origin, why the world is the way it is, or point to some truth of the nature of existence. We see gods in *The Half-God of Rainfall* lusting after and manipulating the mortals. We see hierarchy amongst both mortal and gods. We see a male-dominated society that makes heroes out of our sports figures. Central to the journey of this poem are questions of how to confront the structures of inequality in society. Do you keep working at change? Do you tear everything down? How do you break cycles of trauma? When is enough, enough? When is vengeance necessary? In the grand scheme of things, do your choices even matter? All these questions feel immediate. We are closely examining our institutions. We are looking at our governing structures with added scrutiny. We are looking at our difficulties. We are trying to reimagine our possibilities. *The Half-God of Rainfall* offers to “Play with love. Play with pain.” In the face of so much dissatisfaction with the world I find this offering full of hope. It feels like a message coming from both the past and the future while honoring the magnitude of the difficulties we are facing. How exactly do we hold both love and pain as we fight brutality, violence, and abuse is the next question. One we must work on collectively. And as we do so, it is certain that some myths must die.



CONTENT INFORMATION

This play contains haze, fog, flashing lights, loud sounds and stages sexual and physical violence.



The Actors and Stage Manager employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

This Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director and Choreographer are members of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.



The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.



Season Sponsor



This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



This production is generous supported by the Wyncote Foundation

**JESSICA JOHNSON** (she/they) **MODÚPÉ**

Jessica Johnson is an actor and theatre maker currently based in Philadelphia. She has performed in readings, workshops, and full-length productions all over the region. Most recent credits include “Mayme” in *Intimate Apparel* (Arden Theatre), “Chris” in *POTUS* (Arden Theatre), “Papa Ge” in *Once On This Island* (Arden Theatre), “Opal” in *Fat Ham* (Wilma Theater). She received a Barrymore Award for Outstanding Lead Performer in a Musical as “Celie” in *The Color*

Purple (2019), Outstanding Supporting Performer in a Musical as “Papa Ge” (2023) and three Barrymore nominations. During her time in Philadelphia, she was awarded an Independence Foundation Fellowship (2019), Jilline Ringle Residency (2019), and the HATCH (2021) residency to develop independent work.

**ANTHONY MARTINEZ-BRIGGS** (they/them) **DEMI**

Anthony has a crush on fashionable sneakers, well-cultivated herbs, and sci-fi novels written by black femme authors. They are a Wilma HotHouse company member, Bearded Ladies Associate Artist, and recipient of the 2023 F. Otta Haas Award for Emerging Artist. They wear many hats including but not limited to writing, teaching, facilitating, music-making, and theater artist-type things. They are also known as “Us”: emcee and member of the award-winning band ILL DOOTS,

seen on theater stages throughout the Philly area and in music venues nationwide. The LOVE received from the many communities that have welcomed them has remained a constant source of inspiration and gratitude. Their mission is to pay that love forward. They stand on the shoulders of many. They love their wife, Tess.

**SULI HOLUM** (she/her) **HERA**

Suli Holum is a HotHouse member and Head of HotHouse Professional Training. Co-Founder Pig Iron Theatre Company and Stein | Holum Projects (SHP). Awards: Drama Desk Award, TCG/Fox Resident Actor Fellowship, Barrymore Award, Independence Fellowship, NEFA Touring Grant. Solo performance: *Chimera and The Wholehearted* (SHP) presented by FringeArts, HERE/Under the Radar, La Jolla Playhouse, Center Theatre Group (LA), Z Space and The Gate (London). In

development: *The Woman Question*, Pew supported commission for Peoples’ Light with HotHouse member Melanye Finister. Wilma: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Dance Nation*, *Minor Character*, *Cherry Orchard*, *Twelfth Night*, *My Mama and the Full-Scale Invasion*. Off-Broadway: *Hot and Throbbing* (Signature Theater); Regional: *Born Yesterday* (Arena Stage); International: *A Doll’s House* (FringeArts/Oslo Opera House); TV/Film: *Baby Grief*, *The Fourth Wall*, *Ghostlight*, *Law & Order SVU*, *Mare of Easttown*.

**DAMIEN J. WALLACE** (he/him) **ÒRÚNMILÀ/ELÉGBA**

Damien is proud to make his long awaited debut at the Wilma. Some of Damien’s theatre credits include his extensive work in the August Wilson cycle, having performed in 8 of the 10 play canon. He performed Brucie in Philadelphia Theatre Company’s production of *Sweat*. Damien was also seen in the Arden’s productions of *The legend of Georgia McBride*, *Two Trains Running*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Our Town*, as well as *My General Tubman*. Damien was last seen in

EgoPo’s production of *The Ramayana*, in troupe with two Indonesian theatre companies. Damien was formerly trained under the tutelage of Lee Srasburg disciple Ty Collins and Stella Adler protégé Vernon Blackman. Damien holds a BFA with Distinguished Honors degree in Theatre from Arcadia University.

**KEITH CONALLEN** (he/him) **ZEUS**

Keith, native to Philadelphia has worked as a writer, director, and producer at various Philly theaters; Arden Theater Co., Lantern Theater Co., Theatre Exile, Simpatico, Azuka, Walnut Street Theater, Theater Horizon, etc. he is an original HotHouse Company Member and a 2024 Sylvia Kaunders Barrymore Award Winner. Notable moments on the Wilma stage are Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (dream role), *Don Juan Comes Home From Iraq*, *Dionysus Was A Very Nice*

Man, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Keith is a regular contributor/creator with Die-Cast, an experimental, immersive theater experience that has collaborated with companies across the country.

**BRETT ASHLEY ROBINSON** (she/they) **OSÚN**

Brett is a 2021 Pew Fellow as well as a Barrymore Award-winning actor director, theatremaker, and educator based in Philadelphia. She is the 2021 winner of the PEN America/ Jean Stein Oral History Grant for her original work Re-Enactment. She has taught acting at the University of the Arts, DeSales University, Drexel University, and currently is an Assistant Professor of Acting at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is a company member of Applied

Mechanics an immersive theater company based in Philadelphia, and a member of the HotHouse—the Tony award-winning Wilma Theater’s resident acting company. She loves a buck a shuck oyster and Vino Verde.

**BRANDON J. PIERCE** (he/him) **SÀNGÓ**

Brandon is thrilled to be back at the Wilma! Born in the city of Philadelphia, where he has most extensively plied his trade, Brandon has had the pleasure of performing all over the country. Broadway: *Birthday Candles* (Roundabout Theatre) Off-Broadway: *Exit Strategy* (Primary Stages) Regional: *Fat Ham*, *Eternal Life Pt. 1*, *Kill Move Paradise* (Wilma Theater); *Incendiary* (Woolly Mammoth); *Don’t Dress for Dinner* (Laguna Playhouse); *Ben Butler* (North Coast Repertory);

Native Son (Playmakers Rep.); *Welcome to Fear City* (Kansas City Rep); *Skeleton Crew* (Portland Stage); *Sweat* (People’s Light); *Metamorphoses* (Arden Theatre Company). Brandon is a member of the Wilma Theater’s HotHouse Acting Company. Recipient of the 2023 Barrymore Award for Outstanding Supporting Performance in a Play. Love to Alexandra, Mom, and Dad.





INUA ELLAMS (he/him) **PLAYWRIGHT**

Born in Nigeria, Inua Ellams is a poet, playwright & performer, graphic artist & designer. He is a Complete Works poet alumni and facilitates workshops in creative writing where he explores reoccurring themes in his work – Identity, Displacement and Destiny – in accessible, enjoyable ways for participants of all ages and backgrounds.

His awards include: Edinburgh Fringe First Award 2009, the Liberty Human Rights Award, the Live Canon International Poetry Prize, The

Kent & Sussex Poetry Competition, Magma Poetry Competition, Winchester Poetry Prize, a Black British Theatre Award, the Hay Festival Medal for Poetry, multiple Dora Awards for Outstanding Performance By An Ensemble & Outstanding Production.

He has been commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company, National Theatre, Tate Modern, Louis Vuitton, BBC Radio & Television. His poetry books include 'Candy Coated Unicorn and Converse All Stars' published Flipped Eye, 'The Wire-Headed Heathen' by Akashic Books, *The Half God of Rainfall* by 4th Estate and *The Actual* by Penned in The Margins. His plays include *Black T-shirt Collection* (Fuel, China Plate, Warwick Arts Centre, National Theatre), *The 14th Tale* (Fuel, Battersea Arts Centre, National Theatre), *Barber Shop Chronicles* (National Theatre, Oxford Playhouse, Bristol Old Vic, BAM, A.R.T, Kennedy Center, The Grand Theatre in London, Canada) and *Three Sisters* (National Theatre, Soul Pepper, Obsidian Theatre) published by Oberon, and *The Half God Of Rainfall* (Fuel, Kiln Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop) He founded The Midnight Run (an arts-filled, night-time, urban walking experience). The Rhythm and Poetry Party (The R.A.P Party) which celebrates poetry & hip hop, and Poetry + Film / Hack (P+F/H) which celebrates Poetry & Film.



LINDSAY SMILING (he/him) **DIRECTOR**

Lindsay is an original member of the HotHouse Acting company and now in his second year as Co-Artistic director of the Wilma Theater. *The Half-God of Rainfall* marks his Wilma Theater Directorial debut.

Lindsay has performed in 23 Wilma productions (*Fat Ham*, *My Mama and the Full-Scale Invasion*, *Twelfth Night*, *Kill Move Paradise*) and at over 20 other theaters across the country. Directorial credits include *Mojo* (Shakespeare Theatre of NJ), *Florence* (Shakespeare

Theatre of NJ), *Citizen: An American Lyric* (New Light Theatre), and *Romeo and Juliet* (Delaware Shakespeare Festival). This summer he will direct *Hamlet* and the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival. Lindsay co-founded the Black Theatre Alliance of Philadelphia and is an Adjunct Professor at Temple University where he earned his MFA in Acting.



ONTARIA KIM WILSON (she/her) **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER**

Ontaria is a multi hyphenated artist from Philadelphia. She is a 3rd year MFA Directing Candidate at Temple University. Dance & Choreography: Founding member of Rennie Harris Puremovement; R & B recording artist Gina Thompson; Hip Hop recording Artist Eve; and Teddy Pendergrass. Writing: *The Healing*; *Detox*; and *Beautiful Toxicity*. Theatre: *Alien Nation* (Williamstown Theater Festival); *School*

Girls or The African Mean Girls Play (Arden Theatre); *Wine In The Wilderness*(EgoPo Classic Theatre); *Les Blancs* (EgoPo Classic Theatre); *The Ways of White Folks* (EgoPo Classic Theater); *American Fast* (InterAct Theatre); *Ramayana* (EgoPo Classic Theatre); *From Okra To Greens* (Temple Theatres); *As You Like It* (Shakespeare in Clark Park); *If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must Be A Muhf*cka* (Temple Theatres); *Moreno* (Interact Theatre).



PATRESHETTARLINI ADAMS (she, hers /AEA)

RESIDENT STAGE MANGER

Pat is the Resident Stage Manager at the Wilma Theater. This season (2024-25) will be her 29th and she has recently celebrated over 100 productions with them! She has been a member of Actor's Equity for over 31 years. Pat's almost 40-year career encompasses work with the Crossroads Theatre Company, New Brunswick, NJ; Freedom Theatre, Philadelphia, PA; New Victory Theater, NYC; Ford's Theater, Washington, DC; The National Black Theater Festival, Winston-Salem, NC; The National Black Arts Festival, Atlanta, GA.; the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa. She has traveled internationally with Noche Flamenca! In memory of 'Miss Thomi', for Love and Faith.



DAHLIA AL-HABIELI (she/her) **SCENIC DESIGNER**

Recent and Upcoming credits include: *A Sherlock Carol*, *A Merry Christmas Carol*, *Henry V* (Virginia Stage Company), *La Tempestad*, *Sweat*, *Native Gardens* (Trinity Repertory), *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, *The Odyssey*, *In the Heights*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Gloria* (Dallas Theater Center); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Playmakers Repertory Theater); *The Refugees* (Gulfshore Playhouse); *House of Joy* (Repertory Theater of St. Louis), *What We Were* (Second

Thought Theatre). Dahlia's design work has received IRNE and Kennedy Center awards. She has held faculty appointments at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama, Wake Forest University and Albright College. Learn more about her work as an artist and educator at www.eloquentaction.com



THOM WEAVER (he/him) **LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Wilma Associate Artist, where he has designed over 25 productions including *Fairview*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Kill Move Paradise*, *Mr. Burns*, *Passing Strange*, *Blood Wedding*, *Adapt!*, and *An Octoroon*. His work has been seen at NYSF/Public Theatre, Roundabout Theatre, Primary Stages, Signature Theatre (NY), Alley Theater, Arden, PTC, Lantern, The Getty Pavilion, Theatre Exile, New Paradise Laboratories, Alliance Theater, CenterStage, Huntington Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare,

Syracuse Stage, Milwaukee Rep, Shakespeare Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Williamstown, Indiana Rep, Folger Theatre, Cleveland Playhouse, Roundhouse Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, Hangar, Spoleto Festival, City Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, and Yale Rep, among others. 6 Barrymore Awards, 2 Jeff Awards, Helen Hayes Award, and 2 AUDELCO Awards. Co-Founder of Die-Cast with Brenna Geffers, and a member of Wingspace. Education: Carnegie-Mellon and Yale. www.thomweaverdesign.net



LEVONNE LINDSAY (she/her) **COSTUME DESIGNER**

LeVonne is the Costume Shop Manager for the Lang Performing Arts Center at Swarthmore College. LeVonne received her B.S. in Fashion Design from Philadelphia University and her M.F.A. in Costume Design from the University of Maryland, College Park. Recent design credits include Arden Theatre Company: *Radio Gulf*, *Into the Woods*, *School Girls*; Or, *The African Mean Girls Play*, *Ragtime*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Gem of the Ocean*; Wilma Theater: *Kiss*, *Kill Move Paradise*; Philadelphia

Theatre Company: *The Garbologists*, *Sweat*; InterAct Theatre Company: *Selling Kabul*. Other regional credits include productions at Arena Stage, The Hangar Theatre, Virginia Stage Company, Indiana Repertory Theater, The Everyman Theater, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Theater, Trinity Repertory Theater, and Indiana Repertory Theater.



JORDAN MCCREE (they/he) SOUND DESIGNER & CO-COMPOSER

Jordan is an artist based in Philadelphia. Their most recent collaborations include: *we come to collect: a flirtation with capitalism* (Jenn Kidwell and the Blackening), *The Comeuppance* (Woolly Mammoth/Wilma Theater), *The Good Person of Setzuan* (Wilma Theater), *Grief Hotel* (Clubbed Thumb), *Cost of Living* (Philadelphia Theatre Company), *The BFG* (Arden Theater), *The World Takes*

(short film, Eight Flow Studio), *Eternal Life Part 1* (Wilma Theater), *The Karamazovs* (film, Village Park Productions), *Fat Ham* (2021 world premiere, Wilma Theater). They were one of the 2022 grant recipients to the 1/52 Project. They are also a member of Philly-based, Barrymore Award winning, hip hop collective, ILL DOOTS. Their mixtapes, *The Sample Pack Experiment*, is available everywhere!



ELLE MORRIS (she/her) CO-COMPOSER

Elle Morris is a vocalist, vocal producer/arranger, and member of ILL DOOTS. Prior to joining this production, Elle gave voice to the songs used in Theatre Horizon's *The Agitators*. It was her last theatre project before the pandemic. Elle has been in the music director chair in the last 5 years for productions such as *Jamaica* and *The Wiz*. At the top of 2021, she was tapped to be the music director for *Dreamgirls*, which was produced on the audio only Clubhouse app. Loads of

gratitude for innovation, creativity, and expansion. Love!



BRITTANY ONUKWUGHA (she/her) DRAMATURG

Brittany is a Barrymore Award nominated actor, graduate of Rutgers University-Camden, and the Associate Producer of the Wilma Theater. She is excited to be collaborating on this production as a Dramaturg! Some Regional Credits: *The Playboy of the Western World* (Dramaturg, Inis Nua Theatre Company), *An Army of Lovers* (Chloe, Azuka Theatre), *Julius Caesar* (Decius Brutus/Messala, Delaware Shakespeare Festival), *The Complete Works of Jane*

Austen Abridged (Self, Tiny Dynamite), *To Reach Across a River* (Batya, Theatre Ariel), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Titania/Hippolyta, Arden Theatre). She's also worked on productions in roles such as Associate Choreographer, Dance Captain, and Fight Captain. Website: www.brittanyonu.wordpress.com Social Media: @brittanyonu



MATT MELCHIOR (he/him) ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Matt is thrilled to be back at the Wilma! He is a freelance Stage Manager and theater artist based in Philadelphia, and graduated from West Chester University with a B.A. in Theater as well as minors in music, math, and statistics. Most recently, he was the Assistant Stage Manager for *The Comeuppance* here at the Wilma, and was the Production Stage Manager for both *Winter Wonderland* and *Legally Blonde* at the Media Theater. Next up, he will be finishing out the rest of the Wilma season including *Archduke* in April and *A Summer Day* in June. Much love to Hope and his parents.

MEET OUR COMMUNITY PARTNER

Meet **The Accessible Productions Initiative (API)**, a new program at the Wilma generously funded by the William Penn Foundation. In the Community Practice Department, we believe that pulling inspiration from a variety of voices creates the most authentic artistic experience. We seek to demystify the creative process and add community perspective and wisdom. API invites partner organizations into a production's process to observe and share their reflections with the creative team. Then, we work with the partner organization to create engaging supplemental materials and creative responses to the play, which are shared with our broader audience.

For *The Half-God of Rainfall*, our Community Partner is the **Masculinity Action Project (MAP)**. MAP's work is centered around unlearning Toxic Masculinity and channeling that energy into collective action in support of gender justice and creating new versions of masculinity.



MAP joined a special session with the cast, sharing a lesson plan about Power and Patriarchy. This plan was also shared with Wilma teaching artists to use as part of this year's Wilmagination residency work, which centers on *Half-God*, in 11 classrooms throughout Philadelphia. Additionally, MAP members created a podcast series and a music EP based on themes from the show which will be shared throughout February. We hope that these materials will provide a way to meet the play and sit more deeply with its questions.

MAP's work has been woven into the entire ecosystem of the Education & Community Practice Department this winter and we are proud to work in such a deep and integrated way. Thank you for being at the theater tonight. Thank you for believing in the power of community collaborations.

In Service,

Jess Conda, Director of Education & Community Practice



CHECK OUT OUR PODCAST WITH MAP - WILMA THEATERCAST - AND MUSIC EP ON ALL PLATFORMS!

Episode 1: Setting the Stage – Myths, Masculinity, and Basketball

Releasing Feb 14!

Dwight Dunston (API co-lead) interviewing the shows playwright, Inua Ellams for our new podcast, Wilma Theatercast!

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE - WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12



A READING OF ANIMAL FARM

AN ADAPTATION OF THE NOVEL BY GEORGE ORWELL
BY NELSON BOND
DIRECTED BY JUSTIN JAIN

THIS EVENING UNDERWRITTEN WITH A GENEROUS GIFT FROM ROBERT J. WALLNER, JR.

SAVE THE DATE - MONDAY, MAY 12

FETE

HONORING CAROLE HAAS GRAVAGNO

For more information on these events or to buy tickets,
contact Brittney Anderson at banderson@wilmatheater.org.

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When you give to the Wilma, you make possible bold, adventurous work like *THE HALF-GOD OF RAINFALL* – and also so much more! Your gift supports new play development, our HotHouse Acting Company, expanded accessibility, youth and community programming, and our work with other nationally renowned regional theaters.

Ticket sales cover less than 30% of production costs. Donate now to be a part of what's next at the Tony Award-winning Wilma Theater!

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THE HALF-GOD OF RAINFALL CREW

Production Stage Manager:

Patreshettarlina Adams

Assistant Stage Manager: Matt Melchior

Wardrobe Supervisor: Michelle Biddle Roland

Deck Hand/Flyman: Elliot Greer

Light Board Operator: Victoria Sills

Audio Engineer: Eddie Smith

Carpenters: Elliot Greer, Anna Ryabova,

Nick Schwasman, Julian Love

Electricians: Victoria Sills, Ayla Taffel, Michael

Hamlet, Isabella Gill-Gomez, Bless Rudisill,

Xander Setchko, Janine Katona

Stitchers: Allison Neiheiser

Scenic Charges: Shane Stelly, Sarah Court

Projection content and support: Taj Rauch

WILMA STAFF MEMBERS

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Managing Director: Leigh Goldenberg

Artistic Director Emeritus: Blanka Zizka

ARTISTIC

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Associate Producer: Brittany Onukwugha

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Melanye Finister, Sarah Gliko, Suli Holum, Justin Jain, Anthony Martinez-Briggs,

Jered McLenigan, Kishia Nixon, Bi Jean Ngo, Campbell O'Hare, Jaylene Clark Owens,

Brandon J. Pierce, Steven Rishard, Brett Ashley Robinson, Matteo Scammell, Lindsay Smiling

HotHouse Head of Professional Training: Suli Holum

Artistic Intern: Rose Farrell

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Community Practice Coordinator: Mieke D

Resident Teaching Artist: Lee Minora

Teaching Artists: Donovan Lockett, Chris Davis, Devon Sinclair, Anthony Martinez-Briggs,

Taylor J Mitchell, Taj Rauch, Carly Bodnar, Elle Morris, Rebecca Posner, Chantel Cumberbatch,

Sohrab Haghverdi, Aarimoni Lee

API Project Co-Leads: Dwight Dunston, Toby Fraser

Community Practice Artist in Residence: Dwight Dunston

Podcast Editor: Peterson Toscano

Musicians: DJ Afrvbz, Martronimous

MAP Community Ambassadors: Dwight Dunston, Toby Fraser, Teddy Poneman, Christian

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By Jon Fosse

Translated by
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