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### **For Immediate Release**

## **BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES FULL CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR THE WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL, *GODDESS***

**July 21, 2022-** Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced the full cast and creative team for the world premiere musical, ***Goddess***. The musical stage production is conceived and directed by **Saheem Ali** (*Merry Wives, Fat Ham*), music and lyrics by **Michael Thurber** (*Merry Wives*), and written by **Jocelyn Bioh** (*Merry Wives, School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*). Berkeley Rep presents the show by special arrangement with **No Guarantees and Octopus Theatricals**.

A mysterious singer arrives at Moto Moto, a steamy Afro-jazz club in Mombasa, Kenya. She casts an entrancing spell on everyone, including a young man who has returned home from studying in America. Will the big plans for his life — stepping into a political legacy and marrying his fiancée — be upended? Inspired by the myth of Marimba, the Goddess who created beautiful songs from her heartbreak, this is a rousing tale of romance, the supernatural, and the quest towards one's truest self.

“As artists who have always strived to create new, innovative, and culturally unique stories, we are beyond thrilled that ***Goddess*** will make its world premiere at Berkeley Rep!” said Bioh, Ali, and Thurber. The trio went on to say, “This beautiful and intriguing story, set in Kenya and inspired by the African myth of Marimba, the Goddess of Music, dispels Western impressions of what Africa is and allows contemporary and ancient stories to live side by side. We cannot wait for audiences to jam out to our incredibly eclectic score that blends influences from the continent like Jazz, Afrobeat, R&B, Taarab, Bhangra, and Soul. We promise that ***Goddess*** will be a show audiences will never forget!”

**Johanna Pfaelzer**, Artistic Director of Berkeley Rep said, “I am so thrilled to have this incredibly gifted creative team and cast here at Berkeley Rep, bringing this epic love story to life. In ***Goddess***, Saheem, Jocelyn, and Mike have brought together beloved aspects of classic musical theatre, transformed and infused with their specific voices, perspectives and gifts. I truly believe that years from now, our audiences will be proud to say they saw this here first.”

**Goddess** cast members include **Abena** (Rashida), **Melessie Clark** (Mosi - Griot Trio; U/S Siti), **Rodrick Covington** (Ahmed), **Zachary Downer** (Sameer - Moto Moto Ensemble), **Amber Iman** (Nadira), **Grasan Kingsberry** (Jaali - Moto Moto Ensemble; U/S Madongo, U/S Balozi, U/S Hassan), **Kingsley Leggs** (Hassan), **Kecia Lewis** (Siti), **Isio-Maya Nuwere** (Safiyah - Moto Moto Ensemble), **Aaron Patterson** (Yusef - Moto Moto Ensemble; U/S Omari, U/S Ahmed), **Destinee Rea** (Cheche), **Phillip Johnson Richardson** (Omari), **Awa Sal Secka** (Zawadi - Griot Trio; U/S Cheche & Rashida), **Lawrence Stallings** (Madongo), **Teshomech** (Tisa - Griot Trio; U/S Nadira), **Quiantae Thomas** (Amina - Moto Moto Ensemble); U/S Griot Trio, **Wade Watson** (Musa - Moto Moto Ensemble), and **Reggie D. White** (Balozi).

**Goddess** features direction by **Saheem Ali**, music and lyrics by **Michael Thurber**, a book by **Jocelyn Bioh**, additional material by **Mkhululi Z. Mabija**, choreography by **Darrell Grand Moultrie**, music direction by **Marco Paguia**, scenic design by **Arnulfo Maldonado**, costume design by **Dede Ayite**, lighting design by **Bradley King**, sound design by **Nevin Steinberg**, projections and video design by **Brittany Bland**, wig design by **Nikiya Mathis**, illusions by **Steve Cuiffo**, and casting by **Stewart/Whitley**.

**Previews begin Saturday, August 13, 2022** and the show runs through **Sunday, September 25, 2022**. Press night for **Goddess** will be **Wednesday August 24, 2022**. Tickets are now on sale and can be purchased online at [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org) and by phone at **510 647-2949** (Tue-Sun, noon-7pm).

### **CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM BIOS**

#### **Saheem Ali (Conceiver/Director)**

Saheem is a proud immigrant from Kenya. He is the Associate Artistic Director/Resident Director of New York City's Public Theater. Recent productions include *Fat Ham*, *Merry Wives* (The Public), *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC Theater), *Romeo y Julieta*, *Shipwreck*, and *Richard II* (radio plays). Other productions: *Fires in the Mirror* (Signature Theatre), *The Rolling Stone* (Lincoln Center Theater), *The New Englanders*, *Sugar in Our Wounds* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Passage* (Soho Rep), *Fireflies* (Atlantic Theater Company), *Dangerous House*, *Where Storms Are Born* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *Tartuffe* (Playmakers Rep), *Twelfth Night* (The Public), *Kill Move Paradise* (National Black Theatre), *Nollywood Dreams* (Cherry Lane), and *Dot* (Detroit Public Theatre). He has workshopped new plays at Playwrights Horizons, Playwrights Realm, MCC, New York Stage & Film, Page 73, and The Lark. He is a Usual Suspect at New York Theatre Workshop, Sir John Gielgud SDCF Fellow, and a Shubert Fellow.

#### **Michael Thurber (Composer & Lyricist)**

Michael Thurber is a Drama Desk-nominated composer of musical theatre, popular song, and concert music. As a theatre composer and lyricist, Thurber made his international debut with his score for *Antony and Cleopatra*, a co-production between The Royal Shakespeare Company and The Public Theater directed by Academy Award winner Tarell Alvin McCraney. He has since composed scores for numerous Public Theater productions, including the 2021 Shakespeare in the Park adaptation of *Merry Wives* and *Romeo y Julieta*, a radio play starring Lupita Nyong'o. He has developed original musicals with New York Stage & Film, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Joe's Pub, the Kimmel Center, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and Space at Ryder Farm. In 2020, Michael won the Bryan Gallace Fellowship, a grant awarded annually via space at Ryder Farm. Michael serves on the board of directors for NPR's From the Top. He teaches at NYU's Clive Davis Institute. He studied music at The Juilliard School.

#### **Jocelyn Bioh (Playwright)**

Jocelyn Bioh is an award-winning Ghanaian-American writer/performer from New York City. Her written works for theatre include *Merry Wives* (adapted from Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* for The Public Theater/Shakespeare in the Park), *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC Theater), and the multi-award-winning *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, which was originally produced at MCC Theater in 2017/2018 and has gone on to have over 40 regional productions. She is a former TOW playwriting fellow (2017-2018) and has been commissioned by MTC, Atlantic Theater Co., Williamstown Theatre Festival,

and Second Stage. Jocelyn has also written for TV on *Russian Doll*, Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*, and is also writing the live-screen adaptation of the hit Broadway musical *Once on This Island* for Disney+.

**Mkhululi Z. Mabija (Additional Material)** is a South African librettist from Kimberley. He graduated from Tshwane University of Technology with a BA in Musical Theatre Performance (2006) and from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with an MFA in Musical Theatre Writing (2010). Mkhululi has written operas with composers Angelique Mouyis (*Bessie*, Cape Town Opera) and Robert Fokkens (*Bhekizizwe* and *The President's Suit*, Opera'r Ddraig). Mkhululi has written musicals with composers Paul Castles (*The Road Between the Desert and the Ocean*, Basin Arts), Dewey Fleszar (*Let It Rain*, NYU), Sooyeon Lee (*On the Wall*, NYU), BLK JKS (*Mongezi*, Market Theatre), Bokani Dyer (*My Daughter/Son*, Mayibuye Arts Centre); and dance musicals with Monwabisi Bangiwe (*Emathongeni*, *BahiAfrica*, *Big Hole*, *Mangaliso*, *Umthombo*, *Mwana Wa Mvula* and *Nomaphondo* at Northern Cape Theatre), Zwai Bala (*Tsotsi*, Cape Town Opera). Mkhululi has directed Moagi Modise's *Clues on the Sand*, *Sephiri Sa Kgosi*, and *Emsini* (Northern Cape Theatre). Awards include Yip Harburg Award for Best Lyricist (2009, 2010), *Mail* and *Guardian* newspaper Top 200 Young South Africans. (2015, 2021), *GQ Magazine* 20 Game Changers (2016), ImpACT Award for Theatre (2016), Standard Bank Silver Ovation Award for *Emathongeni* (2018), Standard Bank Cut Above Ovation Award for *Umthombo* (2019), *Sunday World* newspaper's Top 100 Unsung Heroes (2021), Standard Bank Bronze Ovation Award for *Nomaphondo* (2022), Standard Bank Gold Ovation Award for *Emsini* (2022). He is the co-founder of the Kimberley Book Fair, Kimberley Festival of Beer, and Amandla Danca Teatro ZA. He is currently an artist-in-residence at Stellenbosch Institute of Advance Study.

#### **Darrell Grand Moultrie (Choreographer)**

A recipient of the Princess Grace Choreography Fellowship Award, Moultrie's select credits include the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Fat Ham* (The Public Theater), *Merry Wives* (The Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park), *Space Dogs* (MCC Theater), *Invisible Thread* (Second Stage), *Daddy* (The New Group/Vineyard Theatre), *Sugar in Our Wounds* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Witness Uganda* (American Repertory Theater), *Evita* and *Pride & Prejudice* (Kansas City Repertory Theatre), *Redwood* (Portland Center Stage). Moultrie has choreographed premieres for numerous dance companies, including American Ballet Theatre, The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and Dance Theatre of Harlem, among others. Moultrie is a New York native and a graduate of P.S. 144, LaGuardia High School, and The Juilliard School.

#### **Marco Paguia (Music Director/Keys 1)**

Marco is a music director, arranger, orchestrator, and pianist based in New York. He was the music director on Broadway for *Girl from the North Country*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, and *Everyday Rapture*. Other Broadway credits include *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Sunday in the Park with George* (2017), *Tuck Everlasting*, *If/Then*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *The Addams Family*, and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. Marco was the co-orchestrator of *Unknown Soldier* (Williamstown, Playwrights Horizons). His arrangements have been performed at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, and he is the music director/arranger/pianist for LaChanze and Lindsay Mendez. Marco had the honor of recording the piano and celesta parts for the soundtrack to Steven Spielberg's adaptation of *West Side Story*, with the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel. (he/him/his)

#### **Arnulfo Maldonado (Scenic Design)**

Tony Award nominee for Best Scenic Design of a Musical, *A Strange Loop*. Broadway: *A Strange Loop* (Lyceum Theater); *Topdog/Underdog* (Golden Theater); *Trouble in Mind* (Roundabout). Off-Broadway: *Shhhh* (Atlantic); *one in two* (The New Group); *Nollywood Dreams*, *School Girls...* (MCC); *Sugar in Our Wounds* (Lucille Lortel Award; MTC); *A Strange Loop* (Special Citation Obie); *Selling Kabul*, *Dance Nation* (Playwrights Horizons); *To My Girls* (Second Stage); *A Case for the Existence of God*, *Fires in the Mirror* (Signature). Previously at Berkeley Rep: *An Octoroon*. Regional: Alley Theatre, CTG, Guthrie, Steppenwolf, Woolly Mammoth. International Tour: *The Magnetic Fields: 50 Song Memoir*. 2020 Obie

Sustained Excellence in Set Design, Princess Grace Fabergé Theater Award, Henry Hewes Design Award nominee. (he/him/his) IG: [arnulfo.maldonado.design](https://www.instagram.com/arnulfo.maldonado.design) [arnulfomaldonado.com](http://arnulfomaldonado.com)

### **Dede Ayite (Costume Design)**

Dede Ayite is a two-time Tony Award-nominated costume designer whose Broadway credits include *American Buffalo*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *A Soldier's Play*, *Slave Play*, *American Son*, *Chicken & Biscuits*, and *Children of a Lesser God*. Select Off-Broadway credits include *Richard III* and *Merry Wives* (The Public Theater); *Seven Deadly Sins* (Tectonic); *Secret Life of Bees* and *Marie and Rosetta* (Atlantic); *By the Way*, *Meet Vera Stark* (Signature); *Nollywood Dreams*, *BLKS*, and *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* (MCC); *Bella: An American Tall Tale* (Playwrights Horizons); *The Royale* (Lincoln Center); *Toni Stone* (Roundabout). Regionally, Ayite's work has appeared at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Steppenwolf, Arena Stage, and more. She has worked in television with Netflix, Comedy Central, and FOX Shortcoms. Ayite earned her MFA at the Yale School of Drama and has received an Obie, Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, Helen Hayes, Theatre Bay Area, and Jeff Award.

### **Bradley King (Lighting Design)**

Bradley King (he/him) is a lighting designer based in New York. He is thrilled to be returning to Berkeley Rep after designing *Pericles* in 2012. His most recent Broadway shows include *Flying Over Sunset*, *Hadestown*, *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, and *The Great Comet*. His recent work off Broadway includes *Little Shop of Horrors* (West Side Theater), *Endlings* (New York Theatre Workshop), *Evita* (City Center Encores!), and *Alice by Heart* (MCC). His other upcoming new musicals include *The Karate Kid* (Stages St. Louis), *Lempicka* (La Jolla Playhouse), *How to Dance in Ohio* (Syracuse Stage), *Water for Elephants* (Pigpen/Alliance Theatre), and the international debut of *Monsoon Wedding* (Doha, Qatar). Bradley's many awards include two Tony Awards, three Drama Desk Awards, two Outer Critic's Circle awards, and multiple other nominations. He is a proud member of USA 829 and can be found at [bradleykingld.com](http://bradleykingld.com) / @bradleyking

### **Nevin Steinberg (Sound Design)**

At Berkeley Rep: *PigPen Theatre Co.'s The Tale of Despereaux*. Nevin's recent projects include *Hamilton* on Broadway, in London, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and on U.S. tour; *Dear Evan Hansen* on Broadway, in London, and on U.S. tour; *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical* in the West End, Hamburg, Utrecht, and on Broadway (Tony nomination); *Hadestown* (Tony Award) on Broadway; *Freestyle Love Supreme* on Broadway and on tour; Steve Martin and Edie Brickell's *Bright Star* on Broadway; and *Rodgers+ Hammerstein's Cinderella* (Tony nomination). He designed over 30 Broadway productions with Acme Sound Partners and received five additional Tony nominations for *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, *Fences*, *Hair*, *In the Heights*. Nevin has also received the Olivier Award, Drama Desk Award, and the Henry Hewes Design Award. He serves as the audio consultant for Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall. He holds a bachelor's degree from Harvard College in English and American Literature and Language, and in 2011 completed a Certificate Program in Arts Management at NYU's School for Continuing Professional Studies. Nevin is trustee of the Town Hall Foundation, Inc., the nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and support of the Town Hall, a cultural and education center as well as a national historic landmark in the center of Times Square in New York City.

### **Brittany Bland (Projections & Video Design)**

Brittany Bland is a storyteller who has dedicated her life to the proliferation of empathy. As a projection designer for the stage, she has designed for theatre, dance, and opera. Her work as a video artist often explores the ideas of legacy, memory, and empathy. Brittany is interested in how emerging media and technology can elevate concepts and experiences. Originally from Atlanta GA, she holds a BA in Technical Theater and Production from Catawba College and an MFA in Design from the Yale School of Drama. Her recent design credits include *A Dozen Dreams* (En Garde Arts), *Seize the King* (Classical Theatre of Harlem), *Rage* (Quinnipiac University), *Florencia en el Amazonas* (Shubert Theater), & *Black History Museum* (Here Arts Center). [bcbmediadesign.com](http://bcbmediadesign.com)

### **Nikiya Mathis (Wig Design)**

Nikiya Mathis is making her Berkeley Rep debut. Her regional credits include *Grace* (Ford's Theatre), *The Glorious World of Crowns Kinks & Curls* (Baltimore Center Stage), *The Garden* (La Jolla Playhouse), *An Iliad* (Long Wharf Theatre), *The Most Spectacularly Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare). Her New York credits include Broadway's *Chicken & Biscuits*; off Broadway she has designed *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC Theatre), *The Wedding Band* (TFANA), *For Colored Girls...* (The Public Theater), *Confederates* (Signature Theatre), *Stew* (Page 73 Productions), *For All the Women...* (Soho Rep), *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord* (Women's Project), *Travisville* (Ensemble Studio Theatre), *Crowndation* (National Black Theatre). Nikiya is a multi-hyphenate actress and designer. Her awards include the Henry Hewes Design Award and Antonyo Award, and she is a Drama Desk nominee. She holds an MFA in Acting from NYU Tisch Grad Acting. [ActTRESSSEShair.com](http://ActTRESSSEShair.com) @our\_black\_tresses

### **Steve Cuiffo (Illusions)**

Steve Cuiffo is a magician and theatre maker who creates solo performance as well as collaborative works with other artists and theatre companies. His work incorporates aspects of sleight of hand, misdirection, imitation, and re-enactment to create unique performance, art, theatre, and magic. He was the illusion & lip sync consultant for *Dana H.* on Broadway and at Berkeley Rep and magic consultant for the current season of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. Other work includes illusion design for Geoff Sobelle's *Home* and *The Object Lesson*; magic director for *David Blaine: Live*; an associate with the Wooster Group theatre company; and co-founder of Secret Arts.

**Stewart/Whitley (Casting)** Duncan Stewart CSA and Benton Whitley CSA. Broadway/NY: *Paradise Square*; *Hadestown* (Artios Award); *Chicago the Musical*; *Rock of Ages*; *Lightning Thief*; *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*; *Elf*; *On the Town*; *Pippin*; *La Cage aux Folles*; *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. TV/Film: Netflix, 20th Century Fox, NBC, Lionsgate, Disney Channel. West End/U.K.: *Hadestown*, *Thriller Live*, *Menier Chocolate Factory*. Tours: *Hadestown*, *Hairspray*, *Waitress*, *Charlie & The Chocolate Factory*, *Finding Neverland*, *Into the Woods*, *We Will Rock You*. Regional: A.R.T., Berkeley Rep, Alley, Bay Street, For The Record, TUTS, Hollywood Bowl, McCarter, Signature, RCCL. Follow: @stewartwhitley and stewartwhitley.com.

### **GODDESS CAST MEMBERS**

#### **Abena (Rashida)**

From NJ, Abena (she/her) is an actor/vocalist of dual Ghanaian and African-American heritage. She most recently appeared as Adenikeh in the world premiere of Jocelyn Bioh's *Nollywood Dreams*, also directed by Saheem Ali, which gained her a Lucille Lortel Award nomination. Abena originated and reprised the role of Nana in *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* (MCC Theater, Center Theatre Group; Drama Desk Special Award). Vocalist of the Royalton Resorts theme song, "Royalton Life." An AMDA graduate, Abena has also served on the institution's curriculum review committee in order to foster a more inclusive learning environment. Additional credits include *Merry Wives* (Delacorte Theater; Antonyo Award nomination), *Goddess* workshop (Berkeley Rep/MCC SongLab/NYSAF), *Appointment with gOD* (The Playwrights Realm), *Ragtime* (Ellis Island), *How the Light Gets In/Water Is Life* (NYMF), Mainstage Vocalist (Disney Cruise Line). TV: *Orange Is the New Black* (Netflix), *Daredevil* (Netflix), *The Other Two* (Comedy Central), *Celebs Have Issues* (Huffington Post), and *FBI* (CBS). Instagram: @abenadryl

#### **Melessie Clark (Mosi-Grio Trio; U/S Siti)**

Melessie Clark is thrilled to be making her Berkeley Rep debut! She was most recently seen as Risa in Pittsburgh Public's *Two Trains Running* by August Wilson and City Theatre's *An Untitled New Play* by Justin Timberlake by Matt Schatz. Other Pittsburgh credits include Pittsburgh CLO's *The Wizard of Oz*, *Grease*, *Rock of Ages*, *The Wedding Singer*, and *Gypsy*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* by Jocelyn Bioh at Pittsburgh Public Theatre; *The Current War* with Quantum Theatre; *An Octoroon* with Kinetic Theatre; *Dulcy* at Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company; and *The Old Settler* with New Horizon Theater. Regional theatre credits include *A Sign of the Times* at Goodspeed



Opera House and Delaware Theatre Company, *Dreamgirls* at Alhambra Theatre, and *After Midnight* on Norwegian Cruise Lines. TV and film credits include *Farm Queens* on Great American Country, *Archive 81* on Netflix, and *Anything's Possible* directed by Billy Porter on Amazon Prime. Melessie is a proud Pittsburgh native and Point Park University alumnus with a BFA in Musical Theatre. @melessieclark melessieclark.com

### **Rodrick Covington (Ahmed)**

Berkeley Rep debut. Appeared on Broadway in the Tony Award-winning, Grammy-nominated revival of *Once on This Island* and *The Lion King*, where he portrayed Banzai. Co-producer of *Goddess*. His favorite off Broadway credits include *Invisible Thread* at Second Stage, *Joan of Arc* at The Public Theater, *Central Avenue* at the Signature, where he won Best Performance and Best Show in the NTMF. His favorite regional theatre credits include the world premiere of *Witness Uganda* at American Repertory Theater, *Pippin* at the Mark Taper, *Miss Saigon* (best actor nomination) at North Shore, *Pal Joey* at Boston Court, *The Brothers Size* at Syracuse Stage, *Venice* at Kirk Douglas Theatre, *In the Red and Brown Water* (best actor nomination) at Alliance Theatre, *The Brother/Sister Trilogy* (best actor nomination) at Steppenwolf, and *Jelly's Last Jam* (best actor nomination) at Alliance. He recently co-produced the DNC in NYC for the LGBTQ+AI. He has a BFA from SUNY Purchase and is also a proud business owner of a wellness studio in NYC for performers, producers, agents, managers, and directors on Broadway/TV/Film called Core Rhythm Fitness. Gratitude to A&R, Brenner Entertainment, and husband Jay.

### **Zachary Downer (Sameer-Moto Moto Ensemble)**

Zachary is proud to be making his Berkeley Rep debut! He was last seen on stage at Stages St. Louis this spring in the world premiere and pre-Broadway run of Robert Kamens/Drew Gasparini's *The Karate Kid: The Musical*. Earlier this year he opened up the New York City Center's Encores! season in *The Tap Dance Kid*, and also performed in NYCC's Fall for Dance season prior, in Bob Fosse/Gwen Verdon's *Sweet Gwen Suite*. Broadway credits include the Tony Award-winning revival of *Hello, Dolly!* at the Shubert and the 2016 revival of *Cats* as Mr. Mistoffelees at the Neil Simon. Off-Broadway credits include Jessie Nelson/Steven Sater's *Alice by Heart* at MCC. Tours: Hugh Jackman's *The Greatest Showman* world tour. TV: Netflix's *Halston*, *The 43rd Kennedy Center Honors* on CBS, NBC's *Annie Live!*, and Nickelodeon's upcoming *Blue's Big City Adventure* film that will premiere on Paramount Plus this November. (he/him/his) @zachdestyn

### **Amber Iman (Nadira)**

Amber Iman is a performer, filmmaker, and activist. Amber made history as the first woman and first Black woman to perform on Broadway after the pandemic shutdown, as part of the NY PopsUp festival, which welcomed audiences back into Broadway theatres. Amber is one of the most sought-after theatre artists and vocalists working today. She debuted on Broadway as the High Priestess of Soul, Nina Simone, in *Soul Doctor*, earning rave reviews and a Clive Barnes Award nomination. She has been seen in George C. Wolfe's *Shuffle Along* beside theatre luminaries Audra McDonald, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Billy Porter, etc.; she was in the first national tour of the megahit musical *Hamilton*, and she has performed off Broadway and regionally with New York Theatre Workshop, New World Stages, Two River Theater, the Kennedy Center, and many more, earning an LA Stage Alliance Ovation award, nominations for Helen Hayes, IRENE, and countless accolades along the way. On TV, Amber has been seen on *High Maintenance* for HBO, and her short film *Steve* (which she wrote, produced, and starred in) has been a critical darling at film festivals across the country and internationally. This past April, Amber's one-woman show, *An Evening with Amber Iman*, was produced by and recorded for Audible. Most recently, Amber starred as Rafaela in *Lempicka* at La Jolla Playhouse. As an activist, Amber is the Co-Founder of the Broadway Advocacy Coalition and Black Women on Broadway. In 2021, Amber was honored with a Tony Award for her work with BAC. Amber is a proud graduate of Howard University. (she/her) @amberiman\_ [amberiman.com](http://amberiman.com)

### **Grasan Kingsberry (Jaali-Moto Moto Ensemble; U/S Madongo, U/S Balozi, U/S Hassan)**

Originally from Charlotte, NC, Grasan is a Daytime Emmy, ACCA, and Regional BroadwayWorld Award-winning artist. After receiving a BFA from The Juilliard School, he went on to appear in 11 Broadway productions. He was featured in the 2018 Tony Award Best Revival *Once on This Island*. He took part in

the workshop and development of the 2005 original Broadway cast, as well as the 2015 Tony, Grammy, and Emmy-winning revival of *The Color Purple*, reprising the role he originated. Other Broadway shows include *Motown*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, *Leap of Faith*, *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Catch Me If You Can*, and *Aida*. Regional theatre roles include *Something Rotten!* (William Shakespeare) at Musical Theatre West, *In the Heights* (Benny) at Music Theatre of Wichita (2019 Regional BroadwayWorld Award), *Annie* (H. Morgenthau) at Hollywood Bowl, *One Night in Miami* (Sam Cooke) at Center Stage, *Dreamgirls* (Curtis) at NorthShore. TV: *Mozart in the Jungle*, *Smash*, *Royal Pains*, *All My Children*, *Today Show*, *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Film: *The Aerialist* (2019), and *I Am Legend*. Grasan is also an international teacher, choreographer, and mentor who currently serves as a Lecturer in Dance for Musical Theater at USC Kaufman. @gray\_sandy

### **Kingsley Leggs (Hassan)**

Kingsley is very pleased to make his debut at Berkeley Rep. He was last seen as Willie Green in the world premiere of *The Wanderer* at Paper Mill Playhouse. His credits include Broadway: *Pretty Woman*, *Sister Act*, *The Color Purple*, and *Miss Saigon*. Off Broadway: *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin*. He has toured the country and internationally with productions of *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*, *Sister Act*, *Miss Saigon*, *Ragtime*, *It Ain't Nothing but the Blues*, and *Forbidden Hollywood*. Film and TV credits include *Hello Again*, *The Americans*, *The Good Wife*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *One Life to Live*, *City of Angels*. Other regional credits include performances at American Repertory Theater, Goodspeed Opera House, Baltimore Centerstage, Goodman Theatre, Alliance Theatre, North Carolina Theatre, Fifth Avenue Theatre, Denver Center Theatre, and others. Kingsley holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Benedictine College.

### **Kecia Lewis (Siti)**

Kecia is celebrating 38 years in the entertainment industry. She made her Broadway debut at 18 years old in the original company of *Dreamgirls*, directed by Michael Bennett. Her other Broadway credits include *The Gospel at Colonus* (with Morgan Freeman), *Big River*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* (standby for Nell Carter), *Once on This Island* (OBC), *The Drowsy Chaperone* (OBC), *Chicago*, *Leap of Faith* (OBC), *Cinderella* (as Marie/Fairy Godmother), and most recently, *Children of a Lesser God* (directed by Kenny Leon). Off Broadway she has starred in the title role of *Mother Courage*, *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Obie Award), *Dessa Rose* at Lincoln Center (Drama Desk Award nomination), and *Marie and Rosetta* (Lucille Lortel and Drama League nominations/Obie Award winner). Her television credits include Guest Star and recurring roles on *The Good Fight* (CBS), *And Just Like That* (HBO), *Law & Order: SVU* (recurring), *Madam Secretary*, *Royal Pains*, *Limitless*, *Conviction*, *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, *Blue Bloods*, *SMILF*, *The Blacklist* (recurring), *The Passage* (recurring), *Mad About You* (recurring), and the Hulu series, *Wu-Tang: An American Saga* (recurring). As a vocalist Kecia has performed throughout the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Russia.

### **Isio-Maya Nuwere (Safiyah-Moto Moto Ensemble)**

Isio-Maya is ecstatic to be making her theatrical debut with *Goddess* at Berkeley Rep. Isio-Maya is a recent graduate of NYU Tisch School of the Arts, receiving her BFA degree in Dance. She studied at The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and The Harlem School of the Arts in various styles such as classical ballet, modern, jazz, hip hop, contemporary, and West African. Isio-Maya is also a National Ambassador for Brown Girls Do Ballet, where she serves as a role model and mentor for younger Brown Ballerinas to promote diversity in the arts. Instagram @Isio.Maya (She/Her)

### **Aaron Patterson (Yusef-Moto Moto Ensemble; U/S Omari, U/S Ahmed)**

Aaron Patterson (he/him) is bursting with excitement to be making his Berkeley Rep debut with *Goddess*. He was last seen in *Ain't Too Proud* on Broadway, where he made his principal debut swinging on for the role of Eddie Kendricks. Aaron received his BFA for Musical Theatre at The Boston Conservatory at Berklee (class of 2021). During his time in Boston, he was part of transformative professional productions: *Choir Boy* at SpeakEasy Stage Co, *Hair* at New Rep Theatre, and *Parade* at Moonbox Productions, where he won the prestigious Elliot Norton Award for Best Musical Performance by an Actor for his portrayal of Jim Conley. Aaron is so grateful for his family's undying love and support through all his endeavors. He gives special thanks to his mentor, Freddie Hendricks, for assuring him that he is all that

he thinks he is, while also daring him to be even more. Aaron wants us all to remember that trees grow equally in both directions; if we stay rooted, the sky's the limit. Instagram: @aaron\_patterson11

### **Destinee Rea (Cheche)**

Destinee Rea is a multidisciplinary artist, discoverer, and lover of culture. You may have seen her in *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*, *The Book of Mormon*, and *Amélie*. This is for my beautiful Goddess Nieces Eva and E'mani. Find her online @destineeRea

### **Phillip Johnson Richardson (Omari)**

Phillip is a native of North Carolina and a graduate of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Phillip recently finished working on the A24 feature film *Sharper*, starring with Julianne Moore, Sebastian Stan, and John Lithgow. He was a series regular in the Apple+ series *Little Voices*. His first job out of school was with the Chicago company of *Hamilton*. He has made guest appearances on the TV shows *The Last O.G.*, *Chicago PD*, *Proven Innocent*, and *The Other Two*. Phillip has released several of his own singles on Apple Music and all streaming platforms under the moniker of "Phil."

### **Awa Sal Secka (Zawadi-Grio Trio; U/S Cheche & Rashida)**

Awa Sal Secka is so excited to be at Berkeley Rep! Her latest projects include playing Cathy Hyatt in *The Last Five Years*, singing at *Broadway in the Park* at the Wolf Trap Center for the Arts, and co-writing *The Joy That Carries You*, her inaugural play, which was produced at the Olney Theatre Center for the Arts just this spring. Her other credits include *Signature Vinyl*, *Gun and Powder* (Flo), *Blackbeard* (Kali Maa), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Simon), *Barbra Streisand Cabaret*, and *Judy Garland Cabaret* at Signature Theatre; *Christmas Carol* (Mrs. Fred), *Into the Woods* (Baker's Wife), and *The Wiz* (Glinda/Dorothy u/s) at Ford's Theatre; *School Girls...* (Ama) and *Caroline, or Change* (Dottie) at Round House Theatre; *Me Jane* (Maisie) and *Chasing the Wind* (Abby) at The Kennedy Center; *Cinderella* (Cinderella) and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Lucy Van Pelt) at Imagination Stage; *Aida* (Aida) and *Memphis* (Felicia) at ArtsCentric; *The Glorious World...* (Lady 3) at Baltimore Center Stage; *Black Nativity* (Narrator) at Theatre Alliance; *James and the Giant Peach* (Sponge) at Adventure Theatre Musical Theatre Center; *SILENCE! The Musical* (Ardelia) at Studio Theatre; and Dessa Rose Concert (Dessa), Children of Eden Concert (Eve), and *Avenue Q* at Olney Theatre Center for the Arts. She got her degree at Montgomery College, AA in Theatre Performance. (she/her/hers) @\_kujichagulia\_

### **Lawrence Stallings (Madongo)**

Lawrence Stallings is thrilled to be a part of this incredible cast and to be making his Berkeley Rep debut in this epic show. Most recently he played iconic jazz musician Robert Johnson in the one-man show *Me and The Devil*, written by Steve H. Brodnax III, at the Lantern Theater Company. Lawrence was an original company member of two Tony Award-winning musicals: Matt Stone and Trey Parker's irreverent hit *The Book of Mormon* and *Passing Strange*, an autobiographical fiction written by incomparable singer-songwriter Stew. Other Broadway credits include *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical*. Additional theatre credits include *My Mañana Comes* at the Fountain Theater, *Family Album* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, *The Best of Both Worlds* at American Repertory Theater, *Passing Strange* at The Public Theater, *Sharika*, *The White Girl* at Vineyard Theater, *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* at the Lantern Theater Company, *Sam Cooke: Forever Mr. Soul* (solo show) at the Delaware Theatre Company and the Milwaukee Rep, and *From My Hometown* at the American Heartland Theatre. Film: *The Rebound*, *Couples Therapy*. TV: *Grey's Anatomy*, *Diagnosis X*, and *Dirty White*. Lawrence has also produced and starred in two web series: *Circling the Drain* and *I Take Thee Zoe*. John 1:16! (he/him his) @imstallings, [lawrencestallings.com](http://lawrencestallings.com)

### **Teshomech (Tisa-Grio Trio; U/S Nadira)**

Teshomech (she/her) is beyond grateful to be joining the *Goddess* cast once again, as she has been with the family since the 2019 SongLab/Workshop at MCC Theater in New York City. She was most recently seen on the Broadway national tour of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Swing). Other favorite credits include *The Bluest Eye* (Claudia), *The Beehive* (lead), and *Rager!* (Alex/Nora), in which you can find the soundtrack on Spotify. All thanks to God! @teshomech



### **Quiantae Thomas (Amina-Moto Moto Ensemble; U/S Griot Trio)**

BFA in Dance from the Alabama State University. Youth Ensemble of Atlanta alumna. Regional: *Hairspray*, Peaches-Dynamite.W4-Philip tour of *Hamilton*. Dreams really do come true! Thank you God!  
@AmbitiousQuiantae

### **Wade Watson (Musa-Moto Moto Ensemble)**

Wade Watson is a 29-year-old freelance artist and NYC native. He's toured nationally and internationally throughout his career. Wade has worked with Ty Jones, Earl Mosley, Clifton Brown, Candace Brown, Tiffany-Rae Fischer, to name a few. As an artist based in NYC, Wade has been exposed to all styles of dance. He's done concert dance, music videos, movies, and theatre! He's worked with Classical Theatre of Harlem in their productions of *Macbeth* and *The Three Musketeers*. He was also featured in the hit show *POSE* on FX, as well as the hit show *Dickinson* on Apple TV.

### **Reggie D. White (Balozi)**

Reggie was last seen on stage at Berkeley Rep in 2016 as Joseph in Jeff Augustin's *The Last Tiger in Haiti*. Reggie also appeared in the Tony Award-winning play *The Inheritance*. Other theatre credits include *Lessons in Survival: 1971* (Vineyard Theatre), *Bayard Rustin*, *Inside Ashland* (People's Light), *Hundred Days* (NYTW), *The Luckiest* (La Jolla Playhouse), *I and You* (59E59), and *Party People* (Berkeley Rep). Directing credits include Bay Street Theatre, The Public Theater, Bay Area Children's Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, and AlterTheatre Ensemble. His play *In Case You Haven't Heard* premiered virtually last year at Bay Street Theater, and he is currently co-writing a new play with Lauren Gunderson. He is an alum of the Atlantic Acting School, where he now serves as School Artistic Director. Reggie is a recipient of the Colman Domingo Award, the TBA TITAN Award, the TCG Fox Fellowship, and is a founding company member of The Williams Project, a living wage theatre company.  
[reggiwhite.com](http://reggiwhite.com) (he/him/his)

**Goddess** is a recipient of the Edgerton Foundation New Play Award.

For the 2021/22 season, Berkeley Rep recognizes the generous support of **BART** and **Peet's Coffee**, Berkeley Rep's official season sponsors. **Residence Inn by Marriot** is the official in-kind season sponsor. Berkeley Rep is also delighted to recognize the support at the season sponsor level of **Stephen and Susan Chamberlin**, **Bruce Golden** and **Michelle Mercer**, **Frances Hellman** and **Warren Breslau**, **Wayne Jordan** and **Quinn Delaney**, **Gisele** and **Kenneth F. Miller**, and **The Strauch Kulhanjian Family**. **Goddess** is made possible by the support of **Descendant Cellars/ Chris and Michael Rupp**, **Anne and Anuj Dhanda**, **Kerry Francis** and **John Jimerson**, and **Mechanics Bank Wealth Management**.

### **ABOUT BERKELEY REP**

Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its ambition, relevance, and excellence, as well as its adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. Over 5.5 million people have enjoyed nearly 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, which have gone on to win six Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, one Pulitzer Prize, and many other honors. Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. To formalize, enhance, and expand the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre, The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work was launched in 2012. The Berkeley Rep School of Theatre engages and educates some 20,000 people a year and helps build the audiences of tomorrow with its nationally recognized teen programs. Berkeley Rep's bustling facilities — which also include the 400-seat Peet's Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley — are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org)

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