SCHOOL GIRLS;
OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY

PLUS
Jocelyn Bioh: A funny way of being serious
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FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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WELCOME TO SCHOOL GIRLS!

Eighteen or so months ago, when I was in conversations with the Berkeley Rep staff and board about what shows and artists I would want to bring to the Theatre if I were to become its artistic director, Jocelyn Bioh was at the top of my list. So I feel incredibly fortunate that this moment has actually come true, and that we are all here in this beautiful theatre together, in the presence of Jocelyn’s fantastic play.

I worked with Jocelyn a number of years ago to help develop Nollywood Dreams (finally about to have its world premiere production at MCC in New York City!) and was so struck with the singularity of her voice. Even then, Jocelyn’s ability to weave humor and politics together in a way that leaves audiences defenseless against her point of view was evident.

It is often said that truly skillful artists can make the circumstances of their characters feel universal and resonant to a wide-ranging audience. Easier said than done! That being said, one of Jocelyn’s great gifts is that the worlds that she creates are so specific — a travel agency in Nigeria, a nightclub in Mombasa, a girls boarding school in the lush mountains of Eastern Ghana — and yet no matter who we are, her characters feel familiar to us. While our experiences may not match the exact lives of these school girls, the depth of their yearnings, the intricacies of their relationships, and the deepest discoveries of their own emerging strengths will remind us all of that specific liminal moment in our lives when we begin to become the adults we want to be.

I am proud to have Awoye Timpo at the helm of this production, and to have this glorious cast assembled, the vast majority of whom are making their mainstage Berkeley Rep debuts!

Thank you, as always, for being part of the journey of these artists and these stories.

Warmly,

Johanna Pfaelzer
FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

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SPRING IS UPON US. And with spring comes the annual deluge of solicitations from every cultural organization you have ever attended! Buy me! Buy now! You all know it. We all live it.

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But for others, you may be thinking, “What? Why haven’t I gotten my chance to sign on to see all seven shows next season?” You so don’t have to worry, as there will be plenty of opportunities for you, too, to join the thousands (yes, that is real) of people who sign up months in advance to see the full panoply of programs here at Berkeley Rep.

Who are these people who commit themselves to shows (sometimes unknown) months in advance? These are among my favorite people! They are often our most veteran theatregoers, people who have made theatre attendance a priority throughout their long lives. But increasingly they are younger people for whom attending consistently is a commitment to an adult night together without the kids. For them, the regularity of knowing when they should schedule the sitter is just the help they need to protect their date nights. And increasingly, they are families, multigenerational “regulars” who show up at seven matinees and evenings a year, enjoying a shared experience that stimulates conversation and becomes the collection of shared points of reference (sometimes good, sometimes bad!) that stick through the years. Twenty years later my son and I still laugh over the worst production we ever saw together. Just say the word “lugubrious,” and we start laughing.

So why should you go online and renew your subscription? Or why should you sign up for your first subscription? It’s really simple. It means you will actually get out.... You will turn off the TV for a night. And you’ll see shows...at the best theatre in the Bay!

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So go online at berkeleyrep.org and just do it. Sign up for all seven shows, and if that doesn’t work, sign up for as many as you can.

Join me and Johanna for another year of grand theatrical adventure. I think you’ll be glad you did.

Best regards,

Susie Medak
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WOMEN’S CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP HELPS WOMEN COFFEE FARMERS OF COLOMBIA

BY MADDIE GAW
Societal expectations for women across the globe have often been at odds with what individual women seek out for themselves. For the women coffee farmers of Mujeres Cafeteras, based in Huila, Colombia, the shift from laboring on a spouse’s farm to managing their own farm was a hard-won victory. This shift was made possible in part by the Women’s Center for Entrepreneurship, a program developed by Peet’s Coffee in collaboration with Coocentral (the cooperative to which Mujeres Cafeteras belongs), Sustainable Harvest (an import partner for Peet’s), and the EAN University School of Business in Bogotá.

Every year, Peet’s donates $50,000 of the proceeds from their Anniversary Blend to a charitable cause. The blend changes every year, and the selected charitable cause addresses a specific need voiced by the community where one of the coffees in the blend comes from. The 2019 Anniversary Blend sourced coffee from Mujeres Cafeteras, and so Peet’s Coffee Team asked the women in the co-op how this donation could be used to meet their needs.

For these women, the education they had already received from the co-op was a crucial first step toward envisioning a new path for themselves. “[W]e were housewives who didn’t leave the house,” they said. “When the program for women started at Coocentral, we learned about leadership and farm administration. The idea was to give us the tools to tend and manage our own farms. We had to speak to our husbands, who eventually ceded a parcel of the farms so that we could work, manage, and produce our own coffee.”

What they needed next, they said, was to receive further training and education to start and run successful small businesses, and that’s where the Peet’s donation came in. “We started the [Women’s Center for Entrepreneurship] as a response to the women’s desire to continue their education and to become strong economic contributors in their households,” says Matt Brosco, social responsibility manager at Peet’s Coffee. In its first year, the center trained 100 women from Coocentral in the fundamentals of entrepreneurship, business model development, and business plan creation.

One of those women was Lucía Álvarez. For Lucía, the need for economic independence was an urgent one. She separated from her husband two years ago, a decision that is as uncommon in Huila as it is risky. Lucía said that it is typical to “work to leave something to our children and move them forward, and we forget ourselves. We do not think about us.”

While training at the center, Lucía was able to think about herself for the first time in a while. “I found myself,” she said. “I found me.”

After completing her training, Lucía left armed with a business plan. Today, she is working toward her dream of creating an agro-tourism experience on her coffee farm. Lucía hopes to build lodging to host guests and provide them with Spanish, cooking, and coffee-farming lessons, and she has started a Go-FundMe campaign. She visited UC Berkeley’s Haas School of Business a few months ago to discuss her experiences and the unique challenges she faces in her male-dominated farming community. “In Colombia, there is a lot of machismo,” she said. “Claiming this space was not easy at all, it was a tough fight, and that was one of the main challenges.” Her experience speaking in the U.S. was affirming. “To see the acceptance we have here, that women’s coffee is liked a lot… it is worth continuing the process, to continue fighting and bringing the good news that this entrepreneurship center will continue to change our lives.”

What’s next for the Women’s Center for Entrepreneurship? “We have procured funding for Year Two of the program and will train another 100 women from the co-op,” says Phil Maloney, director of coffee purchasing at Peet’s. He confirmed that Peet’s will donate another $50,000 to the center from the proceeds of the 2020 Anniversary cup—which will not be a blend this year, but instead a single-origin coffee from Mujeres Cafeteras. This will be the first time Peet’s has sourced beans from the same farmers two years in a row for their limited-edition Anniversary coffee, and this shows how important the Women’s Center has become to the company. “We hope to keep the program going in Colombia, but also to expand it to other coffee-growing regions,” says Phil.

Lucía has stated that she wants her business to become “a beacon of hope guiding the many women from [her] community to take their own steps forward and move toward a bigger and better future for themselves.” She and other veterans of the Center hope to inspire collaboration, not competition, between the women in their community. For the teenage protagonists of School Girls, competition is a natural instinct, but are they in competition with each other, or with society’s expectations? They might look to Lucía and the rest of the women in Mujeres Cafeteras, who are creating new expectations about the role women can play in their society.
Tatiana Lira found a dedication to writing in the third grade after completing their first play. But calling this now 15-year-old simply “a writer” feels impossible and unjust. By taking classes at the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre and becoming a key part of Core Council, Tatiana has ventured into film making, performance, directing, journalism, and photography—all of which have informed their writing. This scope of artistic experience made them a perfect candidate for Berkeley Rep’s Young Writers of Color Collective (YWoCC), now in its fourth year.

The collective is made up of four passionate high school writers who attend a full year of workshops with local playwrights and theatre artists, many of whom have been part of Berkeley Rep’s Ground Floor Summer Residency Lab, and receive one-on-one mentorship from notable Bay Area playwright Cleavon Smith. The program culminates in a staged reading as part of the Summer Residency Lab. To ensure full realization of the young playwright’s vision, each script receives full support from professional actors, dramaturgs, and directors. It takes a village to realize their plays, and the final performance rings with momentous joy and satisfaction.

At the first YWoCC meeting of the year the playwrights—Tatiana, Kyle Gill, Natalie Ford, and Emielyn Das—and their mentor Cleavon sit around a folding table and introduce themselves between bites of pizza. The meeting begins as most first meetings do: slightly awkward, very little eye contact, and lots of fidgeting.

Cleavon then asks students to share their reasons for joining YWoCC and the story they will pursue. With a small, quiet voice Tatiana shares disheartening times they had been underestimated by teachers, and the longing for a space that acknowledges the context they hold as a non-binary person of color. Then, Tatiana shifts into explaining their story. The play centers around a high schooler named Lorenzo who, in the midst of questioning their sexuality, stumbles into social media fame. As Tatiana speaks, their presence transforms into
an animated, hesitant confidence that exposes their reverence for storytelling. It’s inspiring to watch. The meeting concludes and the young writers are sent on their way with their first assignment.

Since that initial meeting and with the help of their mentor and local playwrights, the writers’ scripts have blossomed into full plays. Cleavon empowers the students to take full advantage of what he calls this “rare opportunity that every writer wants to have.” He notes that Tatiana has the vigor of successful writers. While Tatiana began YWoCC sheepishly, Cleavon says, “They are curious, prolific, and very intuitive. When they write, they put it all on the page and work it out later, which I find courageous.”

When a student has the kind of spirit that Cleavon recognizes in Tatiana, it often takes only one substantial opportunity for them to step up into their potential. For Tatiana, this moment took place in January, at the YWoCC midpoint reading, which offers playwrights a chance to have their plays rehearsed with professional directors and actors. The entire artistic staff at Berkeley Rep (including Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer and Madeleine Oldham, director of The Ground Floor) attends the reading to give invaluable feedback.

“I left the midpoint reading feeling invigorated,” says Tatiana. “I realized that YWoCC is all about the growing process. And I felt uninhibited despite the age difference between myself and those giving me feedback.” From the midpoint until the final reading commences, the playwrights will retreat into rewrites.

Spaces like YWoCC are scarce. Professional institutions rarely have the resources (or desire) to run a program as supportive and inclusive as YWoCC. The fact that YWoCC exists marks Berkeley Rep’s dedication to seriously incorporating people of color into the next generation of theatre-makers.

“YWoCC provides an accessible and comprehensive process of making theatre for its participants,” says Ankita Raturi, 2016–17 Peter F. Sloss Literary/Dramaturgy Fellow, who returned to dramaturg the 2017–18 YWoCC presentations. “It supports the people within the program rather than adapting to the typical caveats of predominantly White institutions.” Inclusion efforts, while well intended, often thrust people of color into White artistic spaces with little thought about how isolating that experience can be for Black and Brown artists.

One former YWoCC member still reflects on the precedent the program set for her. Camilla Dwyer, a part of the first YWoCC cohort and third-year playwright at The Theatre School at DePaul University, spoke to how writing with YWoCC meant she didn’t have to explain how and why Blackness moves at the core of her plays. The solidarity within the collective meant she could fail without having to hold the weight of being the only person of color in the room. Camilla attributes the rigorous yet nurturing environment to her courage to pursue playwriting.

As a theatre educator, I ask myself the same question that many frequent patrons of the theatre do: “How will we build the next generation of theatre audiences?” The answer I have found is to make a great investment in youth theatre. It will take much more than YWoCC to drive the foundational changes necessary to sustain and diversify the next generation of theatre artists. It will require the devotion of artists, administrators, and audiences. Future writers of color like Tatiana deserve the opportunity to flourish in the American theatre.

If you want to support the work of the Young Writers of Color Collective, consider attending the final reading at The Ground Floor Summer Residency Lab. Check berkeleyrep.org/groundfloor later this spring for the performance schedule. Additionally, you can see Tatiana Lira’s work at the 18th annual Teen One-Acts Festival on April 24 and 25. They will be directing China Doll, In Lavender by San Jose teen Jennifer Xiang. Visit berkeleyrep.org/teenoneacts.
Audience and artists alike had already heaped praise on Jocelyn Bioh as an actor through the years by the time she debuted her first professional play as a playwright, *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, at MCC in New York in 2017. She originated roles in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* on Broadway and in *An Octoroon* and *Men on Boats*, among other works, off Broadway. Berkeley Rep was excited that an actor we so admired had written a play that made us laugh out loud. We were thrilled when our new artistic director, Johanna Pfaelzer, revealed that she, too, was a big Jocelyn Bioh fan, having developed Jocelyn’s *Nollywood Dreams* at New York Stage and Film in 2016.

Between our first encounter with Jocelyn’s work and today, *School Girls* has received a robust production life—the dream for any play! *School Girls* will collectively receive at least 11 productions across the U.S. during the 2019-20 season. It is unusual and awesome for a new play to be produced so widely in this country. This season, *School Girls* appears at The Goodman in Chicago, Portland Center Stage in Oregon, Pittsburgh Public Theater, the Jungle Theater in Minneapolis, Kansas City Rep in Missouri, and True Colors Theatre in Atlanta, to name a few.

*School Girls* was one Johanna’s first picks for her inaugural season, and the stars aligned for Berkeley Rep to produce the play. Director Awoye Timpo and Jocelyn had long wanted to find a project to work on together, so we were overjoyed to make the collaboration a reality.
What inspired you to write *School Girls*?

Like the characters, I went to boarding school, so I had the experience of attending school with a bunch of girls at a young age — and it was diverse, I think 80 percent people of color, so mostly people who looked like me. My mother also went to boarding school (in Ghana, like the characters in *School Girls*). I always wanted to write about boarding school life, and I always wanted to write about colorism, which was something that I experienced very personally. I wanted to put that in a play but was not sure how to do it without it sounding like some sort of lecture or, y’know, preachy. Then I came across a story about the Miss Ghana pageant in 2011 where they procured a girl who was American-born and biracial, and she won the competition and went on to represent Ghana in the Miss Universe pageant, which was quite a scandal in the Ghanaian blogs and what have you. I decided to melt all that into one play, and 27 drafts later, out came *School Girls*.

*School Girls* reveals the ways beauty standards from different countries and cultures intersect and collide. What made you interested in exploring that?

I find that standards of beauty across the globe are more universal than people think. The idea of colorism is something I think of specifically as, for instance, me being a darker-skinned Black woman feeling inferior to a lighter-skinned woman of color. While that version of colorism is very specific to me, the idea of colorism...
is widespread across many cultures; there’s a real universality in that experience as a result of who has determined beauty standards. I had my own very long journey to owning my beauty — and if I could alleviate that for someone else, for some young girl, through this play, then my work’s done.

The play deals frankly with economic disparities. Why was it important for you to address that?
The presence of money and classism in the play is another aspect of the story that’s super personal for me. I come from a modest upbringing; we worked really hard and went on to be successful. My brother’s a doctor, my sister’s in administrative social work, and I’m the black sheep of the family as the artist. It was important to me to be able to show in addition to colorism, how classism affects people’s lives — how devastating and embarrassing it can be. Without saying those actual words (colorism, classism), because I’m avoiding being preachy, it’s important for people to understand that where you come from, what your background is — especially if like Paulina, you don’t come from a lot of money — shouldn’t influence your future and how far you can go.

What’s useful about comedy as a way into those difficult subjects?
I read a quote years ago: “Comedy is simply a funny way of being serious.” [Generally attributed to Peter Ustinov.] In a lot of ways that’s my approach to my work. I also don’t want to write the typical narratives that African stories can fall into — you know, poverty, war, AIDS, struggle and strife. That singular narrative of a whole continent is so troublesome to me. And I just naturally have a comedic voice. If people can come into a story and laugh and have a good time, it’s much easier for them to learn something from it, as opposed to knowing they’re walking into a downer.

In its full title, School Girls references the 2004 Tina Fey movie Mean Girls. How does Mean Girls inform School Girls?
Because the play is playing with specific tropes of the mean girl, cliques and crews and all of those things, I knew there would be comparisons to Mean Girls, so I decided to just cut to the chase in the title. And that’s kind of where the similarities stop. I like Mean Girls as a clear point of reference — when you say “Mean Girls,” people know exactly what they’re in for. People walk in feeling like, as with the Tina Fey movie, they know they’re gonna have a good time and potentially learn something.

These characters have distinct voices and a pronounced, ever-shifting hierarchy. How did you develop the individual girls and their dynamics?
I’d never written a play with a cast this large before — these are eight women who all have something to say, and for a good section of the play they’re all onstage simultaneously. As I mentioned, I wrote 27 drafts of this play before I finally got to the final one, and somewhere in the middle, somewhere around draft 10, I was like, “Okay, with this draft I’m gonna focus on one girl, and then draft 11 I’m gonna focus on another girl,” to make sure each of them has a fully fleshed story, including the adult characters. It’s a short piece and it kind of flies by; I know what I want to say and I don’t need to meander to get there.

The girls seem to both love each other and see each other as threats, as competition. Is it possible to love somebody with whom you’re competing?
Yes, but it takes a lot of maturity. I’m an actor/writer, and I deal with that a lot as an actor — when I get to an audition and see several friends whom I know very well, there are some who actually feel a lot of hurt and this competitive spirit
amongst the group of us, like, “She got that part over me.” It took a long time for me to understand that I’m not in competition with anyone — I understand that whatever’s meant for me is gonna be for me. But in high school that is so-so incredibly hard to understand. Even as an adult we have friends and colleagues who harbor those same 15-year-old-type feelings towards someone else, and I’m like, “You have to find a way to let that go.” You can’t fully love them in the way they need to be loved, if you don’t let that go. It’s possible, but it takes a lot of growing up and understanding to reconcile love and competition.

The characters Eloise and Headmistress Francis are of a different generation than the six girls, and serve as (complicated) mentors to them. Why did you decide to include these adult characters?

I wanted to highlight that when people don’t have proper mentors (or therapy) to pull them through tough times, they can grow up to be adult versions of their problematic teen selves. I also wanted some balance in the story — it’s not just these young girls running amok; they still have to answer to authority. Especially in Ghanaian culture, elders are really respected, so when all of that breaks down, it’s thrilling and terrifying to watch.

There are no men in this play, although their influence and presence in the lives of these women is palpable. How did you decide to write a play with no men onstage?

We didn’t need them. As a woman, and as a woman of color, I understand very clearly what it is like to operate in a world where patriarchy exists and hovers above you, both in your face and just omnipresent in your life. Specifically white male patriarchy. They’re the ones responsible for a lot of the themes I’m dealing with in School Girls — colorism and classism and colonialism, and those are things that we didn’t create. Women know we didn’t invent beauty standards.

The original creative team was also primarily women of color. It was exciting as women to come together and tell this story we know inherently, and I think that shines through in the piece. The men are still there in the world of the play, we just don’t need to see ‘em.

Why did you decide to set the play in 1986? To what extent are the experiences and perspectives of the girls tied to that period?

In many ways I think it’s timeless. Which is both sad and also kind of amazing — that we can tell this story in 2020, and it has resonance; we’re just operating at a different level now with social media and TV. I wanted to set it in ’86 though because the value these girls place in the beauty pageant feels archaic. Back then you could be Miss America and actually become a superstar, i.e., Vanessa Williams, and go on to have a successful career. The play’s timelessness is heartbreaking, but at the same time great because we can continue to educate folks and hopefully have people understand the implicit biases they have, and how they perhaps have participated in colorism, and hopefully will find a way not to anymore.

The play was a hit in New York and is being produced all over the country. Why do you think there’s so much excitement and momentum around this story right now?

I have been surprised by the entire journey of School Girls, to be honest. I’m a New Yorker so I’m naturally very pessimistic and assumed the worst, but on opening night I was very surprised by the response, so that was good. I think it may be that people see facets of themselves in these characters, and recognize a lot of their own experiences from high school (and maybe even their adult lives). It speaks to the universality of the high school experience, and how we grow up and just become grown-up versions of our high school selves, and still deal with cliques and crews and popularity contests. I hope audiences see themselves in the girls. We live in such a fraught time and it’s important that as theatre-makers we create stories that we hope will invite audiences in, and allow them to open their hearts and minds in a bigger way. It’s thrilling to know that so many young actresses of color are getting the opportunity to be in a play where they can be funny and have a good time and also tell a really moving story.
Director Awoye Timpo spoke with Literary Manager Sarah Rose Leonard a month before rehearsals started about her collaboration with playwright Jocelyn Bioh and her personal connection to the setting and beauty standards in the play.

What made you want to direct *School Girls*?

Coming to Berkeley Rep to do *School Girls* is a perfect combination of so many things. I've known Johanna [Pfaelzer, artistic director] for a few years because I directed a workshop at New York Stage and Film. She's a fantastic curator, and gifted at making space for artists to create art with a lot of freedom. I feel honored to be a part of her first season.

It's a great testament to Jocelyn and her writing that she's captured so many beautiful spirits in these characters. In this play, everybody's trying to be seen and trying to understand what their place is in the world. I think that's something that we can all relate to, even if you've never been to Ghana.

I also feel I'm honoring my parents in directing a play that takes place in the country they are from. I know Jocelyn talks a lot about this too, but one of the things as we are coming up—and that our parents have had to deal with too—is reckoning with the narrative of Africa that has been perpetuated over the decades. To be able to work on a piece that is affirming of the culture and humanity of the people is really exciting.

How did you and Jocelyn meet?

I can't remember precisely when Jocelyn and I met, but I remember feeling so excited to meet her and to know that there's more first-generation West African artists around. Growing up first generation, it can be quite shocking for the people who have raised us when we tell them we want a life in the arts. You sometimes feel you're working in isolation, and so when you meet other people who have a similar background it's really spectacular and affirming.
You've talked about wanting to show off the lushness of the Ghanaian landscape for this production. How does that thinking influence your design choices?

I've been incredibly fortunate to have traveled to a number of places around the continent, and there is just so much beauty. So often the images that get perpetuated about the continent capture some of the more horrific and tragic components. But we don't often see the beauty, the heart of the people, the tremendous life of the continent.

So part of what we wanted to do as we were creating the design was to capture the true heart and spirit of the place. The life and beauty. We have an amazing scenic designer, Jason Ardizzone-West, who delved into some beautiful research. Ghana is a coastal country, open to the sea to the south. As you go further north, it's very lush and green. We want to celebrate the openness of Ghana, and the place where the school is in the mountains. I went to high school in Togo in West Africa and my cafeteria — and the cafeterias of some of the schools we looked at in Ghana — opened to the outside. I hope that people will get to experience some of that natural spirit of the environment.

You've talked about emphasizing individuality inside uniformity. Can you talk about how that shows up in your casting choices?

It's a real dynamic mix of people. We've got Bay Area actors, people who have gone to school in the Bay Area who are transplants, and actors from New York. As we're thinking about how to create complexity in the kinds of students at the school, we wanted to make sure that we were reaching out to other first-generation actors. Even if people didn't go to school in West Africa, we will be working to understand the cadence and complexities of the culture. We are so lucky to have a number of actors who are first generation, who come from multiple places around the continent, and a beautiful group of African-American actors. Everyone has such a range and brings so much life to their character. I think it's going to be really fun to put this group of people together and see how they clash and where they come together as each character strives to find their place inside of the school environment.

How has the play made you think about your own relationship to beauty standards?

I grew up around Jersey, but my early school experiences were mostly in predominantly white neighborhoods. From those environments, and from television, I was taught about what beauty is in terms of skin color and body size. I had to learn to claim my own sense of beauty because I was very much an “other” in my schooling environment. Later, I went to high school in West Africa, and I was reminded about the beauty of Blackness and the range of what we look like, how we sound, how we feel, the way our bodies are shaped. It really helped me learn to honor myself. I had to learn that along the way because there are so many ways that Blackness gets negated in popular American culture.

I also grew up at a time in the 1980s and '90s when I got to see a lot of film that celebrated that culture. Poetic Justice, Love Jones, and Brown Sugar, all of these films by Black artists. That's the thing about this play too! The girls are in an environment where they are in the majority racially, but the pervasiveness of white culture and the power of whiteness has seeped into and shaped their cultural consciousness.
SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY immerses us in the world of the Aburi Girls’ Boarding School, where the Miss Ghana pageant sweeps the students into a comedic frenzy. The year is 1986. It’s 30 years after Ghanaian activist and politician Kwame Nkrumah was released from prison — where he was held for initiating nonviolent noncooperation with the British colonial government — and elected President of the newly independent Ghana. Nkrumah had a profound influence on early decolonial thought. His goals to unify Africa, dismantle the oppressive structures of the colonial government, and combat white supremacy inspired successive movements around the continent and further abroad and had echoes and reverberations in the American Black Power movement. Though his presidency ended in a military coup, Nkrumah remains a beloved figure in Ghana, and his ideology undergirds pro-Black movements into the 21st century, such as those targeting colorism.

As the first leader of the first independent sub-Saharan African nation, Nkrumah popularized the ideals of African socialism (as separate from Marxist socialism; African socialism was modeled on traditional African anti-hierarchical structures). He infused his political career with an unparalleled dedication to the dream of African unity. As Ghana achieved independence, Nkrumah led the growing Pan-African movement that inspired other colonized peoples to seek self-government and independence. He denounced Euro-centrism, and his government worked to decolonize and remove systems of white supremacy from all aspects of the newly formed nation of Ghana, including a concerted effort in the education system.

Nkrumah’s government put education front and center to encourage Ghana’s social and economic development. New regulations and programs replaced British textbooks and teaching methods with instruction in native African languages, and encouraged attendance throughout the country, as schools expanded and more opened. The government gave many private schools subsidies to Africanize their curriculums. The school in Bioh’s play draws from one such school, the highly regarded Aburi Girls’ Senior High School, where two Ghanaian languages — Akuapem Twi and Ga — are still taught. Managed by the Presbyterian Church since 1946, just north of Accra, Aburi Girls’ holds a prestigious reputation among Ghanaian boarding schools. It is located in the lush, forested Akwapem Mountains, famous for their Botanical Gardens. Boasting plenty of famous alumnae dating back to its inception, Aburi nevertheless fell on harder times as Nkrumah’s government failed to deliver on all its promises. After Nkrumah’s ousting in 1966 — due to his increasingly authoritarian measures — his rapid expansion of education was heavily criticized. Financial supports for his projects such as the school subsidies fell away as educators struggled to match the intended quality of education to the quantity of new infrastructures. By the time Bioh’s characters traipse through the halls of Aburi Girls, the promise of the support for an Africanized education system faded into the grind of economic hardship. The events of School Girls transpire just before the education reforms of 1987, which

BY CHARLIE DUBACH-REINHOLD

(De)Colonization, Ghanaian Education, and Standards of Beauty

LEARNING & UNLEARNING

THE BERKELEY REP MAGAZINE · 2019–20 · ISSUE 5
THE IMPLICATION, PRACTICE, AND EFFECTS OF THAT COLORISM REMAIN, BAKED INTO MODERN IDEALS OF BEAUTY.”

would reinvigorate education in Ghana, including compulsory education through age 14. Before this, the promise of funds for a school like Aburi Girls’ would have been extremely attractive, as we see in School Girls’ Headmistress Francis’ eagerness at the possibility of funds from the Miss Ghana pageant. The pageant represents not only an ultimate arbiter of beauty standards that disrupts the social lives of the schoolgirls, but also an economic advantage at a time when a prominent Ghanaian school was bereft.

International pageants have adhered to certain standards of beauty since their inception: white, Western ones. Pageants were edified in the 1920s with the Miss America pageant. Many initially prohibited all women of color from entering the competition, and in some cases, over 50 years passed before the first Black women took home the crown: 1970 for Miss World, 1977 for Miss Universe, 1984 for Miss America, 1990 for Miss USA, and 1991 for Miss Teen USA. As the pageant institutions spread around the world, they were yet another vehicle for an important mechanism of colonialism: convincing the colonized they are inferior to the colonizer by all standards (in this case, the standards of beauty). The intentional, institutional colorism of many colonial governmental structures may have disappeared by the mid-20th century, but the implication, practice, and effects of that colorism remain, baked into modern ideals of beauty. These ideals—manifested in everyday beauty advertisements, products, and markets—encourage women to lighten their skin with bleaching creams, even though they often contain dangerously corrosive ingredients. Ghana banned hydroquinone, one such chemical, in 2017. The entanglement of white supremacy and standards of beauty, on both the societal and pageant levels, remains.

These insidious standards motivated pageant recruiters like the character Eloise Amponsah in the 1986 setting of School Girls and have continued to impact even more recent pageants. In 2011, the Miss Universe Ghana pageant scouted the contestant Yayra Erica Nego from Minneapolis, where she had previously been crowned Miss Minnesota USA. She traveled to Ghana to compete and was crowned the winner, over the two most famous models in Ghana. As Miss Ghana, Erica was eligible for the international Miss Universe pageant, where she did not place. Her connection to Ghana was tenuous—pageant officials claimed her father was Ghanaian, from the Volta region—and this eligibility concern fed into a larger debate: Why should the Miss Ghana pageant scout Yayra Erica Nego, who is biracial and was raised in America, to represent Ghana? Ghanaian media described the recruitment and win as an obvious case of colorism—a high-profile example of this pervasive privileging of lighter skin over darker. In her interview on page 13, Jocelyn Bihl says this scandal was one of the inspirations for School Girls.

Berkeley Rep is producing School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play in the wake of an historic moment for pageants. In 2019, all of the major pageants—Miss Universe, Miss World, Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Teen USA—were won by Black women. These women have led conversations around the world on racism, colorism, and how conceptions of beauty are influenced by colonialism. Zozibini Tunzi of South Africa, Miss Universe 2019, wrote in an Instagram post:

“Society has previously been programmed in such a way that there’s nothing beautiful about being black. The further[.] you are from being fair skinned the uglier you are. That unfortunately has been the universal standard of beauty and it is very difficult for some people to unlearn it...to whoever else thinks that black is not beautiful I cannot wait for you to experience the depth and magic of a black woman. I am a daughter of the African soil and I am beautiful. See your face reflected in mine <3”

These women work to undo white supremacy in beauty standards and beyond. As social media hashtags like #blackisbeautiful gain popularity, and the representation of Black women in all forms of media begins to reflect their magic, a sea change of the 21st century emerges. Throughout history, Black pride and anti-white-supremacy movements created an ebb and flow in the tide of decolonial work. The contention around pride in natural Black hair, epitomized by the afros of the 1960s Black Panthers, reappears in the U.S. national conversation when Miss Teen USA Kaliegh Garris competes without once straightening her curls. The road to undoing the oppressive effects of colonization is long. But some days, on some stages, the crown goes to a rightful winner. And Black is beautiful.
HAPPY DAYS

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DIRECTED BY JAMES BUNDY
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Dianne Wiest in the Yale Repertory Theatre production of Samuel Beckett's Happy Days
PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS
School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play

WRITTEN BY
JOCELYN BIOH

DIRECTED BY
AWOYE TIMPO

MARCH 19–MAY 3, 2020
RODA THEATRE · MAIN SEASON
This show is performed without an intermission.

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CAST
Ama Afua Busia
Eloise Santoya Fields
Headmistress Francis Omozé Idehenre
Gifty Paige Mayes
Nana Gabriella Momah
Mercy Al-nisa Petty
Ericka Lily Santiago
Paulina Akiiah A. Walker

PRODUCTION STAFF
Scenic Design Jason Ardizzone-West
Costume Design Karen Perry
Lighting Design Stacey Derosier
Sound Design Jake Rodriguez
Hair & Wig Design Megan Ellis
Casting Amy Potozkin, CSA
Tara Rubin Casting, CSA

Production Stage Manager Michael Suenkel
Assistant Stage Manager Leslie M. Radin

The actors and stage managers are members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

World Premiere at the MCC Theater, October 16, 2017
(Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, & William Cantler, Artistic Directors; Blake West, Executive Director)

Originally developed as part of The New Black Fest at The Lark, 2016
Additional development as part of the MCC Theater PlayLabs series, 2016

“The Greatest Love Of All”
By Linda Creed and Michael Masser
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AFUA BUSIA
AMA
Afua is a New York-based actor and singer from Maryland. Afua has previously appeared in Berkeley Rep’s An Octoroon and is thrilled to be returning! Other regional credits include A Christmas Carol (American Conservatory Theater) and The Little Mermaid (Imagination Stage). Afua is a recent graduate of ACT’s MFA program, class of 2019. IG: afuab

SANTOYA FIELDS
ELOISE
Santoya is excited to be making her debut at Berkeley Rep. Regional productions include Men on Boots (American Conservatory Theater), Black Odyssey (California Shakespeare Theater), A Streetcar Named Desire (African American Shakespeare Company), and in the West Coast premiere of James Ijames’ White (Shotgun Players). For her performance in White, Santoya was nominated for two theatre awards for Outstanding Principal Actor. Santoya is from St. Petersburg, FL.

OMOZÉ IDEHENRE
HEADMISTRESS FRANCIS
Omozie’s film and TV credits include On the Road and This Is Us. Off-Broadway credits: The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui (Classic Stage Company). Other theatre credits include What You Are (Old Globe San Diego); Her Portmanteau (Boston Court Pasadena); Good Grief (Kirk Douglas Theater); runboyrun (Magic Theatre); Gem of the Ocean, The Convert, Seven Guitars (Marin Theatre Company); The Comedy of Errors and Richard III (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); Black Odyssey, The Winter’s Tale, Spunk, Macbeth (California Shakespeare Theater); Clybourne Park, Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Scorched, A Doll’s House, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream (American Conservatory Theater). Education: American Conservatory Theater and The Groundlings. She is grateful to be part of this gifted cast and crew.

PAIGE MAYES
GIFTY
Paige is thrilled to make her official Berkeley Rep debut after understudying Misha in White Noise. Her most recent regional credits include Single Black Female (Lorraine Hansberry Theatre), Vinegar Tom (Shotgun Players); Jazz (Marin Theatre Company), The 24 Hour Play Festival (Harlem 9), and For Colored Girls... (African American Shakespeare Company), where she was nominated for Outstanding Ensemble of a Play and Outstanding Performer in a Featured Role in a Play. Paige is from Aurora, CO and studied Performing Arts at Arizona State University.

GABRIELLA MOMAH
NANA
Gabby (they/them) is a nonbinary actor whose mission is to amplify the voices of queer and trans people of color through storytelling. They are excited to make their mainstage debut at Berkeley Rep. Regional theatre credits include Watch Me (The Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep), Top Girls (American Conservatory Theater), Cardboard Piano (New Conservatory Theatre), A Letter to My Ex (Spectrum Queer Theatre), and was nominated for Best Supporting Actress by the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle. Selected roles: Lady M in Macbeth, Gremio in Taming of the Shrew, and Lincoln in Topdog/Underdog. akilahawalker.com IG/ Twitter: @Akthewayy

LILY SANTIAGO
ERICKA
Lily is delighted to be at Berkeley Rep for the first time. She has appeared off Broadway as Claudio/Elbow in Measure for Measure (The Public Theater), Macduff in Macbeth (Red Bull Theater), and previously in the New York Shakespeare Festival’s production of Othello. Regional credits include Juliet in Romeo and Juliet (Huntington Theatre Company) and Emmy in A Doll’s House, Part 2 (George Street Playhouse). She is a proud graduate of Northwestern University (BA in theatre) and LaGuardia Performing Arts HS.

AKILAH A. WALKER
PAULINA
Akilah is a classically trained actor and filmmaker who is moved by transformation, collaboration, and nuanced storytelling that explores the lives of women and people of color. Akilah is elated to be making her Berkeley Rep debut. Akilah also recently appeared at Aurora Theatre Company as Bunny in Detroit ’67 and was nominated for Best Supporting Actress by the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle. Originally from Atlanta, GA, Akilah is a recent graduate of American Conservatory Theater, where she received her MFA, and is also a proud alumna of Fordham University. Selected roles: Lady M in Macbeth, Gremio in Taming of the Shrew, and Lincoln in Topdog/Underdog. akilahawalker.com IG/ Twitter: @Akthewayy

JOCELYN BIOC
PLAYWRIGHT
Jocelyn is a first-generation Ghanaian-American writer/performer from New York City. Jocelyn is a commissioned playwright with Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Atlantic Theater Company, and was a Tow Playwriting Fellow in 2018/19. Her plays include the multi-award-winning School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, which had two celebrated runs at MCC Theater and is also playing at the Goodman Theatre this spring; Nollywood Dreams (Powerhouse Theater at Vassar College, 2016; upcoming at MCC Theater this spring; Kilroy’s List 2015); and the new musical Goddess (Powerhouse Theater at Vassar College, 2019) of which she is the book writer. She has from Rutgers University where she also studied at Shakespeare’s Globe in London. @alniisa al-nisa.com
Once on This Island (Cincinnati Playhouse and Globe, Hunter Theater Project, wnet 13 TV), Uncle Vanya (national tour), The Vanished (site-specific), Skeleton Crew at Chester Theatre Company, and Ndebele Funeral at 59E59 Theaters, Edinburgh Festival/Summerhall, and the South African tour. She is the producer of classix, a series exploring classic plays by Black playwrights.

Karen Perry
Costume Designer
Off Broadway: runboyrun @ In Old Age (New York Theatre Workshop). Regional: Breath, Boom (Huntington Theatre); Lackawanna Blues (Mark Taper Forum, Two River Theater Company); Mothers (Playwrights Realm); Jazz (Marin Theatre Company); Black Superhero Magic Mama (Geffen Playhouse); Fun Home (Baltimore Center Stage); Steel Magnolias, Hair, Dreamgirls (Dallas Theater Center); Oklahoma! (Houston Ballet at TUTS); Cinderella (Eglevsky Ballet Company); Danai Gurira’s Familiar (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Guthrie Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre); Cabin in the Sky (Encore!); Blues for an Alabama Sky (Pasadena Playhouse); Crowns, Stop-Reset, Trinity River Trilogy (Goodman Theatre, STC, Dallas Theater Center/Arena Stage); The Trip to Bountiful, The Fall of Heaven (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); The Brother/Sister Plays (The Public Theater/McCarter Theatre); Having Our Say (McCarter Theatre); A Time to Kill, Resurrection (Arena Stage); Oo-Bla-De (Two River); and Sunset Baby and The Lion in Winter (Guthrie). She has designed nine of the 10 August Wilson Century Series plays (she has not yet designed Fences). Television: Gregory Hines Show, Saturday Night Live, and The Brother from Another Planet. Karen received a Lucille Lortel Award, LA Ovations Awards, a CDG Award, an Ace Award, a Hewitt Award, and is an Emmy and Audelco Award nominee and recipient.

Stacey Derosier
Lighting Designer
Credits include Stew (Page 73); Copper Children (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); Men on Boats (Baltimore Center Stage); for all the women who thought they were Mad (Soho Rep); White Noise conceived by Daniel Fish (NYU Skirball); the bandaged place (NYSAF Powerhouse); Playing Hot! (Pipeline Theatre Company); The Climb (Cherry Lane Theatre-Mentor Project); Mies Julie and Dance of Death (Classic Stage Company); Novenas for a Lost Hospital, No One Is Forgotten, Lewiston/Clarkston (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater); The Revolving Cycles Truly and Steadily Roll’d (Playwrights Realm). Stacey was the 2018 Lilly Award recipient of the Daryl Roth Prize. staceyderosier.com

Jake Rodriguez
Sound Designer
Jake is a sound designer and composer based in the San Francisco Bay Area who last worked with Berkeley Rep on Angels in America. His regional
credits include An Octoroon and the world premieres of X’s and O’s: A Football Love Story, Girlfriend, and Passing Strange at Berkeley Rep; The Christians at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Playwrights Horizons, and the Mark Taper Forum; Between Two Knees at Oregon Shakespeare Festival; The Great Leap and A Thousand Splendid Suns at American Conservatory Theater; Everybody at California Shakespeare Theater; the world premiere and revival of Oedipus el Rey at Magic Theatre; and Woman Laughing Alone with Salad at Shotgun Players. Jake is the recipient of a 2004 Princess Grace Award.

MEGAN ELLIS
HAIR & WIG DESIGNER
Megan is a wig designer and makeup artist from New York City. Growing up watching her mother do her hair and makeup every morning for work is what started her passion. She’s worked with many celebrities on films, TV, and theatre, including Black Super Hero Magic Mama at Geffen Playhouse and the film BlackKkKlansman.

AMY POTOZKIN, CSA
DIRECTOR OF CASTING/ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE
Amy begins her 30th season with Berkeley Rep. Through the years she has also had the pleasure of casting plays for ACT (Seattle), Arizona Theatre Company, Aurora Theatre Company, B Street Theatre, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Dallas Theater Center, Marin Theatre Company, the Marsh, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Social Impact Productions Inc., and Traveling Jewish Theatre. She worked on various independent films, including Conceiving Ada, starring Tilda Swinton; The 8th Year of the Emergency by Maureen Towey; Haiku Tunnel and Love & Taxes, both by Josh Kornbluth; and Beyond Redemption by Britta Sjogren. Amy received her MFA from Brandeis University, where she was also an artist in residence. She has been an audition coach to hundreds of actors and a presentation/communication coach to many businesspeople. She taught acting at Mills College and audition technique at Berkeley Rep’s School of Theatre, and has led workshops at numerous other venues in the Bay Area. Amy is a member of csar, the Casting Society of America, and received an Artios Award for Excellence in Casting for Angels in America.

TARA RUBIN CASTING, CSA
CASTING
Tara Rubin Casting’s select Broadway credits include Ain’t Too Proud — The Life and Times of The Temptations, King Kong, The Band’s Visit, Summer: The Donna Summer Musical, Prince of Broadway, Bandstand, Indecent, Sunset Boulevard, Miss Saigon, Dear Evan Hansen, A Bronx Tale The Musical, Cats, Falsettos, Disaster!, School of Rock, Gigi, Bullets Over Broadway, Aladdin, Les Misérables, The Heir-


MICHAEL SUENKEL
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER
Michael began his association with Berkeley Rep as the stage management intern for the 1984–85 season and is now in his 26th season as production stage manager. He has also worked with the Huntington Theatre (Boston), The Public Theater and New Victory Theatre (New York), La Jolla Playhouse, Yale Repertory Theatre, and many others. Internationally he has stage managed shows in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Among his favorite Berkeley Rep productions are Angels in America, The Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures, Eurydice, Endgame, The Beaux’ Stratagem, and Mad Forest.

LESLIE M. RADIN
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
Leslie is very pleased to be back at Berkeley Rep after most recently stage managing The Good Book, Fairview, An Octoroon, AUBergine, and Head of Passes. She started at Berkeley Rep as the stage management intern in 2003 and has also worked at American Conservatory Theater, Aurora Theatre Company, California Shakespeare Theater, Center Repertory Company, and Santa Cruz Shakespeare. She has traveled with Berkeley Rep productions to the Hong Kong Arts Festival and the New Victory Theatre in New York. Her favorite past productions include Angels in America, Aubergine, Wittenberg, Sisters Matsumoto, The Great Leap, In the Next Room (or the vibrator play), Passing Strange, and The Lieutenant of Inishmore.

JOHANNA PFÄELZER
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Johanna is delighted to join Berkeley Rep, and honored to serve as its fourth artistic director. She recently spent 12 years as the artistic director of New York Stage and Film (nysaf), a New York City–based organization dedicated to the development of new works for theatre, film, and television. Nysaf is known for providing a rigorous and nurturing environment for writers, directors, and other artists to realize work that has gone on to production at the highest levels of the profession.


SUSAN MEDAK
MANAGING DIRECTOR
Susan has served as Berkeley Rep’s managing director since 1990, leading the administration and operations of the Theatre. She has served as president of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and treasurer of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), organizations that represent the interests of nonprofit theatres across the nation. Susan chaired panels for the Massachusetts Arts Council and has also served on program panels for Arts Midwest, the Joyce Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Closer to home, she is the founding chair of the Berkeley Arts in Education Steering Committee for Berkeley Unified School District and the Berkeley Cultural Trust, and served on the board of the Downtown Berkeley Association. Susan serves on the faculty of Yale School of Drama and is a member of the International Women’s Forum and the Mont Blanc Ladies’ Literary Guild and Trekking Society. She was awarded the 2012 Benjamin Ide Wheeler Medal by the Berkeley Community Fund and the 2017 Visionary Leadership Award by TCG. During her time in Berkeley, Susan has been instrumental in the construction of the Roda Theatre, the Nevo Education Center, the renovation of the Peet’s Theatre, and in the acquisition of the Harrison Street campus. She also worked with three consecutive mayors to help create Berkeley’s Downtown Arts District.

THERESA VON KLUG
GENERAL MANAGER
Theresa is excited to begin her fifth season at Berkeley Rep. Previously, she had over 20 years of experience in the New York not-for-profit performing arts sector where she has planned and executed events for dance, theatre, music, television, and film. Her previous positions include the interim general manager for The Public Theater; general manager/line producer for Theatre for a New Audience, where she opened its new state-of-the-art theatre in Brooklyn and filmed a major motion picture of the inaugural production of Julie Taymor’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, released June
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2015; production manager at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and New York City Center, including the famous Encores! Great American Musicals in Concert; and field representative/lead negotiator for the Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers. She holds a MS in Labor Relations and Human Resources Management from Baruch College.

AUDREY HOO
PRODUCTION MANAGER
Audrey fell in love with the wild people and power of storytelling in theatre when she was 18 and has never looked back. With over 20 years of experience in production management, Audrey has worked with a wide range of international artists across all performance arts genres such as Paul Simon, Elaine Stritch, William Kentridge, Sam Mendes, Catherine Martin, and Bill T. Jones, and with institutions such as BAM, Esplanade Singapore, La Jolla Playhouse, and American Conservatory Theater. Always loving a new story to tell and another “impossible” technical puzzle to solve, Audrey is grateful to be part of the Berkeley Rep family and is particularly proud to work alongside the immensely talented and dedicated production staff and artisans. Audrey holds a MFA in Technical Direction from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

MADELEINE OLDHAM
RESIDENT DRAMATURG/DIRECTOR, THE GROUND FLOOR
Madeleine is the director of The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work and the Theatre’s resident dramaturg. She oversees commissioning and new play development, and dramaturges the world premiere productions of Fairview, Aubergine, The House that will not Stand, Passing Strange, and In the Next Room (or the vibrator play), among others. As literary manager and associate dramaturg at Center Stage in Baltimore, she produced the First Look reading series and headed up its young audience initiative. Before moving to Baltimore, she was the literary manager at Seattle Children’s Theatre, where she oversaw an extensive commissioning program. She also acted as assistant and interim literary manager at Intiman Theatre in Seattle. Madeleine served for four years on the executive committee of Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas and has also worked with ACT (Seattle), Austin Scriptworks, Crowded Fire, the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center, the Kennedy Center, New Dramatists, Playwrights Center, and Portland Center Stage.

BRUCE GOLDEN & MICHELLE MERCER
SEASON SPONSORS
Michelle and Bruce have been ardent supporters of Berkeley Rep since 1993, when they moved with two young children in tow to Berkeley. Their favorite evenings at Berkeley Rep were usually the discussion nights, where often friends would join them for an early dinner, an evening of great theatre, followed by a lively discussion with members of the cast. Over the past 25+ years, Michelle and Bruce have recognized Berkeley Rep’s almost singular role in the Bay Area in promoting courageous new works and nurturing innovative, diverse playwrights. According to Michelle and Bruce, “There’s never been a more vital time in our lives when the power of theatre to transform, compel, inspire, and energize has been more necessary. We are honored to be Season Sponsors, and especially proud to do so during Johanna Pfaelzer’s first year as artistic director.”

JACK & BETTY SCHAER
SEASON SPONSORS
Betty and Jack are proud to support Berkeley Rep. Jack is a sustaining advisor of the Theatre, having served on the board for many years, and is now on the board of San Francisco Opera. He is an emeritus board chair of the San Francisco Art Institute and the Oxbow School. In San Francisco, Betty is involved with Wise Aging, a program for adults addressing the challenges of growing older. They have three daughters and eight grandchildren.

MICHAEL & SUE STEINBERG
SEASON SPONSORS
Michael and Sue have been interested in the arts since they met and enjoy music, ballet, and live theatre. Michael, who recently retired as chairman and chief executive officer of Macy’s West, served on Berkeley Rep’s board of trustees from 1999 to 2006 and currently serves on the board of directors of the Jewish Museum. Sue serves on the board of the World of Children. The Steinbergs have always enjoyed regional theatre and are delighted to sponsor Berkeley Rep this season.

THE STRAUCH KULHANJIAN FAMILY
SEASON SPONSORS
Roger Strauch has served on the Berkeley Rep board of trustees for the last 22 years and as an executive officer, including president. He is chair of The Roda Group (rodagroup.com), a high-technology venture development company based in Berkeley. Roda incubated the search engine Ask.com, now located in Oakland and Cool systems (gameready.com), a medical technology company recently acquired by Avanos Medical. He is currently on the board of three cleantech companies, including a carbon capture company, Inventys (inventysnc.com), in which Roda is a major investor. Roger has served on the board of the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute for 20 years and as an executive officer, including chair. He leads the Mosse Art Restitution Project which searches for family art illegally confiscated during Germany’s Third Reich. He is a board member of the Northside Center, a mental health services agency based in Harlem, NY and a member of UC Berkeley Engineering Dean’s college advisory board. His wife, Julie Kulhanjian, is an attending physician at Benioff UCSF Children’s Hospital, Oakland. They have three adult children.

SUSAN CHAMBERLIN
EXECUTIVE SPONSOR
Susan is a retired architect and project manager. Currently she, along with her husband, Steve, directs the work of their family foundation. She also serves on the board of the Oakland Museum of California and is the past chair of the UC Berkeley Foundation board of trustees.

KERRY FRANCIS & JOHN JIMERSON
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Kerry and John are excited to support School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play. John recently retired after 37 years with Chevron and has enjoyed the thought-provoking plays produced by Berkeley Rep. Kerry is a member of Berkeley Rep’s board of trustees, a partner at Deloitte, and a graduate of UC Berkeley.

ANNE & ANUJ DHANDA
SPONSORS
Anne and Anuj are thrilled to sponsor School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play and support Berkeley Rep, their favorite theatre in the Bay Area. Anne is a new member of Berkeley Rep’s board of trustees. She dedicates her time to increasing educational equity and provides consulting services to organizations to strengthen their culture through their people strategy. Anuj is EVP and CIO of Albertson’s Safeway. Prior to their move to the East Bay, both Anne and Anuj...
supported various arts organizations, including serving on the board of the Mattress Factory museum, Carnegie Museum of Art, and Phipps Conservatory in Pittsburgh, PA.

**RICK HOSKINS & LYNNE FRAME SPONSORS**
Rick and Lynne actively support the ambitious artistic programs at Berkeley Rep and salute the organization for giving them one more reason to love the Bay Area. Rick is a private investor and a former trustee of Berkeley Rep. He serves on the board of several private companies and also as a trustee of Kenyon College. Lynne is retired from teaching in the German Department of UC Berkeley and works with nonprofits. You can hear them both sing with Pacific Edge Voices. Their son, Alex, is a junior at Kenyon.

**JACK KLINGELHOFER SPONSOR**
Jack is the founder and former owner of an information technology company located in the East Bay since 1981, and he is pleased that its success has allowed him to contribute to his other passion, the East Bay arts scene. As a longtime subscriber, Jack is excited to support the creative excellence at Berkeley Rep, whose performances have meant so much to him over the years.

**LAURA & NICHOLAS SEVERINO SPONSORS**
Laura and Nick are thrilled to sponsor School Girls: Or, The African Mean Girls Play. The Severinos have been longtime, passionate supporters of the humanities. Laura serves on the board of trustees at Berkeley Rep and is the co-chair of this year’s gala. Nick has been an executive at Apple Inc. for 15 years. Laura and Nick believe strongly in the importance of the arts, and are particularly proud to support the creative work of Berkeley Rep.

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**Special thanks to Lebene Ledi.**
Special thanks to our partners SOMArts Cultural Center and the Museum of the African Diaspora.

Medical consultation for Berkeley Rep provided by Agi E. Ban DC, John Carrigg MD, Cindy J. Chang MD, Christina Corey MD, Neil Claveria PT, Patricia I. Commer DPT, Brenton Dowdy DPT, Kathy Fang MD PhD, Steven Fugaro MD, Whitney R. Johnson DDS, Olivia Lang MD, Allen Ling PT, and Christina S. Wilmer OD.

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<tr>
<th>Costumes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Deck crew</td>
<td>James McGregor</td>
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<td>Jessica Berman</td>
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<td>Ghanaian dialect coach</td>
<td>Samuel Nkansah</td>
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<td><strong>Electrics</strong></td>
<td>Desiree Alcocer · Richard Fong · Chris Hartzell · Bradley Hopper · Jacob Joseph · Camille Kelly · Mi Le · Melissa Ramirez · Minerva Ramirez · Orly Raveh · Nathanael C. Schiffbauer · Megan Schultz · Chloe Schweizer · Kourtney Snow · Caitlin Steinmann · Matthew James Sykes · Joshua van Eyken · Zach Wziontka</td>
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<td>Jennifer Costley · Bradley Hopper · Isaac Jacobs · Carl Martin · Sean Miller · Henry Perkins · Kourtney Snow · Becca Sundberg · Zach Wziontka</td>
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**Pamela Reed in Becky Nurse of Salem** (photo by Kevin Berne)

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For more information on becoming a member, visit our website at berkeleyrep.org/mls or contact Daria Hepps at 510 647-2904 or dhepps@berkeleyrep.org.

The society welcomes the following new members:
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Berkeley Rep has a robust fellowship program (funded in part by Executive Sponsor American Express) in which 15 intrepid individuals spend a season sharpening their skills in all aspects of the theatre (you can see the current list of fellows on the previous page). Here, Costumes Fellow Anthony Fiore makes some adjustments to Eloise’s (Miss Ghana 1976) voluminous dress.
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Directed and choreographed by
Sam Pinkleton

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