



**PROBLEMS
BETWEEN
SISTERS**

STUDIO
T H E A T R E

2 4 | 2 SEASON 5

SEPTEMBER
2024

EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

BY DAVE HARRIS
DIRECTED BY MIRANDA HAYMON

NOVEMBER
2024

SUMMER, 1976

BY DAVID AUBURN

JANUARY
2025

DOWN STATE

BY BRUCE NORRIS
DIRECTED BY DAVID MUSE

MARCH
2025

THE SCENARIOS

BY MATTHEW CAPODICASA

MAY
2025

PARADISE BLUE

BY DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU
DIRECTED BY RAYMOND O. CALDWELL

JUNE
2025

WIPEOUT^T

BY AURORA REAL DE ASUA
DIRECTED BY DANILO GAMBINI

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For a note from the production's dramaturg and other background information on *Problems Between Sisters*, please visit www.studiotheatre.org/problems-between-sisters



FRIENDS,

Let me start with a quick Sam Shepard primer. Shepard is one of the giants of twentieth-century American theatre: its cowboy poet. He was preoccupied with the American West—with its romantic ideals of freedom and openness, and with the gap between those nostalgic ideals and the bleak reality of the modern West. His characters are outsiders, ranchers, desperadoes. His language is at once spare, poetic, and hip. His style veers from the hyper-real to the symbolic and strange. And importantly for this adaptation, most everything about his work—its swagger, its ethos, its central characters—is insistently male.

This play is part of an audacious project conceived by playwright Julia May Jonas: to adapt plays by five canonical American (male) playwrights—Miller, Albee, O'Neill, Mamet, and Shepard—creating an alternative mini-canon that discards patriarchal roots and offers something more expansive and more modern. It's an astonishing achievement: she shifts the voice of each play to capture the spirit of its source, and she manages to hold subversion and homage in delicate balance. These adaptations are not satire—they instead manage to simultaneously turn these plays on their heads and to tap into what makes them special.

Problems Between Sisters mirrors and inverts *True West*, giving us two sisters instead of two brothers, visual art instead of screenwriting, and Vermont instead of California. Like *True West*, it peppers realism with something weirder and more symbolic. And most importantly, it gives its female characters a chance to be “manly”—to have ambition, to be violent, to rage.

This production marks the return to Studio of director Sivan Battat (*Heroes of the Fourth Turning*), who started her professional career here in 2015 as an artistic apprentice. Sivan is joined by a cast of fierce, kind women, including Nancy Robinette, who has been acting at Studio literally as long as Studio has existed, and who, remarkably, here plays a character inspired by Mom in *True West*—a part that Nancy played at Arena Stage in 2002!

I'm happy that you're here to experience this play in its very first production. Buckle up.

Yours,

David Muse
Artistic Director

STUDIO THEATRE

DAVID MUSE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**REBECCA ENDE
LICHTENBERG**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PRESENTS
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

PROBLEMS BETWEEN SISTERS

BY
JULIA MAY JONAS

DIRECTED BY
SIVAN BATTAT

Presented by arrangement with
Creative Artists Agency, LLC.

Problems Between Sisters is one of a five-play cycle by Julia May Jonas, "All Long True American Stories." This series was developed by The Bushwick Starr and New Georges, who will premiere *A Woman Among Women* as a co-production in October 2024.



The Director and/or Choreographer is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.



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

SET DESIGNER
EMMIE FINCKEL

COSTUME DESIGNER
HELEN Q. HUANG

LIGHTING DESIGNER
COLIN K. BILLS

SOUND DESIGNERS
**NOEL NICHOLS &
UPTOWNWORKS**

PROPS DESIGNER
LUKE HARTWOOD

PROJECTION DESIGN
ZAVIER AUGUSTUS LEE TAYLOR

FIGHT AND
MOVEMENT COORDINATOR
ASHLEIGH KING

DRAMATURG
ADRIEN-ALICE HANSEL

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER
JOEY BLAKELY*

DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION
JEFFERY MARTIN

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
RHIANNON SANDERS

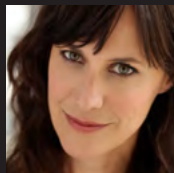
CASTING
CLAIRE YENSON

UNDERWRITTEN BY
**JOAN & DAVID MAXWELL AND
TERESA & DAN SCHWARTZ**

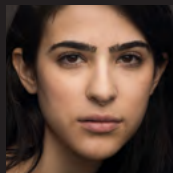
SETTING

A cabin in Vermont

CAST



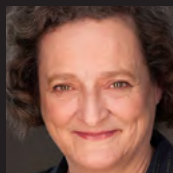
JESS
STEPHANIE
JANSSEN*



RORY
ANNIE FOX*



ANITA
MAYA
JACKSON*



AUNT BARB
NANCY
ROBINETTE*

UNDERSTUDIES

JESS
BRENNA HORNER

RORY
REBECCA BALLINGER

ANITA
MELANIE A. LAWRENCE

AUNT BARB
ALISON BAUER



*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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PLAYWRIGHT



JULIA MAY JONAS

JULIA MAY JONAS is a writer and the founder of the theater company Nellie Tinder. Her theater work has been presented or developed with Lincoln Center Theater, The Bushwick Starr, New Georges, Ars Nova, Target Margin Theater, PRELUDE, the Great Plains Theatre Conference, Montclair State's New Works Initiative, North American Cultural Laboratory, and others. Her debut novel, *Vladimir*, was published in February 2022 by Avid Reader Press and was named "Best Book of 2022" by *Time Magazine*, New York Public Library, *People*, *New York Magazine*, *Town & Country*, *Vogue*, *Esquire*, NPR, and others, was selected as a *New York Times* Editor's Pick, and has been translated into 14 languages. Julia has taught at Skidmore College and New York University, and lives in Brooklyn with her family.



SIVAN BATTAT

SIVAN BATTAT (she/they) is a theatre director and cultural organizer, and Director of New Work Development at Noor Theatre. Sivan began their career here at Studio Theatre, as an artistic apprentice. Recent credits include *Heroes of the Fourth Turning* at Studio Theatre, *Wish You Were Here* at Yale Repertory Theatre, *Layalina* at Goodman Theatre, *Backstroke Boys* at Fault Line Theatre, *Brass Knuckles* at Ensemble Studio Theatre, *Trouble in Mind* (AD) at Roundabout Theatre Company on Broadway, and *Coexistence My Ass* at the Edinburgh Fringe. Sivan has developed work with companies including Roundabout Theatre Company, the Park Avenue Armory, New York Theatre Workshop, Atlantic Theater Company, Ars Nova, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, New Georges, New York Stage and Film, Cape Cod Theatre Project, Long Wharf Theatre, MCC Theater, and more. Fellowships include Roundabout Directing Fellow; Drama League Directing Fellow; TCG Rising Leaders of Color; and The Workshop, which centers the work of JOCISM (Jews of Color, Jewish-Indigenous, Sephardi & Mizrahi) artists and culture-makers. sivanbattat.com

DIRECTOR

ACTORS

STEPHANIE JANSSEN (Jess) was most recently seen on Broadway in *Goodnight, Oscar*. Other Broadway credits include *Death of a Salesman*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and *A Delicate Balance*. Off Broadway, she has appeared in *Queen* at the National Asian American Theatre Company (in a co-production with Long Wharf Theatre), *Ivanov* at Classic Stage Company, *Clive* at The New Group, *PTSD* at Ensemble Studio Theatre, and *Arcadia* at Potomac Theatre Project NYC. Regional work includes *All the Days* at the McCarter Theatre Center, *Nora* at Westport Country Playhouse, *A Map of Heaven* at the Denver Center Theatre Company, *Absalom* at Actors Theatre of Louisville, and *Against the Rising Sea* at Queens Theatre. On screen, she's been seen in *Succession*, *New Amsterdam*, *FBI*, *The Blacklist*, *Mysteries of Laura*, *The Good Wife*, *Elementary*, *Law & Order*, and *Inner Dragons*. Stephanie wrote and performed in *The Umbrella Plays* (2008 NYC Fringe, winner Outstanding Play). B.A. Middlebury College, MFA from the Graduate Acting program at NYU Tisch.

ANNIE FOX (Rory) is an actor and writer based in New York. Her theater credits include *Lobby Hero* on Broadway, *Beginning Days of True Jubilation* and *The Strangers Came Today* at the New Ohio Theatre, *The Wolves* at the McCarter Theatre Center, and *The Diary of Anne Frank* at Cleveland Playhouse. Annie can be seen in episodes of *WeCrashed* on Apple TV+, *Blue Bloods* on CBS, and in the film *Something's More Than One Thing*. She is the co-writer of the short film *Goodnight*. She is a member of Stone Soup Film Collective and Society Theater.

MAYA JACKSON (Anita) is an actor and photographer, dually based in DC and New York. Her theatre credits include the Broadway revival of *Death of A Salesman*; *The Skin of Our Teeth* at Lincoln Center; *Blues for an Alabama Sky* at the McCarter Theatre Center; *Teenage Dick* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company; The Adrienne Kennedy

Play Festival, co-produced by the McCarter Theatre Center and Round House Theatre; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* at Actors Theatre of Louisville; and *Kid Prince and Pablo* at The Kennedy Center. She also serves as a visual consultant for the Cannonball Festival in collaboration with Almanac Dance Circus Theatre.

NANCY ROBINETTE (Aunt Barb) first appeared at the Studio in 1978 in *The Woolgatherer* and soon after in *The Seagull* and *Camino Real*, with more recent productions including *Souvenir*, *Frozen*, *The Play About the Baby*, *Tribes*, and *No Sisters*. On Broadway, she appeared in the Manhattan Theatre Club's *Prayer for the French Republic* (Outer Critic's Circle nomination) and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Some of her favorite roles include *Fat Men in Skirts* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, *Well* and *Ah Wilderness!* at Arena Stage, *The Little Foxes* and *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare Theatre Company, *The Trip to Bountiful* at Ford's Theatre, *Stakeout at Godot's* at Scena Theatre, *Out of the Wild Blue* and *John* at Signature Theatre, *Nicole Clark is Having a Baby* at the Humana Festival of New American Plays, *Escape from Happiness* at Round House Theatre, *The Savannah Disputation* at the Old Globe, and *Philadelphia Here I Come!* at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. She received the Helen Hayes Tribute for her many years performing in DC-area theatres.

PRODUCTION

EMMIE FINCKEL (Set Designer) is a queer, Asian-American scenic designer. Recent credits include *Becoming a Man* at American Repertory Theater; *The Hot Wing King* at Hartford Stage; *Sanctuary City* at TheaterWorks Hartford; *The Comedy of Errors* at The Public Theater: Mobile Unit; *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* at Yale Repertory Theatre; *As You Like It* at La Jolla Playhouse; *53% Of at Second Stage*; *In the Southern Breeze* at Rattlestick Theater; *The Watering Hole* at Signature Theatre Company; *In the Penal Colony* at New York Theatre Workshop Next Door; *Athena* at JACK; and *Riot Antigone* at La MaMa. Associate design credits include many productions with Gabriel Evansohn, including *KPOP* on Broadway and *Empire Travel Agency*, as a member of Woodshed Collective. Emmie holds a B.A. from Wesleyan University and an MFA from the Yale School of Drama, and is currently on the faculty of the Playwrights Horizons Theater School at NYU. efinckel.com.

HELEN Q. HUANG (Costume Designer) is an award-winning costume designer whose credits include *Quixote Nuevo* at Denver Center, South Coast Repertory, Seattle Rep, and Portland Center Stage (Henry Award); *Pacific Overtures* at Signature Theatre (Helen Hayes Award nomination); *The Chosen* at Milwaukee Repertory Theater; *Next to Normal* at Round House Theatre; *The Far Country* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* at The Alley Theatre; and *The Tempest* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Helen is a professor of Costume Design at the University of Maryland, College Park. helenqhuang.com.

COLIN K. BILLS (Lighting Designer, he/him/his) returns to Studio where he previously designed *Clyde's, Cock, An Iliad, Lungs, Circle Mirror Transformation, The Year of Magical Thinking, Stoop Stories, Radio Golf, Contractions, POP!, That Face, Autobahn, The Death of Meyerhold, The Who's Tommy, Four, and Bat Boy*. He is a Company Member and Board Member at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company where he has designed over 55

productions. He was a founding member of the devised theater troupe dog & pony dc, serving as director, writer, actor, and designer for a dozen new works including *A Killing Game* and *Beertown*. Colin is the recipient of a Princess Grace Award and three Helen Hayes Awards. He has taught design at Howard University and is a graduate of Dartmouth College.

DANIELA HART (Co-Sound Designer) is a New York City-based sound designer and composer with an MFA in Sound Design from the Yale School of Drama. Selected theater credits include *Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express* at Syracuse Stage; *Munich Medea: Happy Family* at WP Theater and The Play Company; *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* at Baltimore Center Stage; *Tiny Father* at Barrington Stage Company and Chautauqua Theater Company; *black odyssey* at Classic Stage Company; *Espejos: Clean* at Hartford Stage and Syracuse Stage; *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Goodman Theatre; *Queen* at Long Wharf Theatre; *Choir Boy* at Yale Repertory Theatre; *Fires In The Mirror* at Baltimore Center Stage and Long Wharf Theatre; *The Juniors* at Colgate University; and *How to Save the World in 90 Minutes* at Cherry Lane Theatre. Daniela is also a producer, editor and sound supervisor with her company UptownWorksNYC.com. On social media at [@uptownworks](https://www.instagram.com/uptownworks) (Instagram).

NOEL NICHOLS (Co-Sound Designer; they/she) is a Los Angeles-based sound designer. Select recent credits include *I Hate it Here* at Studio Theatre, *Uncle Vanya* at Lincoln Center Theater, and *I Love You So Much I Could Die* at New York Theatre Workshop. Select sound design highlights with UptownWorks include *Avaaz* at Olney Theatre Center and South Coast Repertory; *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* at Baltimore Center Stage; *Which Way to the Stage* at Signature Theatre; *Today is My Birthday* at Yale Repertory Theatre; *First Down* with Noor Theatre; and *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Goodman Theatre.

PRODUCTION

They are a professor in Sound Design at the University of Southern California and hold an MFA in Sound Design from the Yale School of Drama. noelnicholsdesign.com. On social media at [@noeelevision](https://www.instagram.com/noeelevision) (Instagram).

BAILEY TRIERWEILER (Co-Sound Designer) is a New York City-based sound designer and engineer. Select design credits include *Dangerous Days* at Miami New Drama, *The Slow Dance* at 59E59, *FIVE: The Parody Musical* at Theater 555, *To The Ends Of The Earth* at JACK, *The Singularity Play* at Harvard University, *Concord Floral* at Hamilton College, *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* at Baltimore Center Stage, *black odyssey* at Classic Stage Company, *Chicken & Biscuits* at Asolo Repertory Theatre, and *Fires In The Mirror* at Baltimore Center Stage and Long Wharf Theatre. Select associate credits include *The Welkin* at Atlantic Theater Company, *Mad Hatter the Musical* at Herberger Theater Center, *The Comeuppance* at Signature Theatre (NYC), *KATE* at the Connelly Theater and Pasadena Playhouse, and *Flex* at Lincoln Center Theater. Bailey received an MFA in Sound Design from the Yale School of Drama. btsounddesign.com.

LUKE HARTWOOD (Props Designer) is a queer and disabled Asian-American multimedia designer and activist working on unceded Nacotchtank land. Recent credits include *Through the Sunken Lands* and *The Dragon King's Daughter* at The Kennedy Center; *Off the Page* at Arts on the Horizon; *Las Hermanas Palacios*, *Baño de Luna*, and *Kumanana!* at GALA Hispanic Theater; *The Mountaintop* at Round House Theatre; *The Chosen* at 1st Stage; and *Angel Number Nine* at Rorschach Theatre. lukehartwood.com. On social media at [@lukehartwood](https://www.instagram.com/@lukehartwood) (Instagram).

ZAVIER AUGUSTUS LEE TAYLOR (Projection Design) is an experimental multi-medium artist with a focus in video and projection design. This is his fourth production with Studio Theatre, having served as projection assistant on *White Pearl*; projection associate on *People, Places & Things*; and projection designer for *English*. Zavier's Off Broadway

media design credits include *Malvolio* at the Classic Theatre of Harlem and *The Blues and Its People* at the Apollo Theater. Zavier has also worked regionally across the nation on projects like *Having Our Say* at the George Street Playhouse; *Bonez* at People's Light; *The Mountaintop* at Round House Theatre; *The Wilting Point*, *Push the Button*, and *The Amazing Adventures of Dr. Wonderful (And Her Dog!)* at The Keegan Theatre; *Poetry for the People: The June Jordan Experience* at Theater Alliance; *Rhythm Is Our Business* at The Kennedy Center; *Intimate Apparel* at Theater J; and *The Talk* at Bulldog Ensemble Theater and StreetSigns Center for Literature and Performance. zavier.myportfolio.com.

ASHLEIGH KING (Fight and Movement Coordinator) is a DC-based director, choreographer, and performer. She is the associate director for the national tour of Jenn Weber's *The Hip Hop Nutcracker*. Her regional credits include choreography for *'Bov Water*, *Spring Awakening*, and *Spamalot* at Northern Stage, and *Mamma Mia!* at Virginia Rep (Richmond Theatre Critics Circle award). Among her DC-area creative credits are *Which Way to the Stage* at Signature Theatre (Helen Hayes nomination); *Grace* at Ford's Theatre; *Teenage Dick* and *Fairview* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company; *The World Goes 'Round* at Olney Theatre Center; *Seussical* and *Legally Blonde* (Helen Hayes Award Winner) at Keegan Theatre; *Nate the Great* at Imagination Stage; and *Make Way for Ducklings* at Adventure Theatre MTC.

ADRIEN-ALICE HANSEL (Dramaturg; she/her) is the Literary Director at Studio, where she has dramaturged the world premieres of *Good Bones*, *John Proctor is the Villain*, *I Hate it Here*, *Queen of Basel*, *No Sisters*, *I Wanna Fucking Tear You Apart*, *Red Speedo*, *Dirt*, *Lungs*, and *The History of Kisses*, among others, as well as productions of *At the Wedding*; *Love, Love, Love*; *Fat Ham*; *Fun Home*; *English*; *Heroes of the Fourth Turning* (also with Sivan Battat); *Flow*; *2.5 Minute Ride*; *Curve of Departure*; *Wig Out!*; and *New Electric Ballroom*, among others. Prior to joining Studio, she spent eight

seasons at the Actors Theatre of Louisville, where she headed the Literary Department and coordinated project scouting, selection, and development for the Humana Festival of New American Plays. She is the co-editor of eight anthologies of plays from Actors Theatre and editor of 12 editions of plays through Studio. Adrien-Alice holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama.

JOEY BLAKELY (Production Stage Manager) has been a stage manager in the DC area for ten years. Selected highlights include *Ragtime*, *Sweeney Todd*, *No Place to Go*, *The Upstairs Department*, *RENT*, *Gun & Powder*, *Escaped Alone*, *Assassins*, *Blackbeard*, *Billy Elliot The Musical*, *Passion*, *The Scottsboro Boys*, *Light Years*, *A Little Night Music*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Titanic*, and *The Fix* at Signature Theatre; *The Lehman Trilogy* and *Much Ado About Nothing* at Shakespeare Theatre Center;

Acoustic Rooster's Barnyard Boogie; *Starring Indigo Blume* at The Kennedy Center; and *The Jewish Queen Lear*, *The How and the Why*, *The Last Schwartz*, *Body of an American*, and *Sons of the Prophet* at Theater J.

CLAIRE YENSON (Casting) is the resident casting director at New York Theatre Workshop (NYTW) and The Playwrights Realm. Her theatre credits include *Merry Me* at NYTW, *Mary Gets Hers* at The Playwrights Realm, *Hello Kitty Must Die* at Edinburgh Fringe, *Jane Anger* at Shakespeare Theatre Company, plus The Public Theater, The Alley Theatre, and The Donmar Warehouse. Film and Television credits include *XO, Kitty* on Netflix; *Pachinko* on Apple TV+; *Fleishman Is in Trouble* on FX (Emmy Nominated for Outstanding Casting); *Sharper* for A24; and *Modern Love* on Amazon. Originally from the DC area, she is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The playwright would like to thank Tina Benko, Hannah Cabell, Sarah Hughes, Taylor Reynolds, Kate Schroeder, Shannon Sindelar, The Mental Insight Foundation, The Tank NYC, and Playwrights Horizons Theater School for early development work and support.

ABOUT STUDIO

Studio Theatre is a longstanding Washington cultural institution dedicated to the production of contemporary theatre. We are a community of artists and audience members who believe in the power of theatre to help us understand the world, engage with some of the most important ideas and issues of the day, and affirm our common humanity.

Over 45 years and more than 350 productions, Studio has grown from a company that produced in a single rented theatre to one that owns a multi-venue complex stretching half a city block, but we have stayed committed to our core distinguishing characteristics: deliberately intimate spaces; excellence in acting and design; and seasons that feature many of the most significant playwrights of our time. Each season, we present a diverse roster of thought-provoking contemporary plays, featuring local, national, and international artists. We also invest in the

incubation and development of new work and nurture the next generation of arts leaders. Studio is a values-focused organization that pursues artistry and inclusion, and brings characteristic thoughtfulness and daring to our efforts, onstage and off. We are committed to anti-racism and make a concerted effort to proactively dismantle barriers that have excluded people from joyful participation in our art form.

Rooted in our mission to foster a more thoughtful, empathetic, and connected community, Studio strives to welcome a wide and diverse audience. Our community engagement efforts include access and affordability initiatives, a growing community partner program, free student matinees, and a commitment to opening up our building as a hub for our neighborhood and city. In all that we do, Studio endeavors to make an essential contribution to the vitality of our nation's capital.



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ASHLEY NICHOLAS

BOB REEG

ERIN SHORT



Cast of *Admissions*. Photo credit: Teresa Wood

STUDIO INFINITUM

Did you know that Studio Theatre accepts gifts through a variety of planned giving platforms?

Studio Infitum is Studio's legacy giving program recognizing members who have designated Studio Theatre as the beneficiary of a planned gift, which can include a bequest from a will or gift from a living trust, naming Studio as the beneficiary of your retirement plan or life insurance policy, as well as other planned giving vehicles.

Including Studio Theatre in your long-range gift planning is one way of making a meaningful contribution to Studio's future and the preservation of its core values. With your lifetime gift, you will support our artistic mission while leaving a legacy and providing tax benefits to you and your loved ones.

If you have included Studio Theatre in your estate or long-term financial planning, please let us know.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT PLANNED GIFTS,
CONTACT BIANCA BECKHAM
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT**

**bbeckham@studiotheatre.org
202.919.3717**

www.studiotheatre.org/support/legacy-giving



Julia May Jonas and David Muse at the 2023 ADC Dinner.

The Artistic Director's Circle is a dynamic group of individuals who support the artistic vision of Studio Theatre. Members understand the value of producing powerful contemporary work in intimate spaces and invest in Studio's innovative projects and initiatives while receiving unparalleled access to the art. Members of the Artistic Director's Circle receive exclusive opportunities to experience our work unlike any other of our giving circles.

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**In memoriam*

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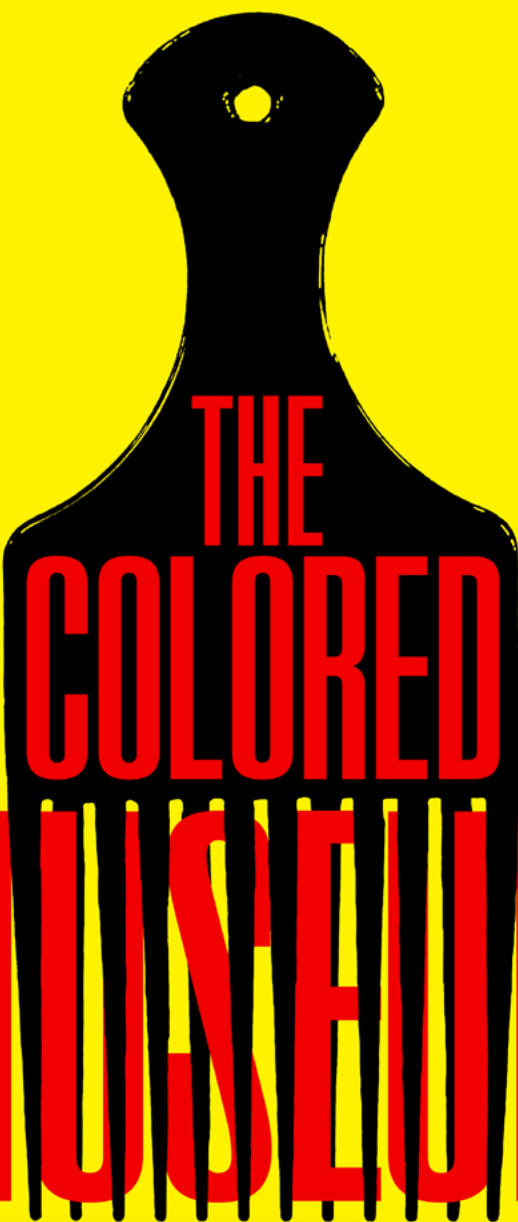
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