

New Manifest Theatre Presents
in partnership with Salvage Vanguard

BLKS

by Aziza Barnes

Directed by Faith Anderson

Cast

-Octavia: Amani Alexander
-Imani: Amani Wilkins
-June: Jacqui Calloway
-Justin/ Ethnically Ambiguous
Dude/ Sosa: Wesley Johnson
-Ry: Faith Anderson
-That Bitch on the Couch/ Drunk
White Woman: Ren Vedder

Production Team

- Director: Faith Anderson
- Stage Manager: Kamyle Smith
- Scenic Designer: Simone Raquel
Alexander
- Lighting Designer: J Mwaki
- Sound Designer: Johann Solo
- Costumer Designer: Drake
Muyinza
- Movement Direction: Sadé Jones

- Producing Artistic Director of New Manifest
Theatre: Simone Raquel Alexander
-Artistic Director of Salvage Vanguard
Theater: Kate Taylor

Director's Note

When this piece was first presented to me, I had so many feels. I was angry, sad, cackling, and exhausted. For my first time directing a full length show, I accepted the challenge of presenting a piece that examines a number of intimate conversations within the Black community. So many of the circumstances Black queer people find themselves in can feel surreal - bordering on a simulation. I often have to ask myself, "is this real?" or as Tiffany Pollard asks on *Flavor of Love*, "are you serious to me right now?!" As you'll observe from these characters, laughter, drugs, alcohol, sex, and conflict are coping mechanisms many use to numb the cruel reality that we are not protected in this country...so what do we do? How do we heal? This piece asks - how have Black folx internalized racism? How do even well meaning white folks place more burden on Black people? How might Black men show up as both victims and perpetrators of violence. How might our trauma affect our relationships and our ability to see the humanity in others? Thanks to the collaboration and ingenuity displayed by this team of artists, I offer this show as a space for catharsis - to explore what happens when we choose not to numb, but to feel and I certainly do. I feel it. I feel it all.

Special Thanks to:

Jennifer Sherburn, Marcie Bruscatto Poss & Pearl Poss, Mark Moore and Elisa Regulski, Ground Floor Theatre, Nehemiah Alexander, Tamar Price, Jacqueline Sindelar, and all of the SVT and NMT volunteers and ensemble

BIOS

Amani Alexander (Octavia): Amani is excited to be back performing theatre in their hometown after the many years of isolation brought on us all. Amani was last in Austin Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Zilker Hillside and will next be in *Date & Time* with the Austin Creative Alliance; a new musical premiering in August 2022.

Simone Raquel Alexander (Producing Artistic Director of New Manifest Theatre; Scenic Designer): Simone is a freelance artist, arts administrator, and arts advocate. She also serves as the Development Director of Ground Floor Theatre, and the Visitor Relations Manager at The Contemporary Austin museum. Simone volunteers through service on the UTeach Fine Arts Council Advisory Committee, and the ACC AAS Tech Theatre Advisory Committee. Simone would also like to thank her community of friends, family and Nehemiah.

Faith Anderson (Director; Ry): Faith Anderson is an intuitive artist and advocate representing the rejection of American societal norms. A curriculum of voice and identity trainings and a dedication to trauma informed leadership has honed Faith's ability to perform, direct, manage, encourage, and connect with historically excluded communities. Influences of family, friends, and a notable partner, Tamar Price, have defined who they are today.

Jacqui Calloway (June): Jacqui is most proud of her work with The Paramount Theater's Literacy to Life program and as the lead in *The Electrics*, a romantic comedy web series highlighting the experiences of Black Austinites. Selected Theater: *The Niceties*, *The Frog Prince* (BIP Award, Lead Performer, Digital Production), *The Colored Museum*, *Vagina Monologues*. TV: *Rosewood* (FOX), *The Inspectors* (CBS), *I Ship It* (CW Seed). Jacqui graduated from Dartmouth College & studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts.

Wesley Johnson (Justin/ Ethnically Ambiguous Dude/ Sosa): Wesley is very excited to be a part of The New Manifest Theatre production of "BLKS". His recent work includes *Rapunzel* (Brown Boy Production), *Where is your Line* (SAFE), *Columbus*, And *Small Kings* (New Era Theatre). Wesley studied Communication at Texas Southern University with a minor in Theatre Arts.

Sadé Jones (Movement Direction):

Drake Muyinza (Costumer Designer): Drake Muyinza is a Ugandan native making his theatrical wardrobe styling debut in BLKS. As owner of Ephrance Vintage, Drake styles various personal closets, commercial productions and music videos. On the weekends, you can find him selling vintage threads at pop up markets around town. Thanks to partner Roy, and favorite four-legged pal, Howie.

J Mwaki (Lighting Designer):

Kamyle Smith (Stage Manager):

Johann Solo (Sound Designer): Johann Solo is a sound designer and producer and has been designing shows in Austin since 2017. He has designed shows such as *Undocuments*, *Annie Jump*, *Rap Unzel*, and *Estar Guar*s. Johann is also the founder of

Yoso Collective. A group that aims to help new musicians in Austin get their start in their music career.

Kate Taylor (Artistic Director of Salvage Vanguard Theater): Kate Taylor (she/her), artistic director of SVT since June 2019, is a wandering wonder sponge, meandering less traditional paths but keeping the exploration curious and delicious, learning expansive lessons on resilience along the way. She's been working as a theatre artist, educator, administrator, and producer in ATX over the last decade. She'll also take your photo and bring you flowers. Tasty moments: touring as a puppeteer with Glass Half Full Theatre & The Hidden Room, rocking giant foam hands and trampoline for Grackle Jack, producing and bearing witness to Taji Senior's *amendment* at a precarious moment of covidscape 2020, and launching a new collaboration, Yessireebarb, with Vincent Tomasino.

Ren Vedder (That Bitch on the Couch): is very grateful to be apart of this production. She graduated from Auburn Univeristy with a BFA in Theatre Performance and this is her first stage production since Covid.

Amani Wilkins (Imani): Amani x Yvonne was born and raised in Austin, Texas and has been acting for a total of 8-9 years! Ever since Yvonne picked up the craft, she has not been able to stop her pursuits and continues to seize any opportunity that she can! She plans to continue to showcase her skills in many different professions, as she is multi talented! Keep on keeping on, is the motto she lives by and hopes to inspire others with her unbreakable determination to be the best you can be.

Land Acknowledgment and Resources

[Indigenous Cultures Institute](#)

[Indigenous Peoples in Austin](#)

[New Manifest Theatre Land Acknowledgment](#)