

Dinner These Days

by Arielle Alouidor

February 20-22, 2025

Who?

Producers: Corinne Evans, Arielle Alouidor

Director: Arielle Alouidor

Stage Manager: Aaron Mesa

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What?

Invited to dinner today are Claudette, Tyrell, Dorce, and Heidi Saint-Joseph. It's been years since the four siblings have spoken together in the same room, and it's been five years since Dorce took his secrets and the family dog and walked away from them all. Now, as Heidi, the youngest, readies to graduate college, they gather to break bread and silence, tapping into the fury and feelings of a decade untouched.

Dinner These Days is the story of a desperate, estranged family on the precipice of acknowledging changes. It is also an ode, to family, to siblings, and to Haitian identity and community in the diaspora. Written with salt, pepper, soul, and affection for Haitian cuisine, this play tells the story of the Saint-Josephs and the processes of becoming that make and unmake its next generations.

This production will be a staged reading of the first half of the play *Dinner These Days*, by Arielle Alouidor.

When?

Date of First Rehearsal: January 13th

Tech Week Dates: February 16-19, 2025

Performance Dates: February 20-22, 2025

Overall Dates (First Rehearsal to Last Performance):

December – February 22, 2023

Time Commitment

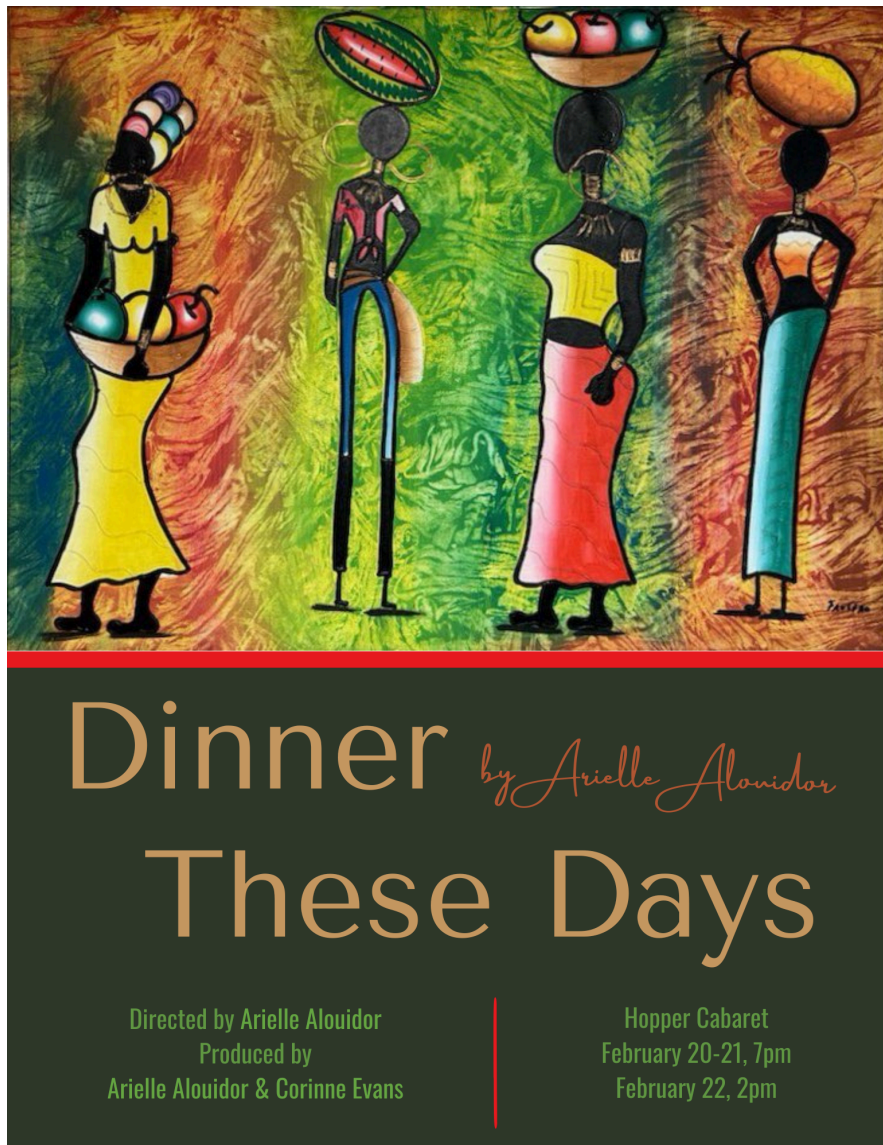
Weekly Estimated Time Commitments:

Each individual performer can expect a time commitment of two to four hours of rehearsal per week prior to tech week.

Rehearsals during tech week (February 16-19) will be around 14 hours total. We will have three performances of this show: February 20, February 21, and February 22.

Content Warnings

The show features references to death and physical illness as well as depictions of mental health struggles, including a panic attack that appears onstage. The characters indulge in verbally aggressive, at times bigoted language; the dialogue includes mentions of racism, queerphobia, misogyny, and xenophobia.



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Synopsis

Dinner These Days in its current formation is a one-act, one-scene play. It follows a conversation between four siblings – Claudette, Tyrell, Dorce, and Heidi Saint-Joseph – as they reunite for a dinner dialogue, years after one of them, Dorce, makes the decision to distance himself from the rest of the family. They gather with the ostensible intention of negotiating terms for Dorce's possible attendance of Heidi's college graduation. Instead, the four of them find themselves in a brutal, revelatory exchange about the meanings of closeness and family, particularly family in the Haitian diaspora. As secrets spill and emotions explode, they grapple to understand one another in terms of their estrangement and in terms of their future, talking across trauma, memories, isolation, and loss in a final-seeming effort to maintain their sibling bonds.

Content Warnings

Per a draft of the script: "Instances of verbal violence, including depictions of misogyny, racism, and queerphobia; references to mental and physical illness".

Dinner These Days is a play about a generation in a family trapped in that family's cycle of dysfunction and emotional cruelty. All four characters engage in aggressive, highly charged dialogue and verbal fights. The story is full of love, but getting to that love healthily and honestly takes work. The characters take wrong paths trying to get to this work.

To list some instances:

- References to emotional abuse
- References to and depictions of misogyny, racism, queerphobia, and xenophobia
- References to physical and mental illness and distress
- Depictions of smoking and drinking

Contact Information

Director Arielle Alouidor arielle.alouidor@yale.edu; (917) 680-2027

Stage Manager Aaron Mesa aaron.mesa@yale.edu

If at any point you have questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to reach out to our director, Arielle, or our stage manager, Aaron. We will be absolutely, utterly thrilled to hear from you!

Timeline

December - February 16th, 2025

Rehearsals

Week of February 16

Tech Rehearsals

February 20-22, 2025

Performances!

Production Philosophy, Goals, and Time Commitment

We at *Dinner These Days* prioritize the well-being of our team above all else. We want to create an inclusive, supportive environment for sustainable and sustainably joyous art creation.

The production will be rehearsing about four to six hours a week in advance of tech week. (Each individual actor can expect two to four hours of rehearsal per week prior to tech week.) Tech week will total to about fourteen hours. And, of course, there's the performances.

We intend on holding some individual check-ins with performers to answer questions and to make sure everyone's getting what they need from the process. We hope to hold optional team bonding activities. It's a show about community! We want to encourage one.

I (Arielle) have been working on variations of *Dinner These Days* for the past, I believe, six years now. I've spent so much time with these themes and these characters. And I've been in their Haitian-American community since I was born. I can't wait to engage with this community on the Yale campus, and I'm so excited to start a fresh leg of this play's journey with you all.

Consent and Intimacy

The script features sibling-style gestures of affection – i.e. hugs and such. We are committed to the well-being of everybody on this team. Feeling safe, respected, heard, and acknowledged is central to maintaining that well-being. We will not ask anyone to engage in activities that they are uncomfortable performing. We will keep this conversation consistent between actors, the director, and stage managers, scaling to acknowledge ongoing actor comfortability and consent.

Every member of this team is expected to uphold our values of safety and respect throughout the production. These expectations apply to rehearsals, auditions, meetings, and all other production-related events and activities.

Characters*

These descriptions of the characters are adapted from the script. Intimacy/intensity notes can also be adapted per performer comfortability. We're looking for four black performers for these roles. We encourage everyone, regardless of acting experience, to join!

Claudette Saint-Joseph, early-to-mid thirties, she/her. Eldest of the Saint-Josephs. She runs *MeZannii!*, a Haitian cuisine catering company. She is married to Ed and has twin children Dewey and Jean-Henrie.

- Intimacy/Intensity Notes: Makes queerphobic suggestions.

Tyrell Saint-Joseph, early thirties, he/him. Initially raised as the eldest, ex-military. He works as an architect in Manhattan.

- Intimacy/Intensity Notes: Engages in homophobic taunting.

Dorce Saint-Joseph, late twenties, he/him. The middle Joseph, distant from the family for at least five years.

- Intimacy/Intensity Notes: Endures queerphobic taunting.

Heidi Saint-Joseph, early twenties, she/her. The youngest, an undergraduate gearing up for graduate studies. She's looking at multiple faraway universities, including ones abroad.

- Intimacy/Intensity Notes: Smokes onstage.

*** The monologues attached below give a sense of each character. At this stage, we are only seeking to fill the role of Dorce for our staged reading. There will not be an audition.**

Claudette

CLAUDETTE: Do you remember my parakeets?

DORCE: They were parakeets?

TY: They were yours?

CLAUDETTE: They lived with our grandparents. And they had the tank back then with the lizard. Sometimes we let her free in the backyard. But the birds – you're always scared letting them out, opening the door.

HEIDI: Were you scared about that?

CLAUDETTE: No. Kids don't think about that. I'd try to let them out when they were trying to get through the door. It looked like they were going to crack up against the window, and that scared me because I'd seen what happened when birds hit windows. I thought it'd be better if they could go free. So I would open the door and my mother would stop me. The pittie, we let her go outside on her own to the backyard. We've got a doggy-door, so she's not running into anything and cracking up like that. People are kind of scared to steal her. And she's such a sweet baby she'd let herself be stolen. She'd think she was making a new friend. The kids are running into things, what can you do. Get them a bird, maybe. Get them to see one. Maybe they're like me and they'd let it out. I never listened to my Mom. I wish you'd told me, Dorce. I haven't been down there in years.

Tyrell

DORCE *exits*. TY *talks over it and starts to follow him offstage as he walks away, eventually exiting.*

TY: What? Am I right? Am I low-balling? Is that it? Not even an actual “goodbye”? No “be well” no “fuck you” – or is that how you’re saying it? DORCE. Dorce, what’s it you want to tell me? Dorce fuck you Dorce. Damn. I’m the asshole? All this bullshit from you, and it’s me? It was you! All this bullshit, you know it was you! What did you want from us? What was the point of all this?

What did we do? Goddamnit, somebody tell me. What did we do?

Dorce

DORCE: Dinner that day was Claudette, Ty, and Heidi and me. We went to Friendly's, all alone together. For the first time, no parents, our unit and just our unit. Just us, our part of the family. We talked about shitty movies and injuries, fought over group appetizers and desserts. I made Heidi apologize for cursing like that in front of the waiter, cause you know, she seemed like a child, and I guess I was too a little. We told the truth, or we tried to. We were honest and we suffered for one another. It was wonderful. I couldn't do it, but I thought I would, I thought I would be able to. I thought we were different. But then every other day happened. It was just me, and they only ever acted like it was just me. I had to be real. I had to be myself. I had to take care, so I did and took him too, but I didn't want to do that to them. I didn't want to have to say goodbye.

Heidi

HEIDI (*Cutting through*): Ty, let's just leave.

TY: She's talking around it, Heid. We can't leave like that.

HEIDI: She's not going to say it. We're not going to say it. We're not going to say anything.

I know you all, I love you all, I can't do this. We're just going to scream and fight and it's going to go all night and we're going to leave unhappy and come back maybe in a few weeks definitely in a few months. And what? We'll do this all over again, or we'll forget it. I'll take that chance, because I've had enough of this evening.