

Juba, or Jump!
Audition Packet

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INTRODUCTION

Hello! Thank you for your interest in *Juba, or Jump!*. As you may have noted on our Yale College Arts page, two of the three roles in *Juba* have been precast: Julian Hornos Kohl will be playing the role of Martin/John, and Armanti Reed will be playing the role of Lane/Bill. **While the third and final role, Eloise/Wanda, is written for a black woman, we welcome black actors of all genders to audition, provided they are comfortable portraying a woman onstage.** This audition packet will (hopefully) answer any questions you might have about the show and the audition process, so please give it a read before signing up for an audition slot! Details about what auditions will look like and what you should prepare can be found at the end of this packet, in the section titled “Audition Process & Materials.” Should you have any further questions, you can email the show’s director, Aaron, at aaron.magloire@yale.edu.

ABOUT THE PLAY

William Henry Lane was a singular figure in the realm of 19th-century blackface minstrelsy. Performing under the name Master Juba, Lane was one of very few black dancers in a genre populated almost exclusively by white men. His distinct, apparently indescribable style of dancing brought him both national and international acclaim more or less unheard of for a black performer in the antebellum United States. All the same, Lane died in obscurity, probably around the age of twenty-seven, and it would be nearly one hundred years before historians took serious interest in his life and career.

Juba, or Jump! begins with an imagined evening in Lane’s life: it’s the summer of 1850, and Lane and his white co-performer Martin are in the dressing room of a New York theater, mere moments before a show; weaving in and out of the room is Eloise, a black member of the theater’s cleaning staff. Personal, political, and artistic tensions intensify as the evening progresses; racial lines dissolve only to recalcify just as quickly; and war is on the horizon. For Lane, skill and stardom prove ultimately insufficient in defense against a nation that does not know where to place him.

The play’s second act jumps forward more than one hundred and fifty years, to the present day, where Bill and his wife Wanda have invited Bill’s newest hire, John, over for dinner, and an initially pleasant evening is unsettled and made almost inscrutable by questions of lineage, language, and color. For all the time that’s passed, answers to those questions seem just as hard to come by, and hundred-year-old heat hangs everywhere.

CONTENT WARNING

As you might have gathered from the above description, *Juba* includes difficult subject matter, such as: use of racist language and blackface imagery; depictions of racial violence; references to slavery, Jim Crow legislation, and other systemic iterations of racism; and implications of sexual predation. The role of Eloise/Wanda may be understandably taxing and distressing, and we ask that you take this into account and consider your personal comfort levels before signing up for an audition. That being said, the entire production team is committed to ensuring that rehearsals for

Juba are characterized by flexibility and respect; you'll be asked to explore and to take risks, but never to put yourself in a position that causes undue mental, emotional, or physical strain. Moreover, we recognize that personal boundaries are ever-changing: feeling internally prepared for a given scene on Monday does not necessitate replicating that preparedness on Tuesday. Trust, too, that the rehearsal process will not always be as serious as the content of the play. We'll have fun and give ourselves breathing room; perpetual doom-and-gloom's never done anyone much good.

Lastly, a note on some of the subject matter listed above: the instance of staged violence occurs only between the characters of Lane and Martin. Shortly afterwards, however, Eloise cleans the blood from Lane's face; her character is therefore proximate to the violence, even if not directly involved. "Implications of sexual predation" does *not* mean staged intimacy or staged sexual violence, but rather that Martin's relationship to Eloise is characterized in part by sexual fantasies rooted in hierarchies of race and gender. Act 2 is arguably the "lighter" of the two acts, with Wanda given more room than Eloise to assert personal agency and nuance; our hope is that the second half of the play, even if not entirely "happy," will provide a refreshing change of pace for the entire cast.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

As aforementioned, both Eloise and Wanda are black women; as such, we ask that only black actors sign up to audition. Gender will not factor into casting decisions, but you should audition only if you would feel comfortable portraying a woman onstage.

Beyond that, we're looking primarily for an actor who works well with the rest of our cast (see "Audition Process & Materials" for more on this), who is decisive but isn't afraid to explore, and who demonstrates excitement for investigating both the similarities and dissimilarities between the two "worlds" of the play.

No acting experience is required! Please note, though, that the characters of Eloise and Wanda should feel distinct. In other words, we're looking for someone who is capable of (and looking forward to) crafting two separate characters.

REHEARSAL PROCESS & EXPECTATIONS

Once casting is finalized, the entire cast will receive a Google Form on which they can indicate their preferences with regard to both logistical details (hours of rehearsal per week, ideal time of day, etc.) and artistic details (favorite warm-ups, personal goals, etc.). For now, though, a safe ballpark for time commitment is **4 to 8 hours per week**, with tech week being somewhat more time-intensive, as is typical.

Like logistics, rehearsal expectations will be ironed out and fine-tuned in the early stages of our process. Mostly, though, we expect mutual communication—whether you're running late, shaky on lines, or feeling uncomfortable in a rehearsal, please let us know! We're not here to make mountains out of molehills; we're just not mind-readers, either. And of course, as mentioned above, everyone in the cast and on the production team will be held to a standard of

respect and good judgment—yes, because it’s a difficult and sensitive play, but also because, well, when are those two things not useful?

MEET OUR TEAM!

Below are some of the names and faces working to bring *Juba, or Jump!* to life! We’re still looking to fill a few positions on our production team, including stage manager, costume designer, and props designer; if you have any interest in joining our prod team, please reach out to Aaron, Sydney, and/or Dominic (all contact info below).



Armanti Reed
Class of 2023

Role: Lane/Bill

Pronouns: he/him

Fun Fact: Armanti has a rather encyclopedic knowledge of the reality shows *Big Brother* and *The Amazing Race*.

Email: armanti.reed@yale.edu



Julian Hornos Kohl
Class of 2023

Role: Martin/John

Pronouns: he/him

Fun Fact: As pictured, Julian fits quite neatly beneath the lockers in the Broadway Rehearsal Lofts!

Email: julian.hornoskohl@yale.edu



Aaron Magloire
Class of 2023

Role: Director; Playwright

Pronouns: he/him

Fun Fact: Aaron's favorite English word is "aviary."

Email: aaron.magloire@yale.edu



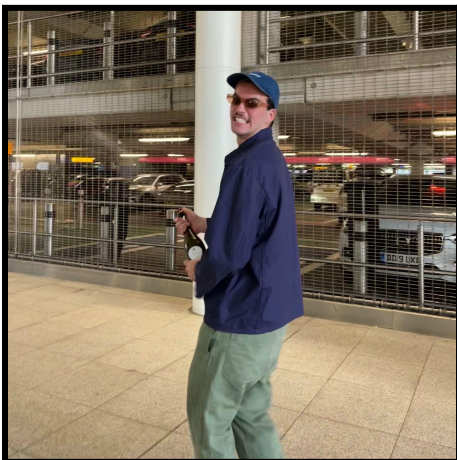
Sydney Bryant
Class of 2023

Role: Producer

Pronouns: she/her

Fun Fact: Sydney couldn't spell "Connecticut" until she was a sophomore in high school.

Email: sydney.bryant@yale.edu



Dominic Sullivan
Class of 2023

Role: Producer

Pronouns: he/him

Fun Fact: Dom has a serious phobia of pigeons. ("They fly into everything. Dom does not want to be flown into.")

Email: dominic.sullivan@yale.edu



Beza Tessema
Class of 2024

Role: Assistant Director; Scenic Designer

Pronouns: she/her

Fun Fact: Beza and Aaron did *not* plan their matching outfits in the photo to the left!

Email: beza.tessema@yale.edu



Leo Egger
Class of 2024

Role: Sound Designer

Pronouns: he/him

Fun Fact: Leo has an identical twin brother.

Email: leo.egger@yale.edu

AUDITION PROCESS & MATERIALS

Since the roles of Lane/Bill and Martin/John have been precast, our audition process will look slightly different from a typical YCA audition process. Rather than hold solo auditions followed by group callbacks, **we will hold group auditions, for which every auditionee will read alongside Julian and Armanti; we do not plan to hold callbacks.**

Please don't let the prospect of group auditions scare you! We will, of course, pay attention to cast chemistry and the ways in which you respond to and riff off of your fellow actors, but we also understand that the product of a single audition is *very* different from the product of a months-long rehearsal process. Just give it your best!

Since Eloise and Wanda will be played by the same actor, each auditionee should come prepared to read for both characters. **From the four sides below, please choose one Eloise side and one Wanda side to read at your audition.** (We may ask you to read a third or even fourth side at your audition, but there is no need to prepare more than two—and it's totally fine if your cold-read isn't as "strong" as your prepared reading.) We look forward to seeing you at auditions!

ELOISE — SIDE ONE

MARTIN goes to the door. It's ELOISE.

Yes? MARTIN

Evening, Mr. Moore. ELOISE

Mr. Moore is my father, darling, please. Martin's just fine. MARTIN

Yes, sir. Mr. Pell sent me to tell you that we're a half-hour from curtain, is all. ELOISE

Half-hour. Got it. Thank ya. MARTIN

Yes, sir. ELOISE

She is about to leave.

Say. MARTIN

Sir? ELOISE

You know this fella? MARTIN, *indicating LANE*

I don't believe I do, sir. ELOISE

This right here— MARTIN

LANE

I'm William.

ELOISE

Pleasure to make / your—

MARTIN

Aht, aht, aht! He's being modest. Which seems to be his specialty. This right here, Miss...

ELOISE

Eloise, sir.

MARTIN

Eloise. Is the best dancer you will ever lay eyes upon so long as you live.

LANE

Martin, c'mon now.

MARTIN

They call him Master Juba. And don't ask me what that means—because I've asked him and he's tried to explain it to me, and I can make neither heads nor tails of it, but that doesn't matter, because the things this boy can do, Eloise, transcend any and all language.

LANE

Marty, don't bore the poor girl.

ELOISE

Oh, it's no trouble.

MARTIN

You're damn right it's no trouble. He's the king! About four years ago—I don't know if you heard—we danced for the Queen of England. It was pleasant. It was lovely, really. And she *was* a queen. But this. This right here is a king!

LANE

Martin, maybe some water?

ELOISE

Do you need some water, Mr. Moore?

MARTIN

I'm fine, darling! And please. Please. Just Martin. Anyway. I'm telling you. One of these days, you have *got* to see this boy dance. It's like watching a strike of lightning. I'm serious.

LANE

He's being theatrical.

MARTIN

He beat Johnny Diamond, you know. The idiot challenged him to more dance battles than you could count and Master Juba beat him at every single one. How 'bout that?

LANE

Okay, Marty.

ELOISE

I'd love to watch the show, sir, but unfortunately I've got to stay and clean 'til just about eleven or so.

MARTIN

Eleven?!

ELOISE

Yes, sir.

MARTIN

Christ. And here I was thinking the whole point of being in the North was that there *wasn't* slavery.

Beat.

MARTIN

Well. One of these nights—how many nights are we here, Willie?

LANE

Three.

MARTIN

Three nights. One of these nights, you tell Mr. Pell that Martin Moore said he'd pay him back plus interest for the work you miss while watching the show. I won't debate it. You tell him I said that it's simply criminal for anyone, when under the very same roof, to miss the chance to watch Master Juba jump Jim Crow.

LANE

Mart. Enough.

MARTIN

Can I not sing my friend's praises?

LANE

You have, and then some. Thank you. And thank you, Eloise. We should be getting ready now.

ELOISE

Yes, sir. Is there anything else / I can—

LANE

We're fine.

ELOISE

Yes, sir.

She exits.

ELOISE — SIDE TWO

MARTIN
Let me ask you something, Eloise.

ELOISE
Yes sir?

MARTIN
You like working at this theater?

ELOISE
Yes sir.

MARTIN
No, no. I mean do you *really* like it?

ELOISE
Yes. Yes I do, sir.

MARTIN
How long have you been working here?

ELOISE
Three years, sir.

MARTIN
Three years. Wow. Long time. You don't ever get tired of it?

ELOISE
No, sir.

MARTIN
I sure as hell would.

Beat.

ELOISE
Yes, sir. Of course.

MARTIN
But you like it. So.

ELOISE
I do, sir.

Beat.

MARTIN
It hot in here to you?

ELOISE
A bit stuffy, yes sir.

MARTIN
Don't lie to me.

ELOISE
I wouldn't, sir. I'm not.

MARTIN
Eloise.

ELOISE
Sir?

MARTIN
Address me as Martin just once, would you? For me?

ELOISE
Of course, Martin. Whatever you please.

Beat.

MARTIN
So. Three years you've been here. What else?

ELOISE
I'm not sure I understand, sir.

MARTIN

I mean. What else. Do you do? When you leave here, what do you do?

ELOISE

In what regard, sir?

MARTIN

Come on. You're young. Can't be older than me. Pretty. This is New York City, for God's sake!

ELOISE

It certainly is, sir.

MARTIN

Don't get smart.

ELOISE

Sir?

MARTIN's flustered; he drops his face paint. ELOISE picks it up and hands it to him, instinctively. Beat.

MARTIN

Can I interest you in a drink?

ELOISE

No thank you, sir.

Beat.

ELOISE

I don't think I should drink on the job, is all. But I do appreciate the offer.

MARTIN

Willie said the same thing. Said it makes him distracted.

MARTIN retrieves the gin and pours himself a drink.

MARTIN

Well, you can watch me.

Beat.

MARTIN

You really ought to see him dance. I'm serious.

ELOISE

I hope to, sir.

MARTIN

One doesn't fully understand the confines of human ability, Eloise, until witnessing something like that. It really is a.... Was this your dream?

ELOISE

Sir?

MARTIN

Cleaning a theater. Is it what you dreamed of as a child?

Beat.

MARTIN

That's a "no," then.

ELOISE

Was a long time ago, sir.

MARTIN

You ever hear of the Fugitive Slave Act, Eloise?

Beat.

ELOISE

I don't believe I have, sir.

MARTIN

Ah. Well. Nothing all that important, as far as I understand.

ELOISE

I'm sure it's not, sir.

MARTIN

Eloise?

ELOISE

Sir?

MARTIN

There is more to life than “yes sir” and “no sir.” I can promise you that.

Beat.

ELOISE

I'm sorry, sir.

WANDA — SIDE ONE

WANDA, *to JOHN*

Jim Crow.

JOHN

I'm sorry?

WANDA

That's the origin, I think. Of the "black people can't swim" stereotype. Which isn't really a stereotype, I suppose. Or, rather, it *is* a stereotype and most stereotypes happen to have a bit of truth to them. Anyway. During the Jim Crow era, most swimming pools in the country were segregated. This goes for North and South. And of course most of the blacks-only pools were, compared to the white ones, a joke. You know. Terribly run-down, far-away. And if you *were* lucky enough to stumble upon a desegregated pool you still had to worry about. Well. Being heckled. Or worse. So black people just didn't. Or couldn't. Take an interest? In swimming. As much as whites.

BILL

White people.

WANDA

Huh?

BILL

You said "whites."

WANDA

Uh-huh.

BILL

But you said black *people*.

WANDA

Yes.

BILL

Seems a little weird not to keep the language the same, no?

Beat.

WANDA

Honestly, Bill, I didn't even realize I'd said something different.

Beat.

WANDA

But yes. You're right. Language is important, like you said.

Beat.

WANDA

Anyway I. That. Is where it comes from. The notion.

JOHN

Wow.

BILL

Mm.

JOHN

I never knew that. I mean. Jim Crow, I know Jim Crow, obviously.

WANDA

Personally?

BILL

Wanda.

WANDA

Only joking!

JOHN

Haha. Just um. Well didn't realize how far-reaching he was. It was. He?

BILL

Was he a real person? I never actually learned where the name came from.

WANDA

A dance, I think.

A dance? BILL

A dance? JOHN

A dance. WANDA

No. BILL

Pretty sure. WANDA

Really? BILL

Google it. WANDA

I would've thought... JOHN

Hm? WANDA

Well, crows. Because. Black. JOHN

Beat. JOHN has been nervously drinking throughout all of this, and has already finished his beer.

Another one, John? WANDA

WANDA — SIDE TWO

WANDA
You ever go by any nicknames, John?

JOHN
Um.

WANDA
Johnny?

JOHN
No.

WANDA
Jack?

JOHN
No, no nick—

WANDA
Jim?

JOHN
What? I don't uh. I don't think Jim is a nickname for John.

WANDA
Isn't it? I could've sworn it was.

JOHN
Don't think so, no.

WANDA, *singsongy, to herself, almost inaudible*
“Wheel about and turn about and do just so...”

JOHN
What was that?

WANDA
I didn't say anything.

Beat. BILL enters with two beers.

Oh. You—

BILL

Yeah I told you I was—

WANDA

No you didn't.

BILL

Almost certain I did, Bill.

WANDA

No, you didn't.

BILL

Well. Easy refills, then!

WANDA

Beat. Only JOHN drinks.

She hasn't been terrorizing you, I hope.

BILL

No, no!

JOHN

Oh, I've been absolutely ruthless, Bill.

WANDA

Beat.

John mentioned something funny while you were gone.

WANDA

I did?

JOHN

WANDA

Well first of all did you know the poor kid has no nicknames?

BILL

He's twenty-five.

WANDA

Huh?

BILL

You called him "kid."

JOHN

Oh, it's—

WANDA

What? It's an expression, Bill.

BILL

Is it?

WANDA

Yes. Yes it is. "Poor kid." Should I have said poor *thing* instead?

BILL

He's a man, is my point.

WANDA

Whites. Poor kid. Can't win with this one, Jim.

BILL

John.

WANDA

What? What did I say?

Beat.

BILL

What was the funny thing?

WANDA

Oh! He said he was surprised I made such good fried chicken. Because he had thought that the saying about black people loving fried chicken was just a stereotype.

BILL

I see.

WANDA

It's like I said. In all stereotypes, a bit of truth.

BILL

Well, not all of them.

WANDA

Name one.

BILL

Plenty.

WANDA

Name one.

BILL

Can't think of one off / the top of my head.

WANDA

You said *plenty*, so / name one.

BILL

I can't think of any right now!

Beat.

JOHN

What about the monkey one?

Beat.

BILL

The what?

JOHN

The um. The stereotype that black people are. Or look like. You know.

WANDA

Monkeys.

JOHN

Yeah.

BILL

Ah.

WANDA

Don't know if that's a stereotype, exactly.

JOHN

But it's clearly untrue.

WANDA

So much as a racist ideology.

JOHN

An *untrue* racist ideology. And that's what you were looking for, right? A, uh, a stereotype, or "racist ideology," if you will, without any truth to it.

BILL

Well. Sure. Anyway—

WANDA

Don't we all come from monkeys, though?

BILL

Lord.

WANDA

Or is it apes?

BILL

Does it matter?

WANDA

Maybe crows.

BILL

Crows?

WANDA

Crows.

JOHN

Crows?

WANDA

Crows.

BILL

Crows.

WANDA

Crows, sure.

WANDA lets out a sudden and raucous CAW, CAW, CAW! BILL and JOHN are unsure of what to do with this. Beat.