

Dinner These Days

by Arielle Alouidor

Spring 2025

Who?

Producers: Corinne Evans, Arielle Alouidor

Director: Arielle Alouidor

Stage Manager: Aaron Mesa

Preferred Contact Email: arielle.alouidor@yale.edu; aaron.mesa@yale.edu

Phone Number: (917) 680-2027 (Arielle)

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.

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 (in Hours):

This production will be rehearsing six to eight hours in the spring prior to tech week. Each actor will likely have a lower time commitment than these listed hours.

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.

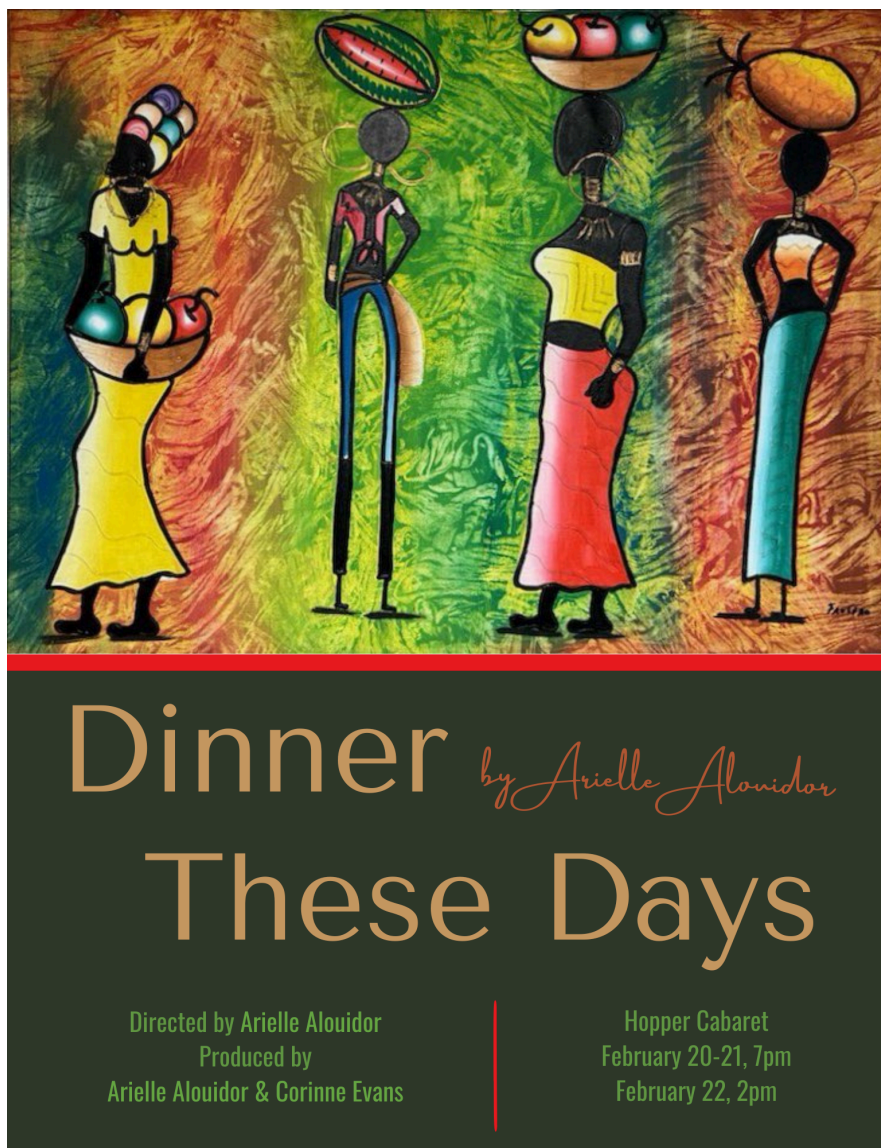
Audition Expectations

Auditionees will be asked to prepare one of the monologues selected from the play. These can be found at the end of the document, along with some more information starting on the eighth page. It's a lowkey audition! Have fun.

Audition Dates and Times

We will be casting on a rolling basis. Please let us know if you would be interested in a role by reaching out to Arielle, our director, at (917) 680-2027. Our performance dates are February 20-22, 2025.

If you would like to do a virtual Zoom audition, please contact us. If the times listed don't work, please reach out, and we will find a time :)



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By Arielle Alouidor

February 20-22, 2025

Directed by Arielle Alouidor
Produced by Corinne Evans and Arielle Alouidor

Audition Packet and Information

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. Please be conscious of that for yourself as you prepare to audition for the show.

To list some instances:

- References to and depictions of emotional abuse
- References to and depictions of misogyny, racism, queerphobia, and xenophobia
- References to and depictions of physical and mental illness and distress, including a panic attack
- 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

Week of January 13th - 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 the fall and six to eight hours a week in the spring in advance of tech week. Tech week will total to about fourteen hours. And, of course, there's the performances. Each individual actor will likely have a lower time commitment than the hours written here.

Dinner These Days runs long, as far as one-act plays go. While it's only a single scene, that scene puts all of its focus onto only four characters and performers. Given this degree of concentration, we want to be upfront and acknowledge that some work will be required during the winter break in terms of dramaturgy and line memorization. We expect actors to work on memorizing their lines throughout the rehearsal process. After winter break, all actors should be "off-book" with their portions of the script memorized. We will have "office hours" and other forms of support to help actors learn their lines.

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 heightened emotion and frequent, at times emotionally violent arguments. There are also 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. For callbacks with scene partners, boundaries will be established between auditionees. Instances of touch must be discussed with scene partners before the scene begins.

Characters*

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

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: Physically restrains Dorce; 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. Follows Dorce offstage.

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

- Intimacy/Intensity Notes: Suffers a panic attack onstage. Is physically restrained by Claudette after getting in Tyrell's face. Verbally attacks Heidi. 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. Shouted at by Dorce.

*** You will notice that there are differences between the monologues written here and the versions that might appear in the script. This script is a work in progress. It is subject to change. The script will be "frozen" in December.**

Audition Process

We encourage all black-identifying performers, regardless of experience, to audition for this production!

In the audition, you will be asked to present your monologue. We will discuss thoughts about the text and interest in the characters, and then you will perform the monologue again responding to that conversation. This audition should not be more than twenty minutes.

We don't require that audition monologues be memorized. You don't need to place them in the context of the play for the audition, and you don't need to follow the stage directions. Be bold, be engaged, be curious. Ask questions. Have fun with the text – have fun with the audition!

Please select one of the monologues below in advance of the audition. Selecting a certain character's monologue does not mean you will be considered only for that role. You'll be considered for each role you note yourself to be comfortable performing.

To audition, please reach out to the director by text message with times that work for you: use (917) 680-2027. You may also email arielle.alouidor@yale.edu.

Best of Luck!

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 they could go free. So I would open the door and my mother would stop me. The pitty, 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. 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*.

TY: What? Am I right? Am I low-balling? Is that it? No “goodbye”? 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?

TY *rushes the edge of the stage and exits*.

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

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. Just our unit. Just us 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 was small. 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. I thought we were different, we could be. 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 didn't say it.

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

CLAUDETTE: I'm sorry.

HEIDI: That's okay. 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 this evening.