

jazz
Zyria Rodgers YC '21
Spring 2024

Who?

Directors(s): Mikayla Johnson and KaLa Keaton
Stage Manager: Coryell Smith
Music Director: Maxwell Brown
Preferred Contact Email: mikayla.johnson@yale.edu

What?

Synopsis of show: *Jazz* is a play-with-music written by Zyria Rodgers (YC'21) about the love and community Black femmes provide, build, and struggle to seek out. The play follows 5 Black femmes in a bar in the American South: Tasha is burnt out from her big corporate job, Jenny is struggling to get her degree without turning to alcoholism, Shannon and Marge can't remember how to love each other, and Kiela just found her dream. With a soundscape that includes Duke Ellington, Erykah Badu, and Sade, *jazz* asks us what it means to find home in each other and break past the burdens and anxieties placed on us by outside forces.

When?

Date of First Rehearsal: Oct 10
Current Tech Week Dates: Jan 29-Feb 10, 2024
Performance Dates: Feb 8-10, 2024
Overall Dates (First Rehearsal to Last Performance): Oct 10, 2023 - Feb 10, 2024

Time Commitment

Weekly Estimated Time Commitments (in Hours): 4-6 hrs/week Fall Semester; 10 hrs/wk Spring Semester (we go up about a month into the Spring so it'll be crunch time)

Content Warnings

Mentions of alcoholism, and depressed/suicidal thoughts

Audition Expectations

What do auditionees need to bring? Do auditionees need to find and prepare their own monologue or song, or will one be provided to them?

- Choose a monologue to read from (doesn't have to be memorized)
 - You'll receive some notes and get a chance to perform the monologue again
- Fill out this [Google Form](#)
- Come prepared to share a story of a song that comforts you and why (we want to get to know you but please keep this to a minute max!)
- **If auditioning for Shannon or Kiela**, please prepare 30-60 seconds of an R&B song (it can be the same song) that comforts you.
 - We'd like you to sing right after your monologue, building off the emotional momentum of the character
- **Anticipate auditions to be 20 minutes long. (we probably won't use the whole block of time, but to be safe)**

Audition Location(s)

Please also provide directions!

Auditions will be held in the Hopper Cabaret on Sept 30 and Oct 1 from 7pm-9:40pm.
Callbacks will be in the same location on Oct 3rd and 4th, 7pm-9pm.

GETTING TO THE HOPPER CAB:

- Enter Hopper the way you would to go to the dining hall
- Go down the staircase to the Hopper basement
- Walk down the hallway that passes the buttery entrance until you're at the entrance to the Cabaret
- (If you get lost, we'll have signs posted around for you)

Character Breakdowns

Marge (mid 50s, Black, lesbian)

- **Intimacy:** kisses Shannon twice and slow dances with her
- Uses AAVE. Stud/Masc-presenting, Mid 50s, lesbian, the bar is her fourth attempt at running her own business and it's going well so far. In a damn near 30 year relationship with Shannon, and has forgotten how to see her. Wise and afraid.

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Shannon (mid 40s, Black, lesbian)

- Singing role: Call Tyrone - Erykah Badu (duet), No Ordinary Love- Sade (Solo)
- **Intimacy:** kisses Marge twice, slow dances with her
- Uses AAVE. Black femme, lesbian, Mid 40s. In a 30 year relationship with Marge but it feels more like 20. Singing gave her life and now she crones with dead eyes in Marge's jazz bar, afraid of losing her love and losing her purpose.

Tasha (36. Black, single)

- **Intimacy:** Currently there is a scene where Tasha strips to her undergarments in the show. There is a chance this scene will be modified or cut in conversations with actor and prod.
- Black femme, 36. Snarky. Went to some PWI around the corner for college and then to the northeast for some big corporate job (think McKinsey or a law firm where the associates promise they would've voted for Clinton three times if they could've). She's working herself to the bone, a good girl fighting for every inch of seat she can get at the table. And she hasn't been home in a while.

Jennifer (23. Black, ace)

- Black femme, burgeoning alcoholic, pre-law. Goes to the same college Tasha went to, and is constantly trying to prove herself, which costs her greatly. Used to being underestimated. Will make those who underestimate her regret it.

Kiela (18, Black, bisexual)

- Singing role: Call Tyrone - Erykah Badu (duet), Bag Lady - Erykah Badu (solo)
- Uses AAVE. Black femme, bright (both in personality and intelligence) and bubbly. High school graduate, works at Marge's bar for now. Loves to play around with the band after work, finds her own voice through it.

Sides

Marge

You know the first time I met Shannon, I was 30. Thirty and already felt like a bag of crushed bones. I didn't have shit to my name, at least nothing of substance. Just a degree that I hadn't used and a fresh divorce.

It was like all of these years had passed, and I didn't know what I wanted to save my life. So I spent my savings on this little corner of the block, and it was a bookstore at first and a coffee shop and anything else I could think of. I was just trying not to fail again. And she walks in on my 3rd tear down of the place and she says, "I don't know what this place is about to be but it's gone be great, girl. I can feel it."

You know Shannon one of them people who just sound like she can sing, get what I'm saying? Her voice is like butter, real flexible, soft, powerful. She even moves like the cascade down a scale. Ha. I knew I loved her the second I saw her frizzy bun fighting to get free at the back of her head and that dark cherry lipstick. Stunning, ain't she... can you see her?

I don't think I can no more.

Shit.

That woman is the only thing in this world that could make me forget what it looked like to be broken, I think. And after all these years of me trying, trying to keep this place together, to keep it afloat, so that I never have to look at failure in the face... I still feel like I'm eye to eye with it. Years of breaking my neck to be something other than lost, feel something other than broken...

I think she's reminding me.

Shannon

Marge used to really hate when I had been drinking. She used to yell to the band, “her breath smells like hot bourbon and chicken wings and then she comes and breathes on my neck all damn night!”. And I would, til 1 in the morning. The show opens at 5! Ha! Can you imagine being breathed on in a hot club, by a hot drunk ass woman with even hotter breath? Ion know... sounds kind of sexy now that I think about it. But that’s neither here nor there. In the moment, it fucking sucks. Drunk women need to be banned from microphones.

When I finally got hired as the lead singer and business was consistent, Marge would get up there a little less, but when she did, I would call her the Siren of the South. ‘Cause she wrangled any man, any poor or rich or happy sad soul out of their caves and into this place. I’d joke and say, it’s a wonder you just don’t take them for all they worth and hide 'em away like the other Sirens did.

Yeah, I miss when she would sing.

[now sing a song!]

Tasha

I should've fucked up more. If I had, I would've stayed out 'til 4 AM on weekends and took random trips to Brooklyn on Wednesdays with my home girls from Econ. I would've walked out of the interview for this morbid job and drank myself to slumber. I should've partied, I should've been ass out drunk on a beach with fun strangers, topless on a balcony, something. Maybe I could've done everything that would make my mother split her hair down to the root

But what about my futures, you know? My daughters. The little sponges that would, that will, that do inevitably suck in every ounce of instability and despair that wrings me dry? It's about them. Always, isn't it? Ain't no room to breathe in these stupid designer scarves and these stuffy corporate offices and these staged dinner parties.

But I choke anyway. In hopes that the daughters who share my face will feel fresh clean air on their skin every morning. And they take it in like it's their right because it is.

And, and they smile because they're free and breathing and don't even know a world where fresh air was never a right. Then at least, this dying will be worth something.

Jenn

Sometimes I be thinking, is anything worth achieving if I gotta be this numb to even get through it?

I've asked myself this at least a thousand times since undergrad, shit, since high school and I still don't know the answer yet.

The world be feeling like an abyss to me sometimes. It's a lot of shit that'll bring you to the edge but when you're done with that, what's next? The jump? Life is rough, yeah, but am I 'jump off a cliff' sick of this shit yet? Am I ready for that type of endlessness? People don't talk about that enough, in my opinion.

Yeah we're tired but what do I do otherwise? What's my otherwise in all this fucking sadness? It sound good to just abandon my life and run away

Then I was 12 again wondering why my teachers couldn't believe my work wasn't plagiarized or why I couldn't get- get a fucking compliment that wasn't backhanded from them. "For someone like you, this is really remarkable work." Like, are you kidding me right now Mrs. Evans?!? For someone like me?

To someone like you, someone like me don't even deserve to breathe.

Kiela

When I was a little girl, I used to trust my mother's dreams, with everything in me. Her dreams felt like my compass, and I just knew that God or the Universe gave her this gift of sight that would save me, keep us for another night. As a kid, I would watch for her dreams, all up in her face, waiting for the Big One, to tell me my future. I used to think she'd run in my room and finally say what the Universe finally had in store for my life. Who would I be? When would I die? Would I be happy?

I was waiting on my own little something from God. Til I realized, that I had my own dreams too. And surprisingly they also meant important things. I guess I was so dependent on my mama's gift of sight, I didn't even realize I could see too.

That's when I started singing. It just made sense for me. Realizing that one gift unlocked an entire chest of gold in my life. And that's why I'm standing in front of you right now, nervous as hell, ready to pass out and shout my praise at the same time. But you know what? Nervous as I am, I really feel like I can breathe.

[now sing!]