

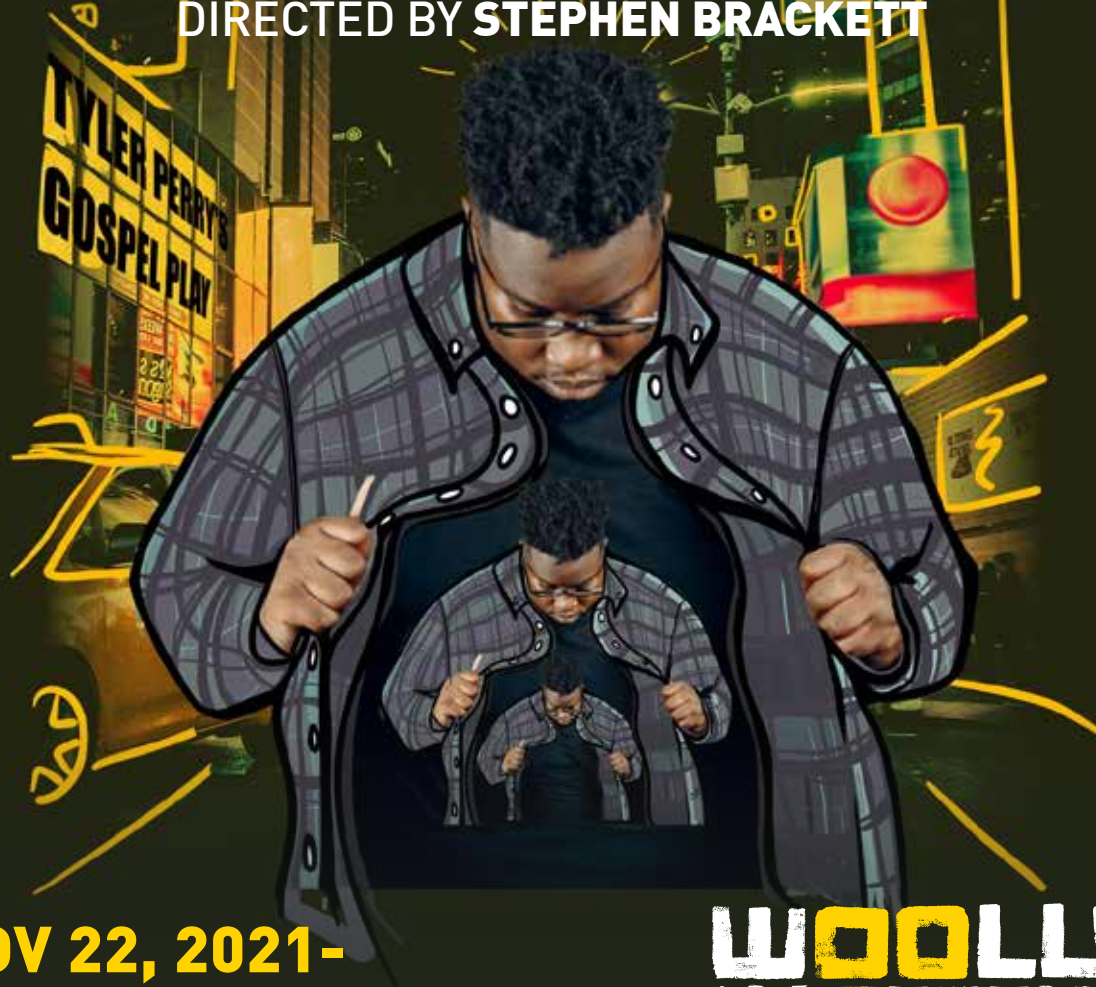
A STRANGE LOOP

BOOK, MUSIC, AND LYRICS BY **MICHAEL R. JACKSON**

MUSIC DIRECTED BY **RONA SIDDIQUI**

CHOREOGRAPHED BY **RAJA FEATHER KELLY**

DIRECTED BY **STEPHEN BRACKETT**



**NOV 22, 2021-
JAN 2, 2022**

**WOOLLY
MAMMOTH**

A NOTE FROM MARIA

What's the most transgressive thing that a cutting edge, provocative, and alternative theatre like Woolly Mammoth could do?

A Broadway-bound musical!

There is nothing more mainstream than the Great White Way, a nickname for Broadway that was inspired by all the electric white lights on the theatre marquees at the turn of the 20th century. The fact that **A STRANGE LOOP** has commercial aspirations is transgressive, not only because of its themes, but also because, by my research, Broadway earns its nickname when it comes to musicals written by Black artists.

Woolly decidedly does NOT have a history of producing musicals, and there are great theatres in the DMV who do so to great acclaim—Signature Theatre, now run by the brilliant Matthew Gardiner, and Arena Stage, run by the incomparable Molly Smith, to name a few. I can't tell you how many people expressed shock when I mentioned that there would be a musical in a Woolly season, given our forays into the genre have included one new musical in our second season of existence in the early 80s; a production of that old standard, **THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW**, in the 90s that was called "DEGENERATIVE FILTH!" by *The Washington Post*; and a film adaptation last season of Heather Christian's **ANIMAL WISDOM**, which adapted a theatre-concert-séance-performance into a haunting romp throughout our building.

A STRANGE LOOP is courageous, urgent, and radically redefines what musicals are and who they can be for. It is explicit and unapologetic in ways that are rarely seen, let alone with a young Black queer body as its centripetal force, exploring the intersections of race, sexuality, and religion. Funny, brutal, and heartbreaking, this musical has had a long gestation period, in part because it needed the world to catch up.

When I was 25 years old, the wonderful artist and teacher Donna DiNovelli introduced me to a student of hers in the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing program at NYU. His name was Michael R. Jackson, and he was working on a new musical splicing his own songs together with the songs of indie rock star Liz Phair. Michael was ushering for **THE LION KING** as a side gig to help pay his way through grad school and he knew every Joni Mitchell song by heart. We hit it off and I jumped onboard as director. That musical was the early draft of **A STRANGE LOOP**. And to now be working on it as a producer...what a strange loop indeed!

If you can believe it, I have known director Stephen Brackett even LONGER than I have known Michael, as we met at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in the early aughts. His direction and dramaturgical insight have been key to catapulting **A STRANGE LOOP** into the musical you see today. I also want to extend our deepest gratitude to Playwrights Horizons and Page 73 Productions, who have been instrumental to the journey of this show, as well as to the many advocates and supporters (Musical Theatre Factory, Barbara Whitman, and so many others) who have championed the musical throughout its development process.

Even with the imprimatur of the Pulitzer Prize, Michael continues to hone the script and the score. This production is only his second professional production and there is still much to learn, especially from audiences like you! This is exactly the kind of relentless inquiry and experimentation that Woolly is known for, and we are thrilled to play a part in this extraordinary musical's history.

Hasta la próxima,

Maria



Maria Manuela Goyanes
Maria Manuela Goyanes, Artistic Director,
Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company

Woolly Mammoth acknowledges that our theatre stands upon occupied, unceded territory: the ancestral homeland of the Nacotchtank whose descendants belong to the Piscataway peoples. Furthermore, the foundation of this city, and most of the original buildings in Washington, DC, were funded by the sale of enslaved people of African descent and built by their hands.

*Language developed in consultation
with Dr. Gabrielle Tayac*

WOOLLY MAMMOTH THEATRE COMPANY
MARIA MANUELA GOYANES EMIKA ABE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MANAGING DIRECTOR
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS AND PAGE 73 PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS

A STRANGE LOOP

BOOK, MUSIC, AND LYRICS BY
MICHAEL R. JACKSON

SCENIC DESIGNER COSTUME DESIGNER LIGHTING DESIGNER SOUND DESIGNER
ARNULFO MONTANA LEVI JEN SCHRIEVER+ DREW LEVY+
MALDONADO+ BLANCO+

HAIR, WIG, AND VOCAL ARRANGEMENTS INTIMACY CHOREOGRAPHER
MAKEUP DESIGNER MICHAEL R. JACKSON CHELSEA PACE
COOKIE JORDAN

PRESS STAGE MANAGER MUSICIAN PRODUCTION
REPRESENTATION ERIN GIOIA ALBRECHT* CONTRACTOR MANAGEMENT
BLAKE ZIDELL & WALTER BOBBY MCCOY JUNIPER STREET
ASSOCIATES (HILLARY BLANKEN,
ROSS LEONARD)

MUSIC DIRECTOR ORCHESTRATIONS
RONA SIDDIQUI~ CHARLIE ROSEN

CHOREOGRAPHED BY
RAJA FEATHER KELLY^

DIRECTED BY
STEPHEN BRACKETT^

Playwrights Horizons, Inc., in association with Page 73 Productions produced the
World Premiere of "A STRANGE LOOP" in New York City in 2019.
"A STRANGE LOOP" was originally developed at The Musical Theatre Factory.

CAST

Usher..... Jaquel Spivey*
Thought 1 L Morgan Lee*
Thought 2 James Jackson, Jr.*
Thought 3 John-Michael Lyles*
Thought 4 John-Andrew Morrison*
Thought 5, Dance Captain..... Jason Veasey*
Thought 6 Antwayn Hopper*
Understudy for Usher
and Thought 4..... Christopher Michael Richardson*

ADDITIONAL CREATIVE TEAM

Usher Casting The Telsey Office
(Rebecca Scholl, CSA & Destiny Lilly, CSA)
Original Casting Elaine Aldaffer, CSA
BOLD Assistant Director..... Nemuna Ceesay
Associate Choreographer Candace L. Taylor
Associate Orchestrator Bryan Carter
Assistant Music Director Jacinth Greywoode
Associate Scenic Designer Corey Umlauf+
Associate Costume Designer Azalea Fairley+
Associate Lighting Designer..... Aaron Tacy+
Assistant Sound Designer Cresent Haynes
Associate Hair, Wig
and Makeup Designer Joya Giambrone

MUSICIANS

MD Chair: Keyboard & Conductor Rona Siddiqui~
Keys/Guitar Beth Callen~
Bass Max Murray~
Drums Erika Johnson~
Reeds Dana Gardner~
Rehearsal Pianist &
Stand-by Conductor Marika Countouris

* Member, AEA // ^ Member, SDC // + USA Union Designers // ~ American Federation of Musicians

Filming, recording, or taking photographs of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.
Please silence your cell phones and any other noisemaking devices.

PRODUCTION CREW

Production Manager Ross Leonard
Assistant Stage Manager..... Victoria Whooper*
Production Sound Kevin Sweetser
Production Electrician Elliot Peterson
Production Electrician Doug Del Pizzo
Production Assistant (NYC)..... Narissa Agustin
Production Assistant (DC)..... Andie Burns
Music Production Assistant..... Nathan Beary Blustein
Wardrobe Supervisor Andrew J. Cutler
Dresser Grace Mitchell
Audio 1 Becca Stoll
Audio 2 Julia McIntyre
Light Board Operators Venus Gulbranson & Ian Claar
Moving Light Programmer Ben Fichthorn
Follow Spot Operator Thommy Nolan
Automation Operator Sarah McCarthy
Deck Carpenter..... Sunny Cushing Spiller
Covid Compliance Manager (NYC)..... Emily Korn
Covid Compliance Manager (DC) Lauren Pikel
Scenic Charge Carolyn Hampton
Scenic Painter..... Leila Spolter
Properties Artisan..... G.E. Burgtorf
Electricians Zavar Blackledge,
Tommy Nolan, Kristen Roth, Malory Hartman, Norah
Matthews, Nolan Thompson, Elizabeth Roth,
Minjoo Kim, Venus Gulbranson
Carpenters Mark Hawkinson, Simone Schneeberg,
Alex Miletich, Derrick Wilson, Paul Peers, Sarah
Cushing Spiller, Tony Wood
AV Technicians Devon Swiger, Nora Simonson,
TJ Johns, Anthony Powell, Matt Reid,
Allie Khorl, Leon June, Franklin Nesmith,
Alexandria Kirchhoff Corrie
Keyboard Programmer Julianne Merrill

ENSEMBLE



JAQUEL SPIVEY (*Usher, he/him*) is grateful to be making his professional debut in this iconic production. He recently graduated from Point Park University with a degree in Musical Theatre. He sends all of his love to Michael, Stephen, this stunning cast, Telsey+Co, Barbara, and Woolly Mammoth. For my family. God is good y'all! @jaquelspivey



L MORGAN LEE (*Thought 1, she/her*) is an Obie award-winning actress and theatre maker based in New York. Her performance in **A Strange Loop** Off-Broadway garnered her a Lucille Lortel nomination and the distinction of being the first openly transgender actress to originate a role in a Pulitzer Prize-winning piece of theatre. L Morgan was recently cast to portray artist Lili Elbe in the British musical adaptation of the novel **The Danish Girl** being workshopped in London. She is also developing a new play, **The Women** (2021), which was seen in Ars Nova's 2021 Vision Residency. L Morgan is dedicated to championing stories centering women and underrepresented voices on both stage and screen. 2021 Mark O'Donnell Prize Recipient. For more: @lmorganlee and lmorganlee.com



JAMES JACKSON JR. (*Thought 2, he/him*) is an actor, musician, and cabaret artist based in New York and originally from Massachusetts. An Obie Award-winner (**A Strange Loop**, Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons), a featured singer with the Radio City Christmas Spectacular, his cabaret/solo work (**Shady Sings the Blues**, **The Black-Ups**) has been seen at Joe's Pub at the Public Theatre, Boston's Club Oberon at the American Repertory Theatre, as well as the Lyric Theatre of Los Angeles, The Green Room42, Feinstein's/54 Below, and The Post Office Cabaret in Provincetown. National Tours: Andrew Lloyd Webber's **Whistle Down the Wind**. Regional credits include **Dreamgirls** (DASH Supporting Actor Award), **Henri Gabler** (Exigent Theatre), **The Wild Party** (SpeakEasy Stage).

He's proudly been blocked by both Kirstie Alley and Taylor Dayne. This show is always dedicated to his mother - I miss you. Thank you to DGRW. And all of my love to Tom. www.TheJamesJacksonJr.com and @JJacksonJr



JOHN-MICHAEL LYLES (*Thought 3, he/him*) is a Harlem-based, Texas-raised, multi-hyphenate creative. As an actor, he's been seen in: **A Strange Loop** (Playwright's Horizons), **This Ain't No Disco** (Atlantic), **Sweeney Todd** (Barrow Street), **The Flick** (Barrow Street), **Brooklynite** (Vineyard), **Big River** (Encores!), **1776** (Encores!), **The Art of Falling** (Second City/Hubbard Street) & **Choir Boy** (Guthrie). TV credits include: "The Other Two", "Chicago PD", "NCIS: New Orleans", & "The OA". Film: **Blind**. As a writer, he's co-writing a new musical with David Gomez, **Shoot for the Moon**, with developmental support from the Dramatist Guild Foundation Fellows class of '21, Musical Theater Factory's 2nd MAKERS Cohort & the

'21 Rhinebeck Writers Retreat. He wrote additional music for the Second Stage production of Young Jean Lee's **We're Gonna Die**. He is currently writing a new musical with support from 5th Avenue Theater's First Draft: Raise Your Voice commission program. @jmlyles1 | www.john-michaellyles.com



JOHN-ANDREW MORRISON (*Thought 4, he/him*) won a Lucille Lortel and an OBIE Award for his work in the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical **A Strange Loop**. He is also an Outer Critics Circle Honoree for his performance in the Off Broadway premiere of **Blues for an Alabama Sky**. John-Andrew spent many years working at La Mama with George Ferencz as a member of The Experimentals working on readings, workshops, and productions of around 50 new plays. John-Andrew's work has been seen throughout the country at theatres including Playwrights Horizons, KEEN Company, The Hartford Stage, Baltimore Center Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, La Jolla Playhouse, and A.R.T.

Internationally his work has been seen at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival with Boy Steals Train which won The Fringe First and The London Stage Awards. John-Andrew's work on film includes **The Last OG** and the television pilot West 40s. John-Andrew is a co-host and co-creator of the web talk show **5 Questions with James and JAM** with James Jackson Jr. He is also a guest interviewer for Season 2 of the Live at the Lortel podcast and creates social media content for The Lucille Lortel Theater Foundation. He holds a BA in Theater Arts from Brandeis University and an MFA in Acting from U.C.S.D. For George and Mom. @jandymorri and johnandrewmorrison.com



JASON VEASEY (*Thought 5, Dance Captain, he/him*) is so very happy to be back in the loop telling this story, with this family. He was last seen in the original Playwrights Horizons production of **A Strange Loop** for which he won an Obie Award. Other credits include the Broadway and National touring companies of **The Lion King** and countless credits on stages across the country including Actors Theater of Louisville, Denver Center, and The MUNY! On TV you could spot him on "High Maintenance," "Chicago Fire," "Dash and Lily," "Flatbush Misdemeanors," "Betty," and more. UPCOMING: the film **Home Free**. Shoutouts to the folks at Nicolosi & Co. and as always DVS and V. Jason would like to dedicate this run and every other run of **A Strange Loop** to Darius Smith and especially Keldon LaVar

Price and Rich Affannato. I wish you could've seen our show. You would've loved it.



ANTWAYN HOPPER (*Thought 6, he/him*) BROADWAY: **Hair**. SELECT OFF-BWAY/NY: Pulitzer Prize Winning **A Strange Loop** (Playwrights Horizons), **The Loophole** (NY Public), **Civil War Christmas** (NYTW), and **This Ain't No Disco** (NYSF). Select Regional: **A Ghost In Satin** (Williamstown Theatre Fest.), **Nick's Flamingo Grill** (Alliance), **Camino Real** (Goodman), **The Brothers Size** (Old Globe), **Rent** (Syracuse Stage), **Jesus Christ Superstar** (Lyric Opera House), **Smokey Joe's Cafe** (New Theatre). FILM/TV: **A Thousand And One** (Upcoming), **Girl Most Likely**, **Citizen Zero**, "The Knick," "Blacklist," "Royal Pains," **Z: The Beginning Of Everything**, "Shades of Blue," "A Gifted Man." RECORDINGS/IN CONCERT: **The Double Threat** (Demo, PCLO), **Muscles: The Sun God** (Jim Rado, Steve Margoshes),

Voices In Ohio with The Bengsons (Ars Nova), **Showboat** (Carnegie Hall). Trained at School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon. Obie-2020 & Craig Noel Award for Best Ensemble (Brothers Size).



CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL RICHARDSON (*Usher Understudy & Thought 4 Understudy, he/him*) is an actor, director, and teaching artist in the Washington, DC area. He is the creator/composer of **Everyday Magic**, an interactive digital series with Arts on the Horizon, and has appeared in **Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!** (The Musical) at The John F. Kennedy Center TYA (Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding TYA Production); **Gun & Powder** at Signature Theatre; **Matilda** at Olney Theatre Center; **You're A Good Man Charlie Brown** at Imagination Stage (Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding TYA Production); **The Wiz** at Ford's Theatre (Helen Hayes Nomination, Supporting Actor); **The Book of Will** at Round House Theatre; and **Macbeth** at The Shakespeare Theatre. He holds a BA in English and Theatre from The

College of William & Mary. www.cmrich.me

CREATIVE TEAM



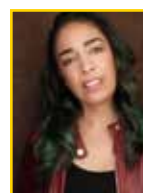
MICHAEL R. JACKSON'S (*Book, Music, Lyrics, he/him*) 2020 Pulitzer Prize and New York Drama Critics Circle-winning **A Strange Loop** (which had its 2019 world premiere at Playwrights Horizons in association with Page 73 Productions) was called "a full-on laparoscopy of the heart, soul, and loins" and a "gutsy, jubilantly anguished musical with infectious melodies" by Ben Brantley for *The New York Times*. In *The New Yorker*, Vinson Cunningham wrote, "To watch this show is to enter, by some urgent, bawdy magic, an ecstatic and infinitely more colorful version of the famous surreal lithograph by M. C. Escher: the hand that lifts from the page, becoming almost real, then draws another hand, which returns the favor." In addition to **A Strange Loop**, he also wrote book, music and lyrics for **White Girl in Danger**. Awards and associations include: a New Professional Theatre Festival Award, a Jonathan Larson Grant, a Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award, an ASCAP Foundation Harold Adamson Award, a Whiting Award, the Helen Merrill Award for Playwriting, an Outer Critics Circle Award, a Drama Desk Award, an Obie Award, an Antonio Award, a Fred Ebb Award, a Windham-Campbell Prize, a Dramatist Guild Fellowship and he is an alum of Page 73's Interstate 73 Writers Group.



STEPHEN BRACKETT (*Director, he/him*) BROADWAY: **The Lightning Thief** (Longacre Theater), **Be More Chill** (Lyceum Theater). OFF-BROADWAY: **A Strange Loop** (Playwrights Horizons, Obie and Drama Desk Awards), **Be More Chill** (Signature and Two River Theaters), **The Lightning Thief** (Theaterworks USA/National Tour), **Buyer & Cellar** (Rattlestick and Barrow Street Theaters/National Tour), **The Mad Ones** (Prospect Theater), **Ultimate Beauty Bible** (Page 73), **Wringer** (NYCCT), **Carnival Kids** (Lesser America), **The Correspondent** (Rattlestick), **After** (Partial Comfort), **The Material World** (Dixon Place), **Be A Good Little Widow** (Ars Nova), and **The Tenant** (Woodshed Collective). REGIONAL: **Fall Spings** (Barrington Stage), **Significant Other** (Geffen Playhouse), **I Now Pronounce** (Humana Festival), **Le Switch** (About Face), **The Great Pretender** (TheatreWorks Silicon Valley). LONDON: **Be More Chill** (The Shaftsbury Theater and The Other Palace) and **Buyer & Cellar** (Menier Chocolate Factory). UPCOMING: **AD 16** (The Olney Theater) and **Radiant Baby** (Two River).



RAJA FEATHER KELLY (*Choreographer, he/him*) is a choreographer, a director, and the artistic director of the feath3r theory. He is a three-time Princess Grace Award winner (2017, 2018, 2019). In 2020, he was the Obie Award winner and Outer Critics Circle Award honoree for choreography for the Pulitzer-winning musical **A Strange Loop**. In 2019 he was an SDCF Joe A. Callaway Award finalist for both **A Strange Loop** and the Pulitzer-winning play **Fairview**. Raja is also the 2019–2020 Randjelović/Stryker Resident Commissioned Artist at New York Live Arts, an inaugural Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, and a 2019 Creative Capital award recipient. He is a current fellow of HERE Arts, the Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU, and a Creative Associate at The Juilliard School. Over the past decade, Kelly has created fifteen evening-length premieres with his company the feath3r theory. His choreography has also garnered a 2018 Breakout Award from the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SDCF) and the Solange MacArthur Award for New Choreography (2016), and he was *Dance Magazine's* inaugural Harkness Promise Award (2018). Recently directed Young Jean Lee's "We're Gonna Die" (Second Stage).



RONA SIDDIQUI (*Music Director, she/her*) is composer/lyricist based in NYC. She is a 2020 recipient of the Jonathan Larson Grant and the 2019 recipient of the Billie Burke Ziegfeld award. Her show **Salaam Medina: Tales of a Halfghan**, an autobiographical comedy about growing up bi-ethnic in America, had a reading at Playwrights Horizons Nov 2019 (dir. by Raja Feather Kelly). Other musicals include **One Good Day**, **The Tin**, and **Treasure in NYC**. She is the recipient of the ASCAP Foundation Mary Rodgers/Lorenz Hart Award, and the ASCAP Foundation/Max Dreyfus Scholarship. She has written pieces for Wicked's 16th anniversary commemoration **Flying Free**, 24 Hour Musicals, Prospect Theater Company, The Civilians, the NYC Gay Men's Chorus, and 52nd St Project, and has performed concerts of her work at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and 54 Below. Original scores she has written include **The Vagina Monologues**, **Middletown**, and **The Good Person of Szechuan**. Music directing credits: **A Strange Loop**, **Bella: An American Tall Tale**, **Who's Your Baghdaddy or How I Started the Iraq War**. www.ronasiddiqui.com

CHARLIE ROSEN (*Orchestrator, he/him*) is a Tony Award-winning multi-instrumentalist, composer, performer, arranger, orchestrator, music director, and producer whose music has been heard worldwide across many stages and screens around the world. Some recent credits include: BROADWAY: **Some Like it Hot** [upcoming, Orchestrations], **Be More Chill** (Music Sup/Orchestrations), **Moulin Rouge** (Orchestrations), **Prince of Broadway** (Orchestrations), **American Psycho** (Assoc MD/Keys), **The Visit** (Guitar/Zither), **Honeymoon in Vegas** (Orchestrations), **Cyrano de Bergerac** (Composer), **One Man, Two Guv'nors** (Music Director, Bass), **13 The Musical** (Guitars, Bass, Keys), **Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson** (Assoc. MD, Bass, addl. Orch). OFF-BROADWAY/REGIONAL: **A Strange Loop** (Orchestrations) - Playwrights Horizons, **Love in Hate Nation** (Orchestrator) - Two River Theater, **Broadway Bounty Hunter** (Orchestrations) - Greenwich House Theater, **A Legendary Romance** (MD/Orch.) - Williamstown Theater Festival, **Miss You Like Hell** (Orchestrations) - The Public Theater, **The Black Suits** - Center Theater Group (MD/Orch.) TV/FILM/PODCASTS: **Wonka** (Warner Brothers, Music Producer/Arranger), **Here Today** - Dir. Billy Crystal (Composer), "The Presidents Show" (Comedy Central, Composer), "Maya and Marty (NBC, MD/Composer/Arranger), "High Maintenance" (HBO, Addl Music), **Hot White Heist** - Dir. Alan Cumming (Audible, Composer).

ARNULFO MALDONADO (*Scenic Designer, he/him*) is a New York City-based set and costume designer. Arnulfo is a recipient of a Princess Grace Fabergé Theater Award and a multiple Henry Hewes Design nominee. He recently received the 2020 Obie for Sustained Excellence in Set Design, as well as a Special Citation Obie as part of the Creative Team of the Pulitzer Prize-winning **A Strange Loop** by Michael R. Jackson (Playwrights Horizons). LAST AT WOOLLY MAMMOTH: Anne Washburn's **Shipwreck: A History Play about 2017**. NOTABLE DESIGN CREDITS INCLUDE: Alice Childress' **Trouble In Mind** (Broadway, American Airlines Theatre), the world premieres of: Clare Barron's **Dance Nation** (Playwrights Horizons); Jocelyn Bioh's **Nollywood Dreams**, & **School Girls, Or...** (MCC Theater); Jaclyn Backhaus' **Men On Boats** (Clubbed Thumb/Playwrights Horizons); Donja R. Love's **Sugar In Our Wounds** (Manhattan Theater Club, Lucille Lortel Award Outstanding Scenic Design recipient) & **One In Two** (New Group); Will Eno's **The Underlying Chris** (Second Stage). UPCOMING: the world premiere of the musical **GODDESS** (Berkeley Rep). MFA: NYU Tisch. IG: @arnulfo.maldonado.design www.arnulfomaldonado.com For Brian.

CREATIVE TEAM (CONT.)

MONTANA LEVI BLANCO (*Costume Designer, he/him*) is a Brooklyn-based costume designer from Albuquerque, New Mexico. His grandmother, a lampshade artisan, inspired an early love of fabric, color, and beauty. He is a graduate of Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music, Brown University, and the Yale School of Drama. Montana is a recipient of the Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, Henry Hewes, and Obie awards. montanaleviblanco.com

JEN SCHRIEVER (*Lighting Designer, she/her*) BROADWAY: *Lackawanna Blues*, *Grand Horizons*, *The Lifespan of a Fact*, *Eclipsed*, *Ghetto Klown*. RECENT OFF-BROADWAY: *Power Strip* (LCT 3); *A Strange Loop* (Playwrights Horizons); *Superhero* (2ST); *What the Constitution Means to Me* (NYTW); *Thom Pain*, *Night is a Room* (Signature); *Collective Rage*, *School Girls...* (MCC); *Usual Girls*, *Bobbie Clearly*, *On the Exhale* (Roundabout); *Dan Cody's Yacht*, *In the Body of the World* (Manhattan Theatre Club); *The Amateurs* (Vineyard); *Strange Interlude* (Transport Group); *The Moors* (Playwrights Realm); *Eclipsed*, *ToasT*, *A Second Chance* (The Public). TOUR: *Iphigenia*; *An Officer and a Gentleman* and *Blue Man Group* national. OPERA: *Die Fledermaus*, *Pearl Fishers* (Metropolitan Opera); *Faust*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *La Traviata* (Mariinsky, Russia); *Pearl Fishers* (ENO & LAO). Adjunct Professor: Purchase College. Mom: Henry. jenschriever.com

DREW LEVY (*Sound Designer, he/him*) BROADWAY: *Oklahoma!* (Tony nom., Drama Desk nom.), *Honeymoon in Vegas* (Drama Desk nom.), *Chaplin* (Drama Desk Award), *The Winslow Boy*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Present Laughter*. OFF-BROADWAY: *Judgment Day* (Park Avenue Armory), *Oklahoma!* (St. Ann's), *Cleopatra*, *One Day the Musical*, *The Weir*, *Why Torture is Wrong...*, *Emergence-See!*, *Rainbow Kiss*, *Dutchman* (AUDELCO Viv nom.), *The Mistakes Madeline Made*. REGIONAL: *The Old Globe*, *Heartbreak Hotel* (Chicago), ART, Williamstown, Huntington, Westport Country Playhouse, Two River Theater, the McCarter Theater, Arena Stage, Long Wharf. OTHER: *Reconfiguration: An Evening with Other Lives* at BAM; Drama Desk Awards 2014 & 2015; Metropolitan Opera 125th Anniversary Gala; holiday installations for Saks 5th Avenue, Cartier, and others.

COOKIE JORDAN (*Hair, Wig, and Makeup Designer, she/her*) BROADWAY: *Clyde's*; *Trouble in Mind*; *Slave Play*; *Once on This Island*; *Sunday in the Park with George*; *In Transit*; *Eclipsed*; *Side Show*; *After Midnight*; *Fela!*; *A View From the Bridge*; *Skeleton Crew* (Upcoming). OFF-BROADWAY: *A Strange Loop*; *In the Blood*, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* (Signature Theatre); Public Works' *Hercules*, *Ain't No Mo'*, *Mlima's Tale* (The Public); *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *Twelfth Night* (The Public's Shakespeare in the Park). TOURS: *Fela!* (national and European tours); *Dirty Dancing*. TELEVISION: Emmy-nominated for makeup design, "The Wiz Live!" (NBC).

ERIN GIOIA ALBRECHT (*Stage Manager, she/her*) Woolly Mammoth debut! Erin is overjoyed to be reunited with her *A Strange Loop* family after their successful run Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons. OFF-BROADWAY: *Wives*, *Dance Nation*, *Mankind*, *Bella: An American Tall Tale*, *A Life*, *Men on Boats*, *Marjorie Prime*, *The Christians* (Playwrights Horizons); *The Light*, *Charm*, *Punk Rock*, *The Village Bike*, (MCC); *India Pale Ale* (MTC); *Red Speedo* (NYTW). BROADWAY: *Bullets Over Broadway*, *Matilda*, *Bronx Bombers*, *Hands on a Hardbody*. REGIONAL: The 5th Avenue, The Old Globe, La Jolla Playhouse, The Public, Ars Nova, WP Theater, TACT. MFA: UC San Diego. Proud member AEA.

VICTORIA WHOOPER (*Assistant Stage Manager, she/her*) Is excited to make her Woolly Mammoth debut. Credits include, VIRTUAL PRODUCTIONS: *Origin Story* (PSM, Bard at the Gate); *The Skin of Our Teeth* (PSM, Hangar Theatre); ACADEMIC: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (PSM, Jerry Herman Ring Theatre). REGIONAL: *Sweeney Todd* (Deck SM, Hangar Theatre), *Into the Woods* (ASM, Hangar Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet* (PSM, Elm Shakespeare Company); *Noises Off* (PSM, Connecticut Repertory Theater) and *Peter and the Starcatcher* (PSM, Connecticut Repertory Theater); *Love's Labors Lost* (ASM, Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Macbeth* (PSM, Northern Stage), and *Peerless* (PSM, Yale Repertory Theater). BROADWAY: *Eclipsed* (Production Assistant). *Amy and the Orphans*, *Midsummer*, *Faustus* and *The Untitled Project* (PSM, Yale School of Drama/Yale Cabaret). Victoria holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama and is a faculty member at Columbia College Chicago.

CHELSEA PACE (*Intimacy Choreographer, she/her*) is an intimacy choreographer, coordinator, and consultant. She has been developing ethical, efficient, and effective systems for staging intimacy for over a decade with work ranging from regional theatre and Off-Broadway to independent films and projects with major studios. Chelsea's theatre work includes *Bundle of Sticks* at INTAR, *Detroit '67* and *RENT* at Signature Theatre, *Seven Guitars* at Arena Stage. Chelsea's intimacy coordination work for film includes *The Tender Bar* and series "A League of Their Own" (forthcoming) and "Harlem." Chelsea is Co-Founder of Theatrical Intimacy Education and the author of *Staging Sex: Best Practices, Tools, and Techniques for Theatrical Intimacy*. She is currently the Resident Intimacy Consultant and Choreographer at both Signature Theatre and Studio Theatre. Chelsea is the current President of The Association for Theatre Movement Educators and is an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. www.chelseapace.com

ADAM WIGGINS (*Copyist, he/him*) BROADWAY: *Caroline Or Change* (Keyboard Programmer), *Million Dollar Quartet* (Transcriptions), OFF-BROADWAY: *Want The Change* (MD / Arrangements / Orchestrations). NATIONAL TOURS (keyboard programming): *The King And I*, *Spongebob Squarepants*, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, *Anastasia*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Hairspray*. NEW YORK: *White Girl In Danger* (Michael R. Jackson), *Another Word For Beauty* (music by Grammy-winner Hector Buitrago), The National High School Musical Awards, Broadway Backwards (2012-2016), *Railroad!* (Louis St. Louis) INTERNATIONAL: *The Joker's Game* (Beijing), *The Monkey King* (Beijing). Adam's orchestrations can also be heard on Michael R. Jackson's album *Dirty Laundry* (2018).

NEMUNA CEESAY (*BOLD Assistant Director, she/her*) is an actor, director, and educator based in New York. She has an MFA in acting from American Conservatory Theater and has been seen onstage at CalShakes, Joe's Pub, PlayMakers Rep, Woolly Mammoth, A.R.T., The Public Theatre, and spent 2 years at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Favorite TV credits include: "Bull," "Broad City," "Instinct," "Younger," "FBI," "Prodigal Son" and "Katy Keene." She has performed internationally at Theatre Calgary and the Moscow Art Theatre. Nemuna teaches acting at Hunter College and Circle in the Square Theatre School and she is the founder of an all BIPOC training program called The Blueprint. Follow her on Instagram @_nemuna_ and @theblueprintartist. You can also visit her website: www.nemunarceesay.com or learn more about The Blueprint at www.theblueprintartist.com

CREATIVE TEAM (CONT.)

CANDACE L. TAYLOR (*Associate Choreographer, she/her*) is a passionate performer, choreographer, and empowerment coach. She began her movement career over 20 years ago in her native Boston, Massachusetts, and received a B.A. with honors in Dance from Connecticut College in 2013. In 2014, Candace conducted dance ethnographic research in Nicaragua and presented her own work at the National Theater as a recipient of a Fulbright Grant. Candace has performed in works by Raja Feather Kelly, David Dorfman, Lisa Race, Shani Collins-Achille, Kyle Abraham, William Wigfield, and Tessandra Chavez as well as a host of international choreographers. She has worked as a choreographic associate for works by Shani Collins Achille and with Raja Feather Kelly for **Lempicka** (Williamstown Theatre Festival), **If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must Be a Muhfucka** (Playwrights Horizons), **A Strange Loop** (Playwrights Horizons), **Fairview** (TFANA), and **We're Gonna Die** (Second Stage Theater). In 2020, Candace choreographed the production of **TJ Loves Sally 4 Ever** at JACK (Brooklyn). connectingcreations.com

JACINTH GREYWOODE (*Assistant Music Director, he/him*) is a New York-based composer, arranger, and music director. Recent compositional credits include **Iron John**, (2020 Richard Rodgers Finalist, 2019 O'Neill NMTC Semifinalist, NAMT 31st Festival of New Musicals, 2019 O'Neill Incubator Residency; Co-Book and Lyrics, Rebecca Hart) and **Black Girl In Paris** (Civilians 2020 R&D Group; Book and Lyrics, AriDy Nox). Recent credits as music director/music arranger include **A Soldier's Play** (Tony Award for Best Revival) and **The Rose Tattoo** at American Airlines Theater. Jacinth received a Bachelor of Arts in music with a Certificate in collaborative piano performance from Princeton University, a Master of Arts in composition from Stony Brook University, and a Master of Fine Arts from the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. www.jacinthgreywoode.com

BRYAN CARTER (*Associate Orchestrator, he/him*) is drummer, vocalist, composer, arranger, and orchestrator based in New York City. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Bryan has already performed with legendary jazz artists including McCoy Tyner, Wynton Marsalis, and Kurt Elling. He can also be heard at venues around the world performing with his band, "The Swangers". Bryan served as the house-drummer for NBC'S "Maya & Marty" and is currently performing on the legendary children's program "Sesame Street". Bryan was a founding teaching artist for Jazz at Lincoln Center's "Jazz for Young People" program and conducts clinics and masterclasses at educational institutions around the world. When Bryan is not on-stage or in the studio, he can be found expanding audiences for jazz via written publications, YouTube and as a presenter on television. He is releasing a new album in the fall via La Reserve Records/The Orchard.

COREY UMLAUF (*Associate Scenic Designer, she/her*) New York associate/assistant credits include: Roundabout Theatre Company (American Airlines Theatre), Playwrights Horizons, The New Group, The Public Theater, Second Stage Theater, Signature Theatre Company, The Lincoln Center, Soho Repertory Theater, MCC Theater, Ars Nova, and Primary Stages. Regional Assistant/Associate credits include The National Theatre (London), Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Arena Stage, Baltimore Center Stage, Dallas Theater Center, Williamstown Theatre Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, Shakespeare Theatre Company, and Huntington Theatre Company. She is a graduate of Emerson College. www.coreyumlauf.com

AZALEA FAIRLEY (*Associate Costume Designer, she/they*) is a New Orleans born, New York-based costume designer who has worked in many capacities both on and off Broadway in the costume world, and this is their Woolly Mammoth debut! Their recent NYC design work includes **What Lies Beneath**, **TJ Loves Sally Forever** (NYT Critics Pick), **Hurricane**, and **Under the Overture**. Regional credits include 10x10 Play Festival (Barrington Stage MA), **Schoolgirls** (Theater Squared AR). Broadway assistant credits include **Hamilton**. Off-Broadway Assisting credits include **The Vagrant Trilogy** (Public Theater), **The Road We Came** (On Site Opera). Film design credits include **The Rainbow Experiment**, **Murderer**, and **Paris in Harlem**. They received their BA from DePaul University (degree in African Diaspora Studies and Theater) and later attended the Fashion Institute of Technology in NYC. azalea-fairley.com

AARON TACY (*Associate Lighting Designer, he/him*) is an associate lighting designer based in New York City who works on a wide variety of projects including Broadway, Regional Theatre, Off-Broadway, Live Events, and Broadcasts. Productions with Jen Schriever include **Lackawanna Blues** (Center Theatre Group & Manhattan Theatre Club), **Blue Man Group: National Tour**, **An Officer and a Gentleman**, and **Poster Boy** (Williamstown Theatre Festival). BFA from the University of Michigan and proud member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829, IATSE. aaronatancy.com

CRESENT HAYNES (*Assistant Sound Designer, she/her*) In 2012, Cresent received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theatre Arts Technology, with a focus in Sound Design. In 2014, she received her first theatre review for her work as Sound Designer on the production **Not About Nightingales** directed by Eric Ruffin, describing her sound design as "an omniscient, foreboding force, ambitious in scope..." Since then, her credits include: **Fabulation** (Mosaic Theater Company), **HER-story** (Kennedy Center), **The Laramie Project** (Duke Ellington School of the Arts), **BLKS** (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company), **N** (Keegan Theatre), **Use All Available Doors** (Pinky Swear Productions), **Hope in the Hood** (Amazing Grace Conservatory) and more. Cresent Haynes is also a freelance Live Audio Engineer and Visual Artist. She aspires to one-day design on Broadway and continue touring with various performing artists as their Live Audio Engineer, all while continuing to fill spaces with her original art exhibits and paintings. Training: Howard University. www.linktr.ee/cresentrochelle

JOYA GIAMBRONE (*Associate Hair, Wig and Makeup Designer, she/her*) BROADWAY: **Clyde's** (Associate to Hair Designer Cookie Jordan), **Grand Horizons** (Makeup Designer), **Slave Play** (Associate Hair and Makeup Designer), **The Cher Show** (Associate Makeup Designer). OFF-BROADWAY: **Fefu and Her Friends** (Associate to Hair Designer Cookie Jordan), **Hercules** (Associate Hair and Makeup Designer), **A Strange Loop** (Associate to Hair Designer Cookie Jordan), **Ain't No Mo** (Associate Makeup and Hair Designer) NATIONAL TOURS: **Iphigenia: A New Opera** (Makeup Designer), **Once On This Island** (Associate Hair and Makeup Designer), **Love Never Dies** (Associate Makeup Designer). EDUCATION: BFA, Theater Arts, Nazareth College. Makeup Certification, Makeup Forever Academy NYC. www.joyagiambrone.com

ABOUT PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS

Playwrights Horizons is dedicated to cultivating the most important American playwrights, composers, and lyricists, as well as developing and producing their bold new plays and musicals. Adam Greenfield became Artistic Director in 2020; Leslie Marcus has served as Managing Director since 1993. Following its 50th anniversary season, Playwrights builds upon its diverse and renowned body of work, counting 400 writers among its artistic roster. In addition to its onstage work each season, Playwrights’ singular commitment to nurturing American theater artists guides all of the institution’s multifaceted initiatives: our acclaimed New Works Lab, a robust commissioning program, an innovative curriculum at its Theater School, and more. Robert Moss founded Playwrights in 1971 and cemented the mission that continues to guide the institution today. André Bishop served as Artistic Director from 1981–1992. Don Scardino succeeded him and served until 1996. Tim Sanford, the organization’s longest-serving Artistic Director, held the position from 1996–2020. Over its 50-year history, Playwrights has been recognized with numerous awards and honors, including seven Pulitzer Prizes, 13 Tony Awards, and 47 Obie Awards.

ABOUT PAGE 73 PRODUCTIONS

Since its founding in 1997, Page 73 has unwaveringly focused on nurturing early-career playwrights and expanding the theatrical canon. The organization has consistently sought to open new pathways to recognition for fresh, urgent, and daring voices, in part by mounting works solely by writers who have not yet had a New York City premiere Off-Broadway. In addition to producing playwrights’ NY debut productions, Page 73 offers writers career guidance, financial assistance, and development opportunities. Page 73’s celebrated world and New York premieres include Zora Howard’s STEW (2021 Pulitzer Prize Finalist), Michael R. Jackson’s A Strange Loop co-produced by Playwrights Horizons (2020 Pulitzer Prize), Mia Chung’s Catch as Catch Can, Leah Nanako Winkler’s Kentucky co-produced by EST, Max Posner’s Judy, Clare Barron’s You Got Older (two Obie Awards), George Brant’s Grounded, and Susan Soon He Stanton’s Today Is My Birthday. Diversifying the American theater and making space for voices theater audiences have not yet heard is at the core of Page 73’s ethos. In 2020, the organization was honored with an institutional Obie Award “for providing extraordinary support for early-career playwrights.”

SPECIAL THANKS

Additional Scenic Elements built by Crux Scenica and The McCarter Theatre Center, Lighting and Sound Equipment provided by PRG, Additional Props Provided by Samantha Shoffner, Automation Equipment provided by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland.



Actor’s Equity Association (AEA), founded in 1913, represents more than 45,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote, and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is associated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. For more information, visit www.actorsequity.org.



The musicians for this production are represented by the Metropolitan DC Federation of Musicians, Local 161-710, of the American Federation of Musicians.



The Director of this production is a member of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.



The scenic, lighting, sound, and projection designers for this production are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

A *Strange Loop* is dedicated to Darius Marcel Smith and “all those black gay boys I knew who chose to go on back to the Lord.” - Darius Marcel Smith (September 13, 1982 – February 25, 2019)

THOUGHTS FROM A COLLABORATOR:
MICHAEL R. JACKSON, DARIUS SMITH, AND KENT GASH

My onramp to “the loop” begins at the intersection of the life and work of the late great genius Darius Smith and our collaboration with Michael R. Jackson. Darius Smith and I began what I hoped would be a lifelong collaboration when he did the musical direction and choral arrangement for the Studio Theatre DC production of Tarell Alvin McCraney’s *Choir Boy*. Darius, then a tenured professor at Howard University, created glorious, moving, and deeply sensitive arrangements of Black spiritual and gospel music to be sung by the young Black men of the Drew Prep School. The music in the play is seminal and essential as the ancestral shoulders on which we stand and as a clarion call for our young, gifted, and Black future. The arrangements were all I’d hoped for and so much more. Darius had many gifts, among them being his ability to absorb a collaborator’s ideas and translate them into the newest and most vivid musical statement imaginable — simultaneously paying homage, incorporating the collaborator’s ascending values, and adding that special Darius Smith genius that was as indelible as a Strayhorn chord progression or a Sondheim internal rhyme.

Darius immediately became my “go-to” musical collaborator. While we were in pre-production for the Ford’s Theatre production of *The Wiz*, he asked me to direct a Signature Theatre Lab exploration of his new musical *Ugly*, which was to have a new libretto by... MICHAEL R. JACKSON. Michael and Darius had been classmates in the NYU Tisch Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program (a program I now work with as a Professor and founder of the New Studio on Broadway at NYU) and had graduated before my involvement. *Ugly* was my first time working with Michael R. Jackson. It was a sublime collaboration. I have never been happier working on a new musical. Three Black Gay men creating a loving yet subversive story about a young Black woman. I remember saying to Michael and Darius that I would work on anything, anywhere with them. We had high hopes for evolving *Ugly* and sharing it with audiences. Michael’s libretto, based on Darius’ original work, was full of heart, dizzying innovation, sharp observant humor, alongside truths about family, growing up, and community. Extremely specific and by being so, transcendent, universal, and truthful. These qualities are hallmarks of *A Strange Loop* and all of

THOUGHTS FROM A COLLABORATOR (CONT.)

Michael's work. I marveled at how sharp Michael's wit and observations about human behavior were. His pursuit of truth was unrelenting. I still don't know anyone who is as demanding of themselves as Michael is. His standard of excellence, his rigor, and his intolerance of bullshit are beyond reproach.

Unbeknownst to us, and for sometime, Darius had not been well. When he taught for us at NYU there were a few health issues. I didn't think it was serious. But it was. Far more serious than I knew and perhaps more serious than he knew. In February of 2019, Darius Smith's glorious gift and voice were silenced forever. We are still bereft. We forge on because we must. But he is alive in every note of music and every production we make. He is throughout **A Strange Loop**. Darius and Michael were not only collaborators but they were the best of friends. Darius was the original orchestrator, arranger, and musical director when **A Strange Loop** was scheduled for its Playwrights Horizons World Premiere, but ultimately had to withdraw. But his spirit and genius are in every note and utterance.

Among its many extraordinary achievements, **A Strange Loop** gives full vibrant voice to the life of a God-fearing African American Musical Theatre loving composer, lyricist, and librettist who is Gay.

What are we to do, the **Loop** asks, when the people we love may believe that homosexuality is a sin and AIDS is GOD'S PUNISHMENT for being homosexual? What if we have absorbed this thinking, believing it to be true? How can we ever be happy and fulfilled if we have these beliefs? While this may seem absurd to many, it is a reality of many faith-based communities and families. Can we end this shame and stigma around same-gender loving? The lives lost to depression, despair, and illnesses often related to self loathing and denial, cannot be what God wants for any of us.

Michael R. Jackson's historic, Pulitzer Prize-winning musical achieves many extraordinary things. The centering of a smart, witty, young, Black queer man as hero and our need to reconcile faith, family, being Black, show business, and our sexuality in a healthy loving way, might be **A Strange Loop's** most significant accomplishment of all. Usher, while not modeled on Darius Smith, uniquely aligns with him. Those of us who knew and loved Darius weep openly even as we laugh, thrill, and are uplifted by this glorious new musical, for it is as surprising, moving, and unpredictable as life itself. Because we hear Darius Smith in every deep, truthful, heartfelt outpouring and every blessed note. In **A Strange Loop** many of us see ourselves center stage, for the first time.

PS... For musical theatre history nerds:

- Michael R. Jackson's **A Strange Loop** is the first musical since the creation of the Pulitzer Prize in 1917 to have a book, music, and lyrics by an openly Queer Black writer.
- Michael R. Jackson joins the ranks of Quiara Alegría Hudes, Nilo Cruz, Charles Gordone, Charles Fuller, Suzan Lori-Parks, Lynn Nottage (TWICE!), Katori Hall, Lin Manuel Miranda, and August Wilson (TWICE!) as artists of color.
- **A Strange Loop** is only the tenth musical recipient in the over one hundred year history of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.
- Michael R. Jackson joins the rarefied ranks of single author of Libretto, Music, and Lyrics, of great musicals. Only Frank Loesser (**The Most Happy Fella**), Sandy Wilson (**The Boy Friend**), Meredith Wilson (**The Music Man**), Noël Coward (**Sail Away** and others), Lionel Bart (**Oliver!**), Rupert Holmes (**Drood**), Jonathan Larson (**Rent**), Lin-Manuel Miranda (**Hamilton**), the late Melvin Van Peebles (**Don't Play Us Cheap** and **Ain't Supposed To Die A Natural Death**), Richard O'Brien (**The Rocky Horror Show**) and the late Micki Grant (**Don't Bother Me I Can't Cope**) share this distinction with Mr. Jackson.

And this is only the beginning...

still...

DARIUS SMITH, NEVER FORGET!

KENT GASH is a freelance director of plays and musicals. He is a friend and collaborator of Michael R. Jackson and the late Darius Smith, and is the Founding Director of NYU Tisch School of the Arts, New Studio on Broadway.

Though the title of Jackson's musical **A Strange Loop** refers to Liz Phair's closing song on her album Exile in Guyville, the term comes from Douglas Hofstadter's theory of consciousness.

The term — a strange loop — refers to a system through which one always returns back to the origin point as one moves through it. They include self-reference and paradox, like in the phrase, "This statement is false." The "statement" refers to itself and creates a paradox by declaring itself "false." Hofstadter applied it to cognitive science to argue that consciousness is a narrative fiction which comes from when the brain has taken in enough symbolic data to create stories which refer back to itself. The stories we tell about ourselves become us.

LOBBY EXPERIENCE

A CULTURAL & HISTORICAL LOOP: ‘ROUND D.C.’S BLACK BROADWAY ON U

On its way to Broadway, *A Strange Loop* has arrived at Woolly. Before the Harlem Renaissance, the Black arts and culture movement thrived on D.C.’s U Street’s later known as “Black Broadway.”

This exhibit showcases the Black joy, Black life, Black pride, and Black power found in D.C.’s historic “Black Broadway” along U Street, despite the oppressive laws of the Jim Crow era. From the 1920s-1950s, Black venues including the neighborhood’s unsegregated concert halls, lively nightclubs, and luminary theatres hosted round-the-clock and afterhours performances. Duke Ellington, Pearl Bailey, Billie Holiday, Cab Calloway, Sarah Vaughan, Billy Eckstine, Louis Armstrong, International Sweetheart of Rhythms, and Blanche Calloway were some of the legendary trailblazing entertainers who performed at these venues. Take a “loop” around this storied neighborhood, and bear witness to Black U Street’s community elders and stakeholders.

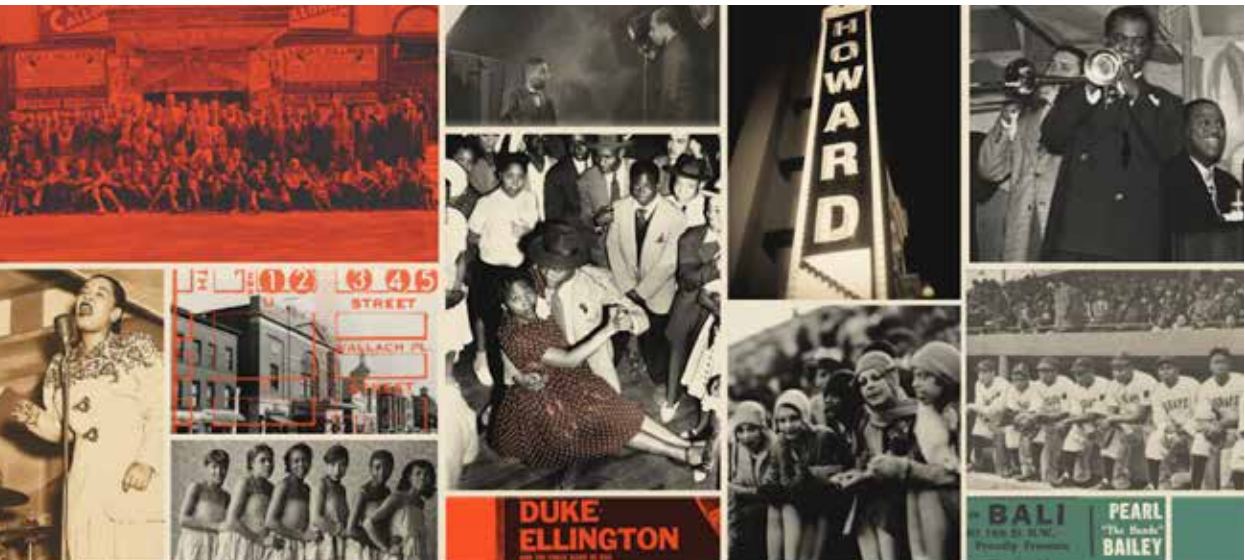


Photo collage by Shellée Haynesworth



About Black Broadway on U Project | www.blackbroadwayonu.com

Launched in February 2014 by award-winning multimedia maker, storyteller, and culture keeper **Shellée M. Haynesworth**, a multigenerational Washingtonian, the Black Broadway on U Project preserves the under-told history of D.C.’s Black U Street corridor when it was known as “Black Broadway” from the 1900s - 1950s. Shellée is very passionate about sharing the story of Black U Street, which was an important cornerstone for her family in the early 20th century. Through the use of digital and social media content, an interactive website, oral histories, pop-up exhibits, virtual mapping and more, the aim of this project is to create a transmedia archive of this historical moment and its transformative impact on the people, community, and culture of Washington, DC as well as the nation as a whole.

About Shellée M. Haynesworth | Creator

Throughout her 20+ year career as an independent producer, writer, and director, Emmy award-winner Shellée M. Haynesworth has told stories that examine the African Diaspora and shed light on the trailblazing contributions of African Americans and Latinos in history, arts, culture, and humanities. Some of her multimedia credits include *Fierceness Served!* The ENIKAlley Coffeehouse, *Latino Voices: Art & Culture* (PBS/ Smithsonian), *Latino Music Greats*, *The HistoryMakers: An Evening with Quincy Jones* (PBS), and *Women’s Land Rights: A Ripple Effect* (USAID/ Gates Foundation), among others. Discover these stories at: www.indigocreativeworks.com. Shellée is an active member of the Producers Guild of America, Women in Film and Video (WIFV), and currently serves on WIFV’s Advisory Board. She is a University of Maryland at College Park alum, where she earned a BS in Broadcast Journalism.



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And, you can come back and see *A Strange Loop* again (and again and again!).

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WOOLLY LEADERSHIP



MARIA MANUELA GOYANES (*she/her*) is the Artistic Director of Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. Prior to joining Woolly, she served as the Director of Producing and Artistic Planning at The Public Theater, where she oversaw the day-to-day execution of a full slate of plays and musicals at the Public’s five-theater venue at Astor Place and the Delacorte Theater for Shakespeare in the Park. Earlier in her career at The Public, she managed some of the theater’s most celebrated productions, including *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Josephine & I* by Cush Jumbo, *Straight White Men* by Young Jean Lee, *Barbecue* by Robert O’Hara, and *Here Lies Love* by David Byrne and Fatboy Slim. While at The Public, Maria also held a position on the adjunct faculty of Juilliard and curated the junior year curriculum of the Playwrights Horizons Theater School at NYU. She has guest lectured at Bard College, Barnard College, Brown University, Columbia University, Juilliard, the National Theater Institute at The Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, UCSD, the University of Texas-Austin, and Yale University, among others. Since 2015, Maria has also served as a member of the board of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre. From 2006 to 2008, she co-chaired the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab with Jason Grote, and from 2004 to 2012, Maria was the Executive Producer of 13P, one of her proudest achievements. Maria is a first-generation Latin-American, born to parents who emigrated from the Dominican Republic and Spain. She was raised in Jamaica, Queens, and has a collection of hoop earrings to prove it. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in 2001 from Brown University.



EMIKA ABE (*she/her*) is the Managing Director of Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. She started at Woolly in 2019 after three years as the Associate Managing Director of the Alliance Theatre (Atlanta, GA), the largest regional theatre in the Southeast. At the Alliance, Emika led a portfolio of projects that guided the theatre’s organizational strategy, culture, and general management. These included stewarding the 70-person Advisory Board, co-chairing the Alliance’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, and defining the theatre’s mission, vision, and values. Emika was on the Advisory Board of Found Stages, she served as Mentorship Co-Chair of The League of Resident Theatre’s EDI Initiative, and she is an alum of Leadership Greater Washington, LEAD Atlanta, Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta, and Theatre Communications Group’s Young Leaders of Color. Emika holds an MFA in Theater Management from Yale School of Drama, an MBA from Yale School of Management, and a BA in Theater from UCLA. At Yale, she was the recipient of the Morris J. Kaplan Award for Theater Management and Co-Chair of the Internship Fund. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Emika has previously held positions at Yale Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and the Palo Alto Children’s Theatre, as well as fellowships at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Center Theatre Group, and Artists Repertory Theatre. Emika is passionate about the intersection of art and business, and the essential role that theatre can play in activating individuals and strengthening communities.

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Unlike the Woolly Mammoth, which went extinct more than 10,000 years ago, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company isn't going anywhere anytime soon. The reason? People like you! Over our 40+ year history, contributions from patrons continue to provide the bedrock of support that makes everything we do possible.

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- Produce innovative theatrical productions you cannot see anywhere else.
- Offer ticket accessibility programs such as Pay-What-You-Will, ensuring our work remains accessible to all.
- Pilot radical care programs like our Company Pool Fund, which offers grants to our Company members to invest in their personal and professional growth.
- Provide transformational career development opportunities through the Miranda Family Fellowship program to train and compensate the next generation of theatre makers.
- Establish innovative collaborative partnerships with local organizations like SPIT DAT, DC's longest running open mic, THEARC Theater, and Howard University.
- And so, so much more!

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The Ambassadors are a network of DC community leaders with connections to other arts and culture organizations, frontline service nonprofits, academic institutions, and policy think tanks who care deeply about Woolly, and work closely with the Connectivity Department to mobilize their constituencies.

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ARTIST INTERVIEW

Excerpt from an Interview between Tim Sanford and Michael R. Jackson conducted and originally printed for the 2019 premiere of **A Strange Loop** at Playwrights Horizons, in association with Page 73.

WHO WERE YOUR HEROES, ARTISTICALLY OR SOCIOLOGICALLY, GROWING UP?

I was a big fan of Alice Walker. I loved Neil Gaiman’s Sandman comics. Those are, to this day, a big inspiration for me. I love **The Catcher in the Rye**. There’s this collection of poetry called **In Search of Color Everywhere**, which is a collection of black poets all the way from Phillis Wheatley to ... the mid-nineties, I loved Stephen King. I loved Jackie Collins. Which may sound weird to mix those in there, but they’re both great storytellers. I was a big reader then.

WERE THE MUSICALS THAT YOU WERE EXPOSED TO AND KNEW ABOUT BROADWAY STANDARDS?

No. So something that I feel very fortunate about is that almost all of the musicals that I had encountered as a kid were musicals that were pushing the boundaries of form and/or content in some way. For example, my mom took me to Toronto to see **Show Boat**, the Hal Prince revival, when I was 12...**Show Boat** knocked me out in the way that it chronicled time and in the way it dealt with racial injustice with the character of Julie. I was so moved that that could be in a musical and I made my mom buy me the cast album. I wore it out... And then shortly after that we went to go see **Raisin**, the musical adaptation of **A Raisin in the Sun**, which a lot of people don’t know about, even though it won a Tony in 1974 for Best Musical. It has some of the best songwriting you will ever hear in any musical anywhere. And then shortly after that, a friend of our family shared the movie **West Side Story** with me...and I watched it and I lost my mind. I thought it was like the best thing ever. Then going to college and getting exposed to Bill Finn’s work and then being exposed to **A Chorus Line**...

HOW WERE YOU BEING EXPOSED TO THEM?

A friend of mine in college shared **In Trousers** with me, ...it’s a weird piece. A lot of things about it are not fully expressed, but the raw artistic and aesthetic ambitions of it are really exciting... It didn’t sound like cookie-cutter anything. It was like, “Oh, you can do anything in a musical. It doesn’t have to be paint by numbers.”

THAT’S QUITE A HETEROGENEOUS MIX OF WRITERS.

And then there’s the one that I haven’t mentioned that’s the biggest influence of all of them, which is Tori Amos.

IN THE CONTEXT OF MUSICAL THEATRE WRITING?

I would say so because if you’re talking about personal writing, she’s the real reason that I was writing personally because I encountered her music right at the point when I was starting to come out. And her music is so about tearing open the soul and talking about religion and sexuality and asking deep personal questions. And so, when I was first starting to try to write songs in high school but didn’t know how to write lyrics, I was imitating her pretty solely. And that period of imitation was the beginning of my understanding how to write. So, I carry her as a musical and lyrical influence, along with people like Joni Mitchell and then Liz Phair who I encountered when I was in college. All three of those were the big influences on how I was writing songs that then would end up in **A Strange Loop**.

TALK ABOUT HOW IT BECAME A SHOW. WHAT WERE THE FIRST STEPS?

So, after the lost years at NYU Undergrad, I did not know what I was going to do with my life. I started writing this thinly veiled monologue called “Why I Can’t Get Work.” It was all about this young black gay man walking around New York City, unsure of where he fit, thinking about his sexuality, troubles with his parents, his place in the world politically. And it ended up being performed at this youth arts festival called Rebel Verses which is now done at the Vineyard every year. And during that same period, I started going to NYU Grad and started writing music. And Maria Goyanes who was then an artistic associate at The Public, directed a short play at that same festival the next year...from there I got this opportunity to perform at Ars Nova and so I did the one-man show version of it... Probably 20 people came and after that was over, I decided I did not want this show to be a one-man show. I wanted it to be a proper, if unconventional, musical.

TALK ABOUT THE INNER WHITE GIRL. THAT’S A MOTIF THAT YOU’VE WORKED ON SIGNIFICANTLY TO CLARIFY WHAT YOU’RE AFTER.

Yeah. As a black person, as a black creative, and a black queer person, there are so many stereotypes about what we can do and be and so many limitations to what we do and can be. And if you challenge any of those limitations, you often are called an Uncle Tom or white-

acting or whatever, when in fact all that I have wanted, or what Usher has wanted, is to just be able to fully express ourselves in whatever complex ways we choose. And so the inner white girl is just this thing that has lived inside of me and Usher where there are these white rocker women who are really just about being themselves. And they're not necessarily facing consequences for that. I'm very much about creating as much expansiveness for black identity as possible while at the same time respecting it.

ONE RECURRING THEME OF SELF-POLICING PERTAINS TO THE “N-WORD.”

This argument has been going on since the word was created by white people. Whether you can say it or can't say it or who should say it or why I should say. And my thing about it is that I respect people who say, I won't say it, or I don't like it, but I won't be policed by them because to me, I feel like I will say it until there's no need to say it. It's a very powerful word and it's a word that draws a line in the sand.

THERE'S A WRINKLE WHEN YOU'RE TALKING MUSICALS. THE THING THAT INEVITABLY HAPPENS WITH MUSICALS IS THE SONGS GET INSIDE YOU AND THEN YOU START BURSTING INTO SONG WALKING DOWN THE HALL. INCLUDING THE SONGS WITH TABOO LYRICS. BUT ISN'T THE THING ABOUT OUR FAVORITE MUSICALS THAT WE ALWAYS MEMORIZE THE WHOLE SCORE AND SING ALONG WITH IT?

...I think art is about making the intangible tangible and about creating a common language between disparate experiences. It is none of my business what lyrics people sing along with at home. I believe strongly that everyone has to take responsibility for their own choices including whether to clap along to "AIDS is God's Punishment" or not. That song was written specifically because I had gone to see the 2013 Tyler Perry film *Temptation: Confessions of a Marriage Counselor*. In the film two black women are essentially "cursed" with AIDS for exercising free sexuality. In the movie theater, there were audience members who nodded along and said, "Yup, that's what she gets." I was struck by the dissonance of that and how that kind of thinking was completely consonant with the homophobia I had been raised with/under. I wanted to create an infectious song moment that gave listeners a punishment and a reward (not necessarily in that order). I think our favorite musicals give us a framework for thinking about real life, which is why I love the form so much.

VACCINATION / NEGATIVE COVID-19 TEST REQUIREMENT

Entrance to any performance at Woolly Mammoth requires proof of full vaccination, or, for those who are not vaccinated, proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 72 hours of the event start time.

Woolly Mammoth will accept ANY ONE of the following methods for proving vaccination:

- Physical vaccination card/print out of COVID-19 PCR test
- Photo of vaccination card/screenshot of negative COVID-19 PCR test results on a mobile device

Along with proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 PCR test, audiences must provide a form of identification with a matching name.

Woolly Mammoth will accept ANY ONE of the following forms of identification:

- Government-issued driver's license or ID card
- Student ID
- Credit card
- Library card

Woolly Mammoth is currently NOT accepting proof of vaccination through mobile or third party apps.

MASK REQUIREMENTS

All audience and staff members are required to wear a face mask that fully covers your nose and mouth while inside the building. Additionally, all are encouraged to practice social distancing while in the lobby.

ABOUT WOOLLY MAMMOTH

Woolly Mammoth creates badass theatre that highlights the stunning, challenging, and tremendous complexity of our world. Woolly is proud to be considered “a national champion of the new—and frequently provocative—American play” (*Washington Post*).

For over 40 years, Woolly has maintained a high standard of artistic rigor while simultaneously daring to take risks, innovate, and push beyond perceived boundaries. Woolly Mammoth was co-founded in 1980 by Roger M. Brady, Linda Reinisch, and Howard Shalwitz and is now co-led by Artistic Director Maria Manuela Goyanes and Managing Director Emika Abe. Located in Washington, DC, equidistant from the Capitol Building and the White House, this unique location influences Woolly’s investment in actively working our mission: To produce courageous and invigorating new work to radically redefine theatre as a catalyst for an equitable, creative, and engaged society.

One of the few remaining theatres in the country to maintain a company of artists, Woolly serves as an essential research and development role within the American theatre.

Plays premiered here have gone on to productions at hundreds of theatres all over the world and have had lasting impacts on the field.

These include the world premiere productions of Danai Gurira’s *Eclipsed* in 2009 that later went on to be the first Broadway play with a cast & creative team of all Black women; Bruce Norris’ Pulitzer Prize-winner *Clybourne Park* in 2010; and Anne Washburn’s *Mr. Burns: a post-electric play* in 2012. Woolly produces theatre beyond our building by sending productions like Aaron Posner’s *Stupid F*cking Bird* across the nation, bringing Aleshea Harris’s *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* to neighborhoods throughout DC, and launching a national tour of Madeline’s Sayet’s *Where We Belong*.

Woolly has built a reputation for innovation off the stage as well. Woolly values building relationships with its local community and resident artists in the DMV area. Our nationally-acclaimed Connectivity Department is one of the ways we accomplish this by linking Woolly to like-minded community organizations in order to generate mutually beneficial, impact and power-aware partnerships.

We’ve earned our reputation by holding fast to our core values.

We are an anti-racist and radically inclusive community—across race, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical ability, socioeconomic background, and political viewpoint—in which all are encouraged to exchange ideas freely and reach for new understanding. We are a supportive home for creative risk-taking by our company and guest artists, staff, board, volunteers, audiences, donors, and colleagues. Through relentless inquiry and experimentation, we strive for world-class excellence and innovation in every aspect of our work.

Our audience completes our mission.

Woolly attracts one of the youngest and most diverse theatre audiences in DC, and we’re committed to making our work widely accessible. Woolly was the first to pioneer Pay-What-You-Will tickets in the DMV, which are now available at every single performance. We also offer \$20 day-of-show Stampede Seats, \$20 tickets for all patrons 30 and Under, and a variety of discounts for educators, members of the military, and artists.

Thank you to all of our donors, subscribers, and audience members. With your support, we will continue to find and produce the most innovative new plays in America.



Nikki Crawford, Samuel Ray Gates, Woolly company member Shannon Dorsey, and Chinna Palmer in Woolly’s production of Jackie Sibbles Drury’s *Fairview*. Photo by Teresa Castracane.

NEXT UP AT WOOLLY

THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE PRODUCTION

seven methods of killing kylie jenner

BY JASMINE LEE-JONES
DIRECTED BY MILLI BHATIA

FEBRUARY 14, 2022 - MARCH 6, 2022

When *Forbes Magazine* declares Kylie Jenner a “self-made” billionaire, Cleo takes to Twitter to call out white women who co-opt and profit from Black culture. Not long after Cleo’s tweets go viral with supposed support, the internet mob turns on her. Soon online discourse spills into reality, blurring the tenuous lines between internet personas and authentic relationships. Through a digital world of GIFs, memes, and #cancelculture, *seven methods...* offers a Gen Z analysis of Black womanhood, colorism, and the politics of social media activism.