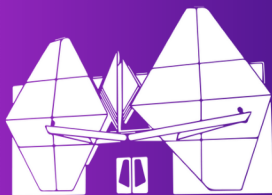


SELMA ARTS
CENTER



SCHOOL GIRLS;

OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY

A PLAY BY JOCELYN BIOH

DIRECTED BY NWACHUKWU OPUTA

FEBRUARY 23RD - MARCH 2ND



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WELCOME

Our Mission

Selma Arts Center strives to enrich the lives of all people who pass through our doors by leading a culturally diverse collection of local artists who provide quality theatre and artistic experiences for the community at large. Home to dramatic, visual, literary, and musical arts, the Selma Arts Center works to create experiences that are inspirational, educational, and of the highest caliber. We are proud to provide a variety of programs that reflect the diverse interests of the communities we serve.

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Nicolette C. Andersen

Community Services Director
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Selma Arts Council

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Ask how you can become a sponsor today!

Demonstrate your community support by becoming a corporate sponsor of the Selma Arts Center, an easy and effective way to market your business with your ad in front of thousands of potential customers.

Why Sponsor?

By sponsoring the Selma Arts Center with donations, you enable us to continue to provide quality entertainment, and community programs that support our mission. In return, depending on the size and type of partnership you may be promoted on posters, in our programs, on social media and other forms of collateral throughout our season.

How to Sponsor

- Provide a cash donation to underwrite the expenses of our shows and event
- Provide in-kind product, such as food, supplies, sound equipment, or media time

Where Do Your Dollars Go?

Percentage breakdown of \$100k budget:



Designers, Staff.....	35%
Utilities.....	25%
Royalties.....	15%
Marketing.....	10%
Sets.....	5%
Costumes.....	4%
System Upkeep.....	3%
Digital Effects.....	2%
Props.....	1%

For full sponsorship package details, please email
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Selma Arts Center
presents

SCHOOL GIRLS;

OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY

A Play by Jocelyn Bioh

Directed by **Nwachukwu Oputa**

Produced by **Camille Gaston**

Stage Managed by **Sofia Arie James**

Asst. Stage Managed by **Myah Galvan**

Costumes by **Tamrah Sales**

Hair and Makeup by **Nwachukwu Oputa**

Lighting Design by **Glenda Stewart**

Scenic Design by **Tamrah Sales**

Sound Design by **Kimmy Kaur**

Property Master **Jamiela Williams**

Feb. 23rd - March 2nd, 2024

Selma Arts Center
Rated PG-13

SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection. (www.dramatists.com)

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NOTE TO AUDIENCE: The videotaping or audio and/or visual recording of this production is a violation of United States Copyright Law and an actionable federal offense.

EVENT

The Company

Paulina Sarpong..... Zera Leigh

Ericka Boafo..... Deyzha Gonzales

Ama..... Ananda Shaffer

Nana..... Zen'ayah Finley

Mercy..... Ayriése Smith

Gift..... Glenda Stewart

Headmistress Francis..... Kayliah Clayton

Eloise Amponsah..... Ke'lea Flowers

Ensemble, Ama/Headmistress U/S... Arielle K. Jones

Ensemble..... Arium Andrews

EVENT

Please, no food or drink in the theater at any time.

Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices that make noise prior to the performance.

For the safety of the cast, and due to copyright, photography or video recording of any kind is strictly prohibited.

Thank you!

Scenes

Part One
Part Two
Part Three
Epilogue

Setting and Time

Aburi (EHH-bree) Girls' boarding school—
located in the Aburi mountains in central
Ghana. The year is 1986.

There will be **NO INTERMISSION** during this
performance.

Running Time **90 min**

*Please note, there will be **NO INTERMISSION** during
the run of this production. Please refrain from leaving
during the performance as it may distract your fellow
audience members.*

*Your cooperation is **greatly appreciated!***

**WE PROUDLY SUPPORT THE SELMA ARTS CENTER
AND THE DIASPORA DREAMS SERIES**



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The Company



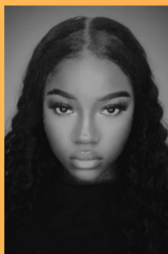
Zera Leigh



Deyzha Gonzales



Ananda Shaffer



Zen'ayah Finley



Arielle K. Jones



Ayriése Smith



Glenda Stewart



Kayliah Clayton



Ke'Lea Flowers



Arium Andrews

CAST & CREATIVE

About the series... DIASPORA DREAMS

Diaspora Dreams - Celebrating Black & African Stories is a first-of-its-kind series for the Selma Arts Center. Together, the two plays in the series (School Girls; or, the African Mean Girls Play and The Brothers Size) explore varied intersections of the Black diasporic experience. When Nwachukwu pitched School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play to the Selma Arts Center they said they wanted to allow "Black actors to come together in a space reserved for just them and create an experience." When Joshua pitched The Brothers Size, he wanted to bring "Black talent together to be apart of a show that's going to be special and inspire other Black talent." It's been delightful and gratifying to be able to watch those dreams come to fruition in and out of our rehearsal rooms. We get to not only create, but build community in a space that is safe and supportive. It's a space where we can feel comfortable to be fully ourselves without explanation.

Ananda Shaffer She/They (Ama) is currently a Theatre Arts Major! Credits include AMERICAN SON (Kendra Ellis-Connor, Fresno State), ON GOLDEN POND (Chelsea, GCP), THE WRITER (Director, FCC), A DARK DISCOVERY (Writer, FCC)

Arielle Jones She/They (Ensemble, Ama/Headmistress Francis U.S.) SCHOOL GIRLS; OR THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY is her first stage performance. She is a writer and college educator in Fresno. They are also proud of their sibling (Vernon Jones III, Legba) in THE BROTHER SIZE.

Arium Andrews She/Her (Ensemble) was born in Fresno, California and attended Fresno High School where she discovered her passion for Theatre Arts. Her acting credits includes A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, HANDS UP: 7 PLAYWRIGHTS 7 TESTIMONIES, GREAT GOD PAN, Fresno Soap Company US & THEM, NATIVE SON, DEN OF THIEVES, THE LAST DAYS OF JUDA ISCAIRIOT, JUST LIKE US, BOOK OF DAYS, FAT PIG, stage reading for THE CAKE, and INT HE NEXT ROOM or VIBRATOR'S PLAY. In 2020, Arium won the Alternate winner for the American College Theatre Festival and the National Best Scene Partner Award in the KCACTF Irene Ryan Acting Competition while she attended Fresno State.

Ayriëse Smith They/She (Mercy) is a 25 year old Fresno State Graduate. Currently they are a recreational therapist and have gotten back into theater just recently. Black History is a critical piece of their person and they're honored to be part of this first time showing for Black History Month.

Deyzha Gonzales She/Her (Erica Bofo) is a Visalia native and proud alumna of Howard University, belonging to the inaugural class of The Chadwick A. Boseman College of Fine Arts where she earned a Bachelor of Music in Performance. Upon her return to California she has become an elementary music teacher, while still pouring into her passion of performing. She has been a performer in musicals and singing since the age of 5, starting off at TCOE Theater Company, and continuing throughout all levels of education! She has had the privilege of performing roles such as the Narrator in JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT with TCOE Theater Company, Sister in DAMN YANKEES with Redwood High School, Susanna in scenes from Mozart's opera LE NOZZE DI FIGARO with Howard University's Classical Voice Department, and Sister Chantelle- as well as vocal directing in BARE with Visalia Players. She is extremely excited to be apart of this amazing, first of its kind experience with Selma Arts Center after being an awed audience member many times and hopes to continue to grow as a performer and experience wonderful theater in the thriving community theater the Central Valley has to offer!

Glenda Stewart She/Her (Gift) is so ecstatic to be a part of something so special here at SAC. This is her first time being in a full length play and it's been nothing short of incredible. She'd like to thank Nwachuckwu for trusting her with this role. You may have seen her in other SAC productions, like PIPPIN and R&H's CINDERELLA. She is so lucky to be back on stage!

Kaliyah Clayton She/Her (Headmistress Francis) is an advocate with a B.A. in Psychology and Africana studies with a certificate in racial understandings. She graduated in 2023 as the student of the year under the Africana studies program. She was also awarded by both the NAACP and the Africana studies program for academic excellence and community engagement. She is a content creator that shares significant stories about people within the Black community while speaking up against oppression. She has been working extensively in the educational field in order to help reduce the disparities in education that deeply affect minority communities.

Ke'Lea Flowers She/Her (Eloise Amponsah) also known as Kay, is a local creative here in the valley. Ke'Lea most recently vocal directed SAC's production of RIDE THE CYCLONE. You may also recognize her talent from DYSFUNCTION: A SONG CYCLE, her original musical which debuted this summer at the Selma Originals. Past credits include BRING IT ON: THE MUSICAL (Danielle, SAC) or Good Company Players production(s) of MAMMA MIA! (Rosie). She is beyond excited to be back playing, pretend with friends and community members. Ke'Lea is currently a student at Fresno city college majoring in music composition for transfer. She is a mother to two beautiful boys and would like to send love to her husband , Darian, and her family for all of their love and support.

Zen'ayah Finley She/They (Nana) is a remarkable 17-year-old Fresno native who graduated at just 16. Zen'ayah was nurtured in a family of performing artists, where she discovered her love for theatre at age seven. She has appeared in a variety of productions including plays, musicals, and children's theatre. Passionate about using arts as a catalyst for healing, Zen'ayah is not just an actress; she's also a poet, artist, published writer, or community advocate, collaborating on numerous youth platforms for self-expression and healing. Zen'ayah is thrilled to join the cast of SCHOOL GIRLS; OR THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY. She sees this play as timeless, resonating with the struggles of Black grrls and womxn worldwide.

Zera Leigh She/Her (Paulina Sarpong) feels that being apart of Selma Art's first ever production of 'Diaspora Dreams' is one of her wildest dreams come true. SCHOOL GIRLS; OR THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY is her second production in several years, and her first ever lead role, as Paulina Sarpong. She is in her third semester at Fresno City College, majoring in Theater Arts and plans to transfer to an HBCU, double majoring in Screenwriting and Education. Although she loves being on stage, crafting the story is what she loves the most. She would like to thank her sisters Zariah and Znai, and the 2023 Fresno City HOOKMAN cast and director Summer Session, for helping her believe in herself as an artist and a person. She hopes you enjoy the show!

Myah Galvan She/Her (Assistant Stage Manager) is no stranger to the Selma Arts Center. She has been volunteering here since she was 14 years old and just recently started stage managing last year. Her first SM job being SAC's production of *ON YOUR FEET!*, and later doing SACTeens *MEAN GIRLS: HIGH SCHOOL EDITION*. Myah is excited to be a part of a production that is so inclusive and can't wait to help share this story with the community.

Tamrah Sales She/Her (Costume & Set Designer) is an undergrad costume and set designer. Previous credits include *THE BROTHERS SIZE* (Set Designer, Selma Arts Center), *EXTRAPOLATIONS 2024* (Costume designer, Fresno State CDE) *WILD SWIMMING* (Set Designer, Fresno State ETC), *ANNA IN THE TROPICS* (Costume designer, Madera Theatre Project), *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS* (Cutter/drafter, Fresno State), and *RENT* (Costume Designer, Fresno State).

Kimmy Kaur She/Her/They/Them (Sound Designer) is a graduate from Fresno State. This is her third show with the Selma Arts Center. Her previous sound design credits include *THE BROTHERS SIZE* (Selma Arts Center), *SUNDAY ON THE ROCKS* (Experimental Theatre Company), *AND THEN THERE WERE NONE* (Experimental Theatre Company), *EMMA* (Fresno Pacific University), *THE WOLVES* (Fresno State University Theatre), *DETROIT '67* (Fresno State University Theatre), *OEDIPUS EL REY* (Selma Arts Center), *ANNA IN THE TROPICS* (Madera Theatre Project).

Jamiela Williams She/Her (Props Master) has worked on a number of shows from community to professional theatre. She is a recent graduate from CSU Fullerton with a BA in Theatre Arts (emphasis in Stage Management) and a minor in African American Studies. She is very excited to join the team.

Sofia Arie James She/Her (Stage Manager) is thrilled to make her design debut with Selma Arts Center, as well as incredibly grateful to have done it with the Diaspora Dreams team. Her previous credits include *IN THE HEIGHTS* (Asst. Costume Designer, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival), and *MEN ON BOATS* (Production Stage Manager, CSU Fresno). Sofia is also a senior at Fresno State where she is the student board chair of the Experimental Theatre Company and a recipient of the Raymond Burr Theatre Arts Award Scholarship. She would like to thank her friends, family, and all those supporting this extraordinary play series!

Audia Yvonne Dixon She/Her (Illustrator) born and raised in Fresno, Ca, is a painter and printmaker that comes from a family of artists and matriarchs who continue to influence her work. Dixon holds a BA in Art from CSU-Fresno (2016) and an MA in Studio Art (2021), also at CSU-Fresno (2021) where she was a recipient for both the Graduate Deans and President's Dean's Medal in 2022 for her academic and community contributions in art. She has participated in numerous exhibitions, public art projects, was a guest lecturer at various college institutions. Apart from her art making, she is an art instructor at Clovis Community College.

Joy Slack (Vocal Director) is a musician, singer, songwriter and a graduate of CSU Northridge, majoring in Theatre Arts. Her previous music credits include providing the score for *POM Drama Department of THE KING and THE PRODIGAL*. Her acting and singing credits include *Everybody* (Everybody, CSUN Little Theatre) and *COCKTAIL* (Ensemble, CSUN Experimental Theatre), *IN COLOR* (Elsa), *JEKYLL & HYDE* (Nelly, COS Theatre).

Camille Gaston She/Her (Producer) is honored to be a part of the Diaspora Dreams Team as producer. She co-produced SAC's *SPONGEBOB THE MUSICAL* in 2022, which was a challenging, yet wonderful experience with such a diverse cast. In 2021, she founded the Central Valley Theatre Race Equity Summit, in collaboration with The Fools Collaborative, in hopes of cultivating more diversity with the local theatre community. This project is, by far, a dream come true.

Glenda Stewart She/Her (Lighting Designer) is so excited to be so excited to be lighting her second full length MainStage shows at SAC. She is very lucky to be trusted with lighting, both shows for Diaspora Dreams. She'd like to thank Joshua and Nwachukwu for giving her this opportunity! She also like to thank Niccolette Anderson as well as Christina McCollum for mentoring her and helping her through any struggles she had in this process.

Nwachukwu Oputa They/She (Director, Series Director - Diaspora Dreams) is a Nigerian-American, multidisciplinary performer, creator, educator, and community builder based in Fresno, CA. They are a graduate from Fresno State with a BA in Theatre Arts - Acting. She has been on the Selma Arts Center Stage in *PUFFS*, *HEAD OVER HEELS*, *SHE KILLS MONSTERS*, *NEXT TO NORMAL*, and *THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHTTIME*. She has performed in Fresno State's productions of *HANDS UP: 7 PLAYWRIGHTS*, *7 TESTAMENTS*, *THE WOLVES*, *DOG SEES GOD*, *DETROIT '67*, and *RENT*. They have also been in The Fool's Collaborative's production of *S'Will 3* and UR Here's production of *DANCE NATION*. She is a Life Member of Tau Beta Sigma, Honorary Band Sorority. They are excited to make their full-length directing debut at the Selma Arts Center which they are glad to call their Central Valley theatre home.



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BOLD,
INCLUSIVE,
&
ARTISTIC**
CONTRIBUTIONS TO
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SELMA, CALIFORNIA

ROALD DAHL'S **MATILDA**

BOOK BY 
DENNIS KELLY

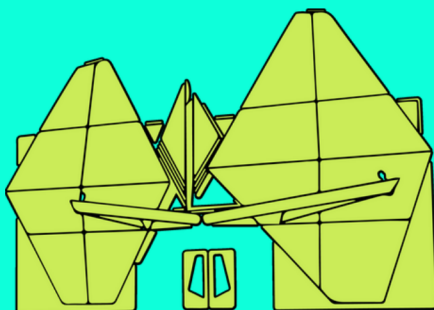
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
TIM MINCHIN

**APRIL
12TH
THROUGH
MAY
4TH**

BASED ON
THE BOOK



**"MATILDA"
BY ROALD
DAHL**





Production

Creative Staff

Director
Nwachukwu Oputa

Producer
Camille Gaston

Series Director
Nwachukwu Oputa

Stage Manager
Sofia Arie James

Asst. Stage Manager
Myah Galvan

Costumes
Tamrah Sales

Hair & Makeup
Nwachukwu Oputa

Scenic Design
Tamrah Sales

Sound Designer
Kimmy Kaur

Lighting Designer
Glenda Stewart

Vocal Coach
Joy Slack

Property Master
Jamiela Williams

Dialect Instructor
Nwachukwu Oputa

Lightboard Operator
Lainey Davis

Soundboard Operator
Vanessa Garges

Spotlight Operator
Vanessa Garges

Scenic Construction
Jacob Franks

Featured Artist
Audia Dixon

Marketing & Graphic Design
Chris Ortiz Belcher

Arts Center Supervisor
Nicolette C. Andersen

Arts & Recreation Assistant
Sami Moree Valles



Directors' Note

The first time I read *School Girls*; or *The African Mean Girls Play* I was hooked. I knew I needed to be a part of a production of this show in some way. It's rare these days that I see a Black production that doesn't feel heavily weighed down with the pain of Black trauma. This show allows the audience to see Black joy, love, and friendship, while not straying from the realities of what it means to walk through the world as a Black woman.

During callbacks, I asked folks to tell me what "girlhood" means to them and throughout this process we have had countless moments that have defined and redefined the word. A common thread between girlhood and Blackness is that with both there is an unspoken understanding. Complete strangers are instantly connected through the invisible, yet almost tangible thread of our shared experiences, both joyful and challenging. There is so much we don't have to explain, we just know and we see another Black woman and we know that they know.

Jocelyn Bioh has so beautifully written three-dimensional characters who depict the reality of what it's like to be a girl. It's what we're like when there's no boys around, whether we're 16 or 40 or 72. *School Girls* allows a glimpse into Black women having fun, spilling tea, calling each other out, loving each other, and everything in-between.

I know these girls. They are my friends, my classmates, my cousins, aunts, frenemies, neighbors, you name it. I'm so ready for you all to get to know them too.



— Nwachukwu Oputa

Special Thank You!

Thank you to Joshua Slack for walking the road to *Diaspora Dreams* with me. I'm so proud of us. Thank you to Camille Gaston, I Adeficha, Arium Andrews, Summer Session, Chris Ortiz-Belcher, Claudio Lasso, and Rodolfo Robles Cruz for your advice, guidance, and support during this process. Thank you to my cast and team of *School Girls*. Consistently being in a space with just Black and brown women has been so rejuvenating in a way that words can't describe. Thank you for being a safe space for me to laugh, cry, vent, and never have to mask who I am or how I am doing. Y'all have my heart forever. Thank you to the cast of *The Brothers Size* for being our brothers in this series. I will forever cherish our weekly joint check-ins and the community we have built. Thank you to Frank Assiamah for your help with cleaning the dialect. Thank you to the Selma Arts Center community for being my Central Valley Theatre home. To the Selma Pioneer Village, Selma City Hall, Fresno Music Academy Vista and Fresno State Lab School, and Labyrinth Art Collective for allowing us to use your spaces to rehearse. Thank you to Papa, Dano, and Deni for supporting me and loving me unconditionally. Thank you to my mother, the late Dr. Francine L. Broadous Oputa for showing me what it's like to be a Black woman who is fully and unabashedly herself no matter what room she walks in.

WE LOVE THE **SELMA ARTS CENTER!**



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