

DRAMATURGY NOTE

A Ball is one night of dazzling energy, excitement, and elegance. It is a place where the mysteries of identity are examined under the bright lights, deconstructed and then put back together. For some, it is a true testament and homage to their identities. For others, it is a test of them and their supposed Realness, whether they could pass for their competitive category in the world. For all, it is a statement of artistry.

But the Ball community is not solely built on one night. It is a life and a world around us that remains unseen. Houses, while involved in a competitive landscape, are built upon the foundation of family. Family is messy and complicated, yet we all crave the sense of belonging that comes with it.

A family is supposed to be the people who love us unconditionally for who we are. For the characters in *Wig Out!*, as well as many others, when this love does not come from their biological family, they must look elsewhere to find true acceptance.

The Ball community was formed in response to this. Around 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBT. Queer young adults are expressing their identities and being shut out from their own families. A House often becomes the home that people are lacking, a place to learn, explore, and express your identity.

During a ball, you have the freedom to become anyone that you want to be, whether that is a rapper, a business executive, or a queen. But a home needs to have that freedom all the time. Because at the end of the night when the performance is over, it is your true self that remains. And a House is there to celebrate who each person is.

~ Trisha Mahoney, BFA3, Dramaturgy/Criticism

BIOGRAPHIES

Vincent Banks (*Venus*) BFA3/Acting. His preferred gender pronoun ain't it/that, it's he/him - they/them if you're nasty. He has been flirting with drag performance off and on for three years, under the name Enamour Venée. Vincent credits the Center on Halsted for helping him to navigate his pansexuality and grow confident and comfortable in his androgynous aesthetic.

Michael Cohen (*Lucian*) BFA4/Acting. Michael was born in Bangkok, Thailand. After living in South Korea during early childhood he was raised in Kansas City, Missouri. Past productions at The Theatre School include *Esperanza Rising*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Women Eat Chocolate*, *The Kid Who Ran for President*, and *Hedda Gabler*. Last summer he made his Equity Membership Candidate

debut in the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival's productions of *Pericles* and *The Tempest*.

Matthew Elam (*Wilson/Nina*) BFA3/Acting. Matthew hails from Los Angeles, California, in the inner city neighborhood of Leimert Park. He started and finished his study of acting, singing, and dance at the Amazing Grace Conservatory in South Central, Los Angeles.

Kayla Forde (*Faith*) BFA3/Acting. Kayla hails from Washington D.C. Her previous Theatre School credits include *Lungs* (W), *Molara* (Elektra), *An Experiment with an Air Pump* (Ellen), *Romeo and Juliet* (Juliet), and Ike Holter's world premiere play *Night Runner* (Cora).

BIOGRAPHIES [cont.]

Keith Illidge (*Deity*) MFA2/Acting. Theatre credits include Orpheus in *Eurydice*, and Actor #4 in *We Are Proud to Present*...

Tia Jemison (*Fate*) MFA2/Acting. Tia attended University of South Florida and double majored in Theatre Performance and Psychology. She is a professional Jazz Vocalist and Musician. Tia was in many shows in South Florida and won Broadway World, Tampa and Creative Loafing Critics choice for Best Actress 2014 along with Best Original Short Play at The Theatre Tampa Bay Festival. She is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

Michael Morrow (*Rey-Rey*) BFA3/Acting. Michael is from Chicago, Illinois. His past works include *We Are Proud to Present*..., *The Kid Who Ran for President*, and *A Lie of the Mind*.

Skylar Okerstrom-Lang (*Loki*) BFA3/Acting. Skylar is from Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Some of Skylar's other roles at The Theatre School include *Rivers/Catesby* (*Richard III*), *Judson Moon* (*The Kid Who Ran for President*), and *Uncle Vanya* (*Uncle Vanya*). This summer, Skylar will be at Interlochen Arts Academy, his alma-mater, to play the role of Edgar in *King Lear*.

Isaiah Rusk (*Eric*) BFA3/Acting. #ProtectTransKids. #BlackLivesMatter.

Sola Thompson (*Fay*) MFA2/Acting. Sola holds a B.A. in English from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her Theatre School credits include the title roles in both *Night Runner* and *Eurydice*.

Nick Trengove (*Serena*) MFA2/Acting. Nick hails from California's Bay Area. Before coming to Chicago, he worked at several theatres in Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco. His recent credits include *Hastings*, *Tyrell*, and *Richmond* in *Richard III* (The Theatre School), *Paris* in *Romeo and Juliet* (The Theatre School), and *Orin* in *The Little Shop of Horrors* (Altarena Playhouse).

Tarell Alvin McCraney (*Playwright*) is best known for his acclaimed trilogy, *The Brother/Sister Plays* which include *The Brothers Size*, *In the Red and Brown Water*, and *Marcus, Or The Secret of Sweet*. Other plays include *Head of Passes*, *Choir Boy*, and *Wig Out!* Tarell's script *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue* is the basis for the Oscar-winning film *Moonlight* directed by Barry Jenkins, for which McCraney and Jenkins also won a Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar. Among its many other honors, the film has won a Golden Globe for Best Drama, Gotham Award for Best Feature, NAACP Image Award for Best Independent Film, WGA Award for Best Original Screenplay, the Human Rights Campaign's Visionary Arts Award, and 6 Independent Spirit Awards including Best Picture and Best Screenplay. Tarell has also worked on TV and film projects with Playtone, HBO, and Disney. He is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius" Grant, the Whiting Award, Steinberg Playwright Award, the Evening Standard Award, the New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award, the Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, the Windham Campbell Award, and a Doris Duke Artist Award. He was the International Writer-in-Residence for the Royal Shakespeare Company from 2008-2010, and a former resident playwright at New Dramatists. He is an ensemble member at Steppenwolf Theatre Company and a member of Teo Castellanos/D-Projects in Miami. Tarell is a graduate from the New World School of the Arts, The Theatre School at DePaul University, and Yale School of Drama, and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Warwick. As Professor of Theatre and Civic Engagement at University of Miami, he created a three-year program in partnership with UM, Miami-Dade County and the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center. He was recently named the new Chairman of the Playwriting Department at the Yale School of Drama, as well as Playwright in Residence at Yale Repertory Theater.

Nathan Singh (*Director*) MFA3/Directing. Nathan recently directed *The Children's Hour*, *Next Fall*, *The Great God Pan*, *Women and In The Blood*. He is a director from Los Angeles