



PLAYBILL

FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE/
WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF



FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE/ WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF NTOZAKE SHANGE

APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 93 MINUTES.
THERE WILL BE NO INTERMISSION

ARTIST NOTE: DJANET SEARS

Last September, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf* by Ntozake Shange (pronounced EN-to-ZAH-kee SHAHNG-gay) celebrated the 40th anniversary of its Broadway production. The play was unlike anything that had come before. Shange called it a choreopoem, a term she coined to describe the kind of groundbreaking work she was creating for the stage. Shange refers to herself as a “poet in the theater,” in that her verse is crafted to be spoken aloud. But she is also a dancer, a choreographer, a dramaturg, a novelist, as well as a playwright, and her work explores the unmistakable fluidity between these disciplines. *for colored girls* sculpts the English language in order for the text to leap off the page in a manner that reflects the author’s experience of the world. Shange invites us to set aside our understanding of genre, and our understanding of Black womanhood, so that we may follow her characters as they explore questions that still plague us four decades later.

In 1976, *for colored girls* was only the second play by a Black woman playwright to be produced on Broadway. The first was *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. At 17, *A Raisin in the Sun* was the first book by a Black author that I had ever read, and I used a monologue from Hansberry’s play to audition for theatre school. The following year, I would travel to NYC as an 18-year-old, first-year theatre student, to see Shange’s production.

I can recall very few specific details about the production itself. However, what remains vivid are the incredible thoughts and feelings that accompanied me out of the Booth Theatre after the show that night. I was already committed to a life as a theatre practitioner, but it was at that moment that I understood why.

DJANET SEARS,

Director of
*for colored girls who have considered suicide/
when the rainbow is enuf*

PRODUCTION SPONSOR

Top Women

CREATIVE TEAM**FOR COLORED GIRLS****CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE**

Tamara Brown
Lady in Brown

d'bi.young anitafrika
Lady in Red

Evangelia Kambites
Lady in Orange

Karen Glave
Lady in Yellow

Akosua Amo-Adem
Lady in Green

Ordena Stephens-Thompson
Lady in Purple

SATE
Lady in Blue

PRODUCTION

Djanet Sears
Director

Suba Sankaran
*Composer, Arranger
& Sound Designer*

Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu
Assistant Director

Astrid Janson
Set & Costume Designer

Darragh Parsons
Stage Manager

Alexandra Lord
*Assistant Set &
Costume Designer*

Michelle Ramsay
Lighting Designer

Kate Sandeson
Assistant Stage Manager

Ketrice Anderson
Apprentice Designer

Jasmyn Fyffe
Vivine Scarlett
Choreographers

Robert Harding
Production Stage Manager

Kelly McEvenue
Alexander Coach

SOULPEPPER PRODUCTION

Evan Bonnah-Hawkes
Technical Director

Barbara Nowakowski
First Hand

Greg Chambers
Props Builder

Jacqueline Robertson Cull
Head of Hair & Makeup

Natalie Swiercz
Dresser

Bill Stahl
Carpenter

Philip Atfield
Susan Dicks
Geoff Hughes
Cutters

Andres Castillo-Smith
Sound Designer

SOULPEPPER ACKNOWLEDGES THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF
TERESE SEARS

THANK YOU: Oz Weaver, Liesl Low, The Onyx Building, Pam Winter, Maria Meindl, Weyni Mengesha, Kate Lushington, Quisbert Sears, Winnie Sears, Rosemarie Sears, Terese Sears, Celia Sears, Qwyn Charter Maclachlan, Kyla Charter, Alec Maclachlan, Vanessah Sears Duru, Djustice Duru, Alejandra Nunez, Ngozi Paul.

for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

*f*or colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf began with a vision. In 1974, Ntozake Shange, emerging from a series of personal struggles, saw a double rainbow arcing over the highway. That rainbow triggered an outpouring of words, which became a solo poem she performed with a dancer. The mid-‘70s saw a ground swell of “women poets, women’s readings, and a multilingual woman presence...” so by the time a collective of seven women – representing every colour of the rainbow, and brown – came together in New York, the solo had become a multi-voice “choreopoem” a wholly original fusion of words, music and movement.

It premiered at the Public Theatre in 1976 with Shange playing the lady in orange. Audiences instantly embraced its energized, truth-telling brilliance. It was an overnight sensation and the show transferred to Broadway, but Shange soon found herself unable to cope with the demands of celebrity. It was all “too big for my Off-Broadway taste, or too little for my exaggerated sense of freedom.”

That freedom pulses in her juicy, uncompromising language. She believes letters dance. Capitals are banished, all part of her determination to “attack, deform and maim the language I was taught to hate myself in.” Autocorrect may try to corral her unique syntax and force it into “proper” English, but thank God, Ntozake Shange gave up being proper decades ago. Her language pays tribute to her literary ancestors, in particular novelist and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston and poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, both of whom celebrated the

vivid vernacular they heard around them. By immersing herself in multiple points of view, Shange fearlessly articulates the very personal struggle Black women face to this day because of racism and sexism. There are more female playwrights of colour now – Suzan-Lori Parks, Djanet Sears and Trey Anthony among them – but Shange was an early visionary pioneer.

We’ve assembled a remarkable cast to inhabit the dancing words of this groundbreaking piece. Let them, let Shange, take you “from random order to the rainbow.”

PLAYWRIGHT BIOGRAPHY

Born Paulette Williams in 1948, the writer grew up in St. Louis. She was bussed to an all-white school where she endured harassment and attacks, later calling herself “...a smart child tryin to be dumb.” Her Xhosa name came from a couple of South African exiles during her graduate studies at USC. “Ntozake” (En-toh-ZAH-ki – She who comes with her own things) “Shange” (Shahn-gay – She who walks like a lion”). Her rich creation embraces poetry, theatre, essays, novels & children’s books. She suffered a stroke in 2004, but continues to write, most recently a “choreoessay”, *Lost in Language and Sound: Or How I Found My Way to the Arts*, in 2013. Shange is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Pushcart Prize. She lives in Brooklyn.

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USING #SPForColoredGirls**

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FOR ATTENDING!



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