



True friendship is never a straight line...



it grows, it falters, and it survives.



a **New Black Voices** project

Sistah Friend

a new play by **Phaedra Tillery-Boughton**

directed by **Margo Hall**

May 16 & 17, 2026

LORRAINE HANSBERRY THEATRE

presents

Sistah Friend

a new play by **Phaedra Tillery-Boughton**

directed by **Margo Hall**

It grows, it falters, it survives—but only when we show up for one another.

For Portia, Kendra and Sia, friendship has meant showing up through decades of triumphs, heartaches, motherhood, spiritual journeys, and all the messy, beautiful moments it takes to become your truest self. Time and time again, they've weathered it all. But what happens when this sacred friendship between three Black women is shaken to its core?

Drawn from real-life events, playwright Phaedra Tillery-Boughton's **Sistah Friend** is a new dramatic comedy about love, faith, and the friendships that make us whole.

This bold **New Black Voices Workshop Production** is a play about friendship, for anyone who has ever dared to love fiercely.

CAST

Asia Nicole Jackson* as **Portia**

Phoenix Rose as **Sia**

Ryan Nicole Austin* as **Kendra**

CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

PLAYWRIGHT, STLYIST & NEW BLACK VOICES MENTEE |

Phaedra Tillery-Boughton

DIRECTOR | Margo Hall

LIGHTING DESIGNER | M.D. Combs

SOUND DESIGNER | Alex Fakayode

PROPS DESIGNER | Heidi Button

SCENIC DESIGN CONSULTANT | Brittany Mellerson

STAGE MANAGER & BOARD OPERATOR | Victoria Erville* **NEW**

BLACK VOICES MENTOR | Dr. Lisa B. Thompson

PRODUCTION MANAGER | Julius Ernesto Rea

PERFORMANCES

May 16 & 17, 2026

MAGIC THEATRE, Fort Mason Center

2 Marina Boulevard, Building D, San Francisco, CA 94123

Performance runtime:

approx. 2 hours & 20 minutes, including an intermission

* Member of Actors' Equity Association. This theater operates under an agreement with Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

LHT MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Lorraine Hansberry Theatre is to create performances by, for, and about the Black experience, and provide employment and career-building opportunities for actors, directors, designers, and technicians from the BIPOC community. LHT prioritizes the work of Black female and femme-identifying playwrights by bringing their stories to the community. LHT draws from the cultural and economic resources of the San Francisco Bay Area to enrich and strengthen the performing arts; actively seeking and participating in collaboration with Bay Area Arts institutions and other related organizations.

WARNING

This production includes references and descriptions of violence against Black bodies, incarceration and drug use.

PLEASE NOTE...

the location of all exits and turn off your electronic devices. Photographing, videotaping, or recording this production is strictly prohibited.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

SistahFriend was inspired by my real-life experiences and the deep bond I share with my sistahfriends, Sonee and Kamiya. I began writing this play because I saw a need for Black women to truly see themselves represented onstage, not as stereotyped characters, but as complex women navigating friendship, love, pain, healing, growth, and survival. So often, Black women are expected to carry everything while making it look effortless, and I wanted to create a story that honored both the strength and vulnerability within that reality.

The emotional journey of these women comes from lived experiences, shared memories, hard conversations, laughter, and the kind of sisterhood that helps you survive life's hardest moments. My sistahfriends have supported me throughout this entire process, and it has been beautiful watching how this story connects with other women. Seeing audiences recognize themselves in these relationships reminds us how powerful it is to feel seen and understood.

At the heart of *SistahFriend* is the idea that none of us are meant to do life alone. The women in this story may struggle, disagree, or carry heavy burdens, but they ultimately need one another. Their friendship becomes the thing that helps hold them together.

That idea extends beyond the story itself and into the way the production moves and breathes onstage. One of the intentional choices in this piece is having the women perform the set changes themselves. The movement of furniture, props, and space reflects the invisible labor Black women often carry in everyday life — constantly adjusting, rebuilding, supporting others, and still finding a way to make everything look beautiful. Even in those moments of transition, the women rely on one another. The set changes become another expression of sisterhood, teamwork, and shared responsibility.

Music then becomes the bridge that carries both the audience and the actors through those transitions. The songs help move us through time, memory, and emotion while inviting the audience deeper into the world of the play. I wanted the music to create a feeling of recognition — reminding people of old friendships, shared laughter, parties, car rides, heartbreak, celebration, and the moments that shape us.

While the women transform the space around them, the music offers grace, rhythm, and connection, allowing the audience to stay inside the story. Together, the movement, music, and storytelling reflect the beauty of community and the power of women carrying one another through every season of life.



Photo Credit: Alexa "LexMex" Treviño

~Phaedra Tillery-Boughton, 2025-26 New Black Voices Mentee

BIOGRAPHIES

Asia Nicole Jackson* **(“PORTIA” | she/her)**

is honored to work with Lorraine Hansberry Theatre again. Asia previously portrayed the characters Kendra and Portia in varied, wonderfully workshopped renditions of *SistahFriend* in association with LHT, 3GT, and Zaccho Dance Theatre. Asia also understudied in *The Black Feminist Guide to the Human Body* at LHT.



A few of her previous theatre credits include Lily Ann Green in *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* at Aurora Theatre, Amara in *Onwu de Play – A WhatsApp Drama* at Berkeley Repertory Ground Floor Summer Lab 2025, and Maggie/Mary in *Sally and Tom* at Marin Theatre.

Asia thanks Christ Jesus for His providence and for being her center. A huge thanks to her family, friends, and spiritual community for their continual love and support. www.asianicolejackson.com

Phoenyx Rose (“SIA” **| she/her)**

is a Bay Area native whose artistry lives at the intersection of music, movement, and storytelling. An international artist and Broadway performer (*Hairspray*), she has traveled the world captivating audiences with a presence that is both powerful and deeply expressive. Her work as a choreographer reflects her ability to shape rhythm into visual language, creating performances that are as intentional as they are unforgettable.



Known for her signature “Phoenyx blend” of soul, hip-hop, and jazz, she is also an international recording artist whose sound carries both emotional depth and cultural resonance. As the First Lady of Hip-Hop TV, Phoenyx stands as a voice for elevation, using her platform to inspire, connect, and amplify creative expression across communities.

Phoenyx makes her debut with the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre in *SistahFriend*, a moment

she embraces with gratitude and pride. To join a legacy rooted in bold storytelling and Black artistic excellence is both an honor and a meaningful step in her journey as an artist.

Beyond the stage, Phoenyx is committed to empowering others through her art, creating work that uplifts, heals, and reflects the fullness of the human experience. Her presence is not only felt in performance, but in the intention she brings to every space she enters.

She is honored to be part of this production and looks forward to sharing this experience with audiences across the globe.

Sending love - Thephoenixrose.com

Ryan Nicole Austin* **(“KENDRA” | she/**

her) is a GRAMMY®-nominated MC, actress, & impact producer, whose work blends hip-hop, storytelling, advocacy to explore racial justice, identity, and liberation. A TEDx and Rainin Fellow, her work has been featured internationally. Ryan co-wrote and co-produced *Co-Founders: The Musical* at American Conservatory Theater.



Expanding that universe, she produced *All People Powered*, a live concert and pitch contest that funds underrepresented startup founders. Ryan is also the founder of *Worth AI*, an AI-powered artist rate calculator designed to help creatives price their work fairly. A third-generation Oaklander, she uses art and technology to build platforms for equity and cultural transformation.

Phaedra Tillery-Boughton (PLAYWRIGHT, **STLYIST & NEW BLACK VOICES MENTEE |**

she/her) is a passionate creative artist dedicated to theatre, production, and community advocacy. She serves as associate producer and casting manager at SFBATCO and co-hosts *Creatively Shaded*, a podcast amplifying Black theatre voices in the Bay Area.

A teaching artist with SFArtsEd, Berkeley Rep, A.C.T., and Pacific Singers & Actors, she recently played *Rabby* in *Fat Ham* at SF Playhouse and was

named the 2025–26 Lorraine Hansberry Theatre New Black Voices Mentee. A 2024–25 Black Futures Awardee, her credits include *The Color Purple*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, and directing *Legally Blonde*. @phaedratboughton

Margo Hall* (DIRECTOR & LHT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | she/her) is an award-winning actor, director, playwright, educator, Artistic Director of Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, and a founding member of Campo Santo. She has graced Bay Area stages for over 35 years. She was last seen in *Josephine's Feast* by Star Finch for Campo Santo and Magic Theatre. Other acting highlights include *Black Odyssey*, *Skeleton Crew*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Marcus or the Secret of Sweet*, *Trouble in Mind*, *Barbecue* (also directed), and *A Winter's Tale*.

Film credits include *Bottled Spirits*, *All Day and a Night*, *Blindspotting*, and the voice of Melba in Pixar's *SOUL*. TV credits include *Blindspotting*, *Chances*, and *Nash Bridges*. Directing highlights include *How I Learned What I Learned*, *Nollywood Dreams*, *Barbecue*, *Red Velvet*, and *Ragtime*. She recently co-created and directed the world premiere production of *In The Evening by The Moonlight*, a play by Traci Tolmaire about Lorraine Hansberry with Nina Simone and James Baldwin for Lorraine Hansberry Theatre.

M.D. Combs (LIGHTING DESIGNER | any/all pronouns) is a Bay Area native growing up in the south bay who found a love for lighting design while studying theater at San Francisco State University. They are fascinated by the way that light can establish worlds and transport audiences to a different place. After spending time working in New York City, M.D. Combs is elated to be back in the bay lighting up various bay area venues and productions.

Alexandria Fakayode (SOUND DESIGNER | she/her) is an artistic collaborator & theatrical sound designer from the Bay Area. Focusing in on sound design, Alex has worked/assisted with different theaters around the Bay, including: Shotgun Players, Berkeley Repertory Theater & Cutting Ball Theater. Her professional career started in July 2022, as the Shotgun Players' Sound Fellow/Apprentice, and then designing a few projects in their Champagne Staged Reading Series. Her debut as a Bay Area Theatrical Sound Designer culminated with Shotgun Players' *Babes in Ho-Iland* in January 2024. She has a B.A. in Drama from the University of California, Irvine.

Heidi Button (PROPS DESIGNER | any/all pronouns) was an aerial performer in a former life, touring with circus theatre companies in Europe and the US. She later spent 9 years as a teacher and organizer at San Francisco Circus Center and co-directed their Youth Program in the spring of 2020. In Spring 2024, she received her BA in theatre from San Francisco State University, while serving as Emergency Props Department Coordinator for the semester. So far in 2025, she has designed props for Cuckoo Edible Magic from San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Company, and Fairway at Contra Costa Civic Theatre. Outside of *Sunset Baby* with Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, other scheduled projects this year are as summer Wardrobe Supervisor for San Francisco Shakespeare Company's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and props design for the Oakland Theater Project. In 2023, Heidi designed props for Lorraine Hansberry Theatre Company's *In The Evening By The Moonlight*, as well as San Francisco Playhouse's production of *Nollywood Dreams* by Jocelyn Bioh, about the Nigerian movie industry of the 1990's.

Brittany S. Mellerson (SCENIC DESIGNER | b/she/they) is a multi hyphenate designer/director with a focus in sharing Black stories and cathartic experiences. Some of their most notable professional credits in the Bay include residencies with PlayGround SF and Lamplighters Music Theatre in Lighting Design/Production Management. They apply an extensive concentration in Sound Design and Intimacy Coordination as a freelance artist. Outside the theatre, Brittany curates their own projects, as the Director & Visual Designer of published, archival, and live performances for their entertainment collective.entertainment collective, VIP.

Victoria Erville* (STAGE MANAGER & BOARD OPERATOR | she/her) is based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Stage Management credits include *Cinderella* with the African American Shakespeare Company. Directing credits include *Our Town* at The Colorado Shakespeare Festival and *Midsummer Night's Dream* at Women's Will Theatre. As a playwright, she is the recipient of the 3Girls Theatre Brady Fellowship and was a semi-finalist with the Bay Area Playwrights Conference for her play *The Lies That Bind*. She has had her plays workshopped with 3Girls Theatre, TheatreFirst,

the North Carolina Women's Theatre Festival, the Playground Incubator Series, and Dragon's Egg Theatre Company. Her play *The Music of Mothers* was produced by TheatreFirst in Berkeley in 2024. Victoria has also worked as a Dramaturg with Central Works Theatre, 3-Girls Theatre, and individual playwrights. Her newest play, *The Verona Matchmakers*, will receive a workshop with Marin Shakespeare Company's Seeds of Time festival this coming October.

Lisa B. Thompson (NEW BLACK VOICES MENTOR | she/her) is an award-winning artist/scholar whose satirical comedies, poignant dramas, and insightful criticism question stereotypes about Black life in the US, particularly the experiences of the Black middle class. *The Black Feminist Guide to the Human Body* is a finalist for the American Theatre in Higher Education's 2024 Judith Royer Excellence in Playwriting Award. Her plays have been produced Off-Broadway, throughout the US, and internationally by Crossroads Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, the Vortex, The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, 1st Stage Theatre, Austin Playhouse, Soul Rep Theatre Company, The Ensemble Theatre, New Professional Theatre, Pyramid Theatre Company, The Billie Holiday Theatre, Chiswick Playhouse, and The National Black Theatre Festival among others.

Thompson is the author of *Beyond the Black Lady: Sexuality and the New African American Middle Class* (University of Illinois Press, 2009), *Single Black Female* (Samuel French, 2012), *Underground, Monroe, and The Mamalogues: Three Plays* (Northwestern University Press, 2020), and *The Mamalogues* (Samuel French, 2021). She has also published articles and reviews in Theatre Journal, Journal of American Drama, Theatre Survey, NPR, Criterion Collection, Huffington Post and The Washington Post. Her creative and scholarly work has received support from a number of institutions including the American Council of Learned Societies, Hedgebrook, MacDowell, Millay Arts, National Performance Network, Center for the Study of Race and Democracy, Clayman Institute for Gender Research, W. E. B. DuBois Research Institute at the Hutchins Center, The Fusebox International Festival, and Texas Performing Arts.

This fall Thompson will begin the third season as co-host and co-producer of Black Austin Matters, a

podcast and radio segment on KUT: Austin's NPR station that explores Black life, culture, and politics in Central Texas. She is currently the Bobby and Sherri Patton Professor of African and African Diaspora Studies and affiliate faculty in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas at Austin. Thompson also serves as the College of Liberal Arts' Advisor to the Dean for Faculty Mentoring and Support.

Learn more about this nationally acclaimed playwright at <https://lisabthompson.com/>

Julius Rea (PRODUCTION MANAGER | he/they) is a Bay Area playwright, curator and performer. In 2018, he co-founded The Forum Collective, an arts organization that focuses on journalism theatre and gallery curation. He began working at Lorraine Hansberry Theatre as a 2021-22 Theatre Bay Area Arts Leadership Residency recipient. As a playwright, he recently had the world premiere of *The Day the Sky Turned Orange*, with SFBATCO. He is also part of the 2026-27 cohort of the Resident Playwright Program with the Playwrights Foundations.

More at juliusernestorea.com

*Member of Actors' Equity Association.

^Member of SAG-AFTRA

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Margo Hall, the **New Black Voices Mentorship Program** has become central to Lorraine Hansberry Theatre's mission of uplifting and celebrating Black voices, perspectives, and stories.

This innovative program offers vital support, mentorship, and production opportunities for emerging Black female and femme-identifying playwrights, nurturing socially impactful pieces relevant to their communities—from initial idea to the stage.

New Black Voices Advisory Board includes Lydia Diamond, Nambi E. Kelly, Dominique Morisseau, and Dr. Lisa B. Thompson.

Applications for the **2026 - 2027 New Black Voices Mentorship Program** are now open at lhstf.org/new-black-voices.

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LHT Offices

762 Fulton Street
SF, CA 94102
415.474.8800
information@lhtsf.org
lhtsf.org



@lhtsf



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Are you hungry?

african stew

a new play by **dr. lisa b. thompson**
& directed by **edris cooper-anifowoshe**

What happens when an African American middle class woman and a wealthy Nigerian immigrant man, meet, fall in love and decide to marry after only knowing each other for six months? What will their parents think of this cross class, intercultural and transcontinental union?

In **AFRICAN STEW**, these characters come together for a meal in Oakland, California that highlights the pleasures and dangers of loving and misunderstanding in the Black Diaspora.

SEPTEMBER 2026

at Magic Theatre
in SF's Fort Mason

