

THREE BONE THEATRE PRESENTS

# JAJA'S AFRICAN HAIR BRAIDING

WRITTEN BY JOCELYN BIOH

DIRECTED BY DONNA BRADBY

NOVEMBER 8-24, 2024

"Jaja's African Hair Braiding" is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service imprint. ([www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com))

World premiere produced by the Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Chris Jennings, Executive Director) and Madison Wells with LaChanze & Taraji P. Henson at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on September 12, 2023.

Commissioned by Williamstown Theatre Festival (Mandy Greenfield, Artistic Director), Williamstown, MA.



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# JAJA'S AFRICAN HAIR BRAIDING

Written by Jocelyn Bioh

## Cast (Alphabetical Order)

Deity Brinson*	Marie
Myneesha King*	Jaja
Sarah Oguntomilade*	Ndidi
Vanessa Robinson	Aminata
Germôna Sharp*	Michelle/Chrissy/Laniece
Trinity Taylor*	Jennifer
Valerie Thames	Bea
EJ Williams*	Vanessa/Sheila/Radia
Graham Williams	James/Franklin/Sockman/DVDMan/Jewelry Man
Kellie Williams*	Miriam

## Production Team

Director	Donna Bradby*
Assistant Director	Tiffany Bryant-Jackson
Stage Manager	Megan Hirschy
Assistant Stage Manager	Daylen Jones
Production Assistant	Brianna Hawkins*
Dialect Coach	Vanecia Boone*
Props Design	Jackie Hohenstein
Sound Design	Christy Lancaster
Scenic Design	Jennifer O'Kelly
Lighting Design	Rod Oden*
Costume Design	Toi Aquila R.J.
Hair Design	Deborah Whitaker*
Graphic Design and Photography	Becky Schultz
Interns	Jaiden Cunningham*, Lauryn Nealy*, Kamari Risher*, Tymara Ward*

*\*Three Bone Theatre Debut*

## Special Thanks

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# THE CAST



**Deity Brinson (Marie)** Deity is beyond excited to be a part of her first production with Three Bone Theatre. Born and raised in Charlotte, Deity is currently majoring in Theater Performance and Applied Dance as well as earning a certificate in Musical Theater at UNC Charlotte. As a multidisciplinary artist, she has studied various types of performing arts. Some of her favorite credits include *Legally Blonde* (Ensemble, Brooke Wyndham u/s, Pilar u/s), *Angels in America* (Africanii/Narrator Ensemble), *Pippin* (Theo & cirque ensemble), and *Single Black Female* (SBF 1). She is passionate not only about her own creative pursuits but also using the arts to foster community and understanding. She cannot wait to share this show and this experience with you all.



**Myneesha King (Jaja)** is a native of Pittsburgh, PA but now calls Charlotte home after 9 years. She is a graduate of the illustrious North Carolina A&T State University where she holds a BFA in Professional Theatre. Myneesha is a theatre educator and has taught at schools such as Kipp Charlotte, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, JT Williams Secondary Montessori School and Cox Mill High School. Her experience includes directing and stage managing many productions both in PA and NC. She is thrilled to debut at Three Bone Theatre as Jaja, returning to the stage after 11 years! Myneesha is the proud mother of 3 amazing boys and wishes to thank them for their support. She extends her gratitude to every friend and/or family member that took time to witness her reintroduction. Blessings!



**Sarah Oguntomilade (Ndid)** is a recent graduate from the University of Michigan and a current Theatre Teaching Fellow at Providence Day School. As a first gen Nigerian American, Sarah is so excited to bring this story to life via the character Ndid. She gives all thanks to her wonderful friends and family, her talented community, and her Creator.



**Vanessa Robinson (Aminata)** is thrilled to return to the Three Bone stage! Vanessa hails from Syracuse, NY and is a graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in Manhattan. OFF-BROADWAY: *Me The People: Fire and Fury Edition*, Laurie Beechman Theatre. *Ragtime* (Sarah), both 4th Wall Theatre and Montclair Operetta Club. *In the Heights* (Daniela), Montclair Operetta Club. *Dessa Rose* (Dessa Rose), 4th Wall Theatre. LOCAL: *If Pretty Hurts...* (Massassi), Actor's Theatre of Charlotte. *Andy and the Orphans* (Kathy), Three Bone Theatre. *RENT* (Joanne), PPT. *Steel Magnolias* (Truvy), Old Courthouse Theatre. Many thanks to the cast and crew, and all the love and gratitude to my family and friends for their unending support!



# THE CAST



**Germôna Sharp (Michelle/Chrissy/Laniece)** is a multifaceted talent, known for her work as a vocalist, film and stage actress, and writer. Originally from Pittsburgh, PA, Germôna has nurtured a lifelong passion for the stage, bringing dedication, energy, and emotional depth to every role she inhabits. Some notable past roles include Mrs. Jefferson/Soloist in *RENT* (Queen City Concerts), The Shirelles in *Beautiful: The Carol King Musical* (Matthews Playhouse), Boyet in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Plays On Shakespeare), Bunny in *Detroit '67* (Theatre Charlotte), A'lelia Walker in *For The Love of Harlem* (BNS Productions), Damneesha in *Be A Lion* (BNS Productions), Truvy in *Steel Magnolias* (Forest Moon Theatre), Radio in *Caroline, or Change: A Musical* (Justice Theatre Project), Tina in *Sister Act: The Musical* (Raleigh Little Theatre), Roux in *Marat & Sade* (Bare Theatre) and many others. Germôna has received recognition for her outstanding performances, including Broadway World Raleigh Awards (nominated), ACHIMagazine (nominated), Raleigh Film & Art Festival (winner) Cary Playwright's Monologue Competition (winner). Germôna is happy to make her debut at Three Bone Theatre and extends a heartfelt thanks to everyone who views her work!



**Trinity Taylor (Jennifer)** is delighted to make her debut at Three Bone Theatre with *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*. The Baltimore native was most recently seen in her Theatre Charlotte debut, *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Trix, The Avitrix). She emerges with an array of previous credits including *The Wedding Singer* (Holly), *Christmas Kumbaya* (Suzanne), *BEAUTIFUL: A Carole King Musical* (Lucille/Shirelle/ Uptown Singer), *A Long Time Since Yesterday* (Babbs Wilkerson) and *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Charlaine). The actress has also booked with Lionsgate Entertainment Corp, Palahnuk Productions LLC/Blind Phoenix Productions, and Universal Studio Group for upcoming film productions. When not performing, she finds purpose as a licensed NC REALTOR® (Keller Williams Ballantyne) and CSUSA educator. Trinity would like to send special thanks to her loved ones for their shared excitement and ever-present support.



**Valerie Thames (Bea)** Valerie is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to return to the stage in another Three Bone production. Recent credits include *A Comedy of Errors* (Adrianna) and *As You Like It* (Celia) with Shepherd Shakespeare Company, *Confederates* (Sandra) with Three Bone Theatre, and *POTUS* (Harriet) with Charlotte Conservatory Theatre. She would like to thank Donna Bradby for selecting her to join this talented cast in the telling of this powerful and timely story. She would also like to thank Tiffany, Megan, Daylen, and Hayley for all of their guidance behind the scenes. To her cast she sends much love for making this adventure a memorable one. She also thanks you, the audience, for supporting local theater and hopes you enjoy the show!

# THE CAST



**EJ Williams (Vanessa/Sheila/Radia)** (she/her) is an Actor, Dancer, and creative from Washington DC. She received her BA in Theater from University of North Carolina at Charlotte and her MFA in Acting from Ohio University. During her acting career she has gotten to play a plethora of unique characters such as Angel from *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and Dunn from *Men on Boats*. She's excited to be performing for Three Bone Theatre and this will make her first time performing with this company! EJ loves fun facts so here's a couple of fun facts about her: Her favorite color is black, her favorite celebrity is Queen Latifa, and she only reads fiction novels.



**Graham Williams (James/Franklin/Sockman/DVDMan/Jewelry Man)** is excited to be joining Three Bone Theatre again after the wildly successful *Thoughts Of A Colored Man*. He has appeared in various productions around Charlotte including: August Wilson's *Jitney*, *Fences*, and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Dominique Morisseau's *Pipeline* and *Detroit 67*, and many others.



**Kellie Williams (Miriam)** Kellie is grateful and excited to be a part of Three Bone Theatre's production of *Jaja's African Hair Braiding!* A Charlotte-based singer, songwriter, poet, and actress, Kel has a deep love and respect for all art forms. She is a graduate of Northwest School of the Arts and Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, NC. Recently she has been in the ensemble for large productions like *Ragtime* (Queen City Concerts) and *Turandot* (Opera Carolina). Some favorite credits include Carmen in *Carmen (CPCC)*; Queen One in *I Am: Queen Charlotte* (Epoch Tribe); Julius Win-field in *Bard Fiction* (Shakespeare Carolina). She is currently pursuing bachelors degrees in Vocal Performance at Queens University of Charlotte, and Africana Studies at UNC Charlotte. Kel wants to thank her family and friends for their love and support!

## Land Acknowledgement

Three Bone Theatre is based in Charlotte, NC. We acknowledge that we rehearse and perform on the traditional, ancestral, stolen territory of the Catawba Indian Nation, including the Catawba and Sugaree tribes. The Catawba Indians have lived on their ancestral lands along the banks of the Catawba River dating back at least 6,000 years.

You can learn more about the Catawba Indian Nation at [Catawba.com](http://Catawba.com)

# THE CREATIVE TEAM

**Donna Bradby (Director)** is an Adjunct Professor and Director of Marketing and Publicity for the Theatre Arts Program at North Carolina A&T State University (NC A&T), the largest Historically Black College and University in the country. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Professional Theatre Performance from NC A&T and a Master of Fine Arts in Arts Management from Virginia Tech. She has also taught at Bennett College, Virginia Tech, Western Connecticut State University, and Elon University. She has directed *The America Play*, *Ethel Waters: His Eye Is on the Sparrow*, *From the Mississippi Delta*, *The Old Settler*, *The Color Purple*, *This One Girl's Story*, *Breath, Boom*, and *A Raisin in the Sun* to name a few. Most recently, she directed *Ernest and the Pale Moon*, *Fairview*, and *The Crucible* at Western Connecticut State University. Other productions include *Mad at Miles: A Black Woman's Guide to Truth* in Triad Stage's Upstage Cabaret, at The National Black Theatre Festival, and in Atlanta at Seven Stages and Spelman College. Donna is the proud mother of Adam Bradby and grandmother to Arris and Raava, the loves of her life.

**Tiffany Bryant-Jackson (Assistant Director)** is a local actor, teaching artist, and facilitator. Her study of theatre began at Elon University and has taken her as far north as Alaska. As a Charlotte transplant, she has been blessed to work with various organizations as an actor, arts advocate, and teaching artist. She is a champion of local arts as a whole and for equity and inclusion in those spaces. Tiffany currently serves as the Education Manager for Three Bone Theatre and is excited to take on a new role as the Assistant Director for this production, where she gets to be in the room to watch the magic happen from start to finish.

**Megan Hirschy (She/They) (Stage Manager)** is excited to be back working with Three Bone to start their 13th season! Megan's first shows with Three Bone were *Dot* and *Sanctuary City* as a board operator. They were thrilled when asked to SM the first show last season, *The Lehman Trilogy*, and close it out with *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles*. They have also worked with Free Reign Theatre company as a SM and light designer. Megan would like to give a huge thank you to Jerry Colbert and Kara Wooten who were their college professors at Queens University of Charlotte for being supportive and encouraging. Megan would also like to thank this incredible cast and everyone involved in the show for their hard work. It has been an absolute pleasure!

**Daylen Jones (Assistant Stage Manager)** is excited to be joining Three Bone again, this time as assistant stage manager. He is a writer, actor and musician. Daylen has performed in Three Bone's recent productions: *Confederates* and *Thoughts of a Colored Man*.

**Jackie Hohenstein (Props Designer)** began working in prop design in 2011. She has worked many shows for Three Bone Theatre including *Fahrenheit 451*, *Appropriate*, *Andy and the Orphans*, and *The Lehman Trilogy*. Other shows she has worked on include *Angels in America* and *Assassins* for CAST, *Rapture Blister Burn* and *Three Days of Rain* for Charlotte's Off-Broadway, and *Defying Gravity* and *Five Lesbians Eating a Quiche* for The Warehouse.

# THE CREATIVE TEAM

**Christy Edney Lancaster (Sound Designer)** is happy to be with Three Bone again. She was last sound designer for their show *Toni Stone*. Some of her favorite designs include Actor's Theatre productions *Red* and *Whipping Man*. Theatre Charlotte's *Misery*, *Grapes of Wrath*, and *Biloxi Blues*. CAST production of *Jekyll and Hyde*. She is also a proud union stagehand with IATSE 322.

**Jennifer O'Kelley (Scenic & Projection Designer)** is returning for her third production for Three Bone Theatre with an open heart and a curious mind. She delights in the collaborative telling (or retelling) of a great tale and whether it be dance, drama, opera or live music. Jennifer earned her MFA at UNCSA, operates Muse Scenic Studio which produces murals and theatrical scenic painting in the Winston-Salem Arts District and has been known to take "time off" from the theater to work on more personal studio art projects and production design for feature film.

**Rod Oden (Lighting Designer)** is the award-winning Executive Artistic Director of Lee Street theatre in Salisbury, NC, and is thrilled to be making his Three Bone debut as the lighting designer in *JaJa's African Hair Braiding*. Rod Oden is proud to have over 29 years experience technical directing and scenic/lighting designing in a variety of venues, genres and audiences. Rod has designed on stages from Los Angeles to New Orleans, and in virtually every type of venue. Regional credits include *In the Heights*, *Jekyll and Hyde the Musical*, *Legally Blonde the Musical*, *Tick, Tick, Boom!*, *Wit*, *The Play That Goes Wrong* (NC Premiere), and *How I learned to Drive*. He has worked with countless community theaters, educational organizations and professional troupes to produce quality, high-end productions audiences have enjoyed watching. Rod is thankful for the support of his beautiful wife Raquel and his children Ariel, Isabelle, Tristan, Lucas, Jamie and Sylar.  
@rod.oden

**Toi Aquila R.J. (aka) Phoenix (Costume Designer)** is a performing, visual and literary artist. Founder of Phoenix Movement Performing & Visual Arts and contracted dance instructor for Dance Bahamas School in Nassau Bahamas. Some of her most recent acting/dancing credits are *Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts + Culture: Golden 50th Year Dance Flash Mob*, *Clyde's* BNS Productions, *Shakin the Mess Outta Misery* Rock Hill Theatre, *Akwaaba* BNS, teaser debut of her written/performed theater work *Cotton to Caviar: Stories of Eartha Kitt* Charlotte Off Broadway, *Africa Live*, *The Colored Museum* BNS earning her the '22' Dee Abdullah Courage Under Fire award and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* BNS earning her the '22' MTA award for Outstanding Supporting Actress. Although she is mostly known for acting and choreography, she also has costumed for productions in Charlotte, surrounding areas and internationally from *The Glorious World of Crowns Kinks & Curls* Three Bone Theatre, *The Wiz* Porch Productions, Bahamas Dance School, Cirque du Soleil, *Chife: Tribute to Michael Jackson*, SCAD fashion week, local and international independent artist music videos and others. Toi is excited and grateful for the opportunity to create with the amazing cast and crew of *JaJa's*. She sends love and appreciation to all of her family and friends that have always provided her with authentic and consistent love and support throughout her artistic journey.

# THE CREATIVE TEAM

**Deborah Whitaker (Hair Designer)** Deborah Whitaker's journey in the braiding industry spans over two decades, a testament to her enduring passion and skill. Mentored by renowned braiders, her career has been shaped by expert guidance and a deep-rooted love for hairstyling that traces back to her teenage years. With mannequin heads as her first canvas, Deborah's early fascination with hair has woven itself into a vibrant career, making her a respected and influential figure in the world of braiding.

**Jocelyn Bioh (Playwright)** is an award winning Ghanaian-American writer/performer from New York City. Her written works for theatre include: *Merry Wives* (Public Theater/ Shakespeare in the Park, PBS Great Performances), *Nollywood Dreams* (MCC Theater), and the multi award winning *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* which was originally produced at MCC Theater in 2017/2018 and has gone on to have over 50 regional productions. Her Broadway playwriting debut came in the fall of 2023 with *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*. The comedy, produced by Manhattan Theatre Club at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre in New York City, was directed by Whitney White. The play was selected as a New York Times Critic's Pick, received two extensions and had its final week of performances streamed live worldwide. It was nominated for six Tony Awards in 2026 including Best Play and Best Direction of a Play. It was also nominated for Outstanding Play at the 2024 Drama Desk Awards.

Jocelyn has also written for TV on "Russian Doll", Spike Lee's "She's Gotta Have It", the Hulu series "Tiny Beautiful Things" and is also writing the live screen adaptation of the hit Broadway musical *Once On This Island* for Disney+. She was 2023's recipient of the Outstanding Adaptation Drama Desk Award.

## Playwright's Note

For most of my life, truly since I was four years old, I have been wearing my hair in braids. I have had braids for so long, I can actually name the three times in my life when I did NOT have braids or some type of extensions for a significant amount of time. So I have spent a very large portion of my life in hair braiding shops and can tell you all about them. The stuffy ones that have way too many braiders in too small of a room. The shop that only has one hair braider because she likes her peace of mind. The shop that is located behind another place of business (a barber shop, a bodega, a pharmacy, a fish market, I've seen it all). I've gone to 125th Street and taken my chance with the kind hair braiding lady standing on the corner, flagging down any customer she could find; always with the standard sales pitch: "Hair braiding miss?" I'm always arrested by the relief on their faces when someone responds, "Yes, I'd like to get my hair braided." I imagine that at least for the next few hours, their dignity is restored. This play is for each and every person who enters the shop. Their hopes. Their dreams. Their incredible stories of how and why they came to this country. I celebrate these amazing women and thank them for what they do. To many people, they are just "hair braiding ladies;" random women people pass by on the street, but to me, they are heroes, craftswomen, and artists with beautiful, gifted, and skilled hands.



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## WHAT WE DO

CRRA provides resettlement services to refugees and asylees who are escaping violence, persecution, and repression.

At CRRA we embrace refugees who arrive in Charlotte, recognizing their troubling experiences, trying to ease their transition into a new country, and respecting their need to remember where they came from.

CRRA's infrastructure allows us to settle refugees of all nationalities and religions. Refugees are arriving from Myanmar, Congo, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Syria, and Central America – as well as others.

The agency, working through HIAS and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, provides basic services for refugees during their initial 90 day period of resettlement.

- CRRA obtains and furnishes apartments and stocks them with food so that once the caseworker meets the newly arriving refugee, they have a home
- New arrivals receive help registering their children for school, enrolling in benefits, obtaining Social Security cards and are able to attend classes for English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Our employment counselors endeavor to find them work and guide each arrival toward self-sufficiency
- Additional grants provide extended medical case management, employment services, financial literacy, a savings program and cultural orientation classes.
- CRRA also connects refugees and asylees to other service agencies in the area

## GET INVOLVED

- Volunteers play an active role in helping Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency's small, dedicated staff members work with newly arriving refugees
- CRRA accepts donations of select furniture and household items to help furnish the new homes for arriving refugees

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# THREE BONE THEATRE

"To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone and a funny bone."

-Reba McEntire

### Our Philosophy

Three Bone Theatre is Charlotte's home for the best of adult contemporary theatre. We strive to create a performing arts experience that is socially engaged, professionally managed, and creatively inspired.

### Our Mission

To use great theatre as a catalyst for conversation and change in our community.

### Our Team

Artistic and Operations Director .....	Robin Tynes-Miller
Executive Director .....	Becky Schultz
Production Manager .....	Hailey Gilland Turner
Education Manager .....	Tiffany Bryant-Jackson
Board of Directors .....	Kamille Bostick, Jackie Fishman, Mason Hurley, Nehemiah Lawson, Maggie Mitchem Flannigan, Marcella Pansini, Kelsey Rector, Octavia Seawell, Rebecca Sistruck



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This project was supported by the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Three Bone Theatre is supported, in part,  
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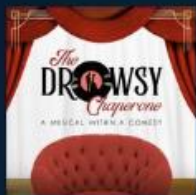
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