

Presents

***Memories of A Supernatural AIDS
Crisis***

Written & directed by Marc Arthur

June 29th, 2024
7pm

Narrator.....Yolanda Jack
Pandrion.....Pink Flowers
Xylophlactis.....Joe Smentowski

Lighting Design.....Justin Gibson
Stage Manager.....Tempest Thomas
Costume Design.....Maryann Trombino

Memories of A Supernatural AIDS Crisis is made possible by support from a Wayne State University College of Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts Creative/Research Grant.

Directors Note: *I wanted you to know that this performance emerges out of my experience of living with HIV. It feels important to name this because it's such a specific kind of experience: the stigma, pain, joy, and the intense social and cultural significations. During rehearsals, we talked a lot about how HIV is experienced differently across different bodies and identities, and how those manifest in the central love story of the play. My hope is that together we can think more complexly about the ongoing pandemic, and how it challenges us to confront existing infrastructures of racism, homophobia, sexism, and classism.*

Creative Team

Marc Arthur (he/him) is an artist, scholar and Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance at Wayne State University. He creates performances that stage community and political encounters through theatrical, choreographic, and theoretical approaches. He earned his PhD from NYU in performance studies, completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the School of Social Work at the University of Michigan, and his work has been presented internationally, including at venues in New York, San Francisco, Brussels, and Berlin.

Pink Flowers (she/her) is a Black trans artist, pleasure activist and educator, whose work is rooted in ancient shamanic, African trickster, and Brazilian Joker traditions. Her theater credits include *Wrong Mountain* on Broadway, the national tour of *Angels in America* for which she won the Los Angeles Ovation award for “Best Featured Actor in a Play”, and numerous NYC and regional theater credits. She has been a faculty member at Montclair State University, Pace University, and a company member of Shakespeare in Detroit.

Justin Gibson (he/him) is going into his third and final year of graduate school at WSU. A Raleigh, NC native, Justin got his BFA from East Carolina University, and spent 5 years as the Resident LD/Lighting Director at Playhouse on the Square in Memphis, TN. justingibsondesign.com

Yolanda Jack (she/her) is Manager of Community Engagement at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and a long-time theatre veteran. A Detroit native, Yolanda attended Cass Technical High School and studied Acting and Theatre Administration at Howard University before beginning her career at Crossroads Theatre Company on the East coast. With a call to come home, Yolanda returned to Detroit to inspire a new generation of theatre practitioners as the Technical and Touring Coordinator for Mosaic Youth Theatre and begin a family. She would go on to do that, graduate from Wayne State University with a B.A. in Acting and establish One World Theatre Company with her husband, Phillip Jack.

Joe Smentowski (he/they) is a queer actor and singer currently receiving his BFA in Acting from Wayne State University. Joe has performed iconic roles like Frank-N-Furter in *The Rocky Horror Show* and even had the chance to perform on *The Gershwin Theatre* stage in NYC. They have over 20 educational and professional theatrical credits. @joesmentowski

Tempest Thomas (she/her) is a stage management graduate student at Wayne state. She is from North Carolina originally and has uprooted her life to enjoy all that Michigan has to offer (mainly its beautiful seasons). She has recently worked on “Chicken and Biscuits” at Wayne and looks forward to working on “Into the Woods” this upcoming season.

Works cited:

¹José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*. NY: NYU, 2009. 35.

²Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie*. NY: Feminist, 2013. 79.

³Samuel Delany, "A Tale of Plagues and Carnivals" in *Flight from Nevèrjon*. Hanover: Wesleyan, 1985. 187.

⁴Bryn Kelly "Other Balms other Gileads," in *We Who Feel Differently Journal*, Issue 3, (Fall 2014).

Special thanks: Michael Barnes, Kelly Young, and Dean Elahi for their support of this project. Simone Chess, Michael Schmidt and the Center for Gender and Sexuality (CGS) for sponsoring the pre-show discussion and an early preview performance. Andrew Jordan and Patrick Burton from MR/QD. Iyla Stebbins for her work on press and marketing. Biba Bell, and Tony Whitfield for providing feedback at an early rehearsal. Turtle Disco, where some of this material was first imagined. My mom, Maryann Trombino, for her help with the costumes. And to my partner, Devin O'Hara.

Land Acknowledgement: Wayne State University rests on Waawiyataanong, also referred to as Detroit, the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Three Fires Confederacy. These sovereign lands were granted by the Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi, and Wyandot nations, in 1807, through the Treaty of Detroit. Wayne State University affirms Indigenous sovereignty and honors all tribes with a connection to Detroit. With our Native neighbors, WSU can advance educational equity and promote a better future for the earth and all people.

Mighty Real Queer Detroit is committed to promoting positive and meaningful images of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community through artistic and intellectual means. *I'll Be Your Mirror: Reflections of the Contemporary Queer* is the 2024 edition of MR/QD, a month-long exhibition featuring over 180 artists and over 800 works spread across 11 Detroit venues – plus film screenings, artist talks, live performances, panels, and poetry readings. The exhibition explores the mirrored relationship between art and self as well as art and community, highlighting the role of art in achieving personal visibility and social connection.

The College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts is home to today's aspiring artists, performers, technicians, scholars, dancers, debaters, entrepreneurs, and communication professionals who all represent the college's legacy of excellence in our respective fields. The college serves students majoring in 17 undergraduate programs, 10 graduate programs and three graduate certificates through its departments: the James Pearson Duffy Department of Art, Art History and Design, the Maggie Allesee Department of Theatre and Dance, and the departments of communication and music. From debate to dance, jazz to journalism, and fashion design to center stage, our students create captivating performances, inspire artistic and academic excellence, and conduct innovative research on behalf of our Detroit community.

"Utopia permits us to conceptualize new worlds and realities that are not irrevocably constrained by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and institutionalized state homophobia. More important, utopia offers us a critique of the present, of what is, by casting a picture of what can and perhaps will be."¹

"Do I belong more to your world than I do to the world of the living? Isn't my politics yours; my house, my body, yours? [...] Reincarnate yourself in me; possess my tongue, arms, sex organs, dildos, blood, molecules; possess my girlfriend, dog; inhabit me, live in me. Come. Ven. Please don't leave. *Vuelve a la vida*. Come back to life. Hold on to my sex. Low, down, dirty. Stay with me."²

"Though the names might be different, the same, or absent, can't we recognize one monster here, common to us all, prowling the border between one and another, or even between us and a land more different still from ours? I assure you, these are as real as the monsters that guard what is, after all, the other's boundary as much as it is ours. For she does not care what distinctions she guards, or how we sex her in homage to the concept of distinction itself. She only cares that distinctions exist."³

"Instead of stigma, will we be given stigmata, to mark our holiness? Does the soul, which has been degraded by poverty, by neglect, by racism, by homophobia, the soul that has always been told it has nothing to live for, now, somehow, have the promise of tomorrow? Of hope and everlasting life?"⁴

