

A PLAY BY MYAH GARY



# FEMININE ENERGY

DIRECTED BY JACQUELINE THOMPSON

FEBRUARY 3-19, 2023

PRESENTED BY



[mustardseedtheatre.com](http://mustardseedtheatre.com)

# Playwright



**Myah L. Gary** is a playwright-health educator from Carbondale, Illinois. Whether she is working as a writer, dramaturg, or director, much of her artistic work centers on health and social issues. She is currently a doctoral candidate in Public Health and Theater at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She holds a master's degree in Health Education and a bachelor's degree in Creative Writing and Sociology.

Myah's work has been performed in staged readings at The St. Louis Shakespeare Festival (St. Louis, MO), The Playwright's Center (Minneapolis, MN), and The Big Muddy New Play Festival (Carbondale, IL). *Feminine Energy* was written during Myah's time as a playwright fellow with The Confluence Regional Writers Project through the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival.

Outside of artistic work, she owns and operates Creative Health Education, a public health resource store ([www.creativehealtheducation.com](http://www.creativehealtheducation.com)), and Kind Might Creative, a health communications firm ([www.kindmightcreative.com](http://www.kindmightcreative.com)). Myah enjoys spending time with her family and friends, taking nature walks, trying new restaurants, and snuggling with her cat, Bella, and her dog, Penelope.

Myah would like to thank God for this incredible opportunity. Her amazing parents, brother, and grandmothers for their love, prayer, and support. Myah also thanks her doctoral and career mentor, Dr. Jacob Juntunen, and Confluence mentor Nancy Bell. And last but not least, she expresses gratitude to Deanna, Jackie, and the fantastic cast and crew for their commitment to this project and for giving her the honor of seeing her play produced for the first time!

# Cast

Rae Davis	Regina/Jasmine/Tarajee Madame Juniper/Student
Michelle Dillard	Mama Tina/Mama Kay Mama Ronesha
Ricki Franklin	Monique Thomas
Joshua Mayfield	Marcus/Paul/Josiah Shawn/Male Nurse
Claire Louise Monarch	Katie/Doctors/Nurse
Andrea Purnell	Debra Jackson
Erin Renee Roberts	Dr. Soleil Kirkpatrick

# Creative Team

Jacqueline Thompson	Director
Spencer Lawton	Stage Manager
Jaylin Hester	Assistant Stage Manager
Emily Fluchel	Props Design
Patrice Nelms	Set Design
Shevare Perry	Costume Design
Michael Sullivan	Light Design
AhSa-Ti Nu Tyehimba-Ford	Sound Design
Sara Naumann	Crew

# Staff

Deanna Jent	Producer
Bess Moynihan	Technical Director
Ann Rapko	House Manager
Leslie Wobbe	PR & Marketing

# Cast Biographies



**Rae Davis** (*Regina/Jasmine/Tarajee/Madame Juniper/Student*) is a Kansas City native that migrated to St. Louis after getting her Bachelor's in Theatre in Columbia and appreciates every opportunity to perform. She has worked extensively with St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, Metro Theater Company and Slightly Askew Theater Ensemble. She directed *The Super Fun Time Party Palace* for SATE's 2022 Aphra Behn Festival. Rae has enjoyed bringing characters to life, sharing their stories, and is honored to be a part of this timely project.



**Michelle Dillard** (*Mama Tina/Mama Kay/ Mama Ronessa*) is an actor, voice over artist, playwright, certified speaker, coach, author, podcaster, and director. She holds an MA in Theatre from Fontbonne University, is a graduate of the Creative Artist Institute (CAT) through the Regional Arts Commission, and Outstanding Actress in a Drama nominee (Theatre Circle Awards).

She has had the pleasure of gracing the stages of several theatre companies in and out of the St. Louis area, The Black Repertory Theatre (*Milk Like Sugar*), Shakespeare Festival (*The Ville Avengence, Feminine Energy, and Home*), True Community Theatre (*Love and Decopage*), Tesseract Theatre (*Facing, Honor Student, Helvetica*), The Repertory Theatre (*Every 28 Hours*), That Uppity Theatre (*Climate Change, Becoming Emily*), Call to Conscience Theater Co. (*The Annie Malone Story*), Fontbonne University (*Trojan Women, Principal, Principle*), Solid Lines Production (*Kimchee and Chitlins*), and DC Shorts International Film Festival (*As Good as it Gets*) to name a few.

Michelle has also enjoyed lending her talents to several staged readings, narrations, commercials, industrials, and short films. She has written, directed, and produced, *#MeToo, Her Voice Must be Heard, Girl Arise You're Carrying Too Much Baggage* and *Quarantined*. Commissioned to write *Times are Getting Harder* and *The Great Migration Story* (Call to Conscience Theatre Company). She is thrilled to be working once again with producer Deanna Jent, director Jacqueline Thomas and a dynamic cast/crew.



# Cast Biographies



family and pasta.

**Ricki Franklin** (*Monique Thomas*) is delighted to be making her Mustard Seed debut in a play where she feels so represented as a PCOS patient herself. She's a St Louis, Missouri native who was trained at Baylor University. Some of her favorite credits include Bottom in *A Midsummer Nights Dream* with the St Louis Shakespeare Festival, Ensemble in *Comb Your Hair or You'll Look Like a Slave*, Lucrece in *The Liar* and Buddy (Bunny) Holly in *Honeymoon in Vegas*. She loves Jesus, her



Although he graduated with a BA in psychology, his need to pursue acting remains unfazed. He is very excited to work with such talented and inspired individuals and enlighten people with a first-hand experience of Black women in the world of healthcare.

**Joshua Mayfield** (*Marcus/Paul/Josiah/Shawn/Male Nurse*) is thrilled to be welcomed to Mustard Seed Theatre, and looking forward to help tell the story of *Feminine Energy*. Josh started acting as a sophomore in high school landing the role of Frank Jr. in *Catch Me If You Can*. Since then, he has known his passion for acting was undying and ever-growing leading him to play in several theater productions both in high school and in college.



is pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching from Fontbonne University, after which she hopes to teach English and drama at the middle school level. Claire recently got married and enjoys spending her time with her husband, Sean, and their two cats, Bingley and Darcy. She also enjoys reading, cooking, baking, hiking, and playing video games and board games. Claire is thankful for her husband, parents, colleagues, and friends who support her every day!

**Claire Louise Monarch** (*Katie/Doctors/Nurse*) is delighted to be making her St. Louis theatrical debut in such an important and powerful show. She is a graduate of Pacific Conservatory Theatre's professional actor training program, and earned degrees in Theatre Arts (Acting) and English (Creative Writing) from Utah State University. Her favorite past roles include Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Sarah in *Time Stands Still*, and Celandine/Naiad in *The Penelopiad*. Currently, Claire

# Cast Biographies



**Andrea Purnell** (*Debra Jackson*) is proud to be making her first appearance with the Mustard Seed Theatre. She is a native of St. Louis, Missouri and has maintained a successful artistic career as both an artist and an arts administrator for over 15 years. Her acting credits include theater, commercials, industrial films, and movies. Andrea has performed with the San Diego Repertory Theatre, St. Louis Black Rep, New Line Theatre, New Jewish Theater, and as Roxane in St. Louis Shakespeare Company's *Cyrano De Bergerac*. Her international credits include a performance in Lyon, France with La'HorsDe

where she depicted an American citizen from Pruitt Igoe. Andrea was also featured in the award-winning film *Pennies for The Boatman* by Mario Farewell and was a cast member in the Ghana, West Africa staging. Purnell holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies from Fontbonne University and a Master of Fine Arts in Arts Management and Leadership from Webster University.



**Erin Renee Roberts** (*Dr. Soleil Kirkpatrick*) is a healer, performance art maker and the founder and owner of both Creative Inhabitor and Creative Healing Arts Therapy Tent; her freelance performance artist entity and pop up massage and movement therapy practice, respectively. A native to St. Louis, Roberts is a licensed massage therapist and experienced performing artist, trained in both theater and dance. She has performed with The Black Rep St. Louis, YoungLiars, COCA, Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis, SATE, and more. She obtained her BFA in Acting from Cornish College of the Arts in 2013.

There she wrote and self-produced her one-woman show *LoveLessonsLearned* which she since toured to the Seattle Fringe Festival (2013), the St. Louis Fringe Festival (2014), and the WOW Café Theatre in New York (2016). She is currently exploring film as an expansion to her artistic and healing work. Learn more about Erin Renée Roberts and her work at [creativeinhabitor.com](http://creativeinhabitor.com)



# Creative Team Biographies



**Jacqueline Thompson** (*Director*) is a St. Louis based Actor, Director and Associate Professor at UMSL in the Communication and Media Studies Department. Some of her local acting/directing credits include The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, The Black Rep, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis, Upstream, Mustard Seed Theatre, SATE, Metro Theatre, and New Jewish Theatre. In March 2018, the St. Louis Post Dispatch recognized her as one of six women shaping St. Louis Arts and entertainment.

She was also noted as one of St. Louis' most versatile performers. She received a St. Louis Theater Circle Award for Outstanding Actress in a Drama as well as an Artist Fellowship from the Regional Arts Commission. She was selected by the Theatre Communications Group (TCG, the national organization for theatre) to participate in The Rising Leaders of Color program. In 2019, she received a Visionary award which recognizes St. Louis women in the arts. Thompson was a 2020-2021 FOCUS St. Louis Impact Fellow. She is an associate artist at Metro Theater and a proud member of Actors Equity Association.



**Spencer Lawton** (*Stage Manager*) is a St. Louis-based producer and theatre artist with a BA in Theatre from Saint Louis University. He is thrilled to be making his Mustard Seed debut as the Stage Manager for this incredible show. Recently, Spencer worked on *Midsummer Night's Dream* (SLU), *Residents of Craiglist* (ERA), and *Brontë Sister House Party* (SATE.) He also works with Opera Theatre of St. Louis as an Assistant Costume Shop Manager, ERA as an Associate Producer, and

Critique Theatre Company as a co-producer. Much love to Bess, Deanna, and Jacquie for this fantastic opportunity.



**Jaylin Hester** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) Jaylin Hester is a senior at Fontbonne, majoring in Social Work and minoring in Theatre. She's the assistant stage manager, she's involved with the office of student orientation and engagement of campus, and a member of several committees. She has participated in some high school plays such Antigone, Alice and the Wonderland musical and so forth. Jaylin wants to thank the entire cast and crew for all the wise words and advice as she

preps for after graduation. She is very excited about her first professional production.

# Creative Team Biographies



**Emily Fluchel** (*Props Design*) is very excited to be working with Mustard Seed Theatre and on this new production of *Feminine Energy*. She graduated from The Jeanine Larson Dobbins Conservatory of Theatre and Dance at Southeast Missouri State University with her BFA in Theatre: Design and Technology. You can find her freelancing around St. Louis as a props supervisor or stage manager. She hopes you enjoy the play as much as she does!



**Patrice Nelms** (*Set Design*) is a freelance theatrical designer and technician. Currently, they serve as the Assistant Technical Director at the New Jewish Theatre, as well as the Technical Director at Buck's Rock Creative and Performing Arts Camp in Connecticut during the summer. They are an alumnus of both the Actors Theatre of Louisville apprentice program (2020) and the Dobbins Conservatory of Theatre and Dance at Southeast Missouri State University.



**Shevaré Perry** (*Costume Design*) is a costume designer, artist, poet, and fashion educator. She explores creative expression through the overlap of visual art, theater, and fashion. Shevaré debuted, *She Is Her, I Am She*, as the inaugural artist for Saks Fifth Avenue Gallery and collaborated with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital for their Saints Gala fundraiser. Over the last few years, her art has been featured at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, and galleries in Chicago, New York, and London. She lives her life passion focused; a true example of, "Love what you do, do what you love." Shevaré holds a B.S. Fashion Design from Philadelphia University and attended graduate school in London, England. She has also completed the Community Artist Training and Teaching Artist Institute programs at the Regional Arts Commission.



# Creative Team Biographies



**AhSa-Ti Nu Tyehimba-Ford** (*Sound Design*) is very excited to be a part of *Feminine Energy* with Mustard Seed Theatre. AhSa-Ti Nu has worked on *Kaleidoscope Crown*, *Butterfly Room* and *Billy Elliot* with Center of Creative Arts, *Peter Pan Jr.* with Ignite Theater, *Seed Folks* with Metro Theater, the *Son Jarocho Festival*, Black Art Salon, and *Mighty Real: A Fabulous Sylvester Musical* with Brava Theater Center, San Francisco. She also recently composed, produced and directed the film *Overlooked Giants: A Parable of Queer Women of Color in the Arts*. AhSa-Ti Nu holds a Bachelors of Science in sound arts from Ex'pression College for Digital Arts,

Emeryville, California. AhSa-Ti is a member of the Recording Academy and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. Learn more about AhSa-Ti Nu at [www.ahsatinu.com](http://www.ahsatinu.com)



**Michael Sullivan** (*Lighting Design*) is an Associate Professor Emeritus at Fontbonne University. Michael's previous Mustard Seed Theatre lighting designs include *All is Calm* (Theatre Circle Award) and *An Almost Holy Picture* (Kline nomination). Michael's work at other theatres includes *Way to Heaven* (Theatre Circle Award) at New Jewish Theatre, *The Great Gatsby* for Ozark Actors Theatre and *Proof* for Moonstone Theatre Company. Upcoming projects: *Macbeth* and *Desert Song* for Winter Opera, and *Grand Horizons* for Moonstone Theatre Company.

# From the Playwright

*Feminine Energy* was the product of my time in the Confluence Writers Project. What's funny is that I never intended to share it with anyone. I spent the program's first seven months writing a different play when I reached writer's block. I began to feel drawn to the story of *Feminine Energy*, but I didn't want to share it because it felt too personal. So instead, I initially wrote the piece as a cathartic release from my life experiences. At the time, I was turning 30 and deeply dissatisfied with my life. My PCOS symptoms had become increasingly unbearable, causing debilitating pain almost daily. And my faith- which had been a pillar in my life for many years- was in deep crisis.

I once read a quote saying, "doctors are to black women what police are to black men." So often, institutions created to protect and assist humankind are not safe havens for people of color. There were many moments in my health journey where I felt dismissed, stereotyped, and degraded by my healthcare team. Unfortunately, as I've learned over time, this experience is widespread for black women. Writing *Feminine Energy* became a safe space where I laughed and cried as I navigated through my grief over my life, faith, and health condition and embraced hope and joy at the possibilities of what could come. There's a lot of me in this play, but I also drew from the many stories I've heard from women of color as they navigated their health, relationships with their loved ones, and coming into their own.

## About PCOS

information from [clevelandclinic.org](https://clevelandclinic.org)

Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) is a hormonal imbalance caused by the ovaries creating excess male hormones. If you have PCOS, your ovaries produce unusually high levels of hormones called androgens. This causes your reproductive hormones to become imbalanced. As a result, people with PCOS often have erratic menstrual cycles, missed periods and unpredictable ovulation. Small cysts may develop on your ovaries (fluid-filled sacs) due to lack of ovulation (anovulation). However, despite the name "polycystic," you do not need to have cysts on your ovaries to have PCOS.

PCOS is one of the most common causes of female infertility. It can also increase your risk for other health conditions. Your healthcare provider can treat PCOS based on your symptoms and if you have plans for having children.