

PLAYBILL®

WHITEFIRE THEATRE

NATURALLY TAN

ONE WOMAN'S CROSS CULTURAL PATH TO SELF-WORTH

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY

TANYA THOMAS

DIRECTED AND DEVELOPED BY

JESSICA LYNN JOHNSON



WHITEFIRE THEATRE
SOLOFEST 2021

PRESENTS

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JESSICA LYNN JOHNSON

CREATIVE TEAM

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

BRYAN RASMUSSEN

PRODUCER

NANCY SANTIAGO

LIGHTING DESIGNER

DERRICK McDANIEL

QLAB DESIGNER

BRANDON LOESER

MOHINIYATTAM CHOREOGRAPHY

VIJAYALAKSHMI

VIDEO DESIGNER

KENNY JOHNSTON

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

SERINA MORRIS

MUSIC ARRANGER

BOBBY WILKERSON

ILLUSTRATOR

JO ALLEN SITU

COPYWRITER

EILEEN ROSETE

ILLUSTRATOR

TORI CONSTANTINE

PHOTOGRAPHER

CAMERON JORDAN

FEATURED MUSIC

SAMEER GUPTA

“Taiwa (Alternate Take) “
Album: *Namaskar Trio*

GERRY GIBBS

“And That’s Why They Call It The Blues”
“The Night the Blytheman Walked Into The Room,
the Room went Dark and Nothing Else Mattered”
“Maiden Voyage”
Album: *Gerry Gibbs and The Thrasher Band (Live at Luna)*

MENA MELATH

“Omanathinkal Kidavo”

NIKHITA THORPE

“Bold, Bright, Brave and Beautiful”

WHO'S WHO



TANYA THOMAS

[PLAYWRIGHT, PRODUCER, TANVI + 35 CHARACTERS]

This is Tanya's debut one-woman play. As an actress, her theatre credits include *Nickel and Dime* (Santa Paula Theatre), *Cheyenne Blood* (Elite Theatre Company) and *Please have a seat* (Ojai Art Center Theater). Film Credits include *False Colors*, *Blame*, *Collide*, *Status Change* and *People Are Strange*.

As a voice actor, Tanya has voiced numerous projects for companies like Apple, Target, Amazon, Food Network, GoDaddy, Google etc.

Tanya is excited to premiere her first one-woman play at the Whitefire Theatre and hopes it will inspire you to step into your own light, celebrate your uniqueness, and deepen our understanding of what is to be human. ♥

TANYATHOMAS.COM



JESSICA LYNN JOHNSON

[DIRECTOR AND DEVELOPER]

Jessica Lynn Johnson is a published playwright, recipient of *Best National Solo Artist Award*, Advisory Board Member of the LA Women's Theatre Festival, Director for Whitefire Theatre, and Founder & CEO of Soaring Solo LLC. Jessica has aided in the development of over 100 solo shows (and still going strong)! As a performer, Jessica has "edu-tained" international audiences touring her own one person shows *ZE* and *Oblivious to Everyone* for over 15 years. Jessica's projects have taken home awards such as Top Of Fringe, HFF Encore Producer Awards, Tvolution Best Solo Performance, Larry Cornwall Award For Musical Excellence & several other accolades! Jessica was also nominated for the Female Director of Distinction in Theatre by Girl Trip LLC at the 2018 Hollywood Fringe Festival. Jessica is so honored to be working on this wonderful solo show, *Naturally Tan!*

SOARINGSOLOSTUDIOS.COM

WHO'S WHO



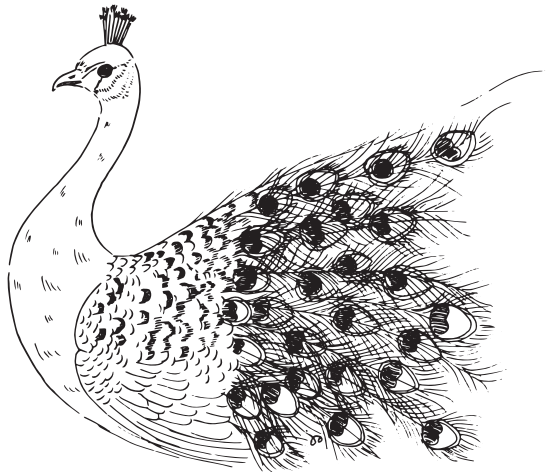
VIJAYALAKSHMI

[MOHINIYATTAM CHOREOGRAPHER]

Vijayalakshmi is a world-renowned Indian classical dancer, an acclaimed exponent of Mohiniyattam, the graceful classical dance form from South India. Daughter and disciple of Bharati Shivaji, Vijayalakshmi takes Mohiniyattam to higher levels by constantly exploring uncharted territory and expanding traditional boundaries. She is also a choreographer, actress, speaker, feminist, writer & singer. A recipient of several prestigious awards, including from the Sangeet Natak Academy, she has performed at some of the most prestigious venues in India and around the globe. Her prominent productions include *Unniarcha*, inspired from Kalaripayattu, the ancient martial art form; *Swan Lake*, inspired from the great Russian composer Tchaikovsky's music; and *Paryapti*, which draws upon the rich cultural ethos and music of Bengal. She has a Bachelors & Masters in English Literature from Lady Shriram College, Delhi University. She is the Artistic-Director of the Centre For Mohiniyattam, New Delhi & the Founder-Director of The Mohiniyattam Institute, Los Angeles.

VIJAYALAKSHMI.NET

THEMOHINIYATTAMINSTITUTE.COM



WHO'S WHO

BRYAN RASMUSSEN

[EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
OF WHITEFIRE THEATRE]

An award-winning actor as well as a director, producer, teacher, coach, and Artistic Director of the Whitefire Theatre, he's proud to be celebrating its' 39th season this year! In the sixteen years he has owned the Whitefire, Bryan has produced over 500 shows, as well as over 50 world premiere productions including *Blood Brothers*, *Love Like Blue*, *Mark Twain in the 20th Century*, *Seasons of Change* and many others. He has directed and acted in the world premiere of the critically acclaimed production of *Firehouse* as well as directing the NAACP Best Solo Show of the Year award-winning *Billie!...backstage w/ Lady Day* about the life of Billie Holiday.

WHITEFIRETHEATRE.COM

DERRICK MCDANIEL

[LIGHTING DESIGNER]

Derrick McDaniel has been working in the live theater arena for over 20 years, both in Los Angeles and New York. From *Romeo and Juliet* to *Guys and Dolls*, Derrick has designed lighting for many plays, musicals and events. A few of his lighting credits include *Mercy Seat* (2012 LA Weekly Awards Winner) at the Inside the Ford Theater, and *Streetcar Named Desire* at the Odyssey Theater – and many others. He has been the go-to lighting designer for the Whitefire Theatre since 1995. Derrick would also like to express his hope that everyone is staying safe in our troubling times!

[LINKEDIN.COM/IN/DERRICK-MCDANIEL-LIGHTING](https://www.linkedin.com/in/derrick-mcdaniel-lighting)

NANCY SANTIAGO

[PRODUCER, WHITEFIRE THEATRE]

Nancy Santiago began her career in theatre over 25 years ago. It began with being asked to take over the Arts Enrichment Program at a private school in a suburb of Seattle Washington. Then went onto partnering with the Theatre Arts Department head at a local high-school. The program went from reaching out to 12 students to 350 students annually. In 2015 she moved to Los Angeles and began working at the Whitefire Theatre. She had the opportunity to work with several great actors and writers, notably Academy Award-Winning writer, director Bobby Moresco and 3-time Emmy Winner Gordon Bressack. Ms. Santiago began producing Solofest in 2015 and has continued to assist Bryan Rasmussen, Artistic Director producing Solofest. the Whitefire Theatre proudly has become the second largest solo festival in the U.S. and currently the largest live-streaming solo festival.

WHITEFIRETHEATRE.COM

KENNY JOHNSTON

[VIDEO DESIGNER, WRESTLING MATCH]

Aside from a long career as an actor, Kenny Johnston is a videographer and editor. Having founded MediaDelux Video Services, Kenny works with many solo artists creating video shorts, green screen effects and performance videos.

[MEDIADLUXVIDEO@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MEDIADELUXVIDEO@GMAIL.COM)

WHO'S WHO

SERINA MORRIS

[GRAPHIC DESIGNER]

Originally from Toronto, Canada, Serina is a Creative Director and Designer from an artistic family that spans three generations of sign-painters. She found her way to LA after living in Miami, Buenos Aires, Barcelona and Ibiza. With a focus on human-centered design, Serina's passion, curiosity and authenticity shine through everything she creates. A background in entertainment, lifestyle, brand advertising and experiential, from start-ups through to Fortune 500 companies. Clients include AT&T, Google, Salesforce, T-Mobile, Samsung, The Honest Company, Zumba, World Animal Protection, and more. From ideas to fruition, Serina is an all around creative solution finder with heart.

SERINAMORRIS.COM

CAMERON JORDAN

[PHOTOGRAPHER]

Cameron Jordan Photography is known for playful and ethereal images that are simultaneously raw and dreamlike. She is dedicated to making positive changes in the world through her craft and does editorial and lifestyle imagery. She has had work featured in Rolling Stone, Vogue, and Conde Nast. Clients include Disney, Tile, Apple, Vonage, Sol Angeles, Bel Kazan, Imagine Dragons, Kucoon, Matches Fashion, and many more. She is so pleased to collaborate with Tanya to create the image for *Naturally Tan*.

CAMERONJORDAN.NET

JO ALLEN SITU

[ILLUSTRATOR]

Jo Situ Allen (also known as Dirty Eraser) is a California artist known for her dreamy works in ink and watercolor. She is sought out for her refined, playful, sensitive and thoughtful artwork that reflects her experience as a Chinese American immigrant, naturalist, intersectional feminist, designer and mother of two. Jo is also the author and illustrator of *The Accidental Naturalist* – a series of books celebrating California's native flora and fauna.

DIRTYERASER.COM

TORI CONSTANTIN

[ILLUSTRATOR]

Tori Constantine (Known on the internet as BodieToli) is a high school student from San Diego who does digital art as a pastime as well as a hobby. She mainly focuses on cartoons and more digital works of art which can be seen throughout her Twitter and Instagram.

@BODIETOLI

EILEEN ROSETE

[COPYWRITER]

Eileen Rosete is the founder of feminist wellness brand, Our Sacred Women, whose mission is to restore women to a place of reverence through specialty gifts, events, and campaigns that help women feel seen, valued, and honored. She is currently writing her first book, *Our Womb Loss* – a compassionate guide to grieving and postpartum healing after pregnancy and infant loss, which will be published by Sounds True in Fall 2022.

OURSACREDWOMEN.COM



OMANATHINKAL KIDAVO

LULLABY SNIPPET FEATURED IN *NATURALLY TAN*

In the Malayalam language, there is a rich collection of traditional lullabies, known as *Tharaattu Pattu*. One of the most famous is *Omanathinkal Kidavo*, written and composed by poet lyricist Irayimman Thampi in 1813. This lullaby was written for the queen of Travancore to sing to her son young prince Swathi Thirunal, who later became the king and a famous musician. His birth was a long-awaited event for the royal family since it faced the threat of being annexed into British India under the Doctrine of Lapse for want of a male heir. The lyrics of the poem reflect this sense of relief when it refers to the baby as a ‘treasure from God’ and ‘the fruit of the tree of fortune’. An interesting feature of this lullaby is that it doesn’t mention the word sleep in it. Sleep is therefore induced by the effects of the raga. The song lends itself well to the graceful classical dance form, *Mohiniyattam*.

LYRICS IN MALAYALAM

ഓമനത്തിങ്കൾക്കിടാവോ
നല്ല കോമളത്താമരപ്പൂവോ
പൂവിൽ നിറഞ്ഞ മധുവോ
പരിപൂർണ്ണേനു തൻറെ നിലാവോ

LYRICS IN ENGLISH

Omanathinkal kidavo,
nalla komala thamara puuvo
Puvvil niranja madhuvo,
pari-puurnendu thande nilavo

TRANSLATION BY A. H. FOX STRANGWAYS IN *THE MUSIC OF HINDOSTAN*

Is this sweet baby
The bright crescent’s moon,
or the charming flower of the lotus?
The honey in a flower,
or the lustre of the full moon?

FEATURING MUSIC BY



SAMEER GUPTA

Sameer Gupta is known as one of the few percussionists simultaneously representing the traditions of American jazz on drumset, and Indian classical music on tabla. Sameer completed his Jazz studies learning from his peers on the bandstands in San Francisco and Oakland to Harlem and Brooklyn. His own interests and love of tabla helped guide Sameer to become a co-founder of the non-profit collective Brooklyn Raga Massive.

Today he lives in Brooklyn, NYC and is actively involved in performing, curating, producing and teaching through various institutions including the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Brooklyn Raga Massive and Carnegie Hall's Global Encounters. Sameer has had the pleasure to make music with many great musicians including 2019 NEA Jazz Master recipient Reggie Workman, Harry Belafonte, Marc Cary, Casey Benjamin, Wallace Roney, Pandit Ramesh Mishra and numerous other luminaries. From bebop to avant-garde jazz, and European classical percussion to North Indian classical tabla. Gupta continues to compose and perform music from a true multi-cultural perspective that now bridges several continents.

SAMEERGUPTA.COM



GERRY GIBBS

Gerry Gibbs is a Grammy nominated Drummer, Producer, Band Leader, Composer & Arranger. Gibbs has released 13 albums as a leader. His first, back in 1996, *Gerry Gibbs Sextet – The Thrasher* featured saxophonist Ravi Coltrane with Quincy Jones as Executive Producer and his second release *First Visit*, with the Third Trio From The Sun, featured 7-time Grammy winning producer Greg Kurstin (producer of Adele's megahit "Hello"). More recently Gibbs released *Gerry Gibbs & The Thrasher Dream Trio, We're Back* and *Live In Studio* which featured Jazz luminaries Ron Carter & Kenny Barron. These celebrated trio recordings featured many special guests including Cassandra Wilson, and Roy Hargrove. After performing with this legendary trio, Gibbs created the Thrasher People Band with the release of the double CD *Weather or Not*, that featured Gibbs' acoustic jazz arrangements of Weather Report compositions as well as original material. Gerry will be releasing his next CD in August 2021. It will feature the music of his father, Terry Gibbs, featuring Gerry's 4 all star trios feat Chick Corea, Ron Carter, Kenny Barron, Buster Williams, Patrice Rushen, Stanley Clarke, Geoff Keezer and Christian McBride.

GERRY-GIBBS.COM

FEATURING MUSIC BY



MENA MELATH

Mena Melath is a young singer from Kasaragod in Kerala, India. Mena brings virtuosity and allure to her eponymous debut, *Omanathinkal Kidavo* – the celebrated lullaby of Irayimman Thampi, through her sublime voice. The song is featured in *Naturally Tan*.

Her latest Malayalam song ‘Unni En Kannile’ is available on Spotify.

@MENA_MELATH



BOBBY WILKERSON


Bobby Wilkerson is a rare and genuine talent. He was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. As his musical journey progressed, in his later years Bobby found time in his busy schedule to give back to kids in the Pacoima area. Bobby’s vocal and drumming skills afforded him the opportunity to perform and tour with artists such as Rose Royce, Charlie Wilson, The Whispers, The Dazz Band, Brick, Zap, The Gap Band, Teena Marie, Confunkshun, The SOS Band, The Mary Jane Girls, The BarKays, Chico Debarge, The Temptations and Lakeside to name a few.

Bobby was the former drummer and background vocalist for the legendary group LTD. Currently he is the musical director for the renowned funk group Slave, The Delfonics Revue featuring Gary Stevens, and the drummer for the R&B group Side-Effect. His acclaimed debut album entitled *The B Project* spotlights his many talents. He arranged, composed and produced the entire album. The album features outstanding tracks including “Beggin’ You”, “Shower Your Love” and “Teach Me Thrill Me”. Bobby Wilkerson is a producer extraordinaire and after folks check out *The B Project*, they’ll know why Bobby “had to put it down this way to keep originality in the game”.

BOBBYWILKERSON.COM

SINGLISH

FLASH CARDS

 cut along the dotted lines



Paiseh

(Origin: Hokkien)

EMBARRASSED



Yam Seng

(Origin: Cantonese)

CHEERS



Sibei Hot

(Origin: Hokkien)

VERY HOT



Heng

(Origin: Hokkien)

LUCKY



Shiok

(Origin: Malay)

exclamation word for
DELIGHT



Siao

(Origin: Hokkien)

CRAZY



Alamak

(Origin: Malay)

SHOCK/SURPRISE



Ai ya or Ai yo

(Origin: Mandarin)

OH, NO!



Garang

(Origin: Malay)

FIERCE/GUNG-HO



Suaku

(Origin: Hokkien)

"MOUNTAIN TURTLE"
Someone who is not well informed

MORE SINGLISH WORDS

(USED IN THE SHOW)

Suay

(Origin: Hokkien/Teochew)

UNLUCKY

Zao Geng

(Origin: Hokkien)

UNINTENTIONAL
EXPOSURE

Ang Moh

(Origin: Hokkien)

CAUCASIAN

Kena

(Origin: Malay)

PERSON RECEIVING
SOMTHING
UNPLEASANT

Kiasu

(Origin: Hokkien)

FEAR OF
LOSING OUT

Buey Tahan

(Origin: Hokkien/Malay)

CANNOT TOLERATE
ANY LONGER

Cheem

(Origin: Hokkien/Teochew)

PROFOUND
OR COMPLEX

Lah/Lor/Leh

(Origin: Hokkien)

PLACED AT THE END OF SENTENCES FOR
EMPHASIS OR REASSURANCE

SINGLISH FLASH CARD ILLUSTRATIONS BY JO ALLEN SITU aka DIRTY ERASER featuring Singaporean snacks and desserts:

Roti Prata - A South-Indian flat bread made by frying stretched dough flavored with ghee

Champagne - Universal desert/drink

Ice Kacang - A shaved ice dessert topped with rose syrup, condensed milk, red beans and cendol (green rice flour jelly)

Kueh Lapis - Nine-layer steamed cake made from coconut milk, tapioca flour & pandan leaves

Kueh Tutu - Floral shaped steamed cake filled with grated coconut cooked in gula melaka (sugar from coconut palms)

Iced Gem Biscuit - Old school biscuits with icing that originated in Britain

Medu Vada - Savory South Indian fritter made from black lentils

Pandan Cake - Chiffon cake with pandan leaf flavoring, giving it a lime green hue

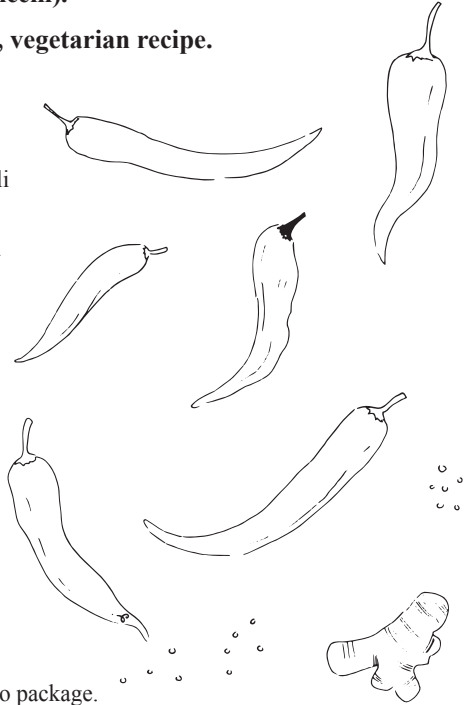
SINGAPORE RECIPE

Tanvi mentions several Singapore foods and one of her favorites is Mee Hoon Goreng (Spicy Rice Vermicelli).

Here's her exclusive gluten free, vegetarian recipe.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 package of Brown Rice Vermicelli
- 1 Carrot, julienned
- ½ head of Cabbage, thinly chopped
- Spring Onion Bunch, chopped
- 3 Eggs, beaten
- 8 Shallots, chopped
- 8 cloves of Garlic
- 2 inch piece of Ginger
- 6 dry Red Chilli soaked in water
- 1 cup of Water
- 5 tbsp Cooking Oil
- 7-8 tbsp of Tamari or more



DIRECTIONS

- Cook vermicelli noodles according to package.
- Heat 1-2 tbsp of oil in pan.
- Add beaten eggs. Scramble the eggs.
- Transfer to plate and set aside.
- Grind the 4 shallots, garlic, ginger, chilli to make a paste. Sadap! (Malay for yummy)
- Heat 3 tbsp oil in pan.
- Add the paste and sauté till well cooked and dry.
- Add remaining shallots and carrots.
- Add 1 cup of water and tamari. Bring to a boil.
- Add vermicelli and toss well.
- Add the cabbage.
- Once the Mee Hoon is cooked, add spring onions and scrambled eggs.

Now it's MAKAN time [Singlish (Origin: Malay) for eat].

It's SHIOK [Singlish (Origin: Malay) for delicious!]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In your inimitable, space holding ways, you have each been instrumental in helping me bring this play to life. I am forever grateful to:

JESSICA LYNN JOHNSON, my rockstar director.

Bryan Rasmussen, Nancy Santiago, Derrick McDaniel, Brandon Loeser, Tor Brown & Kenny Johnston at the WHITEFIRE THEATRE.

THE SOARING SOLO COMMUNITY

Fashion Mamas synergy with SERINA MORRIS, JO ALLEN SITU, EILEEN ROSETE and CAMERON JORDAN.

MENA MELATH, GERRY GIBBS, SAMEER GUPTA & BOBBY WILKERSON for the beats.

THE LYNN RANCHERS

KUMAR, my inspiration for Tanvi.

My loving parents, NORMA AND JOHN, watching the live-stream from Singapore!

EVERYONE who attended the *Naturally Tan* Reading!

My bold, bright, brave and beautiful girls, NIKHITA and AANIKA

&

JOSH THORPE for unconditional love and endless encouragement. I love you!





SHOW SYNOPSIS

NATURALLY TAN

ONE WOMAN'S CROSS CULTURAL PATH TO SELF-WORTH


Told through the bold perspective of a vivacious drag queen named Tanvi, *Naturally Tan* follows Tanya Thomas' desperation to fit in as a minority in Singapore and her search for acceptance in America.

Fueled by assimilation pains, Tanya delves into the heart of colorism that plagues the Asian diaspora, the complexities of racial identity, and the consequences of damaging beauty standards.

Will Tanya hide behind her insecurities forever or will she embody her worth as a woman of color, mother, and artist?

 LEARN MORE ABOUT TANYA'S ONGOING PROJECTS AT [TANYATHOMAS.COM](https://tanyathomas.com)

 FOLLOW HER ON INSTAGRAM [@TANYATHOMASDOTCOM](https://www.instagram.com/tanyathomasdotcom)

 EMAIL HER AT [TANYA@TANYATHOMASVO.COM](mailto:tanya@tanyathomasvo.com)