



Poetry for the People:

The June Jordan Experience



Theater Alliance

INSERIES

OPERA that speaks. THEATER that sings.



welcome.

On behalf of the staff, board, and artists of Theater Alliance and IN Series, we are so glad you're here. In person. Sharing space with this community. It's a wonderful feeling to be back.

If this is your first return to live theater, we are glad you chose to be with us. If it isn't, thank you for already jumping in to support our city's performing arts.



Land Acknowledgement

Theater Alliance would like to recognize the land on which the Anacostia Arts Center stands was once home to the Piscataway and Nacotchtank tribes. This acknowledgement and the centering of Native peoples is an important step in honoring their legacy and the injustices they have suffered so we may do better by them in the future.

Visit <https://usdac.us/nativeland> for more information on land acknowledgment.



The Team

Directed by

Raymond O. Caldwell

Scenic Design by

Jonathan Dahm Robertson *

Lighting Design by

Marianne Meadows

Sound Design by

Brandon Cook

Costume Design by

Bebe LaMonica

Projections Design by

Zavier Augustus Lee Taylor

Technical Direction by

Jonathan Dahm Robertson *

Stage Management by

Genny Ceperley

Dramaturg

Timothy Nelson

Production Management by

Dominique Douglas Hendricks

Produced by

Raymond O. Caldwell

Jennifer Clements

Timothy Nelson

Corinne Hayes

Developed by

Raymond O. Caldwell & Adrienne Torf

**Member, United Scenic Artists, Local 829*

The Ensemble

Lisa Danielle Buch

Sophia Early

Ezinne Elele

Shana Oshiro

Llogan Peters

Anna Shafer

Pianist

Adrienne Torf

Featuring the Work of June Jordan

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Songs & Poems

"Brooklyn from the Roof"

Adrienne Torf

"On the Spirit of Mildred Jordan"

June Jordan

"Ah Momma"

June Jordan

"Oughta Be a Woman"

*Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: Bernice Johnson
Reagon*

"Poem for Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer"

June Jordan

"Poem About My Rights"

June Jordan

Song of the Law Abiding Citizen"

Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: Adrienne Torf

"On the Dialectics of the Diatonic Scale"

Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: Adrienne Torf

"Bang Bang Über Alles"

Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: Adrienne Torf

"Impromptu in Gb Major"

Schubert

"4th Movement of Freedom Now Suite"

Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: Adrienne Torf

"These Poems"

June Jordan

"Dance / Nicaragua"

Adrienne Torf

"I Must Become a Menace to My Enemies"

June Jordan

"Interracial Marriage"

Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: Adrienne Torf

"Leila's Song"

Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: John Adams

"I Guess It Was My Destiny to Live So Long"

June Jordan

"I Live in Subtraction"

June Jordan

"One of Them Is You"

Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: Adrienne Torf

"1st Movement of Freedom Now Suite"

Lyrics: June Jordan, Music: Adrienne Torf

The Cast



Lisa Danielle Buch



Sophia Early



Ezinne Elele



Shana Oshiro



Llogan Peters



Anna Shafer

A Note From the Director

For the last three months I've been baptized by the words, music, activism, politic, voice, memories, laughter, love, and spirit of June Jordan — and I will forever be transformed. I'm frustrated by the fact that her voice (until this point) was never centered in my formal or personal education — and if that was true for me, I'd venture to say that it might be true for members of my community as well.

Adrienne and I originally set out to develop a production that introduced and celebrated “essential” June Jordan to audiences. But as we got deeper into discussing June's massive canon of work, Adrienne's passion for her friend and collaborator were ignited unlocking a series of memories, laughter, tears, and joy that became the spine of this production.

Their friendship and collaboration was inspiring for me because in many ways it was the perfect articulation of June's idea that love and truth are shared pathways toward collective liberation.

June was a true poet for the people. She used the form to speak truth, point out injustice, celebrate and uplift the marginalized and voiceless, and to grapple with every part of her past, present, and future. She was beyond categorization and a consummate teacher who seemingly inspired every person she met.

And now June's voice speaks to a new generation of activists still grappling with the same injustices. Her ideas: timeless, consistent, and unflinching, reinforce the importance of our collective involvement because “this fight takes all of us. And we're not making this fight simply to fight - but to create a space and place where love is possible for all.”

*Born in Wiesbaden, Germany and raised all over the world, **Raymond O. Caldwell** (he/him/his) is an award-winning director and producer. He has directed for Round House, Imagination Stage, Mosaic Theater, The Kennedy Center, National Players, Olney Theatre Center, Solas Nua, CulturalDC, and the Hegira. Prior to leading Theater Alliance, he was a faculty member and resident director in Howard University's Department of Theatre Arts for six years, and spent six seasons as the Community Engagement Partnership Manager at Arena Stage. He is committed to using theatre as a tool to transform communities, and has worked with a number of non-profits and NGOs throughout the world. In July 2019—in partnership with the US Department of State and NGOs based in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal—he developed theatre with artists and activists to promote peace and counter violent extremism. He has done similar work throughout the US, India, Ukraine, and Croatia. MFA, Acting/New Play Development: The Ohio State University; BFA, Acting: University of Florida. www.raymondocaldwell.com*

A Note From Adrienne Torf



In our first conversation, two months ago, Raymond Caldwell and Timothy Nelson extended a compelling invitation. They wanted to produce a theater piece that would inspire more people to learn about June, her poetry and activism, and could I help them define what was quintessential about her? What would be important to convey to audiences new to her work? My initial response was, perhaps, obvious – that she approached everything she wrote as a poet, and that everything she did was fueled by love. For June, her essays, journalism, young adult fiction and plays were all the work of a poet. And by love she meant not only romantic love, but the powerful love that moves people to see and hear each other across differences, to trust, to connect, and to act together to create greater possibilities for life and love for all.

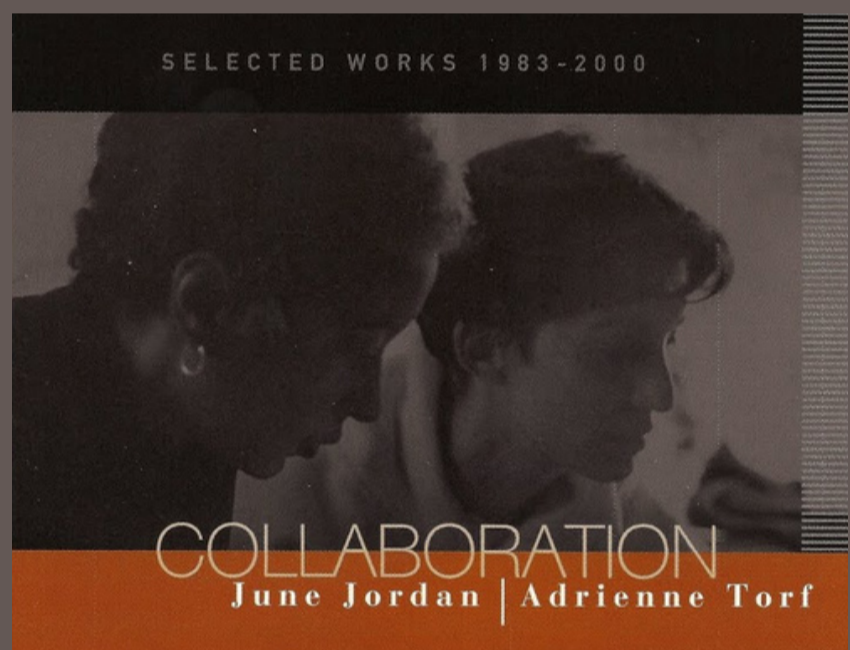
And then...her infectious laughter...her focus on her students...her insistence on staying in shape physically...her son, her parents, her community of poets and activists. I was reticent to center the relationship June and I shared. So often, people stake claims to a place in the lives of those who have passed, narratives hued by feelings of loss or joy or a desire to be associated with celebrity. Raymond and Timothy gracefully moved me through that.

Developing this script became a collaboration based in trust. The brilliant talent, both on stage and off, who bring “Poetry for the People: The June Jordan Experience” to life became the kind of beloved community that was core to June’s work and remains part of her legacy. I am deeply grateful to Theater Alliance and IN Series for inviting me into this community, and to my family and friends who waited patiently for me to return to the piano, where I belong.

About Adrienne Torf

Adrienne Torf (she/her) and June Jordan's artistic and life collaboration began in 1984. Their staged works include *Freedom Now Suite* (1984, Town Hall, NYC), and their full-length stage musical *Bang Bang Uber Alles*, (1984-85, American Place Theater, NYC and *Celebrate Brooklyn*; 1986, Seven Stages Theater, Atlanta.) They also performed their collaborative work together in numerous venues, including the St Marks Poetry Project and the National Women's Music Festival. A selection of their collaborative work, recorded in the studio, is on *COLLABORATION: June Jordan & Adrienne Torf, Selected Works, 1983-2000*. Adrienne has also enjoyed a long-running career as a soloist pianist, accompanist to singers and dance companies, and musical director for Off-Broadway theater productions. Her composition "Ode to the Poet" was commissioned and performed by the Brooklyn Philharmonic under the direction of Tania León. Adrienne's original works for piano and synthesizer can be found on the recordings *Brooklyn From the Roof* and *Two Hands Open*.

Listen to more of her work here: <https://adriennetorf.bandcamp.com/>



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About June Jordan



One of the most widely-published and highly-acclaimed American writers of her generation, poet, playwright, and essayist June Jordan (1936-2002) was known for her fierce commitment to human rights and political activism. Over a career that produced twenty-seven volumes of poems, essays, libretti, and works for children, Jordan was a passionate and influential voice for self-determination for all people. A prolific writer across genres, Jordan's poetry is known for its immediacy and accessibility as well as its insistence on poetic craft. Jordan's work also frequently imagines reasons for connection among people across the globe. Alice Walker calls Jordan "Among the bravest of us...the universal poet," and Toni Morrison wrote about Jordan, "In political journalism that cuts like razors, in essays that blast the darkness of confusion with relentless light...I am talking about a span of forty years of tireless activism coupled with and fueled by flawless art." Jordan taught at some of the country's most prestigious universities, including Yale, Sarah Lawrence, State University of New York-Stony Brook, and the University of California-Berkeley, where she founded Poetry for the People. Her honors and awards include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Massachusetts Council on the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the National Association of Black Journalists, and a Rockefeller Foundation grant.

About the Cast

Lisa Danielle Buch (Ensemble, she/her) is thrilled to make her Theater Alliance debut honoring June Jordan. She was previously touring the nation with Olney Theatre Center's National Players Tour '71 rep of *As You Like It* (Rosalind), *Diary of Anne Frank* (Mrs. Van Daan), and *Walk Two Moons* (Sugar/Mrs. W). Other credits include: (upcoming) *Mary Kate Olsen is in Love* (Ashley) Strand Theater, Baltimore. Regional: *The Taming of the Shrew* (Kate), *A Midsummer Nights' Dream* (Snug). University: *Machinal* (Young Woman) *La Mujer Barbuda* (Magdalena) *Failure: A Love Story* (Gerty) *Middletown* (Librarian). Lisa also writes and produces her own work. Her solo show *Simple Math* premiered at the New York International Fringe Festival in 2018 and at The Tank NYC in 2019. Education: MFA Acting (Ohio University).

Sophia Early (Ensemble, she/her) is a recent graduate of Howard University's BFA musical theater program. She has appeared in several productions at Howard, including *Pippin* (Ensemble), *Milk Like Sugar* (Myrna), and the Howard Players production of *Lysistrata* (Female Chorus Leader). Professional work includes *Sleep Deprivation Chamber* (Ensemble), which was part of the Adrienne Kennedy Festival at Round House Theatre. Sophia has also ventured into the world of audiodrama recently, starring in *WithGoodCo's Retribution: a Miniseries* (Terra), and *The Welders DC's Girl's Night (With Spirits)* (Sad Spirit).

Ezinne Elele (Ensemble, she/her) is a graduate of Howard University with a BFA in musical theater, and has mostly recently been seen in Theater Alliance's *A Chorus Within Her*. She would like to take this time to send prayers to all those in struggling in Ukraine. Next time you see her, she will be performing in First Stage's *Under the Sea with Dredgie McGee*.

Shana Oshiro (Ensemble, she/her) is an alumna of Morgan State University with a BFA in Vocal Performance and is a former Miss Maryland. She has appeared with Opera Philadelphia in productions of *Porgy and Bess* and *Margaret Garner*, made several appearances with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra as a featured ensemble member, as well as appeared with multiple local orchestras, opera/theater companies, and chorales in the DC Metropolitan area. She has received awards and recognition in vocal competitions and showcases, nationally and internationally. Shana is also a board-certified music therapist, and has combined her love for performance with her interest in community music therapy to address racism in the US with her barbershop quartet, HALO, and their collective community music therapy initiative. Their program, Race and #RealTalk, guides people through the listening and singing experience of barbershop music to help engage each other in difficult conversations about our country's complex race relations issues.

Llogan Peters (Ensemble, she/her) is a recent graduate of Howard University where she received her B.F.A. in acting. During the pandemic she worked with Theater Alliance in the digital production, *City in Transition: The Quadrant Series*. This is Llogan's first live theater performance since graduating in 2021 and she is thrilled to be playing with Theater Alliance again! Llogan can be seen in *PERFECT the series* on YouTube and heard on the *Tales of the Text* Teen Drama Podcast on all streaming platforms. She is currently gaining production experience as the Company Management Assistant at Ford's Theatre. Llogan would like to thank the cast, production team, her family, friends, D.I.V.A. Inc., and AKA Sorority, Inc. for all of their support.

Anna Shafer (Ensemble, she/they) is thrilled to be returning to Theater Alliance following her appearance as devising ensemble in *A Chorus Within Her*. Pre-pandemic, Anna was a member of Tour 71 of the National Players (*As You Like It*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Walk Two Moons*). Now, she is just happy to see live theater returning to the stage! Anna is so humbled to be working with such talented and generous artists, and would like to thank Theater Alliance, Adrienne Torf, and her wonderful family and friends for their ongoing support.

About the Creative Team

Genny Ceperley (Stage Manager, she/they) graduated in 2017 with a BA in Theater, Speech, & Dance from the College of William & Mary. After moving to DC, they worked with a number of theaters as a carpenter, electrician, props master, and ASM. Genny came to the Anacostia Playhouse in 2019, as an ASM for *Driving Miss Daisy*. They joined Theater Alliance as an ASM for *This Bitter Earth*. In 2021, Genny rejoined TA as a Production Assistant during the filming of *The Quadrant Series*, as well as *The Blackest Battle*. In fall of 2022, Genny became the Company Manager for Theater Alliance. Recently she stage managed the premiere of *A Chorus Within Her*. They are very excited to help bring Poetry for the People, to the Anacostia community.

Brandon Cook (Sound Designer, he/him) is a local Washington DC Sound Designer making this Theater Alliance debut with *Poetry For The People*. Brandon is extremely proud to have worked on such an important and relevant piece. He feels privileged to have helped bring a beautiful body of work to the people of Washington DC. Recent credits include: *Man Covets Bird*, Spooky Action Theatre 2021, *Fuego Flamenco*, Gala Hispanic Theatre 2021.

Bebe LaMonica (Costume Designer, she/her) is one of the newest and freshest faces in the world of costume design. Based in Washington DC, Bebe brings stories and characters to life through her sharp fashion sense and deep love for the art of costuming.

Marianne Meadows (Lighting Designer, she/her) is a member of United Scenic Artists Local #829. She is a resident lighting designer for Washington Stage Guild, as well as for Histrio and Theatre Lab. She earned an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College, University of Washington, trained at Lester Polakov's Studio and Forum of Stage Design. Previous productions include work with the Rep Stage, Solas Nua, Ford's Theatre, Kennedy Center. Marianne was nominated multiple times for a Helen Hayes Award (*Quills* at Woolly Mammoth, *Old Wicked Songs* at Studio Theatre, *The Chosen* at Theater J). She received Theatre Lobby's Mary Goldwater Award in 2004.

Jonathan Dahm Robertson (Scenic Design, he/him) is a scenic and projections designer for theater, opera, and events. Selected opera credits: *Nixon in China*, *Fidelio*, *Peter Grimes* (Princeton Festival); *Candide*, *Un Ballo En Maschera*, *Così fan tutte* (Opera in the Heights, Houston); *The Consul* (A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute). Selected theater credits: *Day of Absence*, *Blood at the Root* (Theater Alliance); *The Agitators*, *Oh God*, (Mosaic Theater Co.); *The Christians* (Theater J); *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Murder for Two*, *One Slight Hitch*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and more (Totem Pole Playhouse); *Broadway Bound*, *Member of the Wedding* (1st Stage); *Coolatully*, *The Frederick Douglass Project* (Solas Nua); *The Small Room at the Top of Stairs* (Spooky Action Theater Company), and many more. Jonathan holds a BFA in Scenic Design from UNCSA, and was a 2015-16 Kenan Fellow at the Kennedy Center. Member USA829. Visit www.jdahmrobertson.com

Zavier Augustus Lee Taylor (Projections Design, he/him) is a multimedia artist and designer with a focus on interactive and impactful video design for live performance. He has a passion for being hands-on in the creation of new work. Zavier spends his time experimenting with motion graphics, visual art, video editing, and sound design. Zavier also operates a multimedia production company known as ZALT Productions. ZALT Productions is a creative entity that enables people and businesses to fully realize their potential through design. Zavier is eager to connect with and build a network of creatives both locally (DMV), nationally and abroad. Learn more about Zavier and his previous work by searching #ZALTproductions on social media platforms. Instagram: @zaltslaw Website: <https://zavier.myportfolio.com/>

Special Thanks

Adrienne Torf, the Estate of June Jordan, Boosey & Hawkes,
Bernice Reagon, the Anacostia Arts Center

... and all of June's friends and admirers
who have traveled to be here.

INSERIES

OPERA that speaks. **THEATER** that sings.

We make theater from music: transforming artists, audiences,
and community by disrupting expectations, nourishing
empathy, stimulating insight, and deepening the conversation.

Theater Alliance

We develop socially conscious, thought-provoking work that
engages our community in dialogue and spurs social justice
action in our community.