



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cornerstone Theater Company Presents a New Play in Queens, New York

Created in Collaboration with the Community of Queens and Cornerstone Theater's Institute Summer Residency

QUEENS, NY—Cornerstone Theater Company is pleased to present the premiere of a new play in Queens, New York this summer (title TBD). The play will be performed at the Kupferberg Center for the Arts: Goldstein Theatre at Queens College on Friday, August 10 at 8 p.m. and Saturday, August 11 at 2 and 8 p.m. Tickets are pay-what-you-can with a suggested donation of \$10. For more information and to reserve tickets email info@cornerstonetheater.org or call 1-800-578-1335.

This summer Los Angeles-based Cornerstone Theater Company travels to the east coast to make a new play with and about the people of Queens, New York, the most ethnically diverse urban area in the world. Guest playwright (and New Yorker) Cusi Cram adapts *The Odyssey* to reflect the stories and histories of what it means to call Queens home. Directed by Juliette Carrillo, the play focuses on the community of Flushing, an incredibly vital neighborhood in Queens, and draws inspiration from Queens College, their neighbors at Pomonok Houses, the Freedom Mile, and the 7 Train.

Cornerstone Theater Company has been a leader in the community-engaged arts movement for over thirty years, working with renowned playwrights such as Larissa FastHorse, Naomi Iizuka, Lisa Loomer and Sarah Ruhl, in California, across the country, and internationally to create highly impactful new plays in collaboration with underserved communities.

“We could not be more pleased and honored to be in residence at Queens College,” said Michael John Garcés, Cornerstone Theater Company’s longtime artistic director. “The college represents the borough in all of its beautiful diversity, and is deeply committed to equity and social justice, which makes it a perfect partner for us. On a personal note, I lived in Queens for almost a decade, and am really excited to be coming back to the place where I started my career in the theatre.”

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This new play is produced as part of Cornerstone Theater’s Institute Summer Residency. This year is the first time since the immersive learning experience began in 2004 that the residency is taking place outside of California. Through this program, Cornerstone creates a play in collaboration with a unique community while living in the context of that community for four weeks. Previous Institute Summer Residencies have taken place in urban and rural communities throughout California including the agricultural towns of Lost Hills and Arvin in Kern County, Salinas, and Fowler near Fresno, Los Angeles neighborhoods of Venice and Pacoima, and Eureka in far north Humboldt County, among other places.

For this production, 12 Cornerstone company members as well as 13 Institute Participants from across the U.S. and Canada will be in residence at Queens College, building new relationships in the Queens community to produce the play. In preparation, Cornerstone company members have spent time over the past 5 months exploring Queens by attending community meetings and events, and connecting with local residents to learn and share stories. Story Circles continue into the first week of the residency and lead to a new script in time for first rehearsal. Open auditions for the local community take place at Queens College and nearby. In addition to Queens College, other local organizations, such as Pomonok Community Center, The Central Queens Y and Flushing Town Hall are providing significant assistance for development of this new play. “Cornerstone’s received tremendous hospitality in Queens. We are excited to put the community onstage with a beautiful theatrical production,” says Paula Donnelly, Cornerstone’s Director of Engagement.

CREATIVE TEAM

CUSI CRAM (Writer) Cusi Cram is a playwright, screenwriter, educator and an advocate for women in the arts. Her plays have been produced by: Primary Stages, LAByrinth Theater Company, The Denver Center, Princeton’s Lewis Center for the Arts, The Echo Theater, The Williamstown Theatre Festival, South Coast Repertory, The Atlantic Theater, New Georges, and on stages large and small all over this fine country. Her theater work has been generously supported with residencies and fellowships from The O’Neill Theater Center, The Bogliasco Foundation, the Camargo Foundation, The Herrick Foundation, The Fornes Institute, The Ford Foundation, Space on Ryder Farm and the Stillpoint Fund. She is a 2018 recipient of a NYSCA commission in collaboration with Rattlestick Theater for her play, *Novenas for a Lost Hospital*, which looks at the closing of St. Vincent’s Hospital in New York’s West Village.

She’s also written many teleplays and pilots for both kids and adults and worked as a writer on Showtime’s *The Big C*, starring Laura Linney. She is a long-time writer on WGBH’s children’s program, *Arthur* for which she has received three Emmy nominations. Cusi recently directed her first film, *Wild and Precious*, through AFI’s Directing Workshop for Women where it won The Adrienne Shelly and Nancy Mallone Awards and played at over twenty festivals nationwide. She

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sits on the board of the Leah Ryan Fund for Emerging Women Writers and is a member of New Georges' Kitchen Cabinet and Labyrinth Theater Company. She is the former Director of Outreach for the Lilly Awards Foundation, which honors notable women in theater and seeks to shine a light on issues surrounding female theater makers. She has taught at Fordham, Columbia University, and Primary Stages Einhorn School of the Performing Arts, where she was recently honored for her dedication to the school and its students. She is an Assistant Arts Professor in the Department of Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Cusi is a graduate of Brown University and the Lila Acheson American Playwright's Program at Juilliard.

JULIETTE CARRILLO (Director) is a nationally recognized theatre director, writer, and award-winning filmmaker from Los Angeles, CA. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama. As a Cornerstone ensemble member, Juliette has directed community collaborations including *Los Faustinos* by Bernardo Solano, *As Vishnu Dreams* by Shishir Kurup, *Touch the Water* by Julie Hébert, *Lethe* by Octavio Solis, *It's All Bueno* by Sigrid Gilmer and *Bliss Point* by Shishir Kurup. She also wrote *Plumas Negras* for the 10th Cornerstone Institute with the East Salinas, CA, community, and *Ghost Town* for Cornerstone's last Institute with the Venice, CA, community. Outside of Cornerstone, some of her favorite collaborations have been directing the world premiere of *Lydia*, by Octavio Solis, the West Coast premiere of Pulitzer Prize winner, *Anna in the Tropics* by Nilo Cruz, the world premiere of *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot* by José Rivera, and the West Coast premiere of Sam Shepard's *Eyes for Consuela*. She has directed for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Magic Theatre, Arizona Theater Company, Yale Repertory Theatre and the Mark Taper Forum. She has done numerous workshops in regional as well NYC theatres such as The Public, New York Theatre Workshop, INTAR and The Women's Project. Juliette was an Artistic Associate at South Coast Repertory for seven years, where she directed and ran the Hispanic Playwright's Project, collaborating with writers such as Nilo Cruz and Jose Rivera. She is a recipient of several awards, including the prestigious National Endowment of the Arts/Theatre Communications Group Directing Fellowship and the Princess Grace Award. She was also chosen by Sundance Institute Theatre program to participate in the Sundance/Luma Foundation Theater Directors' Retreat in Arles, France.

The cast will feature Cornerstone Ensemble members Peter Howard and Page Leong along with members from the community and Institute participants.

An award-winning design team including: Scenic Design by Meghan E. Healey; Costume Design by Nephelie Andonyadis; Lighting Design by Geoff Korf; and Puppet Design by Lynn Jeffries.

The Kupferberg Center for the Arts: Goldstein Theatre is located on the campus of Queens College [65-30 Kissena Blvd, Flushing, NY 11367](http://cornerstonetheater.org/summer-play-in-queens). More information is available at <http://cornerstonetheater.org/summer-play-in-queens>.

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ABOUT CORNERSTONE THEATER COMPANY

Cornerstone Theater Company has been making new plays with and about communities throughout Los Angeles and beyond for over 30 years. Nationally recognized as a leader in community engaged theater, our plays celebrate many voices as we strive to include people who have not been on stage or even seen theater. Combining the artistry of people with many levels of theatrical experience, we act upon the conviction that artistic expression is civic engagement and that access to a creative forum is essential to the wellness and health of every individual and community. Our plays are staged in theaters, parking lots, factories, schools and subway stations. Each venue is specific to its project and community; audiences pay what they can so our performances are always accessible to all. Visit Cornerstonetheater.org and follow the story on social media [@cornerstonetheater](https://www.facebook.com/cornerstonetheater) on Facebook and Instagram, [@cornerstonethtr](https://twitter.com/cornerstonethtr) on Twitter and [youtube.com/CornerstoneTheater](https://www.youtube.com/CornerstoneTheater).

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