

THEATRE RHINOCEROS PRESENTS

# PILLOW TALK

A World Premiere Commission • Written by **Kheven LaGrone**

Directed by **Tanika Baptiste**



**Live stream!** June 11 – 20, 2021 • tickets: [theRhino.org](http://theRhino.org)

## From the Playwright

I wrote *Pillow Talk* to myself at 28-years old.

*Pillow Talk* is not a love story. It's not a sex story. It's a play about two men seeking intimacy from their contrasting Black male perspectives. Human beings live our lives for intimacy. It's a human need; yet, too many people don't associate Black men with intimacy.

This play is about different kinds of intimacy. It even explores a boy's first intimate bond after his mother - the intimate bond between father and son. That bond appeared to be broken - but can it ever be broken?

I excerpted this play from my full-length play *Locker Room and Pillow Talk* to fit it into the virtual format. Making a virtual play about intimacy was not just ironic, but challenging. However, director Tanika and her posse creatively and technically tell the story in a way that is unique to virtual theater.

Kheven LaGrone

## From the Director

Black men have always been Kings. I love Black men in all their glory and nuance. In 2020 we witnessed multiple slayings of innocent Black men. Those who were fathers and sons. Husbands and lovers. All they had been guilty of was living out loud. Breaking an invisible social code long established as a boundary of their possibility. As a Black queer woman I have suffered watching my brothers slain and for this Juneteenth and Pride Month, I vow to assist them in telling the stories that center their voices.

Some of our most veracious conversations we traverse will be during pillow talk. Where we stare in our lover's eyes and release our private reveries, the highlights of our day and our truest self. When we pillow talk we tell the truth or we entice the other person with what they may want to hear. We let our guard down. We keep it real. We keep it. It is a delicate dance of desire and restlessness. Life is on the tip of your heart.

Through the dynamic and devastatingly brilliant playwright Kheven LaGrone's *Pillow Talk*, we get to experience a certain style of love that is often hidden and silenced. Intimacy between two Black men who love on one another albeit through transaction. Chuck and Baby Boy's intimacy challenges them both to lean into truth and trust. Sometimes we are forced to confront ourselves as we interact with others. Through our struggles to accept parts of our identity we attract our teacher. That guide who has resolved and mastered our struggle within themselves to show us a new way. It can be a

wake-up call or the universe's way of presenting an opportunity for healing. All within the confines of a car. The right car can change your life.

I hope you enjoy this ride tonight and thank you to Theatre Rhinoceros, our incredible production team and this gifted dynamic duo, Devin and RaMond, for the journey home.

All the best,

Tanika Baptiste

**From the Executive Artistic Director**

I've always loved Kheven's work, its locality, its passion, its exploration of passionate lives. We had a great time with *The Legend of Pink* in 2017 and it's great to be able to spend some more time with his characters, again in Oakland and again in a World Premiere. Chuck and Baby Boy are so unique – a compassionate and needy authority figure, a young prostitute who has so much more to offer than sex – and yet they are universal, for who cannot relate to the desire for companionship or the need for mentorship. This play seems to be about connecting but it carries with it a much larger message, and in Chuck's growing awareness of how he can actually help Baby Boy we see that by so doing he might actually help himself. And that, I feel, is the true nature of empathy – it helps all parties.

Enjoy the show!

John Fisher

**Theatre Rhinoceros**

and

**Honorary Producers**

**Tom Horn and the Bob A. Ross Foundation**

**Ray Mulliner and the James Hormel Living Trust**

**The Horizon's Foundation**

present

***PILLOW TALK***

**A World Premiere Commission**

**By Kheven LaGrone**

**Directed by Tanika Baptiste**

Stage Manager ..... Marissa L. Ampon

Costume Designer ..... Rebecca Redmond

Sound and Video Designer ..... Wesley Murphy

Choreographer.....Wilfred Paloma  
Brochure/Graphics/Ads.....Christine U'Ren  
Box Office .....Joe Tally  
Promo Video/Photography..... Tanika Baptiste  
Program.....James McCunn  
Lighting/Sound Consultant.....Henry S. Rosenthal  
Intimacy Consultant .....Maya Herbsman  
Assistant Intimacy Consultant..... Jeunée Simon

Special thanks to Ray Mulliner, Aviva Kanoff, Shin Aoki, Lawrence Dillon, Phil Lowery, Wanda Sabir, Stephanie Niemann, and Folsom Lake College for allowing us to borrow costumes.

*PILLOW TALK* is approximately sixty-five minutes in length and is performed without intermission.

First Theatre Rhinoceros Performance: Friday, June 11, 2021, as a live stream presentation.

*PILLOW TALK* is presented by special arrangement with its author.

Special thanks to The Horizon's Foundation for a grant to support COVID-19 on-line productions.

This production was made possible by generous donations from Tom Horn, The Bob A. Ross Foundation and the James Hormel Living Trust.

### CAST

DEVIN A. CUNNINGHAM .....BABY BOY  
RAMOND THOMAS..... CHUCK  
JOURDÁN OLIVIER-VERDÉ.....MAN 1  
JON-DAVID RANDLE.....MAN 2

### SETTING

Oakland, CA

### TIME

1995

## **Theatre Rhinoceros**

John Fisher (Executive Artistic Director), Joe Tally (Development Director)

## **Board of Directors, Theatre Rhinoceros**

Cath Brannigan (Member), Lawrence Dillon (Member),  
Josh Dunsby (President), Kim Larsen (Vice-President/Development Chair),  
Jeremy Laurin (Member), Jim McCunn (Finance Chair),  
Ely Orquiza (Member), Craig Souza (Secretary), Stan Stone (Member)

## **BIOS**

**Marissa L. Ampon** (she/hers – Stage Manager) is a stage manager, voiceover artist, stage and screen actor, and Managing Director for The Chikahan Company on Ramaytush Ohlone Land (aka the San Francisco Bay Area). She is excited to stage manage her second Theatre Rhinoceros production with this lovely cast + crew. Last Zoom production was the world premiere of *The Emeryville Horror* (Same Boat Theater Collective).

**Tanika Baptiste** (Director) is thrilled to direct her third virtual production with Theatre Rhinoceros! Prior Rhino director credits include *The Review or How to Eat Your Opposition* and *At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen*. Tanika is originally from San Diego, CA and works as a director, producer, actor and vocalist in both the San Francisco Bay Area and SD. She has performed and/or directed with La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego REP, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The Old Globe, American Conservatory Theatre and Diversionary Theatre. Thank you, John and Joe for another beautiful collaboration. Thank you cast and crew for your work and Marissa for keeping us on point!  
[www.tanikabaptiste.com](http://www.tanikabaptiste.com)

**Devin A. Cunningham** (Baby Boy) is an actor and singer from Oakland, CA. He has worked with Theatre Rhinoceros throughout the pandemic in their virtual play reading series. He recently relocated to Savannah, GA where he currently misses the cool of the Bay Area, especially its inviting and present audiences.

**Maya Herbsman** (she/hers – Intimacy Consultant) is a Bay Area/Ohlone land-based intimacy director, director, and teaching artist. She is also the Associate Artistic Director of Cutting Ball Theater. Favorite intimacy direction credits include work at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Shotgun Players, Z Space, and San Francisco Playhouse. Maya is a certified intimacy director through Intimacy Directors and Coordinators.

**Kheven LaGrone** (Playwright) is a Bay Area native whose writing has appeared in *Transition Magazine*, *Media Ethics*, *Journal of African American Men*, and *The Journal of Human and Civil Rights*. His play *The Legend of Pink* was produced by Theatre Rhinoceros in the Fall, 2017. An advocate for the Bay Area homeless community, his essays have appeared in *Street Spirit* and *San Francisco Bayview*. Mr. LaGrone has also edited a collection of scholarly essays on Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. He has curated a number of art exhibits in San Francisco, New York, and Atlanta, including "I Am San Francisco: (Re)Collecting the Stories of Native Black San Franciscans," "I Am America: Black Genealogy Through the Eyes of an Artist," "Coloring Outside the Lines: Black Cartoonists as Social Commentators," and "BABA: Black Artists' Expressions of Father." Mr. LaGrone earned his M.A. in Communications from Emerson College and is the author of several one-act plays and solo shows, some of which have been made into videos.

**Wesley Allen Murphy** (Sound and Video Designer) is excited to be working on his second show with Theatre Rhinoceros. He worked previously on designing sound and video for *The Review*. Wesley is a professional multi-instrumentalist who has played in various bands in Northern California specializing in 5-string banjo and bass guitar. In 2014 he went on a national tour with singer-songwriter Brianna Lea Pruett. He has recorded at Bob Weir's TRI Studios in San Rafael, Canyon Records in Arizona, and Daytrotter Studios in Chicago. He has been nominated for two Elly awards, including Sound Design for his original score in Folsom Lake College's *Alice in Wonderland*.

**Wilfred Paloma** (Choreographer) is an Actor's Equity member with an M.A. in Theatre Arts from San Diego State University and is also a graduate of the Meisner and Chekhov Integrated Acting Studio. Wilfred works with La Jolla Playhouse, Arts for Learning, Young Actors Theater, San Diego Junior Theatre, and Blindspot Collective, and owns a private Performing Arts studio in San Diego, CA.

**Rebecca Redmond** (Costume Designer) is thrilled to be working with Theater Rhinoceros again after designing *The Review* earlier this year. Rebecca earned her MFA in costume design from UC Davis and currently teaches at Folsom Lake College. Other Bay Area design credits include *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (Shotgun Players), *Old Times* (TheatreFIRST), *Three Sisters* (Porchlight Theater), *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Rabbit Hole* (Town Hall Theater).

**Jeunée Simon** (Assistant Intimacy Consultant) is an actor/director/intimacy coach in the Bay Area. Recent credits include: *The Bluest Eye* (Aurora Theatre), *La Ronde* (Cutting Ball Theater), *Men on Boats* u/s (American Conservatory Theater). Simon is a proud recipient of the 2017 RHE Artistic Fellowship and a 2019 Directing Apprentice with PlayGround and she is honored to dive into the world of intimacy coaching. [www.jeuneesimon.com](http://www.jeuneesimon.com)

**RaMond Thomas** (Chuck) is honored and excited to tell this story in his debut with Theatre Rhinoceros! Some favorite performances include *Dirty Dancing* and *Memphis the Musical* (National Tours), *Sugar in Our Wounds*, *The Wild Party*, *Ragtime*, *Working*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *The Fantastiks*.

**THEATRE RHINOCEROS** - Founded in 1977, The Rhino is the longest-running LGBT theatre in the nation. We develop and produce works of theatre that enlighten, enrich, and explore both the ordinary and the extraordinary aspects of our queer community. Our emphasis is on new works, works about under-represented members of the larger queer community, and revivals of lesser known queer classics. Over the years Theatre Rhinoceros has received many awards of recognition including: Theatre Rhinoceros Day in the City Proclamation from Mayor Gavin Newsom, State Assembly Certificate of Recognition from Senator Mark Leno, recognitions from Congressperson Nancy Pelosi and Assembly Persons Tom Ammiano and Carole Migden, numerous Cable Car, BATCC and TBA Awards and Nominations, and the GLAAD Media Award for Best LGBT Theatre. Since March 2020, Theatre Rhinoceros has presented over 50 COVID-19 performances, all of them free.

## **Next Up from The Rhino:**

### ***A Whole New Season of Plays***

Announcement coming soon

### ***Monthly Reading Series***

#### **Curated by Joe Tally**

Live the first Tuesday of every month @ 700pm

Next-Up: *Four Play* by Jake Brunger; Directed by Alejandro Torres

July 6, 2021 @ 700pm – sign up at [TheRhino.org](http://TheRhino.org)

Free

All of these programs are broadcast live and available on-line. Check [TheRhino.org](http://TheRhino.org) for additional information and free recordings of many earlier broadcasts.

Please make a 2021 donation to Theatre Rhino and keep queer theatre alive and safe! [www.TheRhino.org](http://www.TheRhino.org).

## 2020 – 2021 Theatre Rhinoceros Donors

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