



**For Immediate Release**

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Brava! For Women in the Arts presents  
**Love Balm For My SpiritChild**

Directed by Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe & Arielle Julia Brown

**WHO:** Brava! For Women in the Arts, Arielle Julia Brown's Love Balm Project, directed by Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe

**WHAT:** Love Balm For My SpiritChild, - A choreo-play based on testimonies from Bay Area mothers whose children were lost to gun violence.

**WHERE:** Brava Theater Center, 2781-24th Street at York, San Francisco, CA 94110

**WHEN:** July 11-20, 2014 shows Fri-Sat 8pm; Sun 3pm

**TICKETS:** \$10-25

**Love Balm for My SpiritChild** is a play that features the testimonies of Bay Area mothers who have lost children to acts of violence. The performance features testimonies from the mothers and grandmothers of Kenneth Harding Jr., Oscar Grant III, Kerry Baxter Jr., Christopher LaVell Jones, Daniel Booker, Khatari Gant and others. The play, created by theater artist **Arielle Julia Brown**, was developed at San Francisco Playhouse in early 2013 with the acting ensemble, **Ayodele Nzinga, Cat Brooks, Lisa Evans, Anna Maria Luera** and dancer, **Dawon Davis**. Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe directs the Brava Theater Center production. Love Balm for My SpiritChild has been performed and featured at 7 stages Theatre in Atlanta, GA, Theatre of Yugen in San Francisco, Eastside Arts Alliance in Oakland, Ca, La Peña Cultural Center and Pomona College in Claremont, CA. In addition to performances of the play, site specific performances of the testimonies were performed throughout Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose with support from The Triangle Lab at Intersection for the Arts and California Shakespeare Theatre. The Brava Theater production received support from Cal Humanities, a non-profit partner of the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Love Balm for My SpiritChild** was inspired by the revolutionary acts of mothers fighting for justice for their children living and dead. It was specifically inspired by how mothers' memories have served as a vehicle for justice in the cases of the Rwandan Tutsi Genocide. In the wake of

tragic and systemic murders like those of Alan Blueford, Trayvon Martin, Amadou Diallo, Emmett Till - Love Balm for my SpiritChild witnesses local mothers who have personally experienced similar loss as they mobilize to bring about awareness and justice for their son's murders. The performance of these testimonies infuses the collective consciousness of our communities with a renewed and sacred awareness of the precious healing found in mothers' memories. Participants witness, write and perform their own and others testimonies of revolutionary motherhood.

**Arielle Julia Brown** (Project Director) is a playwright, arts administrator and facilitator currently based in the SF Bay Area. As a facilitator, Arielle has taught and directed performance workshops for adults and youth of all ages throughout the Bay Area with such organizations as, Intersection for the Arts, Destiny Arts Center, Streetside Stories, Guerilla Performance Group at Eastside Arts Alliance and the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center. Arielle is the Artistic Director of The Love Balm Project, a Bay Area theatre workshop series and performance that explores the testimonies of local mothers who have lost children to systemic violence. Workshop and performance iterations of The Love Balm Project have been presented at or in partnership with 7Stages Theatre, Theatre of Yugen, The MilkBar, Eastside Arts Alliance, La Peña Cultural Center, San Francisco Playhouse The Triangle Lab (A joint program of Intersection for the Arts and Cal Shakes) and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Arielle is a 2013-2014 SF Playground company playwright. She is a 2014 Artist Investigator in residence at The Triangle Lab. Arielle is a 2013-2014 SF Emerging Arts Professionals Programming Chair. Arielle's work has been supported by Theatre Bay Area, The Triangle Lab ( supported in part by The James Irvine Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and MetLife Foundation and Theatre Communications Group) and CalHumanities. Arielle's theatre work is rooted in peacemaking on both local and international levels. Arielle began doing international theatre work at 7Stages theatre in Atlanta, Ga. Arielle is a core member of Theatre Without Borders. Her international theatre experience includes work in Senegal and East Africa. Arielle received her B.A. from Pomona College where she studied Theatre and Africana Studies.

**Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe** (Director) has directed theatre productions throughout the United States and abroad. She holds an M.F.A. in Directing from the University of Iowa and is an alumna of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors. Additional training has included theatre research and performance at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and at Shakespeare & Company in Tanglewood, Massachusetts. She has directed in the American Conservatory Theatre's M.F.A. Program and taught at Indiana University, Naropa University and with Telluride Association Sophomore Seminars. With the company she founded, Black Artists Contemporary Cultural Experience, Edris has directed the work of Pearl Cleage, Keith Adkins and Billy Graham and most recently directed and produced the critically acclaimed, In A Daughter's Eyes by A.Zell Williams. She has additional directing credits at Trinity Rep in Providence, Southern Rep in New Orleans, Woolly Mammoth in Washington, D.C., the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, WaterTower Theater in Dallas, and Capital Repertory Theater in Albany, New York.

### Actors/Artistic Collaborators

**Ayodele Nzinga** is a multi-talented West Coast based art visionary, who in the tradition of the Black Arts Continuum uses performance as a method of inter-intra group communication. In 2000, Nzinga became the writer in residence and the resident dramaturge at The Prescott Joseph Center For Community Enhancement. This has resulted in over a decade of theater seasons, a troupe in residence, and a summer theater camp for youth. The troupe, The Lower Bottom Playaz, founded by Nzinga in 1999, is enjoying growing acclaim, while mounting, and traveling two-three productions per season. A bright and consistent energy on the cutting edge of the East Bay performance scene, Nzinga aka The WordSlanger, is a tour-de-force Spoken Word artist. Her latest published work appears in *Black Magnolias* and The Pan African Journal of Poetry.

**Cat Brooks** received her BA in theater from the University of Las Vegas, Nevada and studied at the Royal National Theatre Studio in London. She has performed in a myriad of shows around the world, including playing Lady Macbeth at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland. For the last few years she has been a part of the national tour of Terrance McNally's Corpus Christi. Additional credits include Joe Turner's Come and Gone, The Scottsboro Boys and A Raisin in the Sun. She is also a writer, spoken word artist and community activist.

**Allysa "Lisa" Evans** is a recent graduate from UC Santa Cruz. At UCSC she participated with student theater groups, Rainbow Theater and The African American Theatre Arts Troupe as an actress, director and assistant producer. She has continued this work as a cultural worker, teaching and performance artist in Oakland, Ca. Her work has been featured at The California Shakespeare Theatre, Youth Speaks and Eastside Arts Alliance. She also served as the 2010 Women of the World Poetry Slam Santa Cruz representative. She is currently a member of the 2012 Bay Area Unified Slam Team.

**Anna Maria Luera** has spent the last 20 years as a youth worker and theatre artist. Before coming to Oakland Kids First, she worked at Streetside Stories in San Francisco as a program director and facilitated youth workshops in writing and telling autobiographical stories. Anna has facilitated arts education workshops and worked with youth at all over the Bay Area with San Jose Repertory's Red Ladder Program, Each One Reach One and Word for Word. Anna is also a professional actress who has acted in many commercials and theatres, including Intersection for the Arts' award winning theatre company Campo Santo.

**Dawon Davis** is a native of Oakland, Ca. and has performed on many different stages throughout the Bay Area and beyond. At 15, he fell in love with all aspects of the performing arts: dancing, modeling, acting and singing. A former foster child, Dawon strives to be better than anyone could ever expect for him. He believes in elevating oneself no matter the obstacles. He is a company member with Urban Prodigy Entertainment.

### **Brava! for Women In The Arts**

Brava! For Women in the Arts celebrates its 26th year as a professional arts organization dedicated to cultivating the artistic expression of women, youth, LGBT, people of color and other unheard voices through the ownership and operation of Brava Theater Center. BRAVA producing history includes award-winning premieres by Diana Son, Eve Ensler, Debbie Swisher, Reno, Cherylene Lee, Suzan-Lori Parks, Culture Clash, Joan Holden, Anne Galjour, Elizabeth Summers, Kate Rigg, Dan Guerrero, and Mabou Mines, as well as works by internationally known playwrights like Jesusa Rodriguez and Liliana Felipe of Mexico, Jorge Drexler of



Uruguay, and Ojos de Brujo and Ismael Serrano of Spain. Under the Executive Director of Anastacia “Stacie” Powers Cuellar, BRAVA’s current artistic programming includes traditional and contemporary music festivals, a variety of film festivals, contemporary and experimental theatrical productions, international comedy shows, lectures and professional dance productions - making BRAVA one of the most eclectic and multi-faceted arts venues in the Bay Area. BRAVA’s resident youth programs include the long standing SF Running crew which pairs youth with professional mentors and hands on opportunities for technical theatre training; Cuicacalli Escuela de Danza, traditional and contemporary dance training for youth, Famooly Productions Salsa Band workshops and Loco Bloco dance and drum ensemble. Brava is committed to providing affordable space for artistic development and presentation and quality professional arts training for underserved youth in the San Francisco community