



FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY
**ESSENTIAL
THEATRE**



2025-2026 SEASON

FAT HAM

A small, golden, three-pointed crown is placed on the left side of the letter 'H' in the word 'HAM'.

BY JAMES IJAMES

DIRECTED BY LUTHER D. WELLS





FAT HAM

WRITTEN BY JAMES IJAMES

DIRECTED BY LUTHER D. WELLS

SET DESIGN

Ruben Arana

COSTUME DESIGN

Edith Carnley

LIGHTING DESIGN

C. Bacote Robinson

SOUND DESIGN

Kimberly K. Harding

DRAMATURG

Unica Magnus

STAGE MANAGER

Ryan Pettaway

**PRODUCED BY SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT WITH:**

Concord Theatricals Corp.

The Essential Theatre is funded through the activities and services fees, as allocated by the Student Government Association of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

WARNINGS: Profanity, loud noises, violence, contains scenes involving alcohol use, flashing lights and sexual content.

Cameras and recording devices of any kind are absolutely prohibited in the theatre. Please turn off or set to silent mode, your cell phones, pagers and any alarm watches before the show begins. Please refrain from cell phone usage during the performance. The house manager reserves the right to ask disruptive audience members to leave without refund.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

LUTHER D. WELLS

Truth. What's that mean huh? – Juicy

Fat Ham is a comedic, contemporary, queer reimaging of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. While *Hamlet* is a classic and tragic revenge story, James Ijames's comedic turn, seeks to flip the idea of revenge on its head and asks: What if *Hamlet* didn't succumb to revenge? What if breaking the cycle of trauma was the revolution?

Blending sharp humor with serious social critique, comedy is used as a weapon. While the play is funny, it's never escapist—humor is a coping mechanism, a form of resistance, and a way to disarm the audience before confronting them with profound truths.

Fat Ham subverts themes of revenge, masculinity, and legacy found in *Hamlet* to present a play about healing, identity, and breaking cycles of violence. Our protagonist, Juicy, is a character who refuses to conform to the expectations imposed on him by his family and by broader cultural norms. Where *Hamlet* is paralyzed by indecision, Juicy is hyper-aware, interrogating his every motive with humor and introspection. His queerness is not incidental; it's integral to his worldview and resistance to patriarchal violence. Ijames posits queerness as both personal and political. It's not only Juicy's sexual identity but his refusal to adhere to norms of revenge, masculinity, and stoicism that mark him as "other." This "otherness" becomes a strength, allowing him to imagine a life outside the prison of expectation.

Juicy wrestles with whether replicating violence will truly bring peace. This central tension reframes the question of justice in a Black, queer context—how does one respond to systemic and familial trauma without becoming complicit in perpetuating it? Through Juicy's journey, the play invites audiences to consider what it means to be whole in a world that demands conformity—and whether healing can be a radical, transformative act.

What do you think? - Juicy

Thank you for coming and enjoy the show!

CAST

CHARACTER

ACTOR

JUICY	D.J. CRUEL
REV & PAP	JOSHUA LYONS
TEDRA	OXSANA SUN
RABBY	JADE LIVINGSTON
OPAL	LAYLAH HOLLOWAY
LARRY	C.J. O'NEAL
TIO	CAMRON CURRY

UNDERSTUDIES

Performing on Thursday, October 22 @ 8 p.m.

TEDRA CORRYNNE MOSS-BREWER

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless specific announcement for that appearance is made at the time of performance.

SETTING

The Summer of 2016, North Carolina.

MUSIC

“I’m Your Baby Tonight” originally performed by Whitney Houston, Arista Records, 1990, KaraFun Karaoke version produced by Ecaf Music, Epic Solar Songs Inc., Kear Music TEDRA

“Creep” originally performed by Radiohead, EMI Records, 1992, Karaoke sing version, produced by Sing King Karaoke JUICY

“We Found Love” originally performed by Rihanna, written and produced by Calvin Harris, 2011, Def Jam Records LARRY



DRAMATURG NOTES

UNICA MAGNUS

James Ijames is a groundbreaking playwright whose work has significantly impacted contemporary theater. His talent and innovative storytelling are exemplified in his acclaimed play *Fat Ham*, which has gained national recognition.

During the COVID shutdown, his play *Fat Ham* quickly rose to prominence after a film version premiered in 2021 at Philadelphia's Wilma Theater. Critics praised the play as a "delectable comic tragedy" and "a fresh and funny take on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*." In 2022, *Fat Ham* received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, just before its live Off-Broadway debut at the Public Theater. The following year, it opened on Broadway and earned a Tony nomination, demonstrating remarkable success in a challenging post-COVID theater landscape.

A musicality permeates Ijames' writing, a quality he attributes to his childhood in the South. Growing up in Bessemer City, North Carolina, he wrote plays with his grandmother for their church. He transitioned into acting during high school and later earned an MFA in Acting from Temple University in Philadelphia, where he was cast in a production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Many years later, Ijames would reimagine the story from his own perspective—a Black, queer man—creating a version that resonates deeply with his experiences.

Drawing from *Hamlet*, Ijames's chose to focus on the "complex and sometimes violent—accented relationship between fathers and sons." He also emphasizes themes of death and betrayal that pervade Shakespeare's work. This is evident in the characters of Pap and Rev, whose ruthlessness and abusive behaviors highlight the cycle of violence. Unlike King Hamlet, who was portrayed as a kind and gracious ruler, Pap is bloodthirsty, cruel and vengeful, while Rev's taunting and abuse toward Juicy's "softness" leads Juicy to question whether to perpetuate or break the cycle. Juicy's journey to just be himself demonstrates that we can rewrite our own stories, regardless of the circumstances we face.

America's history is marred by violence and bullying—lynchings, the stripping of minority rights, forced assimilation—and today, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities continue to face targeted attacks from agencies like ICE and other domestic threats seeking to perpetuate hateful ideals. In this context, Fat Ham approaches tragedy with humor, reminding us that even in the face of brutality, laughter can be a powerful form of resistance. As Tedra says regarding their tragic lives, “Who says we gotta die?” So, grab a plate and a seat as we delve into James Ijames’ compelling example of ending cycles of violence and reclaiming our stories.

UPCOMING PRODUCTION



JOIN US FOR ***SIBLING RIVALRY***
RUNNING **NOVEMBER 5 - 9, 2025**
AT THE **RONALD O. DAVIS ACTING STUDIO**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FAMU Parking Services, FAMU Plant Operations and Maintenance,
FAMU Police Department, FAMU Student Government Association,
FAMU TV 20, FAMUAN, FSU School of Theatre, Tallahassee Democrat,
Dhyana Ziegler Ph.D



The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, part of the Rubenstein Arts Access Program, is generously funded by David M. Rubenstein.

Special thanks to The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust for supporting the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

Additional support is provided by The Honorable Stuart Bernstein and Wilma E. Bernstein; and the Dr. Gerald and Paula McNichols Foundation.

Kennedy Center education and related artistic programming is made possible through the generosity of the National Committee for the Performing Arts.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

**Together, we build
better lives**



Big Bend

**Habitat
for Humanity**

850.574.2288



PLAYWRIGHT BIOGRAPHY

JAMES IJAMES

James Ijames is a celebrated American playwright, performer, and educator whose work has made a significant impact on contemporary theater. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Ijames developed a passion for storytelling and performance early in life. His artistic voice is marked by a fearless exploration of complex themes such as race, identity, trauma, and social justice, often infused with humor and poetic insight.

Ijames received formal training in theater and writing, which helped him hone his craft. Over the years, he has become known for his innovative plays that push the boundaries of traditional storytelling. One of his most notable works, *Fat Ham*, is a modern reimagining of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* set in a Black family barbecue. The play earned him widespread acclaim and won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2022, cementing his reputation as a vital voice in American theater.

In addition to his writing, James Ijames is also a dynamic performer and director. He has worked with numerous theater companies, including the Wilma Theater, PlayPenn, and Ensemble Studio Theatre, contributing to the vibrant theater scene with his versatility and creative vision. His performances often bring an added layer of depth and authenticity to the stories he tells.

Beyond his creative work, Ijames is deeply committed to education and mentorship. He has taught at several universities and institutions, inspiring a new generation of playwrights and performers. His dedication to nurturing emerging artists reflects his belief in the power of storytelling to foster empathy and understanding across diverse communities.

James Ijames continues to shape the landscape of American theater with his thought-provoking works and innovative approach. His voice is both urgent and timeless, challenging audiences to confront difficult truths while celebrating resilience and humanity. As a playwright and educator, Ijames remains a guiding force in cultivating new voices and redefining the narratives that shape contemporary theatre.

CAST PROFILES



D.J. CRUEL

JUICY

is a junior theatre performance major and liberal arts minor from Panama City, Florida. His Essential Theatre credits include *Thoughts of a Colored Man* (Vocalist/Love Alt.) and *Confederates* (Assistant Stage Manager). This is his third production with the Essential Theatre.



CAMRON CURRY

TIO

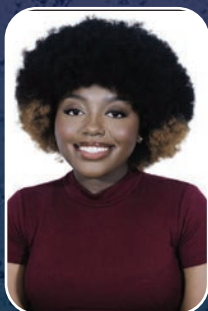
is a second-year environmental studies student from Clayton County, Georgia. This is his first role with the Essential Theatre.



LAYLAH HOLLOWAY

OPAL

is a second-year theatre performance student from Atlanta, Georgia. Her Essential Theatre credits include *Disappearing Acts: Day of Absence* (Mrs. Aide/Supervisor), and the Student Directing Scenes Showcase; *Zooman* and *The Sign* (Rachel). This is her third performance with FAMU Essential Theatre.



JADE LIVINGSTON

RABBY

is a fourth-year theatre scholar from Quincy, Florida. Her Essential Theatre credits include *Sweet Mama Stringbean* (Waters), *Chicken & Biscuits* (Beverly), *Romeo & Juliet: A Miami Love Story* (Stori), *Change it Up! Gen Z Explained* (Singer), *Single Black Female* (SBF 1), and *The Wiz* (Addapearle). She is glad to be performing again with the Essential Theatre.

CAST PROFILES



JOSHUA LYONS

REV & PAP

is a senior theatre performance student from Miami, Florida. His Essential Theatre credits include *Thoughts of a Colored Man* (Lust), *Pipeline* (Xavier), and *Two Trains Running* (Sterling). Other theatre credits include *Fences* (Lyons), *Henry IV Part 1* (Hotspur), and the Urban Film Festival's Best Local Short Film *Pound Cake* (Shakur). Performing in FAMU Essential Theatre's productions has always been refreshing for Josh; he feels there's just no place like home. He is glad to be performing again with the Essential Theatre.



CLARENCE O'NEAL JR

LARRY

is a second-year graphic design major and theatre minor from Pensacola, Florida. His Essential Theatre productions include backstage hand for *Confederates* and *Disappearing Acts: Poof! & Day of Absence*. He was also seen in the Student Directing Scenes Showcase. This is his second performance with the Essential Theatre.

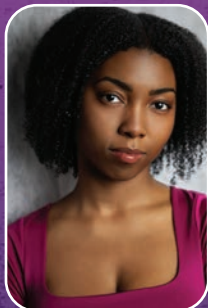


OKSANA SUN

TEDRA

is a third-year Theatre Performance student from Atlanta, Georgia. Her Essential Theatre credits include *Thoughts of a Colored Man*, *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery!*, and *Disappearing Acts: Poof! & Day of Absence*, where she served as an usher. She also served as the special effects technician and understudy for Sara in *Confederates*. This production marks her first principal role with the Essential Theatre.

CAST PROFILES

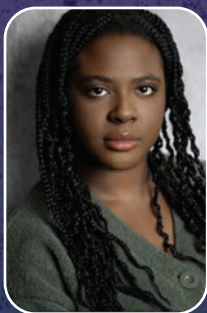


CORYNNE MOSS-BREWER

TEDRA (U/S)

is a 4th-year theatre performance student with a minor in Music from Baltimore, Maryland. Her Essential Theatre credits include *Single Black Female* (SBF #2), *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery* (Assistant Stage Manager), *Thoughts of a Colored Man* (House Manager), and assisting with props, costumes, and set design in *Romeo and Juliet: A Miami Love Story*, *Two Trains Running*, and *Disappearing Acts: Poof! & Day of Absence*. Beyond theatre, Corynne's musical artistry is equally distinguished. She served as the Principal Cellist in FAMU's production of *The Wiz*, and is classically trained in both piano and cello. With a passion for unifying her theatrical and musical talents, Corynne continues to shine on and off the stage. She's glad to be performing again with the Essential Theatre.

STUDENT MANAGERS



RYAN PETTAWAY

Stage Manager/ Intimacy Coordinator

is a third-year Theatre Management student from Wesley Chapel, Florida. Her Essential Theatre credits include Stage Manager for *Single Black Female* and *Confederates*, Assistant Stage Manager for *The Wiz*, and Swing ASM for *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery*. She also served as Intimacy Coordinator for *Confederates*. Beyond her work at FAMU, Ryan was a Production Assistant for Berkeley Rep's *Ground Floor*, Stage Manager for *Beauty and the Beast* (Summer at Sem) and *Cinderella* (Carrollwood Players), as well as Assistant Stage Manager and Intimacy Coordinator for *Fences* (Theatre Tallahassee) and *When Sythe Met the Stone* (FSU Fringe). She also directed *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* at her high school and worked as a Costume Changer for *Grease* (New Tampa Players Community Theatre). Ryan is thrilled to be working with the Essential Theatre again!

STUDENT MANAGERS



JAKYRA ESTIVERNE

Assistant Stage Manager 1

is a junior theatre performance major from Broward County, Florida. She was previously seen in *Slammin' 3* at Alabama State University. This is her first production with the Essential Theatre.



KASHAYLA HORNE

Assistant Stage Manager 2

is a fourth-year Theatre Performance scholar from Fort Lauderdale, FL. Kashayla's acting credits include *Chicken & Biscuits* (Latrice), *The Colored Museum* (Woman) and the 10-MINUTE play festival. Kashayla's technical credits consist of Camera Operator for the 2023 Senior Showcase as well as Assistant Stage Manager to *Romeo & Juliet: A Miami Love Story*. She is glad to be working with the Essential Theatre again.



UNICA MAGNUS

Dramaturg

is a senior at Florida A&M University, set to graduate in Fall 2026. She plans to pursue a career in acting and music. Unica's talents span singing, dancing, acting, and writing. Her recent work includes serving as Dramaturg for FAMU's production of *Confederates* by Dominique Morisseau and performing as Chiffon in *Little Shop of Horrors* at Theatre Tallahassee.

FACULTY & STAFF

Valencia E. Matthews	Director of Theatre Dean, College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities
Ruben Arana	Scene Design
Edith Carnley	Costume Design
Willis Fedd	Director of Marketing
Kimberly K. Harding	Management Theatre History Sound Design
Evelyn Harris	Management Properties Special Events
C. Bacote Robinson	Technical Director Lighting Designer
Anedra Small	Performance Vocal Coach Criticism Recruitment
Luther D. Wells	Associate Director of Theatre Performance Recruitment



PRODUCTION STAFF

Productions Manager	Luther D. Wells
Technical Director	C. Bacote Robinson
Stage Manager	Ryan Pettaway
Asst. Stage Manager(s)	Jakyra Estiverne, Kashayla Horne
Choreographers	Jade Livingston, Gabrielle Williams, Corynne Moss-Brewer
Company Manager	Oksana Sun
Dramaturg	Unica Magnus
Lighting Designer	C. Bacote Robinson
Light Board Operator	Sterling Smith
Sound Board Operator	Gabrielle Williams
Sound Programmer	Kimberly K. Harding
Properties Artisan	Evelyn Harris
Properties Assistant	Layla Brown
Set & Properties Crew	Brianna Bell, Corynne Moss-Brewer, Jacoby Jenkins, Kristiana Holland, Nathan Forbs, Q. Parker, Taleyah Belcher, Jordan James
Stagehand	Jania Sparrow
Costume Supervisor	Edith Carnley
Wardrobe Crew	De'Miya Harris, Azaria McCants, Jordon Noland, Michael Royals
Costume Construction Crew	Maesa Anderson, De'Miya Harris, Shya Lee Ashton McCallum, Azaria McCants, Jordon Noland, Michaels Royals, Oksana Sun, Joel Thompson, Paris Sophrey
Make-Up Artist	De'Miya Harris
Costume Assistants	Shaun Wilson, Kashayla Horne, Amira Churchwell
House Managers	Nahesha Nozistene, Justin Troupe
House Staff	Brianna Bell, Sion Brown, Brandon Charles, Jaila Dunbar, Janiah Jefferson, Kyndal Jones, Dana Ladd, Kara Mullings, Shiane Sullivan
Distribution Managers	Jae Edwards & Keith Wesley
Director of Marketing, Ticket Sales, and Patron Services	Kimberly K. Harding
Public Relations and Advertising	Willis Fedd
Social Media Content Developers & Marketing Assistants	Willis Fedd, Oluwamodupe Oloyede, Layla Richardson, Amir Burgess
Box Office Manager	Monica Woods
Box Office Staff	Diana Belizaire, Trinity Raspberry
Will Call Manager	Skyla Stephens
Subscriber Relations Managers:	Jae Edwards, Jade Livingston
Publicity Graphic Artist	Willis Fedd
Program Layout	Willis Fedd
Photography & Videography	FAMU Students (coordinated by Markeshia Gorden-Hines)

ESSENTIAL THEATRE

2025 -2026 SUBSCRIBERS

ESSENTIAL BENEFACTOR \$1000 - \$2,500

Fitz and Camille Blake
Wendell L. Holden, Jr.
Rev. and Mrs. Theodore Houston
T'Keyah Crystal Keymah

John Pryor
Larry and Sharon Robinson
Dr. Gary and Katrina Rolle
Dr. Kenneth Williams

ESSENTIAL ANGEL \$550 - \$999

Sharon "Shabu" Anderson
Beverly Barber
Drs. A.J. and Mildred Brickler
Delta Sigma Theta
Tallahassee Alumnae Chapter

In Loving Memory of John R. and Ivradell W. Haugabrook
(Karen Haugabrook)
Shauna Y. Smith
McClain, Shawnta and Odell Stroud
Rodner and Clarise Wright

ESSENTIAL STAR \$300 - \$ 549

Cheryl Anderson
Dr. Na'im Akbar
Kimberley E. Brown, MSW
In Memory of Queen H. Bruton
(Sharon Glover)
Ceseann Daugherty-Carroll
Carolyn Cummings, Esq.
Tara Y. Davis

Bev DeMello
Kenneth R. Dukes
Tony and Gretel LaRocca
William and Vernell McCray
Dr. Larry and Mrs. Betty H. Rivers
Jacquelyn Ross and Tonya Session
LemRoy (Nick) Saunders

Drs. Darryl and Latricia Scriven
Patricia Thompson
Jeff and Lynn (Bowens) Turner
Earl and Annette Washington
Mr. and Mrs. Keith Wesley, Sr.
Sylvia D. Williams
Dr. Vivian Wright Wilson

ESSENTIAL FRIEND \$150 - \$299

Alfreda Blackshear
Joanne Clark
Patricia A. Clem
Selvin and Sharon Cobb
Wileen Footman

Bernard and Janis Edwards
Talethia O. Edwards
Dr. Phyllis Gray-Ray
Barbara D. Green

Fredia Houston
Dr. Malinda Jackson-James
Brenda G. Johnson
Rhonda Jones

DONATIONS

Community Business Services



FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY
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