MEMNON

Written by Will Power
Conceived by Carl Cofield and Will Power
Directed by Carl Cofield
Choreographed by Tiffany Rea-Fisher
Coproduced by The Classical Theatre of Harlem
Dancers courtesy of EMERGE125

Getty Villa Outdoor Theater
September 5–28, 2024

Getty

THE CLASSICAL THEATRE OF HARLEM
25TH ANNIVERSARY

MEMNON

Cast

MEMNON, the King of Ethiopia	Eric Berryman*
PRIAM, the King of Troy/NESTOR	Jesse J. Perez*
HELEN, Queen of Sparta, now of Troy	Andrea Patterson*
POLYDAMAS, advisor of Troy/ANTILOCHUS, son of Nestor / Fight Captain	Daniel José Molina*
ACHILLES, the Great Warrior	Jesse Corbin
Chorus	Holly Hwang Belshaw+
Chorus/Dance Captain	Katherine (Kat) Files*+
Chorus	Jenna Kulacz+

Understudies

Mitchell McCollum	**Understudy for Achilles & Antilochus/Polydamas**
Israel Erron Ford	**Understudy for Memnon & Priam/Nestor**
Fana Tesfagiorgis	**Understudy Helen/ Chorus**

Creative Team

Riw Rakkulchon**	Scenic Design
Celeste Jennings**	Costume Design
David R. Molina**	Composer/Sound Design
Yee Eun Nam**	Projection Design
Brandon Baruch	Lighting Design
Samantha Wiener	Hair and Makeup Design
Kanika Asavari Vaish	Assistant Director
Tiffany Rea-Fisher	Choreographer/ Associate Director
Emmanuel Brown	Fight Director
Laura Valenti	Associate Scenic Designer
Hilda Kane	Associate Lighting Designer
Jasmine Lewis	Associate Costume Designer
Junyuan (Betty) Xiong	Assistant Projection Design
Connor Moody	Props Manager
Zachry J. Bailey*	Production Stage Manager
Aisling Galvin*	Stage Manager
Morgan Grant	NYC Production Assistant
Nicole Clemetson	LA Production Assistant

* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

** Members of the United Scenic Artists Union (USA).

+ Member of EMERGE125

This theater operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association.

Carl Cofield is a member of SDC, the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, an independent national labor union.

ACTORS EQUITY ASSOCIATION

SDC The Director is a member of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

The Designers at this Theatre are Represented by United Scenic Artists • Local USA 829 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

Museum Director's Note

Welcome to the Getty Villa's annual outdoor theater production, the award-winning centerpiece of our classical theater program. For some of you, this program has become an annual tradition. For those who are joining us for the first time, we hope tonight's performance inspires a newfound passion for the classics.

One of the reasons we continue to be fascinated by ancient myths is that they are remarkable stories that continue to resonate with us today.

Tonight's story—one that has been overlooked for more than two millennia—tells the tale of Memnon, an Ethiopian king who journeys to the city of Troy to fight alongside the Trojans in their darkest hour. His story has gone untold for far too long.

In classical mythology, Memnon was a revered figure, inspiring great works of literature and art. The story of this African hero provides crucial insight into the worldview of the ancients, demonstrating the cultural and racial diversity of their societies. In today's very divided social landscape, the story of Memnon needs to be better known and understood.

Tonight's performance is a world premiere and marks the esteemed Classical Theatre of Harlem's first major West Coast production. To everyone at The Classical Theatre of Harlem and to all the cast and crew, I offer my congratulations and appreciation for bringing this inspiring story to life in Los Angeles at the Getty Villa.

I also applaud everyone at Getty who works so hard each year to make our annual outdoor theater performances such a success. Presentations of ancient Greek and Roman plays are integral to the Villa's program, and tonight's play continues this grand and vibrant tradition.

Enjoy.

—*Timothy Potts*
Maria Hummer-Tuttle and Robert Tuttle Director of the J. Paul Getty Museum

Director's Note

I was embarrassed. As someone who looks back on history to glean insights into today's world, I thought I had read a fair amount. When I was first introduced to the story of Memnon, I was flabbergasted not to have known this tale. How, in all my inherited mythology, had this story escaped me? Immediately, I knew that I had to "re-member" this amazing story.

The first person I thought of for a creative collaboration was my friend and brother, Will Power. He was the first call I made. Our excitement at the possibility of telling this profound story was immediate. In my role as associate artistic director of The Classical Theatre of Harlem, I knew this story matched our mission statement: To tell bold stories that have a profound impact on audiences, sparking robust conversations.

When the Getty Villa wanted to partner with us in sharing this story, it felt as if the universe had smiled upon us and said, "Now is the time we remember." I'm grateful to this extraordinary team of collaborators as we set out on our artistic odyssey to expand the canon of our collective mythologies. Onward friends, together.

—*Carl Cofield*
Associate Artistic Director, The Classical Theatre of Harlem

Playwright's Note

Memnon was a hero in the canon of classical Greek mythology. He was a revered king, as fierce and strong as the great Achilles, and equally admired by the gods. He was a major figure in the Trojan War, and his exploits at Troy were widely talked about and dramatized in the Greek world. Both Aeschylus and Sophocles had plays and perhaps even tetralogies that told of his adventures. Memnon was featured extensively on vase paintings, with depictions of both his legendary battles and his final ascension. He was without a doubt a favorite mythological figure of the time. He was also African. *What?*

This play is my attempt to discover the fullness of Greek mythology by featuring the complex and heroic tale of Memnon and restoring him to his proper place. Thematically, the play asks: What is the nature of betrayal? When does sacrifice become too much? What is the essence of country, or for the ancient Greeks, the polis? What makes a citizen?

Artistically, I have attempted to create the work not as a modern-day/ancient linguistic mash-up, but one crafted with the style, energy, and weight of ancient Greek poetry. It is written in iambic hexameter, as close as I could come to the original meter of classical Greek drama (dactyl hexameter).

This play attempts to tear apart the native/immigrant binary to hopefully reveal something more truthful and complicated. As a society, we constantly look back to the ancient Greeks in hopes that they will help us to understand our present-day struggles and complexities. I hope that the retelling of *Memnon* can add to these introspective traditions.

—*Will Power*

Actors

Eric Berryman (Memnon) is a Baltimore-born, Brooklyn-based actor involved in work he believes his great-grandmother would dig. He recently performed in the world premiere of *Galilee, 34* at South Coast Repertory. At the Getty Villa he was in *The Persians* and *The Bacchae*. Select theatrical credits: *Primary Trust* (Roundabout Theatre Company, Audelco Award: Featured Actor); *The B-Side* (Wooster Group, Drama Desk Nomination); *Steel Hammer* (SITI Company). Select TV credits: *Atlanta, Godfather of Harlem, Fallout*. BFA: Carnegie Mellon University

Andrea Patterson (Helen) Off Broadway: *Confederates* (Pershing Square Signature Theater), *cullud wattah* (The Public Theater). Regional: *Create Dangerously* (Miami New Drama). TV: *Manifest, Blue Bloods, Jessica Jones*. Patterson is an applied theater teaching artist and founder of Art of Living Collective, a company that uses process drama to support literacy, social and emotional learning, and professional development. She is a 2022 Obie Award winner for Sustained Achievement in Performance and a Drama Desk Award Nominee.

Jesse J. Perez (Priam/Nestor) Off Broadway: *Party People* (The Public Theater); *The Father, A Doll's House* (Theatre for a New Audience); *Informed Consent* (Primary Stages); *Triple Happiness* (Second Stage Theater); *Recent Tragic Events* (Playwrights Horizons); *In the Penal Colony* (Classic Stage Company). The Old Globe: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *El Borracho*, *Romeo and Juliet*. La Jolla Playhouse: *Seize the King*. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School.

Daniel José Molina (Polydamas/ Antilochus/Fight Captain) was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Recent credits: Prince Hal/Henry V in *The Histories* (The Guthrie Theater); *A Christmas Carol* (The Goodman Theatre); *The Liar, Romeo and Juliet* (American Players Theatre); *Fish in the Dark* (Broadway). Five seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Film: *The Yellow Birds*. Awards: Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship. BFA: Savannah College of Art and Design.

Jesse Corbin (Achilles) Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Jesse considers New York City home. Credits include *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Off-Broadway); *A Comedy of Tenors* (Florida Rep); *Bayard Rustin: Inside Ashland* (People's Light); *Grease* (STAGES St. Louis); *From Here to Eternity* (Ogunquit Playhouse); and *The First Noel* (CTH). Jesse is part of The Boy Band Project, as well as a writer and composer developing a musical titled *LEMONADE* (@lemonadethemusical). Phil. 4:13 @thejessecorbin

Holly Hwang Belshaw (Chorus) (she/her) is a dancer based out of NYC. She graduated high school from the University of North Carolina School for the Arts as a contemporary dance major and recently received her BFA in dance from SUNY Purchase College. This is her second season with EMERGE125. Theatrical credits: *Cabaret* (Virginia Theater Festival).

Katherine (Kat) Files (Chorus/ Dance Captain), a Birmingham native, trained at the Alabama School of Fine Arts and graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA program in dance. She holds a graduate certificate in digital marketing. Kat is a company dancer with EMERGE125 and founder of The F.I.L.E.S. Arts Project, a nonprofit. Furthermore, she's the director of education at EMERGE125 and has SAG-AFTRA and Equity memberships, represented by MMG & Parts Models.

Jenna Kulacz (Chorus), a multidisciplinary artist and dancer, is currently a member of EMERGE125 under the direction of Tiffany Rea-Fisher. She has performed with Pilobolus, Gaspard & Dancers, Christal Brown's INSPIRIT at the Kennedy Center, Kristin Sudeikis Dance at Rockefeller Center, and in the Public Works production of *The Tempest* in Central Park. Jenna is a NASM-certified fitness trainer, and teaches at Steps on Broadway, NYCDA, and other studios across the country.

Mitchell McCollum (Understudy: Achilles, Antilochus/Polydamas) is excited to be making his debut with The Classical Theatre of Harlem at Getty. He has performed with theater companies including American Shakespeare Center, A Noise Within, La Mirada Theatre, and Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. He would like to thank his mom for everything, and the audience for supporting live theater. Enjoy the show!

Israel Erron Ford (Understudy: Memnon & Priam/Nestor) is delighted to be back with Carl and The Classical Theatre of Harlem, where Israel was last seen as Feste in the off-Broadway Afrofuturist *Twelfth Night*. Notable regional credits: *Hot Wing King* (Hartford/Baltimore Center Stage); *The Inheritance* (Geffen Playhouse); *Choir Boy* (Yale Repertory Theatre); *Slave Play*, *Antony & Cleopatra* (Yale School of Drama/Cabaret); Television: *Rap Shit* (MAX). BFA, Carnegie Mellon; MFA, Yale School of Drama.

Fana Minea Tesfagiorgis (Understudy: Helen/Chorus) is an artist, actor, and dancer from Madison, Wisconsin, and a graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy and the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program. Fana has danced with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and EVIDENCE: A Dance Company, among others. She appeared in the film *In the Heights*, the national tour of *My Fair Lady*, *Pose*, *Wu-Tang: An American Saga*, and in short films including the EMMY-winning *WILD*. Visit FanaMinea.com and @fanaminea.

Creative Team

Will Power (Playwright) is an internationally renowned playwright, performer, lyricist, educator, and pioneer of hip-hop theater. His diverse works include *Fetch Clay, Make Man*, *The Seven, Seize the King*, and *Detroit Red*. Power has received numerous awards and held positions at prestigious institutions. He currently serves as a professor of theater at Occidental College in Los Angeles.

Carl Cofield (Director) has been The Classical Theatre of Harlem's associate artistic director since 2018. He has directed critically acclaimed productions including *Twelfth Night*, *The Bacchae, Antigone, Macbeth, The Tempest*, and *Dutchman*. Other notable credits include *One Night In Miami, A Raisin in the Sun, The Mountaintop, Disgraced, Henry IV Part 2*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Cofield holds an MFA from Columbia, and is the chair of Graduate Acting at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Tiffany Rea-Fisher (Choreographer/Associate Director) is resident choreographer with The Classical Theatre of Harlem, where she has contributed to *Macbeth, The Three Musketeers, A Christmas Carol in Harlem, Antigone, The Bacchae*, and *Seize the King*. In addition, she is artistic director of the performance company EMERGE125. Rea-Fisher is a seven-time AUDELCO award nominee, a 2022 Toulmin Fellow, a National Dance Project Award winner, and was awarded a citation from the City of New York for her cultural contributions.

Riw Rakkulchon (Scenic Design) (he/they) is an award-winning set and costume designer, animator, and chef from Bangkok. They have worked at Yale Repertory Theatre, The Old Globe, Edinburgh Fringe, Hartford Stage, The Public Theater, and Brooklyn Academy of Music, among others. On Broadway, they designed sets for *Pass Over*, *& Juliet*, and *Parade*. Rakkulchon is a board member of WithAll, a nonprofit fighting to end eating disorders. IG: @riwrdesign

Brandon Baruch (Lighting Design) (he/him) specializes in theater, opera, dance, and immersive performance. At the Getty Villa he designed *Medusa*, *Katabasis*, *Hymns*, and *Asterion*. He's designed for Center Theatre Group (Mark Taper Forum and Kirk Douglas Theatre), The Wallis, the El Portal Theatre, REDCAT, The Ford, Musical Theatre West, Long Beach Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, Chicago Opera Theater, Apollo Theater Chicago, New York City Center, and the Jerry Orbach Theater, among others. www.brandonbaruch.com

Celeste Jennings (Costume Design) (she/her) is a passionate costume designer and playwright. Most recently, she designed the summer season at the Arkansas Repertory Theatre. Upcoming, she's designing *Oh Happy Day* at Baltimore Center Stage, *Rough Crossing* with the Resident Ensemble Players at the University of Delaware, and *Appropriate* at The Old Globe. Jennings holds an MFA in costume design from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and is in the Emerging Writers Group at The Public Theatre.

Yee Eun Nam (Projection Design) is a visual artist and a theater designer. Recent projects include *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (Metropolitan Opera); *A Transparent Musical* (Center Theatre Group); *Once Upon a (korean) Time* (Ma-Yi Theater Company); and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (Minetta Lane Theater). Awards: two nominations for the Lucille Lortel Awards, two LADCC Awards for CGI/Video. Upcoming: *Yellowface* (Roundabout Theatre Company) and *Hamlet* (Center Theater Group). www.yeeeunnam.com

David R. Molina (Composer/Sound Design) (he/him/his) creates music for interdisciplinary and performing arts productions. His work focuses on social justice and working with marginalized communities. Resident Artist: NAKA Dance Theater, Tim Rubel Human Shakes, La Lengua Teatro En Español, La Mezcla. Awards: Ovation, Creative Capital, St. Louis Theater Circle, Henry Award, MAP Fund, InterMusic SF, San Francisco Arts Commission. Multimedia: SFMOMA, The Broad, OMCA, SOMArts. Bands: Impuritan, Ghosts and Strings, Transient. drmsound.com

Samantha Wiener (Hair and Makeup Designer) is a wigmaker, hair stylist, makeup artist, and currently the Wigmaster at LA Opera. Broadway hairstylist: *Motown: The Musical, Les Miserables, Groundhog Day, American Psycho, Soul Doctor, Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, Farinelli and the King, Lion King, Aladdin*. TV/Film: *For All Mankind* S3, *Euphoria* S2, *Evil* S2, *Katy Keene, Her Smell, Puzzle, High Maintenance* S5, *Difficult People* S3.

Emmanuel Brown (Fight Director) Fight direction credits: *Kung Fu* (Signature Theatre, Obie Award); Deadly *She-Wolf: Assassin at Armageddon* (La MaMa); *Native Son, Othello* (The Acting Company); *Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Three Musketeers, Seize the King* (The Classical Theatre of Harlem). Acting credits include: *Spider-man: Turn Off the Dark* and *M. Butterfly* (Broadway), *Blindspot, Iron Fist, Elementary, Gotham*. Thanks God, family, friends.

Kanika Asavari Vaish (Assistant Director) is a director, playwright, and cofounder of the South Asian theater ensemble Fresh Lime Soda Productions. She believes in using theater as a tool for collective healing, social resistance, and self-empowerment. Recent credits include *The XIXth* (assistant director to Carl Cofield at The Old Globe), *Oil on Canvas* (Columbia University), and *Three Sisters, Four Women* (SoHo Shakespeare Company at The Flea Theater). MFA: Columbia University. Kanikavaish.com

Zachry J. Bailey (Production Stage Manager) (he/him) Tours: *Hadestown* (First Nat'l). Select Regional: *Cats: "The Jellicle Ball"* (Perelman Performing Arts Center), *A Raisin in the Sun, The Plot, Twelfth Night* (Yale Repertory Theatre), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Connecticut Repertory Theatre), *Broadway for Biden*. Film: *CRAM* (Radical Rhinoceros Pictures), *Overlook* (Two & Eight), *The Promotion* (C1 Media). Thank you to those who have filled my life with light and joy. Love to Isuri. IG: zachryjbailey

Aisling Galvin (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be working with The Classical Theatre of Harlem and the Getty Villa. Selected credits include *Artificial Flavors* (The Civilians); *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (Yale Repertory Theatre); *Passing Strange* (Long Wharf Theatre); *Criminal Queerness Festival* (National Queer Theater); *Paradise Ballroom* (New York Stage and Film); and *Meet Me in the Gardens* (Shiva Productions).

Production Staff

Jerry Buszek	Production Manager
Marina Claire	Technical Director/ Production Carpenter
Sydney Williams	Company Manager (NYC)
Halei Parker	Wardrobe Supervision
Anna Kupershmidt	Video Operator
Alex Hager	Scenic Assistant
Rodrigo Salazar	Scenic Assistant
Centerline Scenery	Scenic Construction
Elliott Turner	Deck Carpenter

THE CLASSICAL THEATRE OF HARLEM STAFF

Ty Jones	Producing Artistic Director
Lico Whitfield	General Manager
Carl Cofield	Associate Artistic Director
Betty Shamieh	Playwright in Residence
Kyle Gates	Director of Production
Penn Genthner	Director of Development
Alexis Marnel	Development Manager
Alessandro Chille	Director of Marketing
Stacey Scott	Education Coordinator
Jill Jones	Finance Manager
Sydney Williams	Database Administrator and Company Manager
Shawn Rene Graham	Director of Literary Programs
Elena Paul	General Counsel

About The Classical Theatre of Harlem

The Classical Theatre of Harlem (CTH) is an American theater company that tells stories through the lens of the African diaspora. CTH combines original adaptations, music, and dance to present great classics of world literature and contemporary works that will stand the test of time. Since its founding in 1999, CTH has presented works ranging from traditional classical playwrights (Anton Chekhov, Euripides, and William Shakespeare) to established 20th-century playwrights (August Wilson, Langston Hughes, and Jean Genet) to new plays by emerging playwrights. CTH also proudly provides theater-based training and live theater experiences to Harlem youth and their families through its arts education program, Project Classics. The organization incorporates other theater-related programming including Future Classics, Playwrights' Playground, and Revisited Classics to engage new audiences, invest in artistic development, and give exposure to emerging creators. The company serves over 30,000 live audience members per year. Its online offerings have drawn over 500,000 viewers. To learn more, visit www.cthnyc.org.

Support for CTH is provided in part by the individuals and organizations listed at cthnyc.org/funders/

WNYC is a media partner of The Classical Theatre of Harlem. wnyc.org

About EMERGE125

EMERGE125 is a Black female-led hub for dance performance, creation, and education. It has established itself as a leader in setting new standards for dancer care; creating innovative, cross-disciplinary collaborations with leading artists; and using movement as a catalyst for community building to expand the reach, purpose, and impact of dance. The company has expanded its scope and vision into a truly 21st-century organization, growing its network to flourish outside the traditional modern dance sphere.

From community dance classes to stadiums filled with thousands of spectators, EMERGE125 demonstrates that modern dance can be both accessible and relatable to people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. EMERGE125 artistic director Tiffany Rea-Fisher is the resident choreographer with The Classical Theatre of Harlem, where she choreographed productions of *Macbeth*, *Three Musketeers*, *A Christmas Carol in Harlem*, *Antigone*, *The Bacchae*, *Seize the King*, and *Twelfth Night*.

Performance at the Getty Villa

The Getty Villa's public programming enhances the experience of the ancient world by offering a diverse schedule of events anchored by an innovative theater program. Live performances of classical drama offer insight into the social, cultural, and political realities of life in ancient Greece and Rome. The Getty Museum's collection of antiquities, alongside its changing exhibitions, strengthens the connection between modern audiences and the stories enacted in the tragedies and comedies on stage.

Classical dramatists explored basic human stories that often parallel our contemporary experiences. Ancient plays are ever powerful and resonant, continuing to inspire reinterpretation. The Villa Theater Lab series, presented throughout the year in the Auditorium, fosters experimental and modern approaches to ancient stories, enabling directors, designers, musicians, playwrights, and actors to freely incorporate advanced stage, sound, and visual elements into productions developed in residence at the Villa.

Each September a major production is commissioned and presented in the Villa Outdoor Theater, a performance space based on ancient prototypes. (See list of past productions.) These performances have become a much-anticipated end-of-summer tradition for Museum audiences, and plans are already well underway for 2025.

The Villa's public programming also includes performances of music and dance, film screenings, and family festivals. To view our calendar of events, visit Getty's website.

As a courtesy to our neighbors, we ask that you keep noise to a minimum while enjoying the production. Please refrain from unnecessarily loud or prolonged applause, shouting, whistling, or any other intrusive conduct during the performance. While exiting the theater and the Getty Villa, please do so quietly.

The use of photography or any other recording equipment during the performance is strictly prohibited.

Getty Public Programs Staff

Public Programs Head	Laurel Kishi
Sr. Project Specialist	Ralph Flores
Sr. Public Programs Coordinator	Anna Woo
Curatorial Liaison	David Saunders
Sr. Education Specialist	Shelby Brown
Technical Coordinator	Adrienne Wohleen, Production and Special Events Services
Technical Production	Chris Jeong, Marvin Jones, and Bill King
Getty Villa Events	Lars Francisco, Aaron Lee Harvey, Heather Leisy, and David Rue
Public Programs Intern	Isa Aguilar

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