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SF PERUSALS

SOHO THEATRE

TALAWA

HALF BREED

NATASHA MARSHALL

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

Soho Theatre and **Talawa Theatre Company** present

HALF BREED

Written and performed by **Natasha Marshall**

DIRECTOR
Miranda Cromwell

SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER
Ruby Spencer Pugh

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Amy Mae

SOUND DESIGNER
Xana

STAGE MANAGER
Rosie Giarratana

Half Breed was first performed at **The Box, Assembly** at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2017 before its London premiere at **Soho Theatre** on Monday 11 September.

This script went to press during rehearsals, and may differ from the text in performance.

Cast



NATASHA MARSHALL *Writer and Performer*

Growing up mixed-race in the West Country, Natasha has enjoyed performing from a young age. At eighteen she decided to move to London to pursue her acting dreams and attend East15 acting school. During the course Natasha discovered her love for poetry and started writing. After graduating in 2012, Natasha moved back and forth between London and the West Country, but would perform her poems at open mic nights for spoken word in London. Natasha then went on to participate in Royal Court Writers Group (2014/2015), before moving back to London permanently to attend the BBC Comedy Room, BBC Sketch Group and BBC London Voices (2016), Soho Theatre's Writers' Lab, Soho Rising (2016) and Talawa Firsts (2016).

Creative Team

MIRANDA CROMWELL *Director*

Miranda Cromwell is a freelance director and artistic director of Twisted Theatre. Trained at National Theatre Studio Directors course 2015. Previously Young Company director at Bristol Old Vic. Directing credits include; *The Rest Of Your Life* (The Bush Theatre); *FEED* (Company 3); *Magic Elves* (Bristol Old Vic); *Death and Treason* (Twisted Theatre, RSW tour); *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Charleston College of Arts, USA); *Pigeon English* (Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Underbelly); *Children of Killers* (Cottesloe, National Theatre); *Our Country's Good* (BOV Young Company, NSDF, received the judges award for artistic

leadership). Other credits include: staff director on *Angels in America* (National Theatre) and associate director on *Coram Boy* (Bristol Old Vic).

RUBY SPENCER PUGH *Set and Costume Designer*

Ruby is a set and costume designer for theatre, film, and festivals. Ruby trained at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where she won the Philip and Christine Carne Prize for gaining the highest mark. Ruby has collaborated on a variety of projects from adaptions of classic texts to devised theatre. Ruby is Artistic Director of Twisted Theatre. Design credits include; *A Spark and A Beating Heart* (Firebird Theatre); *Mental* (Vault Festival); *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain* (The Wardrobe Ensemble, Bristol Old Vic); *Then Again* (Tremolo Theatre); *The Love of the Nightingale* (Bristol Old Vic YC) and *Magic Elves* (Bristol Old Vic).

AMY MAE *Lighting Designer*

Amy works across Theatre, Dance, Site Specific and Devised performance. She trained at RADA on the postgraduate Stage Electrics and Lighting Design course and has a degree in Stage Management and Performing Arts from the University of Winchester. Amy designed the lighting for the acclaimed 'Pie Shop' version of *Sweeney Todd* which is currently playing at the Barrow Street Theatre in New York. She won the Knight of Illumination Award in 2015 for the London production, and her design for the New York production has been nominated for the 2017 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Lighting Design and the Lucille Lortel Award for Best Lighting Design. Recent credits include: *The Ugly One* (Park Theatre); *Babette's Feast* (The Print Room); *The Lounge* (Soho Theatre); *Start Swimming* (Young Vic); *Wordsworth* (Theatre By The Lake); *Paradise Of The Assassins* (Tara Theatre); *Knife Edge* (Pond Restaurant, Dalston); *Minaturists 55* (Arcola Theatre); *Prize Fights* (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art); *Orphans* (Southwark Playhouse); *Macbeth* (Italia Conti); *I'm Not Here Right Now* (Paines Plough's Roundabout and Soho Theatre); *Liola* (New Diorama Theatre); *Children In Uniform*; *Punk Rock* (Tristan Bates Theatre); *Sweeney Todd* (Harringtons Pie and Mash Shop and West End); *The Three*

Sisters (Cockpit Theatre); *Cat Couture* (Music Video); *In Bed* (London Theatre Workshop); *Henry V* (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art); *Pool*, *The Gut Girls* (Brockley Jack Theatre); *The Legacy* (The Place). She was one of the invited speakers at the 2017 Showlight Conference in Florence. http://www.amymaelighting.com

XANA *Sound Designer*

Xana is a multidisciplinary live loop musician, composer, poet, sound designer and installation artist who creates inter-genre soundscapes through beatbox, vocal looping, coding, archive material, freestyle poetry and field recordings. Xana also works as a community organiser working with SEND (Special Educational Need and Disabilities) and EBD (Educational Behavioural Difficulties) children and young adults, within sound and will be one of the artist-in-residence this October (17/18) in the learning departments at Tate Britain and Tate Modern. Theatre credits include: *Salt* by Selina Thompson (Mayfest Arnolfini, Bristol/Yorkshire Festival, Leeds), Afrofuturistic Pit Party (Barbican); *We Raise Our Hands In the Sanctuary* (Albany Theatre), *Untitled* by Somalia Seaton (Company 3), *Sweet Like Chocolate Boy* by Tristan Fynn-Aiduenu (Cockpit Theatre), *Primetime* (Royal Court Theatre). Film credits: *the ancestors came* directed by Cecile Emeke, *How was your day* directed by Tal Iungman.

ROSIE GIARRATANA *Stage Manager*

Rosie is a freelance stage manager based in Bristol. Having initially trained as a sign language interpreter, she enjoys working with Deaf theatre companies and a diverse range of companies and artists. Recent projects include: *The Who's Tommy* (Ramps on the Moon); *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Manchester Royal Exchange/Graeae); *Blue Heart* (Tobacco Factory Theatres/Orange Tree Theatre); *Monster Raving Loony* (Plymouth Theatre Royal); *The Solid Life of Sugar Water* (Plymouth Theatre Royal/Graeae); *Under a Cardboard Sea* (Bristol Old Vic Young Company); *Lost & Found* (Gloucester Dance) and *Grounded* (Deafinitely Theatre).

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Soho Theatre has the support of the Channel 4 Playwrights' Scheme sponsored by Channel 4 Television.

Also kindly supported by Westminster City Council West End Ward Budget and the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

We would also like to thank those supporters who wish to remain anonymous.

This list is correct as of July 2017.



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30 years of celebrating Black theatre

'I believe theatre is vital to our lives, it's important to see oneself reflected in the arts, and at Talawa this is our aim.'
Michael Buffong, Artistic Director, Talawa Theatre Company

Talawa is the UK's primary Black led theatre company. Talawa has mounted more than fifty productions over our thirty year history, recent productions have included the critically acclaimed production of *King Lear* by William Shakespeare (co-production with the Royal Exchange Theatre, in association with Birmingham Repertory Theatre), *Girls* by Theresa Ikoko (co-production with Soho Theatre and HighTide), *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller (Royal Exchange Theatre, UK tour), *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* by Errol John (National Theatre, UK tour) and *God's Property* by Arinze Kene (Soho Theatre, UK tour).

Talawa was founded in 1986 by Black artists and activists Yvonne Brewster OBE, Mona Hammond, Carmen Munroe and Inigo Espejel, in order to address the lack of opportunities for Black actors on British stages. The vision was to diversify the theatre industry; making it fully representative of the UK's population. Today, led by Artistic Director Michael Buffong, Talawa dedicates its resources to creating high quality touring productions and to developing Black artists. The company enables this by:

- producing one national touring production a year
- developing a canon of new Black British plays through commissioning, training and giving dramaturgical feedback through the free to use script reading service
- through our artist development programme MAKE, we support the careers of over 100 Black theatre artists, backstage staff and administrators annually by offering training, mentoring, and a chance to develop and present creative ideas
- using theatre as a learning and/or personal development tool in schools, community groups and in businesses

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Talawa Theatre Company is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. and a registered charity. All the money that we earn or raise is reinvested back into the work that we do. We receive the support of trusts and foundations including Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the John Ellerman Foundation and the Martin Bowley Charitable Trust.

Talawa was recently awarded the Catalyst Evolve fund from Arts Council England. This means that for every £1 we fundraise* the Arts Council will match it, so we will effectively double our money. With your help we can continue to tour engaging and powerful theatre for audiences across the UK and support the next generation of Black artists to create dynamic new work which reflects the UK today.

Visit us at talawa.com/support-us **to find out how you can support us**

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* ACE will match any income raised up to a total of £105,000

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ISBN 978-0-573-11500-4

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

As an actress I found myself frustrated by the lack of diverse roles for black females. I wanted to be more than a stereotype and was constantly searching for a part that would speak the type of truth that I had come from. Not just as an actor but also as an audience member I had a yearning to see something that was coming from a different perspective on "being black" that could move my soul. I soon realised that if I don't write about it, then the voice will never be heard. I decided to create the type of theatre I wanted to see, and write a story that had been screaming inside of me for a long time. And so *Half Breed* was born.

It's a scary and liberating feeling to write this story.

It's a scary and liberating feeling to perform *Half Breed*.

Originally I thought this was just a play about being mixed-race. However after performing it, I was genuinely surprised at how many people could identify. I realised *Half Breed* is more than skin colour, it's for anyone that's ever been a misfit or on the outside looking in. It's about getting knocked down and standing up stronger and pushing through and pushing through. It's about hope.

It's based in Wiltshire and the whole village is played by Jazmin. The strength of the West Country accent varies with different characters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Miranda Cromwell for making me see the strength in me and the strength in *Half Breed*. Steve Marmion and everyone at Soho Theatre Company, thank you for making my dreams come true and believing in me. Michael Buffong and everyone at Talawa Theatre Company, thank you for your faith and constant support in helping me reach my goals. Jane Fallowfield for your honesty and guidance – thank you. Ikenna Obiekwe at Independent Talent. I am also hugely appreciative of their programs which seek out raw and new talent, such as Soho Young Writers Lab, Soho Rising and Talawa Firsts, TYPT... Long may they continue! Thank you to the Royal Court and the Alfred Fagon award panel. Thank you to my amazing "Half Breed team". And lastly thank you to my mum and dad for basically telling the whole village about my play – thank you for supporting my dreams. It's been a group effort and I am so appreciative for everyone who contributed towards *Half Breed,* without them this wouldn't have been possible.

For my grandma
For Gemma
For anyone that can identify – this is for you

LONDON

BROGAN *(she speaks to the audience)* Do you think I'm scared… do you ACTUALLY think I'm scared, cus I'm far from mate. Just cus you're all together in some sort of group, in some sort of GANG… All together, just proper staring at me. Well I'm not intimidated…cus if you come near me right, I will hurt you right. Cus when I lose my temper I can be really, REALLY unreasonable. So just back up, BACK UP! Go away, have a nice day but just go…because no, you can't have my wallet.

Pause.

Alright now Jaz you have a go. What, you're not gunna do it?! But I'm just showing you how to protect yourself when you go to London. And I'm only saying this because I love you, but if you wanna go there you just need to be more aware of these things. At the end of the day you know me and you know I'm not racist. I mean, I get a Chinky every Friday so I can't be racist…but…you do need to be more aware. For example, if you see one of "those types of people" with a big backpack on, don't be afraid to walk away. No… No… No… NO… That's not being judgmental, that's just being one step ahead of the game. What? It's all in the news!!! Cus you know like Kidulthood…well they really do act like that in London so if they say "come on Jaz, come here 'FAM'" or "come with us, choose a gang" just say "no thank you, I appreciate the offer but I don't take sides and I wish you both the best of luck for the future". Cus at the end of the day it's too busy, too polluted, no grass, no trees, too expensive to live in unless you're like Myleene Klass or something, so why you wanna go? Why you wanna leave here?

JAZ Right now me and Brogan are sitting in our favourite place. Under a tree, and that might sound a bit crap like "oh that's cool, you sit with trees and chill" but Brogan took me here, way, way, way back when we first made friends.

BROGAN "This is the oldest tree in the whole woods but don't tell no one… Oh my gosh I just thought, every time we come here right, we should bring a rock to show we've been here".

JAZ I love my best friend, but that's about as spontaneous as she gets. But I have to admit that this was actually a good idea, cus seven years on and we still come here, you know like today. And now we've got tons of rocks piled high, more than I can even count and it reminds me of the tons of times we've been here. It's kinda nice.

BROGAN Hello! I said why do you wanna leave here?

JAZ I dunno… I just do.

BROGAN So let me get this straight, one last time.

JAZ *(sighs)* Again?!

BROGAN So your gran secretly put your name forward and paid this money?

JAZ Yeah…

BROGAN So that you could audition for some drama school in London?

JAZ Yeah…

BROGAN In four days' time?

JAZ Yeah…

BROGAN Bit short bloody notice isn't it!

JAZ She didn't want me to back out.

BROGAN It's never too late to back out!

JAZ Brog!

BROGAN All I'm saying is, the best thing to come out of London was EastEnders back when Tiffany was alive. But apart from that, it's nothing really that special.

BROGAN

JAZ Brogan's my best friend, white skin, blonde hair, blue eyes she's really perfect looking.

We've been best friends since year seven and she said—

BROGAN "I like your skin colour. It looks really nice because it's like you've always got a tan… So what are you then? Are you like a half-cast or something?"

JAZ She's West Country born, West Country raised, never left the county longer than a day.

BROGAN "Just don't really, wouldn't want, safer here, have a laugh, not going, never going, never never—"

JAZ Brogan's scared of pretty much anything. She's scared of getting food poisoning so she cooks it till it's burnt, it's a joke. She's scared of going uni cus she'll end up broke, scared of crashing on the motorway, cus it's too far away when its outside our village.

Hey… Brog would you come with me if I went somewhere like… I dunno, America?

BROGAN No.

JAZ Wait you're telling me you wouldn't wanna go abroad or something?

BROGAN No.

JAZ Party your life away for as long as possible?

BROGAN No.

JAZ Not have no worries?

BROGAN No.

JAZ Why?

BROGAN Because I just feel like I know what I'm good at and what I'm born to do is—

JAZ But you're seventeen!

BROGAN So?

JAZ Brogan's scared of a lot of stuff, but one thing she ain't scared of is being a mum. To be fair, I think she would be a well good one. What with her being in foster care you know? It's not like she had anyone there.

VILLAGERS Now I don't gossip, I heard from my sister-in-law's brother, she opens her legs for one after the other which implies she's bit of a—

More like a lot of a—

A right old...!

JAZ Alright, she did get about...has got about a lot.

But she don't say not one word, when people around here shout,

"Slag" and "I heard your family don't want you!"

See that's proper strong cus the only thing she ever did wrong, was search for love in the wrong places. So that's basically it, we're different but the same, outsider rejects looking in—

BROGAN —don't fit in

JAZ —don't want to.

BROGAN I got you,

JAZ I got you...

...She may not be perfect. But to me she's a blessing.

ME

JAZ So welcome to the village! I'm Jaz and I'm the only black in the village and I know I'm not "proper black" but trust me around here I'm about as black as it goes, and everyone knows.

"Yeah, it's just her and her mum, her BLACK dad did a runner before she was one".

"Yeah, sad innit, but that's what THOSE do, some women should pay more attention to the men that they screw".

"She's shit".

"Aint fit to be a mum".

"Leaving that poor old grandma to raise her child".

"No wonder her fucking child is running around wild".

BROGAN "Oi! What you saying about her gran?"

JAZ "Jus leave it Brog, leave it."

BROGAN "No, why don't they SHUT THE—"

JAZ I am that mixed-race kid, the one that's the epitome of mixed up, like 50/50, on the fence, lukewarm, in-between maybe. No seriously, even my personality's indecisive, like my brain is just as confused as my skin. Should I stay here? Or should I try move to London?

Stay. Go. Stay. Go. Stay. Go. Stay... "Go back to your own country!"

Let me tell you, right. To be a beautiful girl where I'm from, is to be the epitome of the "girl next door". So basically white, so I'm almost there but not just quite. It's a frustrating place to be in, actually. I mean no guy has ever chased me,

or wanted me like that. That would be too risky, you know like "deal or no deal risk".

"That spot on your forehead makes you look like a right Paki".

"So are you black or white?"

"Where are you from originally?"

Wiltshire.

"Ey?"

Oh yeah, sorry, Wiltshire's next to Somerset by the way.

"No, originally?"

Well I was born in Cambridge...

"No, *originally*, as in your dad?"

Oh, Africa.

"Whereabouts?"

Erm Kenya.

"Whereabouts?"

Ermmmmmmmmm—

I am that mixed-race kid. You know the one you might see in town? You know the one, getting pushed in its pushchair by its white mum. And that kid has got some matted up, dried hair and dried-up skin.

I mean, it's kind of funny actually.

It's kind of flipping sad.

That being half black in an all-white area is a burden you wouldn't wanna have.

"Yes, yes, YES... but who are you?"

Confused.

"But who are you?"

That mixed up, the kid mixed up, myself mix up up, mix up me, trying to be white in a half-black body...

And

Still

Not

Enough.

I mean I straighten my hair and wear real light foundation.

So you can't say I don't try...

I try, I try, I try a lot.

And right now I'm really trying... I'm trying to look for a Shakespeare monologue for this stupid audition. But I can't pick one! Obviously because I can never decide on anything. I don't even understand Shakespeare, you know? And I don't even think I like it...so what's the point?! Why am I even trying...yeah so, forget London, forget drama school and forget this stupid monologue!

ROSE AND CROWN

BROGAN Ok ready Jaz? One... Two... Three.

JAZ *(***JAZ** *takes a shot)* Down town, down Rose and Crown on Friday night...oh...God...no...that's...yuck!

BROGAN *(laughing hysterically)* That shot Jaz had your face like *(mimics)* you're like *(mimics again)*... Trust me you look well weird!!!

JAZ Coming from you! Miss "I'll just have the water please"... You've changed Brog!

BROGAN Whatever, Mitchell don't like it when I drink, so shut up!

JAZ Everyone knows everyone.

VILLAGER 1 Now I don't gossip I just heard from my boyfriend, nieces, brother—

VILLAGER 2 And I heard from my aunties, cousins, mother—

VILLAGER 1 Oh look, in he comes that Mitchell lad, ain't it sad about his brother getting paralyzed in Iraq...

VILLAGER 2 Yeah and that Brogan's just come in. God, she's such a slag...

VILLAGER 1 And she's dragged out that Jazmin friend of hers...

VILLAGER 2 Ohh that Jazmin, that Jazmin's all alone. Since her nutjob of a mum walked out of that home.

JAZ Around here the Rose and Crown is the place to be. But if I'm being honest, right now I'd rather not be here. It's just Brogan's got this new boyfriend called Mitchell and they've been going out—

BROGAN Seven weeks, thirty days, six hours, three seconds. Seven-and-a-half red roses a thousand kisses and NON STOP, rough, steamy, ORGASMIC—

JAZ She likes him a LOT. But more than a lot, she loves him, but more than love, he IS—

BROGAN "the LOVE OF my LIFE and I can't be without him Jaz".

JAZ Ever since they've started dating we've started chilling with him and his friends down the pub. And as much as I try... I just really, really don't like him.

BROGAN Isn't he just so funny?

JAZ No, yeah he's alright.

So like I said, I rather not be here. He's been talking for the last fifteen minutes...

MITCHELL Yeah, well the other day I went down town to get a curry. Now I was tired right cus I've been working all day. So I'm walking right, smoking a backy. I chuck it outside before I'm served by that Paki fella.

Anyway.

So I say to the guy, I say "I'll have a korma with chips on the side, yeah?!"

"Very good, sir."

So off he scurries to get my curry,

and three minutes later he's back with my meal in tow.

Now in that curry house they've got that seating area remember...? So I sit down there and dig in.

So there I am eating away, when all of a sudden I feel something...

Something on my tongue...

Now I ain't one to cause problems,

but it felt like a hair,

so there I am pulling out this big, long, greasy, black hair,

that fucking Paki's hair.

So I walk up to the counter with it in my hand like this *(shows audience)*

and say, "Excuse me, but I found this in my food, do you see this hair?"

And he looks at my hand, then stares me dead in the face and says,

"Sorry sir, I see nothing there".

So I say, "You don't see this hair?"

He says, "No".

I go, "But you can see me right?"

He goes, "Yeah".

I go, "Well can you see this?" and I pick up my Coke.

He's like, "Yeah".

All confused...

I go, "Can you see this?" and I pick up my curry.

And he's like, "Yeah."

So then, nice and slowly, I start pouring the Coke and the curry on the shop floor. And the whole time I'm just staring at him and staring at him, showing him not to mug me off!

And when it all runs out I say, "Now, do you see?"

And he's just like, "Yeah, I see clearly now".

And... Well...that's the end of the story really isn't it?

JAZ And the whole room is laughing.

So I start laughing.

She laughs.

Cus when I go to London right, I'm gunna have a real fresh start.

She laughs.

I'm gunna reinvent myself and grow myself.

She laughs.

The amount of people that I'll meet and all the things that I'll do, will outweigh the times I laughed and laughed and laughed, to get myself through.

She laughs.

I'll be drinking in a bar not a pub. Talking to new people not the same people. Being "someone" instead of "that one". And I'll feel proud.

She laughs.

But right now? Well, I'm just laughing aren't I?

And Brogan reaches over and gives my hand a squeeze,

cus I know that she sees,

but I'm embarrassed she sees,

that I'm embarrassed.

That she sees

that as they laugh,

I'm laughing too.

And the more that they laugh,

so do I do.

And I'm laughing and I'm laughing,

and I hate that I'm laughing.

It follows me home.

That laughing follows me

all

the

way

home.

It follows me home,

that laughing...

Until I open the front door...

And there in the kitchen, is my grandma on the floor.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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