

WE ARE GATHERED

A NEW PLAY BY
**TARELL ALVIN
McCRANEY**

DIRECTED BY **KENT GASH**



ON THE **FICHANDLER STAGE**
MAY 16 – JUNE 15, 2025



Synopsis

In a dimly lit park,

Wallace Tre and Free's quest for casual fun unexpectedly blossomed into love and light. Now, as a milestone anniversary approaches, they grapple with the question of whether their connection is a lasting love or a drawn-out fleeting encounter. Amidst the well-intentioned but often perplexing support of family, friends, and a mysterious stranger, Wallace Tre, a queer Black architect, confronts past doubts and societal pressures.

His relationship with Free Dominic Mann becomes a journey of self-acceptance, challenging them both to redefine commitment and identity. Through heartfelt conversations that traverse joy and pain, shame and pride, and tradition and transformation, they explore the resilience of love. Ultimately, they must decide if fear and a hidden secret will tear them apart, or if they can build a bold and enduring future together, much like the foundations of Wallace Tre's architectural designs.

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT

Tarell Alvin McCraney

Tarell Alvin McCraney is an award-winning writer, producer, and educator whose work explores identity, community, and the human experience. Recently, he was co-chair of playwriting at the David Geffen School of Drama, where he remains on the faculty. He is also an associate at the Royal Shakespeare Company in London and artistic director at the Geffen Playhouse.

He co-wrote the Academy Award-winning film *Moonlight*, based on his play *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue*, earning an Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay. His other critically acclaimed works, including *The Brother/Sister Plays* and *Choir Boy*, have cemented his reputation as a significant voice in contemporary theater.

McCraney's numerous accolades include the Whiting Award, Steinberg Playwright Award, Doris Duke Artist Award, Windham-Campbell Prize, *London Evening Standard* Award, New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award, and a MacArthur Fellowship.



Cruising /'kruːzɪŋ/ n. (in gay culture):

the act of actively searching for a sexual partner in a public or semi-public place. These locations, known as “cruising grounds” or “beats,” can include parks, public restrooms (sometimes called “cottaging”), beaches, gyms, adult entertainment venues, and even online platforms.

Cruising originated as a way for gay men to find companionship and fleeting sexual encounters, especially when homosexuality was illegal and socially stigmatized. It served as a “code word” understood within the community but less obvious to outsiders. While traditional cruising spots remain, the advent of technology and dating/hookup apps has introduced new forms of “digital cruising.” These platforms now allow individuals to connect and arrange meetings, sometimes at traditional cruising locations.

Setting a play within these spaces enables the playwright to delve into themes of hidden desire, risk, secrecy, community formation under oppression, and the reclamation of public space. The inherent tension between the private acts occurring in public locations mirrors the often-clandestine nature of LGBTQ+ life throughout history and in various social contexts.





Photo by Sara Rampazzo via

LGBTQ+ Rights in the U.S.

LGBTQ+ is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning), and others.

The fight for LGBTQ+ rights in the United States is a long journey of courage, defiance, and the relentless pursuit of equality. In the 1950s, pioneers like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis created safe havens where queer individuals could gather and organize. Gathering in these havens, they fostered community, shared experiences, and began to strategize for equality in a restrictive era. Their quiet acts of assembly laid the groundwork for the growing LGBTQ+ rights movement.

These groups planted the seeds of resistance in a time defined by conformity and fear, lighting a spark that would grow into a powerful movement.

THE TIPPING POINT CAME IN JUNE 1969
AT **THE STONEWALL INN** IN NEW YORK CITY;
A SANCTUARY AND SAFE SPACE FOR THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY.

When police raided the bar, as they had countless times before, the patrons fought back. Over several nights of protests, the community's defiance electrified the nation. Pivotal leaders like Marsha P. Johnson, a queer individual who used she/her pronouns, and Sylvia Rivera, a trans woman, emerged as icons of the movement, and Stonewall became a powerful symbol of resistance. In its wake, organizations like the Gay Liberation Front were born, and the first Pride marches took to the streets, declaring that love and identity would no longer be hidden.

As the movement gained momentum, it became clear that true liberation required confronting intersecting forms of oppression. Black LGBTQ+ voices like Bayard Rustin, Audre Lorde, and James Baldwin emphasized that justice for one group could not exist without justice for all. Their advocacy ensured the movement acknowledged and addressed the unique struggles faced by its most vulnerable members.

The journey of the battle for equality reached a historic milestone in 2015 when the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* legalized same-sex marriage nationwide. But even this monumental victory was not the end of the struggle. LGBTQ+ activists continue to lead the fight against continuing violence and discrimination.



Photo by Lucas Jackson/Reuters

Marriage Equality in the U.S.

The fight for marriage equality in the U.S. was a pivotal part of the LGBTQ+ rights movement. For decades, same-sex couples faced legal denial and inequality. While early activism focused on state-level recognition like civil unions, the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in the 1990s hindered progress by legally defining marriage as only between a man and a woman.

However, beginning with Massachusetts in 2004, the early 21st century saw increasing state-level legalization of same-sex marriage, shifting public opinion. The movement, grounded in the principles of equality and the right to form families, culminated in the Supreme Court's landmark *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision on June 26, 2015. This ruling legalized same-sex marriage nationwide, a historic victory affirming the equal dignity and rights of LGBTQ+ individuals.



Breaking the Fourth Wall in Theater



DEFINITION

In theater, breaking the fourth wall occurs when an actor directly addresses the audience, stepping out of the play's fictional world. This technique, often attributed conceptually to Denis Diderot, dissolves the traditional separation between the stage and the house, acknowledging the audience's presence. This deliberate act highlights the theatrical artifice and can take various forms, from a character delivering a monologue directly to the spectators to instances where audience members are invited to participate, blurring the lines between observer and participant and creating a more immediate and engaging theatrical experience.

PURPOSE AND EFFECTS

Creating intimacy: Establishes a personal connection with the audience.

Highlighting artifice: Reminds viewers they are watching a performance.

Encouraging participation: Invites the audience to engage actively, sometimes influencing the play's direction.

Stimulating reflection: Prompts critical thinking about themes and societal issues.

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