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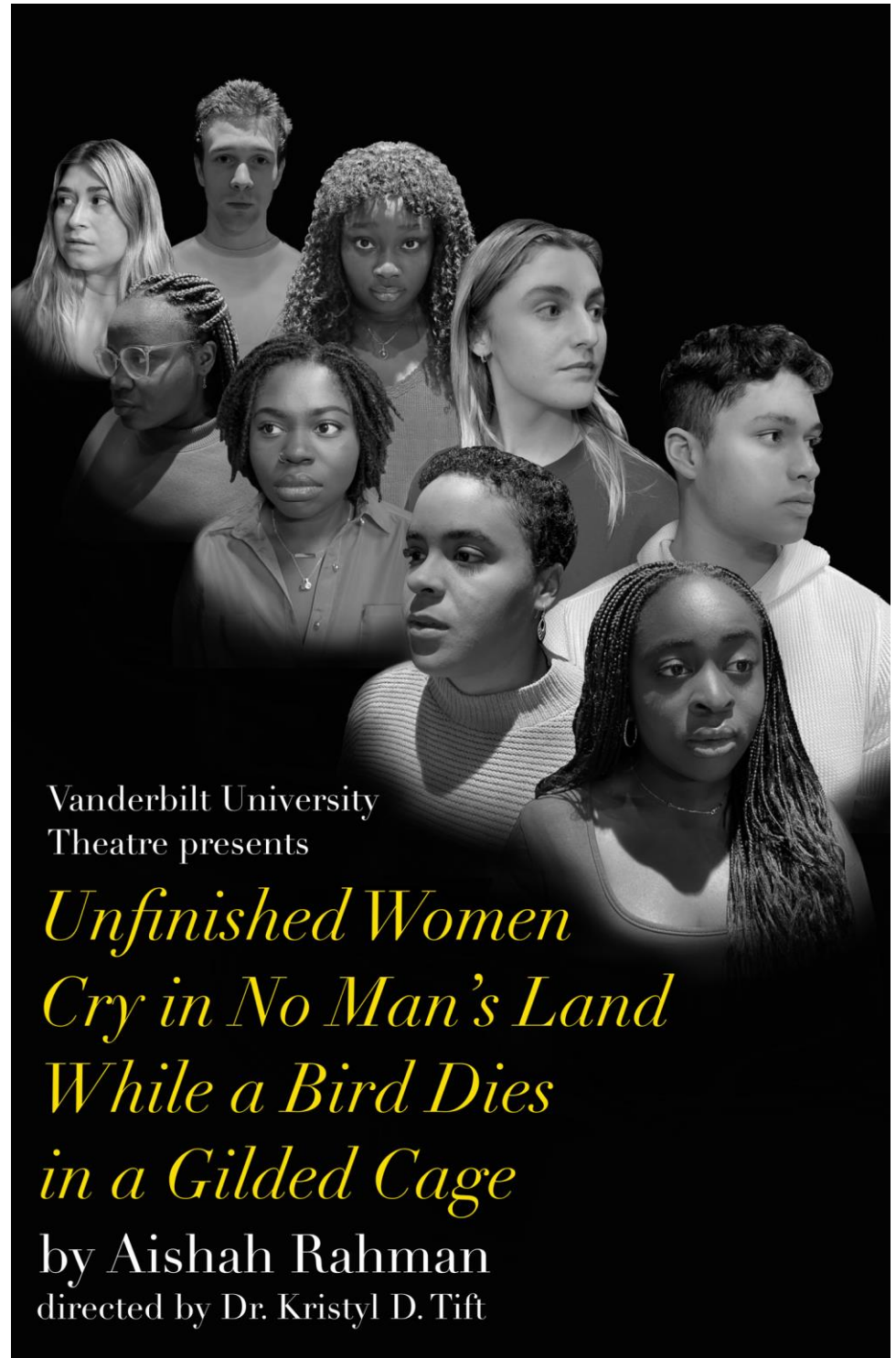
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Vanderbilt University  
Theatre presents

*Unfinished Women*  
*Cry in No Man's Land*  
*While a Bird Dies*  
*in a Gilded Cage*

by Aishah Rahman  
directed by Dr. Kristyl D. Tift

# Unfinished Women Cry in No Man's Land while a Bird Dies in a Gilded Cage

By Aishah Rahman

Directed by Dr. Kristyl D. Tift

Dramaturgy by Dr. Kristyl D. Tift and Brazil Remani

Costume Design by Hannah Chalman

Set and Lighting Design by Phillip Franck

Sound Design by Dr. Kristyl D. Tift and Phillip Franck

Technical Direction by Liz Haynes

Saxophone Performance by Max Dvorin

## Cast of Characters

Charlie Chan ----- Will Growdon  
Wilma ----- Olutobi Akisanya  
Paulette ----- Adanna Brown  
Mattie ----- Esther Ayoade  
Midge ----- Ilana Cohen  
Consuelo ----- Esther Osunlana  
Nurse Jacobs ----- Jessica Cobbinah  
Charles Parker, Jr. ----- Christian Rodriguez Rosales  
Pasha ----- Caitlin Scannell

First produced by The New York Shakespeare Festival

*UNFINISHED WOMEN CRY IN NO MAN'S LAND*

*WHILE A BIRD DIES IN A GILDED CAGE*

is produced by special arrangement with Broadway Play

Publishing Inc, NYC

[www.broadwayplaypub.com](http://www.broadwayplaypub.com)

## Crew

Stage Manager----- Natalie Wright  
Assistant Stage Managers ----- Page Givens, Junlin "Rovier" Chen  
Production Manager ----- Ben Damir  
Scene Shop Staff----- Emily Feingold-Fisher,  
Jonny Wieland, Madison Ferguson,  
Kaitlyn Hammond, Seriol Kumabong  
Carpenters/Painters ----- Brazil Remani, Hana Woolley,  
Kaitlyn Hammond, Lily Gussis  
Props Manager ----- Samuel Goodyear-Brown  
Props Crew----- Ben Damir  
Costume Shop Staff: ----- Sheeko Ndegwa, Carolina Lima  
Sadie Karr, Lan Yao, Qingyun Anne Yang  
Wardrobe Crew ----- Kate Goncalves  
Electricians----- Roy (Yuzhou) Zhang, Lucas Bittorf, Rebecca Lief  
Neil Yao, Samuel Goodyear-Brown, Marc Seay  
Sound Operator ----- Roy (Yuzhou) Zhang  
House Managers ----- Rhylee Tucker, Hana Woolley

*Please Note: VUTheatre has a strict policy about no late seating or  
re-admittance if you leave the auditorium.*

Cameras and recording devices are not allowed in  
Neely Auditorium during the performance.  
Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices. As a courtesy to the  
actors, please do not use devices during the performance.

VUTheatre gladly accepts donations of costumes and furniture pieces.  
Call (615)322-2404 to make arrangements.

## Director's Note

Aishah Rahman's *Unfinished Women Cry in No Man's Land While a Bird Dies in a Gilded Cage* was first produced by The New York Shakespeare Festival in 1977. Characterized by the playwright as a "polydrama," the play conjoins what could have been two separate plays –one exploring teenage pregnancy in the 1950s and one exploring the demise of Bebop jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker. The play's structure, form, and language resist the confines of traditional Western art to privilege an Africanist worldview infused with a jazz sensibility. Troubling our notions of what a play should be, the oft-poetic language mimics the repetition and revision of jazz music – calling audiences to engage with it on a visceral level.

In *Unfinished Women*, time is cyclical – past, present, and future elide. Incorporating Yoruba cosmology, Rahman insists that three worlds exist simultaneously – that of the unborn, the living and the dead. The two separate spaces in which these worlds exist are the Hide-A-Wee Home for Unwed Mothers and Pasha's Boudoir – spaces that connect Charlie Parker – the man, the legend, the music – to five teenage girls who love him. Wilma, Midge, Mattie, Consuelo, and Paulette must make a choice about whether to keep their babies or give them up for adoption on the day that Charlie Parker dies.

Directing this play, I thought about how reproductive choice in the contemporary moment speaks to stories of teenage mothers of the past. I thought about the impact of substance abuse on our brightest stars. These musings, ultimately, led me to focus on the very notion of *choice*—how we come to choose what/who we choose and how we *live* with those choices.

...  
*This cast and creative team bravely infused this production with passion, precision, purpose, and a lot of play. Without your gifts and faith in the process, this story could not be told. Watching you experiment, learn, and grow on and offstage has been the best part. Thank you for your boldness, bravery, and willingness to try something new. You make me proud to call you mine.*

...  
**This production is dedicated to the life and art of playwright Angela C. Hall (1971-2022)—an unfinished warrior woman who cried in no man's land sho' nuff. I miss you so much that it's hard for me to catch my breath when I hear your laugh in my head. You've stood next to me in spirit during this process...guiding and affirming my choices, stopping and starting my words, holding me up as only a sister-friend can. Sleep softly.**

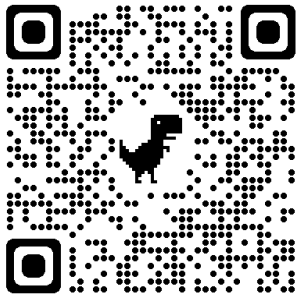
Kristyl D. Tift, PhD, MFA

## Dramaturgs' Note

*Unfinished Women* requires extensive research as the conflation of fact and fiction is its foundation. Binaries of reality and dream; love and hate; hope and fear; girlhood and womanhood; fame and infamy; soloist and ensemble; classical and jazz; and this land and that land claim space in the world of this play. As a dramaturgy team comprised of a PhD student in Sociology and a PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies, we put our heads together to make sense of the seemingly disparate thoughts, ideas, themes, policies, and players referenced. Of note, during the rehearsal process, we presented our research to the cast to educate them on such topics as the prevalence of substance abuse in modern jazz; the implications of pregnancy before *Roe vs. Wade*; the conditions of maternity homes in the 1950s; and Aishah Rahman's life and art.

We invite you to engage with our research by scanning the QR code below. There, you will find our dramaturgical statements along with visual and audio resources that will help you better understand *Unfinished Women*.

Brazil Remani and Dr. Tift



## Biographies (page 4)

**BRAZIL REMANI** (Co-dramaturg) is a second-year Ph.D. student in Sociology. As a lover of the theatre and an advocate for Black arts, she is excited to explore the history and themes of *Unfinished Women who Cry in No Man's Land while a Bird Dies in a Cage*. She would like to thank Dr. Tift, the cast, and the entire department for giving her the chance to "return home to the theatre." Neely will always be her second home at Vanderbilt University.

**CAITLIN "CATIE" SCANNELL** (Pasha) is a sophomore studying MHS and HOD (probably). She is from San Francisco, CA and this is her first VUT show! She's so grateful for the opportunity to work with the incredible people on and off stage who contributed to this show. She thanks you for coming and hopes you enjoy :)

**NATALIE WRIGHT** (Stage Manager) is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Science majoring in Psychology and Medicine, Health, and Society with a minor in Theatre. You may have seen her as The Messenger in VUT's *Antigone* (2022), or as Claudia in VUT's *To Stab a Butterfly Through the Heart or Vladimir Nobokov on a Westbound Train* (2021), or behind the scenes as an ASM or props manager in one of VUT's other performances. She'd like to thank her parents and her brother, Andrew, for all of the support they've given her (and for the marvelous headshots taken by Andy.)

## Biographies (page 1)

**OLUTOBI "TOBI" AKISANYA** (Wilma) is a Junior majoring in Human and Organizational Development and Theater and is originally from Gadsden, AL. Although this is her first time performing in a VUT production, she has previously worked with Dr. Tift as a dramaturg for *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (2022). Before her time at Vanderbilt, Tobi has been involved with many shows produced by CharACTer's Theatrics and Gadsden City High School Theater. Her past roles include Nurse in *Romeo & Juliet*, Donkey in *Shrek the Musical*, Marshal in *Elephants Graveyard*, Nibs in *Peter Pan the Musical*, and Mrs. O'Fallon in *The Magic Tower*. Tobi would love to thank her parents and siblings for supporting her no matter the distance and her amazing friends for convincing her to return to the stage – and especially for helping her learn her lines. She would also love to thank her first theater teacher, Cody Carlton, for always believing in her and always showing up for her. She is extremely grateful for Dr. Tift's support throughout the rehearsal process, and is extremely honored to be amongst such an amazing cast. Aside from VUT, Tobi can be found in her natural habitat... the Rand patio.

**ESTHER AYOADE** (Mattie) is a junior majoring in Biology and Medicine, Health, and Society with a minor in Spanish. She recently played Asali in VUT's *Lovelaces* and Saint Monica in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. Outside of theater, Esther enjoys watching anime and weightlifting.

## Biographies (page 2)

**ADANNA BROWN** (Paulette) is a senior double majoring in Cognitive Science and Child Development. This is Adanna's second show with VUT after getting to work with Dr. Tift last spring as Delia Patterson in *Blues for an Alabama Sky*. Upon first arriving to Vanderbilt, Adanna discovered her love for student written theatre and was inspired to write and direct her own original show, *Walking Each Other Home* (2021), for Vanderbilt's Iceberg Theatre Company. Adanna is beyond excited to return to her acting roots one last time for this eccentric show before she departs from Vanderbilt this December. She gives her overwhelming thanks to Dr. Tift for unveiling and shaping the storyteller deep within her and to VUT for adding a flourish of fun and artistry to her Vanderbilt experience.

**JUNLIN "ROVIER" CHEN** (ASM) was born in Guangzhou, China. As a freshman, he plans to double-major in philosophy and mathematics. *Unfinished Women* is his first theatre experience and he is ready to learn. He is also on the build crew for VOB's production of *9 to 5*.

**JESSICA "JESSIE" COBBINAH** (Nurse Jacobs) is a senior from right here in Nashville, majoring in Secondary Education and English. This is her first VUT show and she is so excited and grateful to be able to share this experience with the amazing cast and crew!

**ILANA COHEN** (Midge) is a junior in the College of Arts and Science majoring in Political Science and Theatre from Las Vegas, Nevada. She is so excited to be back on the stage with VUT after performing in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* this past spring. Outside of VUT, Ilana just finished performing in Vanderbilt Off-Broadway's *Carrie: The Musical*.

## Biographies (page 3)

**PAIGE GIVENS** (ASM) is a first year in Peabody majoring in special education and math. She is from Appleton, Wisconsin and after the amazing experience in *Antigone*, she is excited to be working on her second show at VUT.

**WILL GROWDON** (Charlie Chan) welcomes you to Unfinished Women. He has been in previous roles such as Terry in *Sideshow* and Emmett in *Legally Blonde*, and he played Haimon in the production of *Antigone* just weeks ago. He would like to dedicate this performance to all of the great educators he has had throughout his life.

**ESTHER OSUNLANA** (Consuelo) is a senior majoring in Cinema and Media Arts and Minor in Theatre. Being a Nigerian American, she was raised in the great Sunshine State of Florida. Esther made her VUT debut in *Lovelaces* (2021) and also worked as Assistant Stage Manager on *Antigone* (2022). Esther loves VUT and graduating will be a bittersweet experience!

**CHRISTIAN RODRIGUEZ ROSALES** (Charlie Parker) is a junior in the College of Arts and Science majoring in Neuroscience. He is from Washington D.C., and more broadly, the DMV area. He is very grateful for the opportunity to take part in something as amazing as this play. He gives all the credit to his castmates, the wonderful Dr. Tift, the stage manager, the stage and lighting crew, and everyone involved. Previous VUT shows include *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (2022).