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For associated imagery, [click here](#)

Company One Theatre, in partnership with Boston Playwrights' Theatre and the City of Boston's Office of Arts and Culture, announces

Hoops

a new play by **Eliana Pipes**

based on *The HOOPS Project* by **Nicole Acosta**

directed by **Tonasia Jones**

dramaturgy by **afrikah selah**

FREE with Pay-What-You-Want tickets!

July 12 – August 10, 2024 at the Strand Theatre

Press Opening: Saturday, July 13 (RSVP [here](#))

Learn more at companyone.org/hoops

Boston, MA — Company One Theatre (C1) announces the Boston premiere of ***Hoops*** by Eliana Pipes, based on *The HOOPS Project* by Nicole Acosta, directed by Tonasia Jones, with dramaturgy by C1 Producer-in-Residence afrikah selah, and produced in partnership with Boston Playwrights' Theatre and the City of Boston's Office of Arts and Culture. This is C1's third and final production of their **milestone 25th season**, following *The Interrobangers* by M Sloth Levine and *Morning, Noon, and Night* by Kirsten Greenidge. Press opening will be Saturday, July 13, with a preview performance on Friday, July 12. Performances continue through Saturday, August 10 at the Strand Theatre (543 Columbia Rd, Dorchester). Tickets are available now at companyone.org. As part of C1's ongoing commitment to Public Art for Public Good, **all performances are free** with Pay-What-You-Want tickets.

Based on real lived experiences collected as part of *The HOOPS* project, *Hoops* is a celebration of hoop earrings and their cultural significance in communities of color, particularly Black, Latine, and Indigenous communities. Bolstered by **original music from local hip-hop star Brandie Blaze** (who also stars in the show), this choreopoem in the key of Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls...* highlights the power of adornment and self-expression through evocative performances from a dynamic ensemble cast (Blaze, Elijah Brown, Albamarina Nahar, Kaili Y.

Turner, and Karimah Williams). By producing *Hoops*, C1 amplifies the stories of feminist power and resilience that communities of color have been telling for generations, stories which have too often been overlooked and ignored by traditional theaters.

“I’m excited to return to Boston and reconnect with Company One and BPT with this production of *Hoops*,” says Pipes, a member of C1’s Season 25 PlayLab Circuit Flux Lab. “Boston is where I spread my wings as an artist, and I’m thrilled to bring this play to a theater with such a long history of serving the communities that *Hoops* was written to celebrate. It’s truly an honor to give our communities space to feel seen, space to laugh, cry, and gather with each other.”

Jones says, “what’s so exciting to me about *Hoops* is its emotional resonance. For every moment of success and jubilee you see on stage, there’s a moment that will shake you to your core right around the corner. It’s silly, sassy, and gut-wrenchingly real all at once. *Hoops* can be enjoyed by anyone, but it was made specifically to inspire and uplift Black, Latine, and Indigenous communities. There’s a line in the play: ‘I just want something to be mine. It feels like there’s nothing that actually gets to belong to me.’ Well, *Hoops* belongs to Black people. It belongs to Latine people. It belongs to Indigenous people. And it is not afraid to be made by us and for us.”

Hoops is C1’s fourth production at the historic Strand Theatre in Upham’s Corner, following *Leftovers* by Josh Wilder in 2018, *can i touch it?* by Francisca Da Silveira in 2022, and *The Boy Who Kissed the Sky* by Idris Goodwin in 2023. Earlier this year, C1 was selected by the city of Boston as a recipient of the Neighborhood and Downtown Activation Fund, marking the beginning of a three-year summer residency in the theater. During this residency, all programs at the Strand Theatre will be free with Pay-What-You-Want tickets, disrupting an old and financially inaccessible model historically caused by rising ticket prices in traditional theaters.

“The Mayor’s Office of Arts & Culture is proud to support the meaningful programs that Company One produces through the Neighborhood and Downtown Activation Grant”, says City of Boston’s Chief of Arts and Culture Kara Elliott-Ortega. “C1’s mission to create authentic, accessible, and inclusive theatre programming aligns with our funding goals, and we look forward to seeing all that they accomplish in their 25th season.”

This production is also the first time C1 is working with Boston Playwrights’ Theatre as a producing partner since 2011’s production of *Learn to be Latina* by Enrique Urueta. Pipes is a graduate of Boston University’s MFA playwriting program, and her thesis play *LORENA: a Tabloid Epic* premiered on their stage in 2021. BPT recently produced a week-long workshop of *Hoops* with this production’s cast and creative team, culminating in a public staged reading this May. They will continue to support the production through rehearsal space, marketing assistance, and more.

“BPT deeply admires Company One’s commitment to producing stories that resonate with Boston’s neighborhoods and communities, and we are so proud to partner with them to bring HOOPS at the historic Strand Theatre,” says BPT Artistic Director Megan Sandberg-Zakian. “We are equally proud to count playwright Eliana Pipes as an alum of our MFA program – it has

been inspiring to watch her work make its way through the world, surprising and delighting audiences, and we know that this piece will do the same.”

“I always look forward to the summer because for the past three years, it’s meant C1’s return to Upham’s Corner,” says C1 Artistic Director and Co-Founder Shawn LaCount. “And I can’t think of a better show than *Hoops* to begin the next phase of our residency at the Strand Theatre. Pipes has created a beautiful tapestry of self-expression and cultural history, one that belongs to the communities of color that have long called Dorchester their home. And because of C1’s commitment to Public Art as Public Good and Pay-What-You-Want tickets, there is no financial barrier to entry. We are proud to be a space where those who may have never seen a play before can feel welcomed and represented on stage. We are proud to push back against centuries of racism and classism that has caused the American theatre to stagnate, filling it instead with joy, energy, and vigor.”

>> About the Production

Hoop earrings are way more than just an accessory. They represent family, resilience, and self-expression. They represent the freedom to shine in a world that’s constantly trying to dim the lights. From Chicago to Oaxaca to right here in Boston, these earrings shout “I’m here, and there’s nothing you can do about it.”

Eliana Pipes brings 5,000 years of history to life with *Hoops*, a joyous celebration of Black, Latine, and Indigenous culture. Based on a series of intimate interviews, this vibrant and playful collage of self-adornment and heritage shows off just how much power a pair of hoops can hold.

>> Company One Theatre is producing *Hoops* to AMPLIFY:

- our fourth year of Public Art for Public Good at The Strand Theatre, where we continue to premiere new work by BIPOC artists and create unique, dynamic events for all ages.
- unwavering expressions of self as powerful tools for resistance, ancestral reclamation, and collective and personal liberation.
- the intertwined personal and communal histories that have passed between generations and shape our understanding of culture, status, and evolution.
- community partners and organizations who expand our definitions of beauty, foster authentic gender expression, and celebrate a subversion of the dominant culture.
- accessible creative development programs like PlayLab (of which playwright Eliana Pipes is an alum) that create opportunities for emerging theatremakers to hone their craft and become civically-engaged artists.

>> Cast

Brandie Blaze (she/her)

Elijah Brown (they/he)

Albamarina Nahar (she/her)

Tiffany Santiago (she/her)

Kaili Y. Turner (she/they)

Karimah Williams (she/her)
Beyoncé Martinez (she/her) — Swing

>> Production, Creative, and Design Team

Playwright: **Eliana Pipes** (she/her)
Director: **Tonasia Jones** (she/her)
Lead Dramaturg: **afrikah selah** (they/them)
Composer: **Brandie Blaze** (she/her)
Artistic Advisor: **Lois Roach** (she/her)
Assistant Director: **Kimstelle Merisma** (she/her)
Co-Dramaturg: **Raquel Duarte Hunt** (she/they/ella)
Performance Stage Manager: **Sara Gorelkin** (she/her)
Rehearsal Stage Manager: **Erin Lerch** (they/them)
Assistant Stage Manager: **Kit Verweij** (they/them)
Assistant Stage Manager: **Eliana Zahalsky** (she/her)
Assistant Stage Manager/A2: **Paul Rescigno** (he/him)
Choreographer: **Jenny Oliver** (she/her)
Movement Captain: **Elijah Brown** (they/he)
Scenic Designer: **Peyton Tavares** (she/her)
Costume Designer: **Mikayla Reid** (she/her)
Lighting Designer: **Malory Hartman** (she/they)
Sound Designer: **Anna Drummond** (they/them)
Props Designer: **Kelly Smith**
Wardrobe Supervisor: **Erica Schoenberg** (she/they)
Technical Director: **Wesley Scanlon** (he/him)
Assistant Technical Director: **Thomas Cappelli** (he/him)
Master Electrician: **Oliver Hawke** (he/him)
Board Operator: **Matilda Lee** (she/her)
Strand Technical Director/Production Textile Fabricator: **Liz Ramey** (she/her)
Strand Sound Supervisor/Production Audio Engineer: **Nick Walwer** (he/him)
Strand Scenic Lead: **Marquise Crawford**

Scenery constructed by Wooden Kiwi Productions (Waltham, MA)

>> Performance Schedule

Friday, July 12 @ 7:30PM - Preview Performance
Saturday, July 13 @ 7:30PM - Press Opening
Sunday, July 14 @ 2PM
Thursday, July 18 @ 7:30PM
Friday, July 19 @ 7:30PM
Saturday, July 20 @ 7:30PM

Sunday, July 21 @ 2PM
Thursday, July 25 @ 7:30PM
Friday, July 26 @ 7:30PM
Saturday, July 27 @ 7:30PM
Sunday, July 28 @ 2PM
Thursday, August 1 @ 7:30PM
Friday, August 2 @ 7:30PM
Saturday, August 3 @ 7:30PM
Sunday, August 4 @ 2PM
Thursday, August 8 @ 7:30PM - Teen Night Out
Friday, August 9 @ 7:30PM
Saturday, August 10 @ 2PM
Saturday, August 10 @ 7:30PM

How to purchase tickets:

- Online at companyone.org
- In-person at the Strand Theatre within 45 minutes prior to performance
- A digital streaming version of the production will also be made available for on-demand viewing during the run, details to come.

>> About the Creative Team ([click here](#) for headshots)

Eliana Pipes (she/her) — Playwright

Eliana Pipes is a playwright and filmmaker based in her hometown of Los Angeles. Her plays include *BITE ME* (world premiere off-Broadway WP Theater & Colt Coeur); *DREAM HOUSE* (world premiere co-production Alliance Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, and Baltimore Center Stage, published by Concord Samuel French); *HOOPS* (world premiere commission Milwaukee Chamber Theater). She holds commissions from Two River Theater and South Coast Repertory. Her work has been developed or presented at the New York Theatre Workshop Dartmouth Residency, Playwright's Realm Scratchpad Series, South Coast Repertory Pacific Playwright's Festival, NNPN National New Play Showcase, Old Globe Powers New Voices Festival, Fire This Time Festival, and Drama League DirectorFest. Her writing awards include the Dramatists Guild Foundation Fellowship, Alliance Keneda Prize, Leah Ryan Prize, KCACTF Harold and Mimi Steinberg Award, National Latine Playwrights Award, and Dr. Floyd Gaffney Award. BA English Columbia University, MFA Playwriting Boston University. www.elianapipes.com.

Tonasia Jones (she/her) — Director

Regional Credits include *BLKS* (Speakeasy); *3Miles* (Huntington); *The Elephant in The Room* (Central Square); *Proclamation* (A.R.T); *Raza* (Front Porch); *Legends, Statements, and Stars* (The Theater Offensive); *The Tempest* (Wittenberg University); *It's a Wonderful Life* (Greater Boston Stage); *Pay No Worship* (Flat Earth); *Octavia & Kleopatra*. Assistant Director credits include *How I Learned What I Learned* (Huntington); *The Revolutionists* (Central Square); and *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning* (Lyrics Stage). Tonasia has a BFA in from Emerson College,

and trained at Shakespeare Theatre Company D.C. She is located primarily in Boston and travels for freelance opportunities.

afrikah salah (they/them) — Lead Dramaturg

afrikah salah is a Boston-based cultural worker specializing in dramaturgy, new play development, and arts journalism. With a passion for dialogue and a desire to explore new ideas in innovative ways, they value creative collaboration that strives to build community towards a more equitable world. Currently, they hold the position of NNPN New Work Producer in Residence at Company One Theatre, and are also a 2023-24 TCG Rising Leader of Color. You can find out more at itsafrikah.com

>> About the Cast ([click here](#) for headshots)

Brandie Blaze (she/her)

Brandie Blaze, a multifaceted artist hailing from Dorchester, MA, is a force to be reckoned with in both the rap and theater worlds. Nominated for three Boston Music Awards and gracing the stage as a 2024 Celtics halftime performer, Blaze effortlessly blends her talents as a rapper, actress, writer, and composer. Influenced by the likes of Missy Elliot, Lil Kim, and DMX, her dynamic performances captivate audiences with her raw energy and lyrical prowess. Blaze has shared stages with legends such as GZA of Wu Tang, Souls of Mischief, BbyMutha and JPEGMafia, showcasing her versatility and range as an artist. Her presence on the 2023 Boston Calling lineup and starring role in the musical *Come To Pass* solidify her status as a rising star in both the music and theater scenes.

Elijah Brown (they/he)

Elijah Brown is so excited to be a part of this process, much love to the wonderful cast and creatives! <3 His recent credits include: *Orpheus in the Overworld* (Orpheus) with Fresh Ink Theater Company, *Romeo and Juliet* (Lady Montague) and *Macbeth* (Caithness) with Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, *Power Play* (Sarah) Artist's Theater of Boston, *Antigone* (Creon), and *As You Like It* (Duke Senior) with Emerson College. So much love to this beautiful cast who has spread such an immense amount of love throughout this process <3 Enjoy the show!!

Albamarina Nahar (she/her)

Albamarina Nahar is an Afro Latinx actress born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. Nahar moved to New York City in 2013 to pursue her career in film and television. After returning home from a volunteer gap year program with Global Citizen Year in Brazil, Nahar attended the New York Film Academy to further her acting and film studies. Albamarina's role in the film *250* won the Cultural Perspective-Independent Producer award at the Hometown Media Awards in Philadelphia. Nahar was also nominated for Best Supporting Actress at Jersey City's Golden Door Film Festival playing Toni in the feature film *Bus Stop*. She relocated to Los Angeles, California in 2019 to further her career. Nahar is actively working on her own indie original projects. Her short film *Phases of a Goddess* was selected for The Bitesize Film Festival 2021, Dominican Film Festival in New York 2021, and Halifax Black Film Festival 2022. Nahar is

actively building her bicoastal multifaceted career as an actress, writer, filmmaker, dancer, artist, and entrepreneur.

Tiffany Santiago (she/her)

Tiffany Santiago is making her Company One Theatre debut! Recent credits include Natalie in *Dead Dadz Club* with TcSquared, Andy Stark in *John Deserves to Die* with Fresh Ink Theatre, Leanne/Ginny in the N.E. debut of *Puffs, or Seven Increasingly Eventful Years at a Certain School of Magic and Magic* with FTLO Theater, and #13 in *The Wolves* at Hovey Players.

Kaili Y. Turner (she/they)

Kaili Y Turner is an Afro-Indigenous (Nipmuc), actor, comedian, writer/director, and puppeteer, and mom to two boys. She is elated to be returning to the C1 for the second time this season, following Kirsten Greenidge's *Morning, Noon, and Night*. Kaili recently finished a regional tour in the Obie winning play *The Nosebleed* as part of the Lucille Lortel nominated cast. Selected credits include: *Fires in the Mirror*, Actors Studio Drama School; *The Nosebleed*, Lincoln Center; *My Story is Gluskabe*, Penobscot Theater; and *103 Within the Veil*, Company One. To follow Kaili's journey visit www.KailiYTurner.com or [@MadamnStarlight](https://www.instagram.com/MadamnStarlight) on IG.

Karimah Williams (she/her)

Last seen in *King Hedley II* (Tonya) Actors' Shakespeare Project. *Chicken and Biscuits* [u/s] (The Front Porch Arts Collective); *can i touch it?* [u/s], *Black Super Hero Magic Mama* (Company One); *Onward, Votes for Woman* (Birch Tree Productions); *Coriolanus, For Colored Girls...* (Praxis Stage Company). Film: *Aftershock* (The History Channel), *Ye* (Jagun Fly Productions). Web Series: *Love Undone* (Joseph Goncalves). Education: BFA in Theatre Performance from Salem State University. Karimah is a Boston Public School teacher.

>> About Company One Theatre (C1)

Founded in 1998, Company One has situated itself as a home for social justice and artistic excellence by connecting Boston's diverse communities through live performance, the development of new plays and playwrights, arts education, and public engagement programming. By establishing a dedicated space for marginalized and alternative narratives to thrive and working with partners and collaborators across the city, Company One has become a local leader in the ongoing conversations that continue to define the era of social change in contemporary America.

Company One Theatre's work falls into four main areas: Productions, Education, New Play Development, and Connectivity. Over its 20+ year history Company One has produced over 80 productions, employed over 1500 local artists, and has been awarded over 30 Boston theatre awards. We have served over 100,000 audience members and 15,000 students.

MISSION

Company One Theatre builds community at the intersection of art and social change.

VISION

A Boston defined by justice, equity, and artistic innovation.

MPACT STATEMENT

As Boston's Theatre for the People, C1 is committed to:

- creating artistically innovative, responsive theatre to galvanize C1 audiences toward individual and collective action.
- tearing down the vestiges of segregation, and breaking the silos that confine people and issues.
- shining unflinching attention on how racial and economic power and privilege shape Boston.
- collectively organizing for change in deep collaboration with new voices, younger generations and community partners.
- advocating for Boston's culture workers, and the economic and creative sustainability of our rich arts ecology.

“Company One Theatre pushes the boundaries of narrative with a focus on marginalized stories, and has probably done more than any other institution to bring new audiences to Boston theater.”

— *WBUR* (2023)

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