



**For Immediate Release: Theatre**

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Cast & director available for interviews, high-res pics available for download at  
<http://therhino.org/press-room>

Theatre Rhinoceros Presents

*Group Therapy*

LGBTQ+ folks age & rage gracefully in Kheven LaGrone's new play

Nov 9 - Dec 3, 2023

September 26, 2023, San Francisco - What happens to LGBTQ+ people when they turn forty years old? In Lambda Literary Award finalist and local playwright Kheven LaGrone's world premiere *Group Therapy*, which will see its first performance in November this year, they enter a metaphysical, ongoing group therapy session together, all teetering on that needle's point between youth, middle age, and eldership. Set in San Francisco, 1995, and led by a non-denominational, sometimes creepily jovial facilitator, *Group Therapy* is a little like purgatory, but on the other side is a life of freedom and joy earned by facing one's demons, moving through one's grief, and learning to honor and love oneself. It's in this philosophical group therapy session that Manuel, Keisha, an unnamed Engineer, and an anonymous Church Deacon find themselves and each other ... but not all of them will make it out to see 40 unscathed.

This is not LaGrone's first world premiere, nor his first partnership with Theatre Rhinoceros - 2017 saw *The Legend of Pink*, a "dazzling" story of Black trans and queer humanity set in Oakland's present day (Adrianson, *Theatrius*). 2021 saw the virtual world premiere of *Pillow Talk*, about the many layers of intimacy that exist and unfold between Black men. With *Group Therapy*, LaGrone continues a kind of quiet revolution, bringing the true complexities of LGBTQ+ life out into the open, especially Black LGBTQ+ lives, championing the stories of the most marginalized within an already marginalized community.

*Group Therapy* is directed by Tanika Baptiste, Theatre Rhinoceros' Arts Leadership Resident and a longstanding collaborator with the theatre, having directed the plays *At the Wake of a Dead Drag Queen*, *How Black Mothers Say I Love You*, and the aforementioned *Pillow Talk*. This project is the culmination of her residency, supported by the Arts Leadership Residency program of Theatre Bay Area. Additional support for the production comes from the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

In the real world, the question remains to be answered: what happens to LGBTQ+ people when they turn forty years old? Are we ready to talk about it?

## Calendar Editors

- What: **Group Therapy**
- When: November 9 & 10, 2023 (preview performances, no press at previews please)  
November 11 - December 3, 2023 (Thursdays, Fridays, & Saturdays at 8 PM;  
Sundays at 3 PM; no performance on Thursday, Nov. 23)
- Where: Theatre Rhinoceros, 4229 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94114  
Castro Street MUNI Station; F Market, 33 Stanyan, 24 Divisadero  
Streetcar and Bus Lines
- Tickets: \$35 regular/ \$17.50 for students, seniors, Theatre Bay Area members, & veterans
- Info / Res: [https://therhino.audience1st.com/store/8?show\\_id=100/](https://therhino.audience1st.com/store/8?show_id=100/) or  
<https://fb.me/e/1q7bO6vML>

What happens to LGBTQ+ people when they turn forty? Are we ready to talk about it? In his new play *Group Therapy*, local playwright Kheven LaGrone holds up a rare mirror to older LGBTQ+ and Black audience members, in which they can see themselves, their struggles, and their joy fully humanized. In this metaphysical group therapy session, the only way out is growth. *Group Therapy* is written by **Kheven LaGrone**, directed by **Tanika Baptiste**, stage managed by **Raye Narra**, and performed by local Bay Area actors **Josh Alvin**, **Mark McHenry**, **Senait Mengstab**, **James Quedado**, **Tory Williams**, and **Hector Zavala**. This production is supported by the Arts Leadership Residency, a program of Theatre Bay Area, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

Hi-res Digital Images Available for Download at: <http://therhino.org/press-room>

## The Artists

**Kheven LaGrone** (Playwright) is a Bay Area native whose writing has appeared in *Transition Magazine*, *Media Ethics*, *Journal of African American Men*, and *The Journal of Human and Civil Rights*. His play *The Legend of Pink* was produced by Theatre Rhinoceros in 2017, and his play *Pillow Talk* was a finalist for a Lambda Literary Award in 2021. A passionate advocate for the Bay Area homeless community, his essays have appeared in *Street Spirit* and *San Francisco Bayview*. Mr. LaGrone has also edited a collection of scholarly essays on Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

**Tanika Baptiste** (Director) is a winner of the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award and was named the San Francisco Broadway World Person to Watch Female 2020. Originally from San Diego, CA, Tanika is a proud auntie, sister and daughter with roots in New Orleans and Trinidad and is a critically acclaimed director, actor, vocalist and costume designer who works full time in the Bay Area.

**Raye Narra** (Stage Manager) began stage managing for solo performance in 2018 at The Marsh in San Francisco and Berkeley. They have since stage managed several Theatre Rhinoceros productions including *The Rita Hayworth of this Generation*, *Pericles*, and *Overlooked Latinas*.

Local actors **Josh Alvin, Mark McHenry, Senait Mengstab, James Quedado, Tory Williams,** and **Hector Zavala** play various roles.

**Theatre Rhinoceros** was founded in San Francisco in 1977, and is the longest running LGBTQ+ theatre in the nation. We develop and produce works of theatre that enlighten, enrich, and explore both the ordinary and the extraordinary aspects of our queer community. Our emphasis is on new works, works about under-represented members of the larger queer community, and revivals of lesser-known queer classics. Over the years Theatre Rhinoceros has received many awards of recognition including: Theatre Rhinoceros Day in the City Proclamation from Mayor Gavin Newsom, State Assembly Certificate of Recognition from Senator Mark Leno, recognitions from Congressperson Nancy Pelosi and Assembly Persons Tom Ammiano and Carole Migden, numerous Cable Car, BATCC and TBA Awards and Nominations, and the GLAAD Media Award for Best LGBT Theatre.