

CLARENCE BROWN THEATRE

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

INFO SHEET – *HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF*, Lab, Fall '24

How to Defend Yourself by Liliana Padilla

Lab Theatre, Sep-Oct 2024

Directed by Jayne Morgan

KEY PRODUCTION DATES

Rehearsals: Sep 16 – Oct 15

- Includes Fall Break (Oct 7-8)
- Days off: 9/22, 9/29, 10/6, 10/12, 10/19

Tech: Oct 16-18, 20-22

Performances: Oct 23-Nov 10

- Evening performances: 10/23-25 (Opening), Oct 29-30, Nov 1, Nov 5-8 // Matinees: 10/27, 11/3, 11/10
- No performance on Halloween



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thank you for your interest in auditioning for *How To Defend Yourself*. This is an honest and raw play that explores how college students navigate the nuances of consent and sexual desire.

The play takes place in a college gym, where sorority leader Brandi leads a self-defense workshop, organized in response to the recent sexual assault of sorority sister Susannah. As the students learn the tenets of fending off attackers and how not to "be a victim", they begin to channel their own rage, anxieties, trauma, confusion. (*From Wikipedia*)

Before you audition, please read the following information carefully. Do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions. You may contact me at jemknox@gmail.com.

TO REQUEST AN AUDITION APPOINTMENT

- Follow all instructions on casting notice on CBT website (where you found this document!)

BREAKDOWNS & SCRIPT INFORMATION

- Continue reading this document to review the **Casting Breakdown** and a **Violence, Intimacy, & Special Activity Breakdown** for this production.
- The Casting Breakdown (**see below**) offers information about available roles; basic information about each character; and how the identities of actors and those of characters will interact in this world. The Violence, Intimacy, & Special Activity Breakdown (**see below**) includes a list of moments in the play that you may wish to be aware of when auditioning.
- **Though breakdowns offer important insights into the characters and content of the script, it is highly recommended that you read the play in its entirety before your first audition. Scripts are available to view on Sharepoint or borrow in hard copy from McClung 206.**

FOR THE FIRST ROUND OF AUDITIONS

- **ADULT ROLES:** Prepare 1 of the available **sides** for the part (or parts) you are interested in. Sides will be provided by email when you sign up for an audition time.
 - You will act with another actor (auditioner) **or** “reader” (depending on when your appointment is). A **reader** is someone seated near the audition table who will be your scene partner in all ways except physical interaction.
 - Be familiar enough with the language that you can comfortably look up and connect with your scene partner.
 - CBT will provide e-readers for auditioners’ use. **If you would like a hard copy for accessibility, please let us know.**
- **SUS (child role):** Sus does not have spoken dialogue in the play, but instead is featured in a moment of physical theatre storytelling. She is the center of the final image of the play as a birthday girl at a birthday party. You do not need to prepare anything for auditions. We will ask some questions and play some games to get to know you and help you get to know what rehearsals might be like!

FOR CALLBACKS

- **Read the play by this point. Wear comfortable clothing/shoes to all callback sessions.**
- You will be assigned a role or roles for individual sessions and given sides to prepare to read with other actors. (Or with a reader). The director will likely work with you on your side, and you will read it more than once.
- When you receive a callback, it will include a “withdrawal” date. This is a day by which we ask you to withdraw from consideration if you are no longer interested in being cast. **We will assume that actors who do *not* withdraw by this date will accept roles if offered.**
- Cast lists will be posted the Friday after auditions, via email from Theatre Department. **Please look for an email from Emily Pope that afternoon.**

UNDERSTUDY CASTING/ASSIGNMENTS

- Understudies for *How to Defend Yourself* will be EXTERNAL, meaning that actors in understudy roles will *not* have ensemble roles in the principal cast.
- Individual understudies may be called upon to cover more than one role.
- There will be special understudy rehearsals with expected at-home preparation. There will **not** be guaranteed performances for understudies. Understudies must be on-call for all performances.

CASTING BREAKDOWN

A NOTE ABOUT IDENTITIES AND CASTING:

How to Defend Yourself takes place in a very real, contemporary college setting. The characters come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences with sex and violence. Most (perhaps all) of the characters have their own wounds related to intimacy and are struggling to express their needs and desires and find ways to feel safe. See below for specific information regarding...

Race/Ethnicity/Nationality – The playwright has designated the race/ethnicity of most characters, and every effort will be made to honor her intentions. Below, “POC” is short for “person of color,” i.e. any person who is of mixed race or of a race other than White.

Sex/Gender – Given the subject matter, gender specificity is important to the play. However, cis- and trans-gendered men and women, and non-binary actors, will be considered for roles.

Physical Ability – The play takes place in a self-defense class where martial arts moves are taught. The action is very physical and all roles require some degree of physical ability. The dialogue, action and subject matter may be triggering to some actors and every effort will be made to create a safe and supportive space during auditions and rehearsals. You do not need to disclose any information during the casting process unless there are specific accommodations you want to be assured of in advance of accepting a role.

Age - This play will be cast with primarily undergraduate actors, regardless of age (with the exception of SUS). Actor tracks are listed with characters’ ages only.

ROLES ALREADY CAST

BRANDI, Sorority VP & a black belt in Karate. Her confidence is camouflage for trauma.

MOJDEH, Sorority hopeful and best friend of Diana.

DIANA, Loves guns. Tightly wound and resentful. Pretends to care less than she does.

KARA, Sorority sister to Brandi.

EGGO, Wants to be loved, by anyone really. Sensitive and a little embarrassed by it.

ANDY, Just beginning to recognize his own privilege. He’s trying to be an ally, he’s really trying.

AVAILABLE ROLES

NIKKI: 20, she/her/hers, person of color. Pulls in all her tentacles to disappear. Wants approval and is the most innocent in the group.

SUS: 6, she/her/hers. A young woman of color who makes a wish. In final scene only.

UNDERSTUDY FOR NIKKI: 20, she/her/hers, person of color. Pulls in all her tentacles to disappear. Wants approval and is the most innocent in the group. *Likely to be doubled with understudy for Mojdeh OR Diana.*

UNDERSTUDY FOR DIANA: 18, she/her/hers, character is Mexican-American but understudy may hold different identities. Loves guns. Tightly wound and resentful. Pretends to care less than she does. *Likely to be doubled with understudy for Nikki OR Mojdeh.*

UNDERSTUDY FOR MOJDEH: 18, she/her/hers, character is Iranian-American but understudy may hold different identities. Desperate to lose her virginity. *Likely to be doubled with understudy for Nikki OR Diana.*

VIOLENCE & INTIMACY

This production **WILL** involve professional fight and intimacy direction.

***Violence and Intimacy are subjects at the heart of this script.** The notes below contain information about activities **enacted by character**, but they **do not** cover topics **discussed by characters**. Please read script in its entirety to get sense of full scope of subject matter.*

Character	Intimacy	Violence
Brandi	No	Yes – grappling
MOJDEH	Yes, kissed by Diana	Yes - grappling
DIANA	Yes, kisses Mojdeh	Yes – grappling, punches Kara
Kara	Yes, licks Eggo’s forearm	Yes, grappling, punched by Diana
Eggo	No	Yes, grappling
NIKKI	No	Yes, grappling
Andy	No	Yes, grappling
SUS	No	No