

FAMILY TREE

By Mojisola Adebayo

EASY READ GUIDE



This is an outdoor performance in a garden. Some of the characters will talk to you. You can talk back!
The festival may be busy and noisy.

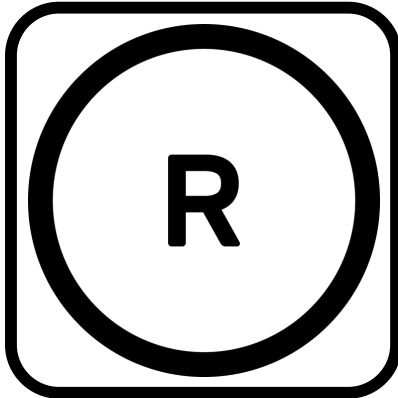
There will be festival staff around to help you and to keep things safe.
Please ask them for help if you need!

There is a lot of walking around and standing. Sometimes there are seats to sit on, you can also sit on the floor if you want!

1 Hour 15 Minutes
Sometimes it will be a little longer.
There is a feast at the end, you can stay for some soup if you like!

FAMILY TREE

What to Expect



Relaxed Performance

All performances are relaxed.

You can:

- come and go
- sit or stand
- move around
- make noise
- ask for help
- wear headphones



Audio Described

There is live audio description

There will be live audio description on the 27th of August.



BSL Interpreted

There is a BSL interpreter

There will be a BSL interpreter on the 27th of August. If you want to stand near the interpreter, please do!



Captions

Captions are provided by The Difference Engine App. This app lets you get the captions to your own mobile device. Download it from the app store. Please bring a portable charger.

FAMILY TREE

Meet the Characters



Hello! I am Michelle Asante!

I play the character of Henrietta Lacks. My character is an African-American woman who lived 100 years ago. Most of the time I will speak to you, and sometimes you can speak back to me!



Hello! I am Diana Yekinni!

I play the character of Ain. Ain is a Black British-Nigerian NHS nurse. I also play the character of Anarcha. Anarcha is an enslaved African-American woman. I also play the character of Oshun. Oshun is a Nigerian goddess.



Hello! I am Kezia Joseph!

I play the character of Bibi. Bibi is a Black British Afro-Caribbean NHS nurse. I also play the character of Betsey. Betsey is an enslaved African-American woman.

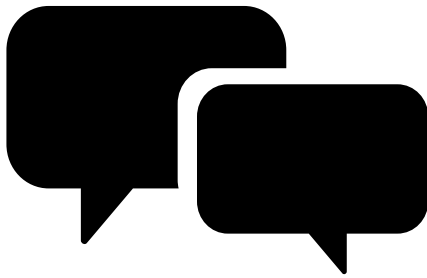


Hello! I am Natasha Cottrill!

I play the character of Lyn. Lyn is a mixed-race British NHS nurse. I also play the character of Lucy. Lucy is an enslaved African-American woman.

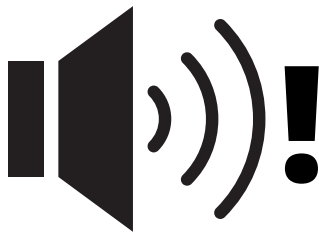
FAMILY TREE

Trigger Warnings



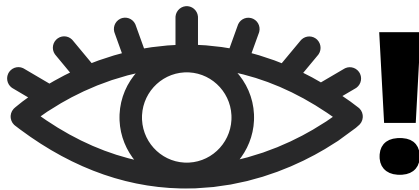
Content

- Slavery
- Racism
- Cancer
- Swearing
- Non-consensual scientific experiments
- Violence
- Mental health
- Disability
- Death



Sound

- Loud music
- Shouting
- People speaking at the same time
- Music and talking at the same time



Visual

During the day, it might be bright. During the evening it will be dark. The paths will be well lit, but if you have trouble please ask for help.



Marlboro Man Mask

Sometimes someone will wear a rubber mask that looks like an old man, sometimes the mask will be put on a dummy. There will also be a point where they bury the dummy in the mask, don't worry, it's not a real person!

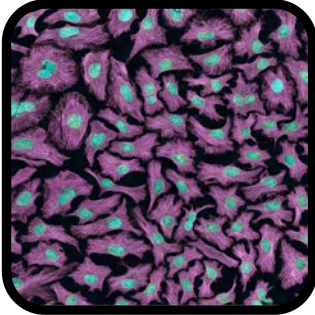


Props

During the show you will see fake blood coming from a tree, a blunt axe, fake bones, and a fake body being buried. All of these things are props and none of them are real.

FAMILY TREE

Words and Phrases to Know



HeLa Cells

Cells are really small things that living things are made of. HeLa cells were taken from Henrietta Lacks without her permission. They were sold and her family didn't get any money from it. They are used to help make medicines and vaccines like the COVID-19 one.

They are called HeLa because the scientists used the first 2 letters of her first and last name.



Dr. Sims

He was a doctor who used to experiment and operate on enslaved Black women. He didn't ask them for permission. He had a statue in America, it was taken down



Tuskegee

This was an experiment that happened in America from 1932-1972. They found African-American men with a deadly disease and told them that they were giving them injections to cure them. But they were lying. They actually just wanted to see what the disease was like. Lots of Black men died thinking that they might get better.



Marlboro Man

A person who was used in tobacco adverts for Marlboro cigarettes. Usually a man dressed a cowboy.



Orisha

An Orisha is a god or goddess that the Yoruba people from Nigeria believe in. There are more than 401 gods and goddesses. Each one is in charge of something different.

Oshun is the goddess of divinity, femininity, fertility, beauty, water, trees and love.

FAMILY TREE

What Happens



Michelle starts the story by explaining what happens in the entire play. She puts on a costume showing that she is changing characters into Henrietta. Henrietta tells us about her funeral and her cells. You can follow Henrietta into the next garden.



Ain, Bibi and Lyn are 3 NHS nurses. They are on their tea break. They sit and do each others' hair. They chat about race and climate change.



On the other side of the garden, Henrietta sits and paints her nails. She tells us about going to the hospital and finding out about her cancer. Music will play, you can hear Henrietta talking over it. She will ask you what year it is, please tell her!



On the other side of the garden, Ain and Lyn are doing hair. Bibi is reading a book. She will stand up and read the book to us.



On the other side of the garden, Henrietta will be drinking a cocktail that she has made. She might offer you some food. She talks about cancer and how her family didn't get any money after her cells were sold.

There is some shouting and swearing in this bit. She will also ask you to finish the sentence "Everybody is everybody and everything is..." You can shout

"Everything!"

She ends up crying and runs out of the garden.



On the other side of the garden, Ain, Bibi and Lyn carry on doing each others' hair.

Lyn talks about how much she wants chicken. They talk about a few racist things that happened to them when they were alive. They also talk about how they died.



You will hear Henrietta singing a lullaby in the next garden. We will all go to her.

Henrietta will be sitting at a bench and she will tell us about her daughter, Elsie. There will be some music playing while she talks. She shouts a bit.

At some point she will ask which other Black people have lost their lives to racism; you can say their names if you know any. She will also say "Amen?" and you can say "AMEN!" back to her.



All over the garden, Anarcha, Betsey and Lucy will be humming and singing while they collect herbs. They will all talk about slavery and whether or not they will be eaten by Dr. Sims.



Henrietta walks around the garden and talks about Eden and Jesus. She wonders about whether she might be chosen for something special. Fake blood will drip from the tree above her. She will dig in the ground and find a fake pelvis bone.



On the other side of the garden, Anarcha and Betsey are giving Lucy tea to drink to help her relax and sleep before she gets an operation from Dr. Sims. Anarcha tells us about her mother. Lucy drinks the tea and it will make her very floaty. They will dance. Betsey will move to the next garden, we will all follow her.



Betsey chops wood for the fire with a blunt axe. She lists the names of things that are made out of wood and paper. We will follow her down the long garden to the fire pit. A Black woman will carry the dummy of the Marlboro Man on her back into the next space. Betsey will follow them, we will follow Betsey.



Betsey bathes Anarcha in a tin bath. Anarcha sings and tells us the story of what happened each of the 29 times she got surgery. Lucy and Betsey hum and listen to the story.



The Marlboro Man is leaning against a tree nearby, slowly getting sicker. He coughs and leaves.

Henrietta goes to the trees and starts talking to them. The trees respond to her. You will hear voices coming out of speakers that are in the trees.

Henrietta will leave the forest, we will follow her. If you don't want to or can't walk through the forest, there is a path.



Ain, Bibi and Lyn are finishing their tea and chatting about what they want to do next. They sing and joke with each other. They see the Marlboro Man die nearby.

They decide to bury him. They plant vegetable seeds in the patch where he is buried. Bibi reads from her book.

They are burying a dummy with the Marlboro Man mask on.



Ain changes costumes and becomes Oshun. She tells Henrietta that she is going to be an Orisha. Oshun also does a magic trick. Henrietta says a speech. All 4 of the actors dance down to the feast. You can dance too!

They sing and play drums. Henrietta changes costumes to become the Orisha of Cells. You can clap and we will eat soup!

For more information on any of these themes, check these out!

Books

Medical Apartheid by Harriet A. Washington
Medical Bondage by Deirdre Cooper Owens
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot
Dying of Whiteness by Jonathan M. Metzl
The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben
The Overstory by Richard Powers
Race and Nature by Paul Outka
Spillover by David Quammen
The Story of my Life by J. Marion Sims
And Still I Rise by Doreen Lawrence
Beloved by Toni Morrison

Music

Henrietta Our Hero by Kamasi Washington
Mississippi Goddam (live at Carnegie Hall) by Nina Simone
Baltimore by Nina Simone
Strange Fruit by Billie Holiday
Black America by Common ft. Stevie Wonder
My Power by Beyonce, Nija, and others
D.N.A by Kendrick Lamar
The Israelites by Desmond Dekker

