

NOOR THEATRE, INC.

PRESENTS

FIRST DOWN

BY SEVAN

DIRECTED BY JOHANNA McKEON

59E59

THEATER C

FEBRUARY 18 – MARCH 5

NOOR THEATRE, INC.

PRESENTS

FIRST DOWN

BY SEVAN

DIRECTED BY JOHANNA McKEON

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

GEORGE BERRI ..... PETER ROMANO *

COACH BILL FITZGERALD ..... LARRY BULL *

MARINA KHAWLY ..... OLIVIA ABIASSI *

HANA BERRI ..... HEND AYOUB *

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM

PLAYWRIGHT ..... SEVAN

DIRECTOR ..... JOHANNA McKEON

SCENIC DESIGN ..... JACOB A. CLIMER †

COSTUME DESIGN ..... DINA EL-AZIZ †

LIGHTING DESIGN ..... CHRISTOPHER BROWN

SOUND DESIGN ..... UPTOWN WORKS:
DANIELA HART †, BAILEY TRIERWEILER †, NOEL NICHOLS †

PROJECTIONS DESIGN ..... STIVO ARNOCZY †

PRODUCTION MANAGER ..... COURTENEY LEGGETT

STAGE MANAGER ..... HANAKO RODRIGUEZ *

TRANSLATIONS ..... ALINE SALLOUM

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ..... ALI-MOOSA MIRZA

ASSOCIATE COSTUME DESIGN ..... XURUI WANG

ASSOCIATE SCENIC DESIGN ..... MA'MOON TEBBO

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER ..... NIA BLIZZARD

ADDITIONAL CASTING ..... STEPHANIE YANKWITT, CSA

WARDROBE SUPERVISOR ..... JESSICA LARSEN

PROPS CONSULTANT ..... DANIEL BROTHERS

COVID COMPLIANCE OFFICER ..... JOANA TSUHLARES

NOOR THEATRE TEAM

FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ..... LAMEECE ISSAQ

ARTISTIC PRODUCER ..... KATE MOORE HEANEY

MANAGING DIRECTOR ..... MEGAN PATTERSON

ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ..... SIVAN BATTAT

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENTV AND COMMUNICATIONS ..... SALMA S. ZOHDI

Run time: 1 hour, 30 minutes. No intermission.

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

†Member of United Scenic Artists. Designers in LORT Theaters are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

I don't like American football.

I know that will read strange given you're about to see (or just saw) the play I wrote in which the sport is a large part of the narrative.

But I think that dislike worked to my benefit as I could look at it honestly and critically in discussing one of the ignored and silenced issues in America: The understanding and treatment of Arabs and Muslims (and make no mistake – the two are not equatable).

Until the 2019 Super Bowl I had only watched about 10 minutes of a high school football game. I didn't understand the sport – technically and socially – but even as a young war refugee immigrant I knew there was something off about it.

First Down started off as a short response piece for Noor's 48-Hour Forum series about an American soccer player deciding to reveal he's Arab and Muslim. When I was asked to write a proposal for a longer version I realised that soccer doesn't hold the same prominence in America as it does across most of the world. The politics of Religion and Sports wouldn't be as clear or as strong. The only option was American Football: The national religion contending with a demonised one.

So I watched the Super Bowl. I did not like the sport any more than I did before.

I watched football films and TV shows. I did not like the sport any more than I did before.

I read about football – its origins, its history, its place in American life.

And then all the light bulbs went off.

My research gave me an entry point for the play as I became fascinated by the sport as a metaphor for America. By its ability to unify and divide. By the monolithic presence it has in American society. By how revealing American mythologies we swallow without question and preach as Truth.

For example, self-professed fans and superfans think they know everything about the sport. But they forget that the NFL is a brand. And the brand will protect and control its narrative at all costs.

One of the fun (read: aggravating) hurdles I kept having to jump was trying to convince fans of the sport that the play is indeed real and possible. I eventually met and talked with people involved with the NFL who vetted the events of the play.

They are possible.

They are plausible.

They are real.

I shan't be jumping that hurdle ever again.

Don't buy into mythologies so much that they become truth to the exclusion of facts. This extends to demonising certain communities as a way to further support American Greatness. For decades, Arabs and Muslims have not been allowed to exist in news and entertainment media unless they were Victims, Martyrs, or Terrorists. These are tropes that are still repeated and perpetuated in TV, Film, and Theater.

My community does exist along other lines. We live and breathe in more ways than you assume or have been taught. Though it may be frightening, it is okay to see yourself in us and our stories; to understand that we may very well be just like you.

Gasp.

More than anything I hope this play creates conversations. About football. About Islam. About race and racism. About America's greatness. Even if you think George will or will not follow through on his plan.

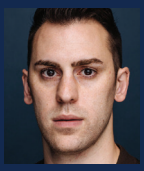
I'll never tell, so don't ask.

And I hope those conversations bring you to a different place of understanding and empathy about my communities and what we represent.

And if not – I've got the other two plays in the triptych to bring you over.

PETER ROMANO

George Berri



Off Broadway/Regional: ***Fucking A*** (Signature Theater); ***Othello***, ***A Midsummer Night's Dream*** (CSC); ***Yasmina's Necklace*** (Premiere Stages), ***Terror*** (Miami New Drama). International Tour: ***Antigone in the World*** directed by Tony Award winner Gregory Mosher. Film/TV: *New Amsterdam, The Blacklist,* Netflix's *The Week Of* (with Adam Sandler). Director: ***Antigone***, ***The Caucasian Chalk Circle*** (Miami New Drama); Film: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Julius Caesar* (Apocalyptic Artists Ensemble). Founding member of Apocalyptic Artists Ensemble, committed to bringing theater arts into New York City schools. BFA NYU Tisch, MFA Columbia. Love to Gritty. @Peterro130

www.Peter-Romano.com

LARRY BULL

Coach Bill Fitzgerald



Broadway: ***Linda Vista*** (2nd Stage), ***The Coast of Utopia*** (Lincoln Center). NYC: ***1776*** (City Center Encores!), ***Mother of the Maid*** (Public Theater). Off Broadway: ***The Traveling Lady, Nora*** (Cherry Lane Theatre); ***Rocket to the Moon*** (Pecadillo Theatre). Off-Off Broadway: ***Kenneth - What Is the Frequency?*** (78th St. Theatre). Regional: ***Appropriate, The Mystery of Irma Vep*** (Actors Theatre of Louisville)**;** ***Outside Mullingar*** (Arizona Theatre), Utah Shakespeare, Shakespeare Theatre, Merrimack Repertory, Huntington Theatre, Trinity Repertory. Film & TV: *Master, Out of Order, Law & Order: OC, The Good Fight, The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, New Amsterdam, The Blacklist, Blue Bloods, Madam Secretary, Law & Order: SVU.*

OLIVIA ABIASSI

Marina Khawly

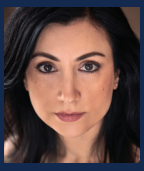


Olivia AbiASSI (she/her) is a Lebanese-American actor, singer, and writer based in Brooklyn. Recent Theater: ***The Ancestry Dot Com Play***, ***Opet Diaries***, ***Hound Dog***, ***The Commons***, ***Eh Dah? Questions For My Father***, ***Pride and Prejudice***. Commercial/VO: Sunchips, At Home, Samsung, Stripes, 7/11, Walmart. Film/TV: *Rock Me, Nora, AWK.*

@justoliviadoingthings

HEND AYOUB

Hana Berri



Theater credits include: Broadway's ***Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*** with Robin Williams, as well as its previous run at Los Angeles's Mark Taper Forum; ***A Thousand Splendid Suns*** (Arena Stage), ***Kiss*** (Yale Repertory Theatre), ***Veils*** (world premiere, Portland Stage; Barrington Stage). Television credits include *Homeland, Orange Is The New Black, The Looming Tower, Madam Secretary, Royal Pains, Feed the Beast,* Comedy Central's *The Watch List,* and recurring roles on *Transparent* and *Damages.* In Film, she co-starred in the Emmy Award-winning film *Death of a President* and the award-winning film *Private.* Hend is currently workshopping her autobiographical solo show titled ***"HOME?"*** about being a Palestinian born and raised in Israel.

SEVAN

Playwright

Actor-Playwright. His work has been seen in London and New York at The Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, The Flea Theatre, The Sheen Center, The Bush Theatre, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Theatre503, Rich Mix, The Old Red Lion, The Space, and Access Theatre. Member: 2021 NAMT 33rd Festival of New Musicals, 2021 Orchard Project Performance Lab, 2020 Theatre Row Kitchen Sink Residency, 2018 Pipeline Theatre, Bush Theatre inaugural 2015 Emerging Writers Group, The Public Theater 2011 Emerging Writers Group, NYTW Usual Suspects, Rising Circle Theatre Collective 2010 InkTANK Writer's Lab, 2016 Kondazian Playwriting Award for Armenian Stories. 2016 Arch and Bruce Foundation Playwriting Prize.

www.justsevan.com

JOHANNA McKEON

Director

Johanna directed Noor Theatre's reading (2010): of ***Forgotten Bread*** by SEVAN (2010). Associate Director credits on Broadway include ***Hedwig and the Angry Inch***, ***American Idiot***, ***War Paint***, ***Grey Gardens***, and ***King Kong***. Directing credits include ***Hedwig and the Angry Inch*** (Olney Theatre Center); ***Noura***, ***Unseen*** (Old Globe); ***I Have Loved Strangers*** (Clubbed Thumb and Williamstown Premiere), ***Tokio Confidential*** (Atlantic Theater Company); ***Comedy of Errors***, ***Schmoozy Togetherness*** (Williamstown Theatre Festival); ***Much Ado About Nothing***, ***Cymbeline***, ***The Taming of the Shrew***, ***The Rise and Fall of Annie Hall*** (Vineyard Playhouse); ***A Hatful of Rain*** (ITS Festival Warsaw), ***Semi-Permanent*** (*Outstanding Solo Show, NY Fringe Festival), ***The Importance of Being Earnest*** (Bard), ***Golden Motors*** (BRIC); ***Functional Drunk***, ***Fiesta Cabana***, ***The Tanks Break*** (Ontological-Hysteric Theatre). Film: *Auld Lang Syne* (Audience Award for Narrative Feature Indie Street Festival). Drama League, Boris Sagal and Fulbright Fellowships. MFA UT Austin.

JACOB A. CLIMER

Scenic Designer

Recent Works include: ***Hedwig and the Angry Inch*** (Olney Theatre Center), ***The 2021 Texas Rose Festival*** (Tyler, Texas), *Platee* (Des Moines Metro Opera). Theatrical work includes ***Les Misérables*** (Dallas Theater Center), ***Unknown Soldier*** (Playwrights Horizons), ***Relevance*** (MCC), ***Uncommon Sense*** (Tectonic Theater), ***Kid Victory*** (Vineyard), and ***Fondly, Colette Richland*** (NYTW). Selected Opera works: ***Shining Brow*** (Arizona Opera), ***Rusalka*** (Des Moines Metro Opera/Portland Opera), ***The Flying Dutchman*** (Atlanta Opera/Cincinatti Opera/Houston Grand Opera), ***The Little Prince*** (Utah Opera), ***Orphée*** (Des Moines Metro Opera/Portland Opera).

www.jaclimer.com

DINA EL-AZIZ

Costume Designer

Off Broadway: ***Hindsight*** (Fault Line Theater); ***Eh Dah? Questions for My Father*** (Hypokrit Theatre), ***Dead Are My People*** (Noor Theater). Other theater: ***Tartuffe*** (Moliere In The Park); ***P*ssyC*ck Know Nothing, Marjana and the Forty Thieves*** (Target Margin Theater). Regional: ***Early Decision/Late Bloomer*** (Princeton University), ***Lilith And Her Demons*** (UArts), ***This is Who I Am*** (Wooly Mammoth), ***9 Parts of Desire*** (Portland Center Stage), ***King Lear*** (Northern Stage), ***Noura*** (The Guthrie; The Old Globe), ***Selling Kabul*** (Williamstown Theatre Festival).

CHRISTOPHER BROWN

Lighting Designer

Christopher Brown is a Brooklyn-based lighting designer and technician working in theater and dance. He has worked with Clubbed Thumb, Elevator Repair Service, HERE Arts Center, The Bang Group, and Danspace Project, among others. Chris Brown was awarded the 2006-07 Princess Grace Award for his work with the Mud/Bone Collective, and in 2018 he was a Visiting Artist at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. He has taught at Stony Brook University and the University of Rochester. He received his MFA in Theatre Design from New York University. His visual arts work can be seen at: https://cbrown-sketchblog.blogspot.com

DANIELA HART /UPTOWN WORKS

Sound Design

Daniela is a New York City-based sound designer and composer with an MFA in Sound Design from the Yale School of Drama. Selected theater credits include ***Fires In The Mirror*** (Baltimore Center Stage & Long Wharf Theater), ***Night Watch*** (Dorset Theater), ***Pleasure Machine*** (Colt Coeur), ***Vapor Trail*** (MIT Music & Theater Arts), ***How to Save the World in 90 Minutes*** (Cherry Lane Theatre), ***Mr. Burns*** (Iseman Theater, Yale), ***References to Salvador Dali...***(ART, Harvard), ***Julius Caesar*** (Vermont Shakespeare), ***Neighborhood 3*** (Rattlestick Theater), ***The Parlour*** (Soho Rep). Daniela is also a producer, editor and sound supervisor with her company Uptown Works.
www.UptownWorksNYC.com

BAILEY TRIERWEILER /UPTOWN WORKS

Sound Design

Bailey Trierweiler (they/them) is a New York City-based sound designer. Select design credits include ***Fires in the Mirror*** (Baltimore Center Stage & Long Wharf Theater), **already there** (The REACH at the Kennedy Center), ***She Kills Monsters*** (Yale School of Drama), ***Night Watch*** (Dorset Theater), ***The Conduct of Life*** (Verano Cabaret), ***Tiny Shakes: Romeo & Juliet*** (Two River Theater), ***Measure for Measure*** (Yale School of Drama), ***Auntie Vanya*** (Ars Nova ANT Fest). MFA in Sound Design from Yale School of Drama.

NOEL NICHOLS /UPTOWN WORKS

Sound Design

Noel Nichols (they/she) Select design credits with UptownWorks include ***Today is My Birthday*** (Yale Repertory Theatre), ***already there*** (Kennedy Center), ***Fires in the Mirror*** (Baltimore Center Stage & Long Wharf Theatre), ***Nightwatch*** (Dorset Theatre Festival), and ***The Masses are Asses*** (Wesleyan CFA). Other design credits include ***Fun Home*** *(Yale School of Drama),* ***Media Clown*** (University of Iowa), ***We are Proud to Present a Presentation...***, ***How to Relearn Yourself*** (Yale Cabaret), ***Latinos Who Look Like Ricky Martin*** (Verano Cabaret), ***Counting Pebbles*** (Faultline Ensemble). MFA in Sound Design from Yale School of Drama.
www.NoelNicholsDesign.com

STIVO ARNOCZY

Projections Design

Stivo Arnoczy is a projections designer and video engineer from Queens, NY. NYU: TISCH. Recent work includes: ***Space Dogs*** (MCC, as Asst.), ***untitled danceshowpartything*** (Virgin Voyages), ***I Am Sending You the Sacred Face*** (Theater in Quarantine), ***Blood Meal*** (TiQ), ***Modelland*** (As Assoc.). Broadway: ***The Rose Tattoo*** (as Asst.), ***Be More Chill*** (as Asst.), ***The Band's Visit*** (Intn'l Tour, as Assoc.). www.stivo.video

COURTENEY LEGGETT

Production Manager

Courteney Leggett (Production Manager, they/them) is a Production Manager and Equity Stage Manager who has worked Off Broadway, regionally, and on festivals and tours. Their passion is in helping teams develop new works. They have a BFA in Stage Management from the University of Miami, FL. NYC Credits Include: ***Baghdaddy***, ***Ideation, GIRL Shakes Loose, Seen/By Everyone, A Power Play, Boy, The Biggest Valley, Into the Woods, DirectorFest, NYC Fringe Festival, American Realness Festival.*** Regional Credits Include: ***Seared, Trouble Cometh, Sid the Science Kid, The Donkey Show, Girls vs. Boys, The Nutcracker, Our Town, Ayikodans, Miami Made Festival, Jazz Roots***.

HANAKO RODRIGUEZ

Stage Manager

Hanako Rodriguez is a freelance theater professional with a passion for helping to bring to life new works written by underrepresented voices. Her recent New York credits include ***Polylogues*** (Colt Coeur), ***Black Feminist Video Game*** (The Civilians), and NYT Critic's Pick ***ATHENA*** (The Hearth). She has worked on numerous Off and Off-Off Broadway projects including those with The Fire This Time Festival, National Black Theatre, HB Studios, Two Headed Rep, The Bushwick Starr, horsetrade, WWTNS?, HERE Arts, and La Mama ETC.

ALINE SALLOUM

Translator

Aline Salloum is an NYC-based actress and writer who has performed in a range of countries, including Switzerland, Lebanon, and the United States. She is a graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts NY and was a member of the 2018/2019 Academy Company. Her recent NYC credits include ***The Meltdown***, which she co-created and co-performed at the Global Forms theater festival produced by Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, and ***Only Remains Remain***, by Freya Powell performed at MoMA PS1 as part of the Greater New York exhibition.

ALI-MOOSA MIRZA

Assistant Director

Ali-Moosa Mirza has been dedicated to elevating the voices and stories of people of color through theater. His vision began as a student at UC Santa Cruz where he worked for the Cultural Arts and Diversity Resource Center directing and acting in shows such as ***Esperanza*** and ***A Record of Light.*** He has since acted in shows such as ***The Conference of the Birds***, ***Noor and Hadi go to Hogwarts,*** and ***Under Milkwood***. His exploration of theater has brought him to New York where he recently trained with the Stella Adler Summer Conservatory. He is now excited to continue this vision as the assistant director for ***First Down***.

XURUI WANG

Associate Costume Designer

Xurui Wang is a costume designer and visual artist based in New York City. She graduated from the University of Connecticut (UConn) with an MFA in Costume Design. She was born and raised in Shenyang, China where she first developed her interest in theatrical costumes. Xurui's recent credits include ***Julius Caesar***, ***A Skate Play***, ***Men on Boats***, ***Cherry Orchard***, etc. She also assisted on theater productions including ***Don't Stop Me***, ***Sunday in the Park with George***, ***20th Century***, ***Hindsight***, ***Row, Cabaret***, etc.

MA'MOON TEBBO

Associate Scenic Design

Ma'moon is an interdisciplinary Lebanese-born artist. His passion for storytelling takes shape in many mediums such as directing, designing, painting, and writing. Design credits: ***Sit Marie Rose***, Alexandria Opera House in Egypt (2015). ***Al Raeioun***, The Royal Cultural Center in Amman Jordan (2016). *Brine* winner of the 24th European (2018) Film Festival. Kalash, LA International Film Festival, and Hollywood MPIFF (2018). *Gabriela,* Austin Film Festival *(2020)* and Florida Film Festival *(2021). My name is Thomas Cain,* Brooklyn Film Festival 2020. ***Play of the living in time of instinction*** at Baltimore Center Stage (2020). **Glimpse,** Global form theater festival. ***Play*** at La Nuit de l'Art festival by Tanthem (2021).

NIA BLIZZARD

Assistant Stage Manager

Nia Blizzard (she/they) is a Black theater worker whose passions include (but are not limited to) binge watching reality TV shows, spending time with their friends, and advocating for the rights of all Americans. Their most recent credits include ***Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*** by Katori Hall, Frank Ketelaar, and Kees Prins (Stage Management Fellow, Bespoke Theatricals), ***The Last of the Love Letters*** by Ngozi Anyanwu (Stage Management Fellow, Atlantic Theater Company), ***Over Easy*** by Abaigeal O'Donnell (Production Stage Manager, SheNYC Arts), ***Broadway Celebrates Juneteenth*** (Production Assistant, The Broadway League), and ***Foul Shots*** by Christin Eve Cato (Production Stage Manager, INTAR Theater Company).
Follow them on Instagram @nia_blizzard1!

STEPHANIE YANKWITT

Additional Casting

Stephanie Yankwitt, CSA (tbd casting co.) Current/Upcoming theater: Hansol Jung's ***WOLF PLAY*** at Soho Rep, Madhuri Shekar's ***QUEEN*** at Long Wharf Theatre & NAATCO, and ***SONGS ABOUT TRAINS*** with Working Theater/Radical Evolution. Recent theater includes Kimber Lee's ***TO THE YELLOW HOUSE*** at La Jolla Playhouse, and Will Eno's ***Gnit*** at TFANA. Multiple collaborations with Tectonic Theater Project, The Sol Project, and NAATCO. Upcoming work outside of theater includes a series for Disney+ and a podcast of original short plays for the Broadway Podcast Network. Stephanie is a member of the CSA and sits on the Equity in Entertainment Committee.

NOOR THEATRE

Noor Theatre supports, develops, and produces the work of theater artists of Middle Eastern and North African/South West Asian and North African (MENA/SWANA) descent. Their programming supports work at different stages of development, whether early drafts of new plays or world premiere productions. They support artists in developing their voices and share their often unheard stories with a diverse audience.

Read more at: www.noortheatre.org

Follow us at @NoorTheatre on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

#FIRSTSDOWN and let's have a digital conversation to talk about SEVAN's play.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Your attendance, advocacy, and financial support make our work possible.
Make your tax-deductible donation today
at NoorTheatre.org or send contributions to:

Noor Theatre, PO Box 1063, New York, NY 10276

FIRST DOWN

Created out of a short piece for Noor Theatre's 48 Hour Forum and then developed as part of the Commissioning Initiative, the piece had an in-person developmental Workshop in October 2021 and a week-long virtual developmental workshop in August 2020, as well as a virtual reading in May 2020. After two years of development, we're thrilled to bring SEVAN's ***FIRST DOWN*** to a broader audience through the generosity of our donors and in collaboration with 59E59 Theaters.



SPECIAL THANKS

59E59 Theaters • Theatre Row's Kitchen Sink Residency
New York Theatre Workshop • Broken Box Mime Theater
LubDub Theatre Company • Superhero Clubhouse • The Assembly

Chris Coffey • Ali Andre Ali • Aline Salloum • Mike Mosallam
Brian Mosallam • JL Rey • Kelsey Williams • Lara Sawalha

Noor Theatre's staff, board, and supporters for making new play development a priority.

Noor is supported by New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

WQXR 105.9 fm wqxr.org

CURATOR'S NOTE



Welcome to Noor Theatre's ***First Down***, which was supported by our Foundation last year with a Covid Relief Grant and is now the first participant in our new Maker's Series Program.

It has been an honor to assist Noor—both in their vital mission to develop the voices of theater artists of (MENA/SWANA) descent and with the debut of this trenchant new play by SEVAN.

Val

VAL DAY
Artistic Director

59E59 THEATERS STAFF

ELYSABETH KLEINHANS President/Founding Artistic Director
VAL DAY Artistic Director
BRIAN BEIRNE Managing Director
ELIZA JOHNSON Finance Associate/Office Manager
CATE PUGLIA Receptionist/Administrative Assistant
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JOSCA MOORE Usher
JOVIAN DIXON Usher
LILY WELSH Usher
MICIAH WALLACE Usher
NATALIE LILAVOIS YUSTY Usher
RICHARD RODRIGUEZ Usher
TAYLOR BROADARD Usher
VICTORIA PARKER Usher
JOHN D. IVY Theater Technician
KAT KHELLBLAU Theater Technician
SAM DAVIS Theater Technician

NEXT IN THEATER C **MAY 1 – JUNE 4**



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

59E59 Theaters reside on the traditional homelands of the Lenni-Lenape People on the Lenape Island of Mannahatta. We acknowledge the Lenni-Lenape as the original people of the land who were forcefully removed during colonization resulting in erased and excluded peoples and culture. We are grateful for the opportunity to work on the land and honor their elders, past and present alongside future generations for their stewardship and continuing relationship with their territory.

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