

# Djola Branner

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## EDUCATION

### **Master of Fine Arts**, Playwriting

Actors Studio Drama School/The New School for Drama, 2006

### **Master of Arts**, Creative Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies

San Francisco State University, 1990

### **Bachelor of Arts**, Psychobiology

University of California at Santa Cruz, 1980

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### **Universities & Colleges**

#### **Professor of Theater**

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 08/21 to present

- design and teach theater courses
- advise undergraduate students in all phases of production
- develop and support programmatic strategies
- participate in college governance and community service

#### **Professor of Theater**

Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 07/07 to 07/21

- designed and taught theater courses
- advised undergraduate students in all phases of production
- developed and supported programmatic strategies
- participated in college governance and community service

#### **Visiting Associate Professor of Theater**

Brown University, Providence, RI 01/21 to 06/21

- developed virtual acting and directing curriculum
- taught virtual acting and directing courses
- advised undergraduate and graduate students

#### **Visiting Professor of Acting**

American Musical & Dramatic Academy, NYC, NY 10/06 to 06/07

- taught beginning acting and scene study

#### **Visiting Assistant Professor of Theater**

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 01/00 to 06/03

- developed undergraduate acting curriculum
- taught beginning and intermediate acting
- choreographed main stage productions
- advised undergraduate students

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE cont.**

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### **Universities & Colleges**

#### **Visiting Assistant Professor of Creative Writing**

Minneapolis College of Art & Design, MN 09/98 to 12/01

- developed liberal arts curriculum for BFA students
- taught dramatic writing
- advised BFA students

#### **Adjunct Professor of Theater & Dance**

Macalester College, Saint Paul, MN 03/96 to 12/02

- taught traditional Haitian dance and folklore
- choreographed and directed dance performances for annual concerts

#### **Visiting Adjunct Professor of Dance**

Stanford University, Menlo Park, CA 03/94 to 06/94

- taught traditional Haitian dance and folklore
- taught Dunham technique

#### **Adjunct Professor of Dance**

City College of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA 01/91 to 06/93

- taught traditional Haitian dance and folklore
- taught Dunham technique
- choreographed and directed student performances

### **Community Centers**

#### **Artist-in-Residence**

Pillsbury House, Minneapolis, MN 08/19 to 08/23

- taught playwriting and performance to emerging artists

Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis, MN 10/94 to 08/06

- taught acting and writing workshops
- directed student performances

SteppingStone Theater, Saint Paul, MN 06/06 to 06/07

- taught theater for young audiences, and directed student showcases

The Loft, Minneapolis, MN 04/97 to 07/03

- mentored young writers of color
- taught dramatic writing

Performing Arts Workshop, San Francisco, CA 09/90 to 06/93

- taught creative process to children (K-6)
- developed and staged personal narratives with youth (ages 14-17)

Institute of Choreography, San Francisco, CA 06/90 to 6/94

- taught traditional Haitian dance and folklore
- taught Dunham technique

School of the Arts, San Francisco, CA 09/89 to 06/94

- taught traditional Haitian dance and folklore
- taught Dunham technique
- choreographed student performances

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE cont.**

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### **Community Centers**

#### **Artist-in-Residence**

Third Wave Dance, San Francisco, CA 03/87 to 06/90

- taught traditional Haitian dance and folklore
- taught Dunham technique

Cadaqués Dance Center, Barcelona, Spain 06/85 to 12/85

- taught traditional Haitian dance and folklore
- taught Dunham technique

## **ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE**

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### **Director of the School of Theater**

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 08/21 to 06/24

- served as a liaison between administration, faculty, and staff
- oversaw daily operations of the School
- supervised the Assistant Director, Production Manager, Academic Advisor, and Office Manager
- collaborated with marketing and communication to promote the mission and image of the School during institutional rebranding
- allocated funds to academic programs, productions, and balanced the annual budget
- facilitated faculty and staff searches, hires, reappointments, and promotions
- served as artistic director for the production season
- sought opportunities for the advancement of the School and production season
- sought opportunities for collaboration across disciplines within College of Visual & Performing Arts
- served as the primary liaison to donors
- spearheaded efforts to bolster diversity, equity, and inclusion
- represented the college at public events

### **Interim Vice President for Student Affairs**

Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 08/19 to 06/20

- served as a liaison between Academic Affairs and Student Life
- supervised two Deans of Students, the Assistant Dean of Students and Assistant to the VPSA
- allocated funds to programs within the division, and balanced the annual budget
- served as a steward to the Board of Trustees
- represented the college at public events
- implemented new federal, state, and institutional health and safety directives
- revised sanctions for student conduct in relation to new health and safety directives
- evaluated applications for student emergency funds during the COVID-19 pandemic

### **Dean of the School for Interdisciplinary Arts**

Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 07/12 to 06/15

- served as a liaison between administration and faculty
- supervised daily operations of the School including management of two staff employees
- allocated funds to academic programs, and balanced the annual budget
- facilitated faculty searches, hires, reappointments, and promotions
- represented the college at public events

## CONFERENCES

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### Panels & Performances

- Theatrical Jazz Conference, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 2024
- Conference Convener/Organizer & Moderator for Playwright's Roundtable
- When the Soul Looks Out: Selections from Dr. Yusef Lateef's Creative Writing, a virtual performance curated by Dr. Priscilla Page, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 2020
- Performer
- Tell That: For Laurie Carlos, Augusta Savage Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 2019
- Writer/Performer – with Dr. Priscilla Page & Ben Davis
- Tell That: For Laurie Carlos, Soundworks Gathering #6, Easthampton, MA 2018
- Writer/Performer – with Dr. Priscilla Page & Shakeel Sohail-Gibran Cullis
- Robbie McCauley Symposium: A Convening, Emerson College, Boston, MA 2017
- Writer/Performer – “A Tribute to Robbie McCauley”
- Merit* by Lenelle Moïse, Smith College, Northampton, MA 2017
- Performer – staged reading
- Fire & Ink: Witness, Advocacy for GLBT People of African Descent, Detroit, MI 2015
- Presenter/Workshop – “Writing/Embodying Autobiography”
- Performer – staged reading of *sash & trim*
- Performer – staged reading of *The Messiah Complex* by Nia Witherspoon
- Festival of Original Theater: Queering Performance, University of Toronto, ON 2015
- Panelist/Performer – Verbatim Theater and Black Queer Narratives
- Fire & Ink: Cotillion, Festival for GLBT Writers of African Descent, Austin, TX 2009
- Performer – staged reading of *Delta Dandi* by Sharon Bridgforth

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### Playwright

#### *Sutta*

- George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2022

#### *sash & trim*

- University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 2008

#### *cover*

- Samuel French One-Act Festival, NYC, NY 2006

#### *oranges & honey*

- The New School for Drama, NYC, NY 2005

#### *Queen Nanny, Queen Nanny*

- In the Heart of the Beast, Minneapolis, MN 2002

#### *Mighty Real: A Tribute to Sylvester*

- LGBT Community Center, San Francisco, CA 2002
- National Black Theater Festival, Winston-Salem, NC 2001
- Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA 2000
- Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, MN 2000

#### *The House That Crack Built* (with Aaron Barnell)

- The New School for Drama, NYC, NY 2006
- Pillsbury House, Minneapolis, MN 2000
- Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis, MN 1996

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE cont.

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### Playwright

#### *Where I'm At*

- Southern, Minneapolis, MN 1998

#### *Forever Hold Your Piece* (with Patrick Scully)

- Illusion, Minneapolis, MN 1997
- Dance Theater Workshop, NYC, NY 1996

#### *Sweet Sadie*

- Dixon Place, NYC, NY 1997
- Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis, MN 1997 & 1994
- Out North, Anchorage, AK 1996
- Josie's Cabaret, San Francisco, CA 1994

### Screenwriter

#### *Mighty Real*

- Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 2019

### Actor

#### *Oba Queen Baba King Baba* by Sage Ni'ja Whitson

- Saint Marks Church, NYC, NY 2019

#### *River See* by Sharon Bridgforth

- Theater Offensive, Boston, MA 2014

#### *...and Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi* by Marcus Gardley

- University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 2009

#### *sash & trim*

- University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 2008

#### *Fools & Lovers* adapted by Moonwork

- Connelly, NYC, NY 2006

#### *con flama* by Sharon Bridgforth

- Penumbra, Saint Paul, MN 2001

#### *Black Nativity* by Langston Hughes

- Penumbra, Saint Paul, MN 2011 & 1999

#### *Mighty Real: A Tribute to Sylvester*

- National Black Theater Festival, Winston-Salem, NC 2001
- Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA 2000
- Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, MN 2000

#### *Angels in America, Part II: Perestroika* by Tony Kushner

- Pillsbury, Minneapolis, MN 2001

#### *The Darker Face of the Earth* by Rita Dove

- Guthrie, Minneapolis, MN 2000

#### *Blues for an Alabama Sky* by Pearl Cleage

- Penumbra, Saint Paul, MN 1999

#### *blood pudding* by Sharon Bridgforth

- Frontera@Hyde Park, Austin, TX 1998

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE cont.

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### Actor

*Forever Hold Your Piece* (with Patrick Scully)

- Illusion, Minneapolis, MN 1997
- Dance Theater Workshop, NYC, NY 1996

*Sweet Sadie*

- Dixon Place, NYC, NY 1997
- Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis, MN 1997 & 1994
- Out North, Anchorage, AK 1996
- Josie's Cabaret, San Francisco, CA 1994

*Dark Fruit* by Pomo Afro Homos

selected venues including:

- Drill Hall Arts, London, UK 1994
- Dance Place, Washington DC 1994
- Lincoln Center, NYC, NY 1993
- Wexner Center, Columbus, OH 1993
- Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA 1993
- Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, UK 1993
- Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago 1993
- Highways, Los Angeles, CA 1992
- Public Theater, NYC, NY 1991

*Fierce Love: Stories from Black Gay Life* by Pomo Afro Homos

selected venues including:

- Lincoln Center, NYC, NY 1994
- Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA 1994
- Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN 1994
- DiverseWorks, Houston, TX 1993
- Dance Place, Washington DC 1992
- Drill Hall Arts, London, UK 1992
- Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA 1991
- Dance Theater Workshop, NYC, NY 1991
- Josie's Cabaret, San Francisco, CA 1991

### Actor (film)

"Black Is... Black Ain't", Marlon Riggs, director, 1994

"Anthem", Marlon Riggs, director, 1991

"Normal Deviant Behavior", Adam Chin, director, 1990

"Guerreros", Dinorah de Jesus Rodriguez, 1990

"Tongues Untied", Marlon Riggs, director, 1989

### Dancer

Drummers & Dancers of Langa, Morris Johnson, choreographer, Minneapolis, MN 1994 to 1997

Flesh & Spirit, Djola Branner and Michelle Martin, co-artistic directors & choreographers,  
San Francisco, CA 1989 to 1994

La Petit Croix, Blanche Brown, choreographer, San Francisco, CA 1985 to 1988

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE cont.

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### Choreographer

*The Sonic Life of a Giant Tortoise* by Toshiki Okada (directed by Kym Moore)

- Brown University, Providence, RI 2019

*for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf* by Ntozake Shange (dir. by Kym Moore)

- Penumbra, Saint Paul, MN 1999

*Seven Guitars* by August Wilson (dir. by Lou Bellamy)

- Penumbra, Saint Paul, MN 1998

*The Day the Bronx Died* by Michael Henry Brown (dir. by Lou Bellamy)

- University of Minnesota, Minneapolis MN 1998

### Director

*Sutta*

- George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2022

*Seriously... What Did You Call Me?* by Onawumi Jean Moss

- Northwestern University, Chicago, IL 2018
  - Powerhouse, Amherst College, Amherst, MA 2017
  - Nyack Center, Nyack, NY 2016
  - Ko Festival of Performance, Amherst College, Amherst, MA 2015
- BFE* by Julia Cho
- Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 2010

*oranges & honey*

- The New School for Drama, NYC, NY 2005

*Making Lemonade* by Patrick Scully

- Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis, MN 2003

*Journey/ Sanctuary* by Cathy Young, Robert Robinson & Mary Easter

- Southern, Minneapolis, MN 2001

*The B-Sides* by Bianca Pettis

- The Garage, Minneapolis, MN 1998

*The Magic of Laughter* by Danielle Daniel

- The Fringe Festival, Minneapolis, MN 1997

*Esker* by Tim Herwig

- Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis, MN 1997

### Director (film)

*Mighty Real*

- Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 2019

### Dramaturg

*Leaves of Grass – Uncut* by Patrick Scully

- Guthrie, Minneapolis, MN 2019
- Dixon Place, NYC, NY 2016

*Making Lemonade* by Patrick Scully

- Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis, MN 2003 & 2009

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Contributing author

*Black Gay Genius* digital release (Counter Narrative Project, 2025)  
*Black Gay Genius* (Vintage Entity Press, 2015)  
*Mighty Real: An Anthology of African American Same Gender Loving Writing*  
(Effusses/Sangha Publications, 2010)  
*Voices Rising* (RedBone Press, 2007)  
*In the Life* (Redbone Press, 2007)  
*The Performer's Guide to the Collaborative Process* (Heinemann, 2001)  
*Monologues for Actors of Color: Men* (Routledge, 2000)  
*Staging Gay Lives* (Westview Press, 1996)  
*Colored Contradictions* (Plume, 1996)  
*ZYZZYVA* (Vol. VIII, No. 3, 1992)

### Contributing editor

*Evergreen Chronicles* (quarterly, Minneapolis, 1995 to 98)  
*Bay Guardian* (weekly, San Francisco, 1991 to 94)  
*Bay Area Reporter* (monthly, San Francisco, 1983 to 1986)

### Collected plays

*sash & trim* (RedBone Press, 2013)

### Collected poems

*lyrics of the last born* (Magpie Publications, 1996)

## GRANTS

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### Fellowships

Cadence Pipeline Foundation, VA 2022 to 2024  
Marion & Jasper Whiting Foundation, Amherst, MA 2016  
Bush Foundation, Saint Paul, MN 2000  
Performance Artist – McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis, MN 1999  
Interdisciplinary Artist – Jerome Foundation, Minneapolis, MN 1998  
Playwright – Jerome Foundation, Minneapolis, MN 1994

### Production

*Mighty Real: A Tribute to Sylvester*  
• Creative Capital, NYC, NY 2000  
• Philanthrofund, Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, MN 2000  
• Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, Saint Paul, MN 1998  
• Jerome Foundation, Saint Paul, MN 1998  
*Forever Hold Your Piece* (with Patrick Scully)  
• Many Voices Collaboration Grant, Playwrights' Center, Minneapolis, MN 1996

### Development

*Mighty Real: A Tribute to Sylvester*  
• Faculty Development Grant, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 2008



## GRANTS cont.

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*The House That Crack Built* (with Aaron Barnell)

- Diverse Visions Regional Grant, National Endowment for the Arts, DC 1996

## AWARDS

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Endowed Chair, Marilyn Levin Professorship, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 2018 to 2021

Millay Artist Residency, Austerlitz, NY 2018

Out on the Edge, Theater Offensive, Boston, MA 2014

Lambda Literary Award (finalist), LGBT Drama, *sash & trim and other plays*, 2014

Best Thespian, Lavender Magazine, Minneapolis, MN 2000

Austin Critic's Circle (nominee), Best Actor in a Supporting Role, *blood pudding*, Austin, TX 1998

Bessie Award, Outstanding Performance, Dance Theater Workshop, *Fierce Love*, NYC, NY 1992

## ARCHIVES

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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Performing Arts Collections, NYC, NY

- Djola Branner Papers, <https://archives.nypl.org/scm/185433>

Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library, New York University, NYC, NY

- <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/>

## AFFILIATIONS

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Dramatists Guild