

## **SOMALIA THE MUSICAL CHARACTERS**

Historical: Set in year 2001 (this was the time the screenplay for the movie, "If You Could Hear My Own Tune was first written and produced.)

Geographical: Set in a pre-gentrified Harlem in New York City, including several bodegas, a hair salon, boutique, etc.

Social: The characters are predominately Black and of Hispanic heritage

### **STORYLINE**

Somalia is an original, hip-hop infused musical that blends fiction and fact. The play takes the audience on a journey of how our lives in New York City were suddenly upended when the World Trade Center collapsed on September 11, 2001. Against the backdrop of Harlem, a pre-gentrified neighborhood known for its cultural richness and artistic vibrancy, themes of loss, fear, unity, uncertainty, and love emerge amidst a complex historical context.

### **PLOT SUMMARY:**

This narrative revolves around Somalia, a skilled Black fashion designer, who dreams of opening her boutique despite facing challenges and navigating a post-9/11 world. Her heritage inspires her designs, and she must be resilient and strong to succeed.

### **DIRECTOR'S VISION & CASTING INTENTION:**

The character breakdowns provided, especially in terms of how they present, are a framework for the telling of this specific story about a community in Harlem ; they are not meant as a limitation. I am committed to diversity, inclusion, and representation, and focused on bringing this show to life in an authentic way. I am most interested in actors who can embody the essence, spirit, and energy of these characters. If you identify with/as any part of these characters, I strongly encourage you to audition.

### **MAIN CHARACTERS**

1) **SOMALIA LA'MINE** - DEAF/HOH, FEMALE (BLACK, AGE RANGE 25 - 40)  
Somalia La'Mine embodies both elegance and independence as a beautiful Black woman who exudes confidence and sensitivity. In spite of her past struggles, including DV abuse relationship with Zavier, Somalia has developed a strong sense of self and is fiercely independent. Somalia values the artistic expression of Lauren Hill and Queen Latifah, influential rappers who use their platform to advocate for the uplift and empowerment of Black women, inspiring a sense of community and solidarity.

2) **SARITA PAGAN** - FEMALE (AFRO-LATINA, AGE RANGE 25 - 40)

Sarita, a lesbian and lounge owner, exudes strength and power, causing some to feel intimidated. Her deep bond with Somalia, which dates back to their childhood, makes her fiercely protective of her friend.

3) **ZAVIER POWELL** - MALE (BLACK, AGE RANGE 25 - 40)

Zavier is an obnoxious musician and guitarist who works in a record store. His obsession with her, purely based on her being deaf, and has a superficial understanding of her identity. On the other hand, Somalia's initial disinterest stems from her focus on her career aspirations, which highlights her determination and ambition.

4) **LAMAR JONES** - MALE (BLACK, AGE RANGE 30 - 40)

After her split with Zavier, Somalia meets a new man who is also a member of the same band. He's a rapper and is a bassist. However, she is reluctant to date him due to concerns that he may not understand her deafness and take it for granted, as Zavier did. This hesitation defines her dating experience as she searches for someone who can appreciate her differences.

5) **FATIMA GRACE** - DEAF/HOH, FEMALE/MIXED/BLACK, AGE RANGE, 30 - 40)

Fatima Grace, an art therapist, transitioned to New York from Florida. She chose celibacy following the unsettling discovery of her ex-boyfriend's infidelity with another man in their bedroom. Despite Marque being a childhood friend of Hennessy, forgiveness was not immediate. However, she has established a connection with Somalia.

6) **CAMILLE JUSTINIANO** - DEAF/HOH, FEMALE (LATINA, AGE RANGE, 25 - 35)

Camille is also studying fashion design. They are roommates. Somalia and Camille are working together to host their own fashion show. Camille designs her wedding gowns for her clients. She has an obsessive crush on nerd or geek gay men. She and Hennessy are very close. She is free spirit, artistic, lively, stunning, and flirty.

7) **HENNESSY "HONEY" TAINO** - DEAF/HOH, MALE (LATINO, AGE RANGE, 25 - 40)

Hennessy is a gay flamboyant, hairstylist and make up artist. He loves fashion. He is known to gossip and make comments about everything. He has a vibrant personality. He and Brandon are lovers who presses Brandon that they should have an open relationship. Marque has a crush on him.

8) **BRANDON GAMBI** - OPEN, MALE (CAUCASIAN, AGE RANGE, 25 - 40)

Brandon is Hennessy's boyfriend and is openly gay with a free-spirited and confident demeanor. He has been on a journey of self-discovery since his youth and continues to explore his passions in the performing arts.

9) **MARA MENDEZ** - OPEN, FEMALE (ARAB MEXICAN, AGE RANGE, 22 - 35)  
Mara is an undocumented immigrant from Mexico who's lineage is from the Arab diaspora living in Harlem with her boyfriend, Ray-Ray. She is pretty and feisty and does not take-no-prisoners. She works as a bartender at Sarita's lounge and works at Hennessy's salon as a hairstylist. Sometimes she wears Hijabs.

## **MINOR CHARACTERS**

10) **RAY-RAY JONES** - MALE (BLACK, AGE RANGE, 25 - 35)  
Ray-Ray, a guitarist and an engineer who lost his hearing later in life and is part of the band at the Zen Lounge. He is shy and has a romantic interest in Mara and, after gaining sufficient confidence.

11) **EDDY MOORE** - DEAF/HOH, MALE (BLACK/HISPANIC, AGE RANGE 30 - 50)  
Eddy, an ASL (American Sign Language) instructor and entrepreneur, offers expert classes for individuals seeking to acquire this valuable skill. Despite his easygoing nature, he expects his students to put in the necessary effort to learn the language and Deaf culture.

12) **WISLYN GILMORE**- FEMALE (BLACK, AGE RANGE, 20-30)  
Wislyn "Wise" owns a Spa treatment. She and Xavier has a history. She and Somalia sometimes do not see eye to eye on things.

13) **MARQUE LEROY** - OPEN, MALE (BLACKLATINO, AGE RANGE, 25-40)  
Marque lives a double lives. He likes men. Although he is in a rocky relationship with Fatima, he hides his sexuality and is secretly in love with Hennessy. He is a design and home decorator.

14) **LAVISH RICH** - FEMALE (CAUCASIAN/MIXED, AGE RANGE, 25 - 35)  
Lavish is a fashion model and the lead singer of Zen Lounge where Sarita works. She's Sarita's on and off girlfriend.

15) **TAHJ "TJ" PATTERSON** - DEAF/HOH, MALE (BLACK/LATINO, AGE, 25-40)  
TJ, a charming playa, has an inflated sense of self-worth, which leads him to believe that all women find him attractive. Due to his deafness, he considers himself a suitable partner for Somalia.

## **ENSEMBLE**

Female/Male/All Gender Identities/Presentation. Residents to make up the strong community of Harlem. The ensemble is heavily used in the storytelling of this show. Must be excellent dancers in street and hiphop styles, and excellent singers. **All singers will shadow some of deaf characters who use American Sign Language. Some sign language will be taught via a DASL expert.**