

OLGA EL



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SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Olga El is an award-winning emerging playwright, performance activist, and folkloric dancer who aims to engage audiences in ways that inspire change—on the level of the personal, communal, or beyond—that will lead to a more just, compassionate, and healthy society. She has won several awards, many of which can be found in the "SELECTED HONORS" section of this document.

In 2011 she founded The Kandake Dance Theatre for Social Change which creates free and low-cost community initiatives, shows, and other offerings that are immersive, accessible, and unique. Her plays have been translated and performed in Spanish she has performed for HBO, Dance Africa, BAM, PlayStation Theater, Webster Hall, House of Yes, Dixon Place, TED Med, Park Avenue Armory, The Lincoln Center, and more. www.TheKandake.com

SELECTED HONORS

2026: Writer in Residence -

Mouths of Babes Theatre

2026: Lambda Literary Writers

Retreat - Playwriting Fellow

2026: Ojai Playwrights Conference -

Round 2 (Equal to Semi-Finalist)

2026 (in process), 2025: \$50K

Creative Capital Award - Round 2

Invitee

2026: BAC Charlene Victor and Ella

J. Weiss Cultural Entrepreneur Fund

- Top 30 Candidates

2026: Dominion Stage Playwright

Competition - Finalist

2025, 2023: June Bingham New

Playwright Commission - Semi-

Finalist

2025, 2024: \$10K Ryan Hudak Award

- Top 20 Candidates (of 200+)

2025: Theatre of Gentle Furies

Commission - Finalist, 1 of 2

shortlisted playwrights

2025: Lambda Literary's Writers

Retreat - Top 30 Playwriting

Candidates

2024: Playwrights' Center Core

Writer Program - Finalist

2024: \$30K MAP Fund - Final

Round (cut by random

elimination)

2024: Steinbeck Fellowship - Semi-

Finalist

2024: "Outstanding Dance" Fruitie

Award for *1001 Nights*...

SELECTED PLAYWRITING & DIRECTING

Works-in-progress in NYC unless otherwise marked:

Negro Leather Shoes (Staged Reading) @ AMT New Works Series—3/31/26

Negro Leather Shoes (Staged Reading) @ Scotopia Festival (North Carolina)—3/21/26

The Art of War and Hip Hop (Staged Reading) @ The Tank—3/1/26

Negro Leather Shoes (Staged Reading Online) presented by National Black Theatre—9/15/25

1001 Nights: Love Stories on Death Row (A Rock Opera) presented by Fresh Fruit Festival—5/1/24, 5/2/24, 5/3/24

1001 Nights: Love Stories on Death Row (A Rock Opera) (Staged Reading Online) presented by National Black Theatre—2/19/2024

Jaguar Woman (Staged Reading Online)—4/25/21

Jaguar Woman (Excerpt) @ The Brooklyn Music School—10/5/19

Jaguar Woman (Staged Reading) @ WOW Café Theatre—9/29/19

Las 1001 Noches: Historias de Amor en el Corredor de la Muerte presented by Comisionado Dominicano de Cultura—3/3/17, 3/4/17, 3/5/17

Las 1001 Noches: Historias de Amor en el Corredor de la Muerte presented by Comisionado Dominicano de Cultura—6/9/16

1001 Nights: Love Stories on Death Row (A Rock Opera) (Excerpt) presented by Theatre for the New City—6/15/15

1001 Nights: Love Stories on Death Row (A Rock Opera) (Excerpt)

presented by Jamaica Performing Arts Center—5/28/15

1001 Nights: Love Stories on Death Row (A Rock Opera) @ WOW Cafe Theatre—5/15/15, 5/16/15

1001 Nights: Love Stories on Death Row (A Rock Opera) presented by Dixon Place—5/6/15

1001 Nights: Love Stories on Death Row (A Rock Opera) (Excerpt)

presented by Atelier Orientale w/ Anahid Sofian—11/9/14

1001 Nights: A Rock Opera (Love Stories on Death Row) @ WOW Café Theatre—8/22/14, 8/23/14, 8/29/14, 8/30/14

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTWRITING

The Forest Protector: Online Game—Ongoing

2023: Hedgebrook: Vanetta

Cutchin Memorial Fellowship

2023: Liberation Theatre Residency

2023: Ma's House Residency w/

Shinnecock Nation

2022: Sewanee Writers'

Conference - Playwriting

Fellowship

2022: Eugene O'Neill National

Playwrights' Conference - Semi-

Finalist

2022: DQT's "Classics in Color"

2022: Writers' Colony of Eureka

Springs

2021: 1st Place in Scriptwriting -

90th Annual Writers' Digest

Competition

2019: MCC - Off-Broadway Full

Script Solicitation

2019: Brooklyn Arts Council Award

2017: Citizens Committee for NY

Award

2016: "Best Musical" New York Latin

ACE Award for *1001 Noches...*

2016: Set on Freedom Artist-Activist

Retreat

2016: "Outstanding Musical" HOLA

Award for *1001 Noches...*

2015: The Public Theater - Off-

Broadway Full Script Solicitation

2015: JPAC Dance Residency

AWARDED - UNABLE TO ATTEND

2023: BAC's Theater of Change

2023: VCCA Residency

ASSOCIATIONS

Dramatists' Guild - Member (2024 -

Present)

Playwrights' Center - Member (2025

- Present)

PEN - Member (2025 - Present)

EDUCATION

Pratt Institute: BFA: Writing For Performance, Publication, Media

TESTIMONIALS

INDUSTRY

"That dance solo was **kick ass**." - **Abdel Salaam**, Artistic Director of Dance Africa at **Brooklyn Academy of Music**

"Olga has a gift for deeply theatrical storytelling. Her plays live on the **flaring edge** between Peter Weiss and Cirque Du Soleil. It's unusual to see a playwright playing around so brazenly with the very apparatus of theatre, and it's a quality I admired in her writing." - **David Adjmi**, author of ***Stereophonic on Broadway*** (Most Tony Award-Winning Play of 2024)

"Beautiful play! **I couldn't stop reading**. There's a timelessness to your work. " - **Nissy Aya**, Playwright & ***Fat Ham Dramaturg*** re: *Jaguar Woman*

"**I friggin' loved** your pages! They made me think of if Isabel Allende wrote a play." - **Chisa Hutchinson**, Screenwriter & Playwright re: *Jaguar Woman*

"**Inspiring!**" - **Hossam Ramzy**, Egypt's late, **premier composer** re: the music and dance of *1001 Nights...*

"**Olga is a tremendous artist** with an incredible voice. Her play was a stunning experience: nuanced, funny, and heartfelt. Working with her was a pleasure." - **Ocean Harris**, Actor & New Work Development Director at **AMT Theater** re: *Negro Leather Shoes*

"I was **blown away** by your work." - **Zoë Reeve**, Artist & Development Director of **AMT Theater** re: *Negro Leather Shoes*

AUDIENCE

"**Visionary!**" - G. Wismoyo

"I love the story! Isn't the writing **fantastic?**" - Random audience member to the co-director of Liberation Theatre

"Most Off-Broadway bores the sh*t out of me. **This didn't!**" - L. Aaron