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## A PROFOUND, HILARIOUS ONE-PERSON SHOW FUELED BY MUSIC AND STORY

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### ARTSEMERSON PRESENTS **THE THINGS AROUND US**

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COMPOSED, WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY AHAMEFULE J. OLUO  
FOUR PERFORMANCES ONLY  
EMERSON PARAMOUNT CENTER  
ROBERT J. ORCHARD STAGE  
FEBRUARY 20 – 22, 2026

**[Boston, MA – Thursday, January 22, 2026]**– ArtsEmerson, Boston’s leading presenter of contemporary world theater and film and the professional presenting and producing organization of Emerson College, is excited to present **The Things Around Us**, an inventive and unexpected one-person show created and performed by acclaimed musician, storyteller, and composer Ahamefule J. Oluo. Running February 20–22, 2026 at the Robert J. Orchard Stage at the Emerson Paramount Center, the performance blends stunning multi-layered music, created on the spot with looping technology, and intimate storytelling to reveal the surprising beauty hidden in everyday life.



#### **The Things Around Us**

*Photo credit: Alex Dugan*

With a trumpet, live looping technology, and an expertise for rhythm and narrative, Oluo builds an entire symphony onstage, layering sound and story. Weaving hilarious personal anecdotes with moments of striking

emotional depth, **The Things Around Us** invites audiences to rethink what surrounds them and discover the extraordinary in the ordinary.

**The Things Around Us** is the third installment in Oluo's celebrated trilogy, following *Now I'm Fine* and *Susan*. The 90-minute performance showcases Oluo's signature ability to transform simple sounds into sweeping musical landscapes while delivering stories that are heartfelt, hilarious, and profoundly human.

"In some ways, **The Things Around Us** is a simple and direct show," explains Ahamefule J. Oluo — "just a performer and an audience in a room, experiencing sounds, words, and lights. That's it. Which means that the space contributes significantly to our shared experience. The Emerson Paramount Center's Robert J. Orchard Stage is one of the most beautiful venues in the country. It takes my breath away. I'm so grateful to ArtsEmerson for bringing this show to Boston and I'm counting down the days until opening night when I can share this space with you."

"Ahamefule J. Oluo has an extraordinary gift for turning sound, story, and spontaneous moments into something moving and unexpectedly joyful," says Ronee Penoi, Interim Executive Director of the Office of the Arts & Director of Artistic Programming at ArtsEmerson. "**The Things Around Us** captures the kind of inventive artistry that ArtsEmerson is proud to champion; work that connects audiences through humor, music, and shared humanity."

Tickets for **The Things Around Us** may be purchased 24/7 at [ArtsEmerson.org](https://ArtsEmerson.org), or by calling 617-824-8400 (Tue-Sat from 12:00PM ET - 6:00PM ET). The Paramount Center Box Office (559 Washington Street, Boston) is open for walk-up service Thu-Sat from Noon - 6:00 PM ET. Tickets start at \$27.50. Groups of 10+ attending a performance save up to 30%.

### **Community Engagement Programming: Play Reading Book Club**

ArtsEmerson invites audiences to deepen their experience of **The Things Around Us** through its **Play Reading Book Club** (PRBC), a four-week, community-based program designed for both seasoned theatergoers and those new to live performance.

Participants read the play aloud together and explore the script through guided discussion and dialogue facilitated by a trained teaching artist. After completing the group reading, participants attend a performance together and are invited to a private reception with artists from the production.

Along the way, participants gain insight into the artistic context and background of the work, learn practical theater-going tips, and build meaningful social connections through thoughtful conversation.

Participants will:

- Engage in deep exploration of the play through group readings, facilitated discussion, and curated contextual resources.
- Meet new people and strengthen social connectedness through meaningful conversation.
- Gain tools and confidence to navigate the theatergoing experience.
- Experience the performance with a deeper level of understanding and appreciation.

**For production stills and other media kit assets, click [here](#).**

### **LISTINGS INFORMATION FOR THE THINGS AROUND US**

#### **Dates:**

February 20 – 22, 2026

#### **Venue:**

Emerson Paramount Center

Robert J. Orchard Stage  
559 Washington St  
Boston, MA 02111

**Performance Schedule:**

Friday, February 20, 2026	8:00PM ET	Press Performance
Saturday, February 21, 2026	2:00PM ET	
Saturday, February 21, 2026	8:00PM ET	
Sunday, February 22, 2026	2:00PM ET	

**Ticket Information:**

Tickets for **The Things Around Us** may be purchased 24/7 at [ArtsEmerson.org](https://ArtsEmerson.org), or by calling 617-824-8400 (Tue-Sat from 12:00PM ET - 6:00PM ET). The Paramount Center Box Office (559 Washington Street, Boston) is open for walk-up service Thu-Sat from Noon - 6:00 PM ET. Tickets start at \$27.50. Groups of 10+ attending a performance save up to 30%.

**Content:**

Recommended for Ages 13+

**Running Time:**

90 minutes, no intermission

**Public Health Information:**

Mask-wearing is strongly encouraged at all times while indoors at the theatre but is no longer required for most\* performances and events.

For folks who require a socially distanced seating location or who have other questions or concerns, please contact the Box Office by phone at 617.824.8400 or by emailing [tickets@artsemerson.org](mailto:tickets@artsemerson.org) to arrange seating that accommodates your needs. Masks and face shields will also be available at the theatre upon request.

If you or a member of your party is feeling sick, experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or has been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 10 days, please stay home. Our box office will allow you to refund or exchange performance tickets at any time prior to the event. No one should come to the venue if they are not feeling well.

It is within our values to create a safe space for everyone, full stop. All staff at the Theatres of Emerson College are working to ensure the health and safety of all who are sharing these spaces. Maintaining our community's health and safety requires the effort of all involved. By committing to this Shared Code of Conduct, you are not only protecting yourself, but fellow guests, artists, and staff. Please do all you can to help keep all of us safe. We cannot wait to see you at the theater! [Click here to review full info on Health and Wellness information.](#)

**THE THINGS AROUND US / PLAY READING BOOK CLUB**

**Play Reading Book Club** will study **The Things Around Us** and will be offered at multiple locations.

Registration includes all sessions at the selected location. Registration to the program is [FREE](#), and includes complimentary access to a special behind-the-scenes viewing of the show before it opens. Tickets for the run of the show can be purchased separately.

**The Shaw-Roxbury Branch of the Boston Public Library**

149 Dudley St. Roxbury, MA 02119

Sat, Feb 07 @ 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm  
Sat, Feb 14 @ 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm  
Thu, Feb 19 @ 6:00 pm - 9:30 pm (PRBC RECEPTION)  
Sat, Feb 28 @ 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm

## Emerson Campus - Hub for Inclusive Visionary Engagement (HIVE)

10 Boylston Pl. Boston, MA 02116

Tue, Feb 03 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Tue, Feb 10 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Thu, Feb 19 @ 6:00 pm - 9:30 pm (PRBC RECEPTION)

Tue, Feb 24 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

### ArtsEmerson Online

On Zoom

Thu, Feb 05 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Thu, Feb 12 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Thu, Feb 19 @ 6:00 pm - 9:30 pm (PRBC RECEPTION)

Thu, Feb 26 @ 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

## CREDITS & BIOGRAPHIES

### Composed, Written & Performed by: Ahamefule J. Oluo

**Ahamefule J. Oluo** (they/them) is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, writer, comedian, and creator of live performance. They were a founding member of the award-winning experimental jazz quartet Industrial Revelation and have been recognized with a Mellon Creative Research Fellowship, a Creative Capital award, the Artist Trust Arts Innovator Award, a MAP Fund award, and a Foundation for Contemporary Arts grant.

Oluo co-produced comedian Hari Kondabolu's albums *Waiting for 2042* and *Mainstream American Comic* for Kill Rock Stars, as well as *Who the Hell is Dwayne Kennedy?* by the eponymous stand-up legend. Their writing credits include the HBO Max series *Santa Inc.*, created by Sarah Silverman and Seth Rogen, and they've appeared on *This American Life*.

Oluo's two autobiographical music-performance works, *Now I'm Fine* (2016) and *Susan* (2019), had their New York City premieres at The Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival. *Now I'm Fine* was described by *The New York Times*' Ben Brantley as "a New Orleans funeral march orchestrated by Arnold Schoenberg," while *Time Out New York*'s Helen Shaw wrote, "A day later, it's as though I grabbed a live wire; I can still feel the electricity in my skin." *Susan* was described by Brantley as "virtuosic" and "crackerjack."

*Now I'm Fine* was adapted into the feature film *Thin Skin* (2020), which Oluo co-wrote, scored, and starred in. *Thin Skin* won Best Director (Charles Mudede) at the Harlem Film Festival.

Oluo has been an artist-in-residence at Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), Seattle Repertory Theatre, MacDowell, and Yaddo. They have been commissioned, presented, and/or invited by the Under the Radar Festival, On the Boards, PICA, University of Washington's Meany Center for the Performing Arts, University of Maryland's The Clarice, Fusebox Festival, Seattle Theatre Group, Seattle Rep, Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center, Oklahoma City Rep, Intiman Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, ArtsEmerson, The Ringling Museum's Historic Asolo Theatre at FSU, REDCAT, Transform Festival in Leeds, England, and more.

Their recent evening-length work, *The Things Around Us*—a solo comedy/music stage performance featuring live-looping of trumpet, clarinet, and household objects—premiered at PICA's Time-Based Art Festival in September 2024 and had its New York City premiere at La MaMa ETC as part of the 2025

Under the Radar Festival. Supported by a MAP Fund grant, the piece has been actively touring, with engagements at Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center (CA), Intiman Theatre (Seattle, WA), Williamstown Theatre Festival (MA), Field Hall (Port Angeles, WA), Transform Festival (Leeds, UK), ArtsEmerson (Boston, MA), and forthcoming at The Ringling Museum/Historic Asolo Theater (Sarasota, FL) and Fusebox Festival (Austin, TX).

Oluo resides on the unceded lands of the Twana people on the Olympic Peninsula in rural Washington State.

**Produced by:** Roya Amirsoleymani

**Roya Amirsoleymani** is a curator, writer, creative producer, and project manager in contemporary performance and visual art, based rurally on Twana lands on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. She has served as creative producer for new, interdisciplinary performance works by San Cha, Ahamefule J. Oluo, and Holland Andrews & yuniya edi kwon; as a consultant for National Performance Network and the International Presenting Commons; and in Seattle, as co-curator of the 2023 Out of Sight exhibition at Bumbershoot and the 2025 Northwest New Works Festival at On the Boards. From 2012-2023, she was an artistic director and curator at Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), where she curated and organized visual art exhibitions, experimental dance and theatre, residencies, public programs, community events, grant making initiatives, and the annual, globally renowned Time-Based Art Festival. Internationally, nationally, and regionally, her practice has also spanned research, writing, symposia, publications, public art, book making, and cultural policy and advocacy. As a creative writer, she is developing a long-form experimental narrative and archival project about death and friendship. Across all her work, she strives for anti-racism, equity, and justice.

## PRESENTER INFORMATION

### ArtsEmerson

ArtsEmerson is the professional presenting and producing organization at Emerson College, and its mission is to bring people together to experience powerful performances that delight, provoke, and inspire, celebrating both our differences and common humanity. Founded in 2010 by Robert J. Orchard — the year the U.S. Census confirmed there was no single cultural majority in Boston — ArtsEmerson is committed to building a cultural institution that reflects the diversity of our city. Our imaginative and globe-spanning live and virtual performances, films, and conversations invites each of us to be part of a Boston that is more creative, equitable, and connected. ArtsEmerson is led by Interim Executive Director of the Office of the Arts & ArtsEmerson Director of Artistic Programming, Ronee Penoi. For more information visit [ArtsEmerson.org](https://ArtsEmerson.org).

### Emerson College

Emerson College is uniquely dedicated to the arts and communication, educating and inspiring storytellers and artists to impact and advance creative industries and media throughout the world. Distinguished faculty spearhead a dynamic curriculum and guide several thousand undergraduate students and 1,300 graduate students to exhibit an unyielding spirit of creativity, professionalism, and critical thought, to transform lives, and make a profound impact on our community and beyond.

Based in the world-class city of Boston, Massachusetts, opposite the historic Boston Common and in the heart of the city's Theater District, the College offers experiential learning programs in Boston and across the globe: at Emerson Los Angeles, located in Hollywood, at its 14th-century castle, in the Netherlands, and at 28 global programs. Emersonians, including 58,000+ alumni, shape industries, inspire change, and amplify voices that redefine our culture. For more information, visit [emerson.edu](https://emerson.edu).

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