IN MEMORY 
ALANA NICOLE DEVICH CYRIL
APRIL 17, 1976 – OCTOBER 27, 2018

"I fully aim to get my soul known again – as the maniac, the saint, the sinner, the drinker, the thinker, the queer. I am the works, the whole works. And it's not 'til you call me all these things that I'll be satisfied."

– Woody Guthrie



Welcome, Drum Call, and Libations

Screening: "My Life, Interrupted," an award-winning documentary short by Alana Devich Cyril

Reading of the Eulogy

Testimonials

Ritual: Messages to Alana

Video Montage

Song + Drum Closing: We Love You Alana

YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS (YBCA) SAN FRANCISCO NOVEMBER 17, 2018



#### Alana Nicole Devich Cyril knew how to live.

On her own terms, she built a shining legacy of laughter and love that lifted us all, through even the lowest of times.

Born in San Jose on April 17, 1976, as the only child of parents Robert and Charlotte Devich, Alana's fierce commitment to joy was apparent from a young age.

Even as a very young child, Alana had her convictions. Mary Poppins was the best movie ever, and she would rent it again and again on childhood trips to the video store with her dad. She made an adamant declaration of vegetarianism at age 11,



foreshadowing her later adoration of good food and a lifelong love of animals. An introverted adolescent, Alana could often be found reading in her room while friends visited downstairs. When her tender heart was particularly melancholy, her favorite dog, Peewee, and her bedroom closet were the comforts little Alana chose.

As she grew, so did Alana's love of the theater, of music, film, and art. Teenage Alana flourished in her high school drama department, spending many weekends at the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" with an artsy crew of friends. She came out as queer in high school, where her love of freaks and geeks, of mixies and militants, of queers and artists was born and would shape the rest of her life. By the time Alana had earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Sarah Lawrence College, she had studied in Oxford, stage-managed dozens of plays, and begun performing stand-up comedy. Alana loved her college years; during that time she deepened a critical analysis of race and gender and built a community of friends that would see her deeply, and last her a lifetime.

Her stand-up became a successful passion after leaving college, and she graced the stage of many venues, including the Comedy Studio in Boston and the Herbst Theatre in San Francisco, earning her the title, "The Deadpan Hurricane." After living in and performing in Austin, Boston, and



San Francisco, Alana found less joy in performing in the racist, misogynist, and homophobic world of stand-up as a queer biracial Black woman, and eventually chose to stop performing. Yet, Alana's humor was her little light, and she let it shine, shine, shine. Yes, she ranked her top 100 dance movies.

Alana's life was a master class in living. Everywhere she went—whether at workplaces like Send.com, Charles Schwab, Business Wire, Hewlett-Packard, and Illumio or with her many many friends—Alana's passion and whimsy drew a quirky, impossibly loving web of connection around her.

The enormity of Alana's love, the outsized scale of her life, cannot be overstated: from massage school to animal spirit card tarot readings; from her profound love of the moon to her profound love of her cat Elijah; from yoga classes where she built lasting community and spiritual practice to her delight in ice cream, brunch and pink sparkles; from the live music and theater that electrified her as a spectator to her many projects as a creator, including the Daily Poll, the Dating Project, her many blogs such as Accidentally New Age, and her brilliant, pithy emails.

In 2013, Alana met the love of her life, a former college classmate, Malkia Amala Cyril. In their unfolding connection, Alana blossomed, gaining a greater sense of self and deepening the practice of her joy. In person and on social media, Malkia and Alana shined, clear soulmates, and quickly became the dynamic duo many know as Mitts and Muffy. The two married on Sept. 13, 2015, which was, as Alana would frequently say, "THE BEST DAY EVER."

Only 14 months later, Alana was diagnosed with stage four gastroesophageal cancer. In love, there is no lack, and when Malkia became Alana's primary caregiver an incredible and huge community rose up to support them. Alana courageously fought cancer with everything she had, with ice cream and film, with laughter and all the love in her heart, and she did not lose. Despite an unforgiving and debilitating disease, Alana created the award-winning 2018 documentary short, "My Life, Interrupted," which has screened in San Francisco; Los Angeles; New York; Oakland; Seattle; Portland, Oregon; and Gary, Indiana.

Cancer could never beat Alana. Alana won. Alana's life remains a breathless act of intention and inspiration, a grace the world has never seen before, and may never see again. We, the lucky ones, got to witness.



Screening her film, "My Life, Interrupted," at Outfest in L.A.

Alana was an awkward, accidental, new age, embodied, high priestess of love. She was a bon vivant who set the hearts of all who knew her ablaze. She was a witchy warrior

who cast spells and set intentions at all times of day and night. She taped affirmations to her mirror to see herself more clearly. She was an editor in love with the way words could fit together perfectly, whether editing novels or press releases. She found deep joy in silence, in her parents' funny antics, in performance art—good or bad—and in her soulmate. She traveled all over the world with her parents and on her own. And everywhere she went, at every stage of life, her love of the singer Paul Simon went with her.

After one month in home hospice, Alana Nicole Devich Cyril died on Oct. 27, 2018, in the arms of her spouse, attended by her mother and an incredible caregiver, Jumoke. She was cremated, as was her wish. Alana is survived by her loving parents, Robert and Charlotte Devich; by dozens of aunts, uncles and cousins; by a community of friends who loved her; by her soulmate, Malkia Amala Devich Cyril; and by a gorgeous, brilliant legacy that will never be laid asunder.

There is no way to fully capture the light that was Alana Nicole Devich Cyril. Light is not meant to captured. It is enough that Alana made everything she touched brighter, and she never, ever, suffered fools. May we release our versions of her to her highest purpose, may we love her as freely as she loved us. May we live not in her shadow, but in her everlasting light.

- By Malkia Amala Devich Cyril

### A SPECIAL OBITUARY

# FROM BOB AND CHARLOTTE DEVICH, PARENTS OF ALANA NICOLE DEVICH CYRIL

Alana Nicole Devich was born April 17, 1976, in San Jose, to Charlotte and Robert Devich.

She graduated from Independence High School in San Jose in 1993. She loved literature, especially drama, and appeared in several performances presented by the school's celebrated drama department, headed by Paul Dolan. In "Macbeth," the audience rolled with laughter at Alana's performance as the porter/gatekeeper, in the comic relief scene after Duncan's death.

She developed a large and enduring circle of friends at tiny Sarah Lawrence College and did a year abroad at Oxford University. In 1997, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree. Her love of drama and comedy flourished in her college years and she made an earnest attempt at stand-up, primarily in the Boston area. Alana was one of eight comics featured in Boston Magazine's 2003 "Best of Boston" issue.

Although her comedy was well-received by audiences and highly rated by her peers, she realized that comedy would not pay the rent. So she studied proofreading, editing, and creative nonfiction, including a Harvard University course, and turned editing into a career. She worked as an editor at several companies, including Charles Schwab and Hewlett-Packard. Alana characterized herself as a "Word nerd, blog wrangler, social media sorcerer, and eagle-eyed 'comma cowgirl' with a knack for delivering clear editorial direction with humanity." She ultimately found a professional home at Illumio, where people went above and beyond to support Alana.

She edited the 2007 collection "War in Darfur and the Search for Peace."

Alana was a great lover of animals, so much that she decided in middle school that people should not eat them. From that point forward, she was committed to the principle, "I do not eat anything that had a mother." Through her school years, Alana loved to go to the zoo and she visited the San Francisco zoo at least once a month with her parents. As an adult, she began to believe that zoos do not create a fair situation for animals, and true to her values, she stopped going. Alana thoroughly spoiled her dog, Peewee, and when she took her for a walk, she always had to carry Peewee back home. Alana watched the Westminster Kennel Club dog show each year and volunteered at a rescue dog kennel.

Her 2018 film, "My Life, Interrupted," won top prize at the Queer Women of Color Film Festival in San Francisco, and was also screened at



Outfest in Los Angeles.

Alana had a deep passion for reading and writing. She loved the theater, dance, and the movies. She saw every performance of "Hair" within a 100-mile radius. She was a fan of August Wilson and Tom Stoppard. She attended Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theatre for at least 20 years. She appreciated the movies, and she thought every movie should have a dance-off. She would do the shoulder dance right up to the end.

On Sept. 13, 2015, Alana married her soulmate, Malkia Devich Cyril, who became her full-time caregiver and tenacious advocate when she was diagnosed. They renewed their vows on Oct. 13, 2018.

Over the last two years of Alana's journey, her community of friends rallied around her, bestowing upon her so many gifts—food, help, and financial aid. They brought her the blessings of hugs, support, and time.

In return, Alana blessed and continues to bless her community with her spirit, which uplifts everyone she has touched.

Alana's oncology team was incredibly competent and caring. It included Dr. Katherine Van Loon, Dr. Steve Braunstein, Dr. Shawn Hervey-Jumper, Nurse Practitioner Angela Laffan, Dr. Sarah Adkins, and all the nurses at UCSF, the incredible hospice team at Sutter Home Health, and caregiver, Jumoke, from Homecare Assistance.

Alana lived in New York, London, Austin, and Boston, and lived the last 14 years in San Francisco and Oakland. Her home-away-from-home was Maui.

She shared her love with over 20 doting aunties and uncles, scores of cousins, and an immense community of friends.

After a two-year battle with esophageal cancer, Alana Nicole Devich Cyril, wife and best friend, daughter and only child, friend, niece, cousin, and beacon of light, died in her bed at home, held by her spouse, Malkia, and attended by her mother, Charlotte, and her amazing caregiver, Jumoke, at 7:20 am on Saturday, Oct. 27, 2018.

Alana is survived by Malkia Amala Devich Cyril, the love of her life, and the parents who presented the world with this magnificent gift, Charlotte and Robert Devich.



#### The entire team at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

The memorial planning team including Ann Marie Dobosz, Carolyn Beebe, Dylan Siegler, Jacquie Ring, Karen Pittelman, Lisa Jervis, Marissa Maier, Nate Query, Penne Soltysik, Sala Cyril, Zoe Gladstone coordinated by Malkia Devich Cyril

Special thanks to Naomi Ishisaka and Courtney Blaskower for design

Special thanks to Austin Greene for art prints

Special thanks to **Susan Maiorana** and **Peek Media** for video montage

Special thanks to Line Break Media for videography

Special thanks to **Robert and Charlotte Devich**, parents of **Alana Devich Cyril** 

Special thanks to Malachi Garza and Oshen Turman for co-coordinating ushers and volunteers

Drummers: Roz, Baba Greg, Simbwala and Rashida

Emcee: Lateefah Simon

The teams at UCSF, Rehab Without Walls, Sutter Home Hospice and Homecare Assistance that cared for Alana and everyone whose donations, words, and acts of kindness made it possible for Alana and her family to be cared for throughout.

## SHARE YOUR STORIES / PHOTOS / VIDEO

Please share your testimonials, stories, photos, and videos of Alana on her memorial website at AlanaDevichCyrilTheWholeWorks.com