

AKEELAH AND THE BEE



FEATURING CAST
MEMBERS FROM
**BALTIMORE
SCHOOL
FOR THE ARTS**

**BALTIMORE
CENTER
STAGE**

MAR 20 - APR 13

BY CHERYL L. WEST

DIRECTED BY JERRICA D. WHITE

BASED ON THE ORIGINAL

SCREENPLAY BY DOUG ATCHISON

Originally commissioned and produced by Children's Theatre Company
Produced by special arrangement with Plays for New Audiences

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Honor Native Land

Responding to a call from our Indigenous colleagues, collaborators, and neighbors, Baltimore Center Stage is working toward building meaningful and accountable relationships with the land we occupy. As a first step on this path, you'll see a land acknowledgement in each of our programs. Acknowledgement is itself a small gesture, and we look forward to continuing our efforts toward decolonization in a meaningful way. If you're interested in more information feel free to visit the US Department of Arts and Culture's "Honor Native Land" guide.

Baltimore Center Stage acknowledges that the land beneath us, this place, this community, owes its vitality to generations who have come before. Some were brought forcibly to this land, some came here in search of ownership or simply a better life, and some have lived and stewarded this land for countless generations. In a spirit of making erased histories visible, we acknowledge that we are standing on the ancestral and occupied lands of the Piscataway peoples. The Susquehannock, Lenape, and Lumbee peoples have also cared for this land. These peoples are not relics of the past. They continue to steward this land today with care, vitality, and tradition. Their relations are numerous throughout Turtle Island, and they continue to grow. We pay respects to their elders: past, present, and future. Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events.

Additionally, in the spirit of reconciliation, you can honor the Indigenous peoples of this land by donating to Native American Lifelines, donating to or visiting the Baltimore American Indian Center & Heritage Museum, and supporting local Indigenous artists. These are only a few suggestions of the many ways we can move towards reconciliation.



BALTIMORE AMERICAN
INDIAN CENTER

**THE
INDIGENOUS
ART GALLERY**

**Free to the public,
open during regular
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TO THE ARTS

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THE CITIZENS OF
BALTIMORE COUNTY



WELCOME TO BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE!

We are thrilled to present *Akeelah and the Bee*, a joyful and uplifting play by the prolific and celebrated **Cheryl L. West**, under the direction of **Jerrica D. White**—who makes her Baltimore Center Stage debut with this production!

This play is special for so many reasons, but at the heart of it is something we hold dear: partnership. We are incredibly proud to collaborate with Baltimore School for the Arts, a true crowning jewel in our city, as we bring this production to life. With a cast featuring 19 promising young artists from BSA, this production is not only made with young people in mind—it is built with their voices at the very center.

Akeelah and the Bee continues our season's theme of BCS belonging to everyone. At its core, this is a story about a young girl who discovers her power in an unexpected place—a spelling bee. Along the way, she finds friends in unlikely places, faces obstacles that feel insurmountable, and learns that courage isn't about never being afraid—it's about showing up anyway. And if a few big words get spelled along the way? Even better.

But *Akeelah and the Bee* isn't just about spelling—it's about belonging. It's about understanding that our starting point in life doesn't define us; what matters is where we go from here. It's about opening ourselves to people who might seem different, only to find they help us see who we truly are. And it's about the power of community, lifting each other up, one letter at a time.

Thank you for being here, for supporting Baltimore Center Stage, and for believing in the transformative power of theater. We invite you to help us continue creating productions, partnerships, and programs that inspire and uplift by donating to our **Next Act Campaign**. Your support makes it all possible.

Now, sit back, cheer loudly, and ask yourself are you smarter than an 8th grader?

Welcome to the Bee.

Stevie Walker-Webb

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE

Adam Frank

MANAGING DIRECTOR, BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE

AKEELAH AND THE BEE

MAR 20 - APR 13, 2025

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BASED ON THE ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY BY DOUG ATCHISON

Originally commissioned and produced by Children's Theatre Company
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The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

CAST

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| NATALYA BENTON* AKEELAH ANDERSON | TRACY "SYMPHONY" HALL* BATTY RUTH | CELESTE CRESPO TRISH | STUDENT ENSEMBLE |
| ZIPPORAH BROWN GLADDEN* GAIL ANDERSON | DWAYNE ALISTAIR THOMAS* DRUNK WILLIE/ PRINCIPAL WELCH | VIVIAN "VIVI" MCCORD* IZZY | BAILEY DANDRIDGE GAINNEY ADDISON "ADDIE" SLATER HARRINGTON |
| THEODORE SHERRON III* REGGIE ANDERSON | QUINCY VICKS* JT | TONICA "TONI" DAVIS RATCHET RHONDA | SHILOH HOPKINS KAILAH JOHNSON LAILA MILLER |
| JEFFERSON A. RUSSELL* DR. JOSHUA LARABEE | BRAXTON SINGHANATH DYLAN CHIU | GRACE ELIZABETH ROLLEY* MOHAWK GIRL | HARLOW MOSCHERA DAVID RITTNER CASSIDY MILLER |
| CHLOÉ SHEPPARD* GEORGIA | WILLIAM "WILL" DOMBROWSKI JAVIER MENDEZ | ANDREW V. LY* MR. CHIU | SUKYRRAH WALLACE MARY HURSON DARNELL WILLIAMS, JR. |

THE CREATIVE TEAM

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| CHERYL L. WEST PLAYWRIGHT | LARRY PETERSON WIG CONSULTANT | LIAM BELLMAN-SHARPE ASSISTANT SOUND DESIGNER |
| JERRICA D. WHITE DIRECTOR | XIANGFU XIAO LIGHTING DESIGNER | AVERY JAMES EVANS* STAGE MANAGER |
| CHAZZ L. ROLLE HOPE HYNSON ERIN MARGARET PETTIGREW ASSISTANT DIRECTING TEAM | ARI KIM ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER | MAKAYLA BECKLES* ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER |
| ANTON VOLOVSEK SCENIC DESIGNER | UPTOWN WORKS DANIELA HART BAILEY TRIERWEILER NOEL NICHOLS SOUND DESIGNER | V BROWN PRODUCTION ASSISTANT |
| MOYENDA KULEMEKA COSTUME DESIGNER | | |



BCS & BSA IN PART

Akeelah and the Bee is a dynamic tale of community, friendship, family, and the importance of education in-school and in-community. This play has re-entered the cultural conversation in Baltimore at a most crucial moment in our society; when the power and connection of education is being tested. When love, acceptance, and access to a quality education are under threat, we choose to highlight and promote the positive things that keep our world moving forward.

HONORING AND BUILDING
COMMUNITY IS OUR RESPONSE AS
WE FIND THE WORLD CAUGHT IN
THE STUBBORN AND HARD WAYS OF
INDIVIDUALISM AND AN "EVERYONE
FOR THEMSELVES" MINDSET.

Akeelah and the Bee shifts our focus, uniting us through the determination, gumption, intelligence, and resilience of young people raised by a constantly changing, often absent society. The opportunity to tell this story through the hearts and minds of Baltimore's youth is a testament to the dedication, commitment, and love that this state, this city, and this theater have for future generations.

I ♥ skool



Partnership

Working directly with young artists is truly the pride and joy of the Education team here at Baltimore Center Stage. The opportunity to work closely with the students of Baltimore School for the Arts (BSA) on their first professional production is a privilege! We have been deeply moved and enriched by the hard work of the Freshman and Sophomore students of BSA, and are fortunate to have watched them embody the story and characters of the play—characters that live inside them, serving as vessels for the many stories and experiences these students carry within. We are undoubtedly grateful for their courage and vulnerability in lending themselves to the story, and for coming together as a true, professional cohort, showing us all what it means to create in community.

A heartfelt thank you to Becky Mossing, head of BSA's Theatre Department, for stewarding this partnership, and to Rosalind Cauthen, Executive Director, for your unwavering support. But most importantly, none of this would be possible without the vision and extraordinary work of our Artistic Director, Stevie Walker-Webb. Stevie not only leads this team toward growth and success, but does so with brilliance as both a director and facilitator, guiding us through deep reflection, rooted joy, and open collaboration.

Thank you for being part of our community and supporting a new generation of artists as they join a stellar cast of actors to tell this story on the largest stage of Maryland's State Theater.

With Deep Gratitude and Joy,

The Artistic Associates of BCS Education

read pages 13-20
by next monday

history report due thursday



A NOTE ON *AKEELAH AND THE BEE* BY **JERRICA D. WHITE**

When *Akeelah and the Bee* premiered as a film in 2006, it did something rare — it told a coming-of-age story centering a Black family, more specifically a young Black girl, within a Black and Brown community: accomplishing her goals, loving her family and friends, healing through hard times, and embracing her voice and

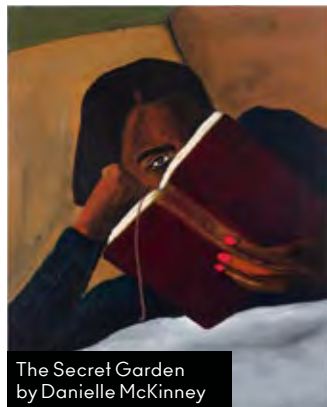
unique place of importance within the world. Featuring beloved actors like Angela Bassett, Laurence Fishburne, and Lauren “Keke” Palmer, Doug Atchison, the writer and director of the film, expanded Hollywood’s portrayal of the Black family, this time highlighting families and communities in Crenshaw and more neighborhoods in Los Angeles.



Laurence Fishburne & Lauren “Keke” Palmer
in *Akeelah and The Bee* film. Lionsgate

In 2015, Cheryl L. West, our playwright, brought this version of *Akeelah’s* story to the stage, setting the story in her hometown of Chicago. And now, in 2025, nearly twenty years after the film and a decade after the play, we step into it again — asking not only who *Akeelah* was, but who she might be today.

For this production, we chose to set *Akeelah’s* story in Baltimore, a city whose bones remember every policy that tried to contain its people. In 1910, Baltimore became the first city in America to pass a racial zoning law — drawing the lines that would decide who could live where, who got investment, and who got ignored. These lines didn’t just shape property; they shaped possibility.



The Secret Garden
by Danielle McKinney

Akeelah’s world — and the world of her neighborhood, the “709” — was built inside those lines. But what happens when a child like *Akeelah*, brilliant and restless, spells her way across them? What does she have to leave behind to step into a space that reminds her, in big ways and small, that some still believe that space is not meant for her? And what does she carry with her, no matter where she goes?



Wriston, Michael. “An Ode to West Baltimore.”
Reddit, uploaded by u/m_wriston, 2024

You’ll see *Akeelah* surrounded by blues and greens, literally and emotionally. Blue for what’s been lost — fathers, safety, certainty. Green for what’s ahead — growth, ambition, and the weight of discipline. These colors flood the set, creating a world where her interior life is impossible to separate from her exterior reality. Her neighborhood is part of her body.



(from left) Screen grab from Alpha Chapter AKA's Step Show (1987), YouTube, uploaded by Linda Looney - Creative Design Boutique, 12 Aug. 2010

The Jackson State marching band performs during halftime of the UNLV Jackson State football game in Las Vegas on Thursday, Sept 1, 2016, Brett Le Blanc/Las Vegas Review-Journal

Major Charity Edna Adams and the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion via National Archives; U.S. Signal Corps; National Archives, Washington, D.C. (531249); Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library.

Music holds that same weight in our production. The sound of step*. The expressive musical arrangements of HBCU bands and the precision in their marching. The shared language of marching and formation between step teams, bands, and the disciplined grace of Black military service. These percussive sounds are braided with the voices of today's griots — Kendrick Lamar, Sampha, Willow, Tyler, The Creator — artists who, like Akeelah, sit between grief and glory, haunted by legacy but determined to define their own.



Bodys Iseke

Visually, we found deep inspiration in Bodys Iseke, the Congolese sculptor who imagined cities as they could be — places where creativity outran catastrophe. His version of utopia. Iseke passed away in 2015, around the time this play was born. His work, alongside my commitment to Afrofuturism, and surrealism, dares us to imagine Akeelah's world not just as it is, but as it could be — if imagination and care shaped her block instead of red lines and broken systems.

More than anything, *Akeelah and the Bee* is a story about community — the messy, sacred, everyday miracle of people showing up for each other. Akeelah does not — cannot — get to the Bee alone. None of us can. I hope this production invites all of us to remember that — to lean a little deeper into the gift of being held, seen, and known. Exactly as we are, we are enough.

Together, we can spell the future.

In gratitude,

JERRICA D. WHITE
DIRECTOR,
AKEELAH AND THE BEE

*Step: Stepping, a complex synchronized dancelike performance that blends African folk traditions with popular culture. Stepping involves clapping, body slapping, vocalizations, and dramatic movements. Stepping was developed by African American fraternities and sororities in the mid-20th century and also is practiced by Latino and Asian American Greek-letter fraternities as well as by other groups, and it has become a recreational and competitive activity in some American high schools. — Definition provided by Britannica

BIOGRAPHIES



NATALYA BENTON* AKEELAH ANDERSON

Natalya Benton is a freshman at the Baltimore School for the Arts. Natalya is from Baltimore. She enjoys watching *Power Rangers*, playing Just Dance and

playing with her friends. She is a part of the 9th grade BSA ensemble. Her favorite play is *Hamilton*. Her favorite song is *Watch my Technique* by Beyoncé. After graduation, Natalya wants to do whatever Allah wills. Acknowledgments: Hi Mom, Hi Dad, Hi London and Hi Grandma!



ZIPPORAH BROWN GLADDEN*

GAIL ANDERSON

Zipporah Brown Gladden is an actor in Baltimore City with a B.A. in Theatre. Previous acting credits here at Baltimore Center Stage include the

Young Playwrights Festival 2024, *Our Town*, and *Dream House*. Other acting credits include *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Chesapeake Shakespeare Company) and *Intimate Apparel* (Maryland Ensemble Theatre). Zipporah is also a teaching artist for Baltimore Center Stage as well as for Arts for Learning MD and Fells Point Corner Theatre.



THEODORE SHERRON III* REGGIE ANDERSON

This is Theodore's performance debut at Baltimore Center Stage! A PG County-based actor in the Baltimore area, previous performances

include: *The America Play* (Perisphere Theatre), *From East, Like the Sun* (Lovely Lane Methodist), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare Beyond), *Macbeth* (Chesapeake Shakespeare), *R & J* (Strand Theatre Co.), *The Complete Works of WS* (Chesapeake Shakespeare). Theodore

holds a Bachelors of Fine Arts in Acting from UMBC.



JEFFERSON A. RUSSELL*

DR. JOSHUA LARABEE

Everyman Theatre: (Resident Company Member): *Primary Trust*, *Crumbs from the Table*

of Joy, Jump, The Lion in Winter, Sense and Sensibility, The Skin of Our Teeth, Flyin' West, Pipeline, Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express, Aubergine, The Soul Collector, Gem of the Ocean, Someone Who'll Watch Over Me, Hedda Gabler, Blues for an Alabama Sky, Heathen Valley. Regional: Chesapeake Shakespeare Co.: *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*; Signature Theatre: *Daphne's Dive*; American Players Theatre: *The Recruiting Officer, Our Country's Good*; Olney Theatre: *Aubergine*; Milwaukee Rep: *Two Trains Running*; Baltimore Center Stage/Cincinnati Playhouse: *Shakespeare in Love*; Ford's Theatre: *Fences, Ragtime*; Pioneer Theatre Co: *Fences*; Cincinnati Playhouse: *A Christmas Carol, Two Trains Running, Jitney*; Marin Theatre Co: *Fetch Clay Make Man, The Convert*; Dallas Theatre/Goodman Theatre: *Trinity River Plays*; Hangar Theatre: *The Piano Lesson*; Round House: *Father Comes Home From The Wars, Two Trains Running, Ironbound, Fahrenheit 451, Amadeus*; Woolly Mammoth: *Clybourne Park*; Arena Players: *The Meeting, Flyin' West*; Rep Stage: *Sunset Baby*; Folger: *The Tempest*; Gulfshore Playhouse: *Race*; National Tours: Kennedy Center: *Harlem, Color Me Dark*; Education: Hampton University, BA, (Sociology/ Criminal Justice), GWU: MFA, Academy of Classical Acting. He is a former Baltimore police officer and a founding member of GALVANIZE, a network for Artists of Color. Former Adjunct Professor: Bowie State University, Towson University.



CHLOÉ SHEPPARD*
GEORGIA

Chloé Sheppard is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. Chloé is from Baltimore, MD. She enjoys acting, dancing and writing

poetry. Her favorite play is *Hamilton*. After graduation, Chloé wants to become a professional actress. A fun fact about Chloé is that she has been dancing since she was 3 years old and acting since she was 8. Her favorite quote is "If you don't like something, change it." - Maya Angelou

Acknowledgements: "I would like to acknowledge all of my family, friends, and my ACCE family but the biggest acknowledgement goes out to my mom (Ivy Branch) and my Uncle Joe. I love all of you very much and I wouldn't be where I am without ya'll."



TRACY "SYMPHONY"
HALL*

BATTY RUTH

Tracy "Symphony" Hall is degreed in theatre; she holds a Bachelor's from Morgan State University and a Master's from

TU. She's a Teaching Artist, and Creative Director for From the Page to the Stage Inc, her nonprofit organization that uses Theatre as a vehicle to address trauma. She's also the Director of the Performing Arts Ministry at LMCF her church home for over two decades. Her most recent role was "Mother" in *Black Nativity*. It is with immense excitement that Symphony is back at Baltimore Center Stage. This performance is in memory of Vera M. Hall & Dr. Shirley Bassfield Dunlap.



DWAYNE ALISTAIR
THOMAS*
DRUNK WILLIE/
PRINCIPAL WELCH

Dwayne Alistair Thomas' Baltimore Center Stage Debut! His recent TV credits include "We Own

This City" (HBO), "Bad Monkey" (Apple TV), "The Americans" (FX), and "Hightown" (Starz). Other selected regional theater credits include Bristol Riverside Theatre, Theatre Horizon, and InterAct Theatre. As a multifaceted creative, Dwayne's artwork can be seen at the National Harbor Arts' tination window display, and his sound design has been featured in many regional theatre productions across the East Coast. To the storytellers of BCS's *Akeelah and the Bee*, it's been a joy!



QUINCY VICKS*
JT

REGIONAL: ArtsCentric: *Once On This Island* (Papa Ge/Ensemble), *Crowns* (Ensemble), *RENT* (Benny); Chesapeake Shakespeare

Company: *Twelfth Night* (Duke Orsino). DC AREA: Signature Theatre: *A Funny Thing Happened...* (Swing); Olney Theatre Center: *Long Way Down* (Mike); Imagination Stage: *Winnie the Pooh* (Understudy), *A Year With Frog and Toad* (Man Bird/Ensemble) [Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Production, Theatre for Young Audiences]; Adventure Theatre MTC: *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* (Schroeder); The Keegan Theatre: *Seussical the Musical* (Cat in the Hat) [Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Ensemble Musical], *Push the Button* (Hero) EDUCATION: BA in Theatre Arts from Morgan State University. Instagram: @qviks_



BRAXTON SINGHANATH
DYLAN CHIU

Braxton is a sophomore at Baltimore School for the Arts. He is from Chicago, IL. Braxton enjoys soccer, dancing and gaming. The music

Braxton likes is R&B and Rap. His favorite play is *MJ*. After graduation Braxton wants to pursue more acting and be on the big screen! Shoutout to Esther, Micah and everyone else!

BIOGRAPHIES



**WILLIAM "WILL"
DOMBROWSKI
JAVIER MENDEZ**

Will Dombrowski is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. He is from Baltimore, MD. Will enjoys Dungeons and

Dragons and playing the piano. He is a part of Scouting America and his favorite play is *Hamilton*. After graduation, Will wants to go to college.



**CELESTE CRESPO
TRISH**

Celeste Crespo is a freshman at the Baltimore School for the Arts. Celeste is from Baltimore and enjoys acting, singing, and

conversing with new people. She values community and friendship. Celeste started acting at a young age in school productions, and wishes to continue her theatre education after high school.



**VIVIAN "VIVI"
MCCORD*
IZZY**

Vivian L. McCord is a sophomore at Baltimore School for the Arts. They are from Annapolis, MD. Vivian enjoys acting,

singing and writing. Vivian is a part of Young Artists of America (YAA), the Asian Student Union, the Gay Student Alliance (GSA) and WD Studios. Their favorite play is *Everything That Never Happened*. After graduation, Vivian wants to go into acting for on and off Broadway shows. Acknowledgments: I'd also like to thank my family, my friends, my vocal coaches Emily Gregoria and Wesley Diener, and my whole BSA ensemble for all the support. yours, ♥ V.



**TONICA "TONI" DAVIS
RATCHET RHONDA**

Toni Davis is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. Toni is from PG County, Washington DC. She enjoys fashion, working and listening to

music. Toni is a part of the Black Student Union at BSA. Her favorite play is *Hamlet*. She has only been in plays in middle school and those productions were *The Wiz* and *Annie*. After graduation, Toni wants to go to Howard and pursue acting. Her favorite song is "The Heart Part 6" by Kendrick Lamar. She is very proud that she made it to BSA as a student and would like to thank her family and friends for everything!



**GRACE
ELIZABETH ROLLEY*
MOHAWK GIRL**

Grace Elizabeth is a Baltimore School for the Arts freshman born and raised in Maryland. Grace enjoys all art

forms, from acting to painting to writing songs. Grace puts her passion and energy into not only theatre but also her classes, which led her to be on the honor roll at her high school. Grace's favorite musical is *Dear Evan Hansen*, for she admires how it displays beauty within truthfulness. After graduation, Grace strives to go to a university to achieve her goal in becoming a movie actress, connecting with audiences through emotion and meaning. Grace knows she wouldn't have the passion for theatre without her cousins Kayla and Jordan, her aunt Rocky, her parents Charline and Otis, and most importantly, her grandma, Clari, for watching every performance, from family karaoke to Baltimore Center Stage.



ANDREW V. LY*
MR. CHIU

Andrew is thrilled to be making his BCS debut! Previous credits include 1st Stage: *Mlima's Tale*, *The Rainmaker* (u/s), *How The Light Gets In*

(u/s); Olney Theatre: *Artificial* workshop; and Classic Stage Company: *King and the Clown* workshop. Andrew trained as a composer and studied music at Yale University (BA), the University of Southern California (MM), and the University of California, Berkeley (PhD). He moved to Washington, DC in 2019 to begin a career in public service, and started acting in 2022. His honors include a Fulbright research fellowship to Austria and a Presidential Management Fellowship to the Treasury Department. He believes in the power of art to create fuller lives and stronger societies.



BAILEY
DANDRIDGE GAINEY
STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Bailey Dandridge (Gailey) is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. Bailey is from Baltimore, MD. She enjoys

teaching dance to young kids, wearing cute outfits and watching Marvel movies. She is a part of Girl Scouts and has been a member since she was four years old. Bailey's favorite playwright is Lin-Manuel Miranda. After graduation, Bailey wants to attend a HBCU to study theater. Acknowledgements: I would like to thank my parents, Shontae Gailey and Eric Gailey Jr., as well as my siblings Carson, Cairo, and Darius for their love and support.



ADDISON "ADDIE"
SLATER HARRINGTON
STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Addison Slater Harrington is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. She lives in Baltimore, MD with

her parents and favorite little brother Alex. She enjoys reading, writing stories and creating art projects. Addison is a member of Baltimore Kind Minds, a student group dedicated to spreading kindness and service in the community. She has appeared in middle school productions of *Lion King Jr.*, *Moana Jr.* and *Beauty and the Beast Jr.*, as well as *Seussical the Musical* and *Legally Blonde Jr.* with Charm City Players. She also honed her storytelling and cinematography skills during a summer session with Black Girls Film School. She draws inspiration from Director and Screenwriter Ava DuVernay and some of her favorite actors, including Zendaya, Keke Palmer, Kerry Washington, and Marsai Martin, who have paved the way for young Black actresses in the industry. After graduation, Addison hopes to continue performing and using storytelling to uplift and inspire others.

"There are so many great things in life; why dwell on negativity." - Zendaya



SHILOH HOPKINS
STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Shiloh Hopkins is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. Shiloh is from Baltimore, MD. She enjoys crocheting, listening to music and

reading. Her favorite play is *POTUS*. Her current favorite song is *Saturn* by SZA. Previous productions that Shiloh has been a part of have been *Annie Jr.*, *Willy Wonka Jr.*, and *High School Musical Jr.* at her old middle school. After graduation, Shiloh wants to continue acting during college. Acknowledgements: She would like to acknowledge her family for supporting her.



KAILAH JOHNSON
STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Kailah Johnson is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. Kailah is from Baltimore, MD. She enjoys writing, poetry, listening to music

BIOGRAPHIES

and learning. She is a part of the Black Student Union. Kailah's favorite musical is *Hamilton*. After graduation, Kailah wants to attend a HBCU. Acknowledgements: "I want to thank my parents for pushing me to be the best version of myself."



LAILA MILLER STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Laila Skye is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. Laila is from Baltimore city. She enjoys writing, drawing and doing nails. Laila's

favorite musical is *The Sound of Music*. After graduation, she wants to go to NYU to pursue acting.

Acknowledgements: she wants to thank her mother April Brown, her father Roy Miller and mentor Kenyatta Hardison.



HARLOW MOSCHERA STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Harlow Moschera is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. While born in Princeton, NJ she has lived in Baltimore most of her life. She is

a competitive swimmer for MBK and is an avid reader. Harlow's favorite plays are *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *RENT*. After graduation, she plans on going to college for journalism and plans to earn a law degree. Harlow wants to thank her family and teachers for being supportive and flexible throughout this experience. A special shoutout to her 6-month-old baby sister Colette for always bringing a smile to her face after a long day.



DAVID RITTNER STUDENT ENSEMBLE

David Rittner is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. David is from Baltimore, MD. He enjoys writing, acting and playing games. David is

a part of Scouts of America. His favorite play is *Beetlejuice*. After graduation, David

wants to become an author. David is grateful for his friends and family who got him this far.



CASSIDY MILLER STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Cassidy S. Miller is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. Cassidy is from Baltimore, MD. She enjoys singing, acting and dancing.

Cassidy is a part of the Baltimore School for the Arts Theater Department. Cassidy's favorite play is *Hamilton*. After graduation, Cassidy wants to acknowledge her family and friends for encouraging and supporting her through her process of becoming a successful actor.



SUKYRRAH WALLACE STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Sukyrrah is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. She is from Baltimore City. Sukyrrah enjoys singing, cooking and

acting. Her favorite play is *Hamilton*. After graduation, Sukyrrah wants to go to law or medical school and also wants to follow a career in acting. One of her biggest accomplishments was being in the *Baltimore Banner*. Her favorite quote is "Pressure makes diamonds."



MARY HURSON STUDENT ENSEMBLE

Mary Hurson is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. Mary is from Baltimore, MD. Mary enjoys reading, baking and spending

time with friends. Mary is proud to be a part of the BSA community. Mary's favorite play is *A Raisin in the Sun*. After graduation, Mary wants to go to college. Mary is grateful for this opportunity to be with her classmates at Baltimore Center Stage! She's also grateful for her family and friends.



**DARNELL WILLIAMS, JR.
STUDENT ENSEMBLE**

Darnell is a freshman at Baltimore School for the Arts. He is from Baltimore, MD. He enjoys gaming, dance and music. Darnell is a part of the class

of 2028 at BSA. His favorite play is *The Play that Goes Wrong*. After graduation, Darnell wants to be in a movie.



**CHERYL L. WEST
PLAYWRIGHT**

Cheryl L. West's plays include: *Something Happened in Our Town*, *Last Stop on Market Street*, *Akeelah & the Bee*, *Mwindo*, *Lizzie Bright and*

the Buckminster Boy, *Addy: American Girl Story*, and *Pullman Porter Blues*. Her plays have been seen in England, Off-Broadway, on Broadway (Play On!) and in numerous regional theaters around the country. She has written TV and film projects at Disney, Paramount, MTV Films, Showtime, TNT, HBO, CBS and is the Webby-nominated writer for the original web series "Diary of a Single Mom." Ms. West is the recipient of several awards: American Alliance For Theatre & Education (AATE) Distinguished Play Award (2016), the 2016 Charlotte B. Chorpenning Playwright Award, the Helen Hayes/Charles McArthur award for outstanding new play, the Susan Smith Blackburn prize, an international playwriting award for distinguished new plays, the National Endowment Playwriting Award and the Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP Best Playwright Award. As said by *The L Magazine*, "Cheryl L. West writes plays that often trump those of master playwright August Wilson – not only meticulous neo-realist slices of African-American life, but dense, ethereal explorations of language and the inner regions of her character's souls. They are vigorously expressionistic, and yet remain grounded, entertaining theater."



**JERRICA D. WHITE
DIRECTOR**

Jerrica D. White is a Brooklyn-based, Cincinnati-bred director, producer, and writer examining the spectrum of Blackness with a focus

on family dynamics, relationships, love, and mental health. She has directed and developed her original work with New York Theatre Workshop, The Public Theater, Atlantic Theater Company, National Black Theatre, Broadway Black, Classical Theatre of Harlem, Primary Stages, Workshop Theater, Urbanite Theatre, Ensemble Theater, and Cincinnati Black Theatre Artist Collective.

Jerrica believes freedom is won through vulnerability and works to give artists a sense of community and a platform to share their stories. She founded OVRZLOUS, a studio built to produce revues, reading series, and editorial content, provide strategy to creative teams, and foster artistic connection. In 2019, she was on the producing team of the Broadway revival of *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*. Most recently, she was a 2023/24 Writer in Residence with Liberation Theatre Company in Harlem, a Soho House Fellow, and a Boris Sagal Directing Fellow finalist.

Her work is a defense for living. She desires for her community to feel seen, encouraged, and know they are not alone. Her artistic language is built on cycles of self-love, healing, faith, and joy.

**CHAZZ L. ROLLE
ASSISTANT DIRECTING TEAM**

Chazz Rolle is a stage manager, director, and digital creative. She has worked on productions including *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* (Congo Square Theatre), *Useless Woman* and *the A.I. Therapist* (Gilded Road Productions and WACO Theater), and a movement workshop for *Try/Step/Trip* (Gilded Road Productions and 42nd.club).

A Bahamas native, Rolle's cultural background has shaped her passion for storytelling, creativity, and connection. In addition to her work in theater, she has built a career in Digital Marketing, Media Communications, and Visual Design, specializing in social media management, content creation, graphic design, and branding.

HOPE HYNSON

ASSISTANT DIRECTING TEAM

Hope received her B.A. in English Language & Literature with a double minor in Creative Writing and Innovation & Entrepreneurship from the University of Maryland, College Park. During her time at university, she honed her writing skills through the Jiménez-Porter Writers' House program, and ignited an existing passion for community advocacy and justice through her participation in her campus' chapters of NAACP, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and several other organizations that focused on leadership and positive community development. As a product of both Baltimore City and County schools, she's excited to connect with her city in new ways as she works with her amazing team to continue to foster a meaningful connection between BCS and Baltimore's youth.

ERIN MARGARET PETTIGREW

ASSISTANT DIRECTING TEAM

Erin Margaret Pettigrew is one of 4 Artistic Associates and one of 2 leaders in Community & Youth Programs. This Los Angeles native, holds a BFA and MFA in acting, collaborating with artists and creatives across the globe as an equity actor, mover, and community builder. Erin has cultivated a rooted connection and dedication to community and arts through 9 years of facilitation as a CUNY professor, a guest facilitator at NYU, a teaching artist inside juvenile detention centers across NYC, and in after-school programs. Continuing her artist's journey with Baltimore Center Stage is a gift received with deep pride, joy, and gratitude at the chance to learn and

grow from the extraordinary folks of this charming city! Thank you for this gift.

ANTON VOLOVSEK

SCENIC DESIGNER

Anton Volovsek is a scenic designer, artist, and theatermaker currently based in New York. Although primarily a scenic designer, Anton has delved into teaching, writing, and devising new work. Recent design credits include: Regional: *Our Town*, *Life is a Dream*, and *Everything That Never Happened* (Baltimore Center Stage); *Curse of the Starving Class* (PTP, Williamstown Theatre Festival); *Mr. Burns* (Brown/Trinity) Off-off Broadway: *Hype Man* (The Flea Theatre & Battery Park City); *Odd Day Rain*, *The Perfect Monster*, *Game Changers*, *Princess Phooey* (TADA! Youth Theater) Colleague: *Real Housewives of the Restoration*, *King Charles III* (NYU Grad Acting and Design); *Spring Awakening*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Montclair State University); *Indecent* (Central Michigan University); *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (City College of New York); *The Women*, *Rapture Blister Burn* (Stella Adler Studio of Acting). MFA from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. BFA from the University of Michigan. Go Blue! You can find more of his work at www.antedward.com.

MOYENDA KULEMEKA

COSTUME DESIGNER

Moyenda Kulemeka is proud to be returning to Baltimore Center Stage after having previously designed *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, and *Tiny Beautiful Things*. Recent credits include *The Scenarios*, *The Colored Museum* (Helen Hayes Nominated, Outstanding Costume Design, Hayes), *Good Bones*, and *John Proctor is the Villain* at Studio Theatre; *Where the Mountain Meets the Sea*, *Selling Kabul*, *Daphne's Dive*, and *Detroit '67* at Signature Theatre; *A Jumping Off Point* and *Radio Golf* at Round House Theatre; *Jump* at Everyman Theatre; *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*, *Nancy*, *Confederates*, *Monumental Travesties*, *In His Hands*, *Bars and Measures*, *Marys Seacole*,

and *Fabulation, or the Re-education of Undine* at Mosaic Theater among others. Moyenda holds a B.A. from the University of Maryland and is a proud member of United Scenic Artists, Local 829, IATSE.

LARRY PETERSON
WIG CONSULTANT

Baltimore Center Stage/ArtsCentric: *Cinderella*, *Black Nativity*. Larry Peterson studied theatrical hair and makeup at Howard University. Larry has a passion for the arts and has over 15 years of experience in makeup artistry, hair/wig design, and costuming. He has partnered with Screaming Queens Productions LLC, BlackRock Center for the Arts, and other performance venues as a performer and hair/makeup designer. Larry has worked as the Wig Designer in the productions of *Kinky Boots*, *Lend Me a Soprano*, and *Beautiful* at Olney; and *The World Goes Round* at Everyman Theatre.

XIANGFU XIAO
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Xiangfu Xiao is a New York-based lighting designer who has worked nationally and internationally in lighting design for theater, live events, TV studios, and exhibitions, continually expanding his career globally. Off-Bway and Regional (Selected): *Matilda the Musical* (Theatre Three, NY); *Clowns Like Me* (DR2 Theatre); *FATHAM* (a co-production with Huntington Theatre in Boston, MA, and Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, GA); *The Chinese Lady* (American Stage, FL); *The Diamond* (Pregones/PRTT); *Measure for Measure* (Mark O'Donnell Theater). International (Selected): *Graduate This Weekend Musical* (Da Yin Theatre, Beijing, China); *Huang Liang Yi Meng* (National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing, China). Education: MFA in Design for Stage and Film - NYU Tisch School of the Arts. xiangfuxiao.com, @xiangfuxiao_design

ARI KIM
(she/her)

ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Ari Kim is a lighting designer based in

NY. Recent work : *Bardo* (Bric, prototype festival), *Next gen* (National Sawdust), *Did you Eat?* (Boston Center for the Arts), *Ma, go* (Playwrights Horizon Downtown). MFA NYU Tisch Design for stage and film.

UPTOWN WORKS
DANIELA HART, BAILEY TRIERWEILER,
NOEL NICHOLS
SOUND DESIGNER

UptownWorks is a collaborative design team specializing in theater, film, podcasts installations and other media. Select sound design highlights include *Becoming Eve* (NYTW); *Laughs in Spanish* (Hartford Stage); *Grandiloquent* (Lortell); *I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* (DCPA); *Tiny Father* (Geffen Playhouse); *Dangerous Days* (Miami New Drama); *Murder on the Orient Express* (Syracuse Stage); *Lady Day* (Baltimore Center Stage); *Avaaaz* (South Coast Rep); *Black Odyssey* (Classic Stage); *Especjos: Clean* (Hartford Stage); *the ripple, the wave...* (Berkeley Rep/Goodman). This design was led by Daniela Hart (uptownworksnyc.com), Bailey Trierweiler (btsounddesign.com) and Noel Nichols (noelnicholsdesign.com). Daniela, Noel & Bailey received their MFAs in Sound Design from Yale School of Drama.

LIAM BELLMAN-SHARPE
ASSISTANT SOUND DESIGNER

Liam Bellman-Sharpe is a multi-disciplinary practitioner working primarily in sound and music for live performance. Liam specializes in devising unique musical and sonic scores and environments for theater, dance, installation, and hybrid forms, as well as designing sound delivery systems and digital tools to realize these scores. As a composer, sound designer, orchestrator, musician, and music director, Liam's work has been heard in the United States, Europe, Hong Kong, and Australia. Liam holds an M.F.A. in sound design from David Geffen School of Drama, and a B.H.Mus from the Melbourne Conservatorium of music. Liam's theatrical credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Classical Theatre of Harlem); *Everybody* (Yale

BIOGRAPHIES

Dramat); *Manning, Mr. Burns: a post-electric play, shakespeare's as u like it*, and *The Tempest* (the Geffen School); *The American Unicorn* (Long Wharf Theatre); *Bakkhai* (Yale Summer Cabaret); *The Ugly One, Mud, Phosphene*, and *Camille: A Tearjerker* (Yale Cabaret). With dancer Sarah Xiao, he has presented untitled semi-improvised dance/music piece (Yale Cabaret) and from/to nothing (International Festival of Arts & Ideas).

AVERY JAMES EVANS* STAGE MANAGER

Avery James Evans a native of Jackson, MS, and has received his B.S in Theatre from Jackson State University, his M.F.A in Stage Management from The University of California, Irvine. Evans has dedicated his career to making a change ethically in the industry primarily focusing on representation and equity, as well as youth and community outreach. LORT: *The Little*

Mermaid (Dallas Theatre Center); *Trouble in Mind* (Hartford Stage); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Old Globe); *Folks at Home* (Baltimore Center Stage). Opera: *Elixir of Love*, *La Bohème*, and *Aida* (Fort Worth Opera). Event Production: SuperBowl LIX Halftime Show 2025, Bloomberg CityLab 2023, and NBA All Star Week 2022. When not working, Avery enjoys gaming, baseball, and being a father to his beautiful daughter Demi and puppy GiGi.

MAKAYLA BECKLES* ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Regional: *The Hot Wing King*, *Pride & Prejudice*, Young Playwrights Festival (Baltimore Center Stage); Olney Outdoors, *The Most Wonderful Time of the Year*, (Olney). Education/Training: BFA in Acting, University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO “THE SAUCE”!

To the incredible parents of our student actors—affectionately known as **THE SAUCE**—we are beyond grateful for your unwavering support. Without you (and your amazing kids), this show wouldn't be possible! Your dedication, love, and encouragement have laid the foundation for these young artists to shine, and we are honored to witness the brilliance that blossoms from your hard work.

THANK YOU, THE SAUCE, for bringing the flavor, the heart, and the magic to this production!

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The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.



Baltimore Center Stage operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director and/or Choreographer is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.

LEGISLATIVE FORUM THEATRE FESTIVAL

2025 FESTIVAL DATES ANNOUNCED SOON!

This year, Baltimore Center Stage will shine a spotlight on civic stories surrounding housing insecurity, homelessness, and abandoned lots. In collaboration with the organization *Joy Baltimore* and independent artist *Lolah*, BCS will partner with **YOU**. Together, we will craft a performance that embodies the collective truths and lived experiences of those facing these challenges and present an electrifying performance to our elected officials. Join us in supporting this vital initiative by engaging with this powerful performance that tackles community issues, explores innovative solutions, and amplifies Baltimore's unified voice in the fight against housing insecurity.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE
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CENTERSTAGE.ORG/LEGISLATIVE-THEATRE

SHARE YOUR STORY

Email the Baltimore Center Stage staff,
artisticpartnerships@centerstage.org to join
us and share stories from within the community

WHAT IS LEGISLATIVE THEATRE?

Legislative Forum Theatre is a powerful form of participatory theater developed by Augusto Boal as part of his Theatre of the Oppressed practices. It combines storytelling and audience interaction to explore social, political, or legislative issues. Theatre of the Oppressed (T.O.) is a popular form of community-based education that uses theatre as a tool for transformation and revolution. Originally developed out of Boal's work with peasant and worker populations, it is now used all over the world for social and political activism, conflict resolution, community building, therapy, and government legislation. Inspired by the vision of Paulo Freire and his landmark treatise on education, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, T.O. invites critical thinking to ask all to analyze rather than accepting, curiosity rather than giving answers.

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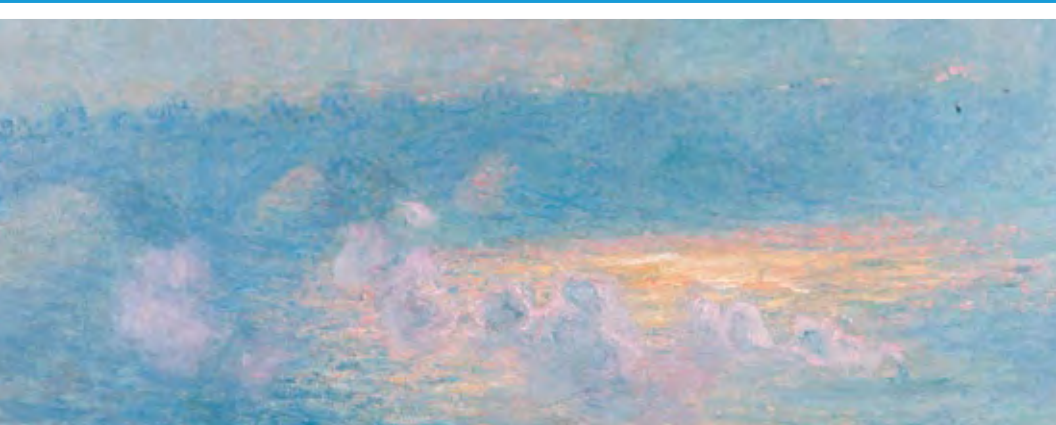
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Claude Monet. *Waterloo Bridge, Sunlight Effect with Smoke*. (Detail), 1903. Baltimore Museum of Art, The Helen and Abram Eisenberg Collection, BMA 1976.38

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khadija jahmila

BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE 2024/25 SEASON ARTIST

(b. 1993, Maryland) Khadija is an Afro-Caribbean mixed-media artist and creative entrepreneur whose work fuses hand-cut paper and digital collage to explore Afrofuturistic themes. Her vibrant creations celebrate the humanity, beauty, intersectionality, and otherworldliness of the African diaspora. Awarded the NextGen Award by VisArts Rockville, MD, in 2020, Khadija's art has been featured in retail spaces and exhibited across Washington, DC, and Maryland, including notable venues such as Eaton DC, Waller Gallery, 11:Eleven Gallery, and VisArts.

In addition to her artistic practice, Jahmila teaches mixed media art to kindergarten through fifth-grade students at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop and leads weekly art classes for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities at Creative Suitland.

Additionally, she conducts her unique collage series, **Cut It Out: A Dangerously Absurd Paper Collage Making Session**, where she encourages participants to engage with innovative techniques and explore the playful aspects of visual storytelling. These roles underscore Khadija Jahmila's commitment to making art accessible and engaging for a diverse range of ages and abilities.

To explore more of Khadija Jahmila's work and stay updated on her latest projects, visit her website at [KhadijaJahmila.com](https://www.khadijahahmila.com) and follow her on Instagram [@khadija_jahmila](https://www.instagram.com/khadija_jahmila).

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