

THEATRE
HORIZON

HOLIDAY GOSSPEL CONCERT

DEC. 8th - 17th,
2023

MAIN STREET PRODUCER

• **Becky Bradbeer** •

Photo by: John C. Hawthorne

Directed by **Jessica Johnson**

Musical Direction by **Garrick Vaughan**

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Cast & Crew

HOLIDAY GOSPEL CONCERT

ARTISTIC AND PRODUCTION

Director

Jessica Johnson (*she/they*)

Music Director

Garrick Vaughan (*he/him*)

Stage Manager

Samantha Leah Smith (*she/her*)

Lighting Designer

Isabella Gill-Gomez (*she/they*)

Sound Engineer

Zoë Gilmore (*they/she*)

Head Electrician

Heather Pynne (*she/they*)

Sound Consultant

Chris Sannino (*he/him*)

PERFORMERS

Candace Benson (*she/her*)

Jacqueline Burris-Smith (*she/her*)

Brandon Moulden (*he/him/his*)

Garrick Vaughan (*he/him*)

CHOIR MEMBERS

Chantel Thea Cumberbatch (*she/her*)

Anjai Gonza (*he/him*)

Lora B. Gonzalez (*she/her*)

Dijah Graves (*she/her*)

Nya Green-Harris (*she/her*)

Tyrone Lackey (*he/him*)

Moe Peay (*he/him*)

Ciara L. Stewart (*she/her*)

Jackie Watkins (*she/her*)

Yasmin Williams-Smith (*she/her*)

YOUTH CHOIR MEMBERS

Aiden Darden (*he/him*)

Maximillion Darden (*he/him*)

Sirmyra Moses (*she/her*)

BAND

Will Brock (Piano) (*he/him*)

Matthew Jernigan (Drums) (*he/him*)

Rodrigo Pichardo (Bass) (*he/him*)

Anjai Goza (Saxophone) (*he/him*)

Director's Note



I grew up going to church every Sunday and choir rehearsal every Wednesday. One of my earliest memories of singing in front of

a group of people is singing a duet with my twin sister in front of our congregation. There is something special about a group of people singing together. I realized at a very young age that music has the power to transform us, to move us, to make us think about the world around us - together.

When I came out to my family and loved ones, I questioned whether I belonged in the place where I grew up. All my life, I was taught to believe that being a queer person was wrong, should be resisted, could somehow change. I feared my loved ones would turn away because of who I loved and how I loved, which felt like it went against everything I'd

been taught by the church. For a time, I tried everything I could to be like everyone, but the more I tried, the further I felt from my faith and from myself. I eventually distanced myself from the church as an institution.

Even in the toughest times, there was always Gospel Music in my life. In musical theatre, I discovered how many of my peers had grown up in church. We were drawn to the community and camaraderie that music could offer. Performing in *The Color Purple* brought me back to my faith and made me a stronger performer. I was no longer afraid to share my whole self.

There is nothing like Gospel Music. There is a song for every circumstance and for everyone. My hope for you today is - whether you are a regular churchgoer or you just want to hear amazing music - that you walk away with new ideas about the world and experience a moment of transformation. Thank you for spending some of your holiday with us. Enjoy.

- Jessica Johnson

Artist Bios



Candace Benson (Performer) (she/her) is a Pottstown-based gospel recording artist. She was first runner-up (top 2) on BET's Season

7 Sunday Best. She has previously been seen in Theatre Horizon's Barrymore-winning casts of *Black Nativity* and *The Color Purple*. She also starred in *Dreamgirls* as Effie White Theatre in the X. She is currently a music production student at the famous Berklee College of Music and will be releasing her debut album in 2024. She is ecstatic to be working with Theatre Horizon once again for the fourth time. She would like to dedicate her performance to her mother, Sharon Lyles Benson and her late father, Charles "Chuck" Benson, who passed in the year 2022. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome

them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” 1 John 4:4



Jacqueline (Jackie) Burris-Smith (Performer) (she/her) is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and is a Christian Music Artist, songwriter,

vocal arranger, and Recording Artist.

Jacqueline began singing and performing in theater at a very young age. As a teenager she decided to follow Christ and help others to heal through music. Jacqueline has ministered and performed in several theater productions and toured Eastern Europe, singing and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. She has led worship, directed and established many choirs, and served in leadership for over 22 years. Jacqueline has vowed to serve the Lord using the gifts and voice given to her. She is so grateful to have this opportunity with Theatre Horizon and looks forward to spreading love and joy through the gift of music.



Brandon Moulden (Performer) (he/him/his) is a Philadelphia-based singer-songwriter, musician, and poet rooted in the jazz idiom, soul

influence, and pop sounds of old and new.

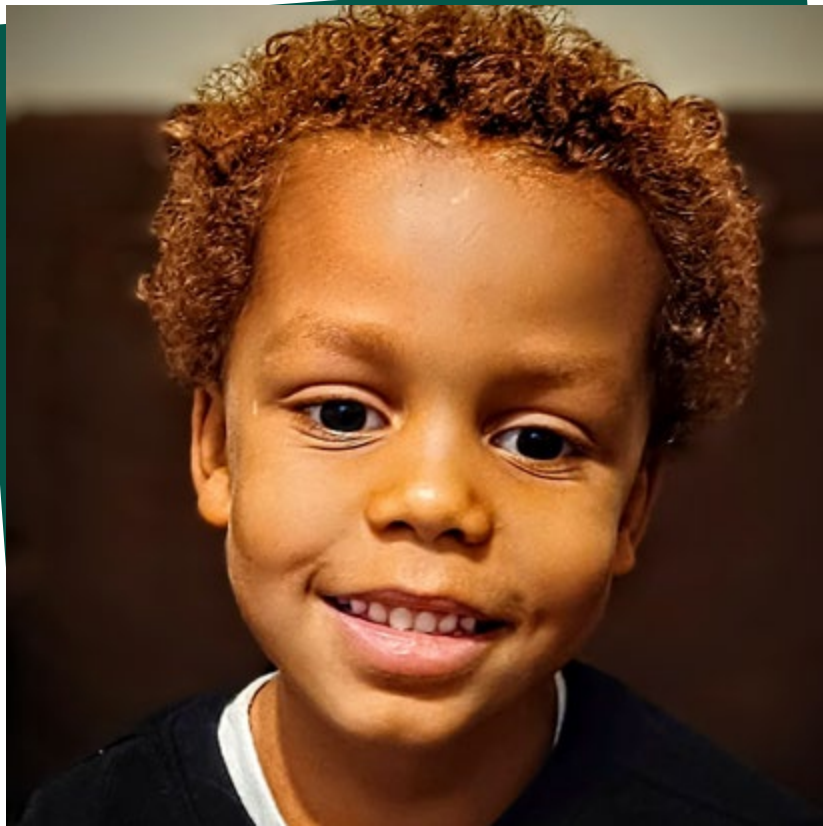
He is excited to be joining the incredible folks at Theatre Horizon for the first time, bringing his experience as a performer and creative to Theatre Horizon's Holiday Gospel Concert.

In September 2018, he released his debut EP, *BRIDGES*, followed by singles "Circles" (September 2020) and "Same Pain" (August 2021). In November 2021, he provided jazz crooner/big band style vocals for DoorDash's Holiday commercial "Perfect Timing". In addition to his work as a bandleader and solo artist, he has also had the opportunity to share the stage with Temple University's Jazz Lab Band, Vertical Current, Ginger Coyle, Josh Collins, Shelia "Lee Mo" Moser, Rhodney Miller, Raw Beauty, and Brittanie Thomas, among others.



**Chantel Thea
Cumberbatch
(Choir Member)**
(she/her) has
worked as a Stage
Manager and/or
Assistant Director
for multiple

theaters recently for such shows as *W.I.T.S* at the University of the Arts, *Pageant* at the Ritz Theatre, and *Memphis* at Candlelight Theatre as well as a few others. She is also a performer who performed at last year's Holiday Concert at Theatre Horizon, singing "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch", The Ritz Theater in *Big Fish* (Little Lamb), and Theatre Horizon in *The Color Purple* (Und. Celie, Nettie, Squeak). This will be Chantel's third time working with Theatre Horizon. She really likes this theater and she's super grateful for this opportunity. She also can't wait for everyone to experience this fantastic holiday show!



Aiden Darden (Choir Member Youth) (he/him) is a first-grade student at Cole Manor Elementary School in Norristown, PA. He loves to draw,

write, and sing. This is Aiden's first time performing in a professional production but he has worked with Theatre Horizon and his former preschool to perform *The Grouchy Ladybug* and *The Three Little Pigs*.



Maximillion Darden (Choir Member Youth) (he/him) a Norristown resident and 6th-grade student at East Norriton

Middle School, is excited to be a part of this production. He has worked with Theatre Horizon to develop his creative talent for a number of years through school programs and NSTEP summer camps. Max was also

seen in *Mary Poppins, Jr.* (COMAD), *TOWN* (Theatre Horizon), *Moana, Jr.* (ENMS), and will perform in *Wizard of Oz, Jr.* in Spring 2024.



**Anjai Gonza
(Choir Member/
Saxophone)**

(he/him) is a Philadelphia/
Norristown-based musician (i.e., saxophonist &

background singer) who is joining Theatre Horizon for the first time. His most recent musical interactions include playing R&B and Gospel. He would like to thank his wife, Lora, and Mydera of Theatre Horizon for encouraging him to audition for Theatre Horizon's Holiday Gospel Concert.



**Lora B. Gonzalez
(Choir Member)**

(she/her) is a mother of three boys and a grandmother of two. She has been

married for 26 years and enjoys singing and dancing. She currently sings with a church choir and has done so for over 50 years. While singing in the church, she directed four choirs as well as having the privilege of being the assistant choir director to the Philadelphia Chapter of the Edwin Hawkins Music & Arts Seminar choir. She was a cast member in the play *TOWN* presented by Theatre Horizon and later was an ensemble member in the Holiday Concert in December 2022 at Theatre Horizon. She enjoys line dancing and currently attends line dancing classes weekly. She looks forward to any opportunity afforded her to perform and/or act in the theater. Happy Holidays to all, and Have a Blessed Christmas and New Year.



Dijah Graves

(Choir Member)

(she/her) returns to theatre, as this is her first production in over 10 years.

As a Theatre Arts student at

Montgomery County Community College with professors such as Tim Gallagher and Michael Whistler, she was able to gain experience with different roles and behind-the-scenes work in several plays. She played a placard girl in the MCCC production of *Pullman Car Hiawatha* by Thornton Wilder, Lighting Designer and actor for *The Laramie Project* by Moisés Kaufman, Lighting Designer and actor (Sally) in *The Day They Shot John Lennon* by James McLure, and was also a stage manager for *A Christmas Carol* produced by MCCC. Her first role ever in Theatre Arts was in Hatboro-Horsham's production of *High School Musical*, playing Taylor Makeessie. In addition, she has participated in other local musical events such as *LLL* (Let's Link L8tr) open mic night at The Centre Theater, and *Horsham Idol* for Horsham Day. Dijah is looking forward to reviving her love for the arts in the coming years. Hoping to be a part of the local theater arts community within the Montgomery County and Philadelphia area.



Nya Green-Harris (Choir Member)

(she/her) is a holly-jolly up-and-coming Norristown-based artist with a specialty in vocal

performance, arrangement, and lyricism.

She has well over a decade of experience in vocal performance, music theatre, and choral settings and is currently learning production in order to release her own music. She is absolutely honored and delighted to be a part of the Theatre Horizon line-up once again. She has previously been seen both on stage and/or co-managing the box office/lobby area for Theatre Horizon, with her most recent stage appearance being a featured performer in the “Sounds of Norristown: A Jazz Brunch.” She is also a recent graduate of Montgomery County Community College and works as a teaching artist with Theatre Horizon’s Autism Drama Program and as a pharmacy technician when not engrossed in music. She would like to thank God, her warm and wonderful friends and family,

her lovely partner, her amazing co-workers, and the staff and production team at Theatre Horizon for always “sleighting” their productions. She dedicates this performance to Makayla, and hopes you enjoy the show!



**Tyrone Lackey
(Choir Member)**

(he/him) is known for his unwavering commitment to music & theater. Music has always been an expression

that finds a way to bring us all back to center and provide healing & reflection. He’s appreciative of this opportunity to share the Theatre Horizon stage with the many talented vocalists.



**Sirmyra Moses
(Choir Member Youth)**

(she/her) is a Norristown youth who plans to pursue a career in singing and acting.

She is excited, blessed, and grateful for the opportunity to be a part of Theatre Horizon's Holiday Gospel Concert. Dreams really do come true. If you just believe!



Moe Peay (Choir Member) (he/him) is an American gospel singer, songwriter, producer, director, filmmaker, and actor. Born in

Norristown PA, Moe has been singing since the age of three. He has sung on many stages, including the Gospel Music Workshop of America and The White House for President Bill Clinton. Because of his voice and his passion, as a kid, Moe would be asked to participate in small skits and plays in church, which developed his love for acting as well. Moe has been blessed to be part of some great stage plays, musicals, and productions over the years, and he has been fortunate to work with Theatre Horizon in shows that include Barrymore award-winning musical *Black Nativity* and *TOWN*. When

he's not performing, Moe enjoys writing and producing music, developing show ideas, family time, running, cooking, and going to church.



**Ciara L. Stewart
(Choir Member)**

(she/her) is a Norristown-based vocalist who specializes in Gospel Music. She is excited

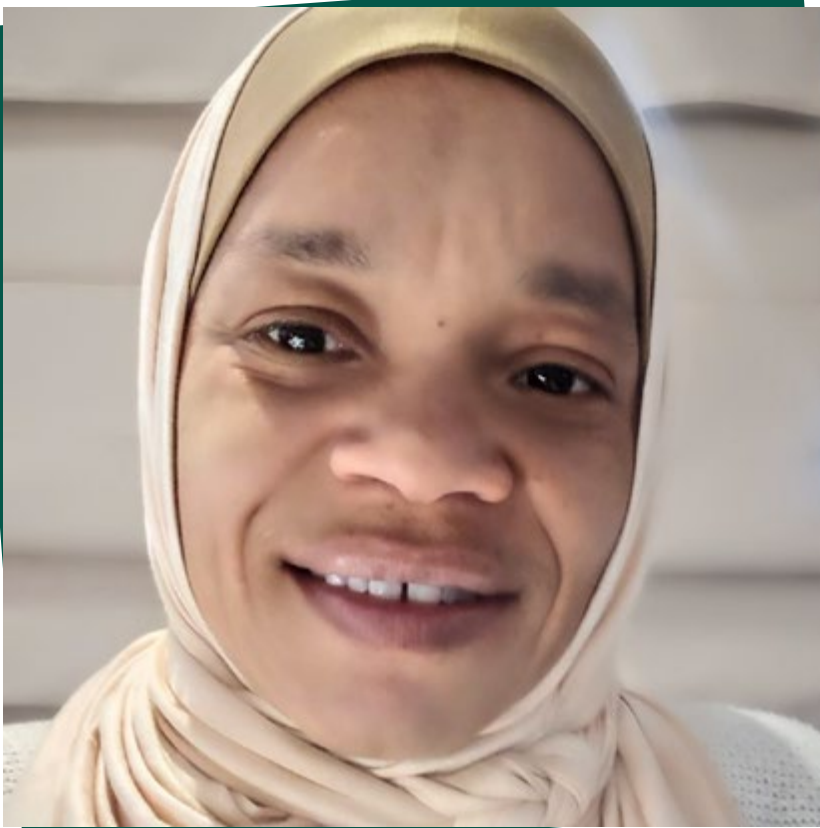
to be joining Theatre Horizon for the first time. This will be her first professional performance. She would love to thank God, her family, her father and mother, Candi, Dymere, and her two beautiful children, Ciaun and Milanah.



**Jackie Watkins
(Choir Member)**

(she/her) is a professional model, actress, and reality TV star personality from Norristown. This

is her second year as a vocalist in Theatre Horizon's *Holiday Concert*. She has been previously seen in *TOWN* (Theatre Horizon), *Crystal Lake*, Lifetime's *Five Guys a Week*, and *Hustle*. She would like to give special thanks to her family, supporters, the Theatre, her mother, grandmother, and Rayyesa. - "May you forever be in my heart."



Yasmin Williams-Brown (Choir Member) (she/her) is a proud Norristown resident with a LOVE for theater and especially

Theatre Horizon! She is grateful to have the opportunity to perform on stage at Theatre Horizon this holiday season. She has previously performed in the final installments of *Art Houses* (Theatre Horizon) and played Isaac Norris in *TOWN* (Theatre Horizon).

Will Brock (Piano) (he/him) has played a lot of music in lots of places around the world, with lots of pretty dope people. He looks forward to lending his abilities to this production.

Matthew Jernigan (Drums) (he/him) is a new Philadelphia-based musician who has been playing and exploring percussion for thirteen years. In every musical setting, his prime focus is to use his voice to say something meaningful and to incorporate his years of experience across disciplines. Aside from his work with electronics, he has been collaborating with two groups that draw from the jazz idiom while also expanding beyond the customary norms of feel and harmony. Primarily, he expresses himself from behind the drumset and conventional Western percussion.

Rodrigo Pichardo (Bass) (he/him) is a Philadelphia-based, Mexico-born, bassist and composer who has been active in the Philly music scene for 15 years. Most often seen playing with his progressive rock band Gnarbot, Rodrigo is well-known in the

scene for being a reliable musician capable of playing many styles. He is ecstatic to be returning for Theatre Horizon's *Holiday Gospel Concert*.



**Jessica Johnson
(Director)**

(she/they) is a Philadelphia-based performer and teaching artist. She began her artistic career

in Philadelphia as a Dorothy Haas Acting Apprentice at the Walnut Street Theatre. Over the past few years, she has performed in readings, workshops, and full-length productions all over the region. She received a Barrymore Award for Outstanding Lead Performer in a Musical as “Celie” in *The Color Purple* at Theatre Horizon (2019), and a Barrymore nomination for her portrayal of “Gina” in *a hit dog will holler* (Azuka Theatre, 2022). During her time in Philadelphia, she was awarded an Independence Foundation Fellowship (2018), Jilline Ringle Residency (2019), and the HATCH (2021) residency to develop independent work.



**Garrick Vaughan
(Music Director)**
(he/him) is
Philadelphian,
born and raised.
He graduated with
degrees in Music
Education and

Vocal Performance from Temple University, where he studied as a classical tenor with Dr. Julie Snyder. Garrick has been active in the city's classical music scene, performing with Opera North Inc. He is also a PHL LIVE Center Stage Classical Competition winner. Garrick has shared the stage with Kristin Chenoweth and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Garrick's talents have been showcased across the country and internationally in the 2018 European tour of the musical *Hair*. He played Harpo in the 2018 Barrymore Award-winning production of *The Color Purple*. Garrick has taken his skills to the creative end of productions, having music-directed *HAIR* (Int'l Tour), *Memphis* (Candlelight Theatre), and Theatre Horizon's *Holiday Concert* from 2022. Follow me and #catchdreams @GarrickVaughan on all social media.

Samantha Leah Smith (Stage Manager)

(she/her) is excited to be working on her first production with Theatre Horizon! Her stage management credits include Inis Nua Theatre Company (*Hymn*) and South Camden Theatre Company (*Terminus*, *Daphne's Dive*, *Abigail/1702*, *Stones in his Pockets*, *The Breath of Life*, *An Infinite Ache*, and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*). She has also assistant stage managed at Gretna Theatre, OKC Ballet, and Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma. Samantha graduated from Oklahoma City University with a BFA in Acting and a minor in Stage Management. www.samanthaleahsmith.com/stagemanagement

Isabella Gill-Gomez (Lighting Designer)

(she/they) is a Latina technician, programmer, and lighting designer based in Philadelphia. Receiving their B.A. in Theater from Temple University, they have spent the past two years, post-grad, collaborating with designers and companies in Philadelphia. Recent designs include *School Pictures* (Wilma), *Meet Me At Dawn* (Inis Nua), *Les Misérables* (The Haverford School), *Media/Medea* (Community College of Philadelphia/Bryn Mawr College),

and *Esto No Tiene Nombre* (Intercultural Journeys). Thank you, Theatre Horizon and Eric, for your support and love for this production. Much love to Alex, Will, Vic, and Henry.

Zoë Gilmore (Sound Engineer) (they/she) is a Philadelphia-based audio technician and stage manager. They are so excited to be back at Theatre Horizon! She has previously worked on *The Rocky Horror Tribute Show* (Audio Tech), *Philly Women's Theater Fest* (Stage Manager), and *PlayPenn* (Stage Manager). A huge thank you to the cast, crew, and production team at Theatre Horizon for all the support! Enjoy the show!!

Heather Pynne (Head Electrician) (she/they) is a Philadelphia-based lighting professional who enjoys the design, support, and implementation of lighting for performances of all kinds. She is delighted to be returning to Theatre Horizon and would like to thank her partner, Chris, for all his support.

Land Acknowledgement

The *Holiday Gospel Concert* was rehearsed and performed at Theatre Horizon in Norristown, which stands on the territory known as “Lenapehoking,” the ancestral home of the Lenape people.

For the past 10,000 years, the Lenape have been the original caretakers and stewards of Lenapehoking—one of numerous tribes that comprised tens of millions of people residing on this continent prior to the invasion of European colonizers.

We recognize that Isaac Norris, Sr.—Norristown’s namesake—purchased land from the family of William Penn even though nobody “owns” Lenapehoking. We acknowledge that Isaac Norris, Sr. was a slaveholder who benefited from a system that captured, sold, and enslaved over 10

million Africans who were trafficked to various locations in North America, South America, and the Caribbean.

We acknowledge the 6 million African Americans that moved from the American South to the Northeast during The Great Migration and their roles in making places like Norristown a central hub for industry and retail. Finally, with a large Latinx population in Norristown—particularly people from Puerto Rico and Mexico—we acknowledge the past, present, and future legacies of the Taíno and Aztec peoples.

This land acknowledgement was written by Director of External Relations Gilberto Vega with advisement from Adam Waterbear DePaul and Barbara Bluejay Michalski of the Lenape Cultural Center.





EDUCATION & CLASSES

Theatre Horizon's After School Drama Clubs familiarize students with the fundamentals of acting as they create an original play over the course of eight weeks.

Led by professional theatre teaching artists, Theatre Horizon's classes cultivate the "Connecting C's":

Creativity & Confidence

Communication & Collaboration

Community & Care

The class culminates with a fun final share-out in which students perform the world premiere of their original piece for family and friends.

Interested in bringing a Drama Club to your school?
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- 123 seats
- lobby space included

LOBBY:

- \$100/hr
- 128 capacity
- four bathrooms
- Wi-Fi



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