



THE UNDERGROUND PERFORMING ARTS COLLECTIVE
PRESENTS

BLACK
GIRL
MAGIC

MARCH 13TH - 15TH

Written, Compiled, & Co-Directed by Sharon Cook
Original Music by Roberta Lea
Co-Directed & Choreographed by Jennifer Kelly-Cooper

ZEIDERS AMERICAN DREAM THEATER | 757-499-0317 | THEZ.ORG



Black Girl Magic

Written and compiled by
Sharon Cook

Directed by
Sharon Cook & Jennifer Kelly-Cooper

Choreographer	Musical Director
Jennifer Kelly-Cooper	Kimberely Hemingway

Production Assistant
Dawn Florence

Stage Manager
Leajjah Flemings

Assistant Stage Manager
Allison Aheart

Costume Designer
Sonya Phillips

Lighting Designer
Derrion La'Zachan Hawkins

Sound Designer
Serenity Jones

Zeiders' Production Chair
Akin Ritchie

Producer
The Underground Performing Arts Collective
The Arts Academy at UPAC

ANY VIDEO AND/OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THIS PRODUCTION
IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

This performance is presented in collaboration with
Zeiders American Dream Theater.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES



Happy Women in History Month! We continue to find a great deal of joy and accomplishment as we collaborate and celebrate the evolution of *Black Girl Magic* from workshop to full production.

Black Girl Magic has this gift of impacting everyone who experiences it. Of course, the audience and cast learn about the Black girls and women we feature. Audience members also gain some insight on the perspective of Black women and girls as they navigate their way through this world. *Black Girl Magic* also gives us a moment to reflect, to introspect, to recall our own stories. It is a mirror for those of us who share the identity of Black girl/woman.

Thematically, we wanted to include elements of traditional African American storytelling in this production. Sharing the narrative voice is one of those key elements. Characters seamlessly pass along narrative responsibility and guide the audience and "Sister" through this world. Another element we've continued to include is the transfer of energy and healing through the power of touch. Notice how characters use touch to support and build-up one another. Lastly, circles appear throughout. Circles surround characters to transport them, to cover them in protection and love, and to wrap them in joy and purpose.

This year's production is also a continuation of the overarching theme of Sankofa, an African principle derived from the Akan people of Ghana. Sankofa, which means "retrieve," stresses that one should remember the past to make positive progress in the future. Allow your past to drive you forward in living a life filled with purpose on purpose. Allow your past to drive you forward in experiencing and sharing healing, light, and love that nurtures the spirit of community.

Sharon Cook & Jennifer Kelly-Cooper

Black Girl Magic Directors
UPAC Founder & Co-Director

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

Sister Lament
The Journey Begins
Yoruba Chant: Chant to Oshun
I am
White Supremacy's Circus
The Land of Stereotypes
Here She Comes
The Journey to Self Love
The Doll Test
Kinky, Curly, Fuzzy, Wavy
Ancestral Game Changers
Down by the Riverside
Silver Pistol by Courtney Cook
Harriet Tubman
Sojourner Truth
So, There I Sat: A Requiem in Honor of
Rosa, Claudette, Mary Louise, and
Irene
We Shall Not Be Moved
Carolyn
Black Lives by Nyla Wimbish
Birmingham Girls
I Was Six Years Old
Fannie Lou's Testimony
Journey to Purpose
Auntie Maxine in Subtext
OUR First Lady: Michelle Obama,
Jasmine Crockett, Stacy Abrams,
Kamala Harris
Building Community: Mother Hale
The Journey to Community
Crowns
Church Medley: ***I'm a Soilder, Jesus on
the Main Line, I Get Joy***

ACT II

The Journey Continues
The Birth of Jazz & Blues
We Real Cool By Gwendolyn Brooks
Bessie Smith: ***Gimme A Pigfoot***
Big Mama Thornton: ***Hound Dog***
Billie Holiday: ***Good Morning Heartache***
Ella Fitzgerald: ***Don't Mean a Thing***
Etta James: ***At Last***
Sarah Vaughn: ***Misty***
Opera Singers: Prima Donnas
Summertime
The Journey of Dance and Why
Representation Matter
The Dream
Dancing Queens: Janet Collins, Raven
Wilkinson, Charlotte Nebres,
Jeni Legon, Judith Jamison
Debbie Allen: ***Fame***
Mukanga Sisters, Laurie Ann Gibson
Journey to Literary Enlightenment:
The Hill We Climb, Amanda Gorman
A Raisin in the Sun
Celie's Letter
Ego Trippin, Nikki Giovanni
Remarkable Lady
Hey, Black Girl
Time to Shine

RUN TIME

2 Hours

There will be one 15-minute intermission!

BLACK GIRL MAGIC CAST & CREW

BLACK GIRL MAGIC ENSEMBLE

Acquanetta Spencer, Arnecia Williams, Ashlei Warren, Chonise Thomas
Christiana Cave, Cleo Nicole, Del Sykes-Dinkel, Elena Holeman, Joi Boone
HannahJo Hemingway, KaJohnna Johnson, Keshara Bailey, Kimora Brown
Mahayla Hall, Maya Boone, Missy Taylor, Paris Ward, Starena Anthony
Wyllow Smith, Zia Posey, Zuri Lofton

PRODUCTION TEAM

Sharon Cook, Jennifer Kelly-Cooper, Kimberly Hemingway
Leajjah Flemings, Allison Aheart, Dawn Florence, Sonya Phillips
Lawana Ward, Serenity Jones, Derrion Hawkins

ZEIDERS AMERICAN DREAM THEATER STAFF

Terry Flint, Akin Ritchie, Jessie DePetti, Donna Minson, JC Nigh, Calvin Graves

RUN AND TECH CREW

Lawana Ward, Aleah Ward (Dance Assistant), Calvin Morris

SPECIAL THANKS

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Christy Parks, Traci Colley
J. Stubbs Photography, Rhondeé Caldwell, Carla Turner, Jonathan Wilson

CAST



ACQUANETTA SPENCER | MAMIE PHIPPS, "PUBLIC" MAXINE WATERS

Acquanetta has been on stage since childhood but opted out of the theatre for a career as a Flight Attendant for a major airline. Upon retirement she returned to the stage. Recently she appeared in a production of *Rosie the Riveter and A Raisin in the Sun*. Other credits include *Flyin' West*, *Iola's Letter: The Memphis Crusade of Ida B. Wells*, and *The Earth Remembers*. Now, fasten your seatbelts. Wheels or rather Curtain up. Enjoy the show!



ARNECIA WILLIAMS | SOJOURNER TRUTH, STACEY ABRAMS

Arnecia Williams is thrilled to back for her second run in *BLACK GIRL MAGIC!!* Since then you may have seen her as a Lead in *Chicken & Biscuits* and singing her heart out in LTN's latest *Holiday Cabaret*. More recently, Arnecia has stepped behind the scenes to help foster belonging while creating safe spaces as a Company Care Coordinator and New Board Member at Little Theatre of Norfolk. Coming up you can catch her in Time's Up at Zeider's Fringe Festival next month!



ASHLEI WARREN | KINKY CURLY ADULT

Ashlei is thrilled to make her stage debut as part of the ensemble! A lifelong lover of the arts, she first fell in love with theater in high school and has been inspired by Broadway ever since. Though this is her first play, Ashlei has been dedicated to dance for the past seven years, continuously refining her craft and growing as a performer. She is beyond excited to bring her passion for both theater and dance to the stage and is grateful for this incredible opportunity.



CHONISE THOMAS | QUEEN GUDIT, MICHELLE OBAMA, OPERA SINGER

Collaborative member of UPAC. She was most recently seen as Tiana Ross in *A Soulful Christmas*, Queen Gudit in the 2024 production of *Black Girl Magic*, a featured performer in UPAC's inaugural performance of *A Motown Christmas* and as Marley in LTVB'S production of *Escape to Margaritaville*. Chonise has performed in *Black Girl Magic* since its inception and has watched it grow and expand over time. Her musical background spans from classical voice to R&B, gospel and contemporary. Chonise holds a BA from Emory University (C2013) in Spanish and Music and is licensed in K-12 Vocal/Choral Music and English as a Second Language (ESL). She is currently a secondary ESL teacher in Virginia Beach. She dedicates this performance to the late Vallery Theus, a queen who boldly let her magic and light shine wherever she went.



CHRISTIANA CAVE | RAPPER

A 22 year old with the passion of dancing. Her dancing days started at the age of 5 attending Evelyn Ott School of Dance where she engaged in ballet, tap, and lyrical contemporary. Eventually her drive went into cheerleading as she entered middle school. She competed with an all star team at Tidewater Gymnastics Academy. Years later she found her way back into dancing and started attending classes at Dance Dimensions. She was apart of the 2024 *Black Girl Magic* Cast with a rap solo and multiple dancing roles. She is excited to return to *Black Girl Magic* and embrace the magic of her skills in her movement.



CLEO NICOLE | SISTER

Cleo is a proud graduate of Norfolk State University, holding a B.A. in Theatre and English. Her previous credits include serving as Stage Manager for *A Soulful Christmas* with The Sharon Cook and performing in *Mud Row* (Peninsula Community Theatre), *Chicken & Biscuits* (Little Theatre of Norfolk), and *Henry V* (Virginia Stage Company). When she's not performing, Cleo is a teacher and theatre director at Churchland High School. She enjoys reading, writing screenplays, and any creative play she gets to share with her son. She extends her heartfelt gratitude to God, her family, and friends for their unwavering love and support. Special thanks to Aiden, CHS All Things Theatre, and an honorary acknowledgment to her guardians above. In conclusion, she'd like to say: Love, Light, and Smile.

CAST



DEL SKYES-DINKEL | QUEEN AMANIRENAS, MAXINE WATERS, OPERA SINGER
Trained as a classical singer, Del earned a Master of Music, Voice Performance degree from Binghamton University/SUNY (also earned- BA, [Biology, UVA] and ME, [Education, GWU]). Del has sung several operatic and oratorio soloist roles with organizations nationwide such as: El Paso Opera, Weill Recital Hall (Carnegie Hall), Amato Opera, Regina Opera, Symphony Space. In 2005, Del moved to Germany where she performed as a soloist with orchestras, touring vocal ensembles and appeared on several German TV shows. Since returning to Hampton Roads, Del has performed as a singer and thespian with several local performance arts organizations: UPAC, VMT, VSC, Virginia Opera Association, Williamsburg Choral Guild, Symphoncity, I. Sherman Greene Chorale, PCT, and Williamsburg Players.



ELENA HOLEMAN | KINKY CURLY PRE-TEEN, BIRMINGHAM GIRL (U/S)
Elena is a 12 year old honor student at Western Branch Middle school and a native of Chesapeake, VA. This is her fourth stage play, and her second appearance in *Black Girl Magic*. Elena is known for playing volleyball, dancing, her sense of humor, uplifting personality, and her love for history. She is grateful for the support of her family; as well as, thankful to be a part of such a fascinating show.



HANNAHJOE HEMINGWAY | RUBY BRIDGES DANCER
HannahJoe is a 6th grader at Norview Middle School. This is HannahJoes third time appearing in this production, being cast as Ruby Bridges the first two times. While taking classes at Hurrah Players she was cast as a baby angel in a production of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* and was in numerous productions at her previous school, Ready Academy Christian Learning Center. When Hannah is not performing she enjoys playing video games, reading and watching TV. She is known to be very expressive and is delighted to be performing in the show again!



JOI BOONE | CAROLYN DANCER, RAVEN, DEBBIE ALLEN
A Washington, D.C. native, Joi discovered her passion for dance at an early age, trained at a local dance school for several years laying the foundation for her dance skills that she continued to enhance through many opportunities. She continued honing her craft as a member of dance groups in both high school and college, ultimately earning her degree from Howard University. A devoted artist and educator, Joi now leads the praise dance ministry at St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church in Portsmouth. She also serves as the Academy Coordinator for An Achievable Dream Academy at Lynnhaven, where she is dedicated to inspiring and supporting students. A wife and proud mother of three, Joi cherishes time with her family and friends. Fun fact: In high school, she had the unforgettable experience of auditioning for Debbie Allen for the stage play *Dreams!*



KAJOHNNA JOHNSON | QUEEN NZINGA, ROSA PARKS, MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY, KaJohnna is deeply humbled to bring to life iconic women who have shaped history. KaJohnna would like to extend her heartfelt gratitude to God, who has ignited within her an unrelenting passion to pursue her spiritual gifts. She is also deeply thankful to her two children, who inspire her to continue pushing beyond boundaries and chasing her dreams. KaJohnna's previous credits include Fannie Mae Dove in *Flyin' West* and Squeak in *The Color Purple*. She is blessed to have had the opportunity to play such dynamic roles, and looks forward to continuing to bring powerful stories to life through her craft.



KESHARA BAILEY | QUEEN AMINA, HARRIET TUBMAN, JASMINE CROCKETT
I am Keshara Bailey who has called the 757 area of VA my home for majority of my life. I am a lover of the Most High and the arts. A published author to a poetry book titled, "*Getting Stronger*." A gospel rap artist by the name of KeyBai, who released an EP titled *Young.RICH.&Joyous*. A writer, poet, and actress. I have done stage plays and done extra work for movies as well. Most recently I have wrote a short film turned stage play titled, "*Bruises Ain't ART*." I know that God has so much more in store, but will continue to steward over the many that He has already given me.

CAST



KIMORA BROWN | CLAUDETTE COLVIN (U/S), BIRMINGHAM GIRLS (U/S)
Kimora is a high school student who plays varsity soccer, is an honor student, a hairstylist, a server, and an actor (president of "ATT" all things theater). She enjoys watching plays, and she has performed in several plays at school. She enjoys every activity she engages in and is willing to try new things.



MAHAYLA HALL | BIRMINGHAM GIRLS, CLAUDETTE'S FRIEND #1
Mahayla is thrilled to be making her debut in UPAC! Mahayla has been doing theatre for over 10 years, performing in shows across Hampton Roads. Her most notable performances have been *The Tempest* with Virginia Stage Company, *Cinderella* and *Little Shop of Horrors* with Hurrah Players, and *Bethlehem Inn* with Theatrix Productions. She is also currently in the FFX acting troupe. When Mahayla is not onstage, she's playing video games, reading, or going out. Huge thanks to mom, dad, and the whole *Black Girl Magic* team!! <3



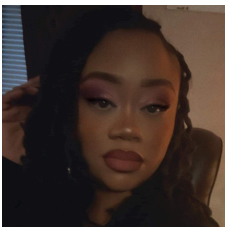
MAYA BOONE | JANET, JUDITH JAMISON
Maya is a junior at Salem High School and a ballet major at the GSA. She began her formal dance training with Ballet Virginia, performing in numerous productions, including *The Nutcracker*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, and *Coppelia*. Maya furthered her training at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Summer Intensive, participating in both the Junior and Professional Divisions in 2023 and 2024. This year, she was also accepted into the Richmond Ballet Summer Intensive. She has participated in the High School Dance Festival, and in *Rhythm Live*; a collaboration between GSA and the Rhythm Project All Stars. In addition to her own training, Maya shares her passion by teaching dance to toddlers at Mile High Kids and serving in the dance and media ministry at her church. Passionate about both movement and storytelling, she aspires to continue dancing while majoring in film in college.



MISSY TAYLOR | PRINCESS YENNENGA, AUNT JEMIMA, FANNIE LOU HAMER
Missy comes to *Black Girl Magic* after having served as Assistant Stage Manager for UPAC's production of *Black Girl Magic* in 2024, and she is honored to have the opportunity to perform in this uplifting and inspiring production! She is a native of Virginia Beach and has been performing since she was three years old; her dream is to travel the world telling stories through theatre. Additional credits include *A Soulful Christmas* at UPAC, *Voodoo Macbeth* at The Z, *The Spirit of Abolition* at The Z (Proteus Festival), and *Little Shop of Horrors* at Shawnee Summer Stock Theatre. Missy would like to express her love to her family and friends who have been nothing but supportive, and gratitude to the production team of *Black Girl Magic* for creating an inclusive and safe space where she has been encouraged and challenged in equal measure to be the very best that she can be. "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him I will trust" - Psalm 91:2



PARIS WARD | LITTLE SISTER, RUDY BRIDGES
Paris is a 9-year-old performer from Norfolk, with a passion for acting, music, and voiceovers. She has appeared on screen in *Over Flow* (2022), *Innovative For Life: Women's Health*, and *Natural Allies* (2021, 2022). You might also recognize her voice from *Worster Words* reading app ads, Georgia Heart Insurance, and political campaign commercials. When she's not acting, Paris is making music! She sings lead vocals and plays bass guitar, electric guitar, keys, and drums, performing live concerts with 716 Studios and Mourning Dove Music Studio. She has been fortunate to train under incredible mentors, including Scott Steele, Sawyer Camden, Celina Crawford, Angela Brown, and Derrick Perkins. Offstage, Paris loves playing the ukulele, drawing, painting, crocheting, and creating content. An honor roll student with a passion for learning and teaching, she's always eager for the next adventure.



STARENA ANTHONY | JENNA MARIE/WONDERLAND SINGER
Starena was born in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba raised in Chesapeake, Va. Married to Deon Anthony. Mother of two beautiful girls. Aspiring singer/ actress. Opened for Levi Little and preformed for No Malice. Starred in plays like *The King and I*, *Annie*, *Amazing Things Happen when you Believe*, *The Color Purple*, *Dreamgirls*, *A Soulful Christmas*, *Pipeline*, and *Jospeh* and the *Amazing Technicolor Coat*. Starena is currently pursuing her acting in film with local directors.

CAST



WYLLOW SMITH | BIRMINGHAM GIRLS, CLAUDETTE COLVIN

Wyllow is honored to return to *Black Girl Magic* under the direction of Sharon Cook and Jennifer Kelly-Cooper. She debuted with *BGM* in 2022, portraying Sarah Collins. Since then, Wyllow has flourished as a passionate theatre artist, with recent credits including VSC's *A Merry Little Christmas Carol* and Hurrah Players' *Cinderella* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. When not on stage, Wyllow is a diligent honors student in the gifted program at her middle school where she performs in the chorus and has been selected to be a part of the 2025 All-District Chorus. Wyllow extends her deepest gratitude to her family and friends for their steadfast love and support, and to her instructors and mentors for their invaluable guidance. As she pursues her dream of performing on Broadway, Wyllow remains committed to honing her craft and honoring the legacies of the stories she is privileged to tell. @its_really_wyllowsmith



ZIA POSEY | BIRMINGHAM GIRLS, CLAUDETTE'S FRIEND, CHARLOTTE

Zia is a professional dancer with over 12 years of experience in various genres. She was invited to dance with Dance Theatre of Harlem, Chocolate Ballerina Company, and Boston Ballet, and Ballet Virginia to name a few. Zia is a certified animal massage therapist, passing the certification as a valedictorian. Zia also won Reserve Champion, Third Place, and First Place ribbons at Equestrian Dressage and Dressage Seat Equitation. Zia is a multiple gold, silver, and bronze medalist at AAU karate competitions and swimming. Zia one day hopes to earn a degree in Biology with a specialization in animal, environmental, and human biology, becoming an herbalist and ethnobotanist that nurtures the natural healing and emotional wellness of Black and Brown Indigenous cultures. Zia lives by Psalm 1:3 "We shall be like trees, planted by the rivers of the living waters, who leaf shall not wither but bears fruit in its season".



ZURI LOFTON | BIRMINGHAM GIRLS, KINKY CURLY TEEN

Zuri Sarai Lofton is a dynamic 7th-grade performer at the Williams School with a passion for the arts that began at the age of six. From her memorable portrayal of Tomika in *School of Rock* to her role in UPAC's *A Motown Christmas*, Zuri has been captivating audiences with her talent. She continually refines her craft through dedicated vocal coaching and proudly performs as a member of the Virginia Children's Chorus from 2019-2024. When she's not on stage, Zuri channels her creativity into writing stories, screenplays, and original songs—all while actively serving her community.

CREATIVE TEAM

SHARON COOK | PRODUCER & DIRECTOR

Performer, director, playwright and theatre instructor in the Hampton Roads community. She is a 30-year veteran educator with Norfolk Public Schools, a Randolph College MFA candidate, with a focus in directing. She holds a bachelor's degree in Broadcast Journalism and TV Production from Kansas State University and a master's degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from The George Washington University. Sharon has been featured in numerous regional and local productions, including, but not limited to: *Grease* (Miss Lynch), *Chicago* (Mama Morton), *Pippin* (Leading Player). Directing credits include: *Black Girl Magic* (also written by Sharon), *The Glory of Gospel* (also written by Sharon), *Refraction of Light* (Zeiders American Dream Theatre), *Chicken & Biscuits* (LTN), *A Raisin in the Sun* (LTVB), and *Escape to Margaritaville* (LTVB). Sharon has also been featured in several television episodes with New Dominion Pictures and industrial films.

JENNIFER KELLY-COOPER | ASSISTANT DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER

Holds a BA from Howard University and MA from Regent. She is a local choreographer, dancer, actress, and director. She has served as choreographer for Sharon Cook's *Black Girl Magic* since its 2020 inception along with productions by Norfolk's Hurrah Players. Currently, she is directing the Region Premier of *Iola's Letter* at the Little Theater of Norfolk. Regional performances include LTN's *Sweet Charity* (Helene) and *Chicago* (Liz/Judge), Hurrah Players: Disney's *The Lion King Experience* (Sarabi), *Once on This Island* (Mama Euralie), *The Wiz* (Aunt Em); Generic Theatre: *Jar the Floor* (Vennie); and Venue on 35th Street: *Refraction of Light* (Nettie). Jennifer was featured in the 2020-21 Super Bowl commercial for Priority Automotive as well as the Cappuccino Bros. television and print campaign *Capp the Night* during the 2017 Oscar/Emmy award season. Jennifer enjoys spending time onstage or in dance classes with her children while her husband runs the Venue on 35th Street.

CREATIVE TEAM

KIMBERLEY HEMINGWAY | MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Kimberley Hemingway was introduced to *Black Girl Magic* through her daughter, who was the original Ruby Bridges in the show. She is currently a music teacher with Norfolk Public Schools. She has previously acted as musical director for productions of Annie Jr and Joseph and the *Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat* at Regent Summer camps in 2007 and played Cinderella's step-mother in their production of *Into the Woods* in 2009. In 2021 she was cast in The Hurrah Players production of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* as one of the church ladies. Kimberley is elated to be using her musical talents in such a meaningful and uplifting show.

LEAJAH FLEMINGS | STAGE MANAGER

With a passion for precision and a love for storytelling, Leajah Flemings has worked as a stage manager for several years now within the Hampton Roads area. Born and raised amidst the vibrant culture of Nashville, TN, Leajah was captivated by the magic of the stage from an early age. She honed her skills at Old Dominion University, where she immersed herself in the intricacies of theatre production. Armed with a solid foundation in stagecraft, technical theatre, and production management, she embarked on her professional journey with unwavering determination. Her previous works include ODU Rep's *Echoes*, The Inheritance Theater Project *Exodus: Homecoming*, Proteus Fest New Plays Favorite: *Boxes of Someday*, Little Theater of Norfolk's *Chicken & Biscuits*, and most recently, the ground-breaking gospel play, *Reflections* by J. L Dean Productions. She is delighted to embark on this exciting opportunity alongside such a talented cast and dedicated production team. She eagerly anticipates the continuation of her journey in exploring the intricacies of theatrical arts within the Hampton Roads community.

ALLISON AHEART | ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Allison is thrilled to join the UPAC team for A Soulful Christmas. Her previous theatrical experience encompasses roles in productions such as *Dreamgirls*, *Never Play with a Woman's Heart*, *Christmas at Shales*, *The Color Purple*, and *More Than Conquerors*. Additionally, she has contributed to past productions in various capacities, including wardrobe, makeup, stage management, and props.

DAWN FLORENCE | ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER

Dawn Florence is a mother, educator, and artistic purveyor hailing from South Brunswick, New Jersey. She discovered her love for the theatre while acting as a Stage-Mom for her eldest daughter over two decades ago. Since then, Dawn has lived many lives and used her artistic and organizational talents both intentionally and passionately; from creating and leading the non-profit organization, Little Sistahs in the Know, Inc., to producing African-American History programs for students and schools across Hampton Roads. Dawn is committed to bringing her community together under the love for all things creative and meaningful, and her dedication to the arts makes her impact on everything she touches undeniable.

SONYA Z. PHILLIPS | COSTUME DESIGNER

Native of Virginia Beach, VA. and a US Army Veteran. She graduated from Old Dominion University with a BS in Biology and International Business. She also completed the Digital Marketing Specialist Certification at Duke University. She is the Co-Owner of Dream Shape Body Contouring Spa located in Norfolk, VA. Sonya has been a cut & sew Fashion Designer for over 30 years. She started her first fashion business, Stretch Couture in 2001 using the basics of sewing that she learned in her 7th grade home economics class and has since studied Couture Fashion Design under Marc Jacobs. In 2022 she founded Sustainabili-T, a lifestyle brand focused on sustainable fashion and self-love. Her work raises awareness about water preservation by reducing plastic pollution as well as gender equal climate action. Her designs are inspired by recycling, reuse, and the work she does in Ghana. Sonya is the Executive Aide to Torgbe Volo Yingor 1st, the Economic Development Chief of Volo, Ghana. She is the visionary behind the Volo Fashion Show and Competition that provides cash prizes to aspiring fashion designers in Africa. Sonya is also an Amazon #1 Best Selling Author and currently has a new project available on Amazon called *The Sexxy Unicorn's Guide to Divine Feminine: Channel Your Billion Dollar Boss Babe Energy*. This guided journal helps female entrepreneurs improve in areas of self-love, self-discovery and money mindset. You can connect with Sonya Z. Phillips on her website www.sonyazphillips.com

SERENITY JONES | SOUND DESIGNER

Serenity has over 20 years of theatre geekery under her belt, and her love of technical theater has only grown in that time. While primarily a sound designer and engineer, she occasionally dabbles in lighting design. She would like to thank her family (both blood and chosen), partners, children, and friends for their continued, unwavering support of her dreams and development in theater. Recent tech credits include: *Indecent* at Generic Theater, *Misery* at Little Theatre of Virginia Beach; and her first dual credit of Sound Designer and Producer for *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* at Little Theatre of Norfolk.

DERRION HAWKINS | LIGHTING DESIGNER

Best known for his abstract vision and concepts, is a designer, performer, and director from Hampton, VA. Recent directing credits include *A Motown Christmas*, *School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls*, *Black Girl Magic* (Asst. Director), *Hairspray*, *The Recommendation*, and *Superior Donuts*. As a performer, Derrion has been featured in *Dreamgirls* (Jimmy Early), *Escape to Margaritaville* (Ensemble/ Jamal u/s), and *The Brothers Size* (Ogun). His Design work has been seen in productions that include *Shrek*, *The Lion King Experience*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Mary Poppins*, *Noises Off!* and *The Importance of being Earnest*. Derrion feels truly blessed at the opportunity to work with such a talented, dedicated cast and artistic team. "God is real, and through Him all things are possible."

THE UNDERGROUND PERFORMING ARTS COLLECTIVE

“Leading the way to freedom & unleashing the power in underrepresented communities through the arts.”

The Underground Performing Arts Collective believes that representation matters! Our mission is to provide shelter and assistance -- a safe, inclusive space -- to performing artists, creatives, and students from underrepresented, diverse populations and abilities in order to transform communities through artistic expression, collaboration, and education. We provide opportunities to those underrepresented and allow for creative exploration, collaboration, audience engagement, community advocacy, and artistic development.

UPAC 2024 - 2025 SEASON

Upcoming show this season!

JUNE 2025

Sankofa Juneteenth Festival with LTN
featuring Having Our Say by Emily Mann

AUGUST 2025

The Glory of Gospel: The Thomas Dorsey Story

Our deepest gratitude to all the collaborators and supporters of The Underground Performing Arts Collective and The Arts Academy at UPAC. Your continuous support since our launch has been invaluable in helping us fulfill our mission of serving artists in the Hampton Roads community. Thank you for believing in our vision, your generosity has made a significant impact on our success.

FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

TRACI M. COLLEY
TIM AND KAREN CROWLEY
THE DAVIDSON FAMILY
DIANNA SWENSON
PATRICK MULLINS
GLENWOOD AND FAYE ADAMS
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CHURCH OF THE GOOD
SHEPHERD, NORFOLK, VA
VOCAL INCLUSION
BY DIANNA SWENSON
BLUE RIBBON RESULTS
ACADEMY
BEAR IN MIND STRATEGIES
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH-
HAMPTON, HAMPTON, VA
STUDIO 360 PERFORMING
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LITTLE THEATRE OF NORFOLK

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TINA GUSTIN
RAY DIMAANO



THE UNDERGROUND PERFORMING ARTS COLLECTIVE


ABOUT US

The Underground Performing Arts Collective consist of performing artists, creatives, and designers signifying underrepresented communities, including the BIPOC, LGBTQ, and Disabled communities. We have come together to create and share art that reflects our experiences and tells our stories, while building, educating, and uplifting our communities.

THE ARTS ACADEMY AT UPAC

The Arts Academy at UPAC 501(c)(3) primary focus is to build community, social awareness, confidence, self-esteem, and self-acceptance through the arts. The Academy provides performance opportunities, workshops, masterclasses, and private lessons in arts education to children, teens, and adults! Our outreach programming consists of building opportunities in underserved communities to provide artistic opportunities to children as well as collaborating with community partners to use the arts as a vehicle that brings awareness.

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