Lorraine Hansberry Theatre showcases the unique life of the Queen of Gospel in *HALIE! The Mahalia Jackson Musical*

**October 10, 2022 | SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

Lorraine Hansberry Theatre presents the world premiere of *HALIE! The Mahalia Jackson Musical*, which celebrates the life of the gospel legend and Civil Rights activist. The musical follows Jackson's life from her humble beginnings in New Orleans to her international acclaim as Queen of Gospel and beyond.

Directed and co-written by Darryl V. Jones, the musical was originally written by Wendy E. Taylor and developed at the Christian Cultural Center in New York. The two continued to workshop the show at California State University, East Bay in 2015.

As she passed in 2019, Taylor entrusted Jones to continue developing the story. Now, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre is honored to uplift the legacies of these two brilliant women.

"This show feels like I'm honoring the legacy of Mahalia Jackson, Wendy Taylor, and all of my female ancestors," Jones says. "Mahalia's story feels synonymous with all of the Black women in my family: my mother, my aunts, my grandmothers — and their ability to overcome insurmountable odds through a strong work ethic and deep, abiding faith."

Guided by a strong religious calling, Jackson's gospel performances connected with audiences across the world while deeply highlighting both the struggles and the joys of African Americans. Combining strong musical performances and a unique look into her life, *HALIE! The Mahalia Jackson Musical* will both educate and enrapture audiences.

"This is a necessary, historical, and empowering story, and it's on us to tell our stories, our historical accounts," says Lorraine Hansberry Theatre Artistic Director Margo Hall. "Black history is slowly being removed from schools, so it's important for Black institutions to make sure our history is not erased. We do this through our art."

The show's cast of four includes golden-toned powerhouse Jeannine Anderson as the titular character with Rodney Earl Jackson Jr., Sam Faustine, and Jones playing a variety of characters from Jackson's life. Anderson returns to her role after performing in the 2015 workshop.

Jones and Anderson presented an excerpt from the musical at this year's 2022 New Roots Theatre Festival, hosted by the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Company (SFBATCO) on October 14 - 16. Lorraine Hansberry Theatre showcased work alongside Crowded Fire Theater, Dimensions Dance Theater, African Arts Academy, and SF Recovery Theatre.

Learn more and get tickets at www.LHTsf.org
MEDIA CONTACT

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Photos: https://bit.ly/3EJpr41

FOR CALENDAR LISTINGS

WHAT: HALIE! The Mahalia Jackson Musical
WHEN: December 2 - December 24, 2022
   Thursdays - Saturdays at 8pm | Sundays at 3pm | December 24 at 3pm
TICKETS: $15 - 50 | www.lhtsf.org
WHERE: Magic Theatre
       2 Marina Blvd
       Landmark Building D, Fort Mason Center
       San Francisco, CA 94123

ARTISTIC TEAM

Written by Wendy E. Taylor & Darryl V. Jones
Directed by Darryl V. Jones
Musical Direction by Andrew Barnes Jamieson
Choreography by Hannefah Hassan-Evans
Featuring Jeannine Anderson, Rodney Earl Jackson Jr., Sam Faustine & Darryl V. Jones

LORRAINE HANSBERRY THEATRE STAFF

Artistic Director | Margo Hall
Managing Director | Stephanie Shoffner
Production Manager | Julius Rea

BIOS

Darryl V. Jones served as the Acting Artistic Director for Lorraine Hansberry Theatre and is Professor Emeritus of Theatre at Cal State East Bay and was adjunct faculty in the American Conservatory Theatre MFA Program. In 2021, Jones directed the world premiere of The Great Kahn for SF Playhouse. In 2020, he directed The Devil’s Music: The Life and Blues of Bessie Smith for Center Rep. In 2019, he directed and co-choreographed Kill Move Paradise for Shotgun Players and Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. Jones directed Detroit 67 and directed and co-choreographed The Royale for the Aurora Theatre Company winning for the latter the Bay Area Critics Circle Award for Entire Production-East Bay as well as being nominated for Outstanding Direction. Other directing credits include the off Broadway and national tour of We Are Your Sisters (AUDELCO Award Outstanding Production), A View From The Bridge
(Washington, DC Theatre Lobby Award Outstanding Direction, Source Theatre Co.) and *Spunk* (Helen Hayes Award Nominee Outstanding Musical, African Continuum Theatre Co.) As a performer, Jones has performed leading roles in *Blues In The Night*, Old Globe; *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor...* Ford’s Theatre and he was TBA nominee for outstanding supporting actor in Theatre Rhino’s 2017 production of *Priscilla*. Jones is a member of AEA and holds a B.M. in Vocal Performance from The Catholic University of America, and an MFA in Directing from Boston University.

**Wendy E. Taylor** was a consummate theatre artist, who may best want to be remembered as a woman who loved and served the Lord. Wendy began her performing career in the Baltimore/Washington area performing in dinner theater productions such as *GODSPELL* and *THE SOUND OF MUSIC*. She was one of the original members of the YOUNG COLUMBIANS TOURING COMPANY performing all over the country with them including Disney World and President Carter’s first White House State Dinner. Wendy was also a featured regular on two PBS teen series *GETTING OVER* and *DIAL A-L-C-O-H-O-L*. Wendy was cast in the original Broadway production of *AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’* and toured with the production as well. She also appeared in films – including *FIRST MONDAY IN OCTOBER*, *SUSPECT*, *9 1/2 WEEKS*, and *MALCOLM X*. In the early 2000s she turned her attention to honoring one of her heroines, Mahalia Jackson. She wrote *HALIE* in New York assisted by Broadway performers, directors, and musical artists. Wendy, like Mahalia, had a wide circle of friends to call on. The first workshop of *HALIE* was done at the Christian Cultural Center, in Brooklyn, New York. The next workshop was produced and directed by her longtime friend Darryl V. Jones at Cal State East Bay. Earlier Taylor and Jones had written several musical revues together and co-directed a production of *AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’* for Toby’s Dinner Theatre. In addition to her work in the theatre, Wendy majored in African American Studies at the University of Maryland and later in life earned her bachelor’s in theology. In addition, she served in the Music Ministry of Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, New York.

In the fall of 2019, Wendy E. Taylor went back home to be with God. But she left us not just one inspirational story of a Black woman led by her faith and devotion to God, but the story of two such women: Mahalia and Wendy!

**Jeannine Anderson**, a Bay Area native is a classically trained Soprano. During her career in Opera, Jeannine has performed roles across the world in staged productions of *La Boheme*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *Suor Angelica*, *The Magic Flute*, *Dark River*, *Post Pardon*, and most recently, *Euridice*, with Berkeley Playhouse. When not onstage Jeannine has spent her time as an educator to young students in music, but also her second love, English and Creative Writing. Jeannine’s most recent career adventures have taken her into Social Work with California’s Homeless Population.

**Rodney Earl Jackson Jr.** is the Artistic Director & Co-Founder of the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre (SFBATCO). He made his Broadway debut in *The Book of Mormon* recently seen at Ragtime at TheatreWorksSV & Broadway SF’s Golden Gate Theater in *A Christmas Carol*, he was also seen at American Conservatory Theatre & Arena Stage in the co-produced production of *Toni Stone* and traveled North America in the first national tour of *Motown: The Musical*. A San Francisco native who built his love and foundation for art and theatre in public city organizations such as SFartsEd, San
Francisco Recreation and Park’s Young People’s Teen Musical Theater Company, and the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts’ where he graduated from the theatre department. He holds a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University’s School of Drama. Other theatre credits: An Old Vic Production of A Christmas Carol, Berkeley Repertory Ain’t Too Proud: the life and times of the Temptations, San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Company I, Too, Sing America. FB: /rodneyjacksonjr IG: @rodneyearlacksonjr

Andrew Barnes Jamieson is a pianist, composer, and arranger, based in Oakland, California. While earning his Bachelor’s of Music in composition at Northwestern University’s School of Music, his most formative experience came during his time off campus as a pianist and organist with Black congregations in the Chicago area, where he developed a close relationship with African American worship and sacred music traditions. Since graduating from Mills College with an MA in composition, he has been active in faith communities and experimental music ensembles in the Bay Area, aiming to deconstruct and challenge white supremacy and injustice in musical and faith systems, and celebrate, and remain accountable to, the Black gospel music tradition, and the communities and musicians it represents, especially as a white person confronting the ways he benefits from systems that misappropriate, marginalize, or exploit the tradition. Andrew wrote and produced Heaven Down Here, his 2014 chamber opera about Jonestown and Peoples Temple, and Jim Jones’s abuse of a majority Black community as a white man. Andrew also founded the avant-gospel Trouble Ensemble, performed over 800 of #1000improvisations (1000 planned daily improvisational keyboard livestreams since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic), and collaborates on duo performances with baritone, activist, and visionary Darnell Ishmel. He serves as music director for community worship at Pacific School of Religion, and as a keyboardist, in collaboration with Charlene Moore and Rusty Watson, at Bishop Yvette Flunder’s City of Refuge United Church of Christ in Oakland.

Sam Faustine, a San Francisco born-and-raised musician, performs a wide-variety of genres ranging from Baroque Opera to Modern Musical Theatre. Recently, he was a member of the first National Tour of Broadway’s A Christmas Carol and made his third appearance as a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony performing as the Roasted Swan in Carmina Burana. Sam has appeared in Europe, China, and across the US in roles such as Anthony in Sweeney Todd, Tony in West Side Story, Seymour in Little Shop of Horrors, Curly in Oklahoma, and Candide in Candide. In addition to his staged-performance career, Sam sings with many Sacred Music and Choral ensembles across the country, including Byrd Ensemble, Gaude, Volti and Cappella SF. When not performing classical music, Sam plays in a QUEEN cover band impersonating Freddie Mercury. @samfaustinesf [www.samfaustine.com]

Born in San Francisco California and raised in Oakland, Hannefah Hassan-Evans received her AA Degree in dance from Laney College (1997) & BA Degree in Dance & Theater Arts from California State University East Bay (2008). She started her career in 1993 when she worked with poets, artist, directors, musicians, dancers & choreographers like; Linda Johnson, Leon Jackson, Evelyn Thomas, Gerald Wright, Soyinka Rahim, Patricia Turner, Lynn Coles, Robert Johnson, Dwayne Wiggins, Antoine Olivier, Mahealani Uchiyama and many more. She has danced professionally all over the Bay Area and abroad, performing African Haitian, West African, Modern, Jazz, Hip-Hop, Lyrical, Improvisation, Afro-Modern,
Praise/Spiritual & Tap Dance. As a member of "Our Thang" Performing Arts Company for 6 1/2 years, Hannefah worked as a Professional (Principle) Dancer & Assistant Choreographer, headed By Artistic Director Soyinka Rahim & Theatrical Director Denise Brown. She has performed in numerous shows & Productions such as; "A Benefit for Haiti Relief" @ The Historic Sweets Ballroom, "A Gala Benefit with The African & African American Performing Arts Coalition @ ODC SF, " Dreamgirls" @ The Black Repertory in Berkeley (cast in the lead role as Effie White), "Bubblin Brown Sugar" @ Kimball's East (where she was a featured dancer in a trio), "Un Ballo in Maschera" @ The San Francisco Golden Gate Opera, The world premier of "Dark River" the story of Fannie Lou Hamer (where she danced the roll of Emmet Till) "Da Chitlin Circuit Revue Live 6" "Black Steps in The Desert Sands" @ The African American Arts & Culture complex/ Buriel Clay Theater & she also appeared in an episode of HBO's "Real Sex" as a Lyrical dancer & singer with Author, poet & AIDS activist Jessica Holter. For the past 20 years she has worked as a Dance Teacher, Theater Arts Instructor & Mentor, for students K-12 in the Cities of Oakland, Berkeley, Albany & Richmond within the Unified School Districts, Parks & Recreation Youth Departments & After-School programs. She has worked as a Dance Instructor & Choreographer for The East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, Albany YMCA, The City of Oaklands "Oakland Summer Theater, Saint Mary's College High School &The Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG) @ UC Berkeley. For the past 13 years (and currently) she has been a Dance & Theater Arts Instructor, and Drumming Teacher for The City of Oaklands Parks & Recreation Youth program @ Studio One Arts Center & Camp Feather River.