FINDING FREEDOM: THE JOURNEY OF ROBERT SMALLS

STORY BY TERALYN REITER
DIRECTED BY JAMEEKA D. HOLLOWAY

October 6-7, 2023
ROBERT SMALLS
BIOGRAPHY

By Damon L Fordham

Robert Smalls was born in slavery in Beaufort, SC in 1839 to Lydia Smalls and an unknown father. Early in his life as an enslaved boy, his mother instilled a sense of awareness and pride and he learned by listening to the conversations of others. He would hear of the heroics of the great abolitionist Frederick Douglass and this inspired him to one day seek his own freedom and that of his people.

As a young man, he arrived in Charleston SC to work for a cousin of his owner. Association and exposure to free and educated Blacks, as well as Black tradesmen, encouraged him to be an entrepreneur. He would eventually purchase the freedom of his wife Hannah. During the Confederacy, he served as a pilot for the Confederate ship The Planter. His desire for freedom led him to stow away some other enslaved friends and family members aboard The Planter, and on May 13, 1862, he secretly sailed them past Confederate guards and surrendered them to the Union Navy.

This heroic endeavor made Smalls into a national celebrity. He met with President Abraham Lincoln, he advocated for Black Americans being permitted to serve in the armed forces of The United States. This led to Smalls serving with both the United States Navy and Army for 17 battles, including one at Fort Sumter in 1863 and supporting General William T. Sherman’s troops in Savannah in 1864. It was around this time that Smalls hired tutors to teach him to read and write, and after the surrender of the Confederacy, Smalls triumphantly returned to Charleston on The Planter in 1865.

Smalls’ activities continued in the Reconstruction era. During the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1868, Smalls made a proposal that led to the establishment of the public school system of South Carolina. While serving in the House of Representatives, he boldly spoke before Congress regarding racial violence in his State, and occasionally escaped hostile mobs. After the fall of Reconstruction in 1877, Smalls was arrested briefly on trumped up charges designed to remove him and other Black elected officials. He later joined five other Black leaders at the statehouse in attempting to stop South Carolina from enacting segregation laws. In spite of their loss in this latter effort, the heroism of Smalls continues to inspire long after his death in 1915.
When you require impeccable service and comfortable sophistication, join us at The Establishment in historic downtown Charleston. The Establishment serves fresh, sustainable seafood from the waters surrounding Charleston alongside an award-winning wine cellar and a formidable bourbon list.
Thank you for joining us for the world premiere of Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls. We are so excited to share with you the Gaillard’s first ever self-produced and commissioned theater work. Featuring an all southern cast and creative team, we are so grateful to have had the opportunity to work along side the incredible director JaMeeka D. Holloway, script collaborators and talented creative team to bring to the stage the story of South Carolina and American hero Robert Smalls. Smalls dedicated his life to fighting for equality, and his story and contributions to American and Charleston history remain largely underrecognized, something we hope to change with this performance.

The Gaillard not only brings premier performing arts to the Lowcountry, we strive to explore the vast and complex history of Charleston by using the arts and entertainment to bridge divides and build dialogue, and to uplift underrecognized historical figures and their stories.

While I believe everyone will love this performance, I am particularly excited that Finding Freedom will introduce Robert Smalls to thousands of students from across the Lowcountry, offering a role model and inspiration for them to find their own voices and create their own ways to make a difference within their communities.

I hope you will add your voice to the conversation that this play will undoubtedly generate. And please return for more performances that honor histories of the South this season, including Step Afrika!’s Drumfolk in November, which tells the story of the communicative power of drums through the history of the South Carolina Stono Rebellion of 1739, or for the Colour of Music Festival in February, which will offer never-before-heard orchestrations from one of Charleston’s foremost composers who had a hand in shaping classical music, Edmund Thornton Jenkins.

As always, thank you for your support of the Charleston Gaillard Center and for being an active part of our mission to inspire, educate, engage, and create exceptional artistic experiences. We hope you enjoy the performance.

Sincerely,

Lissa Frenkel
President and CEO
Charleston Gaillard Center
A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

“To acknowledge our ancestors means we are aware that we did not make ourselves; that the line stretches all the way back, perhaps to God; or to gods... We remember them because it’s an easy thing to forget: that we’re not the first to suffer, rebel, fight, love, and die. The grace with which we embrace life, in spite of the pain, the sorrow, is always a measure of what has gone before.” — Alice Walker

These words have been my North Star as we’ve navigated the tides of mounting a theatrical production. In the midst of turbulent winds and sudden twists in the creative process, they have anchored and continue to steady me, reminding me this is more than just “a play”; it is a tribute to our ancestors and forebears. Those who walked these paths before us, whose silent but determined whispers encourage us and entrust us to handle their memories with care and creativity, rekindling their essence in a new light.

Tonight, we pay vibrant homage to the resilient spirit of the Lowcountry embodied in the soul of Robert Smalls.

Heartfelt gratitude to the Gaillard and historic city of Charleston for embracing me with open arms. With this note, I embrace you aboard this creative journey as we collectively Remember a Hero who charted a course through life that few could imagine. While Robert Smalls is celebrated for his audacious success in commandeering, piloting, and delivering the Planter, his commitment to his community, family, and political advocacy may be his most remarkable achievements. The very essence of a legend, an icon.

I remain awestruck & humbled by the opportunity to delve into Robert Smalls’ history and to shape his story for the stage. I want to acknowledge all the various storytellers who came together to ensure we bring this work to life responsibly. For the generosity of time, imagination and skill, experiential wisdoms and cultural expertise, I am forever grateful.

In collaboration with this world-class team of designers, extraordinary technicians and performers, our goal has been to craft a respectful, authentic, yet imaginative, and revitalizing portrayal of this history. We aim to reflect and celebrate the beauty of Robert’s inquisitive, insightful, adaptable, and unwavering spirit, nurtured by the richness of his Gullah roots, heritage, and upbringing in the unique cultures of the South Carolina Lowcountry.

As a North Carolina-raised granddaughter of South Carolina, I hope to honor this legacy and make you proud.

Thanks, thanks and ever thanks for sharing in the journey.
I believe the ancestors smile as Robert Smalls’ story continues to emerge on the lips of folks across the country.
The branches on the oak trees in Beaufort sway with adoration.
The waves of the Charleston Harbor leap in remembrance.

Welcome to our interpretation of Robert Smalls’ extraordinary life. Let’s be inspired together.

JaMeeka D. Holloway
Thank You …

to Jonathan Green for allowing the Finding Freedom team to use some of your incredible artwork as both an inspiration and palette for the overall design of the show. We hope that audience members will recognize many familiar images throughout the production. Many thanks also go to Kim Long for her guidance and support.

The Gaillard Center is so grateful for the collaborative process created by our Director JaMeeka D. Holloway in the creation of this production. This is especially evident in the sophisticated and communal process of developing the script for the show that we hope reflects both the major elements of this important historical figure as well as a respect for the Gullah communities of the sea islands.

Special thanks to Michael Mooore and the family of Robert Smalls, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, Southern Equity Collective, Reconstruction Era National Historic Park, Penn Center, Nella Barkley and the Gaillard Center Board of Directors Education Committee, St. Johannes Church, Historic Charleston Bed and Breakfast, Queen Street Playhouse, Storytree Theatre, Tiffany Silverman and The Citadel Fine Arts Program and 20 South Battery.
LETTER FROM
CHARLTON
SINGLETON

From the moment that I was asked to be involved to the last detail prior to opening, this project has been fascinating, educational, enlightening, and inspiring. As Artist-in-Residence Emeritus at the Gaillard Center, I have had the pleasure of working with our educational team on several outreach programs and projects. Being asked to be the Music Director for Finding Freedom was an easy “Yes” for me.

The music in our area during this historical time is from the Gullah Tradition. Songs that became known to the rest of the world as Spirituals, Hymns, Children’s Games were everyday offerings. Having the ability to draw from and reimagine some of the songs from that beautiful catalog, as well as composing a few other musical inserts has been wonderful.

I was also particularly excited to work alongside JaMeeka D. Holloway, who not only joined the Gaillard Center for this production, but also will serve as the new Artist-in-Residence for the 2023-2024 season, a role that I hold close to my heart. Each member of the creative team and cast has brought incredible enthusiasm for the culture and the history presented in this brand-new work.

Our community has always been filled with fascinating history, with fascinating people, doing fascinating things. I would especially like to acknowledge the Gaillard Center and their commitment to presenting these amazing stories from right here in our backyard that have significant merit and historical relevance to our society.

Sincerely,

Charlton Singleton
Artist-in-Residence Emeritus & Finding Freedom Music Director
JAMEEKA D. HOLLOWAY, AWARD-WINNING DIRECTOR OF FINDING FREEDOM: THE JOURNEY OF ROBERT SMALLS, JOINS THE CHARLESTON GAILLARD CENTER’S EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAM AS OUR NEW ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE!

Our artist-in-residence program, one of the cornerstones of the Gaillard Center, connects students with artists to inspire our next generation and deepen students’ understanding of the process of creating work.

Throughout the year, JaMeeka will teach an inaugural residency featuring the works of Charleston’s own first African American studio photographer, Michael Francis Blake and his 1910-1934 “Portraits of Members” series and workshops based on her original work “Blk Girls Luv the Bard”. Recently awarded the New York Stage and Film Pfaelzer Award, JaMeeka brings incredible knowledge and experience to our Lowcountry students.

As the director of Finding Freedom, JaMeeka has also welcomed students to attend dress rehearsals and masterclasses with the creative team. “In Finding Freedom, we get to illuminate this underappreciated history and center Robert Smalls’ enormous feats and the trajectory of his life in rich and compelling ways,” said JaMeeka D. Holloway. “The work is being realized by a group of amazing collaborators from the South who can authenticate the Southern lived experience. Students and families will immediately recognize the sights, sounds, and feel of the Lowcountry and Smalls’ Gullah heritage, even though this story began more than 150 years ago.”
RAISING THE VOLUME
with Marcus Amaker & Charlton Singleton

The Charleston Gaillard Center presents Raising the Volume, a conversation on music, race, art, activism, and community, curated by Artists-in-Residence Marcus Amaker and Charlton Singleton. In Raising the Volume, Charleston’s Poet Laureate Amaker and Grammy Award winner Singleton explore issues through open, honest dialogue. The series begins with Amaker and Singleton examining their own experiences with racism as artists. Each subsequent conversation is led by either Amaker or Singleton having in-depth conversations with local Black leaders, educators, business owners, and artists.

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FINDING FREEDOM: THE JOURNEY OF ROBERT SMALLS
EDUCATIONAL & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Charleston Gaillard Center’s reach extends well beyond its campus, providing students across South Carolina’s Lowcountry with the skills, tools, and space to tell their own authentic stories, and teachers with the resources to integrate the arts into the classroom. Through our holistic approach to performing arts education, our nonprofit arts center offers barrier-free access to performances, creative programs and resources focused on developing social and discipline-specific skills and fostering a love for the arts.

Through the program Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls, we have:

- Presented 4 educational performances, reaching 6,000 students
- Created a lesson plan for grades 2-12
- Conducted in-school workshops
- Hosted 5 masterclasses with the Robert Smalls creative team
- Held 2 open dress rehearsals for students
- Welcomed community members to a free panel on Robert Smalls’ contributions to South Carolina
- Produced 2 episodes for our Raising the Volume video series, as well as contributed content to our Setting the Stage video series

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Gaillard Center’s Education & Community program.
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CHARLESTON GAILLARD CENTER PRESENTS

FINDING FREEDOM: THE JOURNEY OF ROBERT SMALLS

Story by Teralyn Reiter

Script developed by JaMeeka D. Holloway, Celeste Jennings, Caroline Randall Williams, and Teralyn Reiter

Dr. Jessica Berry: Dialect Coach and Gullah Transcriptions

Tristan André Parks
Movement Director

MeJah Balams
Scenic Design

Kathy A. Perkins
Lighting Design

Preston Dunnavent
Sound Design

Charlton Singleton
Music Director

Celeste Jennings
Costume Design

Joseph Amodei
Media Design

Laura Lever
Properties

Becca Eddins
Production Stage Manager

Kailey Jones
Assistant Stage Manager

Damon Fordham
Historical Dramaturgy

Jacqueline E. Lawton
Production EDI Facilitator

Directed by
JaMeeka D. Holloway

Matthew Tapp
Assistant Media Design

Molly Belle
Costume Assistant

Trey Brazeal
Assistant Lighting Design

Brandon Austin
Costume Assistant

Beacon Theatrical, Production Management
TTS Studios, Scenic Construction
FINDING FREEDOM CAST

Joshua Suiter
"Smalls", Young Adult Robert

R.W. Smith
Captain Raeyla, Ben Tillman +

Aydan Gadsden
Robert Smalls, Younger

John Smalls
Jones +

Keith Alston
Robert Smalls, Older

Sadia Matthews
Morrison +

Michele Powe
Lydia

Ronnie Walker
Gourdine +

Zania Cummings
Hannah

Shanna Hastie
Gibbes +
The Cast

ROBERT SMALLS, YOUNGER.................................................................Aydan Gadsden
“SMALLS”, YOUNG ADULT ROBERT .........................................................Joshua Suiter
ROBERT SMALLS, OLDER..............................................................................Keith Alston
LYDIA ................................................................................................................Michele Powe
HANNAH.......................................................................................................Zania Cummings
JONES +.............................................................................................................John Smalls
GIBBES +.........................................................................................................Shanna Hastie
GOURDINE + ................................................................................................Ronnie Walker
MORRISON + ................................................................................................Sadia Matthews
CAPTAIN RAEYLA, BEN TILLMAN +...........................................................R.W. Smith

Movement Captain: Ronnie Walker  Music Captain: John Smalls

Settings

Beaufort, SC
Ashdale Plantation, Lady Isle
Charleston Harbor
The South Carolina Constitutional Convention 1868 and 1895

CONTENT ADVISORY STATEMENT:
This performance contains the following elements that may affect some audience members:

Special Effects: This production incorporates the use of haze, moving lights, and simulated war explosions, which may create visual and auditory effects that could be intense for some viewers.


Historical Context: The production may feature scenes or dialogue that depict historical events related to war and racial discrimination. These portrayals are intended to reflect the realities of the time period.

We encourage audience members to be mindful of their own comfort levels and sensitivities. Our aim is to provide an authentic and thought-provoking theatrical experience, and we are committed to engaging with these important themes responsibly and respectfully.
Joshua Suiter is a 23 year old artist from Durham, NC who now resides in Atlanta, GA. He earned his B.F.A in Professional Theatre (Acting) from the illustrious North Carolina A&T State University. He is a well rounded performer with roles such as Tinman (The Wiz), Puck (A Midsummer Night’s Dream), and Lead Vocalist/Ensemble (Ain’t Misbehavin) under his belt. He is beginning his film career and has already starred in Bigger Than Me, a short film produced by Beats by Dre as Malik Johnson, football sensation. Fun fact: Joshua was a 2021 Trophy Presenter at the 94th Academy Awards. Joshua’s favorite bible verse is Jeremiah 29:11. God Bless and enjoy the show!

Aydan Gadsden, who plays the role of young Robert, is extremely proud to be joining the cast in his first role. Aydan was born in North Charleston, SC, where he now lives with his family. His favorite subjects are English and Algebra. Aydan is best known for his love of singing, gaming and playing basketball. Aydan would like to thank his mom, grandparents, family and friends for their love and support. He also thanks director JaMeeka D. Holloway for the opportunity to pursue his dreams.

Keith Alston is a Charleston Native who made his stage debut playing Boy Willie in The Piano Lessons for the Flowertown theatre Company. He has since enjoyed working with many of the theatre company’s in Charleston. Some of his favorite productions are One Monkey Don’t stop no show, Raisin in the Sun, Driving Miss Daisy, 5 guys named Mo’, The Paul Lawrence Dunbar Story, and Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom. More recently he has performed in Clyde’s and Septima both for Pure Theatre. He is excited to be a part of this wonderful cast and crew.

Michele Powe is a well-known stage and film actress in the Charleston, SC and surrounding areas. She has appeared in over 25 plays locally and regionally as well as TV/Film roles. These productions include, Septima, The Amen Corner, Intimate Apparel, The Exonerated, For Colored Girls who have considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf. Her most challenging role was breathing life into the complex woman, Ma Rainey, in Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom. In TV/Film, Michele can be seen in various commercials, episodes of Mr. Mercedes, The Inspectors, Paws P.I, Shots Fired and Reckless.

Michele contributes her love of the Arts to her parents and watching Cicely Tyson in the Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. She knew at an early age that she wanted to be an actress. Her love of music comes from her parents filling the house with the blues, rock n roll and R&B at their house parties or whenever the mood hit them.

Michele is excited to be a part of this amazing cast and crew. She gives thanks to her Creator, family and friends who rearrange schedules to make her performances. She thanks her late parents, James and Ruby Powe for always being supportive of her creativity. Michele sends a special thank you to her sister, Lucette Powe, who always moved mountains to make the many opening nights. Michele’s motto is: “All things can be achieved when you put your faith in action. Believe in yourself!”

Zania Cummings is extremely proud to be a part of this production right here in her beloved city of Charleston! She received her classical training at The American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City becoming a member of The Academy Company upon graduating. While studying in New York she rediscovered her love of poetry and has been performing as a spoken word artist in NYC, Charleston and worldwide ever since, currently working on her first book. Zania believes moving in her purpose means serving her community by giving a voice to the untold stories of her ancestors, as well as creating safe spaces for bodies of color, ESPECIALLY here in Charleston. She recently co-curated “3000 Black + Beyond” Charleston's very first afro-futurist art exhibition series, one of many projects Zania is bringing to the city. A poet, yoga teacher
and art curator, Zania loves finding the intersectionality and balance in multiple mediums of Art. Theater, however, will forever and always be her ultimate Love.

**R.W. Smith** has performed onstage in *Hangmen, Ben Butler, True West, Death of a Salesman, Sweat, American Buffalo, The Pillowman, Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train* and much more. He has also appeared on film and screen in *Army Wives, Vampire Resurrection*, *Cold Soldiers* and *NY International Film Festival* award-winning *Silent Scream*.

**John Small** is a stage and screen actor and singer who has appeared in over twenty plays and musicals in Charleston and the surrounding area; films *When All Hell Breaks Loose, Letters to Rolando* and *The Notebook*; television *Army Wives*, and *Porgy and Bess* documentary on PBS. John also sings full time with Ann Caldwell and the Magnolia Singers, an acapella group that performs spirituals, Gullah poetry, and stories indigenous to the Lowcountry all year long.

**Sadia Matthews** has performed onstage this year in *Ship* with The Void Theatre Company and *Antigone* for The Gibbes Museum. 2023 has been a year of expansion and growth and they are so very grateful with the opportunity to work with the Gaillard team and this cast. Marrying their love of theatre and Black culture is a dream come true and you can catch her next in *Cadillac Crew* with The Footlight Players.

**Ronnie Walker** is excited to be making his debut in *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls*. Ronnie, a graduate with a BFA in Acting from Columbus State University and from Atlanta, Georgia, is an actor, dancer, singer and artist who relocated to Charleston in order to pursue his dreams! When Ronnie is not on stage, you can find him performing in Charleston as the Drag Entertainer Nova Cane O’Bishop! Ronnie’s other credits include *Once on this Island* (Ensemble) and *Kinky Boots* (Angel) with Charleston Stage! *R+J Theory* (Nurse), *Lucky Stiff* (Emcee), *1984* (Parsons), *Evil Dead* (Moose), *Legally Blonde* (Carlos), *Cinderella* (Ensemble) and *Spamalot* (Ensemble). Ronnie is grateful for his friends and family for their love and support and would like to thank all those involved in *Finding Freedom* for making this the most rewarding experience of his life. To stay in touch, you can find Ronnie on Instagram @ronw2_/@novacaneobishop.

Enjoy the show!

**Shanna Hastie** is a native of Sumter, SC and extremely proud to be a cast member with other phenomenal actors and fellow artists in the production of *Finding Freedom, The Journey of Robert Smalls*. While Shanna has spent over 20 years in the Social Work profession building partnerships with organizations to support the needs of vulnerable populations and facilitate health equity initiatives across the continuum of care on both local and national levels, her true passion is being on stage! She believes there is so much power in being able to tell stories that are engaging and empowering to both the artist and the audience. Shanna believes that true artistry can be a catalyst for change. Her passion has led her to develop stage performances that bridge the gap between discussing challenging topics, such as HIV/AIDS and theatre, to tell the stories of vulnerable populations in a safe space.

Shanna Hastie now resides in the Charleston, SC area. She desires to be a resounding voice that advocates for more theater, film and tv productions to develop projects in the Lowcountry and surrounding areas.

She would like to thank all the family and friends who have supported her on her endeavors of following her dreams of theater. Shanna would like to send a special thank you to her late father Woodrow Hastie Jr., her first cheerleader! He always said she could do anything she set her mind to. Shanna motto is: It’s never too late to follow your dreams.
JaMeeka D. Holloway is an artist; freelance director and producer based in Durham, North Carolina, recognized as the 2023-‘24 Pfalzer Award Recipient by New York Stage and Film and as Artist In Residence at the Charleston Gaillard Center for ’23-’24. Her creative work has garnered her the 2018 Indy Arts Award and in 2019, she received a special distinction from the African American Heritage Commission and Governor Roy Cooper for her significant impact on North Carolina’s thriving arts and culture landscape. Holloway’s dedication to her craft has also been supported by grants from the Manbites Dog Theater Fund and the Ella Fountain Pratt Emerging Artists program.

She’s a self-producing artists, currently the creative force behind BLK GIRLS LUV THE BARD, a virtual theater platform reimagining Shakespeare’s works through the perspectives of Black and POC women and femme-identifying artists for which she received grants from the NC Arts Council and the National BOLD Women’s Theatre Circle in 2021-22.

An alumni of The Lark Play Development Center's apprenticeship program, she has been Assistant Director at The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and an associate director at Playmakers Repertory, and LaMAMA Experimental Theatre Club in New York.

She was the 2021-22 ROE GREEN Director in Residence at Kent State University, her directing credits spanning various stages, including: Northern Stage, Shakespeare in Detroit, Classic Stage, Durham Performing Arts Center, Manbites Dog, The Department of Theatre at Dartmouth, Tantrum Theatre at Ohio University, Duke Performances and Dukes’ University’s Department of Theatre Studies, the Professional Actors Program at UNC-Chapel Hill, the National Black Theatre Festival, and The National Women’s Theatre Fest. JaMeeka is a contributor in the 2018 Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance. Her ability to pursue her passion wouldn’t be possible without the unwavering support and belief of her daughter, Allyson, her mother and family. To explore more about her work, check out www.jdhdirectedit.com.

Teralyn Reiter earned her MFA in Acting from the University of Montana. She is an actor, a Teaching Artist, a director, a playwright, and a mom. Teralyn has traveled throughout the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia bringing theatre performances and education to students. In 2010 she developed and implemented a theatre program in Daegu, SK teaching students English while writing and performing their own play. In 2011, Teralyn founded Storytree Theatre with the mission to bring professional theatre education and performances into schools throughout Charleston, SC. She has had the privilege to develop content for the Kennedy Center’s Teaching Artist Presents series, she earned a Fellowship from the Wolf Trap Institute, and she developed original online programming for the Educational Theatre Association.

She created Theatreteacher.org, an online resource for teachers who are interested in arts-integrated lessons. When she is not working as a Teaching Artist, Teralyn is performing, hanging with her kiddo, and writing and producing original plays about historical figures she finds intriguing. Her most recent play, The Only Woman in the Room, premiered in July 2022 in Damariscotta, ME. It told the story of the first female Cabinet Member, Frances Perkins, and her work on the Social Security Act of 1935. She currently lives in Damariscotta, ME where she continues to develop original programming for schools throughout the United States, write plays, and perform.

Charlton Singleton A native of Awendaw, SC, Charlton Singleton began his musical studies at the age of three on the piano. He would then go on to study the organ, violin, cello, and the trumpet throughout elementary, middle, and high school. In 1994, he received a Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance from South Carolina State University. Since that time, he has taught music at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as being an adjunct faculty member at the College of Charleston. In 2008 he co-founded and became the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Charleston Jazz Orchestra; an 18-piece jazz ensemble of some of the finest professional
musicians in the Southeast and the resident big band in Charleston, SC. Mr. Singleton is also the organist and choir director at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Charleston, SC. In November of 2016 he was named the inaugural Artist in Residence at the recently renovated Gaillard Center in downtown Charleston. He remained in this position until July 2019; at that point he was named Artist in Residence Emeritus. In this position he continues to lead the Summer Youth Jazz Orchestra Camp as well as lead the “Jazz Through the Ages” assembly, which attracts a capacity crowd of students at the Gaillard Center.

As a performer, Charlton leads his own ensembles that vary in size and style. He has performed in France, Great Britain, Scotland, Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, The Netherlands, as well as many great cities throughout the United States. He is a founding member of an ensemble called Ranky Tanky. The group is a quintet that interprets the sounds of Gullah from the Southeast Coast of the United States. In 2017 Ranky Tanky reached the top of the Billboard, iTunes, and Amazon Contemporary Jazz charts with their self-titled debut recording. In 2019 they accomplished the same feat with the release of their sophomore effort, “Good Time”, which recently won the 2019 Grammy Award for “Best Regional Roots Album”. In 2022 the band's live recorded set at the prestigious New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival was nominated for and won the Grammy Award in the same category. In 2021 he was the recipient of the SC Governor’s Award, which honors arts organizations, patrons, artists, members of the business community, and government entities who maximize their roles as innovators, supporters, and advocates for the arts. It is the highest honor for the arts in the state of South Carolina.

In addition to performing, he is in demand as a speaker, clinician, composer, and arranger. He has also shared the stage with and/or worked with some of the most talented entertainers in the world, including Bobby McFerrin, Ruby Dee, Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton, Houston Person, Darius Rucker, Fred Wesley, and Cyrus Chestnut to name a few. Outside of music and entertainment, he, and his wife, MaryJo, are the proud parents of Shalamar and D’Marcus and new grandparents to Sophia Rose. They are also parents to their FIVE pets...Jango, MoJo, Dakota, Pumpkin, and Ginger.

Celeste Jennings is a costume designer and playwright. She’s currently an MFA candidate at NYU and is expected to graduate in spring 2023. She’s a child of southern drawl, of iced tea with just enough lemon, family reunions that last late into hot summer nights, round tables of relatives reminiscing the good ole days, and the sounds of their comforting laughter. She uses the language of her family to quilt love songs for Black people and invites them to stop and rest awhile as they refamiliarize themselves with the poetic diction of home. She loves to incorporate her unique perspective into her work and is particularly motivated to uplift and protect Black women as a writer and designer. Her dream projects evoke the past, present, and future and remind Black women that they are loved, that they’re soft, powerful, capable of resting, deserving of liberation, and that they are everything–that they always have been. Most recently, her play Bov Water was produced at Northern Stage, and she developed her play, Contentious Woman, with PlayCo. Selected work includes Citrus (produced at Northern Stage), and Processing. Lately she collaborated with JAG in a designer workshop for Urinetown and worked as an assistant designer on The Notebook. She’s grateful to her community of friends, family, and mentors for encouraging and uplifting her work and is excited to graduate soon and continue to learn and grow as a human being and artist.

Kathy A. Perkins is Professor Emerita (1989–2011) in lighting design and Africa/African Diaspora theatre. She joined the department to reinstate the MFA lighting design program, which she headed for twenty years. She developed new courses in African/African Diaspora theatre in addition to non-Western theatre courses.

In addition to productions at UIUC, Perkins has designed on Broadway and at such regional theatres as American Conservatory Theatre, Arena Stage, Berkeley Repertory, Seattle Repertory, St. Louis Black Repertory, The Alliance, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Congo Square, Manhattan Theatre...
Club, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, New Federal Theatre, Definition Theatre, Mark Taper, Indiana Repertory, Writers Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Two Rivers Theatre, and Playmakers Repertory Company. She is the recipient of such design awards as NAACP Image Award, National Black Theatre Festival Award, and was a nominee for the L.A. Ovation Award. Internationally, she has designed in Switzerland, Austria, and South Africa.


In 1995, Perkins co-curated ONSTAGE: A Century of African American Stage Design at New York’s Lincoln Center. In 2016, she served as theatre consultant for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) inaugural exhibition Taking the Stage. She is the recipient of numerous research awards, including the Ford Foundation, Fulbright, United States Information Agency (USIA), New York Times Company, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) and various University of Illinois awards, including University Scholar. She is the recipient of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) Career Achievement Award in Academic Theatre and the USITT Distinguished Achievement Award in both Education and Lighting.

Perkins has traveled to over forty countries as both designer and lecturer. She has served as board member/advisory for USITT, URTA, Definition Theatre, and The History Makers. In 2007 she was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. She received her BFA in Drama from Howard University and her MFA in Lighting Design from the University of Michigan. In 2021 she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from the University of Michigan. Perkins is Professor Emerita at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2011-2018). She continues to free-lance as a designer.

**Tristan André Parks** Brother. Sun. Black memory cultural worker. Lover of his community. Tristan, an alum of the MFA Professional Actor Training Program at UNC-Chapel Hill, is a Southern multi-hyphenate artist whose credits include PlayMakers Repertory Company's “Ragtime,” “Life of Galileo,” “Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood,” “Leaving Eden,” “Twelfth Night” and “The Crucible”. Shakespeare Theatre Company's “The Amen Corner” and most recently Public Works’ “As You Like It”. Tristan is overjoyed to be premiering his solo performance work “They Do Not Know Harlem”. For where two and three are gathered. Peace and love to all.

**MeJah Balams** is a multi-disciplined visual artist residing in Atlanta, Ga. She received a BFA in Theatre Design and Technology from Auburn University and extended her studies at the reputable Cobalt Studios, for scenic art. Her work has been credited as scenic, lighting, and props designer. She has also had the privilege of touring as art department lead for theatre production. Her most notable collaboration was a lighting designer for Prague Quadrennial 2019’s main creative centerpiece “Blue Hour”, a large scale multifaceted and immersive installation. She most recently designed for the Summit Performance Indianapolis production of Skeleton Crew.

**Joseph Amodei** (they/them) is a new media artist, theater designer, activist, and educator. Their work seeks to make material differences with and for people at the intersection of art, technology, and community. Joseph grew up in North Carolina, where they received a BFA in Studio Art from UNC-Chapel Hill. Joseph completed their MFA in Video and Media Design at Carnegie Mellon. Currently, they are a Professor of Immersive Media at Chatham University, and will be joining Lehigh University's Department of Theater in the fall of 2023. Recent work has explored gameplay
This summer, their media design for the dance floor, the hospital room, and the kitchen table, (New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center, Theater Communications Group’s National Conference, Kelly Strayhorn Theater, National Performance Network) – a show about archiving queer care across pandemics – has been selected to represent the USA in the emerging category at the Prague Quadrennial, what USITT calls, “the Olympics of performance design.”

Selected Media Design highlights: They Do Not Know Harlem (Playmakers Repertory), To Buy the Sun: The Challenge of Pauli Murray (Hidden Voices); Amm(i)gone (APAP, The Theater Offensive); Packing and Cracking: Gerrymandering through Gameplay (The PA Center for Women and Politics, UNC’s Process Series, SFX); This Emancipation Thing (RedCat); The Young Playwrights Festival (City Theater Company of Pittsburgh), My Mouth is a Queer Time Machine (Ars Nova); The Pattern at Pendarvis (HERE Arts Center); and The Clothesline Muse (National Black Theater Festival).

Damon Fordham Born in Spartanburg, SC on December 23, 1964 to Anne Montgomery and was adopted by Pearl and Abraham Fordham of Mt. Pleasant, SC the following year. He received his Master’s Degree in history from the College of Charleston and the Citadel, and his undergraduate degrees at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. He is currently an adjunct professor of World Civilizations, United States, and African-American History at Charleston Southern University and The Citadel in Charleston, SC and has taught US History and African-American Studies at the College of Charleston. He was a weekly columnist for the Charleston Coastal Times from 1994 to 1998, as well as the author of The 1895 Segregation Fight in South Carolina (Charleston: History Press, 2022), Mr. Potts and Me (Charleston: Evening Post Books, 2012) Voices of Black South Carolina-Legend and Legacy (Charleston: History Press, 2009), True Stories of Black South Carolina (Charleston: History Press, 2008) and coauthor of Born to Serve-The Story of the WBEMC in South Carolina in 2006.

Research and articles by Mr. Fordham appear in the books Sweetgrass Baskets and the Gullah Tradition by Joyce Coakley, South of Main by Beatrice Hill and Brenda Lee, The Greenwood Encyclopedia of African-American Folklore for the University of Missouri Press, Cecil Williams and Sonny DuBose’s Orangeburg 1968, and The Malcolm X Encyclopedia for the University of Southern Mississippi Press in 2001. He has also commented on history and storytelling for numerous radio and television programs in the United States, Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom. He was on a ten-day tour of Senegal and Gambia, West Africa, with fellow educators where he spoke to students at the University of The Gambia in May 2022. He has also appeared on the NBC LX News and CBS Sunday Morning in 2022.

He conducts a walking tour called “The Lost Stories of Black Charleston”, and has received a citation from the South Carolina House of Representatives for his work in education, historical research, and social justice. He was also on an educational fact-finding visit to Senegal and Gambia, West Africa, where he toured the Slave Port at Gorre Island and spoke to a class of students at the University of Gambia in Banjul.

His motto is Educate yourself to lead yourself, for if you wait on others to show you the way, you will wait for a long time.

Jacqueline E. Lawton is a playwright, dramaturg, producer, racial equity facilitator, and advocate for Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the American Theatre. Her approach to facilitation is anti-racist, anti-bigoted, and intersectional. Her work examines the ways that racism, bigotry, misogyny, and ableism impact policy, practices, and pedagogy. She is centered on the individual, whether you work at a theatre, university, or nonprofit organization. Because each of us has an
individual and collective responsibility to ourselves and each other, we must be accountable for our actions and inactions. Recent clients have included Actors Theatre of Louisville, Boston Playwrights Theatre, City of Raleigh, the Dramatists Guild, Education Theatre Association, eHarmony, the English National Opera, Flat Rock Playhouse, HERE Arts Center, James Madison University's School of Theatre and Dance, Local 802 - American Federation of Musicians, Maestra Music, Montclair State University’s Department of Theatre and Dance, New Jersey Institute of Technology/Rutgers University, PACE School of Performing Arts, PACE Actor Studio Drama Program, PCPA Pacific Conservatory Theatre, PlayMakers Theatre Company, Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, ScriptWorks, Shea's Performing Arts Center, Shenandoah Conservatory, Theatre Communication Group, the University of Southern California's School of Dramatic Arts, University of Kentucky's College of Design, University of Memphis's Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Virginia's Department of Drama, and Vagabond Theatre. Currently, she is an Associate Professor in the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and a dramaturg for PlayMakers Repertory Company. She is a proud member of the Dramatist Guild of America.

**Dr. Jessica Berry** is an educator, advocate, and researcher who is passionate about sharing the living Gullah Geechee history, culture, and language with the world. She is a native of Huger, South Carolina. She completed her B.A. and M.A. in speech language pathology & audiology from Winthrop University and South Carolina State University, respectively. She completed her doctoral studies at Louisiana State University in communication disorders with a minor in linguistics.

She has worked as an assistant professor of speech language pathology at Columbia College and South Carolina State University. She also served two years as acting department chair, graduate coordinator at South Carolina State University. She currently serves as academic program manager at the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.

Dr. Berry is a fluent Gullah/Geechee speaker who has worked as a translator/transcriber with the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture project (2014). She is the creator of the first series of Gullah/Geechee, cultural competency focused professional development sessions for teachers in Charleston County School District (2017-present). She was recently awarded the American Speech Language Hearing Associations Editor’s award for her work which examined the use of strategic scoring and probes as alternative assessment methods for children who speak African American English.

She is the author of, *The Little Gullah Geechee Book: A Guide for the Come Ya*. She wrote this book with hopes to reach tourists, transplants to the low-country region, and anyone who is interested in learning more about the Gullah Geechee language and culture.

Dr. Berry is an advocate for creating spaces where children who do not speak Mainstream English are provided the same opportunities and additional assistance that they need to be successful. As a part of this goal, her research focuses language impairment in the context of regional dialect variation, non-biased assessment of children who speak nonmainstream varieties of English, and Gullah Geechee linguistic structure and sociolinguistic complexities.

She enjoys learning and growing and plans to use all that she has learned through her years as an educator/clinician to mentor the next generation of scholars and educate the public about the Gullah Geechee language. She is a wife, mother of two girls and enjoys singing and reading in her spare time.

**Becca Eddins**’ theatrical roots sprang from the world of dance but changed direction forever with her audition for *The Music Man* as Amaryllis at age 10. After graduation from the Theatre Arts program at Virginia Tech, Becca began her journeys around the world at The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago. Then followed several years of travel as the Stage Manager for numerous successful children’s tours, including *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse*, *Blue’s Clues*, and *Dora the Explorer, Live!* as
well as *A Chorus Line* and tour manager of *Vocalosity*. Becca is a 18 season veteran of Charleston's renowned Spoleto Festival, USA, working with acclaimed international artists. Highlights include *Lakmé*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Porgy & Bess*, and *Veremonda*. Up next is a return to the headset with Holy City Arts and Lyric Opera's *Rigoletto* this fall, after stage managing their beloved *Into The Woods* last year. Special thanks to Greg, Basher, and our two pups for their unending support and snuggles.

**Caroline Randall Williams** is a multi-genre writer, educator, performance artist in Nashville Tennessee, where she is a Writer-in-Residence at Vanderbilt University. Host of the Viola Davis produced series *Hungry For Answers*, she is also co-author of the NAACP Image Award-winning cookbook *Soul Food Love*. Her debut poetry collection, *Lucy Negro, Redux* was published by Third Man Books, and turned into a ballet by Nashville Ballet, with an original score by Grammy award winner Rhiannon Giddens. She performs her poetry as a member of the cast. The production made its television debut last year as part of PBS’s Great Performances series. Named by Southern Living as “One of the 50 People changing the South,” and ranked by The Root as one of the 100 most influential African Americans of 2020, the Cave Canem fellow has been published and featured in multiple journals, essay collections and news outlets, including *The Atlantic, The Iowa Review, The Massachusetts Review, CherryBombe, Garden and Gun, Essence,* and the *New York Times*.

**Preston Dunnavant** is a live sound audio engineer and music producer from Lexington, South Carolina. He has held the role of festival audio engineer at Spoleto Festival USA for the past three years, and spends the “off season” collaborating with an array of musicians, artists, and local Charleston venues. An alumni of Clemson University, Preston is excited to make his debut in sound design with *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls*, and the Charleston Gaillard Center.

**Carla “Fly Carla” Thomas** is a costume designer, wardrobe stylist and style contributor. She is a creative and motivated Local USA 829-IATSE union wardrobe professional who loves all things fashion. She can do it all! She’s the one designing and styling your favorite commercials, tv shows and movies! Hailing from Baltimore, cultivated at Howard University and now thriving in Brooklyn, Carla is always on a plane or in a showroom. Find her talking fashion and inspiring as Fly Carla on Instagram.

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**About the Charleston Gaillard Center**

The Charleston Gaillard Center commissions, supports, and presents ambitious, multidisciplinary cultural programming and provides access to the best local, national, and global artists and companies. Deeply rooted in the community, the Gaillard is committed to elevating local and regional voices and partnering with Charleston institutions to reflect the city’s diversity. Through programming on its public campus and extensive arts education initiatives, it serves as a platform to participate in community building and essential dialogue.

**The Charleston Gaillard Center Public Statement on Equity Efforts**

Located in Charleston, S.C. where 40% of enslaved Africans first set foot in the United States, The Charleston Gaillard Center recognizes the unique and historically significant nature of its position as a space for racial healing and progress through the performing arts.

We are committed to the power of the arts as a means of exploration and imagination — from the injustices of our past to the dreams of a more equitable future. As an organization, we also know that an authentic commitment to justice requires us to look inward, to personally and collectively learn and unlearn behaviors that have contributed to systemic inequities, and to actively create a more inclusive environment where all individuals feel a sense of belonging. To that end, the Gaillard Center is currently engaged in a multi-year effort to better understand and improve how equity manifests within our policies and practices, including staff and board representation, expansive community partnerships, programming that features underrepresented artists, and increased accessibility of our offerings to individuals from diverse lived experiences.

The Gaillard Center has prioritized creating partnerships with other local nonprofits and community groups to create a broader platform for conversation in the community. The Gaillard is committed to creating a forum for engagement with Black histories that are underrepresented within mainstream history and curriculum by creating festivals, productions, and programs, as well as creating curriculum guides, offering access to students, and presenting work that align with this mission.
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September 17
Sottile Theatre
Bandoneón player JP Jofre join musicians of CMC to perform original works alongside Strauss’ Piano Quartet.

September 24
Dock Street Theatre
Tchaikovsky’s “Souvenir de Florence” with violinist Daniel Ching of the Miró Quartet & Alan Rafferty of the Cincinnati Symphony

October 22
South Carolina Society Hall
Piano Quartets of Mozart and Schumann fill the historic ballroom of South Carolina Society Hall.

November 5
Sottile Theatre
One of the world’s foremost violinists, James Ehnes, performs with pianist Andrew Armstrong and cellist Alice Yoo.

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<tr>
<th>OCTOBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>15  PATTI LUPONE</td>
<td>2    SARAH BRIGHTMAN: A CHRISTMAS SYMPHONY</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 &amp; 20 NASHVILLE BALLET</td>
<td>6    RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER: THE MUSICAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>22  Coco in Concert</td>
<td>7    SPIEGELTENT: CABARET ROYALE BY UNDERBELLY</td>
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<td>23  PINK MARTINI FEATURING CHINA FORBES</td>
<td>8    ALLMAN BETTS FAMILY REVIVAL</td>
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<td>29  LAKE STREET DIVE TOUR</td>
<td>9    A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS LIVE ON STAGE!</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER</td>
<td>10   BIG BAND HOLIDAYS</td>
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<td>2    STEP AFRIKA!</td>
<td>14   THE ILLUSIONISTS</td>
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<td>18 &amp; 19 SPIEGELTENT: MEOW MEOW</td>
<td>23   SPIEGELTENT: HOMGROWN &amp; NATIONALLY KNOWN WITH CHARLTON SINGLETON, KANIKA MOORE, &amp; PATRICK DAVIS</td>
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