

Sometimes the quietest voices tell the most powerful stories.

# PRIMARY TRUST

By Eboni Booth



Directed by  
Sharon Denise Miles

February 17 –  
March 1, 2026

Sponsored by



Community Foundation  
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Xerron X Mingo

Costume Designer  
Deonica Davis

Lighting Designer  
Allyson Simone Sims

Scenic Designer  
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Production Manager  
Casey Nelms

Stage Manager  
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Technical Director  
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Sound Designer  
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**NEW STAGE**  
*Theatre*

The New Stage Theatre  
Production of

# PRIMARY TRUST

by

Eboni Booth

PRIMARY TRUST is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. [www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com) The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited.

## WARNING

This performance contains strong language

## SETTING

Cranberry, New York, a medium suburb of Rochester

## TIME

Before smartphones

Any video and/or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

There will be no intermission

## CAST

Kenneth .....	Kevin Aoussou
Bert .....	Herman J.R. Johnson
Clay/Sam/Le Pousselet Bartender .....	John Howell
Corrina/Wally's Waiters/Bank Customers. ....	Alicia Thomas*
Musician/Composer .....	Andrew Dillon

## UNDERSTUDIES

**Understudies never substitute for listed performers unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance.**

For Kenneth: Hosea Griffith; For Bert: Cecil Hill; For Clay/Sam/Le Pousselet Bartender: Xerron X Mingo; For Corrina/Wally's Waiters/Bank Customers: RaKaela Thompson

\* Appears through courtesy of Actors' Equity Association

## THE AUTHOR

**Eboni Booth** (Author) is a writer and actor from New York City. Her work includes the 2024 Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Primary Trust* (Roundabout Theatre) and *Paris* (Atlantic Theatre). For television, she has written for Hulu's *We Were the Lucky Ones* and HBO Max's *Julia*. As an actor, Eboni has appeared in productions at Playwrights Horizons, LCT3, Manhattan Theater Club, Ars Nova, WP Theater, Page 73, Soho Rep., Clubbed Thumb, and more. Booth is a resident playwright at New Dramatists and the recipient of a Steinberg Playwright Award, a Helen Merrill Award for Playwriting, and a John Gassner award. She is a graduate of Juilliard's playwriting program and the University of Vermont.



Mississippi

NAMI Mississippi offers free resources, classes, and support groups for individuals impacted by mental illnesses.

Learn more at [namims.org](http://namims.org)!

A New Stage Theatre Production of

# Let it Shine:

A Visit with Fannie Lou Hamer

Airing on MPB TV:

Sunday, February 22 at 2pm

Monday, February 23 at 9:30pm

Sunday, March 1 at 4am & 10pm

Thursday, March 5 at 4pm

Saturday, March 7 at 4pm



NEW STAGE  
*Theatre*



Visit the Hewes Room for

## The Reflection Eternal Art Exhibition

featuring: George Sky Miles Jr., Chausey Wade, Nathan Bruce,  
Bro Shambé Jones and Tony Davenport

# The 2024 Pulitzer Prize Winner in Drama

For a distinguished play by an American author, preferably original in its source and dealing with American life, Fifteen thousand dollars.

## More Than a Medal: A Legacy of Impact

The Pulitzer Prize for Drama isn't just a trophy for the mantelpiece. It is one of the highest honors in American playwriting. It measures not just artistry but cultural resonance. Since 1918, the prize has recognized plays spotlighting the American experience. It's not only about crafting beautiful language or tight plot lines. It's about saying something urgent, but in a way that lasts.



## Why It Matters to See a Pulitzer Winner

Reading a Pulitzer Prize-winning play is powerful, but seeing one onstage is something else entirely.

Live theatre brings the emotional core of these stories to life in a visceral, immediate way. You're not just witnessing a character's journey; you're sharing space with it. You hear every breath, see every flicker of doubt or hope, and feel the tension ripple through the audience.

When you attend a Pulitzer-winning play, you're stepping into a moment of history. These works shift conversations, challenge assumptions, and reflect the depth of human experience. Whether it's the linguistic precision of *English*, the gentle resilience of *Primary Trust*, or the thunderous heartbreak of *Fences*, these plays were awarded because they move us. They deserve to be experienced in full.

It's not just a great night out; it's a rare opportunity to witness the kind of storytelling that shapes culture.

## So, What Does It Really Mean?

For a playwright, winning the Pulitzer Prize can be career-defining. It opens doors to national productions, attracts producers and directors, and elevates the work into academic syllabi and cultural conversations. But more than anything, it signifies that their story is part of the American story.

For audiences, it's an invitation to witness something rare, to feel deeply, and to leave the theatre just a little changed.

Whether you're a devoted theatre lover or just discovering what makes a play unforgettable, keep an eye on the Pulitzer winners. You might just find your next favorite story or see your own life reflected in unexpected ways.

*Source: What Does Winning the Pulitzer Prize for Drama Actually Mean? By Caroline Austin for The Alley Theatre April 29, 2025*

## THE CAST

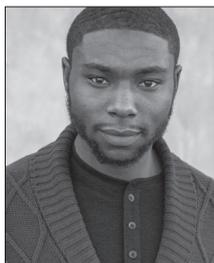


**KEVIN AOUSSOU** (Kenneth) New Stage Debut! **CHICAGO:** *Superior Donuts* (Artistic Home), *Baldwin vs. Buckley* (TimeLine), *Jaja's African Hair Braiding* (Chicago Shakespeare), *Henry V* (Chicago Shakespeare), *Inanimate* (Theater Wit); *Moby Dick* (Lookingglass Theatre Company); *Routes* (Remmy Bumpo). **REGIONAL:** Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Theater at Monmouth, The Hedgerow Theatre, The Rogue Tucson, Cardinal Stage, Children's Theatre of Charlotte. **EDUCATION:** MFA in Acting, Northwestern

University; National Theater Institute, MXAT; B.A. in Theatre Performance, Winthrop University. @ayokeyv247 @TheLocallabco @stillpointtheatrecollective



**ANDREW DILLON** (Musician/Composer) was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. He received a B.A. in Music Education with a concentration in strings K-12 from Jackson State University. A few summers ago, Dillon received a M.A. in teaching from Longy School of Music at Bard College. He believes all children should have access to a robust, active musical life and he strives to ensure all children have access to classical music education. When Dillon is not teaching music, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Chelsea and their two children, Mendelssohn & Lazarus.



**HOSEA GRIFFITH** (Kenneth U.S.) is a graduate of the University of Mobile (M.M.) and Mississippi College (B.M.). He has had the pleasure of portraying many roles in Jackson and the surrounding areas, including *Sister Act*, *Bright Star*, and *A Christmas Carol* (New Stage Theatre). Recently, Griffith was seen in *Songs of a New World* (Uproar Theatre), *The Color Purple* (Jackson State University), *9 to 5*, *Chicken and Biscuits*, *Beautiful* (New Stage Theatre), and *Little Women*, *The Broadway Musical* (New Stage Theatre) as well as various workshops and concert readings of the

musical play *Slippin' Through the Cracks* in Jackson (New Stage Theatre), New York, and Chicago (Goodman Theatre).



**CECIL HILL** (Bert U.S.) is a Jackson, MS native. Previous New Stage credits include Guy Jacobs in *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, Ensemble in *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, and Miles/Shawn/Rashaad in *Gloria*. He would like to thank his friends and family for their continued support and encouragement throughout the years.

## actor chat

Stay and meet the cast after **Primary Trust** following the show on Wednesday, February 18 and Thursday, February 25, after the evening performance. Audience members may ask questions of the actors, directors and designers in an informal setting.



**JOHN HOWELL** (Clay/Sam) last appeared at New Stage as Dennis in *The Play That Goes Wrong*. Other New Stage credits include *Come From Away*, *Noises Off*, *What the Constitution Means to Me*, *Clue*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *And Then There Were None*, *All the Way*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Suicide Club*, *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*, *Mrs. Mannerly*, and *Twelfth Night*. He and his wife Diana are co-founders of Fondren Theatre Workshop, with whom he most recently appeared as

Michael in *God of Carnage* and directed the world premiere of *The Invention of Language* at Millsaps College. Other favorite FTW credits include writing, directing, or acting in *Through the Looking-Glass*, *The Lion in Winter*, *The Monster Monologues*, *Poetry in Motion*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Howell was the arts coordinator and drama teacher at Casey Elementary School from 1997-2022.



**HERMAN "J.R." JOHNSON** (Bert) is a native of Chicago, IL. Johnson is an actor and an award-winning director/filmmaker. You can find Johnson's work on various platforms such as Amazon Prime and Tubi. His first supporting role in a film was acting alongside Grammy-winner, Cedric Burnside. Johnson is glad to be back at New Stage for his fifth main stage production with the company. His prior roles with New Stage were Evan in *Sweat*, Chester in *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse*, BoBo in *A Raisin in the Sun*, a variety of characters in *A Christmas Carol* and Robert

Hayes in *The Exonerated* (Unframed). He thanks Sharon Miles for another opportunity to be a part of **Primary Trust**.



**ALICIA THOMAS\*** (Corrina/Wally's Waiters/Bank Customers.) is a Detroit native and calls N.Y.C. her home, too. She's thrilled to tell this story about friendship and community. REGIONAL CREDITS: *The Preacher's Wife* (Alliance Theatre), *Fire!!* (Quintessence Theatre), *Motherless-* written by Cherise Kimoy, *Dreamgirls*, *The Colored Museum* and *The Producers* (American Stage), *The Lion in Winter* (freeFall Theatre), *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *Raisin*. WORKSHOPS: *Table 17-* written by Douglas Lyons and directed by Zhailon Levingston, The Directors Company, and

Project Shaw. Thomas dedicates this show to her vibrant nephews and her supportive community. "Let your light shine..." ~ Matt 5:16. [itsmealicia.com](http://itsmealicia.com) @itsme\_alicia\_



**RAKAELA THOMPSON** (Corrina/Wally's Waiters/Bank Customers U.S.) is thrilled to be part of the Frozen design team. This is her debut as a prop designer. She was born and raised in Pearl, Mississippi. She recently finished a resident acting contract with Playhouse on the Square. Some notable roles of hers include Nurse Norma (*Waitress*), Shanita (*Skeleton Crew*), Brianna Jenkins (*Chicken and Biscuits*), and Harriet Tubman (*Freedom Train*). Additionally, she graduated with her BFA in Theatre Performance from the University of Southern Mississippi! To The Top!! She

wants to thank her friends and family members who support her on this blessed journey! (She/her/hers)

## PRODUCTION TEAM

**SHARON DENISE MILES** (Director) is a director, actor, singer, and educator from Mississippi, now based in Chicago. She recently earned her MFA in Acting from Northwestern University and is drawn to theatre that lives at the intersection of storytelling and civic engagement. Her work is rooted in cultural heritage and driven by a commitment to spark dialogue, foster connection, and inspire community. Select New Stage credits include: *Matilda* (Director), *A Christmas Carol* (Director), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey II), *9 to 5: The Musical* (Violet), *All the Way* (Fannie Lou Hamer), and *Our Town* (Stage Manager). Sharon is deeply grateful for her family's endless support and for the communities that have served as a "third space" in her journey. She carries her love for Mississippi into every project and is thankful for the opportunity to bring this story home.

**XERRON X MINGO** (Assistant Director/Education Director/Clay U.S./Sam U.S./Le Pousselet Bartender U.S.) is a graduate of Florida A&M University. Born and raised in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. While living in New York City, he worked as a health & safety manager for Apple TV and HGTV productions. He also worked as a testing secretary and production coordinator for television shows with LIONSGATE and Apple Music Reviews. For the past ten summers, Mingo has worked at Raquette Lake Camps teaching musical theatre to students from across the world. Mingo could not be more blessed to continue teaching, coaching, and mentoring in his fourth season as Education Director at New Stage Theatre. Mingo most recently served as Choreographer for the production of Disney's *Frozen*. On New Stage's main stage, he directed *Chicken & Biscuits*, *The Mountaintop*, *The Lion King Jr*, *Sister Act, Jr* and *Mean Girls, Jr*. Mingo also directed the touring productions of *Junie B. Jones, The Musical*, *Anne & Emmett, A Year with Frog & Toad, Don't Let The Pigeon Drive The Bus! The Musical!*, and *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Unframed). Mingo played BOB in *Come From Away* and Macy's Store Manager in *ELF The Musical* and served as the choreographer for the productions. He also played the role of Gabriel in *Fences* and served as choreographer while playing the role of Fezzwig in *A Christmas Carol* at New Stage in 2021. He has worked professionally at a plethora of regional theatres in a handful of states. Some of his past credits include *Matilda* (Rudolph/Choreographer), *Hell In High Water* (Cephus), *Sister Act* (TJ), *Shakespeare in Love* (Wabash/Frees), and *Disney's Beauty & The Beast* (Monsieur Dar'que). Moreover, *The*

*Wiz* (The Lion) and *The Hot Mikado* (Pooh-Bah) at the GLOW Lyric Theatre in Greenville, S.C. He was in *Black Nativity* (Narrator) at Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, *The Great Society* at Asolo Rep, and *Hairspray* (Gilbert) at American Stage. Mingo continues to live in the light and encourages everyone else to do the same.

**RICHARD LAWRENCE** (Technical Director) serves as the vice president of Fondren Theatre Workshop and has appeared in *A Christmas Memory* at New Stage, FTW's *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Buck Nekkid for Jesus*, directed FTW's *Every Christmas Story Ever Told*, and most recently appeared as Trekkie Monster in *Avenue Q*. He was also the director of the widely successful productions of *Cabaret* and *Company*, which were joint productions of FTW and Actor's Playhouse of Pearl, with support from New Stage. Lawrence has been seen in New Stage productions of *The Trip to Bountiful* and UnFramed's *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *The Weir*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, and *Dublin Carol*. Lawrence has won three Best Set awards at Mississippi Theatre Association conferences and has also won Best Set at Southeastern Theatre Conference.

**KELLIE NICOLE** (Scenic Designer) is a scenic and experience designer whose work lives at the intersection of story, space, and emotion. With formal training in psychology and theatre, and an MFA in Scenic Technology and Design from Louisiana State University, she designs immersive environments that explore how physical worlds shape inner ones. Spanning theatre, experiential design, and installation work, her projects include *Fences*, *Dark Lady*, *The ClockMaker*, and *The Georgia Incarceration Project*. She is devoted to visual storytelling and to the exploration of every creative possibility that can bring a moment to life. Her work invites audiences not only to witness a story, but to step inside it.

**RACHEL BOUDREAUX** (Production Stage Manager) is thrilled to join New Stage Theatre as their Resident Stage Manager. Rachel is a member of the Stage Managers' Association and received their Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from the University of Southern Mississippi. Past work includes *Frozen*, *Wait Until Dark*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *Come From Away*, *Big Fish*, *Into The Woods*, *Is God Is*, and *Macbeth*. Boudreaux is passionate about stage management and theatre education and can often be found monologuing or reading. [www.rachelboudreauxsm.com](http://www.rachelboudreauxsm.com)

**CALLIE JACKSON** (Sound Designer) is a graduate of Mississippi State University with a B.A. in Political Science and is from Madison, MS. She began working at New Stage Theatre in 2024 as a board operator and is now the Resident Sound Designer and Engineer. She enjoys working with different schools and community theaters in her free time. Some of her regional credits include: *Million Dollar Quartet Christmas*, *Little Women*, *Come From Away*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, and *Frozen*.

**ALLYSON SIMONE SIMS** (Lighting Designer) is a creative force in theatre and production, proudly rooted in St. Louis, Missouri. She earned her undergraduate degree in Theatre from Miles College and continued sharpening her craft with graduate studies in Theatre at Louisiana Tech University. With a strong foundation in production and technical theatre,

Sims brings stories to life through bold design, precise stagecraft, and a deep love for the magic behind the scenes. A Clayco Future Leaders Fellow with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (Class of 2023–2024), Sims has cultivated both artistic excellence and strong leadership in professional theatre spaces. She currently serves as the Technical Director of Theatre at Jackson State University, where she leads productions from blueprint to opening night, mentors the next generation of theatre makers, and turns creative visions into living, breathing stage experiences. Driven by passion, collaboration, and community, Sims' work is all about creating powerful moments, uplifting voices, and pushing the boundaries of what live performance can be.

**ANNA DUNBAR** (Properties Designer/Lead Electrician) is a performer, theatre/film technician, sketch comedian, and writer originally from Madison, MS. She's worked several shows here at New Stage in many capacities and is so excited and thankful to be a part of this beautiful show! Dunbar has studied, performed, and worked at theatres and studios including The Second City, Blue Man Group, Broadway in Chicago, Acting Studio Chicago, iO Chicago, The Annoyance Theatre, and the Neo-Futurists. She's also worked in the UK for a show, *Ubu Cocu*, that was accepted into two London theatre festivals and is now being submitted to fringe festivals around the UK. Dunbar has written, produced, designed, and directed multiple independent film projects including two of her very own web series *Scratch That!* (YouTube) and *Bottled Up* (winner of two film festival awards and participant in 5 film festivals). You are enough. You are loved. You matter.

**DEONICA DAVIS** (Costume Designer) is from Pearl, MS with her BFA in Graphic Design from The University of Southern Mississippi. She is a graphic designer by day and seamstress and maker by night. She brought her talents to New Stage starting as a volunteer and eventually earned the title of Costume Designer for plays such as *Anne and Emmett*, *Sunset Baby*, and *Acts of Creation*. *Chicken and Biscuits* was her first main stage production to design for and *Primary Trust* is her second mainstage production at New Stage.

**ANTONIO JUAREZ** (Assistant Technical Director) has worked in theatre for six years, beginning when he was the technical director during his senior year for Northwest Rankin's production of *Zombie Prom*. Next, his first professional role was here at New Stage sewing phantom cloaks and board operation for *A Christmas Carol* in 2021. Antonio's favorite shows that he has worked are *Clue*, *Fences*, *Curious Incident of The Dog In The Night-time*, and *The Play That Goes Wrong*. Juarez is also pursuing a BFA in Theatrical Design at the University of Mississippi.

**LAMANA STRINGFELLOW** (Wardrobe Supervisor) has a B.A. in Theatre Performance and in Traditional/Digital Art from Belhaven University. Past credits include *Frozen* (Lead Dresser/Costume Assistant) at New Stage Theatre, *Tuck Everlasting* (Director) and *Four Old Broads* (Stage Manager) at Black Rose Theatre, *Seussical* (Director) at Brick Street Players, and *The Wizard of Oz* (Props Designer) and *Silent Sky* (Makeup/Hair Designer) at Belhaven University.

**CASEY NELMS** (Production Manager) is a proud Mississippian born and raised in Pearl, MS. She received her Bachelor of social work from Belhaven University followed by her master of social work from the University of Southern California. While living in Los Angeles, she transitioned from a robust therapy career to producing and supervising productions in the film industry. Nelms has been fortunate enough to work with companies such as Lionsgate, Patriot Pictures, and Convoke Media, as well as many others, and now happily serves as production manager at New Stage Theatre, where she has worked on productions such as *Little Women*, *Come From Away*, and *The Play That Goes Wrong*. She lives on the Ross Barnett Reservoir with her husband, Joey, and daughter, Cleopatra, and their two droopy-faced beagles, Olive and Mabel.

## CREW

Assistant Director . . . . .	Xerron X Mingo
Assistant Technical Director . . . . .	Antonio Jaurez
Lead Electrician . . . . .	Anna Dunbar
Lighting Assistants . . . . .	Noni Burke, Keishon Johnson, Grace McKay, Zitavious Settles-Robinson
Light Board Operator . . . . .	Hannah Beth Rollman+
Running Crew . . . . .	Kymbrianna Griggs+, Tarvorius K. House+, Seth Rodivich+, Michaela Williams+
Wardrobe Supervisor. . . . .	Lamana Stringfellow
Construction . . . . .	Dave Ellis, Jimmy J.R. Robertson
Scenic Charge Artist . . . . .	Michael Montgomery
Painter. . . . .	Jessica Harris

+Associate Artist Company Member

## THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

**FRANCINE THOMAS REYNOLDS** (Artistic Director) has been the artistic director at New Stage since 2006 and has worked as a theatre artist for 38 years. She recently directed *Wait Until Dark*, *Come From Away*, *Noises Off*, *Gaslight*, *Beautiful*, *The Carole King Musical*; *The Secret Garden*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, *I Just Stopped By to See the Man*, *The Debate for Democracy*, *Pipeline*, *Bright Star*, *Hell in High Water*, *Sweat*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Silent Sky*, and *Best of Enemies*. Favorite acting roles include Dr. Katherine Brandt in *33 Variations*, Polly in *Other Desert Cities*, Lucille in *Dividing the Estate*, and Edna Earle in Eudora Welty’s *The Ponder Heart*. She has directed a variety of shows including *All The Way*, *The Whipping Man*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Our Town*, *Red*, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Hairspray*, *Mahalia: A Gospel Musical*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Lombardi*, *Boeing, Boeing*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Gee’s Bend*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Annie*, *A Soldier’s Play*, and *I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change*. Reynolds is a 2022 recipient of a Directing Fellowship from the Mississippi Arts Commission. She served three terms on the board of directors for the Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and several terms on the Mississippi Theatre Association Board of Directors. Reynolds has served on grant

panels for the National Endowment of the Arts and the Mississippi Arts Commission and has enjoyed adjudicating for Poetry Out Loud and the Southeastern Theatre Conference. Recently she served as a member of the 2025 Governor's Arts Awards Selection Committee for the Mississippi Arts Commission. Originally, from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Reynolds enjoys living in Jackson with her husband, Chuck.

**DAWN BUCK** (Managing Director) has worked on staff at New Stage for more than 20 years. She began her career at New Stage in the fall of 1981 as a box office assistant. Since that time, she has worked as box office manager, audience services director, house manager, bookkeeper, business manager and marketing director. Buck's other professional artistic credits include the USA International Ballet Competition, the Thalia Mara Arts International Foundation – World Performance Series presenting a series of performing artists including American Ballet Theatre, Aquila Theatre of London, Joshua Bell, Alvin Ailey, Cirque Eloize, Wynton Marsalis, and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. She attended Belhaven University and is an alumnus of Leadership Jackson and a graduate of Dale Carnegie. Buck also completed a residency on theatre management at the Eugene O'Neill Center through a grant from the Foundation for the Extension and Development of Professional American Theatre (FEDAPT). Prior to serving on the staff of the USA International Ballet Competition, she also worked with America Reads – Mississippi, and with Imageworks – Films for Business, where she assisted with the production of commercials, documentaries, and training videos. She resides in the Heatherwood neighborhood with her husband David and has two sons who live in the big “N” cities of New York and Nashville.

**BILL MCCARTY III** (General Manager), a graduate of the University of Mississippi, has an extensive background in wholesale and retail sales and real estate property management with the Jitney Jungle supermarket chain. The company was founded by his Grandfather Will McCarty and two Holman cousins in 1919. The families grew the business into a profitable billion-dollar Mississippi-based company led by Bill McCarty Jr, his father, Henry Holman and many talented associates which sold in 1996. During his grocery career, Jack Stevens and Ivan Rider recruited Bill in 1973 to run a follow-spotlight for *The Gershwin Show* at the theatre's original Gallatin Street location. He has continued to volunteer with New Stage for more than 51 years in all areas including production, lighting and sound design, back-stage, and for New Stage fundraising events. He is involved in the day-to-day management, maintenance, and production for the theatre and serves on the Board of Trustees as a lifetime member. His favorite design credits are *A Christmas Carol* (1984), *Greater Tuna* (1986), *The Gin Game* (1987), and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1990).

**MELISSA TILLMAN** (Director of Business Services) is a graduate of Belhaven University where she received a B.A. in technical theatre. She served as the audience services director and marketing director at New Stage, has worked as a box office associate at Lawlor Events Center in Reno, Nevada, and assisted with many box office activities at Belhaven University. Tillman has stage managed many shows in several parts of the country,

including Las Vegas and Tennessee. Her stage managing credits include *Oklahoma!*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Love's Labours Lost*; and *Noye's Fludd* and *La Boheme* with the Mississippi Opera. This is Tillman's ninetieth season with New Stage. She currently resides in Madison with her husband, Kyle, their son, River, and their dog Vash.

**JERIANNA SHAW** (Marketing Director) is a proud 2016 graduate of Mississippi State University with a passion for theatre and a love for good pizza. When she's not at New Stage, you can find her at Poppy Pies—her and her partner's family-run pizza shop located at the Belhaven Town Center named after their daughter Poppy. In 2025, The Shaw-Welch family welcomed their second daughter, Penny, into the world. Shaw believes life is best served with a side of laughter, a dash of drama, and, of course, plenty of pizza.

**BETTY WONG** (Box Office Assistant/Education Assistant) begins her 18th season at New Stage. She continues to enjoy traveling to schools and towns throughout the state with the Professional Apprentice Company to provide live theatre experiences for students and adults of all ages. When not on the road, you can find her in the box office. She has also served for many years as a volunteer in other areas of the theatre. Her professional work experience in education and her passion for live theatre have contributed to the growth and expansion of New Stage's Education Department. She has served as a consultant to school districts throughout the state of Mississippi. Wong has a B.S. in educational psychology from Mississippi State University, a M.Ed. from Delta State University, and recently won the 2019 Exemplary Arts Service Award from the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education.

**MAHRI MCLEAN** (Box Office Manager) graduated in 2023 from Belhaven University with a BA in theatre performance. This is her fourth season working with New Stage in various capacities, and she is so grateful for the opportunity to work in live theatre every day. Previous acting and production credits include *The Moors* (Emilie), *A Lovely Sunday For Creve Coeur* (Costume Designer), *The Spitfire Grill* (Shelby Thorpe), *The Burial at Thebes* (House Manager), and most recently, *Mamma Mia!* (Sophie Sheridan). McLean also serves as a board member at Pearl Community Theatre. Outside of theatre, you can find McLean reading, making detailed playlists, and spending time with her cat Rowan and her partner Corey.

**CARLA MARSH** (House Manager) received her B.A. in criminal justice with an emphasis in juvenile justice from Jackson State University. She is pleased to be returning to New Stage for her twenty-first season. Marsh is employed full-time with the Hinds County Sheriff's office.



**Find Newstage on Facebook,  
Twitter, and Instagram!**

# The Attala County Garden Club

COMING  
NEXT

by Topher Payne

April 7 – 19

In 1987 Mississippi, Rose Chipley's chance at respectability is crushed when she's denied membership to the prestigious City Garden Club. But her luck changes when Bettye Little-Landrum, an eccentric outsider, invites her to join the Attala County Garden Club. What starts as a quirky alternative to the elite club soon turns darker as Rose uncovers the club's mysterious, nighttime gardening rituals—and the unsettling truth about its members. As Rose digs deeper, she realizes there's far more at stake than flowers—and the witches running the club might have revenge in mind. "Some secrets bloom in the dark."

## NEW STAGE THEATRE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff of New Stage Theatre wishes to thank the following individuals and companies for the generous donation of time and resources to this production and the 60th season.

Kimar Cain

Greg Campbell

Aisha Carson

Ken Hackman

Jackson State University

Kaylyn Johnson

Bryan Ledford

Brent Lefavor

Joey Nelms

Ron Rodenmeyer

John Spann

Connie Taylor

Olivia Taylor

# 2025-2026 SEASON CONTRIBUTORS

It all begins here. The following individuals, corporations and foundations have made generous contributions to New Stage Theatre. Their gifts provide a major portion of the funding necessary to present the productions you enjoy on our stages, the educational programs we offer and help the theatre maintain its standing as one of the nation's best professional regional theatres. Please take a moment to read the list. They deserve your recognition.

These donations were received from May 16, 2025 to February 9, 2026

## Grand Benefactor (\$2500+)

Dawn and David Buck  
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*During performances, will remain  
open until 7:00*

Saturday: 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

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## TELEPHONE/WEBSITE

Main Number: (601) 948-3533

Box Office: ext. 222

Artistic Director: ext. 224

Managing Director: ext. 246

Marketing Director: ext. 225

Education Director: ext. 232

Website: [www.newstagetheatre.com](http://www.newstagetheatre.com)

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