

SHAW 20
FESTIVAL 23

THE AMEN CORNER



2023 Ensemble



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I WAS TALKING TO A FRIEND OF THE SHAW THE OTHER DAY:

TC: So, Shaw Friend, how do you pick which shows you see?

SF: *The first thing I do is to look for the hidden gems I would never get to see anywhere else...*

TC: ...by Bernard Shaw, for example...

SF: *True enough, these days.*

TC: All right, then what?

SF: *Well, I always book for the musical, because I know that a Shaw production will always take the piece seriously, like a play set to music.*

TC: Nicely put.

SF: *Thanks. Then, of course, the famous classics. It's surprising how often I realize "You know, I've never seen that play!" And even if I have, I know The Shaw will blow the dust off it.*



TC: So what you're saying is, you basically book for everything?

SF: *Well, I do have a Season Pass.*

TC: Of course you do. But if you could only pick one play?

SF: *Ah – then it has to be the play and the author that no one has ever heard of.*

TC: A bit counterintuitive...

SF: *Not at all. I think to myself, "Hang on, if TC has programmed this play, knowing full well that it will only get an audience if it is amazing – well, then it probably is."*

TC: May I quote you on that?

TIM CARROLL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FESTIVAL THEATRE MAHABHARATA • GYPSY • Noël Coward's BLITHE SPIRIT • THE AMEN CORNER ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE PRINCE CASPIAN • ON THE RAZZLE • VILLAGE WOOING • THE SHADOW OF A DOUBT JACKIE MAXWELL STUDIO THEATRE THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD • THE APPLE CART • THE CLEARING OUTDOORS @ THE SHAW MOTHER, DAUGHTER • THE GAME OF LOVE AND CHANCE • A GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING – ONE ACT – IN CONCERT • A SHORT HISTORY OF NIAGARA HOLIDAY SEASON Lerner and Loewe's BRIGADOON • A CHRISTMAS CAROL



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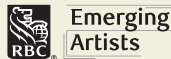
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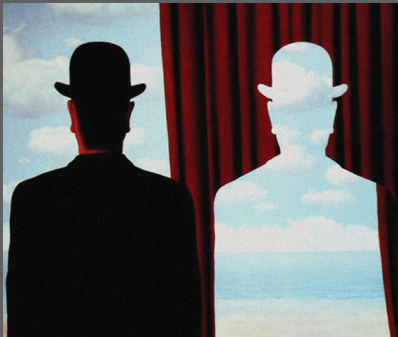
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BERNARD SHAW, *THE APPLE CART*



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Delf Dodge &
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Legacy Circle

SHAW 20
FESTIVAL 23

FESTIVAL THEATRE, JULY 30 TO OCTOBER 8

SHAW 20 FESTIVAL 23

TIM CARROLL TIM JENNINGS
Artistic Director Executive Director

KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD, Associate Artistic Director

THE AMEN CORNER

by JAMES BALDWIN

with DAVID ALAN ANDERSON, TAT AUSTRIE,
ALANA BRIDGEWATER, ANDREW BRODERICK, JENNI BURKE,
DEBORAH CASTRILLI, KRISTLE CHANCE, JANELLE COOPER,
JJ GERBER, DANTE JEMMOTT, NATHANAEL JUDAH,
ALLAN LOUIS, AMANDA LUNDGREN, CAITLYN MacINNIS,
JAWON MAPP, TAMA MARTIN, RYANN MYERS,
MONICA PARKS and JEREMIAH SPARKS

Directed by KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD
Set designed by ANAHITA DEHBONEHIE
Costumes designed by A.W. NADINE GRANT
Lighting designed by MIKAEL KANGAS
Gospel choir music direction by JEREMIAH SPARKS
Musical collaboration by PAUL SPORTELLI
Production dramaturgy by INTISAR AWISSE

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FRONT COVER: PHOTO BY KEY GORDON

JANELLE COOPER AS
MARGARET ALEXANDER.



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Ryann Myers are generously
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The Cast

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Brother Boxer	DAVID ALAN ANDERSON
Sister Douglass	TAT AUSTRIE
Odessa	ALANA BRIDGEWATER
David	ANDREW BRODERICK
Sister Boxer	JENNI BURKE
Choir Member	DEBORAH CASTRILLI
Choir Member	KRYSTLE CHANCE
Margaret Alexander	JANELLE COOPER
Choir Member	JJ GERBER
Brother Washington	DANTE JEMMOTT
Choir Member	NATHANAEL JUDAH
Luke	ALLAN LOUIS
Sister Rice	AMANDA LUNDGREN
Ida Jackson	CAITLYN MacINNIS
Choir Member	JAWON MAPP
Choir Member	TAMA MARTIN
Sister Sally	RYANN MYERS
Sister Moore	MONICA PARKS
Brother Davis	JEREMIAH SPARKS

The action takes place in the church and home of Margaret Alexander.

ACT I: A Sunday morning in Harlem.

INTERMISSION

ACT II: The following Saturday afternoon.

INTERMISSION

ACT III: The next morning.

Stage Manager	LEIGH McCLYMONT
Assistant Stage Managers	SANG-SANG LEE JANE VANSTONE OSBORN
Production Stage Manager	MEREDITH MACDONALD
Assistant Set Designer	YIMING LIU
Assistant Costume Designer	EMILY DOTSON
Assistant Lighting Designer	EMILIE TRIMBEE
Fight Director	DAVID CHINCHILLA
Fight Captain	LEIGH McCLYMONT
Voice and Dialect Coach	AUSAR STEWART

Special thanks to Philip Sparks Tailored Goods Inc and Alexandra's Custom Shirts.

UNDERSTUDIES

DAVID ALAN ANDERSON, Luke; TAT AUSTRIE, Sister Boxer; ALANA BRIDGEWATER, Sister Moore;
JENNI BURKE, Odessa; DEBORAH CASTRILLI, Ida Jackson; KRYSTLE CHANCE, Sister Douglass;
JJ GERBER, Brother Washington; DANTE JEMMOTT, David; NATHANAEL JUDAH, Brother Davis;
AMANDA LUNDGREN, Sister Sally; CAITLYN MacINNIS, Sister Rice; JAWON MAPP, Brother Boxer;
MONICA PARKS, Margaret Alexander; DORA TOMASSI, Stage Manager; THÉA PEL, Assistant Stage Manager

Running time is approximately 3 hours and 15 minutes including two intermissions



JENNI BURKE AS SISTER BOXER, DAVID ALAN ANDERSON AS BROTHER BOXER, ALANA BRIDGEWATER AS ODESSA AND MONICA PARKS AS SISTER MOORE; ALAN LOUIS AS LUKE AND JANELLE COOPER AS MARGARET.

OPPOSITE: ANDREW BRODERICK AS DAVID.

Director's Note

BY KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD

While Shaw was a member of the Fabian Society, which championed one of his themes, *The New Woman*, through social reform (including the suffrage movement and emancipation), James Baldwin was in the company of Black American activists, such as Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte, who used their platforms as pulpits to advance the cause of the *New Negro*, a theme borne out of the Harlem Renaissance, and found in many artistic works including those of one of Baldwin's predecessors, Langston Hughes.

Baldwin's dedication of *The Amen Corner* further reads as a roster of more artist-activists including "...Nina, Ray, Miles, Bird and Billie." And it is their jazz music which is pitted against gospel music in his play. Our hero, David, finds his voice as a young, Black, gay man in the jazz music of his estranged father, emancipating himself from the shackles of the church piano where he plays gospel music in his mother's Pentecostal church. Which music is sacred? Is the Spirit in the Music or is the Spirit in the Man? Baldwin presses beyond the Music of the church to the Message and asks us to consider how The Word is manipulated to keep Black people poor, humble and grateful – seeking justice in the Afterlife instead of this one.

Baldwin's use of language also mirrors the form of jazz, which also harkens to Bernard Shaw's style: precise in composition when the characters espouse tenets similar to the playwright's, and as improvisational when they riff on a signature sidebar during an argument.

Baldwin italicizes both *Him* (God) and *him* (Self), revealing the Divine in both. And if the divine spirit is Love, in the composition of this play, Love is the musical motif. David asks his father, "...weren't the music enough?" hoping this to be true as he resigns himself to a life without. Luke replies, "You know, the music don't come out of the air, baby. It comes out of the man who's blowing it," building on an earlier revelation to his son that if man is the source of the music, man cannot actualize himself "...without somebody loved him."

Beyond parallels between Baldwin and Shaw – polymaths, provocateurs and social critics – they also lie between *The Amen Corner* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the play I most recently directed. We meet both Lear and Sister Margaret ruling their kingdoms unapologetically with plans for succession for both Cordelia and David. But neither anticipates the emancipation of their heirs from their legacy. As they both tumble to their demise, their parental heartbreak is vivid and painful:

"Better thou hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better."

ACT I, SCENE 1, *KING LEAR*

"Declare, I wish you'd died in my belly, too, if I been slaving all these years for this!"

ACT III, *THE AMEN CORNER*

While Lear may not find peace by his final moment, Sister Margaret is touched by the Holy Spirit and in her last soliloquy speaks the musical motif: "To love the Lord is to love all His children – all of them, everyone!"

God is Love. Amen.





STOREFRONT CHURCH IN CHICAGO, 1941 (RUSSELL LEE / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS).

A Tragic and Beautiful Search for Self

BY SOYICA DIGGS COLBERT

James Baldwin wrote *The Amen Corner* in 1953 following his acclaimed autobiographical novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. Similar to the novel, *The Amen Corner* presents worship services in the Pentecostal church and how the religious order shapes the characters, a world Baldwin knew well. From the age of fourteen to seventeen, he preached at the Fireside Pentecostal Assembly in New York City. There Baldwin developed his signature rhetorical style captured in debates and conversation and featured in Raoul Peck's 2016 documentary, *I Am Not Your Negro*. His training in the church taught him how to use symbols and metaphors in his writing and also craft a live performance. "The church was very exciting," Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time*. "It took a long time for me to disengage myself from this excitement, and on the blindest, most visceral level, I never really have, and never will. There is no music like that music, no drama like the drama of the saints rejoicing, the sinners moaning, the tambourines racing, and all the voices coming together and crying holy unto the Lord."

The Amen Corner depicts a young man, David, who comes of age and must decide how the legacies of his parents will inform his future. Luke and Margaret shared a past-filled heartbreak that set them on divergent paths from which David must choose. His mother, Margaret, leads and serves as a minister at their storefront church. His father, Luke, is a jazz musician who suffers with addiction. In the play, Baldwin taps into "the communion which is the theatre," he wrote, "to involve people," "shake them up, and, hopefully, to change them."

Director Kimberley Rampersad plans to use the similarities between Baldwin's depictions of the church and the theatre to bring his play to life. In a recent interview, Rampersad explained, "The congregation is our audience, the actors the intercessors, and the script our holy text, which we raise





MOVE ON UP A LITTLE HIGHER BY CHARLES WHITE, 1961; MEMBERS OF A PENTECOSTAL CHURCH IN CHICAGO, 1941 (RUSSELL LEE / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS). OPPOSITE: J.J. JOHNSON, MILES DAVIS, AND HANK MOBLEY, 1961 (PHOTO BY LAIRD SCOTT).

unto heaven, to God, to science, to reason, the fly gallery – whatever you believe. I am here, hopefully, to be in service of this experience. I believe the most secular, profound moments of ‘catching the holy spirit’ can happen in the theatre. These are the rarefied moments when the audience knows they are all witnessing something else – something elevated. The air is electrified, a collective breath, the suspension of time, and you leave the theatre asking, ‘what just happened?’” Rampersad went on to explain that the production of live music, which will include a gospel choir, will contribute to this dynamic feeling.

The American theatre of the 1950s presented everyday tragic figures in domestic spaces, and Baldwin crafted a specific kind of home for drama to unfold. The setting of the play slides from public-worship space to private residence out of necessity. Limited resources mean places have to serve multiple functions. In the tight quarters, David struggles to find freedom to express his personal, emotional or sexual desires unburdened by familial, social or communal expectations. “We’ve created incredibly dense and compact space,” Rampersad commented, “so that we can feel the pressure of community and our accountability to one another that happens especially in the Church.” David must face the economic precarity that required his home also serve as a religious gathering space and the reality that his dreams for the future may not provide much more financial stability than the meager amount of money his mother earns as a minister.

The same poverty that drove Baldwin from the United States and to Paris in 1948 in search of a place to write serves as a backdrop to the play and much of Baldwin’s writing throughout his life. In fact, he had to borrow money from friend Marlon Brando in 1952 to return to the USA to work on the play. In *The Amen Corner*, Baldwin comments on the impact of poverty without talking about it directly. Rampersad said, “We see how poverty forces us to latch onto things that are detrimental” and in the play produces a Black woman tragic hero, an audacious choice for a relatively unknown writer.

By 1963, Baldwin was one of the faces of the Civil Rights Movement. That year, he attended the March on Washington with Martin Luther King, Jr, organized a well-publicized meeting with Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, and published his explosive essays compiled in *The Fire Next Time*. But in the early 1950s, he was unknown to the theatre world and had only just launched his career as a writer with a well-received first novel and several essays and reviews for magazines such as *The Nation*, *Harper’s* and *Partisan Review* under his belt. He noted, “Writing *The Amen Corner* I remember as a desperate and even rather irresponsible act – it was certainly considered irresponsible by my agent at the time. She did not wish to discourage me, but it was her duty to let me know



that the American theatre was not exactly clamouring for plays on obscure aspects of Negro life.”

As predicted, the play proved to be a difficult fit for the American theatre, which, Baldwin quipped, “says a great deal more about the American theatre than it says about the author.” It was first produced in 1955 by the Howard University Players in Washington, DC, but the play would not appear on Broadway until 1965. By the play’s New York premiere, American audiences had shifted their tastes from the tragic realism that launched the career of Baldwin’s friend Lorraine Hansberry with the 1959 Broadway production of *A Raisin in the Sun* and turned towards more experimental work. But Baldwin’s play endures because it taps into an impulse at the heart of all his work – to face the danger of confronting the truth in the hopes of finding freedom.

The truth is Margaret must reconcile her place in the church community with the past relationship that produced David, one that she’d rather forget. Another coarse reality, David must negotiate the Harlem street corners that appear through references, set design, and the return of his estranged father. Although they would rather turn away, the characters must contend with the past.

The play advances Baldwin’s personal investment to address the pain that his difficult relationship with his step-father caused. Baldwin described their relationship in *Notes of a Native Son*, writing, “When he died I had been away from home for a little over a year. In that year I had

had time to become aware of the meaning of all my father’s bitter warnings, had discovered the secret of his proudly pursed lips and rigid carriage: I had discovered the weight of white people in the world. I saw that this had been for my ancestors and now would be for me an awful thing to live with and that the bitterness which had helped to kill my father could also kill me.” In the play, David must resist letting the legacy of his parents consume him and, at the same time, he must learn to accept them because, as Rampersad detailed, ultimately, “the consequences of judgment and quick judgment means loss always. It means loss.”

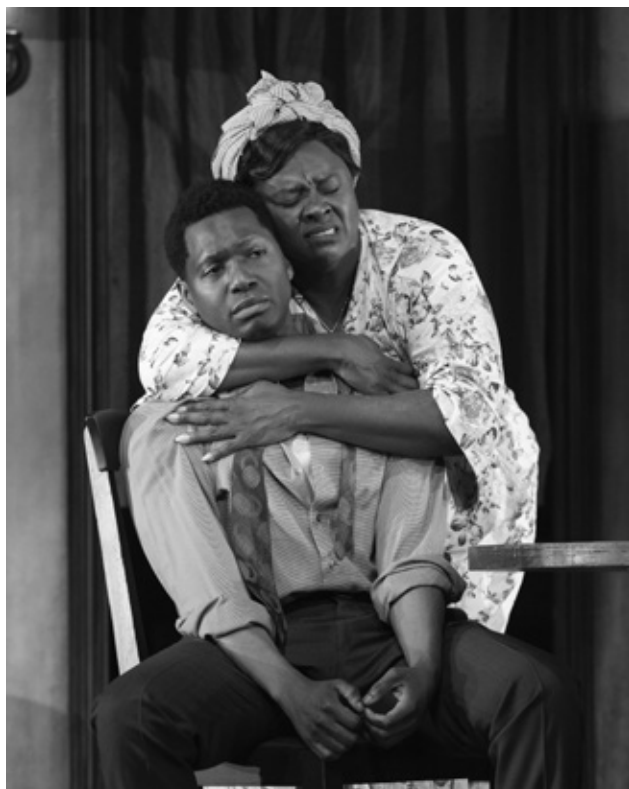


“Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word ‘love’ here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace – not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.” JAMES BALDWIN, *THE FIRE NEXT TIME*



SOYIGA DIGGS COLBERT IS A PROFESSOR OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES AND PERFORMING ARTS AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY AND THE AUTHOR OF *RADICAL VISION: A BIOGRAPHY OF LORRAINE HANSBERRY*. SHE IS AN ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR AT THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY IN WASHINGTON, DC AND HER ESSAYS HAVE APPEARED IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, *WASHINGTON POST*, *PUBLIC BOOKS* AND *AMERICAN THEATRE*.

HARLEM TENEMENT IN SUMMER, 1935 (NYPL).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDREW BRODERICK AS DAVID AND JANELLE COOPER AS MARGARET; SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE WITH PARKS AS SISTER MOORE AND THE CONGREGATION; ALANA BRIDGEWATER AS ODESSA; ANDREW BRODERICK AS DAVID, ALLAN LOPEZ AS DAVID ALAN ANDERSON AS BROTHER BOXER; CAITLYN MACINNIS AS IDA JACKSON.

The Amen Corner, 2023



WITH JANELLE COOPER AS MARGARET, MONICA
LUIS AS LUKE, JENNI BURKE AS SISTER BOXER





*"We resist changes until
the changes break us."*

BERNARD SHAW, *BUOYANT BILLIONS*



CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT: ALLAN
LOUIS AS LUKE AND
ANDREW BRODERICK
AS DAVID; THE
CONGREGATION;
JEREMIAH SPARKS
AS BROTHER DAVIS;
MONICA PARKS AS
SISTER MOORE;
CAITLYN MacINNIS
AS IDA JACKSON
WITH THE CONGRE-
GATION; THE GOSPEL
CHOIR.

Production History

Originally published in 1954, the *The Amen Corner* was first produced by the Howard Players, May 11–14, 1955, in Washington DC at Howard University's Spaulding Hall. It took another decade for the play to get to Broadway, in a production by the Cambridge Players, a Black theatre company in Los Angeles which transferred to Broadway in 1965 for eighty-four performances.

The play has been presented in many regional theatres – the Dallas Theatre Center (1985, starring Esther Rolle), the Long Wharf Theater (1995, starring Mary Alice), the Alliance Theatre of Atlanta (1995), the Goodman Theatre/Huntington Theatre (2001, directed by Chuck Smith), the Guthrie Theater/Penumbra production (2012, directed by Lou Bellamy) and the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, DC (2021).

Anton Phillips' Tricycle Theatre production in 1987 was the first Black-produced and directed play to transfer to a West End theatre in London. There was an acclaimed production on London's Royal National Theatre Oliver stage in 2013, directed by Rufus Norris.

In 1983 there was a short-lived Broadway musical adaptation with the slightly truncated title, *Amen Corner*. The play is virtually unknown on Canadian stages and marks the first Shaw Festival mainstage production by a Black playwright to date.

FRANK SILVERA AND BEA RICHARDS IN THE CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS PRODUCTION, 1965 (NYPL); RUTH BROWN AND RHETTA HUGHES IN *AMEN CORNER*, 1983 (MARTHA SWOPE / NYPL). OPPOSITE: JAMES BALDWIN, 1953 (ALAMY IMAGES);



The Author

JAMES BALDWIN (1924-1987) was an American essayist, novelist and playwright whose eloquence and passion about race in America made him an important voice, particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The eldest of nine children, he grew up in poverty in Harlem in New York City. During the summer of his fourteenth birthday, Baldwin underwent a dramatic religious conversion, partly in response to his nascent sexuality and partly as a further buffer against the ever-present temptations of drugs and crime. He served as a junior minister for three years at the Fireside Pentecostal Assembly, a period he wrote about in his semiautobiographical first and finest novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), about the time he spent as a teenager working as a preacher in a small revivalist church. Gradually, he lost his desire to preach as he began to question Christian tenets.

He wrote two plays during his career, *The Amen Corner* (1954) and a bitter play about racist oppression, *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964), based on the racially motivated murder of Emmett Till in 1955.

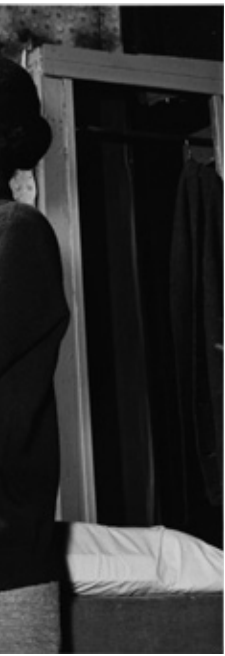
In 1948, Baldwin left for Paris where he wrote the first draft of his renowned collection of essays, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955). He returned

to the United States in 1957 and became an active participant in the civil rights struggle that swept the nation. His book of essays, *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), explores Black-white relations in the United States. This theme also was central to his novel *Another Country* (1962), which examines sexual as well as racial issues.

Baldwin continued to write until his death – publishing works including *Going to Meet the Man* (1965), a collection of short stories; the novels *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974) and *Just Above My Head* (1979); and *The Price of the Ticket* (1985), a collection of autobiographical pieces.

A writer of considerable renown, James Baldwin bore articulate witness to the unhappy consequences of American racial strife. As an openly gay man, he became increasingly outspoken in

condemning discrimination against lesbian and gay people. His fame as a social observer grew in tandem with the civil rights movement as he mirrored African American aspirations, disappointments and coping strategies in a hostile society.



For full biographical information about our cast and creative team, please visit shawfest.com/ensemble.

KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD Director
SHAW 2023: Director for *The Amen Corner*; 8th season. I was born and raised in the community of North Kildonan, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Treaty 1, and fortunate to live in a place where the arts went hand-in-hand with hockey; where creativity was as practical as any other virtue. While excellence and education were the mantras of our home, so was generosity of spirit as my parents freely opened our home to others, and showered guests with stories, music, dance and love. I think theatre may be a natural convergence of all these elements, and perhaps that is why I am here at the Shaw Festival.

ANAHITA DEHBONEHIE

Set Designer

SHAW 2023: Set designer for *The Amen Corner*. As a performance designer, my practice is founded on the principle that truths are communicated most powerfully through evocative sensory experiences. I am committed to work that questions positions of power and creates space for contemporary conversation. Born in Iran and currently based in Toronto, I have been fortunate enough to work at a spectrum of scales and in a variety of mediums across Canada and internationally. My work as a creator and installation artist has been featured at the National Arts Centre, Prague Quadrennial, The Vilnius Capital of Culture and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. I am galvanized by the power of collective storytelling and relish the opportunity to introduce audiences to new worlds.

A.W. NADINE GRANT

Costume Designer

SHAW 2023: Costume designer for *The Amen Corner*. I grew up in Cookstown, Ontario. My husband and I currently live in Tillsonburg after living many years in the States. My first theatre experience was at the Little Theatre in Cookstown, where my brother and I were cast in a production of *South Pacific*. All our lines were in French! I've been very fortunate to have some amazing teachers and mentors as a designer, such as Lindsay Davis, Sarah Oliver, Rick Rees, Paul Tazewell, Philip Boutte Jr and, of course, my parents. This is my first show at Shaw, but you may have seen my previous work in Stratford's *Little Women*, *Serving Elizabeth*, and earlier this year in Volcano's *Treemonisha*. Also, you can find me as Head of Wardrobe at the University of Waterloo. Favourite observation about my costumes, is that I must have used every piece of Velcro in Stratford.

KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD



ANAHITA DEHBONEHIE

PAUL SPORTELLI



A.W. NADINE GRANT



MIKAEL KANGAS Lighting Designer

SHAW 2023: Lighting designer for *The Amen Corner*, *The Game of Love and Chance*, *Mother, Daughter* and *A Grand Night for Singing*. I walked into the theatre at my high school and never left. Designing lighting for theatre has become my passion and also, luckily, my career. The teamwork, creativity and dedication of everyone involved in producing a show has inspired me since the first show I ever worked on. Working with light is a unique challenge, and I am grateful to be able to share my work at the Shaw Festival again this season. Our time away from in-person gatherings, has reinforced for me how important the shared experience of performance is for everyone.

JEREMIAH SPARKS Gospel Choir Music Director / Brother Davis

SHAW 2023: Gospel choir music director for and appearing in *The Amen Corner*; 4th season. I come from a small community in Nova Scotia known as Preston, and within Preston, my town is Cherrybrook. I began my theatre career in Halifax, Nova Scotia with Ships Company Theatre in *A World Without Shadows*, a play about Maud Lewis in the early nineties. It is such a joy to be back at Shaw again. I enjoyed playing Sir Jasper Tring in *Me and My Girl* and Robert Davis in *1837: The Farmers' Revolt*. Another gem emerged from 2017, when I was asked to create the Shaw Gospel Choir, which performed at the last Secret Theatre about Bernard Shaw. And, I am delighted to bring back the Gospel Choir once again!

MIKAEL KANGAS



PAUL SPORTELLI Musical Collaborator

SHAW 2023: Musical collaborator for *The Amen Corner*; music director for *Gypsy* and *A Grand Night for Singing*. My mom starred in community theatre and my parents took me to rehearsals when I was quite young. Other parents brought their kids too; but while the other kids were in the parking lot playing, I was inside watching rehearsal, mesmerized. Years later, I was music directing *Gypsy* at the same community theatre, with my mom as Mamma Rose. Many thanks to my dad for driving me to all those piano lessons over the years. Shaw productions of *Tristan* and *Maria Severa* – two musicals I co-wrote – have been two of many highlights at Shaw.

JEREMIAH SPARKS



INTISAR AWISSE Production Dramaturg

SHAW 2023: Production dramaturg for *The Amen Corner*. My initial exposure to theatre was as a performer in a grade-school production called *Clowns*. This was my first and last time on-stage. I then went on to study English literature, where I fell in love with drama as a literary genre through the works of not only European artists, but African artists like Wole Soyinka, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Obotunde Ijimerere – artists whose productions I could only access through the play texts.

INTISAR AWISSE



Years later, as a playwright and dramaturg, language and narrative are still instinctually the way into a work for me, but I also need the liveness of theatre and the magic of stagecraft for a production to feel whole. My favourite comment from an audience member was at an outdoor production of *Romeo and Juliet* where, during the final scenes, a young child cried out, "Daddy, do something!"

DAVID ALAN ANDERSON Brother Boxer

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *The Clearing*; 4th season. I was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, where our house was filled with creative energy – my mother's drawings; music she played on her childhood piano; soul music being played in the family room, coming from the band my dad managed as they rehearsed. I first stepped onto a stage when I was about nine. I attended a wedding reception at the Madam Walker Theatre Building in Indianapolis. While exploring, I got lost. While trying to find my way back, I found the stage.

TAT AUSTRIE Sister Douglass

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *A Grand Night for Singing*; 1st season. I have always been a GTA baby; born in Mississauga, lived in Oakville, then Brampton, and finally settled in Georgetown where I still am today. For as long as I can remember, music and theatre have been a large part of my life, but it wasn't until high school that I caught the bug for performing. When my school brought us to see *Ragtime*, right here at the Shaw Festival, something inside of me shifted. I had never experienced a show like that one before. I didn't know that music and story could resonate as deeply in someone as it did within me that day. It is a feeling that I keep with me always, and is one of the many things that drive me every time I am lucky enough to step out on a stage.

ALANA BRIDGEWATER

Odessa

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *A Grand Night for Singing*; 1st season. I'm delighted to be part of this season's Shaw Festival and share a glimpse of my journey with you. I come from Toronto, with my roots spanning across Newmarket, North York and Scarborough. From a young age, the theatre has held a special place in my heart.

One of my earliest memories was playing Rachel Lynde in *Anne of Green Gables*. It was during that production that Don Harron, who adapted the original production, praised my potential for a bright future in the performing arts. Throughout my training, I had the privilege of learning from remarkable mentors, including Alan Dilworth. You may recognize me from my work at Soulpepper and, most recently, from my performance in *Trouble in Mind* at the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton. Now, I'm honoured to embark on my debut at the Shaw Festival.

ANDREW BRODERICK David

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *A Grand Night of Singing*; 7th season. I'm happy to return to the Shaw Festival. Some favourites from previous seasons include *Sweeney Todd*, *The Magician's Nephew*, *Grand Hotel* and *Peter and the Starcatcher*. I went to a performing arts high school in Newmarket, then to Sheridan College; both programs brought me to Shaw to see shows. I still remember my anticipation, excitement, and the grin that covered my face, when the house lights dimmed or when the overture began – feelings that still bubble up today. Being an artist in this company, on this stage, is a young student's dream turned reality. I'm thankful for all arts educators and contributors; also, for my creative, diverse, loving and supportive pillars on- and off-stage.



ANDREW BRODERICK



DAVID ALAN ANDERSON



TAT AUSTRIE



ALANA BRIDGEWATER



JENNI BURKE Sister Boxer

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *Gypsy*; 2nd season. I grew up in Oakville, Ontario. I remember my high school theatre class attending a production of *Oklahoma!* at Sheridan College – THAT was the day I discovered that being an actor was something I could be. I studied there and have been grateful to get to work in a field that I admire and love. It has unlocked fullness in my life. It has turned what I have into enough and more. It has turned denial into acceptance, confusion to clarity, and strangers into friends. It has been a passport to happiness as was playing Martha in *White Christmas*, truly one of my favourite theatrical experiences here to date.



DEBORAH CASTRILLI Choir Member

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *Gypsy*; 1st season. My first real memory of being in a theatre was when I was around five years old, seeing my parents perform at a community event. Both of my parents are multi-instrumentalists, and my mother happily shared her favourite musicals with me from a young age. I am continually inspired by the community that is fostered through storytelling: the learning and loving, the healing, the collective joy! But also, I am brought back to the little girl in me who loved to dance through the grocery store

aisles, and would get lost in her make-believe worlds for hours. I do this for her, ultimately.

KRISTLE CHANCE Choir Member

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *Gypsy*; 1st season. I'm from Toronto, Ontario and began my career in 2015 after booking my first role in a production of *Da Kink in My Hair*. I fell in love with theatre and performing from that experience and have been actively pursuing the craft ever since. Every production I've worked on has been instrumental to my artistry, but playing Effie in *Dream Girls* (Lower Ossington Theatre) has a special place in my heart. That role allowed me to grow as an artist and as a person, and for that I am forever grateful. I'm looking forward to exploring my next phase of artistic and personal growth here at Shaw!



JANELLE COOPER Margaret Alexander

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner*; 1st season. The first time I experienced the theatre was at eight years old. Our little schoolhouse in downtown Toronto received a handful of comps to *Les Misérables*, starring Michael Burgess. It was arresting. I didn't know art could flow, explode, and stand still all at the same time. I loved exploring the world through stories and music and dance, my whole little sphere revolving solely around these elemental things. I come from a long line of storytellers. It's in my bones. But I didn't know what I wanted to do, how I could utilize them, until this experience. It changed me. It kind of changed everything.



JJ GERBER Choir Member

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *The Clearing*; 2nd season. As a child growing up in Ontario, I always dreamed of performing on-stage. My family would dance, sing and limbo at every family function. My Tobagonian mother brought her island flavour to the church on Sundays, while my Irish and Swiss father clapped along in support. I learned to sing in their cadence. I thought, "I can do that!" and carried the feeling of joy that performing brings since. Recently, I was asked what home is to me and I realized it's not just the people I carry in my heart or the landscape of my childhood, but the sharing of my heart I get to do on the stage as well. I am so honoured to get to share a little home with you this season.

DANTE JEMMOTT Brother Washington
SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *The Clearing*; 1st season. My wife and I live in Milton, Ontario. We have frequented the Shaw Festival as patrons before and are extremely excited that we are here now, because I am an actor in the Company. Since I was a child doing small plays in church, I always found the acting process to be one of fulfillment and invigoration. To walk alongside a character, learn who they are and journey with them as they pursue their grandest desires is a deeply industrious, intimate, and imaginative experience. Through this work I discover more of myself and the beauty of creation around me. It is for this purpose that I do what I do.



NATHANAEL JUDAH Choir Member
SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *Gypsy*; 2nd season. I was born in a small city on the south coast of Jamaica, and moved to Canada when I was a child. My first time in the theatre was in ninth grade to see my high school production of *Spelling Bee*. I remember being surprised that I was enjoying myself and wanting to be on that stage. Constantly learning from this ensemble of artists only reminds me we could be making someone's day.

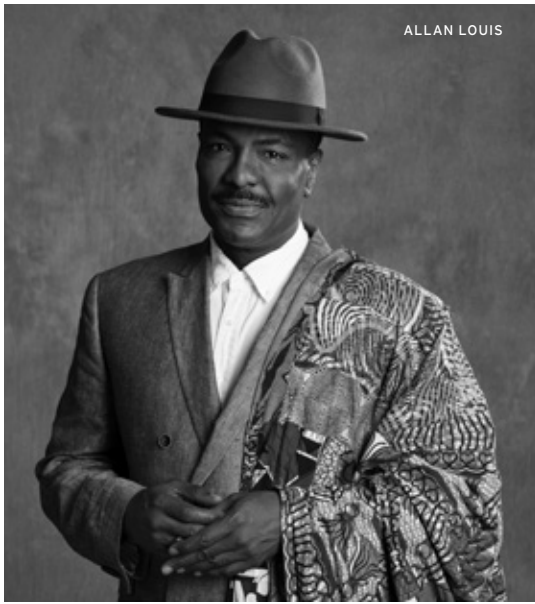
ALLAN LOUIS Luke
SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *Gypsy*; 5th season. I was born in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti. I immigrated to America with my mom. Naturally, most immigrant parents want their children to become doctors or lawyers; but, in grade nine I made my theatrical debut on a green skateboard in the musical *Runaways* by Elizabeth Swados. At the time, my mom didn't think much of my artistic pursuits and was not in the audience to see me get a standing ovation. However, the elation I felt in that instant set me on my path to prove her wrong!



AMANDA LUNDRÉN Sister Rice
SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *Gypsy*; 3rd season. My earliest memory of theatre was getting to watch a Panto from the pit. It was amazing! My uncle brought me, his little dancing niece, and entered via the stage door. I followed him around, meeting as many cast and crew as we could before it started. It was the worst possible "view" because I was under the stage, but the MD let me get as close to him as possible so I could try to see anything I could. My neck was craned all the way up and cramping, but it didn't matter because Jeff Hyslop from *Today's Special* was in it – my favourite show.



CAITLYN MacINNIS Ida Jackson
SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *Gypsy*; 2nd season. I grew up in the Niagara Region, and before I could walk, I danced. I think that's where it all started. I took a career quiz in high school, but my mind was already made. There's nothing I love more than sharing stories through art. My mom bought me the 1999 movie musical *Annie*; and when I saw that little curly-haired girl alongside who I'd later learn was Audra McDonald, I dreamed of being like them. In 2014, the same year I took that career quiz, *Annie* was cast as a Black girl in the movie revival! I like to think that was a wink to little Caitlyn.



ALLAN LOUIS

JAWON MAPP Choir Member

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *A Grand Night for Singing*; 1st season. I grew up in the town of Keswick, Ontario, where my love for acting was born. My mother enrolled me in our town's theatre camp. Mostly to occupy my time, but part of me believes she knew what I had in me. From my first bow on the stage I was hooked. Along my journey I had been blessed to learn and work with people I have long admired. A memory that lives deeply in my soul took place just at the beginning of 2023. I was blessed with playing The Baker in RMTc's *Into the Woods*. A dream role for me and it was my first contract out of theatre school. Taking that bow on opening night took me back to my first bow when I learned the stage is my home!

TAMA MARTIN Choir Member

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *Gypsy*; 1st season. I was born and raised on the Caribbean island, Saint Kitts. From a toddler, dance was sweet escapism and the stage: home. I'd have my family watch me "do a performance". My introduction to theatre was later, when I stumbled on a YouTube performance from *Matilda: the Musical*. Twenty-three-year-old me, finishing a business degree, would dance around my apartment singing "Revoltin' Children". Jeremy Webb and Ray Hogg gave me my first, unforgettable theatrical experience as an apprentice choreographer. Delighting and moving people through theatre fulfills me immensely. Once an audience member told me, "Thanks for such healing. [Your character] inspired me to restart therapy."



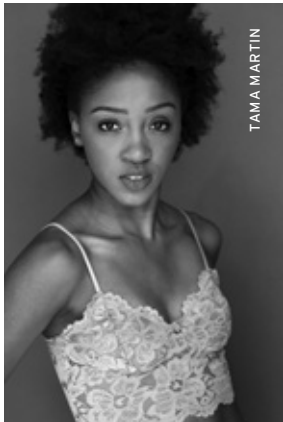
RYANN MYERS



CAITLYN MacINNIS

RYANN MYERS Sister Sally

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner* and *The Clearing*; 1st season. I am an American actor from Princeton, New Jersey. My first time in the



TAMA MARTIN

theatre was at the age of seven, playing Amaryllis in *The Music Man* at my local community theatre. What inspired me to take on acting was simply the playfulness I would see when watching actors on TV. From action movies, to comedies, to dramas; acting always felt like something that kept people being big, playful, expressive and creative. As I am soaking in all that my first year at The Shaw has to offer, I've had the privilege to see some of the productions here and my favourite one, so far, has been *Blithe Spirit*. Not only are the actors hilarious and brilliant, but the set, sound, costumes and lighting designs for the show have blown me away.

MONICA PARKS Sister Moore

SHAW 2023: *The Amen Corner*; 2nd season. You might have seen me in *Gem of the Ocean* and/or *Just to Get Married*. I am from University City, Missouri, in St Louis County, centred in the middle of the USA. As a kid, I was inspired by movies. My first film was inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*, made with my playmates (I played a witch). Later, I was drawn to dramatic and political classics – from Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and so on. High school interests were archaeology, law and theatre; but I was taught that I could be anything I wanted to be, do anything I wanted to do... my mother had begun taking me to the theatre. I was hooked. I chose theatre, receiving my BA in Performing Arts and MFA in Classical Acting from the Shakespeare Theatre Company's ACA, in collaboration with the George Washington University.



LEIGH McCLYMONT Stage Manager

SHAW 2023: Stage manager for *The Amen Corner*; assistant stage manager for *Gypsy*; 15th season. I grew up in small-town Ontario and began dancing when I was three. From there it was a natural transition to theatre and studying drama at the University of Waterloo, with a focus on stage management. My dream job was working for the Shaw Festival, and in 2009 that dream came true. In my winter seasons I have worked westward in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, but always love returning home to Shaw when spring arrives.



SANG-SANG LEE Assistant Stage Manager

SHAW 2023: Assistant stage manager for *The Amen Corner* and *The Clearing*; 1st season. I was born and raised in Amiskwaciwāskahikan (ᐱᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢᐢ), also known as Edmonton, in Treaty 6 Territory and the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4. It's the traditional land of many Indigenous peoples, including the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Nakota Sioux and Métis. I acknowledge those who came before us, those who have stewarded this land since time immemorial so that we may have a life here. It's a reminder that the responsibility of stewardship has been passed to each of us, and that I must do more to care for this land so that future generations can enjoy the beauty and bounty that we have benefited from. I'm missing those amazing, long summer days where it seems like you have all the time in the world and the sun barely sets. I still call Edmonton home.



JANE VANSTONE OSBORN

Assistant Stage Manager

SHAW 2023: Assistant stage manager for *The Amen Corner*; stage manager for *A Grand Night for Singing*; 6th season. The first show I

saw was probably at the YPT Colonnade in Toronto, where I grew up. My first ASM gig was on *Grease* at York University. What a strange job – arrive early, sweep

the floor, make orange juice, hold the curtain for a car, and stay late. And I was hooked. I continued to work in community theatre, apprenticed and learned from my fellow stage managers. I enjoy the collaborative, creative, puzzle-solving nature of this work. I love watching ideas come to life and then hearing the audience take part. One of my favourite shows was *Up to Low* at Arts Court, where I sat amongst the audience and could feel their responses as I whispered cues to the crew.



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