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Vol. CXI, No. 4 2023-2024 **January 19 - February 4, 2024**

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Cynthia Weil
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Choreographed by Christi Hall
Music Directed by Jason Eschhofen
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From the Executive Producer...



I am wishing each of you a very Happy and Healthy 2024. Theatre Memphis is counting our blessings that YOU, our treasured audiences, have embraced our shows for this 2023-24 season and seasons past as we experience the best attendance in our 102 year history.

What a great privilege and pleasure to present A RAISIN IN THE SUN on our Lohrey Theatre Stage. And we are so fortunate to have Jared Thomas Johnson helming this important and poignant story with an outstanding cast, stage management, and design/production team. Playwright Lorraine Hansberry (1930-65) was the first black woman to have had a play produced on Broadway – in 1959. The power and craft of her writing make A RAISIN IN THE SUN as moving today as it was a half century ago.

We are so pleased to announce that Austin DeVine has received our Theatre Memphis/Priscilla Presley 2nd annual scholarship. Austin is currently attending Columbia College Chicago and is pursuing a degree in dramaturgy. Austin's enthusiasm and dedication to create a path for himself in the theatre environment stood out as a beacon to those who believe in themselves and hard work, according to the scholarship selection committee. Having begun a path to dig deeper into gender inclusivity in modern theatre, Austin's love of dramaturgy actually began by attending local theatrical productions with his family. As an accomplished string musician, he also has a passion to find ways to include classical music in productions while incorporating dramaturgical research.

Austin's remarkable journey to be a meaningful contributor and a change advocate in the theatre environment really spoke volumes to his commitment and authenticity. A Memphian through and through, he plans on returning to Memphis at some point to 'give back' to the community he found and grew to be a part of as his journey continues.

As a national leader among community theaters, and one of the oldest in the United States, Theatre Memphis created the Theatre Memphis Priscilla Presley Scholarship to be awarded annually. The award for up to \$2,500 will go to an individual to make an artistic dream come true when the aspiring designee is working to advance an aspect(s) of performance art through education or training, thereby, fostering the ongoing growth of community arts in Memphis and the MidSouth. The scholarship honors the contributions that Presley has made to the arts community and underscores the commitment to helping artists pursue their heart's desire. The 2023 cash award and a commissioned commemorative medallion created by Jin and John Powell was presented to Austin during a 2023 December performance of A Christmas Carol.

And last but certainly never least, Theatre Memphis will celebrate two Memphis theatre and Theatre Memphis legends, Bennett Wood and Barry Fuller, on Saturday, March 23, 2024 at TM. More about these two cherished Memphis treasures will be in our BEAUTIFUL program. We hold those two amazing gentlemen in our hearts!!

As always, THANK YOU for your outstanding support and welcome to Theatre Memphis which is truly for and by our community. We look forward to seeing you often at Theatre Memphis!



643rd Production 103rd Year

THEATRE MEMPHIS

Presents



By Lorraine Hansberry

Directed by Jared Thomas Johnson

Lighting Design
Nicole Northington

Costume, Wig, Hair & Makeup Design

Marsena Sellers

Scenic & Properties Design

Jack Netzel-Yates

Sound Design

Jason Eschhofen

Stage Manager Kaitlin Brucker

Assistant Director

Justin Raynard Hicks

Production Manager/Technical Director

Michael Compton

Season Presenting Sponsor: **First Horizon Foundation**Show Sponsors: **Dr. Thomas Ratliff** and **Marjorie Palazzolo**Media Sponsors: **WKNO 91.1 FM** and *Memphis Flyer*

"A Raisin in the Sun" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

The taking of photographs and the videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited. Your cooperation is appreciated. Wheelchair accessible restrooms are located off the north and south lobbies. Hearing reinforced headsets are available at the Box Office.

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Poster/Cover Created by Missy McClendon Promotional Photo by Steve Roberts Production Photos by Carla McDonald

Cast of Characters

Ruth Younger	Donita Johnson
Travis Younger	Braxton Gibson
Walter Lee Younger	Trey Oliver
	Mariah Michelle Stokes
Lena Younger	Sherronda Whitmore Johnson
Joseph Asagai	Kashief Crain
George Murchison	Marvin Holt
Bobo	Jonathan Stewart Mosley
Karl Lindner	Patrick Ashbee
Mrs. Johnson	Fatima L. Gray
Moving Men	Mark'Quest Ajoku, Nicholas Weaver

Understudies Mark'Quest Ajoku (Bobo) Jonathan Stewart Mosley (Walter Lee Younger) Nicholas Weaver (Joseph Asagai)

SETTING

The Younger family's apartment on Chicago's Southside, early 1950's

ACT ONE

Scene I – Morning in the Younger's Apartment Scene II – The following morning (Saturday)

ACT TWO

Scene I – Later the same day Scene II – A few weeks later (Friday)

There will be one 15-minute Intermission

ACT TWO (cont'd) Scene III – Moving Day: One week later (Saturday)

ACT THREE An hour later

Theatre Memphis has received special funding from the TN Nonprofit Arts & Culture Recovery Fund. Several of our projects are being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP5534 awarded to the State of Tennessee by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Theatre Memphis is grateful for this outstanding aforementioned grant administered by the Tennessee Arts Commission.



Mark'Quest Ajoku



Patrick Ashbee



Kashief Crain



Braxton Gibson



Fatima L. Gray



Marvin Holt



Donita Johnson



Sherronda Whitmore Johnson



Jonathan Stewart Mosley



Trey Oliver



Mariah Michelle Stokes



Nicholas Weaver



Jared Thomas Johnson Director

Mark'Quest Ajoku (Moving Man / u/s Bobo) Originally, from Ellenwood, GA by way of Hollywood, FL, Mark'Quest makes his theatre debut at Theatre Memphis! Mark'Quest is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Epidemiology at the University of Memphis. He is excited to learn and grow on this new theatrical journey. His performance is dedicated to the memory of his mother, Doreen. IG:markymark_quest

Patrick Ashbee (Karl Lindner) is thrilled to make his debut appearance at Theatre Memphis. Earlier this season, Patrick appeared as Karl Lindner in Hattiloo's production of A RAISIN IN THE SUN. He is delighted to be a part of a new RAISIN family here at TM and extends his gratitude to the cast and crew. Patrick dedicates tonight's performance to Lorraine Hansberry, whose timeless play is still relevant to the human condition in 2024!

Kaitlin Brucker (Stage Manager) is the current Office Manager/Usher Coordinator at Theatre Memphis. Kaitlin has most recently worked with DeSoto Family Theatre in Southaven, Mississippi as Office Manager and Weathervane Playhouse in Newark, Ohio as Theatre Manager. Her stage management experience includes work as a Stage Manager for A FEW GOOD MEN and AMERICAN SON at Theatre Memphis, a Production Assistant at Washington National Opera at The Kennedy Center, an Assistant Stage Manager at Ash Lawn Opera Festival in Charlottesville, Virginia and a Stage Management Intern at B Street Theatre in Sacramento, California. Kaitlin is a graduate of the University of Memphis with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Design and Technical Production, and a minor in Business Management.

Olivia "Via" Caspersen (Assistant Stage Manager) was born backstage wearing black and sporting a headset. Previously, Via was the Stage Manager for Elf The Musical; Assistant Stage Manager for Jesus Christ Superstar, Guys and Dolls, and A Christmas Carol 2022; Assistant Lighting Designer for The Addams Family and Titanic the Musical; Spotlight Operator for Mamma Mia!, Matilda The Musical, Ragtime, and Mary Poppins; and Running Crew for Sherlock's Last Case. "I love theatre and I am excited to be working with Theatre Memphis and all the lovely people in this show."

Kashief Crain (Joseph Asagai) is thrilled to revisit A RAISIN IN THE SUN and work again at Theatre Memphis. A few credits include FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, INK, MACBETH, and HENRY VI. Kashief would like to dedicate his performance to the memories of Ava Christopher and Josh Massey.

Braxton Gibson (Travis Younger) is a 13 year old 8th grader at CCMS and thrilled to make his second appearance on the Theatre Memphis stage. Some of his previous credits include Michael in MARY POPPINS (Theatre Memphis), Les in Newsies (ACCT), Ben in Disney's Descendants: The Musical (ACCT), Roger in 101 Dalmatians (ACCT), and Jojo in Seussical (ACCT). Braxton would like to thank his parents for all of their love and support and Theatre Memphis' entire production team for this opportunity!

Fatima L. Gray (Mrs. Johnson), a native of Flint, Michigan, was trained as an actress at Flint Youth Bower Theater as a child. She later went on to do three shows before moving to Memphis, Tennessee. While in Memphis, she completed an associate degree in Theatre and Speech at Southwest Tennessee Community College. She has performed in many community plays, television, and film. She is very happy to be performing at Theatre Memphis for the first time.

Justin Raynard Hicks (Assistant Director) was born on January 2, 1995 in Dallas, TX. After moving to Memphis, TN at the age of 7, Justin began studying voice, acting, and dance. At the age of 15, Justin performed Isaac Hayes' Oscar Award winning hit "Theme from Shaft" at the 2011 TvOne Trumpet Awards in Atlanta, GA in honor of Richard Roundtree for his role in the 1971 film. Since then, the Stax Music Academy alum has performed both nationally and internationally at venues such as the Apollo Theater, Lincoln Center, Smithsonian Folklife Festival, The Kennedy Center, and The Gibson Showcase Museum in Berlin, Germany. Since 2012, Justin has starred in over 30 regional/community theatre productions including 10 productions at Hattiloo Theatre, The Scottsboro Boys (Haywood Patterson) at Playhouse on the Square, and Fences (Ostrander Award nomination) at Theatre Memphis. In July 2021, Justin as (JUSTINRAYNARD.) released his debut independent album, Who Do U Think U R?, written by himself and produced by Albren "AlleeoMuzik" Spears and new album coming

summer of 2024. With consistency and hard work, Justin hopes to prove to the world that he is a true triple threat entertainer.

Marvin Holt (George Murchison) is excited to be performing in A RAISIN IN THE SUN at Theatre Memphis! He was most recently seen in U of M's SENSE AND SENSIBILITY (John Dashwood / John Willoughby), Playhouse on the Square's THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS (Charlie Weems / Ruby Bates), U of M's THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW (Brad), and completed a summer contract at Ohio Light Opera. He would like to thank the entire directing team for giving him this opportunity and his family for pushing him to where he is now.

Donita Johnson (Ruth Younger) is extremely honored to have the opportunity to create magic with this amazing cast and crew! Some of her most recent productions include Theatre Memphis' SISTER ACT, MACBETH, and YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU, as well as Hattiloo's SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY and ECLIPSED. She would like to thank her Mother and Father for their continued support, and her two beautiful children for their constant motivation. "I love you all so much!"

Jared Thomas Johnson (Director) is an award-winning choreographer and director from Memphis, Tennessee. Jared made his directorial debut with his production of AMERICAN SON at Theatre Memphis (TM) winning the Ostrander Award for Best Direction, Ensemble and Production in 2022. Other notable credits include Playhouse on the Square's FAT HAM, PASSOVER, and THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS (2023 Ostrander Award for Best Production). Jared's favorite credits as Assistant Director include SILENT Sky, Guys and Dolls, and La Cage aux Folles at TM. Favorite credits as Choreographer include The 25TH Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, THE PRODUCERS, FALSETTOS, THE BOY FROM OZ and ALTAR BOYZ. Jared has also been onstage recently appearing as Mister in The Color Purple at Hattiloo Theatre and will be joining the cast of BEAUTIFUL: THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL in March as one of the four Drifters, making his boy band debut. Jared thanks the incredible cast and crew for taking this journey to live out their dreams as storytellers. He credits the artists of his team for their trust and confidence. Jared is inspired to tell stories that move, inspire,

and spark needed conversations. But, more importantly, use art to journey into the lives of underrepresented communities: women, queer folk, black people – telling their stories authentically and lovingly.

Sherronda Whitmore Johnson (Lena Younger/Intimacy Choreographer) is thrilled to make her debut with Theatre Memphis. She recently worked as Stage Manager and Intimacy Choreographer for FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS and THE COLOR PURPLE (Hattiloo Theatre). She was the Director for SISTAS THE MUSICAL (Hattiloo Theatre) and Assistant Director for MISSISSIPPI GODDAMN (Circuit Playhouse). This performance is dedicated to Pearl, Girlean, Ruth, Elvira, and Ardella, who taught her about strength and love.

Jonathan Stewart Mosley (Bobo / u/s Walter Lee Younger) is a native Memphian with a passion for acting. In 2018, he made his stage debut at the Hattiloo Theatre playing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma the Musical. Since then, he has been in other local productions and even toured regionally. He is excited to be in his first production with Theatre Memphis.

Trey Oliver (Walter Lee Younger) is a Memphis native who developed a love for acting at an early age after participating in summer programs like Arts Camp, Blues Camp, and Echoes of Truth. This is Trey's second production on the Theatre Memphis stage, where he was seen earlier this year as Eddie in Sister Act. Other credits include If Pekin Is A Duck, Why Am I In Chicago at TheatreWorks, Clyde's (Swing) at The Circuit Playhouse, and most recently, starred as Juicy in the regional premiere of Fat Ham at Circuit Playhouse, also under the direction of Jared Thomas Johnson. Trey would like to thank all of the teachers and mentors he has had over the years, and most importantly, his family and friends for their unwavering support.

Marsena Sellers (Costume Designer) is a Memphis native who earned her Bachelor's in Africa and African American Studies from the University of Memphis. Marsena began her costuming career with Memphis' own Hattiloo Theatre in 2015. She was the Stage Manager for IF SCROOGE WAS A BROTHER (2015) and was the Assistant Stage Manager for IN THE RED AND BROWN WATER (2015). She went on to design costumes for Hattiloo's

productions of Sassy Mamas in 2016, Take the Soul Train to Christmas in 2023, For Colored Girls, Too Heavy for your Pocket, Women in the Pit, Shaking The Mess Out Of Misery, School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play (Ostrander Award nomination), The Color Purple, Father Comes Home from the Wars, and A Song for Coretta in which she also played the character Gwen. She assisted in the costume designs for Aida and Ruined in 2017. Marsena has since worked as a costumer and/or stylist for major television networks like NBC, Hulu, Apple, Lifetime, Hallmark, Netflix, along with a plethora of short films, music videos, and the Broadway production Hamilton. Marsena is elated to make her debut with Theatre Memphis and to have the pleasure to serve the cast of Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun as the Costume Designer.

Mariah Michelle Stokes (Beneatha Younger) is a passionate singer, actress, proud alopecian, and Master's level social worker. She has been singing since she was 5 years old, but did not appear in her first stage play until 2018 under the direction of MaryAnn Washington. Mariah wants people to believe in their gifts and continuously cultivate self-love.

Nicholas Weaver (Moving Man / u/s Joseph Asagai) is thrilled to be making his Theatre Memphis debut. He is a Tacoma, WA native whose recent credits include The Color Purple and Take The Soul Train to Christmas with Hattiloo Theatre. Professionally, he is a nonprofit leader who collaborates with local nonprofits and executive-level talent to connect them to resources to impact the greater Memphis community. Personally, he is a lover and student of the arts. Although he is new to the theatre world, he is no stranger to music. Having sung background for Jennifer Hudson and various indie artists, he is comfortable behind a microphone. He is excited to be a part of this amazing show and looks forward to performing for you! IG: Nicktwe

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A RAISIN IN THE SUN CREW

Stage Manager

Kaitlin Brucker

Assistant Stage Manager

Olivia "Via" Caspersen

Intimacy Choreographer

Sherronda Whitmore Johnson

Fight Choreographer

Austin Wall

Stage Crew

Kadarius Clemons

Child Supervisors

Ashley McArthur, Brandon McArthur

Set & Properties Construction

Michael Compton, Jason Eschhofen,

David Horne, Maggie Jackson, Mark Kimberling, Doug Laurie, Jack Netzel-Yates, Nicole Northington, Chelsea Robinson, Abi Walker

Costume Construction

Cathy Bascom, Connie Douglass, Amie Eoff, Julia Horne, Brigette Hutchison, Pam Johnson, Pam Key, Geri Meltzer, Gracen Rawlinson, Olivia Scruggs, Ashley Selberg

Additional Crew

Kennedy Jefferson, Daniel Marshall

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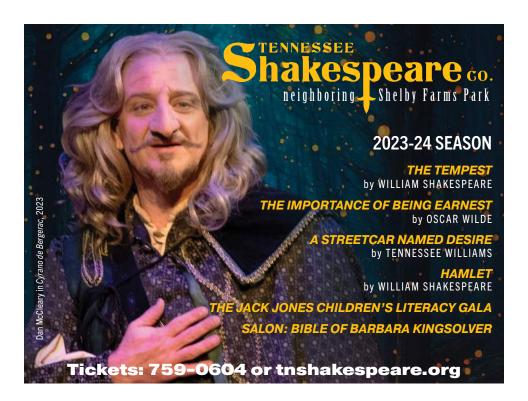
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THEATRE MEMPHIS ARTISTIC STAFF

Becky Caspersen (Director of Stage Management, Outreach and Volunteer Engagement), a native of St. Louis, was transplanted in Memphis circa 2012 and has never looked back. After 25 years as a free-lance lighting designer/stage manager, 5 years as Production Manager for Opera Memphis, and a 3-time complete failure at retirement, she found a soft landing here at TM in April 2022. She is the wife of one amazing jazz bassist/music director (Carl), mother of three fierce (and artsy) women warriors (Gigi, Anneka, and Via), and the caretaker of 2 Great Pyrenees (which keep her well stocked in lint rollers). Becky is thankful to Theatre Memphis for providing her with a wonderful theatre "work family" and a safe place to hide her chocolate.

Michael Compton (Production Manager/Technical Director) This is Mr. Compton's 20th season as Production Manager for TM. He earned his BS in Technical Theatre from Illinois State University and was previously the Technical Director for the Players Theatre in Sarasota, FL. Ostrander Awards include lighting design for Thoroughly Modern Millie, the Behind the Scenes Award for the 2006-2007 season, and the 2021 Janie McCrary Putting it Together Award.

Amie Eoff (Resident Costume Designer) is pleased to be the Resident Costume Designer at TM. From 2012-2014, she served as the Costume Shop Supervisor at Rhodes College, and in 2012, she completed her fourth season as the Resident Costume Designer for Circuit Playhouse. During her career, Amie has been nominated for several Ostrander Awards for Best Costumes and won for Present Laughter; Bloody, Bloody, Andrew Jackson; The Producers; 1776; Shrek The Musical; Side show; Cats; and Ragtime. She holds an MFA in Costume Design from the University of Southern Mississippi. She has also worked on cruise ships with Jean Ann Ryan Productions and has designed for the Hangar Theatre in New York.

Jason Eschhofen (Resident Sound Designer) has a BA in Voice Performance and Studio Recording Technology from Bowling Green State University and an MM in Voice Performance from the University of Memphis. Some of his favorite credits include The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee (Theatre Memphis, music direction); RUTHLESS! THE MUSICAL (Theatre Memphis, music direction); Days of Rage (Playhouse on the Square, sound design); and Murder for Two (Playhouse on the Square, Marcus Moscowicz, co-music direction, sound design/recording/engineering). Additionally, Jason has been the Music Director for the High School Musical Theatre Awards at the Orpheum since 2017 and the Music Director for the Ostrander Awards since 2019. He has won Ostrander Awards for Best Musical Direction (Nine, University of Memphis), Best Sound Design (Urinetown The Musical, Theatre Memphis), and the Larry Riley Rising Star award.

Maggie Jackson (Assistant Technical Director) is excited to be joining Theatre Memphis for its 101st season. After the honor of being Stage Manager for RAGTIME, she is thrilled to continue her work with this wonderful community as the Assistant Technical Director. She would like to thank the TM staff, directors, and the cast and rew for the opportunity to be a part of such an amazing production and season. Lastly, she would like to thank her family and friends for all their love and support.

Jack Netzel-Yates (Resident Scenic Designer/Properties Master) received his BFA in Theatrical Design and Production from Oklahoma City University in 2010. Now entering his tenth year with TM, he has previously worked for venues such as The Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, Light Opera Oklahoma, Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park, City Rep., Ballet Memphis, and Tennessee Shakespeare Company. Jack has designed over 67 productions for TM, received 49 Ostrander Award nominations, and won Best Scenic Design for his work on The Heiress (2014), The Producers (2015), Beauty and the Beast (2016), Hairspray (2018), Cats (2019), The Secret Garden (2021), and Urinetown The Musical (2021). Most recently, Jack received the American Association of Community Theatre Award for Scenic Design of the Decade for The Drowsy Chaperone (2018). He would like to thank his friends and family for all of their continued love and support, especially his husband, Terry.

Nicole Northington (Resident Lighting Designer) is excited to join Theatre Memphis for her first season as the Resident Lighting Designer. She began participating in technical theatre as a freshman in high school and went on to receive her BA in Dramatic Arts in 2019 from Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, Tennessee. During her time in Nashville, she worked with many organizations including Nashville Children's Theatre, TPAC, Nashville Opera, and more. After graduating, she moved to Memphis in August 2019 to complete three seasons at the Circuit Playhouse. Some of her favorite designs include TORCH SONG, SONGS FOR A NEW WORLD, THE GOODBYE LEVEE, and NAT TURNER IN JERUSALEM. This and every show she does is dedicated to her late father, LJ Northington. For every day he drove her to play rehearsal to every show he saw, his support is what got her here today.

Chelsea Robinson (Stage Management, Outreach and Volunteer Engagement Manager) has been part of the Theatre Memphis family since 2008 where she has been stage managing, working backstage, volunteering, and performing for many years and was a member of the ShoWagon acting troupe during the 2012-2013 season. She received her BFA in Design and Technical Production from The University of Memphis and received the Larry Riley Rising Star Award at the 2015 Ostrander Theatre Awards in Memphis. Chelsea is so excited to work with the incredible staff at Theatre Memphis and all of the amazing casts, crews, stage managers, and volunteers for the upcoming seasons.

THEATRE MEMPHIS ARTISTIC STAFF

Karon Samuels (Outreach and Education Programs) currently serves as Program Coordinator for The Cooler, Outreach Coordinator for Memphis Black Arts Alliance, and Education and Outreach Associate with Theatre Memphis. She also serves as a Read2Lead Theatre Instructor with Memphis Dream Center, a local non-profit that seeks to empower Memphis youth by encouraging a love of reading. A proud graduate of Howard University's Fine Arts program, Karon has spent much of her career elevating and celebrating black storytelling and marginalized voices, working with local art nonprofits that support her personal mission of art accessibility and equity. She is also an artist in her own right, gracing stages in musicals, plays, spoken word sets, and operas in Memphis and the DMV area. Karon is proud to play her part in creating a unique and sustainable creative ecosystem in Memphis. She hopes to see the creatives in our city leave a lasting, socially impactful influence in modern media, both onstage and behind the scenes.

Ashley Selberg (Costume Shop Manager) was born and raised outside of Memphis, TN. She attended O'More College of Design and received a BFA in Fashion Design. While in college, she interned at Nashville Repertory Theatre and fell in love with costuming. After graduating, she became a costume technician for Ballet Memphis under head designer Bruce Bui. Since then, she has worked for other theatres and film production companies on shows like BLUFF CITY LAW and WOMEN OF THE MOVEMENT. In 2022, she won the Ostrander Award for Best Costumes and Best Wig and Makeup for THE SECRET GARDEN at Theatre Memphis. She also competes in Cosplay, winning Best in Show at MTAC 2018 and Best Group at MTAC 2022. "Costuming is my passion; there is just something magical about helping an actor, dancer, or everyday person feel special by creating the perfect costume that brings everything together.'

Abi Walker (Stage Management, Outreach & Volunteer Engagement Assistant) Having always been dramatic, Abi surprised no one when she chose to study theatre, first at Northwest Community College and then Mississippi University for Women. She worked summers at Carey Dinner Theatre, was a carpentry intern at Playhouse on the Square, and recently produced a feature film with her husband. Some of her favorite credits include backstage crew for PRISCILLA: QUEEN OF THE DESERT (Playhouse on the Square), Juliet in ROMEO AND JULIET (NWCC), Assistant Director for WAKERS: AN AUDIO DRAMA (Bedrock Productions), and Executive Producer for TWENTIES (Clandestine Pictures).

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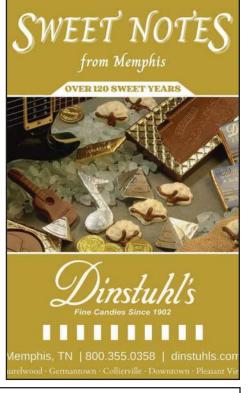


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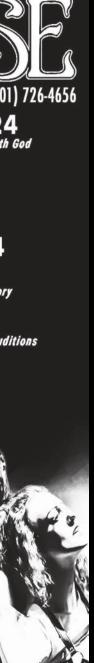
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