

THEATRE MEMPHIS presents **"BYHALIA, MISSISSIPPI"**
Written and Directed by **EVAN LINDER** ▪ Sponsored by **DR. THOMAS RATLIFF**
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NOVEMBER 11-22

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THEATRE MEMPHIS in the NEXT STAGE

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Tickets **901.682.8323** | Online **theatrememphis.org**

IN THE NEXT STAGE AT THEATRE MEMPHIS



Written and Directed by **EVAN LINDER**
Executive Producer **DEBBIE LITCH**

Production Manager/TD
MICHAEL COMPTON

Resident Costume Designer
AMIE EOFF

Resident Lighting Designer
NICOLE NORTHINGTON

Resident Scenic and Props Designer
JACK NETZEL-YATES

Resident Sound Designer
EMILY LUCE

Assistant Technical Director
MAGGIE JACKSON

Costume Shop Manager
ASHLEY SELBERG

Fight Choreographer
LAUREN HESTER GUNN

Stage Manager
MARYA PAOLILLO

Assistant Stage Manager
ALISON REINGOLD

CAST

Jim . . . . . **ROBERT ALLISTON**
Ayesha . . . . . **JESSICA "JAI" GARRETT**
Celeste . . . . . **JENNY ODLE MADDEN**
Karl . . . . . **DARIOUS ROBERTSON**
Laurel . . . . . **HALEY WILSON**

Poster/Program Design by Missy McClendon
Production Photos by Carla McDonald
Program Layout by Michael Gravois

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY



ROBERT ALLISTON (Jim) teaches English literature and coaches football & soccer at Southaven Middle School in Southaven, MS. He was last seen in the production of *Shawshank Redemption* here at Theatre Memphis. He is excited to be part of this production!



JESSICA "JAI" GARRETT (Ayesha) has been a proud member of the Memphis acting community since 2010. Some of her favorite stage credits include *The Submission, Ruined* (Ostrander Award - Best Supporting Actress), *Detroit '67, American Son* (Ostrander Award - Best Leading Actress), *Rasheeda Speaking*, and *Sweat*. She is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to share the stage with this talented cast and to create art under the visionary direction of Evan Linder. Special love and appreciation to my husband, Scott!



LAUREN HESTER GUNN (Fight Choreographer) has worked as a senior resident actor and teaching-artist with Tennessee Shakespeare Company. Additionally, she is an advanced combatant and associate instructor with Dueling Arts International and has worked as a fight director and stage combat instructor throughout Tennessee, Missouri, Mississippi, and Illinois. Within Memphis, Lauren has had the pleasure of collaborating with Ballet Memphis, Opera Memphis, Theatre Memphis, Germantown Community Theatre, New Moon Theatre, and several local high schools. Fight direction credits include: *Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, Henry IV Part One, The Lightning Thief, Evil Dead the Musical, Carmen, Treasure Island,* and *The Illusion*.



EVAN LINDER (Director/Playwright) is a playwright, actor and director. He was a co-founder of Chicago's The New Colony, a theatre company that produced over 30 world premiere plays and musicals under his leadership as Co-Artistic Director. Evan is a proud graduate of the College of Charleston and received the Alumni of the Year award in 2016. His plays include *Byhalia Mississippi, 11:11, The Warriors, The Bear Suit of Happiness, B-Side Studio,* and *5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche*. *Byhalia, Mississippi* received simultaneous world premiere productions on January 8th, 2016 at theaters in Chicago, Toronto, Memphis and Charleston SC. The following week, theaters in Boulder, Los Angeles and Birmingham produced staged readings of the play before a live online World Premiere Conversation was held connecting audiences and creative teams in all seven cities. *Byhalia* received six nominations including Best Production at the 2016 Non-Equity Jeff Awards where Evan was given the Jeff Award for Best New Work. *Byhalia* was subsequently remounted at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago. In 2019, it was produced as part of the Kennedy Center's season in Washington D.C.



JENNY ODLE MADDEN (Celeste) began her professional career in 1995 at Playhouse on the Square as an intern, company member, and Director of Development, earning accolades as both a performer and administrator. She is the co-founder of Voices of the South, creating and performing theatrical works locally, nationally, and internationally. A nine-time Memphis Theatre Award-winning actress, her favorite credits include Emilia (*Othello*), Rona (*The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*), Rosie (*Mamma Mia!*), Mo (*Parallel Lives*), and everything Voices of the South. Jenny is presently the Director of Auxiliary Programs for St. Mary's Episcopal School, where she has been teaching and directing for 28 years. She has been happily married for 27 years to her husband, Jim, and they are the proud parents of James and Chloie.



MARYA PAOLILLO (Stage Manager) started volunteering backstage with Theatre Memphis in 2012. She has also stage managed for New Moon Theatre Company, Germantown Community Theatre, The Harrell Performing Arts Theatre, Theatre Oxford and Lost in Found Production Company. Marya would like to thank her family and friends for always supporting her and her love of the arts. Love to her husband.



ALISON REINGOLD (Assistant Stage Manager) is happy to be helping bring this beautiful work to life. Alison is involved with Memphis theatre as a performer and a technician. She will be playing Hall in *Men on Boats* at New Moon Theatre Company in February. Thank you to Marya for this opportunity!

WHO'S WHO IN THE COMPANY (cont.)



DARIOUS ROBERTSON (Karl) is a Memphis-based actor and entrepreneur. He is excited to make his Theatre Memphis debut. His stage credits include *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Levee), *The Meeting* (Malcolm X), and *Sassy Mamas* (TayTay) at Hattiloo Theatre, as well as *Mississippi Goddamn* and *Days of Rage* at Playhouse on the Square. His performance as Levee in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* earned him an Ostrander Award nomination for Lead Actor. He is grateful for every opportunity to tell stories rooted in humanity, complexity, and the culture of the South, and is thrilled to share the stage with the cast and creative team of *Byhalia, Mississippi*.



HALEY WILSON (Laurel) is thrilled to be back on stage at Theatre Memphis! A Memphis-based actor, singer, and choreographer, Haley has appeared in *Come From Away* (Beverly), *A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline* (Patsy Cline), *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* (Sonya), POTUS (Dusty), and *Smokey Joe's Café* (Shimmy Girl), among many others. She holds a BFA in Musical Theatre with a concentration in Choreography and Directing from Drake University. Haley is an Ostrander Award winner for Best Supporting Actress for her performance as Sonya in *The Great Comet of 1812*. She would like to thank her family, friends, and her fiance, Morgan, for their endless love, encouragement, and belief in her. Your support means the world.
Insta: haley.breann.wilson

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Forgiveness can be messy, especially when it comes to the people we love. What are we willing to forgive? Who deserves forgiveness and who doesn't? The five characters you are about to meet in Byhalia, Mississippi find themselves asking these questions. What always surprises me whenever I return to this story is the love I feel for each one of these characters. All of them are beautifully and devastatingly human, trying to make it through the best way they know how. However, they also have a habit of ignoring things that might be unpleasant, which can ultimately make forgiveness that much harder. If we don't address our past wrongs, how can anything change for the better?

Ten years have passed since Byhalia, Mississippi first premiered. From Chicago to Toronto, from Sacramento to the Kennedy Center, this play has sparked conversations that have opened my eyes and enriched my life. I could not be more proud to bring it back to my hometown and share it with Memphis audiences. I hope you grow to care about these characters like I do.

More than anything, I hope you remember the names Skip Robinson and Butler Young Jr. Look them up when you get home. It might be unpleasant, but we can't ignore it.

A family tradition for 49 years.
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