

THE UMBRELLASM
STAGE COMPANY

The Color Purple



2022–2023 SEASON

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THE UMBRELLA STAGE COMPANY PRESENTS

The Color Purple

Based on the novel by Alice Walker
and the Warner Bros./Amblin Entertainment Motion Picture

by Marsha Norman

Music & Lyrics by

Brenda Russell, Allee Willis, & Stephen Bray

Produced by Brian Boruta

Directed by BW Gonzalez

Music Direction by
Nathanael Wilkerson

Lighting Design by
SeifAllah Salotto-Cristobal

Choreographed by
Najee A. Brown

Sound Design by
James Cannon

Stage Managed by
Anna Hanh*

Costume Design by
Danielle Domingue Sumi

Assistant Stage Managed by
Nadine Sa

Hair & Make-up Design by
Schanaya Barrows

Scenic Design by
Janie E. Howland

Properties & Set Dressing by
Sarajane Morse Mullins

The Color Purple was produced on Broadway at the Broadway Theater by Oprah Winfrey, Scott Sanders, Roy Furman, and Quincy Jones. The world premiere of The Color Purple was produced by the Alliance Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia.

THE COLOR PURPLE is presented through special arrangement with and all authorized performance materials are supplied by Theatrical Rights Worldwide, 1180 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 640, New York, NY 10036. www.theatricalrights.com

This show is sponsored by Gail & Matt Burr

Assistive Listening Devices are available at this performance. If you would like to inquire about using one, ask an usher or a member of house management.

The Color Purple contains overt racism and sexism, as well as depictions of physical and sexual violence, and also alludes to rape and incest.



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The Color Purple

Cast

Shy'Kira Allen as Celie
Kai Clifton as Sofia
Cristin Gilmore* as Shug Avery
Jordan Aaron Hall* as Harpo
Brian Demar Jones* as Mister
Kayla Leacock* as Nettie

Understudies

Randell Benford u/s Harpo	Hanifa Nelson-Kamau u/s Sofia
Dashawn McClinton u/s Mister	Aloura "Aeon" Smith u/s Nettie, Squeak

Swings

Todd McNeel	Jade Mitchell
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WITH

Schanaya Barrows	Sydney Jackson
Yasmeen Duncan	Nicole Franklin Kelley
Fatima Elmi	Zachary McConnell*
Aaron Graham	Treshor Webster

Band

Nathanael Wilkerson, <i>Keyboard I</i>	Carlos Ramos, <i>Trumpet</i>
Liz Sinn, <i>Keyboard II</i>	Josh Bass, <i>Guitar</i>
Vivek Patel, <i>Reed I</i>	Tristan Harrison, <i>Bass</i>
Riley LePere, <i>Reed II</i>	Stephen Guerra, <i>Percussion</i>

* Appearing through an Agreement between this theater and Actor's Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. **Actors' Equity Association** ("Equity"), founded in 1913, is the U.S. labor union that represents more than 51,000 professional Actors and Stage Managers. Equity fosters the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, improving working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors' Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. Equity is governed by its own members through an elected Council, representing principal actors, chorus actors and stage managers living in three regions: Eastern, Central and Western. Members at large participate in Equity's governance through a system of regional Boards and Committees. Equity has 28 designated area liaison cities with over 100 members each.



Musical Numbers

The Color Purple is performed in two acts, with one intermission.

ACT 1

Opening Act I - Nettie, Celie
Somebody Gonna Love You - Celie, Nettie, Women
Our Prayer - Celie, Nettie, Church Ladies
That's Fine Mister - Jarene, Doris, Darlene
Big Dog - Mister, Field Hands, Celie
Mister-Nettie - Mister, Celie
Lily of the Field - Celie
Sofia - Harpo, Sofia
Dear God-Sofia - Celie
A Tree Named Sofia - Doris, Jarene, Darlene
Hell No! - Sofia, Sofia's Sisters
Brown Betty Part 1-2-3 - Underscore
Shug Avery Comin' To Town - Mister, Church Ladies, Celie, Men, Townspeople
All We Got To Say - Doris, Jarene, Darlene
Dear God-Shug - Celie, Shug
Too Beautiful For Words - Shug
Push Da Button - Shug, Band, Crowd
Uh-Oh - Church Ladies, Sofia, Mister, Harpo, Squeak, Crowd
What About Love - Celie, Shug
Finale Act I - Underscore

ACT 2

Africa (Part 1) - Nettie, Celie, Chief, Villagers, Olinka Children
Africa (Part 2) - Olinka Children, African Wives, Nettie, Celie
We Walk Away - Ensemble
The Color Purple-Shug - Shug
It's Easter Sunday - Nettie
End Easter Dinner - Celie
Mister's Nightmare - Underscore
Mister Song - Mister
Letter to Nettie - Underscore
In Miss Celie's Pants - Celie, Shug, Doris, Darlene, Jarene
Any Little Thing - Underscore
What About Love-Reprise - Celie
I'm Here - Celie
Reunion - Underscore
The Color Purple - Celie, Nettie, Sofia, Adam, Olivia, Shug, Harpo, Mister, Ensemble



Welcome to The Umbrella Stage Company's 2022/2023 season.

We are beyond happy to be bringing live theater to the region. While the pandemic took its toll on all of us, The Umbrella has remained strong and is committed to continuing to produce bold, daring, and innovative work.

The pandemic has forced many of us to reconsider how we work, what we produce, and what that im-

pact has on our community. During your visit to The Umbrella, I encourage you to spend some time in our Gallery, wander through the three floors of artist studios, and peek into our classrooms. I hope that tonight's performance will leave you wanting to not only come back for more theater, but also to sign up for an art class, come to a gallery opening or concert or film, visit us at Winter Market and Open Studios, engage with our Arts & Environment program, tour our outdoors public art installations, or become a volunteer.

There are so many ways you can participate in the Arts at The Umbrella. We look forward to seeing more of you.

Enjoy the show!

Jerry Wedge
Executive Director
TheUmbrellaArts.org

Welcome!

Thank you for joining us for the final production of the 2022/2023 season! It has been a joy sharing such powerful work with you all season long, and *The Color Purple* is the perfect culmination to a year of brave storytelling.

A joyous testament to the healing power of love, *The Color Purple* has become an iconic masterpiece of musical theater. I am excited to have partnered with BW Gonzalez, who appeared in last season's *The Colored Museum*, to stage this beautiful piece with an incredible company of artists.

While the 2022/23 season is winding to a close, we are also preparing for a thrilling line up in the 2023/24 season! In September, we open with the volcanic rock musical *Lizzie*, followed by the uniquely engaging *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit*. The two will run in rep through November, activating both our Main Stage and our Black Box. In March we present the Greater Boston Premiere of Tracy Letts' Tony nominated play, *The Minutes*. We close our season with the return of director Nancy Curran Willis who will helm a production which we will announce later this year.

Thank you again for all your support this season. I can't wait to welcome you back to The Umbrella again soon.

Enjoy the show!

See you at the theater!

Brian Boruta, **Producing Artistic Director, The Umbrella Stage Company**

Letter from the Director

Dear friends,

Hello and welcome to The Umbrella Stage's production of the musical version of *The Color Purple*.

This is a timeless and epic piece of theater, giving us a snapshot of African American history from the turn of the twentieth century, well into the 1940's. It tells the story of a young African American female raised in rural Georgia, from ages fourteen to forty. Celie faces seemingly insurmountable odds as she tries to survive a world that is hostile and unforgiving to her. She is expected to care for and nurture those who care nothing for her. She is brutalized not only by her stepfather and husband, but also by a society that does not see her as human. That sees her as an ignorant and obstinate possession, a vessel for birthing only to be cast aside at will. Celie loses everything she ever loves, including her own children. Yet, through it all, Celie's indomitable spirit searches unceasingly for the love, both spiritual and physical, that has eluded her. In this search, she brings out the best in all those around her and, in the end, creates the life she has always dreamed of. Her spirit is the spirit of African American women across this nation. Her personal anthem, "I'm Here," cuts to the very core of a society determined to cast aside or render invisible a nation of African American women who helped build this country with strength, sweat, tears, blood, joy, and grace.

Experiencing this story for the first time in Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, published in 1982, changed the perceptions and the lives of women around the world. Ms. Walker states that she wrote the story because she never knew her grandmother or her great grandmother. Women, she says, who had very sad and difficult lives. She speaks of how much she loved and admired her own mother and that her mother's only joy in life was the garden she created. Over forty years ago, Alice Walker planted a seed in the American psyche called *The Color Purple*. This garden has grown into a global garden lush with compassion and love for all living things, and a deeper understanding of that which connects each and every one of us.

The Umbrella Stage Company's production of this beautiful piece of theater was created as a love letter to the theater because of its intricate patchwork of scenes that form a delicate pattern of love, surrounded by the strength and endurance of the spirit of our African ancestors. It is in the spirit of love that we present this piece. Love of community, love of family and love of the theater.

BW Gonzalez, **Director**

Dramaturg's Note

Diversity in the Black Community

There's a common misconception about 'Black shows'. I think we have all come around to the same conclusion, that Black directors and creatives should be at the helm of shows about the Black experience that feature an all, or mostly, Black cast. Yes to this – it's super important. As Black people, there are many common cultural things that we can relate to. But also, the 'Black experience' is not one thing. It is a mistake to believe that there is not diversity within any Black group. Black people are not a monolith.

The Color Purple alone shows us a wide range of Black experience, from powerful women overcoming colorism, sexism and violence, to folks struggling with identity and relationship to Africa, to victims of white supremacy who perpetrate the same violence on other Black people. The characters in *The Color Purple* are as diverse as the actors who are portraying them on stage.

As an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion consultant, I sat down with the cast to engage in discussion about Blackness. Yes, we were all Black – but we all had different stories to share. We all came to *The Color Purple* with different lived experiences. Some felt right at home with characters like the church ladies while others spoke of being ostracized from the church because of their identities. Some had grown up in mostly white communities and had felt forced to assimilate. Some with darker skin spoke of suffering from overt colorism growing up, while others shared their struggles around identity and 'fitting into' Black spaces. Perhaps Blackmembers of our audience can identify with one of these perspectives. Maybe none of them ring true, and that just further proves the vast diversity of experiences of our people.

Though the stereotypes that often come along with Blackness do not define us, Blackness itself is a part of our identity. We all share in the joy, strength and resilience of our people, both in *The Color Purple* and in our lives. This line in 'African Homeland' has always stood out to me:

*We walk away from this ravaged land
With courage deep in our hearts
To face the unknown, together
We'll find a place where we can be
Where spirit rise and soul is free
Our people, my people*

Though our paths, challenges and identities as Black people are unique, we are all connected to the African Homeland – whether we remember it or not. Whether our ancestors were stolen or traveled here freely. Across the African diaspora, we all have claim to Blackness, and that ties us together. We celebrate our diversity as proudly as we celebrate the beauty of our people.

Kira Troilo, **EDI Consultant**

Who's who in The Color Purple



Shy'Kira Allen (*Celie*) is thrilled to be making her professional debut with The Umbrella Stage Company! She is an actress based in Boston who's originally from Memphis, TN. Her love for singing and acting started when she was young and carried over into her school-aged years. After graduating high school in 2021, she moved to Boston to pursue an BFA in Musical Theatre from Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Along with performing, Shy'Kira also writes music and cares deeply about social justice. She would like to thank her Mom and brothers for being so supportive of her no matter what. She would also like to give a heavenly shout-out to Dr. Sandra Franks and Mr. Woodie Whited, who taught her everything she

knows, and while they can't be physically with her, she knows they're watching over each step of the way.



Schanaya Barrows (*Olivia/Ensemble*) is excited to be making her debut at The Umbrella Stage Company! She graduated with a BFA in Theatre Performance and Dance at Salem State University 2021. Her recent credits include Ashlee in *Dance Nation* (The Apollinaire Theatre), Meeka, Beth in *Can I Touch it?* (Company One) for which she won an Elliot Norton Award, Helena, Peter Quince, Choreographer in *Dream Love Escape* (The Ridiculous Project), Adding clerk, Lawyer of Defense, Reporter, Choreographer in *Machinal* (Salem State University). Other credits include *The Long Christmas Ride Home* (Choreographer), *Much A Do About Nothing* (Choreographer), *Bedroom Farce* (Female swing, Fight Captain), George Washington, Shante Johnson, Lois Milberger, Woman in *Gunplay: A play about America*, Sarah's Friend, Harlem Ensemble, Dance Captain in *Ragtime*, Melpomene, Leda, Margery U/S, Dance ensemble in *A Freeman of Color* (Salem State University). Awards: Elliot Norton Winner (2023), KCACTF Region 1 Irene Ryan Best Scene Partner (2019), Merit Nomination for Best Ensemble (*Ragtime*). Irene Ryan Nominee KCACTF (2019). (she/her)



Randell Benford (*Adam/Brody/us Harpo/us Preacher*), Off-Broadway: *That Just Happened A Sketch Comedy* (Players Theatre) Regional: *QUEENS* (Moonbox), *Gods Dirty Deeds* (Entropy Theatre). Educational: *Candide* (The Boston Conservatory), *Violet*, *Sweeney Todd* (Interlochen Arts Academy). He is a graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy and is a current student at The Boston Conservatory at Berklee. He is excited to see his childhood icon Beyoncé this summer in concert. @randellbenford



Kai Clifton (*Sofia*) is so excited to be back at The Umbrella for *The Color Purple*. Recent onstage credits include: Ursula in *The Little Mermaid* (The Palace Theatre), Miss Roj in *The Colored Museum* and Pythio in *Head Over Heels* both at The Umbrella. Kai is also a playwright and recently won the Broadway World Award for Best New Play or Musical for his original play titled *QUEENS*. Kai would like to dedicate their performance of the role Sofia to his Mother, and thank her for being the perfect example of what it means to be resilient, strong and beautiful.

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Who's who in The Color Purple



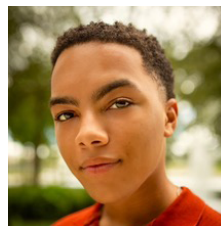
Yasmeen Duncan (*Doris/Ensemble*) was last seen at The Umbrella in *The Colored Museum* last Spring. She works as a Boston-based model and actor, and is a graduate student at Emerson College studying Applied Theatre. Other credits include *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicidal When The Rainbow is Enuf* and *A Song For Coretta* (CMU University Theatre). She is thrilled to be back at The Umbrella!



Fatima Elmi (*Ensemble/us Shug*) was last seen at The Umbrella in *Parade*. She also played the Killer Queen in *We Will Rock You* and Eve/Mama Noah in *Children of Eden* (TAM). Fatima is beyond excited to be part of this beautiful production with all of these amazing humans.



Crystin Gilmore (*Shug Avery*) is ecstatic to be making her debut with The Umbrella Stage Company! Some of her recent credits are: Camae in *The Mountaintop* (Footlight Players), Albert "Pearl" Johnson in *Black Pearl Sings!*, Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray* (Charleston Stage Co.). Some additional credits include *School Girls*; Headmistress in *Or The African Mean Girls Play*, Shug Avery in *The Color Purple* (Speakeasy Stage Co.) where she received an IRNE and Arts Impulse Award, Miss Pain in *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin* (Progressive Theater), Mae in *Letters from War* (North Shore Theatre), and Wanda in *Beehive! The 60's Musical* (Greenbrier Valley Theatre). Crystin also enjoys being a motivational speaker, doing commercials, voiceovers and she hosts a podcast called POVwCrystinGilmore. Special thanks to her family, friends and the Lord. Philippians 4:6-8. @crystingilmore, crystingilmore.com



Aaron Graham (*Prison Guard/Ensemble/us Ol' Mister*) is so so excited to join The Umbrella Arts family. He is currently a rising junior at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Recent credits include: Ensemble/Angel Cover in *Bucks County Playhouse*.



Jordan Aaron Hall* (*Harpo*) is an actor, singer, writer, and director from Harlem, NY. Jordan got his start as a performer on Broadway as a child playing Young Simba in *Lion King* and Young Michael Jackson in *Motown The Musical*. In 2023, he will appear in *The Idea of You* on Amazon Prime as Zeke, as well as a Featured Vocalist in *Rustin* on Netflix. He thanks his family and friends for all of their support. @jordanaaronhall on Instagram.

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Who's who in The Color Purple



Sydney Jackson (*Squeak*) is thrilled to be a part of this amazing cast of *The Color Purple*. She is currently pursuing a BFA in Acting with a Concentration in Musical Theatre from Boston University College of Fine Arts. Sydney would like to thank her family and friends for their support!



Brian Demar Jones* (*Mister*) is grateful for the opportunity to work with The Umbrella Stage Company for a second time in a row. He was last seen as Tom Collins in this past year's production of *RENT*. Brian is also a teacher at the Walnut Hill School for the Arts, as well as a freelance director. Brian will also be playing in New Rep's upcoming production of *The Normal Heart* this summer, as well as directing *Into the Woods* for the Actor's Company of Natick. Some of his favorite regional credits include: The Dentist in *Little Shop of Horrors*; Elegba/Marcus in *The Brother/Sister Plays*; Darcy in Kate Hamill's *Pride and Prejudice*; Theseus/Oberon in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. A special thanks to his Walnut Hill community for their ever

growing support. Bdemarjones.com. IG: bdemarj



Nicole Franklin Kelley (*Church Soloist/Ensemble*) is making her Umbrella debut and is thrilled to be working with such a talented group of actors. Favorite past roles include Sarah in *Ragtime*, Marta in *Spring Awakening*, Aida in *Aida* and Dynamite in *Hairspray*. Nicole studied Theater and Voice Performance at Westfield State University where she earned her Bachelors. She would like to thank her husband and 2 beautiful boys (K&K) for their constant love and support. This performance is dedicated to her dear friend Helen.



Kayla Leacock (*Nettie*) is beyond thrilled to be making her Greater Boston Area debut in *The Color Purple*! Select credits include: National Tour: Rocky in *PAW Patrol Live!*, Ada Twist in *Rosie Revere Engineer & Friends*. Regional: Renee in *Hurricane Diane*, Linnea in *Bad World: A New Musical*, Makeda in *The Paradox of Education*, Alice's Daughter in *Big River*, Lily Polkadot in *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical*, Dynamite in *Hairspray*. Special thanks to her family, friends, and The Umbrella Stage Company! www.kaylaleacock.com



Dashawn McClinton (*Preacher/Ol' Mister/us Mister*) is thrilled to make his Umbrella debut with *The Color Purple*. As a student at the Boston Conservatory, he is very excited to share the stage with so many of his peers. Dashawn has been seen in many different roles, including Sky in *QUEENS*, Papa Corin in *As You Like It* and The Baker in *Into The Woods*. Dashawn would love to thank his family and best friend Shelby for their constant support. Instagram is @dashawwnn

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Who's who in The Color Purple



Zachary McConnell* (*Pa/Buster/Grady*) From a small town in West Michigan, Zachary McConnell is thrilled to be making his debut with The Umbrella Stage Company! He received his BFA in Music Theatre Performance from Western Michigan University where he played such roles as Angel in *RENT* and Mr. Magix in *My One And Only*. He then attended The Boston Conservatory at Berklee for his MFA. Notable professional roles include: Four-Eyed Moe in *Five Guys Named Moe* (Mason Street Warehouse Theatre), Mitch Mahoney in *Spelling Bee* and Richie in *A Chorus Line*, (Wagon Wheel Theatre).

More recently he was in the Norton Award winning company of *All is Calm* at Greater Boston Stage Company; a role he will be reprising this coming Christmas. He also played The Wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* and Rudolph in *Matilda*, both at Wheelock Family Theatre. He would like to thank his supportive and loving parents Tammra and Justin as well as his partner Adam, "who is my best muse and loving companion." Website: zmcon.com



Todd McNeel (*Swing*) is a versatile artist commended for his "tower of strength" stage presence and "powerful voice" (Theatre Mirror), McNeel, a native of Dallas, Texas, has been featured in operas, musicals, recitals, and concerts throughout the United States and Europe. Most recently, he appeared in concert with the Boston Pops/Boston Symphony Orchestra in their newly commissioned symphonic version of *Ragtime: The Musical* and in the 2023 Pulitzer Prize winning opera, *Omar*, with Boston Lyric Opera. Past season highlights include engagements with Lyric Stage Boston, Odyssey Opera, The Princeton Opera Festival, New Repertory Theatre, The Umbrella Stage Company, MassOpera, Boston Opera Collaborative, and regional tours with the American Spiritual Ensemble—including a concert with Kathleen Battle. McNeel is a proud recipient of the Emerging Talent Artist award from the Kurt Weill Foundation/Lotte Lenya Competition. He holds a Bachelors from Ouachita Baptist University and a Masters from Emerson College.



Jade Mitchell (*Swing*) is a Mississippi native, actress and performer. Some of her early life inspirations were The Temptations, Tina Turner, Whitney Houston, and the list goes on. After performing in the High School Jazz Band in her hometown, her father moved her to Boston at the age of 13. There she would attend Boston Arts Academy and study at Berklee College of Music through the City Music Program. With her background in classical, jazz, blues, gospel, spiritual, R&B, rock, and musical experience, she utilizes the techniques and styles learned to better convey the stories she is telling. A few of the productions she has taken part in are *The Wiz*, *The Motown Review*, and *Memphis the Musical*.



Hanifa Nelson-Kamau (*Jarene/us Sofia/Ensemble*) Originally from Boston, Hanifa now resides in Ashburnham, MA. As a young person, she attended the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts and worked with the National Association for African American Artists on various projects. Her vocal, acting, and limited dance skills were heavily influenced by her involvement with these groups. She has performed for and with many notable people such as Josh Groban, Rosa Parks, Maya Angelu, Ruby Dee, Nelson Mandela and countless political figures and sports celebrities. Some of her most memorable roles are Effie White in *Dreamgirls*, Sarah's Friend in *Ragtime*, Gary Coleman in *Avenue Q* and Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray*. Side note, she can totally sing with her mouth closed, mostly in key. IG @Hjaribu

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Who's who in The Color Purple



Aloura "Aeon" Smith (*Ensemble/us Nettie/us Squeak*) is a 22-year-old student at Mount Wachusett Community College getting a degree in Theatre Arts. They are absolutely overjoyed to make their Umbrella debut in this production. They have been in love with the stage since they were super small, so this experience has been very surreal. Their previous credits include Jamal in *Escape to Margaritaville* (MWCC), Fermina/Horse/Dancer in *Man of La Mancha* (MWCC) and Ensemble in *Ragtime* (MWCC) and Rosie in *Mamma Mia* (GHS). In their free time, you could find them at their sewing machine, playing their ukulele or guitar, singing (of course), or playing games on their Nintendo Switch. Recently they have also been

enjoying going to the gym and dancing in their hip hop class. Push da button and come on in, y'all! Enjoy the show! IG: @alourasmith._ (they/them/any)



Treshor Webster (*Darlene/Ensemble*) is thrilled to be performing at The Umbrella in the production of *The Color Purple*. Treshor is a recent graduate of Boston Conservatory at Berklee with a Bachelor's of Music and a minor in Creative Entrepreneurship. She is from New Orleans, LA, where she began pursuing singing in choirs and theatre from elementary school and onward. Treshor Webster was last seen as an Ensemble member in *Susannah* (The Boston Conservatory). She also played Cis in *Albert Herring* and Miss Todd in *Old Maid and the Thief* (New Orleans Center for Creative Arts); Ino in *Semele*, and Kate in *Pirates of Penzance*.



Brian Boruta (Producer) This is Brian's 46th production with The Umbrella and his 43rd as the Director of Performing Arts, during which time he has earned Best Production nominations for *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, *Red*, *Angels in America*, *Equus* and *Bonnie & Clyde*; a DASH Award for Best Play for *True West* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and Best Musical for *Parade* and *Big Fish*. Umbrella directing credits include: *Parade* (Dash Award for Best Director of a Musical) *Big Fish* (DASH Nom.), *Hair*, *Evita*, *Side Show*, *Next to Normal*, *The Rocky Horror Show*. Elsewhere: *Sweeney Todd*, *Legally Blonde*, *Godspell*, *Seussical the Musical*,

The Actor's Nightmare, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You*. Favorite on-stage credits include Billy Lawlor in *42nd Street* (DASH Nom.), Judas/ John the Baptist in *Godspell*, Cosmo Brown in *Singin' in the Rain*, Austin in *True West*, and Greg in *A Chorus Line*. As a designer and educator, Brian has worked with numerous college, high school and community groups including Merrimack College, Goddard College, Framingham State University, The Performing Arts Center of MetroWest, Brookline, Chelsea and Wellesley Public School. His solo piece, *UnMasqued*, has been workshoped and performed at the Wheeler Theater in Port Townsend, WA. Brian holds a Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College and was named the recipient of the 2014 Framingham State University Young Alumni Achievement Award for his work in the performing arts.

Who's who in The Color Purple



BW Gonzalez (Director) is an actor/director/writer and has directed for the following theatre companies: Sacramento Theatre Company, B Street Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe. Ms. Gonzalez has also directed for Santa Clara University and University of California Davis. Ms. Gonzalez is an actor and was last seen in the ensemble for *The Colored Museum* at The Umbrella Stage Company last season. Other credits include *Arrested Development* on Netflix as Lupe. Ms. Gonzalez has also worked as an actor for the following theatre companies: American Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, The San

Francisco Mime Troupe, The Huntington Theatre Company, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Denver Theatre Center, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, LA Women's Shakespeare, and Center Repertory Theatre. At the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ms. Gonzalez performed such notable roles as Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Masha in *The Three Sisters*, Cassandra in *Trojan Women*, Ariel in *The Tempest*, and Shen Te/Shui Ta in *Good Person of Szechuan*. Other plays include, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Restoration*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Titus Andronicus*. Ms. Gonzalez is the recipient of a Citation of Excellence in Theatre Arts from the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

Marsha Norman (Book) won the Pulitzer Prize for her play, *Night, Mother* and a Tony Award for her book of the Broadway musical, *The Secret Garden*. Ms. Norman is co-chair, with Christopher Durang, of the Playwriting Department of the Juilliard School and vice president of the Dramatists Guild of America. Her other plays include *Getting Out*, *Traveler in the Dark*, *Sarah and Abraham*, *Trudy Blue*, and *Last Dance*. Her published work includes *Four Plays, Vol. I: Collected Plays of Marsha Norman* and a novel, *The Fortune Teller*. She has numerous film and TV credits, Grammy and Emmy nominations, and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and the Fellowship of Southern Writers. She is a native of Kentucky who lives in New York City and Long Island with her two children.

Brenda Russell (Music & Lyrics) has a unique musical perspective, intimate voice and prolific treasure-trove of lyrics, that prove that a truly glowing talent only deepens with time. Composer of the classics "Get Here," "If Only for One Night," and the Grammy-nominated "Piano in the Dark," Brenda's songwriting prowess and chameleon-like ability to shift between musical genres and combine styles trumpeted ovations in 2005 with the opening of the Tony Award-winning hit Broadway musical *The Color Purple*, for which she, Allee Willis and Stephen Bray co-wrote the music and lyrics. Brenda and her co-authors were also nominated for a 2007 Grammy in the Best Musical Show Album category for the original cast album.

Allee Willis (Music & Lyrics) is a one-woman creative think-tank. A multi-disciplinary artist and visionary thinker whose range of imagination and productivity knows no bounds, her success exuberantly defies categorization; 'unique' pales as a descriptor. Willis is a Grammy-winning and Emmy- and Tony- nominated composer whose hit songs - including Earth, Wind & Fire's "September" and "Boogie Wonderland," The Pointer Sisters' "Neutron Dance," Pet Shop Boys with Dusty Springfield's "What Have I Done to Deserve This," and The Rembrandts' "I'll Be There for You (Theme From Friends)" - have sold over 50 million records. In 2006, Willis' songs were also featured in three of the top grossing films of the year, *Happy Feet*, *Night at The Museum* and *Babel*.

Who's who in The Color Purple

Stephen Bray (Music & Lyrics) After beginning music studies with private instruction in Detroit, Bray continued training at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Working with Madonna, he wrote and produced many of her top-ten recordings, including "Angel," "Into the Groove," "Papa Don't Preach," "True Blue" and "Express Yourself." Performing with Breakfast Club, he earned a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist and a top-ten single. He has composed and produced for multiplatinum artists including The Jets, Gladys Knight and Kylie Minogue. Film and television projects include *Beverly Hills Cop II*, *Who's That Girl?*, *All About The Benjamins* and the theme for PBS's "California Connected." Stephen is developing artists for his Soultone label and looks forward to more musical theater. He would like to thank his daughter Milena for her eternal patience and his family for their continuing support.

Tree Brock (Wardrobe Supervisor) is proud to be working with The Umbrella Stage Company again after joining them as Wardrobe Supervisor in *RENT* and *Middleton Heights*. They have previously worked as the costume designer with Hoovey Theatre doing *Witch*, *Marjory Prime*, and *Pillowman*. They were also Costume Designer with *The Christmas Carol* in Waltham. Tree also works backstage and does costume work for various performers at *Drag me to Brunch* and *Strut*. Their company is Red Bark Crafting at www.redbarkcrafts.com and they believe you should fly your fandom banners proudly.

Najee A. Brown (Choreographer) can be described as nothing else than a young entrepreneur. After starting his media company, Mindlezz Thoughtz in 2011, he has helped provide numerous resources to aspiring artists. In addition to running his own media and arts company, Najee Brown also produced his own music and has danced on every stage from the Apollo to Carnegie Hall. He co-wrote and directed the musical *Glimmerings Of Hope*, which premiered in New York City and toured Michigan in the spring of 2019. He also directed and choreographed the award-winning musical *Henry Box Brown - A Musical Journey*, in Edinburgh Scotland in the summer of 2019. During the shutdown in 2020, Brown oversaw the *Sol*, series at Seacoast Repertory Theatre in Portsmouth, NH, which focused on presenting the narratives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Concurrently, Brown premiered two new plays, *Stokely and Martin* and *Nevaeh's Brother*, at Seacoast Repertory Theatre, as well as produced a revival of his play, *The Bus Stop*, which sold out six times in New York City when it premiered. As a young Afro-Latino boy growing up in Brooklyn, NY, during the early '90s, the theater was an important tool that helped Brown imagine a better world in the midst of the increased violence due to the crack epidemic. He saw that performing arts could facilitate a safe environment, where people felt free enough to express themselves and their social justice views through storytelling on stage. In that spirit, Brown recently founded Theater For The People to provide this same outlet and opportunities for today's youth and adults, especially in cities that either lack diversity or include communities of marginalized people. Brown has been recently awarded a playwrighting residency at Boston Center for the Arts. His most recent play *Hear Her Sing for Freedom* premiered in January 2023 in Cambridge at the Multicultural Arts Center, where Brown serves as the new Artistic Director.

James Cannon (Sound Designer) is a freelance audio engineer, sound designer, composer, and music producer from Chicago, IL, and currently based in Watertown, MA. Recent theatrical credits include: *The View Upstairs* (Speakeasy Stage), *Well, Straight White Men* (Hovey Players), *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Passing Strange* (Moonbox Productions), *The Last Wide Open*, *The Old Man & The Old Moon*, *Head Over Heels*, *The Colored Museum*, *Dracula* (The Umbrella Stage Company), *NIGHTTOWN: An Operatic Reimagining of James Joyce's Ulysses* (Lowell House Opera), and *Spring Awakening* (Wellesley Theater Project).

Who's who in The Color Purple

Al Forgione (Technical Director)'s set design and scenic work has been showcased across the United States and the United Kingdom. A native of the Boston area, Al has a BA in Theatre Arts from Bridgewater State University and a MA in Design For Performance from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. *The Color Purple* is Al's thirtieth production with The Umbrella.

Anna Hanh* (Stage Manager) started her journey stage managing *A Comedy of Errors* at Clark University until its abrupt halt at the start of the pandemic. She then transitioned to all-virtual shows with The Umbrella Stage Company, Pao Arts Center, and Asian American Theatre Artists of Boston (AATAB). Once theaters began reopening, she enjoyed stage managing in person with Studio Theatre Worcester in its productions of *The Gift of the Magi* and *Next to Normal*. Anna also worked with Boston Playwright's Theatre on their production of *Save the Whales*. Most recently she worked on The Umbrella's production of *Middleton Heights* and she is so excited to continue her work at The Umbrella.

Sarah Hobbs-Butler (Audio Op) is delighted to return to The Umbrella Stage Company for a second time for *The Color Purple* after her Umbrella debut in *RENT*.

Janie E. Howland (Scenic Designer) returns to The Umbrella Stage Company having designed *Head Over Heels*, and *Tuck Everlasting*. Recent designs include: *Heathers* (BSU), *Urban Nutcracker* (year 7, City Ballet of Boston), *English* (Speakeasy Stage), *Turn of the Screw* (New England Conservatory), *Polaroid Stories* (Northeastern Univ.), *3 Decembers* (Berkshire Opera Festival), *West Side Story* (Reagle Players), Greater Boston New Works Festival (Moonbox), *Paradise Blue* (Gloucester Stage). Venues include: NYC Dance Alliance, Lynn Redgrave Theatre (NY), InterAct Theatre (PA), Mass MOCA, New Rep, ASP, Odyssey Opera, Weston Playhouse (VT), Umbrella Stage, North Shore Music Theatre, Central Square Theatre, Ohio Star Theatre (OH), Company One, Merrimack Rep, Seacoast Rep, NJ Shakespeare Festival (NJ). 4 time Elliot Norton Award winner, 4 time IRNE Award winner; adjunct faculty at BSU, Emerson and Wellesley College. Founder of the Prop Co-Op. USA Local 829. www.janiehowland.com

Kayleigh Kane (Intimacy Director) is a Boston-based theatrical intimacy professional and multi-disciplinary artist. She's received training from Intimacy Directors and Choreographers, Theatrical Intimacy Education, National Society of Intimacy Professionals, and more. Recent intimacy direction credits include *The Moors* (Entropy Theatre); *Marriage or MADE* (Harvard University), *Dracula: a feminist revenge fantasy, really* (The Umbrella Stage Company). In addition to designing movement and intimacy for scripted theater, Kayleigh teaches and performs at ImprovBoston, where she enjoys helping people of all backgrounds unlock their creativity through improvisation. In everything she does, Kayleigh is a joyful believer in pushing the boundaries of the artform while supporting the boundaries of the artists. Learn more at kayleighkane.com.

Sarajane Morse Mullins (Props Master/Set Dresser) is a Boston-based actor and theater artist. Previous Umbrella credits for properties and set dressings include *Tuck Everlasting*, *42nd Street*, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Dash Nomination), *Joy Luck Club* and *Dracula*. Past appearances on The Umbrella stage include Lucille in *Parade* (Dash Nomination), Blanche Barrow in *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arts Impulse nomination, DASH nomination), and ensemble roles in *Tuck Everlasting*, *Big Fish* and *Evita*. SJ holds a BFA in Theater Arts from Boston University and trained abroad with the London Academy of Music and Drama. She has appeared at The Huntington Theater Company, Greater Boston Stage Company, Turtle Lane Playhouse, and over 50 productions in the Midwest. She annually adjudicates for the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild. More at officiallysarajane.com

Who's who in The Color Purple

Johnny Penney (Stage Crew) has worked with The Umbrella since the 2019 season in multiple positions. His latest credits include Audio Op for *Middleton Heights*; Stage Crew for *Rent*; and Assistant Stage Manager for *Dracula: A feminist revenge fantasy, really*. He also regularly works with The Umbrella as a scenic carpenter and woodworking teacher. He previously worked with The Glimmerglass Festival as a fly captain, stage operations staff member and as a carpenter and stage crew member with the Resident Ensemble Players.

Nadine Sa (Assistant Stage Manager) is thrilled to be making her debut at The Umbrella Stage Company. Favorite Credits include: *Vokes: The Piano Lesson* (Stage Manager); Concord Players: *Titanic the Musical* (DASH Award Winner), *Secret Garden* (Assistant Stage Manager); Needham Community Theater: *Mary Poppins*, *Little Mermaid* (Stage Manager), Sudbury Savoyards: *HMS Pinafore* (Stage Manager), Lexington Players: *Mountaintop*, *Who will Sing for Lena?* (Stage Manager), Wellesley Theater Project: *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (Stage Manager). She would like to thank the entire creative team and cast for making her feel welcomed and supported.

SeifAllah Salotto-Cristobal (Lighting Designer) is excited to be back at The Umbrella Stage Company for his 10th season. He has been telling stories using light and video for the past 17 years. He holds a MFA in Design from the University of Missouri-Kansas City with a focus on Lighting and Projection Design. His career has taken him across the country and has allowed him to design for many companies such as Opera Maine, Portland Stage Company, Portland Theater Festival, Brown/Trinity Rep MFA Program, Wagon Wheel Center for the Arts, and Theatre at Monmouth. He currently serves as the Asst. Professor of Lighting Design at the University of Southern Maine where he brings his knowledge and experience to help shape the next generation of theatre professionals, focusing on developing complete storytelling. www.seif.design

Danielle Domingue Sumi (Costume Designer) is a visual artist inspired by culture, spirituality, and humility. She is committed to promoting emotional and social well-being. Her creativity is explicated through diversity and social justice principles with recognition, exploration, and reflection upon multiethnic heritage. A graduate of Clark Atlanta University, FIDMLA and Loyola Marymount University; with degrees in both design and art psychotherapy. Danielle has created with Theatre Forty, Los Angeles Opera, Music Academy of the West, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Perm Opera and Ballet, Los Angeles Master Chorale, East West Players, JACCC, Halau Hula Moani'a'ala Anuhea, New Orleans Opera, and Company One. Her costume design was last seen at New Orleans Opera's productions of *The Barber of Seville* and Charlie Parker's *Yardbird*. www.danielledominguesumi.com

Kira Troilo (EDI Consultant) is a Boston-based creative who has been doing the work of EDI consulting, without the title, for decades. In 2021, after serving for 12 years as the Managing Editor of an online media company, she received formal training – earning her certificate in Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace. In 2022, she began Art & Soul Consulting – an EDI consulting service specializing in the arts. She strives to serve as an open door and bridge builder through her blog (bi-racialmom.com), writing frequently about her experiences as a Black, biracial woman, creative professional and mother. Kira consults for many Boston arts organizations (including SpeakEasy Stage Company, Lyric Stage Company, and Greater Boston Stage Company). She serves as a member of Moonbox Productions' EDI advisory council and also as a board member for the Theatre Community Benevolent Fund (TCBF). artandsoulconsulting.com

Nathanael Wilkerson (Music Director) is elated to make their Umbrella debut with *The Color Purple*. Recently, Wilkerson music directed a workshop of their original musical, *The Mountain and Their Mortals*, and worked on orchestrations and arrangements for multiple student let projects at the Boston Conservatory. Wilkerson is currently slated to join the first national tour of *MJ The Musical* as Keys 2/associate conductor.

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The Color Purple

Production Staff

Producer.....Brian Boruta
Director BW Gonzalez
Choreographer.....Najee A. Brown
Music DirectorNathanael Wilkerson
Stage Manager.....Anna Hanh*
Technical Director.....Al Forgione
Lighting DesignerSeifAllah Salotto-Cristobal
Sound Designer James Cannon
Scenic Designer Janie E. Howland
Costume Designer..... Danielle Domingue Sumi
Hair & Make-up Designer.....Schanaya Barrows
Assistant Stage ManagerNadine Sa
Run Crew.....Johnny Penney
Audio Op.....Sarah Hobbs-Butler
Scenic Charge.....Page Evett
Wardrobe Supervisor.....Tree Brock
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Consultant Kira Troilo
Intimacy Director..... Kayleigh Kane
Properties and Set Dressing Sarajane Mullins
Videographer.....Ryan Malyar
Dance Captain.....Zachary McConnell*
Fight Captain.....Jordan A. Hall*
COVID Safety Officer.....Cathie Regan
Playbill Designers.....Joe Blair, Sarah Shiner

Acknowledgements

Gillian Mariner Gordon, photographer

Rebecca & Michael Robichaud

Jim Sabitus, photographer

Our 2022-2023 Season was created in collaboration with members of The Umbrella Stage family, including Board, Staff, Directors, Designers, and Performers. We extend our deepest thanks for their time, insights, and perspectives.

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