



INTERNATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL®

A NC Black Rep Experience

North Carolina Black Repertory Company
1979-2024

45 *years* 35
1989-2024
International Black Theatre Festival

WINSTON-SALEM, NC • JULY 29–AUGUST 3, 2024



I AM...A SHEPHERDESS

North Carolina Black Repertory Company

Tuesday, July 30, 8:00pm
Wednesday, July 31, 8:00pm
Thursday, August 1, 2:00pm
Friday, August 2, 8:00pm
Saturday, August 3, 2:00pm

**Wake Forest
Harold C. Tedford Mainstage**



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ARTS COUNCIL IS THE CHIEF ADVOCATE OF ARTS AND CULTURE FOR WINSTON-SALEM AND FORSYTH COUNTY.

Our goal is to serve as a leader in lifting up, creating awareness and providing support to grow and sustain artistic, cultural and creative offerings throughout our region.





NORTH CAROLINA BLACK REPERTORY COMPANY

I AM...A SHEPHERDESS

ABOUT THE SHOW

Present day. Inside a Church sacristy in Brooklyn, NY. Tashana and her best friend, Ambreen, are waiting for Fatima and her son, Jamaal. They're about to rehearse for a wedding.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Founded in 1979 by Larry Leon Hamlin, the North Carolina Black Repertory Company (NC Black Rep) is the first professional Black theatre company in North Carolina. It is committed to exposing diverse audiences to Black theatre classics, the development and production of new works, and internationally sustaining Black theatre. The company also produces the International Black Theatre Festival (IBTF) every two years.

NC Black Rep produces one world premiere play each season, provides professional theatre training for youth by way of NC Black Rep's Teen Theatre Ensemble (TTE). It also hosts a Living Room Theatre reading series, free to the public and annually produces a MLK Birthday Celebration that collects non-perishable food items for Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest, NC.

CAST & CREW:

<i>Antu Yacob</i>	Actor
<i>Devin Elise Kessler Fitzgerald</i>	Actor
<i>Althea Alexis</i>	Actor
<i>Melissa Joyner</i>	Actor
<i>Bianca LaVerne Jones</i>	Director
<i>Eljon Wardally</i>	Playwright
<i>Marie Laster</i>	Scenic
<i>Kathy Perkins</i>	Lighting
<i>Jasmine Williams</i>	Sound
<i>Belynda Mbaye</i>	Stage Manager
<i>Lauryn Nealy</i>	Assistant Stage Manager
<i>Destiny Hill</i>	Costumes
<i>John Virgo</i>	Props
<i>Nathaniel Avery</i>	Production Manager
<i>Malachi Woodward</i>	Production Manager

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

Festival Sponsors



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This project is supported by the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Resources.



This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



The North Carolina Black Repertory Company is supported by the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

Silver Sponsors



Event Sponsors



NC Black Rep is a recipient of the THRIVE! Uplifting Theatres of Color program, funded by the Theatre League of Kansas City and administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for theatre leading for a just and thriving theatre ecology.

In-Kind Sponsors



WHO'S WHO

ANTU YACOB is a thriving actress. Her onstage credits include work done at Primary Stages, The Fire This Time Festival, American Slavery Project, The Goodman Theatre, The Cincinnati Playhouse, The Philadelphia Theatre Company. Yacob's onscreen: *Rob Peace*, *Inventing Anna*, *The Other Two Night Comes On*, *Daredevil*, *Gypsy*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Adieu Lacan*.

DEVIN ELISE KESSLER FITZGERALD is a New York City based actress. Her credits include *Jordans* (The Public Theatre), *School Girls: Or the African Mean Girls Play* (The Hangar Theatre), *Pipeline and Three Sisters*, (NYU Grad Acting), AOML to God, my family, my team, my tribe and Delta Sigma Theta for their continuous support. Asé.

Althea Alexis, a NY-based graduate of Howard University, performed at the 2022 NBTF as Shawnese in *Greenwood*. She has credits in stage, film, commercials, and voice overs. Thank you to my cast and crew for creating a supportive process. Special thanks to Eljon for the gift of Ambreen, and Bianca, for genuinely "filling my pot." It is my pleasure to return to the IBTF with this production.

BIANCA LAVERNE JONES a Broadway luminary who excels in theater and film. Her directorial skill is evident in *MABEL* (featured in IBTF Film Festival) earning her accolades like the 2024 ESSENCE Finalist. Educated at LAMDA, her diverse work spans from *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* to *Eureka Day*, showcasing her storytelling prowess. biancalavernejones.com

ELJON WARDALLY is an award-winning writer who passionately tells stories about the underrepresented and gives a face to the faceless. She writes about loneliness and secrets but also has a zest for telling stories with a dark comedic twist. www.eljonwardally.squarespace.com



I AM...A SHEPHERDESS

Written by Eljon Wardally



HERITAGE

Written by JuCoby Johnson

FINDING HOLY GROUND

The Wake Forest University School of Divinity and the Wake the Arts initiative are proud to be lead sponsors of this year's festival with the *Finding Holy Ground* project, created with generous support from the Henry Luce Foundation.



WHO'S WHO

BELYNDA MBAYE is a Harlem planted dweller uprooted from Baltimore many years ago. One summer day in August, she stepped into National Black Theatre's doors and expressed her desire to stage manage. Mbaye found her purpose: the art of serving the artists in theatre, dance and film as well as working on stage new developments. She is delighted to be at The International Black Theatre Festival.

LAURYN NEALY has most recently worked with The Ensemble Theatre in varied capacities both on and off stage. She is a recent high school graduate and is continuing her education at North Carolina A&T State University, where she will pursue a BFA in acting.

MARIE LASTER is a scenic designer based in New York City and Philadelphia. Scenic design credits include *What the Constitution Means to Me* (Arden Theatre), *one drop cool* (Moxie Arts NY & WP Theater) and *Chicken & Biscuits* (TheatreSquared). Laster enjoys channeling her creative energy through the scenic design process. marielasterdesign.com

KATHY A. PERKINS has designed on Broadway, Off-Broadway, regionally and internationally. She is the editor of seven anthologies and numerous articles. A recipient of multiple awards, including an NAACP Image Award, Henry Hewes Design and Fulbright. Perkins is Professor Emerita at the University of Illinois and The University of North Carolina.

JASMINE WILLIAMS is a 23-year-old young lady from Opelousas, LA. She is a graduate of Dillard University with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Technology. Williams is a performing artist in acting, singing, and pre-professional dance training. Her other sound designs can be heard in *Heritage* and *Coconut Cake* here at the festival!

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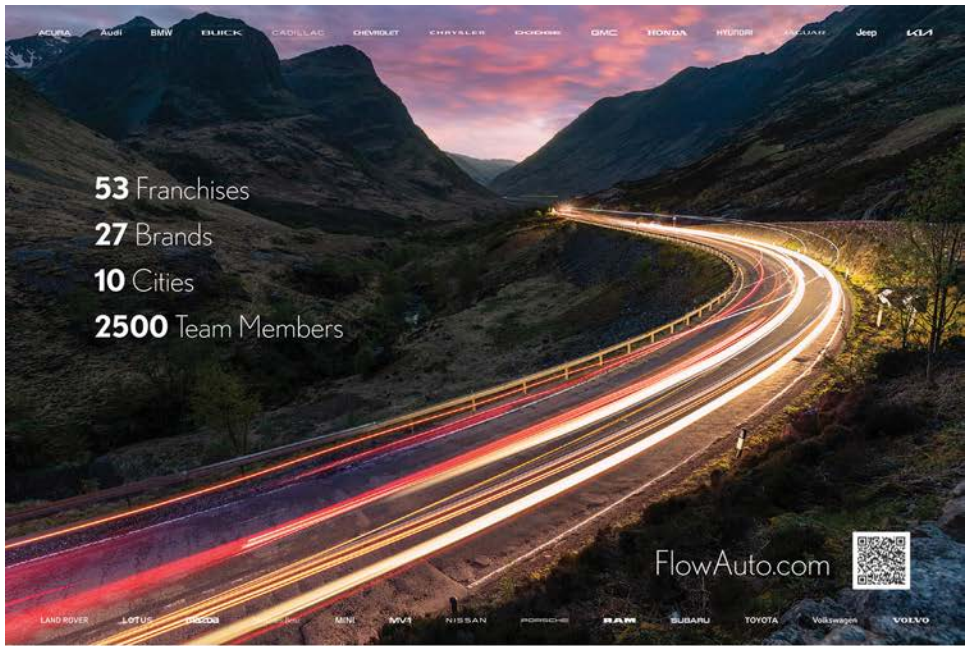
WHO'S WHO

DESTINY HILL was born and raised in Winston-Salem, NC. In 2022, she earned a B.S. degree in Apparel and Textiles from North Carolina Central University, followed by a Masters degree in Textiles from North Carolina State University. Hill is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at North Carolina State University and serves as the costume designer for *I Am...A Shepherdess*.

JOHN VIRGO A television and film producer, with more than 15 years of production experience. Virgo was 'raised' in the Art Department as set dresser and props master. Currently, he's working as the video producer for a Charlotte ad agency and creating props for local theatre's in Winston-Salem.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to NC Black Repertory Company, Wake Forest University School of Divinity, Wake the Arts and the Henry Luce Foundation for giving me the opportunity to tell this beautiful and important story. Thank you to Jackie Alexander, Christina Soriano and Bianca LaVerne Jones for supporting the development of this play and to Randy Wilkins for championing me always.



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Visit Winston-Salem welcomes you to Black Theatre Holy Ground. We thank and congratulate NC Black Repertory Company for 35 years of awe-inspiring performances that have put Winston-Salem on the international stage. The festival has been a bright beacon for groundbreaking performances, and this year will be just as remarkable.

For a list of restaurants, events and things to do, go to www.VisitWinstonSalem.com.



Visit Winston-Salem Visitor Center
200 Brookstown Avenue
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Saturday — 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Closed Sunday





Applauding passion in every performance

Theater is important in the community. It teaches us about diverse people, places, and ideas. Bravo to the directors, cast, and crew who show us the world in new ways.

Let's join together in celebrating International Black Theatre Festival.

[wellsfargo.com](https://www.wellsfargo.com)



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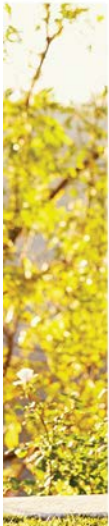
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GHANA
APRIL 27 - MAY 2, 2025

THE CALL

CREATE. CONNECT. HEAL.
MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

We invite you to the 4th Biennial Convening of *The International Black Theatre Summit* in Ghana, April 27-May 2, 2025. Ghana welcomes you and IBTS to the continent with an agenda to CREATE, CONNECT, and HEAL. Seize this opportunity to replenish and revitalize our divine and creative selves and embrace this chance to strategize the future of Black storytelling across continents.



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Through **collective giving, grantmaking, and community engagement**, BPI ensures local organizations have what they need to advance racial equity and respond to needs in local Black communities.

Join us! → Learn more & get involved: bpiws.org





“My book is an insight into what to expect and how to handle common-sense situations that arise once you book a show. It can also transcend into everyday workplace situations. It’s a book that I hope will be handed down by stage managers, teachers, performing arts schools, acting and dance classes.”

—Brenda Braxton

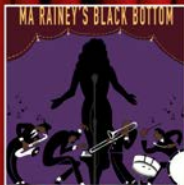
Brenda Braxton is a Tony Award Nominee and Grammy-winning actress, author and entrepreneur. Her Broadway credits include *Smokey Joe’s Cafe*, *Chicago*, *Cats*, *Jelly’s Last Jam*, *Legs Diamond*, *Guys and Dolls*, and the original Broadway production of *Dreamgirls*. She can also be seen on *SMASH*, *Nurse Jackie*, and *The Good Fight*, now streaming.

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