



**Wizard's  
Wardrobe**

WHERE READING IS MAGIC

*Virtual*  
**READERS'  
THEATRE  
EVENT**

**“AN EVENING OF POWERFUL READINGS”**

# About Wizard's Wardrobe

In September 2011 over twenty members and friends of First Presbyterian Church started tutoring at Giffen Elementary School.

In June 2014 a subset of that group, realizing that the children of Giffen needed more help, started planning the next step. Inspired by the TED talk "Once Upon A School", we set out to establish a one-on-one after-school tutoring program primarily for 1st through 3rd grade students, continuing on with them through elementary school. We incorporated one year later as South End Neighborhood Tutors and located space for the program one block east of Giffen. In February 2017, the Wizard's Wardrobe became a reality and opened its doors to seven students. Since then we have served twenty-three students with forty trained tutors.

## Meeting a Need

- We believe that all children deserve the opportunity to succeed.
- Only thirteen percent of the students in third – sixth grade at Giffen Elementary School read at grade level. In grades one to three students learn to read; in grades four and above students read to learn. Once students reach fourth grade, those who cannot read are at an overwhelming disadvantage.
- Research shows that students who get thirty-five to forty hours of individual tutoring can gain one year in academic growth.
- With three hours a week of one-to-one tutoring, we aim to achieve marked improvement in our students' reading skills, positioning them for academic success.



Debra & Eric Fagans  
Founders of the Wizard's Wardrobe

## **7:00 - PROGRAM**

FEATURING

### **KATHERINE PATERSON**

Newbery Medal winning author of  
*The Bridge to Terabithia*

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

### **REX SMITH**

Editor of the Times Union

ADDITIONAL READINGS BY LOCAL AUTHORS

**Margaret Miki Conn**

**Lorraine Garnett**

**Marion Roach Smith**

ALSO JOINED BY

BLACK THEATRE TROUPE

**Jean-Remy Monnay,**

Producing Artistic Director

**Aaron Moore,**

Playwright and Director

**Zoe Lewis**

**Majestic Tillman**

**D. Colin**

ASL Interpretation by **Marian Eaton**



## **8:00 - ZOOM AFTER PARTY**

**KATHERINE PATERSON** is the author of more than thirty books, including sixteen novels for children and young people. She has twice won the Newbery Medal, for *Bridge to Terabithia* in 1978 and *Jacob Have I Loved* in 1981. *The Master Puppeteer* won the National Book Award in 1977 and *The Great Gilly Hopkins* won the National Book Award in 1979 and was also a Newbery Honor Book. For the body of her work she received the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1998, the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2006, and in 2000 was named a Living Legend by the Library of Congress. She is a vice-president of the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance and is a member of the board of trustees for Vermont College of Fine Arts. She is also a honorary lifetime member of the International Board of Books for Young People and an Alida Cutts lifetime member of the US section, USBY. She was the 2010-2011 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. Katherine Paterson has four grown children and seven grandchildren, and she currently resides in Vermont with her faithful dog, Pixie.



**REX SMITH** is Editor-at-Large of the *Times Union*, where he is a columnist and leads the Editorial Board; he also coordinates the Hearst Journalism Fellowship for Hearst Newspapers. Rex has been with the *Times Union*, the dominant communication medium in New York's Capital Region, for a quarter-century, including eighteen years as the newspaper's editor – a time when it won national recognition for writing, reporting, photography and design, both in print and digitally. He is a former national correspondent and bureau chief for Newsday, and previously edited community newspapers in New York and Indiana. Earlier in his career, he was a congressional aide in Washington for four years and a television reporter and anchor in the metropolitan New York region. He has received numerous professional citations and awards, including the Distinguished Service Award of the national Society of Professional Journalists, a Pulitzer Fellowship and a Rotary Fellowship. He is a graduate cum laude of Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, and received a master's degree with highest honors from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, where he chairs the Alumni Board. Rex hosts a nationally syndicated weekly program, "The Media Project," on Northeast Public Radio, and a program of choral music, "Radio Pro Musica," on WMHT-FM. He is past chair of the New York News Publishers Association past president of the state editors association and vice chair of the New York Fair Trial/Free Press Conference. He was an early leader in efforts to build a news literacy curriculum in high schools and colleges. He is in demand as a speaker and contest judge, and has twice been a juror for the Pulitzer Prizes. Outside journalism, Rex is known as a singer: He is a member of Albany Pro Musica, one of the Northeast's premiere choral ensembles. Rex lives in Rensselaer County with his wife, the author Marion Roach Smith. They have an adult daughter.



**MARIAN EATON** is a fully credentialed American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter with forty-seven years of interpreting experience. For the past thirty-two years she has been in private practice under the dba: Associates in Interpreting and Mentoring Services. While providing services in a variety of arenas, she specializes in Legal, Medical, Mental Health, and Performance Interpretation. Since 2003 she has been a regular interpreter for Proctors Theater's Broadway Series and prior to that for the former New York State Theater Institute (NYSTI), as well as periodically for Cap Rep. Marian views her work as an ASL interpreter as acts of social justice. She believes Deaf and Hard of Hearing people have the right to receive equal access with hearing people to all communication. This is a right that has been denied Deaf and Hard of Hearing people for centuries. Many hearing people are unaware that a unique and vibrant Deaf Culture exists. ASL, the language of that Culture, is to be respected as the means of everyday communication amongst its members and as the linguistic modality Deaf artists use to create visual poetry and prose. These creations are every bit as expressive and enjoyable to those who understand ASL as reading or listening to prose and poetry is to those who understand English! As you watch the interpretation of these original pieces read by their authors, you may be able to observe differences in the length between the original and interpreted presentations or that temporal aspects of a piece occur in different sequences. This is a function not only of the differences between two languages, but most especially because of the differences between a spoken/auditory language and a visual/gestural language that makes use of motion and three-dimensional space. Marian is thrilled and honored to participate in this exciting event supporting the work of Wizard's Wardrobe and hopes her work will begin to "draw back the curtain" on a form of artistic expression little known by most hearing people.



**MIKI CONN** is an artist, storyteller, poet, author and community organizer. Her African and Native American roots inspired her interest in indigenous arts and multiculturalism. Miki is the former executive director of the Hamilton Hill Arts Center, a multi-arts center located in the heart of the inner-city in Schenectady. Although retired, she teaches art and tells stories to children and adults and offers workshops and classes in team building, creativity, writing and African spirituality. Her essays are published in the anthology *Sacred Waters*, she edited and self-published *Integrating Delmar 1957, the Story of a Friendship*, authored by her mother, Margaret Cunningham and family friend, Arlen Clinard. Her book, *Out of My Mind, A Quirky Look at Life Through Poetry* was published in November 2019 and she recently finished a children's book, *The Story of a House*. She will read two poems and a section of *The Story of a House*.



**LORRAINE GARNETT** was born and raised in Jamaica, West Indies. She attended Rockland Community College in Suffern, N.Y. She is a member of PEN America, Worker Writers School, founded and directed by Mark Nowak. Her first Tanka was published in the *Tanka Workers Collective Chapbook*. She read from this and other works at the PEN World Voice Festivals, Berl's Poetry Shop, The Workers United Film Festival and The People's Forum. Lorraine did her first interview with Journalist, Maddie Crum of *The Buffer* for a piece titled, "Meditations in an Emergency". The article was a part of the Worker Writers School Coronavirus Haiku project. Lorraine was also one of five poets from the Workers Writers School featured in ATM Magazine. She lives in Brooklyn, New York with her college scholars, Laurence and Paris, and currently has shifted her focus to writing haikus and fairy tales for children. Lorraine feels a strong sense of duty to include children in her writings. Her experience with and passion for children makes this new project fun and rewarding.



**MARION ROACH SMITH** is the author of four mass-market books, the most recent of which is *The Memoir Project: A Thoroughly Non-Standardized Text for Writing & Life* (Grand Central Publishing). A former staffer at The New York Times, she has been a commentator on NPR's All Things Considered and a talk show host on Sirius Satellite Radio. She currently runs a writing lab and teaches memoir worldwide at marionroach.com. Marion will be reading an essay entitled "DNA" from her book, *The Memoir Project, A Thoroughly Non-Standardized Text for Writing & Life*.



**BLACK THEATRE TROUPE** was originally founded as Soul Rebel Performance Troupe in November 2009 by veteran actor Jean-Remy Monnay as a not-for-profit organization to foster understanding, appreciation and participation of the performing arts among communities of color. Headquartered in New York State's Capital Region, Black Theatre Troupe promotes performance and theatrical pieces by, and about, artists of color.



**JEAN-REMY MONNAY** (Founder and Producing Artistic Director) grew up in Haiti and has been acting since he was about eight years old in French and Creole. He moved to New York in the 80's and continued performing in his native language with a Haitian troupe until 1997. He moved to the Capital Region and has been performing since in various theatres in the community. He has directed many plays including *The Niceties*, *Fences*, *Yours For The Oppressed*, *Eclipsed*, *Intimate Apparel*, *Slow Dance On The Killing Ground*, *I Just Stop By To See The Man*, *A Lesson Before Dying*, *Réunion In Bartersville*, *Wedding Band* and *Camp Logan*, etc... Films credits include; *The History Channel's The Revolution*; *Rachael's Ward*, 2007 Edwood Film Festival; *Night Of Autumn*; *Blood Conscious*, *Time Crunch*, *Blood Conscious*; *Ted K*; *Classified Killer*.



## ***The eyez in the wall***

Written and Directed by Aaron Moore

**AARON MOORE** comes from Albany, New York, and has always had a heart for the stage and screen. Having trained under Ward Dales and Gregory Marsh at Albany High School's Drama program, Aaron then took his talents to SUNY Potsdam where he earned a degree in Theatre Education with a concentration in African American Theatre, and continued his education at The Alvin Ailey Dance Company, The Michael's School for Therapeutic Arts, and the Classical Theatre of Harlem. Aaron has performed and worked with local and non-local companies such as Capital Rep Theatre, Pendragon Theatre Company, Youth FX, The African American Culture Center, Proctors, The Roundtable Theatre Company, NBC, Showtime, The History Channel, and more.



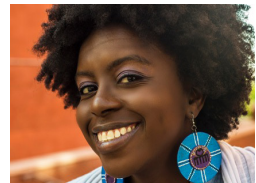
**ZOE LEWIS** is dedicated to providing and seeking representation for youth of color and queer youth onstage. Having been involved in theatre for eighteen years, her recent credits include *Cedric in Puffs!* and *Kyra in Bare: a pop opera*. Recent directorial credits include *Going Black to Broadway* with Acting with Aaron and Seussical Jr. with Proctors' School of the Performing Arts. When she's not onstage or behind the scenes, you can find her working with Hill City Ice Queen, providing princess magic for children's birthday parties!



**MAJESTIC TILLMAN** is an actor, based out of Albany, New York, whose purpose is to provide a space and opportunity to create art through music, film, and theater. Majestic has been with the Youth FX program for ten years and has seen the program grow into an all year round program. Majestic also portrayed Corey in August Wilson's Pulitzer and Tony Award-winning play, *Fences*, in 2019, and previously played the role of Jefferson in *A Lesson Before Dying*, both with The Black Theatre Troupe of Upstate New York.



**D. COLIN**, originally from Bridgeport, CT, is a poet, performer, visual artist and educator living in Troy, NY. She is the author of two poetry collections, *Dreaming in Kreyol* and *Said the Swing to the Hoop*. She is also a Cave Canem, VONA and New York State Writers Institute fellow. D. Colin has been involved with community theater since 2009, writing and acting with the Black Theater Troupe of Upstate NY, Sandglass Theater, and Creative Action Unlimited among others. Her original play, *Simone*, debuted at Capital Rep Theater in 2019 and she has received the League of Women Voters Presidential Award for her reenactments of "Sojourner Truth."



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*Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked witch of the West*  
(Basis for the Tony award-winning Broadway Musical “Wicked”)**

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Special thanks to Michael Fagans, Technical Wizard

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