



**Converging Arts Columbus  
Presents**

# **THE JOURNEY: Civil Rights**

**LINCOLN  
THEATRE**

**MAY 6,  
2023**



# **THE JOURNEY: CIVIL RIGHTS**

**Concept & Creation by Destiny Coleman**

**Creator & Director**

Destiny Coleman

**Musical Director**

Dr. Milton Ruffin

**Choreography**

Lorii Wallace

Jaime Kotrba

Seth Wilson

**Stage Manager**

Jaylene Jennings

**Assistant Stage Manager**

Isaiah Jones

**Performances By**

Milton Ruffin Gospel Chorale (directed by Dr. Milton Ruffin)

Columbus Dance Theatre (directed by Jaime Kotrba & Seth Wilson)

Tapestry Performing Arts Company (directed by Lorii Wallace)

Columbus Cultural Orchestra (directed by Stephen Spottswood)

## CREATOR & DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I created *The Journey: Civil Rights* as a continuation of my 2019 production, *The Journey*. However, due to COVID-19, the production was canceled. I'm extremely excited to share this production with you with support from Converging Arts Columbus, Greater Columbus Arts Council, Ohio Arts Council, and Johnstone Fund for New Music.

As a director, creative, and singer, my productions aim to create programming through a thoughtful, intentional process rooted in inclusiveness, authenticity, and representation of diverse voices and perspectives. These programs go beyond engagement to create new productions and truly inclusive performances, giving representation and opportunities to all artists by celebrating and integrating different cultures, history, and forms of expression.

It is essential to bring awareness around African-American cultural history, introduce audiences to the wealth of African-American artists based in Columbus, establish a platform for artistic expression and create performances and programs that are relevant and representative of our entire community.

I dedicate tonight's performance to my mother for her constant support of me and my art. I would also like to thank my grandparents for introducing me to the arts and my father for taking me to the MLK March as a child, which inspired this production. Thank you to my family and friends for their continued support.

— Destiny Coleman

## **CAST**

Keyona Willis (soprano)  
Karolyn Lee Gholston (soprano)  
DeMeeshia Marshall (mezzo-soprano)  
Kenneth Eaddy (tenor)

Franklin Brewer (tenor)  
Tifani Kendrick (spoken word)  
Kenneth Brown (spoken word)  
Stephen Spottswood (violin)

## **PRODUCTION CREW**

Stage Manager  
Assistant Stage Manager  
Videographer  
Photographer

Jaylene Jennings  
Isaiah Jones  
Ceylon Wise  
Terry Gilliam

## **BAND**

Nate Asamoah (drums)  
Milton Ruffin (bass)  
Kevin Turner (guitar)  
Chris Grays (piano)

Terrance Farmer (sax)  
Lee Savory (trumpet)  
Ashley Wise (piano)

## **COLUMBUS CULTURAL ORCHESTRA**

Stephen Spottswood (violin)  
Nic Lacy (violin)

Norman Caldwell-Nurri (viola)  
Alex Palmer (cello)

## **COLUMBUS DANCE THEATRE**

Seth Wilson  
Jaime Kotrba  
Jenna Swartz

Brennan Johnson  
Sincere Rose-Cohen

## **MILTON RUFFIN GOSPEL CHORALE**

Artasia Brown-Goosby  
Aria Cadeau  
Cheryle Carter  
LaVerne Castle  
Dwight Cochrane  
Kim Collins

Mike Davis  
Kim Edmondson  
Tish Hogan  
Dawn Jackson  
Joi Johnson  
Jennifer Price  
Merlyn Ruffin

Sandra Rolland  
Crystal Sanders  
Erma Smith  
Joe Westerman  
Justin Williams  
Judy Wright

## **TAPESTRY PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY**

Tonya Ferguson  
Cierra Hill  
Danielle Franklin

Cassandra DeLaRosa  
Ashley Austrie Brown  
Tasz Stowe

# **PERFORMING ORGANIZATIONS**

## **CONVERGING ARTS COLUMBUS**

Converging Arts Columbus connects artists to create innovative programs with diverse artistic expressions to explore themes of humanity. Committed to engaging local talent, programs aim to reach an audience in the central Ohio area and encourage a growing appreciation for the arts within the community.

## **COLUMBUS CULTURAL ORCHESTRA**

The mission of the Columbus Cultural Orchestra is to advance a collective of multi-generational musicians of color by performing high-quality jazz, classical, and hip-hop music. Established in 2020, the orchestra teaches developing musicians arrangements of jazz, hip-hop, and classical.

## **COLUMBUS DANCE THEATRE**

Columbus Dance Theatre is a nationally recognized contemporary ballet company with a significant performance history. The Company repertoire is a highly theatrical fusion of ballet and contemporary movement creating theatrical works that range from contemporary abstraction to classical narrative. The Company's repertoire features a wide array of styles and programming ranging from cutting edge contemporary dance to family programming. One unique feature of CDT and its repertoire is its reliance on classical and neo-classical music and its affiliation with recognized chamber music ensembles available to provide live music for its performances.

## **MILTON RUFFIN GOSPEL CHORALE**

The Milton Ruffin Gospel Chorale has been inspiring audiences with traditional and contemporary gospel music for over 20 years. This group of talented individuals was recognized by Columbus Monthly as the best gospel choir in Columbus. The choir's namesake, Dr. Milton Ruffin, is a gifted and professional musician with over 40 years of experience in the music industry. Ruffin is cousin to singing sensation David Ruffin of the popular R&B group known as the Temptations. His daytime hours are spent providing leadership for the Ft. Hayes Metropolitan Education Center as director and principal. The chorale has shared the national stage with many greats including Mavis Staples and Paul Anka. The chorale's most recent engagements include the Easton Tree lighting and the Intel Ground breaking ceremony. The choir has been featured along with the Columbus Jazz Orchestra. This group of high spirited and energetic singers is guaranteed to motivate and inspire those who hear them.

## **TAPESTRY PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY**

Tapestry Performing Arts Company is a Dance, Drama and Musical Company, created to weave various forms of the arts to engage the audience in breathtaking productions.

## CREATIVE TEAM



**Destiny Coleman (Creator & Director)** is a dynamic education and administrative professional with significant experience in program creation and management with a proven ability to cultivate community partnerships. Ms. Coleman is the Administrative Director of The Woltemade Center for Economics, Business & Entrepreneurship at Ohio Wesleyan University and serves on the Converging Arts Columbus Board. Ms. Coleman previously served as the Director of Education and Artistic Administration for Opera Columbus from 2013-2020. In that role, she oversaw the administration of annual productions and managed the creation and implementation of 12 educational programs and 25 community partnerships with local organizations and universities, reaching more than 16,000 people annually. Ms.

Coleman received acclaim after she conceptualized, created, and directed the Opera Columbus productions of *The Voice of Freedom*, *The Voice of Freedom: Civil Rights*, and *The Journey, A Celebration of Music Inspired by African-American Culture*. These community performances, centered around diversity and inclusion, offered over 100 artists of color opportunities to perform throughout central Ohio. In 2020, she was recognized as an emerging leader in Columbus and was awarded the Next Up Award by The Columbus Young Professionals Club and City Pulse Columbus.

As a mezzo-soprano, Ms. Coleman has performed with The Ohio State University Lyric Opera Theatre Program, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Opera Columbus, Lincoln Theatre, Heather Headley, and the world-renowned tenor Andrea Bocelli. Ms. Coleman holds a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from The Ohio State University and a Master of Science in Business Management and Leadership from Western Governors University. Learn more at [www.DestinyColeman.com](http://www.DestinyColeman.com)



**Dr. Milton Vaughn Ruffin (Musical Director)** holds a BM in Jazz Studies and BME, MA and PhD degrees in Music Education from The Ohio State University. He has been employed by Columbus City Schools for 31 years, currently as principal and director of the Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center. Dr. Ruffin was the 2019 recipient of The Ohio State University School of Music Distinguished Alumnus Award, and a 2019 Inductee to the Ohio Jazz Music Hall of Fame. Under Dr. Ruffin's leadership, Fort Hayes has been designated as a "School of Promise" by the State of Ohio, and identified as one of the "Top 100 High Schools in America" by U.S. News and World Report; additionally, the school was chosen by President Barack Obama to introduce the Jobs Act. Fort Hayes is a member of the prestigious

Berklee City Music network and has been awarded a Grammy Award as a Grammy Signature School (2011–2012). Ruffin has co-written the song "Wait" with his daughter, Dr. Nia Allen, achieving #1 status on Billboard's Gospel Air Play Charts.

Ruffin has presented at numerous conferences including OMEA and the Berklee City Music conference. A highly respected musician, Ruffin was the composer for the Columbus 200 Celebration Anthem for the city of Columbus, Ohio. Ruffin was previously the instrumental music instructor and band director at the Monroe Traditional Middle School where he developed a program that included over sixty percent of the student body.

Born into a talented family (notably his cousin, the late David Ruffin of the Temptations), Milton was exposed to music in church by his parents and his grandmother who was a pastor. He and his brother Clifton formed a band and toured nationally while in junior high school. A native of Youngstown, Ohio, Milton began his formal music training at Youngstown State University. Upon moving to Columbus, he became minister of music at Mt. Hermon Baptist Church where he met his wife and daughter, Nia. He currently serves as music director at New Salem Baptist Church.

As a bassist, Ruffin has shared the stage with such greats as Lou Rawls, Eric Gale, Rusty Bryant, George Clinton and the Parliament Funkadelic, Cameo, Rick James, Kenny Eldridge and the Jesus Celebration Mass Choir, among many others. He also toured Europe with Keith Dobbins and the Resurrection Mass Choir as the music director (1993).

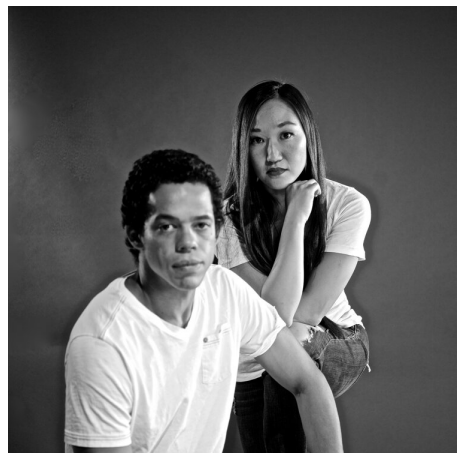
Ruffin co-produced the debut CD for the New Salem Mass Choir, *We Win*. He also recently

produced New Salem's sophomore project, Sweet Aroma. Milton has produced and co-written with his daughter Nia Allen, several songs including a recent release on Pure Worship presented by multi-Grammy Award winner Ce Ce Winans. Ruffin released a solo project entitled the Basic Principal (2011) that has received very positive reviews as well.



**Lorii Wallace (Choreographer)** is a Dance Educator and choreographer, from Toledo, Ohio. She began dancing and playing the viola and piano at a young age then continued her study with Toledo Ballet, Toledo Performing Arts Company, and more. After studying Dance Therapy at the University of Toledo, and training with the late Geraldine Blunden of DCDC, she traveled and danced with The Tacoma Performing Arts Company. She's written over 20 original productions and has directed and choreographed numerous productions across the country. Lorii recently choreographed the CATCO's "EUBIE " and "My Way" and is currently choreographing CATCO's "Head Over Heels".

During the last 10 years, Lorii's worked with over 100 churches, schools, companies, and organizations creating community-wide projects. Acknowledgments from Columbus City Council, State Senators Office, and Congress were given for her community arts productions to raise awareness for human trafficking and other subjects that affect our community. She serves on several community boards including Columbus Dance Alliance, operates Set The Atmosphere Interior Decorating & Decor, is the Executive Director of Evolve Productions Incorporated, and currently working as the Creative Director for an upcoming film.



**Jamie Kotrba (Choreographer)** is currently the Executive Director at Columbus Dance Theatre where she produces, choreographs and teaches for the professional company and school. Jaime grew up in Northern Michigan and graduated from Interlochen Arts Academy as a dance major under the direction of Sharon Randolph. She attended the Dance Theatre of Harlem School before joining the second company and later the main company dancing work nationally and internationally by George Balanchine, John Taras, Michael Smuin and Geoffrey Holder, to name a few. She has had the pleasure of

performing in theaters around the world including State Theatre in New York City, Sadler's

Wells Theater in London, England, in the Bermuda Arts Festival and in 2006, at the White House for President George W. Bush, honoring Dance Theatre of Harlem's late Artistic Director, Arthur Mitchell.

In 2006, Jaime helped found the Janusphere Dance Company in New York City, where she choreographed a work that premiered in Santa Barbara, California. In 2007, she joined BalletMet Columbus and enjoyed dancing works by Gerard Charles, David Nixon and many others. She has been a guest artist with Les Grands Ballet Canadiens' production of The Nutcracker, Viewpoint Dance in New York City, and Collage Dance Collective in Memphis, Tennessee. With Collage, she also had the joy of performing in Port Au Prince, Haiti with Ballet D'Afric Du Haiti.

Jaime has enjoyed being a guest teacher and choreographer for various studios in New York and Michigan and has had the honor of receiving the Greater Columbus Arts Council's Choreography Fellowship in 2011.

**Seth Wilson (Choreographer)** has danced and taught with Columbus Dance Theatre for the last 16 years and has previously served as the company's Co-Managing Director and Communications Director. He has had the pleasure of working with the Company on many choreographic ventures including a work that won the Greater Columbus Arts Council's Choreography Fellowship in 2012.

A native of Queens, New York, Seth grew up attending LaGuardia High School of the Arts, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre, Bernice Johnson, and Ballet Hispanico for his early training. After high school, Seth attended SUNY Purchase where he performed in Dusseldorf, Germany with Cloud Gate Theater of Taiwan and with Stanton Welch in a collaboration with ABT's Studio Company. He then joined Dance Theatre of Harlem's Ensemble and performed works nationally by Geoffrey Holder, Arthur Mitchell, Laveen Naidu and others. He has danced with New York Theatre Ballet performing works by Artistic Director, Diana Byer and Collage Dance Collective in Memphis, Tennessee. He has been a guest performer at the Flint Institute of Music, Fred Benjamin Dance Company, Creative Outlet and has performed at Lincoln Center Outdoors, at the Bermuda Arts Festival and Jacob's Pillow.

As a teacher, Seth taught ballet in the P.A.L League in New York City, to youth in Queens and Brooklyn. He has taught at IT's Dance in New York City and as a Guest Teacher for schools in and around Columbus.



**Townsend Price-Stratlen (Historical Synopsis)** is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Ohio State University. He writes, “I study historical and contemporary community capacity building; i.e., the means by which local area assets are brought together to improve the quality of life. My work focuses on how community and organizational practices shape demographic, health/wellness, and justice outcomes. In my historical work, I explore how NAACP activism and other assets of urban destinations helped shape the “Great Migration” of African Americans across the 20th century. My contemporary work analyzes how community organizations inform faith, health, and civic engagement. This work includes the impact of neighborhood social and physical disorder on psychosocial

well-being and self-assessed health. My forthcoming book, *Reconstructing Rage: Transformative Reentry in the Era of Mass Incarceration* (Peter Lang Press), is an ethnography of how a grassroots, reentry organization has nurtured sustained desistance across a generation, and built community capacity with former felons at the core of its leadership.”

## CAST & CREW



**Jaylene Jennings (Stage Manager)** is an Ohio State University graduate and a company member of Available Light Theatre in Columbus as costume designer, stage manager, and collaborator. In addition to being part of AVLT's creative team, she also oversees the costume shop at Ohio Wesleyan University and other local schools. She has spent time working on *Unanswered We Ride* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the regional tour of *One Night With Janis Joplin* and *A Map of Myself: My Odyssey to America*. Some of her favorite credits include *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, *bobrausenbergamerica*, *Remain in Light*, and *Dance*

Nation.



**Keyona Willis (Soprano)** recently had the honor of performing Mass in Blue with Capriccio Jubilee, as the soprano soloist, and was seen portraying Mimi with Opera Columbus in La Bohème. Prior to the pandemic, she performed Lauretta in Gianni Schicchi and Mother in Amahl and the Night Visitors. Ms. Willis was the soprano soloist in Verdi's Requiem with Central Ohio Symphony Orchestra and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Willis also performed Mozart's Requiem, as the soprano soloist, with Capriccio Columbus and later with the Westerville Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Willis portrayed Alice Ford in Verdi's Falstaff with Prelude to Performance. She also had the honor of singing a premier work, The Ruby Elzy Story, inspired by David Weaver's book, Black Diva of the Thirties. Other notable performances include: Donna

Anna (Don Giovanni), Vitellia (La Clemenza di Tito), Aida (Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida), Adolfo (Faramondo), Juliette (Romeo et Juliette), Countess (Le nozze di Figaro), Polly (The Threepenny Opera), Susannah (Tintypes), Monica (The Medium), and Rosa Bud (The Mystery of Edwin Drood). Ms. Willis obtained her Bachelor of Music degree from Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio and her Master of Music and Doctorate of Musical Arts with a Singing Health Specialization from The Ohio State University. Ms. Willis is an Assistant Professor Musical Theatre Voice Specialist at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Ms. Willis is a proud member of the Actor's Equity Association and the National Association of Teachers Association.



**Karolyn Lee Gholston (Soprano)** has gained a stellar reputation in operatic and recital works in the Central Ohio area. She is native of Altoona, Pennsylvania and received a BA from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania in music performance. She went on to earn her M.M in Performance/Pedagogy from Ohio University. Past engagements include guest solo work with The Black Opera Alliance Gala, Capriccio Columbus Shout for Joy Concert and Martin Luther King Day Celebration, Opera Columbus guest vocalist in the productions of The Journey and The Voice of Freedom. Past opera roles include La Ciesca in Gianni Schicchi, Annie in Opera Columbus' world premiere The Flood Workshop, Kate Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly, Anna (Donna Anna) in Opera Columbus' production of #UncleJohn

which is an adaptation of Mozart's Don Giovanni. Karolyn has also sung the roles of the

Infirmiry Nun in Opera Project Columbus' production of Suor Angelica, Lucia in Nino Rota's I Due Timidi with Opera Project Columbus, Musetta in La Bohème with the first collaboration of Shadow Box and Opera Columbus's "Opera on the Edge". Along with her concert and solo work, Karolyn has created her own music genre #Opsoul. She is a published songwriter, online content creator and music influencer. She also teaches voice at Kenyon College and at her private home studio.



**DeMeeshia Marshall (Soprano)** is from Columbus, Ohio. She has been singing and performing since age 5. DeMeeshia graduated with a BM in Vocal Music performance at The Ohio State University. There she studied classical opera music. DeMeeshia has traveled with Opera Columbus education outreach program, where she played the lead role of Cinderella. DeMeeshia is also skilled in other genres such as jazz, gospel, musical theatre, etc. DeMeeshia has performed live on TV stations such as The Word Network multiple times. In 2016, she was crowned the Voice of Columbus and aired on NBC 4 news. DeMeeshia plans to one day open her own performing arts center for all ages and spread the love and passion for music.



**Kenneth Eaddy (Tenor)** is a multidisciplinary performing artist, educator, entrepreneur, and activist. He is currently serving his seventh season with Thiossane (pronounced cha-sahn) West African Dance Institute in Columbus, OH, where he currently resides. In 2019, Kenneth traveled to Senegal and The Gambia, West Africa to collaborate in an international exchange with Bakalama Danse to further his knowledge of dance, drums, language, and culture. That same year, he showcased an emotionally charged monologue describing intersectionality through the lens of his life's journey as a Black/Queer man to a sold-out crowd

called K. Daniel Presents: Chrysalis Epoch. Kenneth is a three-time recipient of the Funds for Artists grant provided by the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC), and currently serves as an artist on their pilot GCAC Navigator Program, a new initiative which seeks to increase outreach to artists, especially those from historically marginalized or underrepresented communities.



**Franklin Brewer (Tenor)** is very excited to be a part of *The Journey: Civil Rights* with Converging Arts. He recently sang with Opera Project Columbus in *Un Ballo in Maschera* as a chorus tenor. Franklin has performed with Opera Columbus in various chorus roles including *I Pagliacci* as *Un Contadino* and in *La Traviata* as *Un Servo*. Franklin studied Vocal Performance at Kentucky State University, where he received a BM and at Bowling Green State University, where he received an MM.

Franklin has served as tenor section leader (Broad Street Presbyterian Church and St. Michaels in the Hills Episcopal Church and as Music Director (Sylvania First UMC, Asbury South UMC, Third Baptist Church, and First Church of God). In the realm of academia, Franklin has been an Adjunct Voice Professor (University of Toledo, Ohio Christian University and Owens Community College), a Choral Director (Rogers High School and Columbus Arts & Technology Academy), and Assistant Principal and Interim Principal at CATA. A published author, his first book *The Art of Becoming: An 8 Step Guide to Cultivating Energetic Excellence* can be found at [TheArtOfBecomingBook.com](http://TheArtOfBecomingBook.com).



**Tifani Kendrick (Spoken Word)** writes, speaks, and curates wellness experiences that provide a breath of fresh air for people who want to heal and thrive. A native of Springfield, Ohio, Tifani K was 3 years old when her Grandmother started putting her on stage to sing and recite poems at church. While studying psychology at Ohio University 1998-2002, she started performing her original poems on stages across the country. Since she has resided in Columbus, Ohio for 20 years she has a few performance highlights including her feature at the Streetlight Guild Rhapsody and Refrain show and Maroon Arts Group ROOTS Open Mic in 2019. So far in 2023, she has performed poetry at the Ohio Attorney General's Office Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. event, the Zora's House Groundbreaking ceremony, and the Back Stage at the Lincoln

10-year Anniversary event as a 2020 Artist Incubation Program Graduate. Tifani is a member of the Black Women Rise Poetry Collective, which hosts monthly open mics and poetry workshops. In October 2020, Tifani turned her trauma into a TEDx Talk on the Life Saving Power of Inspiration. As an artist, Tifani K publishes and performs work that expresses her authentic voice as a Black woman, community advocate, and Mother rooted in love.



**Kenneth Brown (Spoken Word)** is an interdisciplinary artist involved in all facets of performance art for nearly 2 decades. He has graced the stages of Columbus and abroad as an actor, singer, dancer, and spoken word artist, has worked in productions as a director and choreographer, and has passionately instructed for 16 years in various disciplines and genres. Known for expression and emotion forward artistic work, he continues to aspire to utilize his artistic platform to uplift and encourage knowledge of self, knowledge of culture, and the fight against injustice in all of its forms.



**Stephen Spottswood (Violin)**, native of Silver Spring, Maryland, moved to Columbus, Ohio to study music education at Capital University. He went on to start his solo career performing as a hip-hop and jazz violinist, while simultaneously working as a middle school orchestra teacher at Reynoldsburg City Schools. Stephen has worked to inspire African-American classically trained musicians to incorporate contemporary genres in their performance. In January of 2020, he founded Columbus Cultural Orchestra whose mission is to advance a collective of multi-generational musicians of color by performing high-quality music. Stephen is married to Jhay Spottswood, and they live in Columbus, Ohio.

## **Board Members**

Destiny Coleman (Administrative Manager & Marketing)  
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## **SPECIAL THANKS**

### **Sponsors**

Ohio Arts Council  
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Columbus Dance Theatre  
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Columbus Cultural Orchestra  
CAPA

The Lincoln Theatre  
Broad Street Presbyterian Church  
Powell United Methodist Church  
King Arts Complex  
Faith Ministries Church

The Journey: Civil Rights was originally developed and commissioned  
by Opera Columbus.

