

LYRIC
BALTIMORE



• LYRIC YOUTH THEATER ENSEMBLE •

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

MAY 13 | 2025 7PM

FEATURING:

KENDALL CURTIS KADIN-ROYALE PURNELL MARCUS RICHARDS
KENDALL SHAW ASIA WEBSTER BONITA TILLMAN
RAEGAN WHITT BELLAGRACE ANNIBAL ELLE FOSTER
KALEI WASHINGTON NASIR EL

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

FEATURING

BellaGrace Annibal
Kendall Curtis
Nasir El
Elle Foster
Ka'din-Royale Purnell
Marcus Richards
Kendall Shaw
Bonita Tillman
Kalei Washington
Asia Webster
Raegan Whitt

Behind Closed Doors was developed through a rigorous process throughout the school year. **Lyric Youth Theater Ensemble** members, led by Lyric Education Coordinator Laura Sligh, collaborated with various teaching artists to create this show. The ensemble learned various methods of monologue writing, playwriting, and choreography to co create this work. **Behind Closed Doors** is a monologue driven piece grounded in today; the show opens with a group of teens processing discord behind the closed doors of a group counseling session. This show explores the various triggers youth face today and how they can work towards resolution via poetry, breathwork, and dance. **Behind Closed Doors**, is part choreopoem, part surrealistic adventure through the minds of the youth, and part meditation of the heart.

LYRIC YOUTH THEATER ENSEMBLE



BELLAGRACE LUCIENNE ANNIBAL

BellaGrace Lucienne Annibal is a 14-year-old homeschool scholar in the 9th grade. BellaGrace has dual citizenship (French/American) and speaks both languages fluently and hopes to be an ambassador to either country. She loves traveling and has been to France seven times. BellaGrace means "God's Beautiful Blessing" in Italian, and she is indeed the epitome of her name. BellaGrace has been blessed with the gift of oration and song, and loves being a motivational speaker. She competes locally and nationally in essay and oratory competitions and is ranked in the top 5 in the state. BellaGrace is no stranger to the Lyric, winning The Lyric Opera House's Dream Big Essay Contest, sponsored by the Lyric Baltimore Education Foundation, and having the amazing opportunity of being featured on WBAL television, reading her award-winning essay on the Lyric stage. BellaGrace is very excited for her first Lyric play.



KENDALL CURTIS

Kendall Curtis is a 16-year-old junior. This marks her second time performing on the Lyric stage, and she is thrilled to be back. She is passionate about storytelling and the arts, with dreams of becoming a director and screenwriter.



NASIR EL

Nasir El, is a rising star training with the LYTE Baltimore theater. Nasir has played in 2 roles in the LYTE Lyric Theater.



ELLE FOSTER

I was born in Baltimore. I go to St. Frances Academy and I'm in the 9th Grade. I've been acting and dancing since birth. My favorite things to do are sleeping, eating, and being alive. My favorite show is *Avatar: The Last Air Bender*.



KA'DIN ROYALE PURNELL

'Ka'din Royale Purnell is in the 10th grade and has been in the acting field since he was five years old. He is in his second year with the Lyric Youth Theater Ensemble. He has been in shows like *Motown*, *The Little Mermaid*, and many more. He attends Cristo Rey Jesuit High School.



MARCUS RICHARDS

I'm 16. This is my second year at the Lyric, and I have so much fun. I love seeing the creativity of all of the different members and kids. A little about me, I am in the 10th grade, and in the future, I am going to be a nurse, I am Christian Repping Victorious Ministries International (VMI).



KENDALL SHAW

I'm a senior at Patterson High School. I have an undying loyalty and passion for *Epic: the Musical*. Plus, I love trying new things and exploring new places!



BONITA TILLMAN

Bonita Tillman is a third year student at Bard High School Early College. She intends to pursue Law and Politics within her future career. In her personal life she takes interest in music, and history



KALEI WASHINGTON

My name is Kalei Washington, and I'm a sophomore at African Alchemists Homeschool Academy. I've grown on the Lyric stage, and I'm grateful to continue to.



ASIA WEBSTER

I'm a senior at Baltimore City College! Last year in the Drama Club and last year taking the Lyric Stage! But trust, you will be seeing me so much more in the future!



RAEGAN WITT

Raegan Witt is fourteen years old, and she wants to express her gratitude to her mother for always encouraging her to pursue her dreams. She also wishes to thank both Lyric Baltimore for providing this opportunity and herself for consistently putting her best foot forward. Raegan has been involved in theater since she was eleven, and she hopes to continue pursuing it for the rest of her life.



LAURA SLIGH

Laura L. Sligh (pronouns: she, her) is a multi-disciplinary artist, who has worked for over 2 decades in the Baltimore, Washington DC area. She received her MFA from The Maryland Institute of Art and her undergrad degree in performance from Morgan State University. Laura's artistry shows up in many forms. Her work blends texture, visual art, performance, woodworking, written word, and photography. Her art is complex, immersive, visually layered, and often interactive.

Laura Sligh is a director, theater teacher, and visual artist in Baltimore and its surrounding area for many years. She has worked with organizations such as Eubie Blake Cultural Arts Center, The YMCA, YATTS, Arena Players, and Baltimore City Schools. She has also worked as a stage manager, wig, makeup, and costume designer in the Baltimore Washington area and her work has been seen in shows such as *Grease*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Dreamgirls*, *The Wiz*, *Oliver*, and *Once on this Island*.

Laura also finds inspiration from the communities in which she works. Her work often deals with the current political climate, urban life, gentrification, and giving voice to the unseen. She can inspire and voice their stories through theater and visual art. Because Laura started as a performer, she understands the process of creating from all sides and equally values all aspects of art-making. Whether on stage or in a gallery, her work is always visually intriguing and thought-provoking. She strives to make art that is relevant and, encompasses all aspects of life and love.

CO-DIRECTOR



MAYA L. JAMES

Maya L. James is a Baltimorean with Old Bay and the waters of the Chesapeake running through her veins. She is a multimedia writer, theatre artist, editor, educator, and spiritualist. She also is an alumnus of Howard University where she studied theatre arts and poetry.

Maya grew up surrounded by old women and their stories. Ever since she was a little girl, they would sidle up beside her smelling like hard work and peppermints, needing to unload their troubles, prayers, and blessings on an unbiased ear. This inspired that little bookish girl to pursue the writer's life. She loves to blur

the lines between genres; between the seen and unseen in order to capture the Black, magical surrealism of her world.

Her poetry has been published in *Drum Voices Revue*, *Fokus Magazine*, and *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege Journal*. Maya's fiction has been published in *The Liberator Magazine*, and various publications. Maya is a fellow of *Callaloo (Poetry)*, *The Watering Hole (Poetry)*, *VONA (Playwriting)*, and *Kimbilio (Fiction)*. She was also a Helen Gurley Brown Education Fellow at The New York Public Library.

Theater credits include: *Fences* (Consultant/Dramaturg) Triad Stage, Greensboro, NC; *Mother Wit and Water Born* (Director), National Black Theatre, NY, NY; *Itagua Meji* (Director), Rutgers University; *Sonography of Sound: A Choreopoem* (Director/Playwright/Poet) Harvard University; *Debajo del Laurel* (Director), Teatro Latea, NY, NY; *Mi China De Oro* (Director) Brecht Forum, NY, NY; and *Wading in the Water* (Playwright), University of California, San Diego. She currently is the Education Coordinator at Lyric Baltimore in Baltimore, MD and resides in Brooklyn, NY.

THEATER ADMINISTRATOR



NICOLE ADELL JOHNSON

Nicole Adell Johnson, a native of Baltimore, MD, serves as administrative intern for the Lyric Youth Theater Ensemble. Currently, Nicole is enrolled at Coppin State University pursuing a degree in Arts Administration. Nicole has worked professionally for over 20 years as a dancer, singer, and actress in both Broadway and film. She began her artistic journey at The Baltimore School for the Arts and continued her education at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, eventually graduating from The Alvin Ailey American Dance School.

Trained in multiple disciplines of dance, drama, and voice, Nicole is dedicated to spreading the joy and healing power of the arts. Nicole's mission has always been to serve her community by inspiring, creating, and providing quality training in the arts. She believes the arts should be accessible and inspirational for everyone. After performing on Broadway and across the country, Nicole returned to her hometown to share her extensive experience and knowledge with future artists. She continues to promote her love for the arts through creating, teaching master classes, providing technical and administrative support, and directing artists and communities in the DMV area and nationwide. Nicole is grateful for God's grace, blessings and the continuous support and love from her family, friends, and mentors.

Credits include: *Antigone*, *Marty & the Hands that Could*, *Chicken & Biscuits*, Coppin State University Repertory (Stage Manager), John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Theater Programming Coordinator), The Harlem Globetrotters (Stage Manager, Understudy), L.T.Y.C (Program Coordinator, Resident Theatre Instructor), Baltimore Center Stage, *Antigone* (Choreographer, Resident Teaching Artist), *The Lion King Broadway* and National Tour (Ensemble, Swing, Principle Understudy for Nala and Shenzi), 1st National Touring Company of The Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (Vocal Ensemble, Dance Captain), *Once on This Island* (Erzulie), Lula Washington Dance Company, and Creative Outlet Dance Theater of Brooklyn.

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



DENISE KUMANI GANTT

Denise Kumani Gantt's plays and performance pieces include *meditations/from the ash*, winner of the Artscape Best Play Contest and voted Best New Play by *The Baltimore Alternative* and *City Paper*; *Three Stories to the Ground*, written with Gabriel Shanks and winner of the Theatre Project Outstanding Vision in Theatre award and *anatomy/lessons* selected as part of Penumbra Theater's Cornerstone Project (MN). Her play, *The Gift, a brief history of everything we have ever known*, received staged readings at A Contemporary Theater (ACT-Seattle), The Drama League (New York),

and Cape May Stage (NJ). In 2002, her poetry collection, *conjuring the dead*, received the Maryland Emerging Writers Award. Gantt has attended numerous artist residencies including Hedgebrook, The MacDowell Colony, and Sangam House (India). She is the former Executive Artistic Director of the Village of Arts and Humanities in Philadelphia and worked at Baltimore Center Stage for 14 seasons. She is currently the Director of Education at Lyric Baltimore and serves on the board of Maryland Citizens for the Art, and the Leadership Council of CityLit. Gantt's digital story, *Trick*, was part of the Arts & Spirituality exhibition that opened at Notre Dame's Gormley Gallery in September 2023. She also facilitates digital story workshops with the StoryCenter and the StoryCentre, CA and is on the board of StoryCentre CA.

RESIDENT ARTIST/EDUCATION SPECIALIST



EBONY EVANS

Ebony Evans is a musician, performing artist, arts instructor, lightworker, and radical activist centering her work around the freedom, agency, empowerment, and self-expression of Black women and femmes. Ebony has become a consistent leader of rallies, organizing and protests in alignment with the Say Her Name movement to rail against the culture of misogynoir pervading our society today. Ebony obtained her B.A. in urban arts theater, community arts, and music from Coppin State University, where she received accolades for her exceptional performance achievements.

With more than 12 years of experience in education, she has developed a variety of arts programs, summer camps, workshops, and classes. One of her standout initiatives was an African Folklore program at Creative Alliance, which aimed to connect youth with their cultural identities, highlight Africa's global influence, enhance their performance skills, and assist them in discovering their purpose. In 2018, she interned as a Community Art Collaborative fellow at the Maryland Institute College of Art and took on the role of Resident Artist and Education Coordinator at the Lyric Performing Arts Center. By 2021, Ebony had advanced to the position of Education Specialist at the Lyric Performing Arts Center. Her influential work as a performer, cultural disruptor and curator has been showcased in numerous media outlets, including *WYPR*, *WBAL-TV*, *WJZ CBS Baltimore*, *Mic*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Baltimore Beat*, *Baltimore Magazine*, and *Bmore Art*, among others.

LYRIC BALTIMORE

LYRIC BALTIMORE EDUCATION

At Lyric Baltimore, we value the voice and agency of Greater Baltimore youth. Our in-school and afterschool programs in theatre and creative writing are supported by the belief that every person has a unique and important story to share. Just as Shakespeare wrote contemporary, relevant dramas for Elizabethan England, increased involvement in the arts can reflect the joys and struggles of our communities in new, compelling ways.

To learn more about our programming or get involved with the Education Department, visit lyricbaltimore.com/education

LYRIC BALTIMORE

The mission of Lyric Baltimore is to provide diverse populations with world class entertainment in a world class venue, offer impactful educational programming to students in Baltimore City and beyond, and maintain the historic, Lyric Theatre. Lyric Baltimore is more than just a Baltimore institution and city landmark, the historic theatre is one of the longest running performance halls in the country and is recognized on the National Register of Historic Places.

Currently, Lyric Baltimore has made its mark hosting Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony-winning performers in all genres of music and comedy, including the likes of Jamie Foxx, Eddie Vedder, The Temptations, Alanis Morissette, Dave Chappelle, and Chris Rock. View our upcoming shows at lyricbaltimore.com

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Laura Sligh, *Director*
Maya James, *Co-Director*
Nicole Johnson, *Administrator*
Denise Kumani Gantt, *Director of Education*
Ebony Evans, *Resident Artist/Education Specialist*
Brad Ranno, *Production Manager*
Embu Seitu, *Lighting Designer*
Amanda Morrel, *Stage Manager*
Naw!Company, *Videographer*
Yvette Shipley-Perkins, *Choreographer*
Navasha Daya, *Vocal Coach*

LYRIC EDUCATION STAFF

Denise Kumani Gantt, *Director of Education*
Ebony Evans, *Education Specialist*
Maya James, *Education Coordinator*
Laura Sligh, *Education Coordinator*
Nicole Johnson, *Intern, Coppin State University*
Naima Gordon, *Intern, City College of Baltimore*

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