MARIE & ROSETTA

BY GEORGE BRANT ★ **FEATURING** THE MUSIC OF ROSETTA THARPE AND MARIE KNIGHT

WORLD PREMIERE PRESENTED BY ATLANTIC THEATRE COMPANY, NEW YORK CITY, 2016

THE STORY OF ONE OF THE GREATEST DUOS IN MUSIC HISTORY



SEPTEMBER 18 THROUGH 27

★ A/MFA Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts ★

MARIE AND ROSETTA WAS DEVELOPED AT THEATRE WORKS SILICON VALLEY AS PART OF THEIR NEW WORKS FESTIVAL. ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE PLAYWRIGHT'S CENTER AND THE NEW HARMONY PROJECT.

MARIE AND ROSETTA IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY CARDINAL COUNSELING, VIRGIL L. MILLER, JR., REBSAMEN FUND, AND DR. ODELL NICKELBERRY.
IN-KIND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY ROLLER FUNERAL HOMES.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAMS ARE SUPPORTED IN PART BY THE SHUBERT FOUNDATION AND THE MCMATH FAMILY.

ABOUT THE SHOW

DISCOVER THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF SISTER ROSETTA THARPE THROUGH THIS ACCLAIMED PLAY CELEBRATING ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ARTISTS IN AMERICAN MUSIC HISTORY. BLENDING MUSIC AND DRAMA, ***MARIE AND ROSETTA*** EXPLORES A PIVOTAL CHAPTER IN THARPE'S CAREER WHILE ILLUMINATING HER GROUNDBREAKING CONTRIBUTIONS TO GOSPEL, ROCK AND ROLL, AND POPULAR MUSIC.

BOTH INTIMATE AND INSPIRING, THE PRODUCTION EMBODIES THE THEMES OF REDISCOVERY, REVERENCE, AND RECOGNITION FOR ARTISTS WHOSE INFLUENCE TRANSFORMED AMERICAN CULTURE.

JOIN US FOR A POST-SHOW TALK BACK

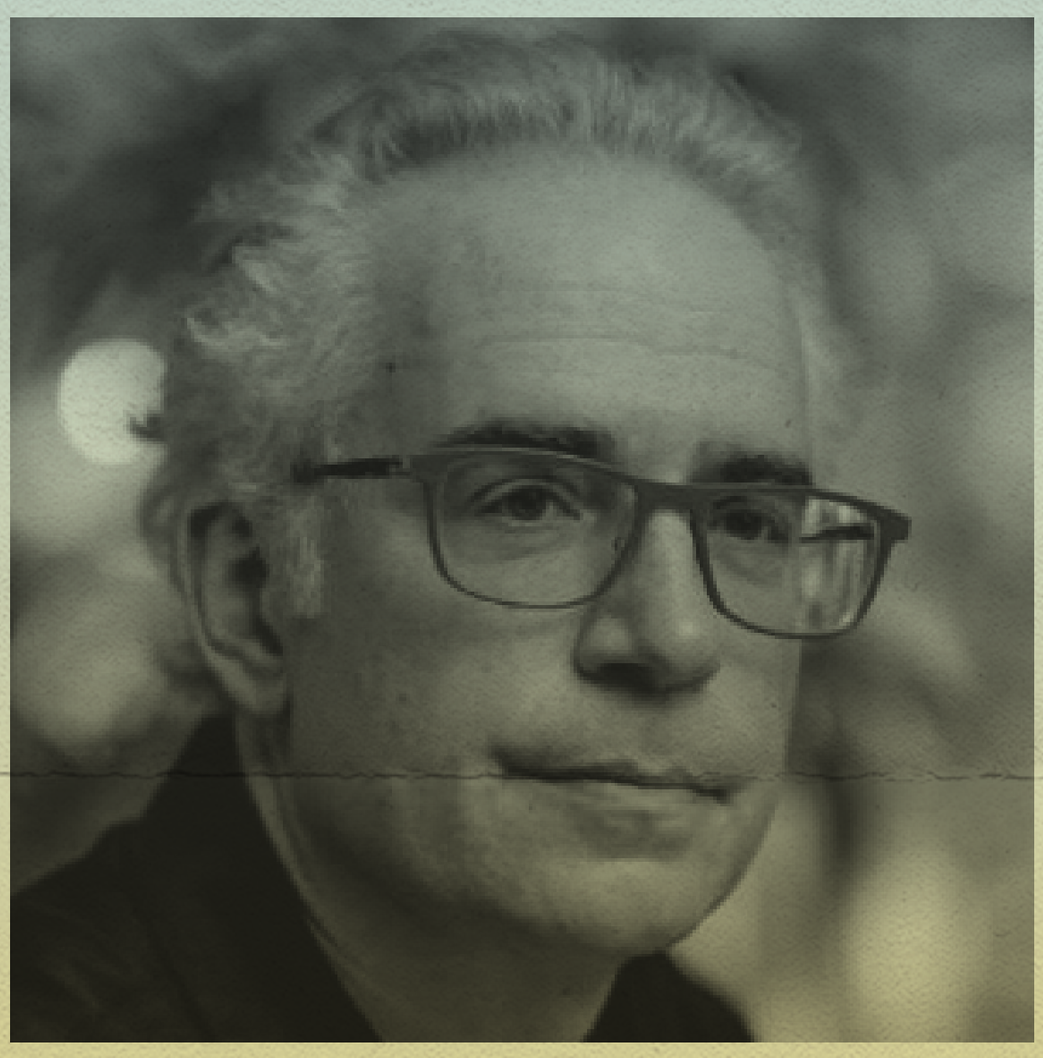
SCHOOL MATINEE TALK BACKS WILL INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM MOSAIC TEMPLAR CULTURAL CENTER

RUNNING TIME: **90 MINUTES** RECOMMENDED AGE: **13 AND UP**

CONTENT WARNING: TOPICS SUCH AS RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION ARE ADDRESSED IN THIS PLAY. THERE IS MILD MATURE CONTENT INCLUDING RACIALLY CHARGED LANGUAGE.

THE VIDEOTAPING OR MAKING OF ELECTRONIC OR OTHER AUDIO AND/OR VISUAL RECORDINGS OF THIS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTING RECORDINGS OR STREAMS IN ANY MEDIUM, INCLUDING THE INTERNET, IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED, A VIOLATION OF THE AUTHOR(S)'S RIGHTS AND ACTIONABLE UNDER UNITED STATES COPYRIGHT LAW. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: HTTPS://CONCORDTHEATRICALS.COM/RESOURCES/PROTECTING-ARTISTS

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



GEORGE BRANT

George Brant is an award-winning writer for theatre, opera and film. He is the author of over 40 plays, including *Grounded* (stage play and opera version with music by Jeanine Tesori), *Elephant's Graveyard*, *Into the Breeches!*, *Marie and Rosetta*, The *Prince of Providence* (adapted from the book by Mike Stanton), *The Mourners' Bench*, *The Land of Oz* (music by Nathan Motta), *Three Voyages of the Lobotomobile and Rust: A Story of Steel and Grit* (adapted from the memoir by Eliese Colette Goldbach), as well as *Tender Age* and *Crooked River Burning* (both adapted from the novel by Mike Winegardner). His scripts have been translated into 18 languages and performed in 28 countries by such companies as Soho Place (London's West End), the Public Theater, Atlantic Theater Company, the Kennedy Center, Page 73, Gate Theatre (London), Traverse Theatre (Edinburgh) and the Festival d'Avignon.

Brant's accolades include a Grammy nomination, a Lucille Lortel Award, the Smith Prize, a Scotsman Fringe First Award and the Keene Prize for Literature. He has been awarded fellowships from the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, MacDowell Colony, New Harmony Project, Hermitage Artist's Retreat and the Michener Center for Writers. Brant has been commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, Trinity Repertory Company, Dobama Theatre, the National Theatre of Genoa and Cleveland Play House. He is published by Concord Theatricals, Oberon Books and Smith & Kraus. Brant is currently developing *Buffalo Bill's Last Ride* for the National Theatre of Genoa and the opera *Mothers of Kherson* (with music by Maxim Kolomiiets) for the Metropolitan Opera House. Brant is a proud graduate of the Michener Center for Writers at UT-Austin.

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE



Rosetta Nubin was born in 1915 in Cotton Plant, Arkansas. Her mother, Katie Bell Nubin, was a singer, mandolin player, and preacher, and Rosetta began performing with her at churches throughout the South by age four. The pair moved to Chicago in the 1920s, where Rosetta's distinctive guitar playing and fusion of gospel, blues, jazz, and rhythm and blues began to attract attention. In 1938, Tharpe moved to New York City and signed with Decca Records, recording the label's first gospel songs. Her music appealed to both religious and secular audiences, making her one of the most popular performers of her era and earning her the title "Godmother of Rock and Roll." In 1946, she discovered singer Marie Knight and invited her to tour, leading to recordings including "Up Above My Head" and "Gospel Train."

Tharpe continued performing across the United States and Europe for decades, bringing her electrifying guitar style and gospel-rooted sound to audiences around the world. Her 1964 performance at a railway station in Manchester, England, became one of her most iconic appearances. After suffering a stroke in 1970, she died in 1973 at age 58.

Today, Tharpe is recognized as a foundational figure in rock and roll, influencing artists including Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jimi Hendrix, and Eric Clapton. She was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2018 with the Award for Early Influence.

MARIE KNIGHT

Marie Roach was born in 1920 and raised in Newark, New Jersey, in a Church of God in Christ family. A gifted singer and self-taught pianist, she began performing in her church youth choir at age nine and was touring the national gospel circuit by 1939.

In 1946, after making her first recordings with The Sunset Four, Knight caught the attention of Sister Rosetta Tharpe while performing in Harlem. Tharpe invited her to join her touring ensemble, recognizing "something special" in Knight's powerful contralto voice. The two became a celebrated gospel duo, recording songs including "Up Above My Head" and "Gospel Train" and sometimes performing as the "Saint and the Sinner," with Tharpe as the saint and Knight as the sinner. Their partnership helped bring the energy of gospel performance to increasingly broad audiences.

Knight and Tharpe eventually went their separate musical ways but remained close friends. Knight formed her own group, The Millionaires, recorded gospel and secular R&B, and continued to reunite with Tharpe on occasion. After Tharpe's death in 1973, Knight helped arrange her funeral. She remained a respected presence in gospel music and continued to perform well into her later years.

In the 1970s, Knight returned fully to gospel music and became a minister in New York City. She continued recording and performing gospel music for the rest of her life, dying in 2009 at age 84. Her powerful voice and partnership with Tharpe helped establish her as an important figure in the history of gospel music.



SISTER ROSETTA THARPE AND **MARIE KNIGHT** WITH FANS FOLLOWING A 1947 CONCERT IN ST. LOUIS.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

FERGIE PHILIPPE



"In the subliminal space of the sacred, and the secular sat Sister Rosetta Tharpe: the Godmother of Rock 'n' Roll. When she started using distortion on electric guitar to sing gospel music and inadvertently creating rhythm and blues, which led to the creation of rock 'n' roll, I think one of the things that probably struck us (those who receive this music) was how intrinsically sacred it felt to hear and feel it. The soul with which she sings all of her music. The grit with which she plays that guitar. There's something about rock 'n' roll that affects us deep inside. And while we have moved on from gospel music into its own genre that can talk about a myriad of subjects, that connection to its sacred roots sits beautifully in its secular execution... just like Sister Rosetta did.

Marie and Rosetta wrestles with faith, intimacy, and most importantly the role that music plays in our lives as teachers. How the gift of connecting spiritually with music is one of the things that shows us who we are and how we choose to walk on this earth. Thank you for being here and helping contribute to recognizing, not only Sister Rosetta's artistry, but her existence. May the music show you who you are.

Fergie Philippe"

Fergie Philippe is an actor, director, writer, and puppeteer currently touring the nation as The Beast in the 30th Anniversary Revival tour of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. Previous Credits - Broadway: *Hamilton* (Hercules Mulligan/James Madison), *Camelot* (Sir Sagramore; King Arthur U/S). Off-Broadway: *The Connector* (Bob Henshaw/Willis Taylor). National Tour: *Hamilton* (Hercules Mulligan/James Madison). TV/Film: *The Good Fight, The Gilded Age, Law and Order: SVU, Space Cadet.*

MEET THE MAKERS

★ AMFA CREATIVE TEAM ★

DIRECTOR	FERGIE PHILIPPE
MUSIC DIRECTOR	ANTHONY MONTGOMERY
SCENIC DESIGN	MICHAEL KLUCHER
COSTUME DESIGN	VERDA DAVENPORT
LIGHTING DESIGN	GRIFFEN BIRDSONG
PROPS MASTER	JESSI PERREN
STAGE MANAGER	BALEIGH ALMOND

★ CAST ★

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE	MIKI GAYNOR
MARIE KNIGHT	SELENA MYKENZIE GORDON
UNDERSTUDY	BRIANNA EAST

★ PRODUCTION CREW ★

RECORDED MUSIC PERFORMERS	ANTHONY MONTGOMERY (PIANO)
	JACK NICHOLS (GUITAR)
CARPENTRY & RIGGING	MICHAEL KLUCHER
	AARON BURNSIDE
SCENIC CHARGE ARTIST	BALEIGH ALMOND
COSTUME SHOP MANAGER	VERDA DAVENPORT
HAIR SPECIALIST	JESS MYLONAS
AUDIO LEAD	LUKE MITCHELL
SOUND BOARD OPERATOR	JESSI PERREN
BACKSTAGE RUN CREW	BRIANNA EAST
GUITAR CONSULTANT	CLAYTON ARONOWITZ

MEET THE MAKERS

★ SPECIAL THANKS ★

PRESHOW PLAYLIST PROVIDED BY NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC

ROLLER FUNERAL HOME; QUAPAW QUARTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH; RETRO FIT; NATIONAL PAWN SHOP, DON BOLINGER, UA LITTLE ROCK COSTUME SHOP; TAMRA PATTERSON CALAMESE, THE REP; CLAYTON ARONOWITZ; JULIE WILLIAMS; JACOB PRUETT

★ CHILDREN'S THEATRE & PERFORMING ARTS STAFF ★

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS	CHAD BRADFORD
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR	MICHAEL KLUCHER
ASSISTANT TECHNICAL DIRECTOR	GRIFFEN BIRDSONG
COMPANY MANAGER	RIVKA KUPERMAN
PRODUCTION MANAGER	LIZ MCMATH
PERFORMING ARTS MANAGER	KIERA SMITHSON

★ AMFA LEADERSHIP ★

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER	DR. VICTORIA RAMIREZ
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER	LAINE HARBER
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER	SPENCER JANSEN
CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER	MALINA TABOR
CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER	JANA WOLFF

MEET THE CAST



North Little Rock native, **MIKI GAYNOR**, is a multidisciplinary artist and entrepreneur whose creative work includes acting, singing, writing, hosting, storytelling, directing, and producing engaging experiences for the community. With a background in theatre and live entertainment, Miki loves creating playful, imaginative, and heartfelt performances that encourage creativity, joy, confidence, and connection for children, adults and families alike.



SELENA MYKENZIE GORDON is a Brooklyn-based actor, singer, educator, and MFA graduate of the University of Arkansas. She returns to AMFA, having previously performed as Luciana in Shake on the Lake's *Comedy of Errors*. Some of her credits include Ken Ludwig's *The Three Musketeers*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. Mykenzie believes that the pursuit of joy is essential to every artist's journey. Visit selenamykenzie.com for updates on her upcoming projects.



BRIANNA EAST is a graduate from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with a BA in Music and a Minor in dance. She is a gifted triple-threat who has recently starred in *Elephant and Piggie*, *Frozen*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *White Christmas*, *Footloose*, *Grumpy Old Men the Musical*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*. She thanks her family and friends for their love, support, and encouragement throughout her pursuit of the arts.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

ARRIVE EARLY

Arriving 30 minutes early allows time to make a final trip to the restroom and locate your seats.

TURN OFF ELECTRONICS

Lights and sounds from phones and other electronic devices are distracting to other patrons as well as the performers. Photography is not allowed during the performance.

BE AISLE KIND

Tuck your belongings under your seat to remove tripping hazards while seated and be sure to take all your belongings with you when you leave. Throw away any rubbish on your way out.

PLAY YOUR PART

Watch and listen; laugh at funny bits; applaud at the spectacular. Be present and in the moment with the performers.

WATCH THE VIDEO

LEARN MORE

WATCH

MUSIC IN ARKANSAS

LISTEN

ARKANSONGS

READ

FROM ALMEDA TO ZILPHIA

DISCUSS

HOW DOES FORGETTING HAPPEN?

UP NEXT AT AMFA



NOV 27 – DEC 16, 2026

TRAILER

By Chad Bradford / Music by Chad Bradford and Tim Cooper, featuring Additional Music by Faith Rivera



MARCH 5 – 25, 2027

TRAILER

Script and lyrics by Sarah Hammond / Music by Will Aronson
Based on the Pete the Cat series of books by Kimberly and James Dean / PETE THE CAT is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Corp. www.concordtheatricals.com

PROFESSIONAL AND YOUTH AUDITIONS COMING IN 2027