

CLARENCE BROWN THEATRE

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

THE ROYALE

By Marco Ramirez

MAR 25 - APR 12

Directed by
Tosin Morohunfola



THE *Jenny Boyd* THEATRE



Photo: Sammy Pontello and Cast/Ensemble by LeAnna Jacobson

CLARENCE BROWN THEATRE

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

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For more than 50 years, Clarence Brown Theatre (CBT) has told meaningful stories by providing world-class live theatre to nearly 40,000 patrons who visit us each season. The CBT season runs from September through May and features six to eight productions ranging from musicals to drama and provides a cultural resource and professional theatre for both the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and the larger East Tennessee community.

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CLARENCE BROWN THEATRE

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

presents

THE ROYALE

By **Marco Ramirez**

Director and Fight Choreographer **Tosin Morohunfola**

Associate Director and Dramaturg **Drew Drake**

Scenic Designer
Alondra Castro

Costume Designer
Tori Niemiec

Lighting Designer
Maranda DeBusk

Sound Designer
Willow James ♦

Stage Manager
Nia Sciarretta *

Artistic Director /
Department Head
Kenneth Martin

Managing Director
Tom Cervone

Production Manager
Susan L. McMillan

"The Royale" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

Center Theater Group / Kirk Douglas Theatre, Michael Ritchie, Artistic Director produced the World Premiere of THE ROYALE in Los Angeles, CA in 2013

Originally Produced by Lincoln Center Theater, in 2016, New York City

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

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♦ The Designers in LORT Theatres are represented by **United Scenic Artists**, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.



* The stage manager appears through the courtesy of **Actors' Equity Association**, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Cover photo: Denzel DeJournette; by Shawn Poynter

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Tosin Morohunfola

"I ever tell you about the Royale?"

The key to understanding this play may very well be in its title. In the late 1800s, Royales were barbaric underground brawls where Black men were blindfolded and sent into arenas to fight for spare change from the white spectators who forced them into battle.

Before boxing became mainstream and respectable, it was an exploitative, back-alley game where racial hierarchy and subjugation played out in blood and currency.

It is perhaps fitting, then, that this play—set around 1910, when Black boxing legend Jack Johnson brought visibility and legitimacy to the sport—allows its title to harken back to when these fights were just extensions of the highly-voyeuristic chitlin circuit. It begs us to really ask how much has changed even now: Who owns the sports teams you cheer for? Who is allowed to participate? Who is permitted to win, and who is condemned when they do? And what do you risk when being a person of color in a sport is, itself, a political act?

Jack Johnson's victory against "The Great White Hope" led to nationwide outrage, hate-crime violence, footage-censorship and white panic. At the same time—for a different community—it ignited a people's imagination and gave visuals to what's possible. It demonstrated what Black excellence can look like before that was a common phrase. It broke boundaries and elevated a sport from vulgar to venerated.

This is the semi-fictionalized story of that pivotal moment in American history, and one man's choice to change it. The story wrestles with the price of greatness—one's responsibility to self versus one's responsibility to community—an impossible moral dilemma of family versus future. It tackles the culture of celebrity and how: to be Black and well-known is to carry a pressure that you represent the entire race. It reminds us all that we don't get control over how history remembers us. We are not in charge of how our story is told. And perhaps most chillingly, we will never know the full ramifications of our decisions.

But nevertheless, a legacy sits on each of our shoulders, as it did on Jack's. Perhaps, if we listen quietly enough, we too will hear the ancestral voices calling us to our destiny.

~ **Tosin Morohunfola**

THE CAST

Jay	Denzel Dejournette *
Wynton	Kerwin Thompson *
Nina	Anquanizia Hall *
Fish	Keith Allen Davis, Jr *
Max	Jeb Burris *
Ensemble / <i>U/S Fish</i>	GG Grigsby
Ensemble / <i>U/S Nina</i>	McKinley Merritt
Ensemble.....	Anna Swart
Ensemble / <i>U/S Max</i>	Thomas Nash Tetterton
Percussionist	Corey Hodge
<i>U/S Jay and Wynton</i>	Will Dorsey IV *
<i>U/S Percussionist</i>	Obayana Ajanaku

RUN TIME:

90 minutes with no intermission

ADVISORIES:

The Royale contains themes of racism and depictions of violence.
The play contains strong language.



* The actors appear through the courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

After the show, please take a moment to fill out a brief 5-minute survey tiny.utk.edu/cbtsurvey about your experiences at **The Royale**. Your feedback helps us better know our audiences, offer more programming, and increases funding opportunities for the CBT. Thank you in advance!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR **MARCO RAMIREZ**



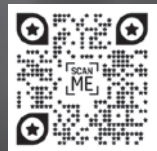
Marco Ramirez has had plays produced at Lincoln Center Theater, The Kennedy Center, The Humana Festival, The Old Globe (San Diego), The Bush Theatre (London), American Theater Company (Chicago), Soulpepper (Toronto) and Center Theatre Group (LA). Honors include Helen Hayes and Drama Desk nominations, the Outer Critics Circle's John Gassner Playwriting Award, Juilliard's Lila Acheson Wallace Playwriting Fellowship, Lincoln Center's Le Comte du Nouy Award and TCG's Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. Marco is also a WGA and Emmy

Award-nominated TV writer and producer, where his credits include Marvel's *Daredevil* (Netflix), Marvel's *The Defenders* (Netflix), *Sons of Anarchy* (FX), *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix) and *Fear the Walking Dead* (AMC).



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ABOUT JACK JOHNSON

by Drew Drake

Jack Johnson — born Arthur John Johnson in Galveston, Texas on March 31, 1878 — was the third of nine children born to Tina and Henry Johnson, who had both been formerly enslaved.

Johnson would go on to become one of the most famous — and controversial — athletes of his era. His life and legacy helped inspire *The Royale*, which explores the pressures, expectations, and dangers faced by a Black boxer navigating in the segregated world of boxing during the Jim Crow era.

GROWING UP

Johnson grew up on Galveston's East End, a neighborhood that, at the time, was relatively mixed-race. In the late 1800s, Galveston was a thriving port city filled with sailors, dockworkers, immigrants, and travelers from around the world.

Johnson later reflected on his childhood: "As I grew up, the white boys were my friends and my pals. I ate with them, played with them, and slept at their homes. Their mothers gave me cookies. And I ate at their tables. No one ever taught me that white men were superior to me."

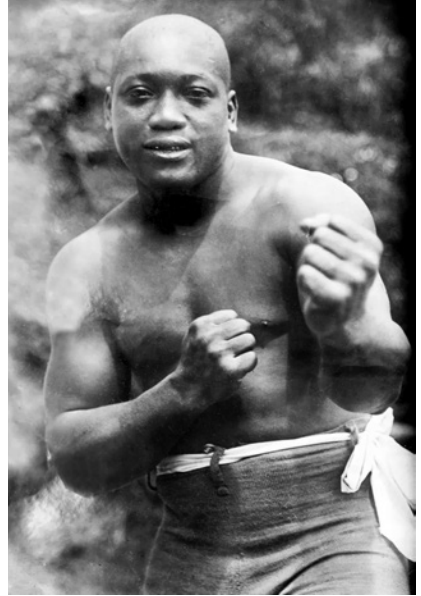
Johnson left school after the fifth or sixth grade and began working on the Galveston docks, where he developed the strength and toughness that would later serve him in the boxing ring.

INTRODUCTION TO SPARRING

In the late 1890s, a carriage painter named Walter Lewis in Dallas, Texas recognized Johnson's natural athletic ability and encouraged him to try boxing.

Johnson later found work as a janitor at a boxing gym run by German-born heavyweight Herman Bernau, where he saved enough money to buy a pair of boxing gloves. Before long, he was sparring whenever he could, taking the first steps toward a career that would change boxing history.

Johnson would eventually become the first Black heavyweight champion of the world, a victory that challenged the racial order of the time and made him a target of intense scrutiny. The echoes of that moment and the weight carried by those who dare to break barriers are at the heart of *The Royale*.



Jack Johnson, Heavyweight Champion
Boxer - Galveston Giant

A TIMELINE: THE CAREER OF JACK JOHNSON

1896–1898

Dockside Beginnings

Johnson began boxing as an amateur, fighting for small purses on the docks of Galveston, Texas. Word quickly spread about the young fighter's strength and confidence, and he developed a reputation as a powerful and fearless competitor.

1898 - Turn of the Century Professional Debut

Johnson made his professional debut in 1898 in Galveston. At the time, boxing existed in a legal gray area and Black fighters were barred from competing for the sport's most prestigious titles, forcing them to create opportunities outside the traditional system.

1901 - The Jailhouse Sparring Match

After a 1901 bout with Joe Choynski, both fighters were arrested because prizefighting was illegal in Texas. Unable to pay bail, they agreed to spar inside their jail cell while spectators paid admission — a strange chapter in boxing history.

1903 - The Galveston Giant

By 1903, Jack Johnson had won at least 50 professional fights against both Black and white opponents. His rise to national attention accelerated after a 20-round bout with Denver Ed Martin for the World Colored Heavyweight Championship.

Known as the "Galveston Giant," Johnson stood 6'1" and around 200 pounds—an imposing size for a heavyweight boxer in the early 1900s.

1908 / The Burns Challenge

Ambitious and outspoken, Johnson openly challenged leading fighters through the press. He ultimately set his sights on world heavyweight champion **Tommy Burns**, a Canadian boxer.

Because many white champions refused to fight him, Johnson reportedly followed Burns across continents, purchasing ringside seats and loudly taunting him during bouts.

Finally, Burns agreed to a championship fight in **December 1908 in Sydney, Australia**—a bout that would change boxing forever. The match made history as the first heavyweight championship with an African American. Burns was handily defeated in the 14th round.

Despite the win, Johnson was still not seen as the True Heavyweight World Champion in the eyes of White America, using the fact that Burns was a Canadian to discount Johnson's title.

THE PAYOUT

Johnson's victory sent shock waves across America and the world. With newspapers both celebrating and condemning the outcome, Johnson had shattered a racial barrier that many believed was impenetrable.

For defeating Tommy Burns, Johnson was paid \$5,000. When adjusted for inflation, that comes out to about \$170,000 today. Despite losing, Burns was paid \$30,000, which would be over a million dollars today.



1910 - The “Fight of the Century”

In 1910, Johnson defended his heavyweight title against former champion **James J. Jeffries** in what newspapers called the “**Fight of the Century.**” Jeffries had come out of retirement as the “Great White Hope,” widely expected to reclaim the title. Instead, Johnson dominated the fight and defeated Jeffries in the fifteenth round.

15,000 boxing fans descended on Reno, Nevada for the fight, which drew major public interest.

This was also the first time in history that a stadium had been constructed specifically to host a boxing match. The temperature for the July 4 fight was a positively scorching 110 degrees.

The victory sparked dozens of race riots across the United States, revealing the intense racial tensions surrounding Johnson’s success.



LEGACY

The legacy of **Jack Johnson** extends far beyond his achievements in the boxing ring. Through both his extraordinary boxing skill and his unapologetically unconventional lifestyle, Johnson openly challenged the prevailing norms of white supremacy in early 20th-century America.

After being targeted by federal authorities under the **Mann Act**, Johnson fled the United States rather than submit to what many historians view as a racially motivated prosecution. His defiance and independence made him both one of the most celebrated and one of the most controversial figures of his era.

Today, his legacy lives on and inspired legendary boxers that followed him in history, including Muhammad Ali, as well as local Knoxville boxer Big John Tate.

THE JIM CROW ERA

The Jim Crow era refers to the system of racial segregation and discrimination that operated primarily — though not exclusively — in the Southern and border states of the United States from 1877 through the mid-1960s.

Jim Crow was more than a collection of discriminatory laws. It was a social system that governed nearly every aspect of daily life. Under Jim Crow, African Americans were forced into segregated schools, housing, transportation, and public spaces, and were widely treated as second-class citizens. The system effectively legitimized and enforced anti-Black racism throughout American society.



THE BOTTOM is a nonprofit cultural organization serving our community through our Black-affirming bookshop and arts programming. Rooted in place justice, we stand to build community, celebrate culture, and engage the creativity of Black people in Knoxville. We do our work through curated events, community projects, ongoing programming, shared resources, and physical space. Our current programs include Lit Kidz, Arts In Movement, Sew It Sell It, Ceramics at the Bottom and the Community Podcast program. In our space, you can find our bookshop, tea room, community podcast studio, community art studio, and the Elandria Williams reading and research room.



At The Bottom, community leaders, artists, educators, students, cultural workers, activists, and entrepreneurs blend culture, history, politics, and social issues in strategic and engaging ways. We strive to cultivate a sense of belonging, togetherness and safety for Black people in Knoxville and beyond.

thebottomknox.com



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THE ACTORS

OBAYANA AJANAKU (*U/S Percussionist*) is a distinguished performing artist and cultural music educator with over 20 years of experience in the arts. His journey began at age six with the Djembe orchestra, a foundation that led him to international stages across Russia, Brazil, Cuba, and Africa. He continually deepens his craft through global immersion, most recently completing an intensive 2023 study project in Mali, Senegal, and Nigeria, where he mastered various drum styles and cultural traditions. Over his career, Obayana has performed with a diverse range of dance companies, from ballet to traditional African styles. Currently based in Knoxville, Tennessee, Obayana serves as the West African Drum Instructor at Austin-East Magnet High School and Vine Middle Magnet School. In 2024, he was honored with the Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance Educator of Excellence Award for his two decades of impactful service in Knox County Schools. Beyond the classroom, Obayana is the founder of the "Indigenous Vibes" edutainment group and the Executive Director of Drums Up Guns Down. Driven by a passion for youth development, he leverages drumming as both an educational tool and a therapeutic outlet, helping young adults process mental and emotional stressors while fostering unity across diverse cultures and backgrounds.



JEB BURRIS (Max) is an Assistant Professor of Movement and Company member of the Clarence Brown Theatre Company. Professionally, Jeb is an Actor, Fight Director, Intimacy Director,

Movement Director, and Director who has worked on over 100 professional productions. When not teaching, he is the Director of Movement at American Players

Theatre in Spring Green, Wisconsin. His work has been seen around the country in places like Portland Center Stage, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, American Players Theatre, Sacramento Theatre Company, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Great Lakes Theatre, and Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Company, to name a few. Jeb holds an M.F.A. from Illinois State University and trained with Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare Company in the U.K.



KEITH ALLEN DAVIS, JR.

(Fish) is a first year MFA Acting student at UTK. He is an actor, writer, musician, and director from Meridian, Miss. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Theatre

Performance at Alabama State University. During his time at ASU, he has been cast in and worked on productions such as *Dreamgirls*, *The Wiz*, *Tracks*, *Slammin II*, and *Blues for An Alabama Sky*. He has also written for and co-directed Montgomery, Alabama's performance for the worldwide festival of *The Walk* (Little Amal) in 2023. Since graduating, he was cast as Tim Allgood in *Noises Off* and Professor Bhaer/Knight in *Little Women* at New Stage Theatre. Since joining the MFA program, he has been cast as Philpot/Grimgrind in *A Christmas Carol*. Follow his music and acting pages on Instagram, @thebabyboykeith and @keithallendavisjr!

THE ACTORS



DENZEL DEJOURNETTE

(Jay) Dedicated to the memory of Betty DeJournette, Donald Foster Sr., Calvin Simpson Jr., and Desman DeJournette. You have the best seat

in the house...Heaven. Thank you to my parents and family for the unwavering support and coming to every show, and to GBC, my love, thank you for your love, creativity, and support!
www.denzeldejournette.com



WILL DORSEY IV

(U/S Jay and Wynton) is a proud native of Flint, Michigan, attended Central Michigan University and is a Knoxville College alumnus. A certified personal trainer and

amateur bodybuilder, he operates his own fitness business. Will began his stage career in 2009, performing with Carpetbag Theatre, Clarence Brown Theatre, River & Rail Theatre and The WordPlayers, where he also directs. Represented by Talent Trek Agency, Will works in film, television, commercials, and voiceovers, and serves as drama director at Overcoming Believers Church.



GG GRIGSBY

(Ensemble / U/S Fish) is a Theatre major with a concentration in Acting at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She began her journey in the arts with her debut role as Kanine Krunchy

in *101 Dalmatians*. Her recent performances include *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The*

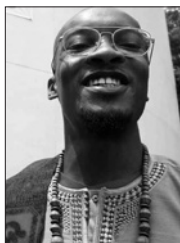
Winters Tale, and *Sandbags* at the Tennessee Stage Company. GG's CBT work includes a role in *Inherit the Wind* and *How To Defend Yourself*. She is ready to whoop and holler alongside the crowd for *The Royale*. By the end your socks will be knocked off! Thank you for following her journey @GgJayBirrd and she hopes you stick around for all her future productions. She dedicated this show to D'Andrew & Blossom.



ANQUANIZIA HALL

(Nina) is a native of Meridian, MS. She is an award-winning director and actor. Hall attended college in Los Angeles at AMDA College and Conservatory of the Performing Arts where

she graduated with honors and received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting. You can find Hall in projects on Amazon Prime and Tubi. Her first supporting role in a film was acting alongside GRAMMY winner, Cedric Burnside. Hall has been seen onstage as Beverly in *Chicken & Biscuits* at New Stage Theatre, *The Mountaintop*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and more. Hall is elated to be a part of the Clarence Brown Theatre for the next 2.5 years as an MFA Acting graduate candidate; she's living in answered prayers. To keep up with her professional endeavors follow @anquanizia.



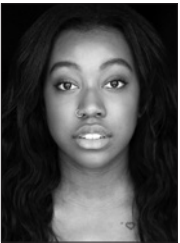
COREY HODGE

(Percussionist) An alumnus of the University of Tennessee, Corey "Legend" Hodge has continued evolving in music since beginning West African Drum classes at Vine Middle.

Remaining a student first, Corey has been able to further his musical capabilities through traveling abroad, hosting

THE ACTORS

classes for communities, and learning under renowned musicians. Blessed with acknowledgments including Knoxville's 40-Under-40, Corey's initial fuel remains showing youth the grand value of art and their talents. Audience, with combining House Music and traditional music, turn on your ears, invite your positivity, and dance to the music we are providing!



MCKINLEY MERRITT, (Ensemble / *U/S Nina*) a UT Theatre alumnus and Nashville native, is thrilled to join the cast of *The Royale*! Her favorite roles include Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*,

Victoria in the new Ahrens & Flaherty musical, *Knoxville*, and Lauren in *Kinky Boots*, all at the Clarence Brown Theatre. You can often find McKinley interning at a cappella conventions, singing with her 90s cover band, Teen Spirit, and probably laughing too hard at something really silly. Stay healthy, be kind, and, most importantly, enjoy this beautiful show!



ANNA SWART (Ensemble) is a sophomore at the University of Tennessee, studying Theatre Arts. This is her first professional production, and she could not be more excited to share it

with both her fellow cast and the audience.



KERWIN THOMPSON (Wynton) aka The Leading Man, is an Emmy Award-winning Actor from Atlanta, GA. His early acting training was at the Alliance Theatre; but he received his most substantive training at

the feet of 2X Tony Award nominee Freddie Hendricks while performing with the Youth Ensemble of Atlanta (YEA). Kerwin has starred in and/or produced two films that premiered at Cannes. He is motivated to use his gifts not just to entertain, but to touch people's lives. Kerwin gives thanks to The Divine, The Ancestors, his family, and his friends for their unyielding protection, love, and support.



THOMAS NASH TETTERTON (Ensemble / *U/S Max*) At the Clarence Brown Theatre Company: *Cabaret* and *A Christmas Carol*. Select Regional Credits: *Hamlet*, and *Much Ado About*

Nothing (PlayMakers' Rep); *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial* (Judson Theatre Co.); *The Rainmaker*, *Silent Sky*, and *The Life of Galileo* (Burning Coal Theater); *Romeo & Juliet* and *Cymbeline* (Virginia Shakespeare Festival); *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Christmas Carol* (Annapolis Shakespeare); *Richard III* (Sweet Tea Shakespeare); and *Inherit the Wind* (Compass Rose Theater). TV & Film: *Die Hart* (Roku.com); and *Have A Nice Life* (avail. on Amazon). BFA in Acting from Shenandoah Conservatory. MFA in Acting candidate at the Clarence Brown Theatre/University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He sends his love to Galen and their two dogs - Offal & Guapo. www.tntetterton.com. @thomasntetterton



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THE ARTISTS

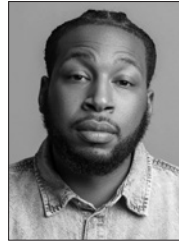


TOSIN MOROHUNFOLA

(Director and Fight Choreographer) is an actor, writer, director and son of Nigerian immigrants, who you may recognize from his magnetic charm as a

regular on *Run The World* (STARZ) or from his brooding intensity alongside David Oyelowo in the Taylor Sheridan western *Lawmen: Bass Reeves* (Paramount+). He also recurred as a dreamy romantic on the series *Julia* (HBO Max), a hilarious F-boy on ABC's *Everything's Trash* (Freeform), a teleporting supervillain on *Black Lightning* (CW), and a terrifying gang lord from *The Chi* (Showtime). Previous TV credits include an ark on *Love Is* (OWN) and guest appearances in *Stumptown* (ABC), *NCIS* (CBS), *I'm Sorry* (TruTV), and recurring as a doctor on *Chicago Med* (NBC). On film, he stars in Amazon's *Blackbox*, BET's romantic comedy *Always A Bridesmaid*, the erotic thriller, *Friend Request* and the bro-mantic comedy, *North of the 10*. He was also in Oscar-winner Kevin Willmott's *The 24th*, nominated for a NAACP Image award. He was costar in the action-heist film, *1992* (Lionsgate) with Ray Liotta. Currently, he leads Tyler Perry's heart-warming romantic drama *Finding Joy* (Amazon). Tosin is also a filmmaker whose festival-selected shorts are: *The Pulpit: Prelude*, a thriller about a controversial pastor under threat from extremists, which is also being developed as a feature, *Endowed*, a parable about fear, faith and fatherhood, and *On Sight*, a social justice police thriller. Currently, he's producing *Famous Enough*, a dark comedy about the dangers of celebrity. Tosin has also written two series' about his Nigerian heritage: *Single A.F.* and *Small Chops*. Tosin's writing and filmmaking centers on stories of empathy, awareness, belonging and seeing the human as hero. Recently, he

directed *Fat Ham* at the Unicorn Theatre. His TYA play, *The Drum Closet* was also commissioned by the Coterie Theatre and will premiere in 2026. Tosin earned his theatre degree at the University of Kansas, where his proudest accomplishment was founding the "Multicultural Theatre Initiative." He began his career in Kansas City regional theatre; appearing at the Kansas City Rep Theatre, the Unicorn, Heart of America Shakespeare Festival and his artistic home, the Coterie, where he was Resident Artist for two years. After moving to Chicago, he performed stage roles at the Goodman, Lookingglass, Northlight, Court Theatres and Creede Repertory Theatre. He notably won the "Best Supporting Actor" award from the Black Theatre Alliance for his performance in Victory Gardens Theatre's *The Gospel of Lovingkindness*.



DREW DRAKE

(Associate Director and Dramaturg) is an Actor, Poet, Hip Hop Artist and Educator currently residing in Knoxville, Tennessee focused on creating art that facilitates healthy

dialogue for people of color. Drew was last seen performing on TV in roles such as "Lamar Cordell" in *Law and Order* Season 22, "Keshawn" in Netflix International Original *Ratu Ratu from Queens* and stages such as Bonnarro Music Festival, Barclays Center and Brooklyn Academy of Music production *Word. Sound. Power.* and Off Broadway at National Black Theatre's production *Packages, O The Things We Deliver* and Capital Rep's production *Friend of A Friend* this past February. Drew was a former Artist in Residence at the University of Tennessee and also adjunct professor of Theatre for Pellissippi State Community College and Maryville College. Learn more at www.thedrewdrake.com

THE ARTISTS



ALONDRA CASTRO
(Scenic Designer) is a second year MFA Scenic Design student who is excited to be the first MFA Scenic Design student in The Jenny Boyd Theatre. Her past Scenic Design work

includes *How to Defend Yourself* (The Lab Theatre), *The Colored Museum* (BVTA), *I and You* (Angelo State University), and *Bright Ideas* (Angelo State University). Alondra also worked in paints and props for two years in Richmond, Virginia where she was able to work on a range of productions which included plays, musicals, theatre for young audiences, and small intimate shows. She is also the associate scenic designer for *You Can't Take It With You* designed by Ken Martin, so don't miss it! You can see more of her work at alondracastrodesigns.myportfolio.com.



TORI NIEMIEC
(Costume Designer) Originally from Arizona, Tori is a second-year Costume Designer in the MFA program. They have previously designed such shows as *Sense and Sensibility*

(Clarence Brown Theatre), *How to Defend Yourself* (Clarence Brown Lab Theatre), *A Midsummers Night Dream* (DC Shakespeare in the Park), *Dance 2* (In Partnership with the University of Maryland), *The Waffle House Musical* (Andy's Summer Playhouse) in addition to assisting at The Folger Shakespeare Theatre, Signature Theatre VA, Disney Theatrical Cruise line and most recently at the Utah Shakespeare Festival.



MARANDA DEBUSK
(Lighting Designer) is an artist and educator specializing in lighting and media designs. They proudly hold an MFA from the University of Tennessee (Class of 2017), and they currently

serve as an Assistant Professor of Lighting Design at The Ohio State University. Last seen at the Clarence Brown Theatre designing lights for *Blithe Spirit* (2020), Maranda is thrilled to be back in Knoxville. Other shows at the CBT include *Around the World in 80 Days* (Lighting - 2017), *Violet* (Media - 2016), *South Pacific* (Media - 2016), and *A Lesson Before Dying* (Lighting - 2016). Highlights of their work include designing at Actors' Express (Atlanta); Virginia Stage Company (Norfolk, VA); Music Theatre Wichita; and the Warehouse Theatre (Greenville, SC). Select associate designs include Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park; Trinity Repertory Company (Providence, RI); Syracuse Stage; and the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Their work has been exhibited internationally at the 2017 World Stage Design Expo in Taipei, Taiwan [Emerging Artist Exhibit - *A Lesson Before Dying* (2016), Clarence Brown Theatre]; and at the Prague Quadrennial in 2019 and 2023 [Emerging Artist Exhibit - *Roméo et Juliette* (2015), Glow Lyric Theatre (Greenville, SC); Emerging Artist Exhibit - *K2* (2019), Catalyst Arts Atlanta; and Professional Artist Exhibit - *LIZZIE* (2022), Actors' Express]. At the core of all of their work is their belief in the power of the dramatic arts to create positive change in our communities. The greatest work is that which, when let out into the world, improves it.

THE ARTISTS



WILLOW JAMES

(Sound Designer) is a Chicago-based arts leader, DJ, and multidisciplinary artist working in photography, sound design, and composition. He uses art as a platform for

community healing and work that uplifts Black identity—building spaces where art and purpose meet. He currently serves as Civic Engagement Director at Definition Theatre (where he is also an ensemble member), a teaching artist with Court Theatre and Adjunct Faculty at DePaul University. *Chicago: Eureka Day* (TimeLine Theatre); *You Will Get Sick* (Steppenwolf Theatre); *Fat Ham* (Goodman Theatre/Definition Theatre); *Black Cypress Bayou* (Definition Theatre); *Miss Julie* (Court Theatre); *Hymn* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater). Regional: American Players Theatre, TheatreSquared, Next Act Theatre, Alleyway Theatre, and others. Representation: Michael Moore Agency. worksbywillow.com | [@worksbywillow](https://www.instagram.com/worksbywillow)



NIA SCIARETTA

(Stage Manager) Nia is excited to return to the Clarence Brown Theatre following her work on *Knoxville* in the summer of 2024. Previously, she served as resident Production Stage

Manager at the Asolo Repertory Theatre in Sarasota, FL, stage managing more than 40 productions in her time there. Nia has also worked with the Alley Theatre, the Signature Theatre (NYC), Creede Repertory Theatre, Hangar Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre of NJ, Flea Theatre, and more. Ithaca College graduate. Love and thanks to her family: Matthew and Lily.



KENNETH MARTIN

(Department Head, Artistic Director) Ken comes from the University of Missouri, at Kansas City, where he was the Patricia McIlrath Endowed Professor and Chair of

the Theatre Division. His career in academia also included nearly 18 years serving as chair of the theater departments across the USA. Ken is also a scenic designer and member of United Scenic Artists, his designs have been seen at theatres across the country including Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Florida Repertory Theatre, Skylight Music Theatre, The New Theatre, Ohio Light Opera, Cleveland Ensemble Theatre, Ocean State Theatre and many others. He has also designed shows for many colleges and universities including Marquette University, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Coastal Carolina University, Cuyahoga Community College, and The Ohio State University. Martin has actively served his profession as a respondent for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, as a consultant for several regional theaters and through active participation in organizations like the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Educational Theatre Association and the Southeastern Theatre Conference.

THE ARTISTS



TOM CERVONE

(Managing Director)
Tom is grateful and honored to serve the Clarence Brown Theatre as Managing Director. Cervone has also served as executive director for both Dogwood Arts and

the Historic Tennessee Theatre Foundation, but the CBT/UTK Theatre Department is Tom's administrative and artistic home. Cervone is a long-time board member of the WordPlayers and continues to evangelize on behalf of the art and culture community locally and nationally. Tom received the Chancellor's Citation for Outstanding Service to the University in 2010. Cervone holds his undergraduate degree in Theatre from West Liberty University in West Virginia and a Master of Fine Arts and an MBA from UT. He is a graduate of and was selected as the Class Representative of the Leadership Knoxville class of 2011. Cervone was inducted into his undergraduate alma mater's class of 2015 Wall of Honor and was appointed by the Governor of WV in 2021 to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of WLU.



SUSAN L. MCMILLAN

(Production Manager)
Susan is in her twelfth year as Production Manager at the CBT and UT Department of Theatre. In addition, she teaches Stage Management. Prior, Susan was

the Production Manager and Stage Management Instructor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, for 6 years. Susan is a member of Actors' Equity Association, and was a Stage Manager at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for 18 years. Additionally, she has stage managed at the Guthrie Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Portland Center Stage, PCPA, Rogue Valley Opera, Portland Civic Theatre, and has toured to the Kennedy Center. Through science (B.S. degrees in Biochemistry and Biology from Oregon State University) and music (cellist), Susan found her way into theatre (Minor in Theatre from OSU). She is incredibly grateful for all the opportunities and adventures along the way, inspirational mentors, artistic and talented colleagues, amazing students, and the love and support of her family and friends. And very grateful for Molly – woof! This season is fully dedicated to her beloved, beautiful, and deeply missed mother, Grace – a shining light forever.

PRODUCTION CREW

MANAGEMENT

Fight Captain - **Jeb Burris**

Assistant Stage Managers - **Simone Ladouceur,**
Joey Lopez and Ambrielle Vaughn

COSTUMES

Assistant Costume Designer - **Vicky Kahnle**

Wardrobe Supervisor - **Laura Clift**

Assistant Wardrobe Supervisor - **Maddison Goerg**

Wardrobe Crew - **Mei Sirag, Campbell Koella**
and **Sarah Whitlow**

SCENERY

Deck Crew - **Brock Burwitz, Trey Henson,**
Ella Jeske, Elizabeth Perry and Hayden Sullivan

Automation Operator - **Donte Tolson**

LIGHTING

Assistant Lighting Designer - **Dylan Tillery**

Light Board Operator - **Tyler Monroe**

Production Electrician/Motor Operator
- **Hayden Springer**

SOUND

Assistant Sound Designer - **Chance Beck**

Sound Board Operator - **Bray Krumenacker**

CREW SWING

Ella Mae Baker and Cheyenne Grenda

INSIDE REHEARSAL



Denzel Dejournette, Kerwin Thompson and Keith Allen Davis, Jr. in the rehearsal room.



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Only beverages with lids are permitted inside the auditorium.

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Mayfair Mix \$4
Including butter toffee peanuts, taco sesame sticks, peanuts, cajun corn sticks, pretzel balls and cheddar whales

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PRODUCTION

Production Manager - **Susan L. McMillan**

Rental Coordinator/Assistant Production

Manager - **Phyllis Belanger**

Production Stage Manager - **Patrick Lanczki**

COSTUMES

Costume Shop Manager - **Melissa Caldwell-Weddig**

Cutter/Draper - **Kyle Andrew Schellinger**

Costumers - **Amber Williams, Elizabeth Aaron,**

Ellen Bebb and **Laura Clift**

Costume Assistants - **Matthew Carl, Tori Niemiec**

and **Victoria Kahnle**

Wigs - **Siobian Jones/The Mighty Wig**

ELECTRICS

Electrics Shop Manager - **Travis Gaboda**

Lead Electrician - **Jon Mohrman**

Lighting Assistants - **Miguel Santiago, Dylan Tillery,**

Rachel Clift, Angelyn Baer, Kayla Moore,

Josh Rodriguez and **Ella Jeske**

SCENERY

Technical Director - **Jason Fogarty**

Assistant Technical Director - **George Hairston**

Lead Carpenter - **Jerry D. Winkle**

Senior Carpenter - **Kyle L. Hooks**

Scene Shop Overhire - **Nikki Gericke**

Scene Shop Assistants - **Justice Morris, Grace Bartoo,**

Olivia Laymen, Bronson Trunzo, Jackson Garrett

and **Minnie Brock**

Scenic Charge Artist - **Isabel Isaac**

Scenic Artist - **Alondra Barbosa**

PROPERTIES

Props Shop Supervisor/Props Director - **Christy Fogarty**

Lead Properties Artisan - **Sarah Gaboda**

Prop Artisans - **Hudson Guy, Skye Reid**

and **Rachel Winenger**

SOUND

Sound and Video Manager - **Chris Walters**

Sound Assistants - **Chance Beck, Elisabeth Dupuy**

Sound and Video Shop Assistant - **Liam Cumesty**

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The University of Tennessee, Knoxville is one of just a handful of universities nationwide with its own professional LORT theatre. The Clarence Brown Theatre Company is a LORT D company and is fully integrated into the Department of Theatre's academic curriculum.

Founded in 1974, the Clarence Brown Theatre Company is one of the older companies in the LORT system and has a distinguished history of hosting artists of national stature.

All Department of Theatre faculty have dual appointments with the professional company in their area of expertise. MFA Performance students may join the Clarence Brown Theatre Company in their third year of study. MFA Design students have the opportunity to work on LORT productions throughout their graduate training.

COMPANY MEMBERS:

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Tom Cervone - *Managing Director*

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Terry D. Alford

David Brian Alley

Phyllis Belanger

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Q&A WITH **DENZEL DEJOURNETTE**

What has your experience been like being a part of *The Royale*?

This experience has been wonderful. I am in a very comforting and encouraging room that allows me to be 100% myself, with no filter. This is a magical story that needs to be told, and I'm glad I get to tell it.

How do you get into character?

I do a lot of text work to get into the mind of the character. I look at what I say as the character and what others say about me, and I make decisions based on that while being careful not to judge my character. I also decipher what is truthful and what is a mask by comparing my character's actions with what my character is saying.



Denzel Dejournette

What has it been like playing Jay?

Playing Jay has been exhilarating. Figuring out his motivations and seeing how he handles the pressure of succeeding in a world that doesn't want him to win on either side has been the most interesting part. He has so many layers and I love exploring them!

What has your experience been like as an MFA Actor here at UTK?

Being an MFA actor has taught me a lot about myself and about the craft. The schedule and workload are brutal, but it's all worth it for the quality of work it produces. I see it pay off every time I step on stage or walk into an audition.

What are you most looking forward to sharing with audiences?

This story offers a glimpse into a rarely told but vital part of American history. The man it is based on, Jack Johnson, helped pave the way for figures like Muhammad Ali, whose influence inspired hometown hero Big John Tate to pursue boxing glory and become a proud staple of this community.

What has it been like being in the new theatre?

I'm excited to perform in the new theater because it offers a change of scenery and a more intimate space while still having the same technology as the main stage. It also allows me to connect with the community on a more personal level and to be part of the inaugural season of The Jenny Boyd Theatre.



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Join Marian Brown's Circle, where theatre lovers go beyond the audience and straight into the heart of the storytelling!

This isn't your ordinary book club. We dive into the scripts before they hit the stage, explore their themes, characters, and creative choices with directors, actors, dramaturgs, and sometimes even the playwrights themselves. Our Page2Stage events and Literary Lunches spark lively, thought-provoking discussions amongst great company, making every gathering an unforgettable experience.

If you love theatre and engaging conversation, this is the perfect way to deepen your understanding and appreciation for the productions you see on stage, while also supporting the CBT!



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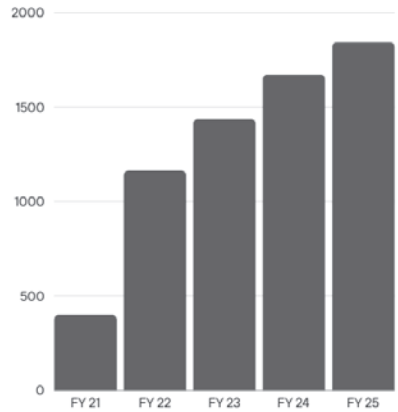
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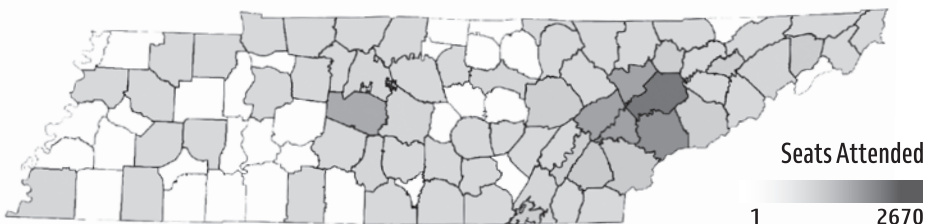
- 3** Venues - Clarence Brown Theatre, The Jenny Boyd Theatre, Lab Theatre
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- 18** Faculty
- 22** Graduate Students
- 33** Staff
- 119** Undergraduate Students
- 225+** Artists Each Season
- 500+** Individual, Corporation, & Foundation Support
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- 240+** Seats in The Jenny Boyd Theatre
- 125** Seats in the Lab Theatre

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- 35,000+** Patrons Attending
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- 75%** Live in Knoxville



2024-2025 Attendees by County



Photos top L to R: Aleah Vassell in HAIR; Jacob Leon, Jasmine R. Handy, Rachel Darden, Allison Bunch and Drew Drake in THE GIVER; Chris Verrier in ADAPTIVE RADIATION; Cecilia Iole and James Onstad in CANDIDE; Omari Collins in KINKY BOOTS; By Brynn Yeager and Ella Marston

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Nellie Thomas
Carolyn Thompson
Templeton Thompson
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Tig T
Daniel Tobin and Erika Sengstack
Kristina Straub and Carol Goldburg
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Members of the CBT Society provide vital investments for the Clarence Brown Theatre's programs and activities year after year, all while receiving VIP treatment in return. Become a member today and make a difference in the next generation of theatre artists! For corrections to your acknowledgement name, please contact Shelly Payne at shellypayne@utk.edu

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2025/2026

CORPORATE, FOUNDATION & GRANT PROFILES



The Shubert Foundation, Inc., was established in 1945 by Lee and J.J. Shubert, in memory of their brother Sam and is dedicated to sustaining and advancing the live performing arts in the United States, with a particular emphasis on theatre and a secondary focus on dance. They are the nation's largest funder dedicated to unrestricted funding of not-for-profit theatres, dance companies, professional theatre training programs and related service agencies. The Shubert Foundation is especially interested in providing support to professional resident theatre and dance companies that develop and produce new American work.



Knox County Tourism Consortium

The Clarence Brown Theatre is a proud member of the **Arts & Culture Alliance's Knox County Tourism Consortium**, joining with 24 arts and culture organizations who deliver more than 4,000 tourism geared events and activities. The visitors the consortium attracts to Knox County bring millions of dollars into the county as they patronize local restaurants, shops, vendors, and hotels. Pre-pandemic, the consortium attracted visitors from all fifty states and international visitors from more than 80 countries to Knox County, bringing nearly \$18 million into the county with them. Visitors from surrounding East Tennessee counties have added more than \$16 million. The consortium supports \$12 million in jobs and pays \$18 million more to local vendors.



The **Tennessee Arts Commission** was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly with the special mandate to stimulate and encourage the presentation of the visual, literary, music and performing arts and to encourage public interest in the cultural heritage of Tennessee. TN Arts Commission Governing Policies can be found [here](#). The mission of the Tennessee Arts Commission is to cultivate the arts for the benefit of all Tennesseans and their communities. Our vision is a Tennessee where the arts inspire, connect and enhance everyday lives. The Commission is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.



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CORPORATE, FOUNDATION & GRANT PROFILE

to give back to the community. Our founder, Mr. James A. Haslam II, established our philanthropic spirit when he started the company in 1958. Our employees all take part in giving their time, talents and efforts to various organizations throughout the year. Together we work to make our communities better places to work, play and live. Visit www.pilotflyingj.com for more information.



First Horizon Bank is proud to support The Clarence Brown Theatre. For more than 160 years, our associates have delivered trusted financial solutions to individuals, families, and businesses across the Southeast. At First Horizon, we value relationships built on integrity and personalized service, ensuring our clients' financial goals are met with care and expertise. With deep roots in our neighborhoods, we are committed to investing in the vibrant communities we serve—

including the creative spirit of theatre. Together, we strive to build a brighter future and inspire the talents that make our area unique. To learn more, visit firsthorizon.com.



City of Knoxville - Knoxville's roots run deep and strong. The city has served as the hub of the region since its founding in 1791. The best of its Appalachian heritage remains today — a strong work ethic, a family-centered community, and an intense respect for the natural beauty that envelopes the region. The

metropolitan Knoxville area was ranked the "best place to live in the United States and Canada" among cities with a population of fewer than 1 million. The ranking came from the Millennium edition of Places Rated Almanac. The results confirmed what most in this area have known for a long time - Knoxville is one of the best cities in the country!

The **Mildred Haines and William Elijah Morris Lecture Endowment Fund** supports campus visits of lecturers and scholars in all disciplines in the College of Arts and Sciences. The dean of the college solicits proposals from departments and academic programs for the use of the funds, appoints an advisory committee to review and make recommendations regarding the proposals, and makes awards to the successful proposals. The advisory committee has a representative from the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences and the arts faculties of the college. The committee selects a chairperson from among its members. Committee members serve two-year terms and may be reappointed at the discretion of the dean.

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