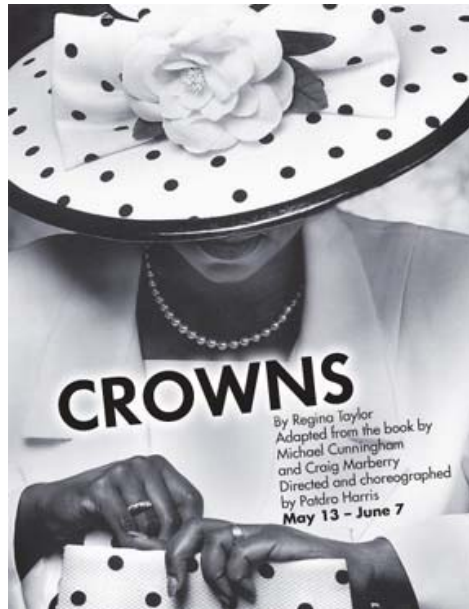




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Crowns
A Roof-Raising Musical Play with "Hattitude"



By Regina Taylor
Adapted from the book by Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry
Directed and Choreographed by Patdro Harris
Musical Direction by William Hubbard

ARCHBOLD THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE
Previews: May 13-14 Press Open: May 15 Close: June 7

(Syracuse, NY)—A jubilant hit at theatres across the country, *Crowns* embodies the soul, faith and style of African-American women and their fabulous hats. When a Brooklyn teenager moves south to escape a family tragedy, she is introduced by her grandmother to the "hat queens," and so begins a musical journey of healing, humor and heart. Filled with gospel music and colorful dress, *Crowns* runs May 13-June 7. Tickets are available at the Syracuse Stage Box Office at 820 East Genesee Street, by telephone at 315-443-3275 or www.SyracuseStage.org.

Inspiration for *Crowns* came from the photography book by Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry entitled *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats*. Originally printed in 2000, the book is now in its seventh printing.

"I always believed that the oral histories I gathered for the book *Crowns* would work on the stage," said Craig Marberry. "These hat queens, I realized, were not really celebrating their singular headgear. They were reflecting on love and loss and, most importantly, sisterhood." He also notes, "Adorning the head for worship is a very African tradition. I think it's rooted in the tradition that when one presents oneself before God, you should be at your best."

In order to trace back the tradition of hats, the structure of *Crowns* does not follow a conventional narrative. Different characters and time periods are woven together with music and movement, creating a tapestry of voices.

"Hats reveal and they conceal," said Playwright Regina Taylor. "In the course of this play, we're taking away all these layers, in terms of where these women come from, who their parents were, and also beyond their memories to the subconscious memory that's been passed down, from generation to generation."

"On the surface *Crowns* appears to be about a young mixed-up girl from Brooklyn heading down South to live with her church-going grandmother. And of course it is about hats: big, small, plain, decorative, old-fashioned and trendy," said Director Patdro Harris. "Who would have thought something so simple as a hat could express the rhythm, the heart, the soul of a people—hats being an extension of how a people live their lives with honor, hope, and healing. Yes, *Crowns* is about a young girl's troubles, but it is also about discovery of community, culture, and facing the past."

In the photography book of *Crowns*, there is a quote by James Baldwin: "Our crowns have been bought and paid for, all we have to do is wear them."

Crowns at Syracuse Stage is a co-production with Indiana Repertory Theatre.

REVIEWS FROM INDIANA

"...a thought-provoking, healing show about universal experiences of love, sorrow, perseverance, faith, and pleasure." - *Indy Theatre Habit*

"...next to flawless...this production of *Crowns* transcends." - *NUVO*

"...a rousing, heartfelt musical...this show is a must-see." - *Examiner*

PLAYWRIGHT

Regina Taylor (Playwright) may be best known to television audiences for her role as Lilly Harper in the series *I'll Fly Away*, but she is also an accomplished playwright. Her plays include *Oo-Bla-Dee*, which won the American Critics' Association New Play Award; *Drowning Crow*, an adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, which was produced on Broadway by the Manhattan Theatre Club starring Alfre Woodard; and *The Dreams*

of *Sarah Breedlove*, about Madame C. J. Walker; as well as *A Night in Tunisia*, *Escape from Paradise*, *Watermelon Rinds*, and *Inside the Belly of the Beast*. Her latest play, *Magnolia*, premiered in March at Chicago's Goodman Theatre, where Ms. Taylor is an artistic associate. An adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* set in 1963 Atlanta, Georgia, the play was directed by Anna Shapiro, Tony Award winner for *August: Osage County*. As an actress, Ms. Taylor performed on Broadway in *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, and *Macbeth*. Other stage credits include *Machinal*, *A Map of the World*, *The Illusion*, and *Jar the Floor*. She won the Los Angeles Dramalogue Award for her performance in *The Tempest*. Her film credits include *The Negotiator*, *Courage under Fire*, *A Family Thing*, *The Keeper*, *Clockers*, *Losing Isaiah*, *Jersey Girl*, and *Lean on Me*. She has appeared in numerous television movies, including the Peabody Award-winning *Strange Justice* in which she portrayed Anita Hill. Her series work includes *The Education of Max Bickford* and *Feds* as well as *I'll Fly Away*, for which she received a Golden Globe, an NAACP Image Award, and two Emmy nominations. Currently she may be seen in CBS's *The Unit*, for which she recently received a second NAACP Image Award. She was raised in Dallas, Texas, and still calls it home.

WRITERS

Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry (Writers). Cunningham is a commercial photographer whose clients include Coca-Cola and Sara Lee. Two of his photographs are currently on loan to the Smithsonian's Anacostia Museum, and his works have been featured in the *New York Times* and *Ebony*. He lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Marberry, a former TV reporter, holds a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University and is the owner of a video production company. He has written articles for the Washington Post and Essence magazine. Marberry is also the grandson of the late Louis Henry Ford, former Presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ. He lives in Greensboro, North Carolina.

DIRECTOR

Patdro Harris (Director and Choreographer) has directed at distinguished theaters such as the Alliance Theatre, Sacramento Theatre Company, Round House Theatre, Liberty Theatre Cultural Center, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Penumbra Theatre, Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, Ensemble Theatre, True Colors Theatre Company, and the Tribeca Performing Arts Center. He has also served as choreographer, artistic consultant, and movement director with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Kennedy Center, Studio Theatre (D.C.), City Theatre of Pittsburgh, Minneapolis' Mixed Blood Theatre, Theatrical Outfit, Jomandi Productions, the National Black Theatre Festival, the Guthrie Theatre, the National Black Arts Festival, Portland Center Stage, and Broadway's Royale Theatre. He has traveled the world as choreographer and lead dancer for the incomparable Stevie Wonder. Patdro has worked with such artists as the S.O.S. Band, TC Carson, Daryl Coley, and Yolanda Adams. His talents were also showcased as choreographer and movement specialist in Toni Morrison's world premiere opera, *Margaret Garner*. Patdro choreographed the Tony Award-winning Broadway hit *A Raisin in the Sun* starring Sean Combs and Phylicia Rashad. For

television, his credits include TNN, BET, MTV, *Soul Train*, the PBS documentary *Dance Black America*, and Time Warner's pay-per-view special *Nitro Girls*. He appeared in the movie *The Gospel* and choreographed the television movie adaptation of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Patdro has written and produced a book and DVD series, *The Moving Word: The Ministry of Dance*. www.patdroharris.com.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

William Hubbard (Music Director) is a composer, musician, actor, vocalist, and arranger making his debut at Syracuse Stage. William last performed in David Murray and Amiri Baraka's *Sisyphus Syndrome* in Paris and Milan, and at the MetroStage in Alexandria, Virginia, once again with Roz White in her hit show *Pearl Bailey . . . by Request*. William has music directed *The Piano Lesson* at Lehigh University, *Spunk* at the historic Atlas Theatre in Washington, D.C., *Three Sistahs* at Atlanta's Horizon Theatre and at the New York Festival of New Musicals, and MetroStage's production of *Two Queens One Castle*, which included his compositions. William made his Actors Equity debut in *All Night Strut* at the MetroStage. He is a Helen Hayes Award winner for Best Musical Direction for *Crowns* at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., and received nominations for his work in *Mahalia* and for *Three Sistahs*, along with Tom Jones and Janet Pryce. He is internationally known for his hymn "I Love You Lord Today," published in the *New African American Heritage Hymnal*.

CAST

Shannon Antalan (Yolanda) has been seen on Broadway in *Caroline, or Change* and *Xanadu*, Off-Broadway in *Junie B. Jones*, and in the first national tour of *Hairspray* as Inez. A few of her favorite regional roles include Abyssinia in *Abyssinia*, Taylor in *High School Musical 2*, Ermina Crump in *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, and Princess Amaliya in *The Princess and the Golden Yam*.

Terry Burrell (Wanda). Her Broadway credits include *The Threepenny Opera*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Swingin' on a Star*, *Into the Woods*, *Dreamgirls*, *Honky Tonk Nights*, and *Eubie*. She appeared in the first London production of *Show Boat*. Off-Broadway, she has appeared in *Almost Heaven*, *The World Goes 'Round*, *Just So*, and *Taking a Chance on Love*. She received a Helen Hayes nomination for her portrayal of Queenie in *Queenie Pie*. Other regional credits include *Mahalia*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Up from Paradise*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Jar the Floor*, *The Women of Brewster Place*, *Cinderella, for colored girls . . .*, *Sweet and Hot*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Time and Again*, *Sheila's Day*, *Sophisticated Ladies*, and *Smokey Joe's Café*. Tours include *The Wiz*, *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, *Thunder Knockin' at the Door*, *Copacabana*, *Show Boat*, and *A Grand Night for Singing*. Terry has performed her cabaret act internationally and has performed in Jazz in July concerts with Dick Hyman; for Lyrics and Lyricists at the 92nd Street Y (New York); with the Duke Ellington Orchestra in Venice, Italy; and for the Oslo Jazz Festival in Norway.

Chandra Currelley (Mother Shaw) is the former lead singer for the legendary recording group the S.O.S. Band. She was recently seen in the world premier of the Alliance Theatre's *Jesus Christ Superstar Gospel* and Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company's *The Amen Corner*. Other credits include *Dinah Was*, *Blues in the Night*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Hot Mikado*. Atlanta credits include *Two Queens, One Castle* at the Horizon Theatre; *Madea's Class Reunion* at the Fox Theatre; and *Slam!*, *Sophisticated Ladies*, *One Mo' Time*, and *Black Nativity* at Jomandi. Regionally, she has performed at the Beacon Theatre in New York City; the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles; the Aladdin Theatre in Las Vegas; North Shore in Boston; the Studio Theatre, Arena Stage, and Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C.; and San Diego Repertory Theatre. TV credits include VH-1, *Say Yes!* on TBN, *Video LP* on BET and *Atlanta Jazz Showcase* on PBS. She appeared in Tyler Perry's *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* for Lionsgate Films. Nominated for the Helen Hayes Award, the Atlanta Gospel Choice Award, the Suzie Bass Award, and the NAACP Phoenix Award, Chandra has released two cds, *Love Songs* and *The Real Me*, available at cdbaby.com and iTunes. For more information, go to www.chandracurrelley.com.

Crystal Fox (Jeanette). A theatre veteran and film/TV actress, Crystal is most noted for her role as Sgt. Luann Corbin on the TV series *In the Heat of the Night*. She has appeared in such theatre productions as *The Breach* and *Gem of the Ocean* at Seattle Rep; *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Seven Guitars*, *From the Mississippi Delta*, and *A Christmas Carol* at the Alliance; *Flyin' West* at True Colors; *for colored girls . . .* at Portland Center Stage (Drammy Award for Best Actress); *Home* at the Round House Theatre (Helen Hayes nominee for Best Supporting Actress); *Three Sistahs* at MetroStage; and two successful seasons with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in productions of *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Piano Lesson*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*. Crystal's other TV and film credits include *The Old Settler*, *Third Watch*, *Law & Order*, *The Sopranos*, *Mama Flora's Family*, and *Driving Miss Daisy*.

Valerie Payton (Mable) was most recently seen in *Jesus Christ Superstar Gospel* at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta. She has played Power Woman in *Menopause the Musical* in Atlanta and was a Suzi award nominee for the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* at the Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern. She played Armelia in *Ain't Misbehavin'* and Mabel in *Crowns* at San Diego Rep, both directed by Patdro Harris. Off Broadway, she played Sister Mary Robert Ann in *Nunsense*. Other credits include Domina in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and roles in *The Wizard of Hip*, *Violet*, *The Mandrake*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Two Queens One Castle*, *The Full Moon of Sonia Sanchez*, *The People vs. Mona*, *Dating and Mating in Modern Times*, *The Spitfire Grill*, *Murder in the Cathedral*, and *Salome*. Valerie has performed in concert in Amsterdam, Sydney, Australia, and across the United States.

Dennis W. Spears (Man) is a company member with Penumbra Theatre in Minneapolis. As an actor, he has performed roles with Penumbra, Guthrie, Chanhassen, and Mixed Blood. Among his most memorable performances are *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Get Ready*, *Blue*, and *Once on this Island*. An accomplished jazz vocalist, he has performed nationally and internationally, and

shared stages with Ella Fitzgerald, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and Harry Connick, Jr. Dennis is a featured vocalist with the vocal jazz ensemble Moore by Four. He has three solo recordings: *I Hear It*, *Why Try to Change Me Now*, and *Evening Candlelight*.

Roz White (Velma). Rosalind "Roz" White makes her debut at Syracuse Stage in *Crowns*. A native of Washington, D.C., Roz is a graduate of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts and Howard University's College of Fine Arts. As a recording artist, she has recorded and toured with many artists, including gospel music legend Yolanda Adams. Recent theatrical credits include Grandma Rose and Paula in the world premiere of *Cool Papa's Party*, choreographed by Maurice Hines at MetroStage. Roz's self-penned cabaret *Pearl Bailey . . . by Request* made its world premiere at MetroStage in November. Other theatre credits include two national tours of *Dreamgirls* as well as regional productions of *Blues in the Night*, *Eubie*, *Rejoice*, *Don't Stop the Carnival*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Mahalia*, and *Bessie's Blues*, which garnered her the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Musical. Roz is a member of Actor's Equity Association.

TICKET PRICES

Adult: \$24-\$48

Age 40 and below: \$20 with ID

Rush: \$15-\$25 day of performance, \$9 with student ID

**Rush tickets available by phone (\$5 fee) or in person (no fee)*

**Discounts available for seniors, students, groups and subscribers*

HOW TO PURCHASE TICKETS

Online: www.SyracuseStage.org

Call: 315-443-3275

In person: 820 East Genesee Street

Groups (10 or more): 315-443-9844

SPONSORS

Crowns is sponsored by Chase and Residence Inn by Marriott. The Media Sponsor is Urban CNY. Syracuse Stage season sponsors are *The Post-Standard* and Time Warner Cable.

SYRACUSE STAGE

Syracuse Stage is Central New York's premier professional theatre. Founded in 1974, Stage has produced more than 220 plays in 36 seasons including a number of world, American, and East Coast premieres. Each season 90,000 patrons enjoy an adventurous mix of new plays and bold interpretations of classics and musicals featuring the finest theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational

outreach program that annually serves over 30,000 students from 24 counties. Syracuse Stage is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, and a member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). Syracuse Stage is a non-profit organization and performances are made possible by funds from Syracuse University, the Central New York Community Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, The Shubert Foundation, Onondaga County, and corporate, foundation and individual donors.

Fact Sheet:

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PRODUCTION:

Felix E. Cochren (Scenic Designer)

Reggie Ray (Costume Designer)

Jennifer Setlow (Lighting Designer)

Jonathan Herter (Sound Designer)

Stuart Plymesser (Stage Manager)

CAST:

Shannon Antalan (Yolanda)

Terry Burrell (Wanda)

Chandra Currelley (Mother Shaw)

Crystal Fox (Jeanette)

Valerie Payton (Mable)

Dennis W. Spears (Man)

Roz White (Velma)

The names in bold are actors and stage managers who are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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 40 Below: \$20 with ID
 Rush: \$15-\$25 day of performance, \$9 for students with ID

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SHOW CALENDAR: May/June

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			13 7:30 P	14 7:30 P	15 8:00 O	16 8:00
17 2:00 7:00 D	18	19	20 10:30	21 10:30 7:30	22 8:00	23 3:00 8:00
24 2:00	25	26	27 2:00 7:30	28 7:30	29 8:00	30 3:00 8:00
31 2:00	1	2 7:30 S	3 7:30	4 7:30	5 8:00	6 3:00 8:00
7 2:00						

P=Preview O=Opening S=Signed
 *10:30 performances are for students only

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Syracuse Stage | Producing Artistic Director: Timothy Bond | Managing Director: Jeffrey Woodward
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