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# ACT and The 5th Avenue Theatre Co-Produce the Beautiful Coming of Age Story Filled With A Capella Gospel Music **CHOIR BOY**

Written by Tarell Alvin McCraney

Directed by Jamil Jude

Complete cast and creative team announced; tickets on sale now.

“Reaffirms Tarell Alvin McCraney’s position as one of the most profoundly moving and insightful writers of our time.” -*DC Metro Theatre Arts*

**SEATTLE, WA (August 9, 2022)** — **ACT - A Contemporary Theatre** and **The 5th Avenue Theatre** today announced complete cast and creative team for their 10th co-production together, the tender yet invigorating coming-of-age play with music, ***Choir Boy***. Written by the celebrated American playwright of the “The Brother/Sister Plays” and Oscar-winning screenwriter Tarell Alvin McCraney, ***Choir Boy*** tickets are on sale now and are available for purchase at [ACTtheatre.org](http://ACTtheatre.org) or by calling the ACT Box Office at (206) 292-7676.

For half a century, the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys has been dedicated to the education of strong, ethical Black men. One talented student, Pharus Young, has been waiting for years to take his rightful place as the leader of the legendary gospel choir. But can he make his way through the hallowed halls of this institution if he sings in his own key? This riveting show is an intersectional coming-of-age story and a powerful examination of personal identity against institutional traditions: here, being black and queer in a prestigious all-male prep school. From Tarell Alvin McCraney, the Academy Award®-winning writer of *Moonlight*, *Choir Boy* electrified Broadway with its soaring gospel, spiritual, and R&B performances.

***Choir Boy*** will feature **Nicholas Japaul Bernard** (*Disney’s Beauty and the Beast*, *The 5th Avenue Theatre*) as Pharus, **Jaron Williams** (HBO’s *Treme*) as Bobby, **Donovan Manannah** (Film Short: *Wannabe*) as Junior, **Kyle Ward** (Dallas Theatre Center, *Hairspray*) as Anthony Justin “AJ” James, **Brandon Starling** (Folger Theatre, *Henry IV Part 1*) as David, **Arlando Smith** (Lyric Theatre, *Dream Girls*) as Headmaster Marrow, and **Larry Paulson** (Denver Center, *Twelfth Night*) as Mr. Pendleton.

The co-production, led by director **Jamil Jude** (Artistic Director of Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre) and associate director Shermona Mitchell (*The Race 2020!*, *Citizen*), will feature scenic design by **Tony Cisek** (Denver Center, *Sweat*), costume design by **Trevor Bowen** (American Players Theatre, *The Brothers Size*), lighting design by **Andrew Smith** (Book-It, Seattle Shakespeare Company, WET), sound design by **Erin Bednarz** (Village Theatre), music direction by **Jada Cato**, choreography by **Juel D. Lane** (*When the Beat Drops*), and fight direction and intimacy choreography by **Kaja Dunn** (Amazon Prime, “Harlem”).

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**ACT's Artistic Director John Langs** said, "*Choir Boy* marks our 10th co-production with The 5th Avenue Theatre and it is a joyful departure from some of the traditional musicals that have previously been the focus of our partnership. *Choir Boy* provides all the joy and open-hearted emotion we love about musicals. But it is very much a play. We wanted to open our season with a story of joy, courage, and hope, with a director who could take this partnership to another level. We are so happy to welcome Jamil Jude, who has a long history with this play, to take the helm.

On a more personal note, the last few years have been challenging to say the least. It has been a comfort and a blessing for both institutions, ACT and The 5th Avenue Theatre, to support one another and continue to build our relationship through the long investment in this partnership that has lent each of us strength as we bring back this co-production model which has become a reliable favorite for audiences."

**The 5th Avenue Theatre's Producing Artistic Director Bill Berry** added, "*Choir Boy* is a unique and powerful story that expands how we think of and create musical theater. I'm grateful for our continued partnership with ACT and that we get to collaborate on this new production made by and for the Pacific Northwest community."

**Director Jamil Jude** said, "I'm excited to revisit this show, especially to present it to Seattle audiences. I've visited the area a few times and I've always been impressed with the audiences and the way they lean into stories. *Choir Boy* is full of 'lean in moments' and I'm certain audiences will enjoy what this cast and the story will deliver."

#### **ABOUT TARELL ALVIN McCRAANEY (Playwright)**

**Tarell Alvin McCraney** is best known for his acclaimed trilogy, *THE BROTHER/SISTER PLAYS: THE BROTHERS SIZE, IN THE RED AND BROWN WATER, and MARCUS; OR THE SECRET OF SWEET*. They have been performed at McCarter Theater in Princeton, The Public Theater in New York, Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, at a trio of theaters in the Bay Area: Marin Theatre Company, ACT, and Magic Theatre, as well as the Young Vic in London (Olivier Award nomination) and around the world. Other plays include *THE BREACH* (Southern Rep), *WIG OUT!* (Sundance Theatre Institute, Royal Court, and Vineyard Theatre - GLAAD Award for Outstanding Play), and *AMERICAN TRADE* (Royal Shakespeare Company and Hampstead Theatre). Steppenwolf Theatre Company, where he is an ensemble member, will produce the world premiere of his commissioned play, *HEAD OF PASSES*. Tarell was the Royal Shakespeare Company's International Playwright in Residence in 2008-2010, where he co-edited and directed the Young People's Shakespeare production of *HAMLET* which toured throughout the UK and was presented at the Park Avenue Armory in New York. He is the recipient of the prestigious Whiting Award and Steinberg Playwright Award, as well as London's Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright, the inaugural New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award, and the inaugural Paula Vogel Playwriting Award. He is a graduate from the New World School of the Arts High School, the Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago, and the Yale School of Drama. He is a resident playwright at New Dramatists and a member of Teo Castellanos/D-Projects in Miami.

#### **ABOUT JAMIL JUDE (Director)**

**Jamil Jude** is a highly accomplished director, playwright, and a dramaturg focusing on bringing socially relevant art to the community. Jamil is the Artistic Director at Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta, Georgia, where he previously served as Associate Artistic Director. Additionally, he is the co-founder of The New Griots Festival, which is dedicated to celebrating, advocating, and advancing the careers of emerging Black artists in the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area in Minnesota. Prior to joining the staff at True Colors, Jamil served as the Artistic Programming Associate at Park Square

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Theatre in St. Paul, a Producer in Residence at Minneapolis' Mixed Blood Theatre, a New Play Producing Fellow at Arena Stage in Washington, DC and co-founded the Colored People's Theatre. Among his many awards, Jamil has been named the recipient of the Captain of Industry Award (21/22), Turn The Spotlight Fellowship (18/19), Andrew W. Mellon/TCG Leadership U Fellowship (2015/17), Nautilus Music Theater Management Fellowship (2014/15), NNPN Producer Residency (2011/12, 2012/13), Jerome Foundation/The Playwrights' Center Many Voices Mentorship (2013/14), and the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship at Arena Stage (2009/10, 2010/11). Jamil received his Bachelors of Arts from Colgate University.

## FOR EDITORS/PRODUCERS

### WHAT:

#### ***Choir Boy***

For half a century, the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys has been dedicated to the education of strong, ethical Black men. One talented student, Pharus Young, has been waiting for years to take his rightful place as the leader of the legendary gospel choir. But can he make his way through the hallowed halls of this institution if he sings in his own key? This riveting show is an intersectional coming-of-age story and a powerful examination of personal identity against institutional traditions: here, being black and queer in a prestigious all-male prep school. From Tarell Alvin McCraney, the Academy Award®-winning writer of *Moonlight*, *Choir Boy* electrified Broadway with its soaring gospel, spiritual, and R&B performances.

### WHERE:

#### **ACT**

**700 Union St, Seattle**

### WHEN:

**September 9 – October 23, 2022**

Performance times: Tuesday–Sunday

Select Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m.

### Key Dates

- Previews: September 9-11, 13-14
- Press Invite: September 15, 7:30 p.m.
- Tix for Teachers – September 11, 7:00 p.m.
- TeenACT – October 8, 2:00 p.m.
- Post-Show Discussion – September 27, 7:30 pm

The performance runs appx. 90 minutes with no intermission.

### TICKETS:

**Tickets start at \$39.**

We are proud to offer a range of ticket prices for all our plays, including reserved (or advance purchase) Pay What You Choose tickets for each performance, making theatre affordable for everyone.

To purchase tickets, visit <https://acttheatre.org>

### PHOTOS/VIDEO:

For available photography and video, please visit the [online press room here >>](#)

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**CONNECT ON SOCIAL:**

***acttheatre.org***

Facebook - /ACTtheatre

Instagram - @ACTtheatre

#ChoirBoyatACT

**ABOUT ACT - A CONTEMPORARY THEATRE**

Steadfast in its dedication to producing work that sparks an authentic curiosity about the human condition, ACT produces bold, audacious works of contemporary theatre. Over the last 55 years, ACT has been a trusted Seattle destination presenting necessary and relevant works on contemporary themes, producing more than 300 plays and musicals. *History of Theatre* will become ACT's 47th world premiere during the 2022-23 season. Led by Artistic Director, John Langs and Managing Director, Anita Shah, ACT is a theatre where artistic ambition and civic engagement unite around the mission to nurture theatre-makers of the next generation.

**ACT is here to challenge how stories are told.**

*Thank you to our Theatre and Season Sponsors: 4Culture, ArtsFund, National Endowment for the Arts, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, The Shubert Foundation, Nesholm Family Foundation, The John Graham Foundation, and Katharyn Alvord Gerlich.*

**ABOUT 5TH AVENUE THEATRE**

The 5th Avenue Theatre is one of America's leading musical theater companies. We enrich the community we love with the art form we love—giving the Pacific Northwest a front-row seat to original powerhouse productions that go on to light up marquees and audiences all the way to Broadway. From the page to the stage, we bring passion and epic scale to every musical we create. With big talent. Bigger-than-life productions. And did we mention dazzle? As a nonprofit theater company and our region's largest performing arts employer, we spread the joy of great musicals with people of all ages across our region and state. Each year, we reach 75,000 young people through our nationally acclaimed education programs. Programs designed to develop new musicals ensure that the next generation of great musicals will be there to tell the stories that captivate tomorrow's audiences. On the national stage, we are a leading voice for the power of this art form to lift the human spirit.

For more information about The 5th Avenue Theatre, its season and its programs, please visit [www.5thavenue.org](http://www.5thavenue.org).

*Special thanks to 2022/23 Season sponsor ArtsFund.*

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For more information:

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