



TAPROOT THEATRE COMPANY

BETWEEN THE LINES

Taproot Theatre Company's
Subscription Newsletter
Volume 26, Issue 2

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

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Box Office Hours:
Tuesday - Saturday,
Noon - 5 pm

*On performance days,
the box office phone
is answered until
30 minutes
prior to show time.*

**Tickets always
available online at
taproottheatre.org**

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Faith Bennett Russell directs Taproot Theatre's production of **Crowns** by Regina Taylor, adapted from the book *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats* by Michael Cunningham and Craig Marberry. This "delightfully celebratory" (New York Times) play weaves song and story into a transformative journey through a family's history.

Gospel music and storytelling come together to surprise, delight and remind us all of the unique and diverse ways we express ourselves. When a young woman from Brooklyn struggles to find her place in the world, she is surrounded by a community of women that transcend place and time to infuse her with stories of faith, fortitude and pride.

Bennett Russell makes her Jewell Mainstage solo directorial debut, following her co-direction of Paula Vogel's *A Civil War Christmas* with Taproot Theatre's Associate Artistic Director, Karen Lund. Bennett Russell has directed *The Lion King*, *Hairspray*, *Godspell*, *13 the Musical* and *Footloose* for Village Theatre's KIDSTAGE and *Into the Woods*, *Seussical the Musical* and *Once On This Island* for Studio East.

The cast features Bretteney Beverly (Taproot Theatre's *A Charlie Brown Christmas*) as Wanda, Marlette Buchanan (5th Avenue's *Man of La Mancha*) as Mabel, Kristen Natalia (Asolo Repertory Theatre's *Clybourne Park*) as Velma, Tracy Michelle Hughes (New Century Theatre's *Bright Half Lights*) as Mother Shaw, Vincent "VJ" Orduña (Village Theatre's *My Heart is the Drum*) as Man, Be Russell (Taproot Theatre's *Godspell*) as Jeanette and Bethanie Willis (Village Theatre's *Dreamgirls*) as Yolanda.

Following *Crowns* is Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* playing May 16 – June 23, 2018. Karen Lund directs.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Previews: March 21 & 22 at 7:30pm | **Opening:** March 23 at 8:00pm

Running: March 21 - April 28 | **PWYC:** March 28 at 7:30pm

Show Times: Wed & Thur, 7:30 pm; Fri & Sat, 8:00 pm; Sat Matinee, 2:00 pm

Running Time: 2 hours, plus one 15-minute intermission.

Crowns is recommended for ages 12 and above.
Children under 5 are never admitted.

Actor Spotlight: For Bethanie Willis, Theatre is a Story of Family



Bethanie Willis plays Yolanda in *Crowns* at Taproot Theatre.

Do you wear hats? Occasionally. I wear hats when I feel like I want to look extra cute or cool that day. My favorite hat is a solid black one that's all velvet and is a newsboy style.

Do you have a favorite hat memory? Yes, my sister, Kiana, would always wear these sequined, multi-colored baseball hats when she was going through chemotherapy and lost her hair. To this day, I've never seen a more bright, colorful, or sparkly hat as the ones she used to wear. They were truly extraordinary.

How would you describe your character? Yolanda is a teenager that has her own style and a hardened energy about her. She uses clothes and her defensive demeanor to mask what's truly inside: a hurt soul that misses her brother who passed away.

What excites you most about our production? I'm excited to portray a character that is like myself in a lot of ways. Like Yolanda, I also lost a sibling. My sister, Kiana, passed away when I was ten due to Neuroblastoma, a fast-growing form of pediatric cancer. I'm the oldest amongst my sisters, but Kiana was the next oldest after me, so, like Yolanda and her brother, we were really close to each other. When she passed away, my entire world shattered, I didn't know how to cope except to mask my feelings, like Yolanda does. The only difference is that Yolanda's mask is a tougher exterior and my mask is an overly happy, excited persona. I hope to be able to grow in the process of playing Yolanda, as she learns how to cope with her emotions during this production of *Crowns*.

How did you get started in theatre? I got started in theatre when I was really young; some might say before I was even born. My mother is a singing, dancing, acting and all other things musical theatre teacher. She took me to her classes where I've watched her students since the week I was born. I was matching pitch with a *Beauty and the Beast* CD my parents had recorded together since I was eight months old. I've also been performing professionally since I was eight years old. I was kind of born into a musical theatre family, so theatre has always been a large part of my life.

How much has your family influenced you as an artist, or as a person? My family is the reason why I'm a part of the theatre business to begin with. Most musical theatre people in the Seattle area know of, or have worked with one or more Willis during their tenure here. I'm proud to be a part of the Willis family; each one of us has performed professionally in the Seattle area. We feed off of each other's energy and encourage each other to get better at the craft that we love so much to do together.

Any dream roles? I actually have this fantasy of playing Angelica Schuyler, while my middle sister, Madison, plays Eliza Schuyler, and my littlest sister, Shelby, plays Peggy Schuyler in *Hamilton* because we're all sisters, and that age order makes sense. You never know, The Willis Sisters might rock The Schuyler Sisters one day!

What's the best piece of advice you've been given, theatrical or otherwise? My Dad always tells us "Choose to succeed; do not choose to fail." That's always stuck with me and it lets me know that I can do whatever I want as long as I choose that successful path for myself.

Why see this show? I am so excited to be able to perform in this production of *Crowns*! There is so much heart in this show. It's going to be so much fun!



Marlette Buchanan and Bethanie Willis in *Crowns* at Taproot Theatre.

Production Spotlight: Henrietta Swan Price

“Something else my Mama would always tell me is, ‘Put something on your head. Put something on your head.’”

Velma – *Crowns*

The elegant hats you'll see in ***Crowns*** are the creations of the legendary Seattle hat-maker, and Taproot Theatre's hat consultant and milliner for this production, **Henrietta Swan Price**. Her hat shop, *Henrietta's Hats and Accessories*, served the Seattle community's hat needs for more than 30 years.

Back in 2004, Henrietta provided more than 100 hats for Intiman Theatre's production of *Crowns*. When she learned of Taproot's production, she was more than eager to help out again, creating several new hats as well as contributing some from her own personal collection and sitting in on rehearsals to teach the cast about "hattitude."

Known for her charm and vivacious personality, Henrietta welcomed guests to her shop, literally with open arms, often hugging strangers, and combating the famous "Seattle freeze" with warmth and an unstoppable charisma. More than just a simple salesperson, her passion for people was on full display at her shop as she would often be found coaching her clients in the proper way to wear a hat, encouraging them to be bold in expressing who they are in the way they dress.

"Other people are not necessarily right, you are." Henrietta encourages.

These days, Henrietta and her six daughters will still sell you a hat by appointment, even making house calls for people who have trouble getting out, but she has retired from the day to day grind of running the shop.

Taproot is thrilled to be able to work with Henrietta on this production, and we hope you enjoy the artistry of her creations too!



**Henrietta Swan Price
Hat Consultant/Milliner for
Crowns at Taproot Theatre.**

Photo from <http://seattlemedium.com/henrietta-swan-price/>
Quote from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/television/programs/evening/2015/04/29/hat-fashion-kentucky-derby-henriettas-style/26609507/>

Coming Up Next on the Jewell Mainstage...



Lady Windermere's Fan

A play about a good woman...

It's the party of the social season, but instead of celebrating, Lady Windermere suspects her husband is having an affair with a mysterious and beautiful stranger. As rumors swirl and secrets are revealed, the Windermere's lives are upended and threatened to end in disgrace. This comedy classic from Oscar Wilde will charm you with its cleverness and wit.

...and a fan.

Tickets on sale now!

For tickets call 206.781.9707
Or visit taproottheatre.org/lady-windermeres-fan

CROWNS: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats

“When the Apostle Paul wrote an open letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:5), decreeing that a woman cover her head when at worship to symbolize her obedience to God and the church hierarchy, he could not have imagined the flamboyance with which African American women would comply.”

— Craig Marberry

CROWNS: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats

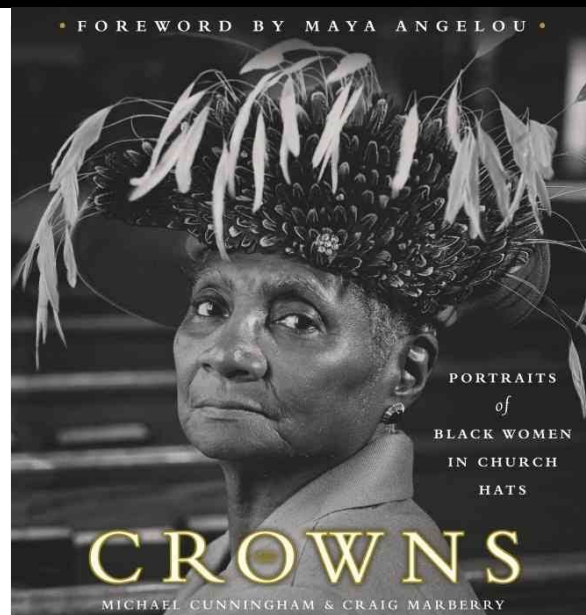
Crowns debuted Off-Broadway in 2002, and is based on a selection of photos and interviews that were collected into a book by photographer Michael Cunningham and journalist Craig Marberry.

When a friend of Cunningham’s returned from a trip to North Carolina in the summer of 1998, she regaled him with descriptions of the spectacular hats her relatives had worn to Sunday church services. He immediately saw the potential for a book of photography which explored the tradition. He chose to photograph the women in black and white in order to give a more timeless, fine-art quality and to keep the focus not only on the hat, but also on the woman whose head it adorns.

Author, Craig Marberry, grew up in the Church of God in Christ, the nation’s second largest African American congregation, where, as he writes in the book, “the magnificent hats were as plentiful as Bibles.” When Marberry discovered Cunningham’s photography project and relished the idea of exploring the “important oral history under the hats.”

“From the very beginning, I saw that my challenge was to elicit from these hat-queens stories as individual and compelling as the hats they wear,” said Marberry of the project.

The result, ***CROWNS: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats***, published in 2000, is a stunning collection of portraits and stories of 52 women wearing a dazzling variety of elegant and fanciful church hats. The book dives deep into the history and tradition of the worshipful headgear as well as the captivatingly complex lives of the African American women who wear them with such faithfulness, reverence and panache.



Senclary Saunders, as photographed on the cover of ***CROWNS: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats***. Photo by Michael Cunningham

CROWNS: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats

is available at the Seattle Public Library:
<https://seattle.bibliocommons.com/item/show/1988875030>

**Also, look for these titles from
Michael Cunningham
and
Craig Marberry:**

CUTTIN' UP
Wit and Wisdom from Black Barber Shops
By Craig Marberry

SPIRIT OF HARLEM
A Portrait of America's Most Exciting Neighborhood
By Craig Marberry & Michael Cunningham

JEWELS
50 Phenomenal Black Women Over 50
By Michael Cunningham & Connie Briscoe

QUEENS
Portraits of Black Women and Their Fabulous Hair
By Michael Cunningham & George Alexander

About the Author: Regina Taylor



Regina Taylor

The multitalented Regina Taylor, has had an impressive career spanning theatre, television, film and writing. In addition to writing *Crowns*, which became the most performed musical in the country in 2006, according to American Theatre Magazine, her works as a playwright also include the award-winning play *Oo-Bla-Dee*; *Drowning Crow*, a Broadway adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull*; *The Dreams of Sarah Breadlove*; *A Night in Tunisia*; *Escape from Paradise*; *Watermelon Rinds*; and *Inside the Belly of the Beast*.

Taylor is also an award-winning actor who received a Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a TV Series, an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series and two Emmy Award nominations for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series for her work in *I'll Fly Away*. On stage, Taylor holds the distinction of being the first Black woman to play Juliet on Broadway, in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

She currently lives in Chicago and works as an Artistic Associate at the distinguished Goodman Theatre.

How to Wear a Church Hat

Like with most high fashion items, church hats come with a few basic rules and guidelines that you should remember. Below are a list of fashion rules for hats, as outlined by the high fashion hat boutique, Samuel's Hats:

- **Never let your feathers get ruffled.**
This is great life advice, but it's also important for your church hat! If your feathers get bent or broken, it can be seen as disrespectful.
- **Don't wear a church hat that's wider than your shoulders.**
There is such a thing as too big. If you look like your hat is about to swallow you up, that's a definite fashion don't!
- **Always wear a white, cream, or pastel Easter hat.**
Even if Mother Nature sends you six inches of snow for Easter and it feels like anything but Spring, this rule still applies.
- **Don't wear a church hat that's darker than your shoes.**
It's just not considered as elegant.
- **Consider a chapel veil.**
These small veils are a great way to add some pizzazz to your church hat, while still looking demure and dignified.
- **Don't borrow church hats.**
If you want the respect and honor that these hats were built on, make sure yours comes from your very own closet.
- **Always have the right attitude.**
Never forget the history behind these hats.
Wear your church hat with pride, and walk with your head held high.

<http://samuelshats.com/CHURCH-HATS-HISTORY/>

Subscriber Rewards Spotlight: Deep Roots



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drink.nakedcity.beer | 206.838.6299

Discount: Naked City offers a 10% discount to all Taproot Theatre patrons! Show your playbill or ticket to your server or bartender to receive the discount on the night of the show.

Naked City strives to carry on the rich tradition of the American public house with a small craft brewery influenced by Northwest beer culture and the great beer traditions of the world, and a scratch kitchen specializing in American Comfort Food with fresh, seasonal, and local ingredients. Naked City also hosts monthly cultural events, including film nights, Think & Drink with KUOW, baroque music nights, burlesque nights, and comedy shows. Come one, come all, to Greenwood's town hall.

... And our Newest Subscriber Rewards Partner

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8570 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103

flyingbike.coop | 206.428.7709

Discount: \$1 off your first beer when you show your Subscriber Rewards Card and a ticket stub from a recent show at Taproot Theatre!

Flying Bike is Washington's first co-op brewery! We strive to ensure our tasting room and delicious brews are accessible to all. We're also a Cooperative which means we are owned by our members (100%!). Co-op member also gets you some great deals!

