
Non-Negotiable

As a young girl growing up in the South, I was required to wear a hat to my Baptist church on Sundays for Sunday School as well as to the regular 11 o'clock sermon.

All eyes were on the hats so it was commonplace for young girls and women to exhibit their hats by parading to the front pews of the church.

Wearing a hat to church was never a negotiable matter in my family, growing up in a household with my mother, two grandmothers and great-great grandmother.

I had much of a desire upon completion of high school to become an educated young woman, move away from the nest, and enroll in a sophisticated Southern Methodist college for African American women. I did not get as far away from tradition as I thought. Bennett College for Women required its students to wear hats and gloves to Sunday vesper services and on downtown shopping sprees. I continue to love hats and always wear them when I visit my family church in Greensboro. Though I'm a bit more sporadic with this tradition up North, it remains a non-negotiable item with my mother.

G. Jean Howard

Director of Wilson Commencement Park

Always a part of me

Hats have always been an integral part of my attire. My mother wore hats and as children, we weren't really dressed unless we had on a hat and gloves.

My most prized hat is an Easter hat that I purchased 38 years ago.

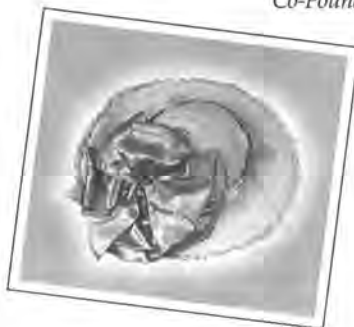
I've worn it every Easter since. I remember when I purchased that hat at B. Foreman Company. My daughter was 12—she will turn 50 on her next birthday—and I still possess the hat my daughter wore that Easter Sunday.

When I was a school administrator in the Rochester City Schools, the superintendent always said at board meetings that he could tell where Alice Young was sitting.

I never went to those meetings without a hat.

Dr. Alice Halloway Young

Co-Founder of Monroe Community College



Left: Straw hat with Valenciennes lace and Chinese silk, USA, ca. 1908. Made by McNulty & Co. Hatters, Rochester NY.



Right: Botolo (Chief's Hat), fiber and copper, The Democratic Republic of Congo, ca. 1920.



salutation

When I was a child, Sundays were always special in the African American Community.

It was not only a day of worship and prayer; it was also an important social time. The church was a vehicle for family and friends to come together. Everyone dressed in their very best for church. No matter how hard our grandmothers and mothers worked during the week, on Sunday they were regal queens, wearing hats and “strutting” tall down the aisle to their church pews. Their heads were held high as they wore their

Sunday crowns. The hats were big, bold and bright! The hats often personified the women who wore them. They told a story. Women wore hats that dared to have personality and life. The hats were never plain or drab. Like the women who wore them, they had charisma. I salute my mother and all the mothers and their beautiful “crowns.”

Francine Conwell

Adjunct Professor of Writing, Monroe Community College

Head Dress

The hat I am wearing in my portrait is a part of an outfit made for me in my last visit to East Africa a few years ago. I first went to Africa as a missionary in 1969.

Of course, one is not fully dressed in that culture without the “head dress.”

My outfit is purple, denoting my Episcopal colors. The sisters had not met a Black, female Bishop. I was celebrated with shouts, claps, waves, hugs and kisses and gifts everywhere I went. I wore my outfit with much pride for the female Bishops who would come after me.

Rev. Dr. Violet L. Fisher

Resident Bishop, New York West Area, The United Methodist Church



Left: Marriage Hat,
bast fiber and
red lead dye,
South Africa,
ca. 1940.



Right: Pillbox hat,
felt and velvet, USA,
ca. 1949.



Crowns

The Keeper of the Crowns

One of the greatest honors bestowed upon me in my entire lifetime came from the adult children of one of my closest friends. Following the unexpected need for my beloved friend's adult children to suddenly sell their parents' home and move them into a one-bedroom independent living facility, I was called upon to assume the critical task of storing and safekeeping her prized 50-year plus magnificent hat collection.

What a daunting and awesome task!

It was with mixed feelings of awe, inspiration and anxiety that I agreed to assume this highly honorable and formidable task of storing the prized and museum-quality collection of my dear friend's hats in my home. I have wonderful memories of my friend, as she regained her strength and stamina, requesting specific hats to wear to special gatherings and events at the health care facility, such as for Christmas parties and related gatherings. As her health improved, I was able to bring entire seasonal collections of my friend's hats to her and her husband's independent living apartment, where she would display them in their bedroom for both viewing enjoyment and wearing pleasure. What joy the two of us brought to the health care staff and residents when we entered the facility dining room in our elegant crowns!

I'm enormously proud and truly honored to hold the bestowed and well-earned title of "keeper of the hats" by my dear friend and her family. Never underestimate the power of hats to bond sistahs together! Even more importantly, always wear your church crowns with a profound sense of glory to God, pride, confidence, courage and HATTITUDE!!

Never underestimate the power of your crowns to bring sheer joy to others!!

Sistah Dr. Stella

Professor of Social Work at Nazareth College



**Left: Felt and
pearl beads,
USA, 21st century.**



**Right: Felt, feathers,
wooden beads,
USA, 21st century.**



Geva
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MARK CUDDY

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presents

Crowns

By

REGINA TAYLOR

Adapted from the book by **MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM** and **CRAIG MARBERRY**

Directed and Choreographed by **MARION J. CAFFEY**

Musical Direction by **e' MARCUS HARPER**

Scenic/Lighting Design
DALE F. JORDAN

Costume Design
EMILIO SOSA

Sound Design
RICK MENKE

Asst. Director / Dance Captain
LaVON D. FISHER

Stage Managers
KIRSTEN BRANNEN
FRANK CAVALLO

Production Manager
JOEL MARKUS

Casting
ELISSA MYERS & PAUL FOUQUET, CSA

Additional Musical Arrangements by e' Marcus Harper

Crowns by Regina Taylor is presented by arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., in New York.

Crowns was originally produced by the McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton, New Jersey and by Second Stage Theatre, New York City.

Crowns was originally commissioned by the McCarter Theatre Center and was developed with the assistance of the Sundance Institute Theatre Laboratory.

The co-production of *Crowns* has been made possible with special funding from The David Schwartz Foundation.

A co-production with Studio Arena Theatre in Buffalo

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CAST

Mother Shaw/Obatala – Orisha of Wisdom & Creativity Barbara D. Mills
Mabel/Shango – Orisha of Fire Angela Karol Grovey
Velma/Oya – Orisha of Storms Gretha Boston
Wanda/Oshun – Orisha of Rivers & Water Joy Lynn Matthews
Jeanette/Yemaya – Orisha of Seas LaVon D. Fisher
Yolonda/Ogun – Orisha of Iron, War & Labor Roz Beauty Davis
Man/Preacher/Teddy/Elegba – Orisha of Crossroads Rob Barnes

MUSICIANS

Music Director/Keyboards e' Marcus Harper
Percussionist Romero Wyatt

SETTING

Darlington, South Carolina

TIME

2005

Crowns is performed without an intermission.
Approximate running time is 100 minutes.



ssdc



The Actors and Stage Managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

The Director is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.

The Scenic, Costume, Lighting and Sound Designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists Local USA-829, IATSE.

Please note that the taking of photographs or use of recording devices during the performance is not permitted. Cell phones and all other electronic devices are strictly prohibited in the theatre.

This theatre operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), a consortium of regional theatres throughout the nation, and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States, and the Society of Stage Directors & Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.

Geva Theatre Center is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national service organization for non-profit, professional theatres.

Funding for sign language interpreted events is provided, in part, by a grant from Theatre Development Fund's TAP Plus program in cooperation with the New York Council on the Arts.

The Artistic Company

ROB BARNES (*Man/Preacher/Teddy/Elegba*)

Mr. Barnes is excited to make his Geva Theatre Center debut. Mr. Barnes' Broadway credits include *Hair*, original cast of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Don't Bother Me I Can't Cope* and Dick Clark's *Rock 'N Roll*. Film credits include *S.W.A.T.*, *Subway Stories*, *First Deadly Sin* and *Up The Down Staircase*. Television credits include "Law & Order," "Keenan & Kel," "Clarissa," "The Tony Awards," "Guiding Light," "All My Children," "Solid Gold," "Mystery of Shelby Woo" and numerous commercials. As a playwright he has written four new plays: *Switch Seats*, *Mama & Papa/24-7*, *Solitude* and *Holdings*. He received a gold record for the hit single "Generale Hospitale." Mr. Barnes is currently recording a CD to be released on an independent label.



GRETHA BOSTON (*Velma/Oya*) Ms. Boston received the Tony Award for Best Featured



Actress in a musical, *Showboat* (Queenie) and the Theater World Award for Outstanding Debut Artist as well as Tony and Drama Desk nominations for *It Ain't Nothin' But The Blues*. Other

theatre credits include the 2002 national tour of *South Pacific* (Bloody Mary), starring Robert Goulet. Ms. Boston made her Carnegie Hall debut May 1991 in Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, and returned that same year for performances in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. Her repertoire includes operatic roles, oratorio works and recital programs. She also appeared in *Jar the Floor* (Lola) at Charlotte Repertory Theatre. Her

television credits include PBS' "Salute to Oscar Hammerstein," "David Letterman," "Rosie O'Donnell," "Today," "Law & Order," "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" and "Hope and Faith." Currently she is also developing a work based on the life of the famous contralto Marian Anderson.

ROZ BEAUTY DAVIS (*Yolonda/Ogun*) *Crowns*

marks Ms. Davis' Geva Theatre Center debut. She appeared recently in *Gospel at Colonus*, starring Charles S. Dutton, at the legendary Apollo Theater. Other New York credits include *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Dussie Mae),



which was the winner of three Audelco Awards earning her a supporting actress nomination, *Eulogy for the Blackman* in which she earned an Audelco Nomination for Lead Actress and her theatrical debut *Damn Yankees* (Lola) where she received an Audelco Award for Best Musical Performance—Female. Regional credits include *Orange Lemon Egg Canary* at Humana Festival/Actors Theatre of Louisville and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* at Stamford Theatre Works. Ms. Davis has toured worldwide performing pop, rock and gospel music. Much love and thanks to Leopold Lowe, my "lil' sister/big sister" Kimrie Lewis, Mommy and the matriarch Grandma Beauty Richardson.

LaVON D. FISHER (*Jeanette/Yemaya*) Ms.

Fisher is excited to return to Geva Theatre Center where she was the dance captain and understudy in *Cookin' at the Cookery* (Alberta Hunter and Narrator). Ms. Fisher's other favorite roles include *Dreamgirls* (Effie), *Smokey Joe's Cafe* (B. J.), *Honky Tonk Angels* (Sue Ellen) and *Blackbirds of Broadway* (ensemble). Ms. Fisher re-



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