

REIMAGINING
CABARET
The Genres Explored



SATURDAY
MAY 10, 2025
7:30 PM

FREEDOM HALL
IN PARK FOREST

blackvoicesincabaret.org

JAZZ INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

PRESENTS

The Gala 2025

FEATURING
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BRANFORD MARSALIS

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May
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REIMAGINING CABARET: The Genres Explored

May 10, 2025 at 7:30 pm
FREEDOM HALL | Park Forest

CREATOR/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER Lynn Colbert-Jones
EMCEE/VOCALIST Margaret Murphy-Webb
MUSIC DIRECTOR/PIANIST Theodis Rodgers, Jr.
BASSIST Michael Manson
GUITAR Larry Brown, Jr.
DRUMMER Linard Stroud, Jr.

Today's songs will be
performed by artists from
the BVIC roster—

Making their BVIC debut:

Joan Collaso
Ron Gutierrez
Bruce Henry
Theo Huff
Brianna Johnson
Meagan McNeal
Devon Sandridge

Returning cast:

Margaret Murphy-Webb
Evelyn Danner
Sean Harris
Randolph Johnson
Ava Logan
Holly McGuire
Isiah Mitchell
Madeline Morgan
Darcelle & Gene Williams
Bobbi Wilsyn

THANK YOU FOR ALL THE SUPPORT!

Victor Blackful and Freedom Hall Family
*NBC, CBS, SunTimes, Fox32 - media coverage
of the Reimagining Cabaret series
Craig D. Barnes, CDB Graphics, Graphic Design
Jeanne Franks, Photo presentation and stage manager
Tyrone Williams, Jahi Entertainment video
Working In Concert staff and volunteers:
Executive Director Claudia Hommel, Cappy Kidd,
Juliana Engels, Katie Rub, Kerri Burkhardt,
Lauren Lassen

To our audience, THANK YOU!

Stay connected via our email newsletters,
donate what and when you can,
and join us as fellow artists.
Sign up at blackvoicesincabaret.org or
workinginconcert.org/connect. Call 773-509-9360.

BVIC is an initiative of Working In Concert, a
performing arts facilitator since 2019. We are proud to
have Lynn Colbert-Jones on our board.

WELCOME TO BLACK VOICES IN CABARET.

From swing to soul, from the opera house to Broadway,
from jazz to blues, we're taking our fourth trip through the
wide world of cabaret.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES — Lynn Colbert-Jones

As the director of *Reimagining Cabaret: The Genres Explored*, I am honored to continue this extraordinary journey of musical storytelling. With each installment of the Reimagining Cabaret series, we have pushed boundaries, expanded narratives, and centered the brilliance of Black artistry in a genre that has too often excluded it.

This production is a celebration of our collective voice and a tribute to the rich legacy of Black excellence. From jazz to soul, Broadway to blues, each genre explored in this show reflects a vital thread in the tapestry of our cultural identity. It is cabaret reimagined with boldness, purpose, and pride.

Our artists bring their truth to every note and lyric, transforming the stage into a space of authenticity, vulnerability, and joy. Backed by a stellar band, these 18 vocalists offer more than just music—they offer stories, lived experience, and a powerful reminder of the depth and diversity of Black musical expression.

Thank you for joining us on this ride. Whether this is your first time or your fourth, I invite you to listen deeply, feel fully, and help us continue to reimagine what cabaret can be.

SHARE THE NEXT SHOW WITH FRIENDS & FANS!

May 17 at the Haven in Bronzeville.

July 13 at Epiphany Center for the Arts
with *Black Voices & Friends!*

REIMAGINING CABARET

The Bronzeville Edition



Creator, Director & Producer
Lynn Colbert-Jones



Music Director
Theodis Rodgers Jr.



Emcee
Margaret Murphy-Webb

**SATURDAY
MAY 17, 2025
7:30 PM**

**THE HAVEN
BRONZEVILLE**
932 E 43rd CHICAGO, IL 60653



NEW ARTIST



Cynda Williams

RETURNING ARTISTS



Sean Harris



Madeline Morgan



Sonia Oyola



Ken Fobs

blackvoicesincabaret.org

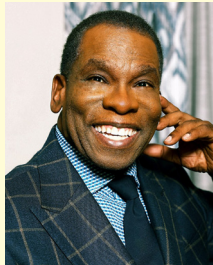
Director/Producer LYNN COLBERT-

JONES is a Chicago-based award-winning songwriter, producer, and arts advocate with over three decades of experience in music and business. She has written more than 200 songs and is the creator and host of Composers' Café and The Good Hearts Club Music Jam. Lynn serves on the boards of the Jazz Institute of Chicago, JEXA (Jazz Excellence Awards in L.A.), Working In Concert, AAMPA (African-American Museum of Performing Arts), and is JEXA's Entertainment Director and Executive Producer. A Broadway World Award winner and a proud cousin of jazz legend Lil Hardin Armstrong, Lynn is known for connecting talent, curating powerful musical experiences, and championing Black voices in all areas of entertainment and beyond.



THEODIS RODGERS, JR., Music

Director, is an American Jazz pianist and multi-keyboardist from Chicago. He has worked in theater, television and motion pictures as a performer, composer, arranger, producer and music conductor/director both nationally and internationally. He has been music director/ keyboardist for Curtis Mayfield, Patti LaBelle, Angela Bofill, Jennifer Holiday, Sarah Vaughn, Ramsey Lewis, Freddie Hubbard, The Emotions and Dennis De Young. Theodis is a former member of the funk/rock band Love Craft. He co-wrote music for the movie *A Family Thing* featuring Robert Duvall and James Earl Jones. For the stage, he has served as musical director and/or pianist for *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Dreamgirls* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He is currently Music Director for Teatro Zinzanni Chicago. He travels internationally with his piano and organ Jazz trio, including the 2023 Chicago Jazz Festival, Jazz Showcase and Winters Jazz Club. His new music album *Hot Jazz* can be found on all streaming platforms.



MARGARET MURPHY-WEBB is an award-winning entertainer crediting her unique vocal style and showmanship to the tutelage of legendary Chicago tenor saxophonist Von Freeman. Margaret has been featured at the Taste of Chicago, Winona Indiana Jazz Festival, Mississippi Valley Blues Festival, Hyde Park Jazz Festival, The Green Mill, Jazz Showcase, Winters Jazz Club among other Chicago festivals and jazz venues. She had the honor of performing for both Presidents Obama and Clinton, as well as ambassadors from Russia and Poland. Margaret is executive director of the nonprofit South Side Jazz Coalition which presents free live jazz, offers mentoring programs, and advocates for Chicago musicians. Margaret was co-chair of The Year of Chicago Music 2020/21 and a member of the Chicago Cultural Council



P E R

JOAN COLLASO, an Emmy-winning vocalist and Chicago native with a music degree from Chicago State University, has earned acclaim for her work across live performance, film, and television. She's performed with legends like Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Al Jarreau, and George Duke, and appeared on major platforms including Oprah, Empire, and PBS's *Precious Memories*. Her international credits include multiple performances at the North Sea Jazz Festival, as well as festivals in Japan, Estonia, and Italy. As founder and executive director of Timeless Gifts Performing Arts Program, Joan has provided professional training and international performance opportunities to young Chicago artists since 2011.



EVELYN DANNER is a vocalist/actor/teacher and costumer. She has been with Chicago's Black Ensemble Theater for more than 25 years, singing, dancing, acting and serving often as "Miraculous Wardrobe Mistress". She was costume designer for Goodman Theater's *Gem of the Ocean*. With more than 20 musical productions to her performance credit, Evelyn has portrayed the legendary jazz great Ella Fitzgerald in four different productions. She serves in the music ministry of Covenant Faith Church of God. She is a founding member of Black Voices in Cabaret.



RON GUTIERREZ's musical journey began with early influences from his jazz saxophonist father, country-loving mother, and singing Christian music in church. Blending jazz, country, pop, R&B, and gospel, he crafted a soulful jazz style of his own. At the University of Kansas, he performed in vocal jazz ensembles and Kansas City clubs before leading vocals for Garry Mac Productions and The Atlantic Express. A successful audition with The U.S. Army Chorale launched a full-time career, performing for presidents, Congress, the military, and international dignitaries. His powerful vocals led to appearances with Michael McDonald, Wynonna Judd, B.B. King, and the National Symphony Orchestra, as well as on *Showtime at the Apollo* and PBS holiday specials. Back in Kansas City, he became a top performer, touring with the Tommy Dorsey and Kansas City Jazz Orchestras. Internationally, he wowed audiences at St. Ignatius Cathedral in Rome and Morocco's Jazz in Riads Festival. Dubbed "The Latin Luther" by CNN's Roland S. Martin, Ron continues to shine from Carnegie Hall to the Grand Ole Opry—and he's just getting started.



FORMERS

SEAN HARRIS—An extraordinary singer with a voice from lyric baritone to tenor and countertenor, Sean has a firm commitment to conveying his songs to each member of the audience. Sean has been deeply influenced by Mario Lanza for opera and Neapolitans, Johnny Mathis for pop, and his favorite jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald. His rich repertoire includes rhythm and blues, jazz, French cabaret, Neapolitans, opera and oratorio, art songs and Broadway. He was mentored by pianist/band leader Joe Vito who said: "His is an unbelievable voice; with smooth transitions between musical styles." In demand from churches to senior centers, he is featured singing in French and English on the *Jazz Fauré Project* albums (jazzfaure.com). He can be reached at 773-744-6537.



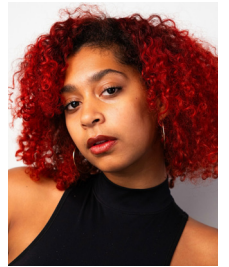
BRUCE A. HENRY, born in West Point, Mississippi and raised in Chicago, began singing publicly at age 5 and was mentored early by his pianist father, who introduced him to Count Basie and Duke Ellington. Though classically trained at the Chicago Conservatory of Music, his passion for improvisation led to a distinctive style shaped by influences like Nina Simone, Al Jarreau, and John Coltrane. Known for his three-and-a-half octave range and vocal versatility, Bruce has performed on five continents, with strong followings in France and the Far East. His music has been featured on the BBC, Disney, and HBO, and he's appeared on renowned stages including the National Theater of Havana, Le Bilboquet in Paris, and the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Chicago. He has performed with Julius Hemphill, Doc Severinsen, Sounds of Blackness, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, and Bobby McFerrin, and opened for Roberta Flack, Natalie Cole, Ramsey Lewis, and more. Now based in Chicago, Bruce is also a passionate educator, widely recognized for his "Evolution of African American Music" programs.



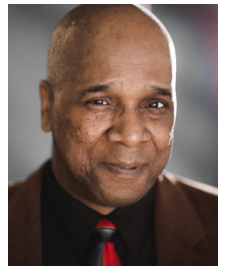
THEO HUFF, a Chicago native, international soul singer, song-writer and actor, was born to entertain. Theo blends traditional and contemporary Blues/Southern Soul and R and B effortlessly with unforced phrasing and sassy churchiness. Theo's stage presence combines sexy sensitivity, cocksure flamboyance and a confident command of the stage has captivated his audience since the age of eighteen. It is often said that Theo is a natural born singer and once you hear his soulful voice, you will agree that the Theo Huff Xperience is like none other.



BRIANNA MARIE JOHNSON has earned her BFA in Musical Theater performance at Columbia College Chicago this year. She starred as Dionne in *Hair* and Philoclea in *Head Over Heels*. Professional credits include *Spring Awakening* as Ensemble/Ilse understudy/Dance Captain and *Rent* as Ensemble/Mimi understudy. She competed at the Region 3 KCACTF placing as a finalist for Irene Ryan acting and MTI Dance program; she was awarded the MTI Voice National Alternate.



RANDOLPH JOHNSON, a native Chicagoan, has received acclaim for his portrayal of Charlie in *The Bridges of Madison County* (4 Jeff Awards): Horse in Kokandy's *Full Monty*, and Blood in ETA's production of *Every Night When The Sun Goes Down*; and a BTAA nomination for Cousin Acey in *The Clara Ward Story* at Open Door Theatre. Other Chicago roles include Amonasro, Aida's father in the Bailiwick Chicago's *Aida*, Philmore in Pegasus Players' *Jitney* (BTAA's award for Best Ensemble). Not to mention, Booker T. Washington in *Ragtime* at Porchlight Music Theatre and Big Noise Theatre; Bailiwick Theatre's *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* and Newt Lee in *Parade* (Jeff Citations). He was a featured vocalist for the Max Roach Trio, the U of I Black Chorus, and Chicago Chamber Opera. He is a James Scholar, Masters in Music Education from University of Illinois.



AVA LOGAN is an award-winning singer-actor from Washington, D.C. Veterinarian Dr. Logan by day, Ava is a classically-trained jazz recording artist and has performed jazz, pop, and R&B with duos to 18-piece big bands nationally and internationally. She has portrayed her idols Ella Fitzgerald and Nancy Wilson in professional theater performances in Chicago. Her CD, *So Many Stars*, produced by guitarist Henry Johnson, was met with critical acclaim. www.avalogan.com



HOLLY McGUIRE is a veteran Chicago vocalist known for her dynamic interpretations of jazz, pop, and blues. She began her career at the Chicago Playboy Club and has since performed at major venues like Andy's Jazz Club, touring with the Steve Sandner Quartet and recording the album *Catch 38*. Holly has shared stages with Roberta Flack and Dave Koz, and performed internationally with the Ken Arlen and Jeff Stitely Orchestras, including for 300,000 people at



Poland's Woodstock Music Festival. Her solo credits include appearances at St. James Cathedral, Fourth Presbyterian Jazz Service, and Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase.

MEAGAN MCNEAL brings her own sunshine to every stage, blending a passion for people with a powerful voice that spans jazz, R&B, soul, hip hop, rock, and classical. The Chicago-born singer/songwriter has collaborated with artists like Makaya McCraven, Common, The O'Jays, Eminem, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. After releasing her debut album *Mindset* in 2014, she reached national audiences on NBC's *The Voice* in 2017, mentored by Jennifer Hudson. Meagan has since toured the U.S. and Europe, and a 2019 viral video of her singing house music on a Chicago El train led to a feature on *The Kelly Clarkson Show*. Since 2018, she has regularly performed in the CSO's *Notes for Peace* concerts honoring youth lost to gun violence, and in 2022, joined CSO musicians, conductor Andrew Grams, and Justin Roberts for family and school performances.



ISIAH MITCHELL—For nearly 40 years, Isiah Mitchell has been the powerhouse lead vocalist of Chicago's legendary Midnight Sun Band, captivating audiences with his dynamic range, soulful delivery, and electrifying stage presence. Isiah's journey began at just eight years old, earning recognition as "Little Michael Jackson" before evolving into a versatile artist inspired by the genius of Stevie Wonder and the uplifting spirit of Earth, Wind & Fire. His career has taken him across the world, sharing the stage with icons like Jean Carne, Roy Ayers, Otis Clay and others. With a repertoire spanning Blues, Gospel, R&B, Rock, and Reggae, and whether leading Midnight Sun or commanding the stage solo, Isiah Mitchell doesn't just sing—he brings music to life.



MADELINE MORGAN got her music education the old fashioned way—from a family who believed in performance and were performers themselves. Her style is laid-back and her musical preference is jazz. She has sung in church choirs, community choirs and the Sounds Good seniors choir. A member of Chicago Cabaret Professionals, she has performed at Davenport's Cabaret several times, and produced and directed projects *Ella and Sarah* with Judy Narcisse at Infinity and the Luncheon Jazz series.



DEVON SANDRIDGE is a Chicago-based vocalist known for his rich bass-baritone voice and heartfelt storytelling, inspired by legends like Johnny Hartman, Joe Williams, and Billie Holiday. A former Air Force member, his global experiences deepened his connection to jazz, eventually

leading him to study under Chicago jazz icon Henry Johnson. Devon has performed at top venues including Andy's Jazz Club, The Jazz Showcase, and the Chicago Jazz Festival, and his 2022 debut album *Storyteller* showcases his soulful artistry. With a background in biochemistry and a deep commitment to preserving jazz tradition, Devon continues to captivate audiences and honor the genre's legacy.



EUGENE "GENE" WILLIAMS was the Mayor of Lynwood for 16 years, past president of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA), and served on several municipal committees and councils. In his retirement he has honed his natural talent for voice and music. He and his wife Darcelle have hosted a show together, singing songs of love, and have joined many other productions as well. In his not so spare time, he enjoys playing the piano and as he puts it, "learning new stuff". They have been married for 47 years and have three children.



DARCELLE WILLIAMS received her BA in Theater Education from Illinois State University and a MA in Theater Directing. She taught Theatre, English and Speech, and directed theater productions at Percy Julian and Thornwood High Schools, co-directing two State Championships for the Group Interpretations activity. More recently, she performed in *Ragtime*, as Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray*. She directed a reading performance of *Death of the King's Horseman* and the musical *Sister Act* at the Drama Group. She can be seen on television in episodes of *The Chi* and *Blackboard Jungle*. She is a founding member of Griot Theatre Collective. Since the pandemic Darcelle rediscovered her love for music through Zoom groups and singing with her husband Eugene in several shows.



BOBBI WILSYN — Recipient of the 2018 Black Excellence Award in Jazz and 2015 Outstanding Jazz Educator, Bobbi Wilsyn is a celebrated singer, actor, voice-over artist, and recording talent. Discovered by Milt Trenier, she toured nationally before settling in Chicago in the late '70s, performing jazz, blues, pop, and gospel with her combo. She was a featured vocalist with the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, and Chicago Jazz Orchestra, and toured internationally with the Italian Jazz Band and Symphonic Jazz International. Her theater credits include *Keegle Street*, *Beehive*, *It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues*, and *Sophisticated Ladies*. Now Professor Emerita from Columbia College, where she coordinated Voice Studies, Wilsyn remains active as a voice and life coach, workshop leader, performer, and motivational speaker.





NATHAN MANILOW THEATRE *at* FREEDOM HALL

CONCERT SERIES TICKETS ON SALE SEPTEMBER 2025

Tickets available online at
FREEDOMHALL.ORG

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Cultural Arts Supervisor

Victor Blackful

Assistant Cultural Arts Supervisor

Shelley Strasser

Office Assistant

Stacey Coleman

Audio Production

*Bill Aldridge - Third City Sound
thirdcitysound.com*

Lighting Technicians

Albert Caldwell, Brad Mietzner, Shelley Strasser

Building Assistants

*Don Borus, Thelma Cartwright, Stacey Coleman,
Alex Pavloski*

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CHICAGO



Cabaret Week

May 9-18, 2025



More than 95 performers performing in 17 venues throughout Chicagoland includes our BVIC associates:

May 9— Opening Night: Robin Watson at Epiphany Center for the Arts

May 10—Black Voices in Cabaret at Freedom Hall (Park Forest)

May 12—Chicago Cabaret Professionals' "Cities of the World" at Rhapsody Theater

May 13—Claudia Hommel & Co. offer Paris with Love at Rockwell on the River

May 15—Sarah Siddons Swell Soirée at PianoForte

May 15—Lynne Jordan & the Shivers at the Cliff Dwellers Club

May 16—Joan Collaso & Friends at the Haven in Bronzeville

May 17—Black Voices in Cabaret at the Haven

May 17—I'm M\$. B'Havin at the Tonk

Visit chicagocabaretweek.org for the full lineup and details.

**CABARET IS A HEARTBEAT
A MOMENT TO FEEL AND DREAM.**



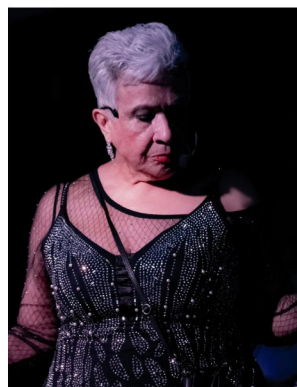
Congratulations to Lynn Colbert-Jones and Black Voices in Cabaret on your continued journey of musical storytelling.



CRAIG D. BARNES
Owner/Creative Director
cdbgraphics@gmail.com
ph 773.551.3245

CREATE. DESIGN. BOLDLY!

Official Creative of the Reimagining Cabaret series



**I'm M\$. B'Havin
with my
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 immsbhavin.com

 [@im_ms_b_havin](https://www.instagram.com/im_ms_b_havin)

 immsbhavin70@gmail.com

**After our May 17 show, join M\$ B until midnight
at the Tonk, 1800 S. Racine Ave. No tickets required!**