



victoria theater
lizzie & jonathan tisch stage

Thursday, February 23, 2023
Friday, February 24, 2023
10AM & 12:30PM

A NJPAC SchoolTime Performance

Mad River Theater Works presents

Freedom Flight

**As a courtesy to the performers and fellow audience members, please be sure to silence all mobile devices.
The use of recording equipment and the taking of photographs are strictly prohibited.**



Made possible by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts,
a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts

about the performance

There are many stories of the Underground Railroad in communities throughout the northern United States. History, and its propensity to weave fact and fiction, has left us with images of runaway slaves making their way from one safe spot to the next through dark tunnels or under the stars, aided and abetted by well-meaning and purposefully networked white northerners.

The Underground Railroad did help freedom seekers along, but it was by and large an unorganized system of Black people helping Black people. Some stories have prized fiction over fact while others, preserved through public record and oral history, only appear larger than life.

One such story is that of Addison White, a man whose freedom journey from Kentucky to Mechanicsburg, Ohio became one of the most famous cases in the history of the Underground Railroad. After taking refuge on the farm of a local abolitionist, White was trailed by federal marshals enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act.

When the marshals raided the house looking to take Addison prisoner, they were greeted with unexpected resistance. The town of Mechanicsburg prevented the arrest and drove the marshals out of town. The subsequent legal battles, which were eventually settled in court, inspired the people of the small village to take up a collection and buy Addison's freedom. White went on to settle in Mechanicsburg, got married and has family still living in the area to this day.

The turbulent period of slavery and abolition in American history is the backdrop for Mad River's one-act play with music, *Freedom Flight*. Centered around the telling of family history and the role of generational understanding, growth and self-worth, the play wrestles with the ongoing legacy of slavery and identity. When Evelyn, a descendant of Addison White, confronts her own difficulties with racism, an array of characters relive their family history. The play illustrates the tension, drama and promise of deliverance from bigotry.

Freedom Flight explores the unwritten roadmap between past and present, and the relationship between the things we leave behind and those that carry us forward.

meet the cast

Gabrielle Camille Archer is excited to join Mad River Theater Works for her first national tour. Gabrielle most recently had the honor of taking part in the Emerging Playwrights Competition as an emerging director for the Negro Ensemble Company, under the directing mentorship of Daniel Carlton. Other recent credits include *The Black Women and The Ballet/In the Parlour* series for The American Slavery Project, *The Store* at the Castillo Theater, *Walk Hard* at the Metropolitan Playhouse and *Hair Body Attitude* at the Black Spectrum Theatre. She is also a producer with Working Theory Productions. She'd like to dedicate this performance to her own beloved

meet the cast

village (her Amanda, teachers, ancestors, mentors and soldiers of love). Gabrielle is thankful for the opportunity to help bring another part of history back to life. “Here’s to joining forces for truth — seeking and bridging the gap between our past, contemporary and future freedom fighters.”

Charlie Raiford Faircloth, Jr., *Udney Hyde, guitar*, was born in the early 1950s in Macon, GA and grew up in Chattanooga, TN. He is married to Sadie Polk Faircloth, a singer and piano player from Memphis, TN and they have two grown children. Raiford is glad to make his way as an actor, singer and musician and comes by it honestly, as he was raised in a musical family. His father was a well-known performer and radio personality, and Raiford was first on stage with his father’s band in a notable appearance on Ernest Tubb’s *Midnight Jamboree* national radio show at age 15. He has a BA in health, physical education, recreation and dance, and a masters in education. In addition to many years with Mad River Theater Works, Raiford taught school for 10 years in Covington, KY.

Evelyn LeTeshia, *Evelyn*, is an actress, singer/songwriter, model, director and screenwriter from South Carolina. She has notable acting credits in film and television, as well as experience in freelancing on a diverse collection of production crews. Evelyn has also completed several theatrical productions. With her second touring production for Mad River Theater Works, she most recently portrayed Catherine Burks in *Freedom Riders*. To

date, Evelyn has completed three productions with Mad River Theater Works and is excited for the fourth upcoming!

Carlton Pope, *Solomon, musician/drummer*, from Columbus, Ohio, is a core member of the Thioasane Institute, a West African dance company located in central Ohio. This is his first production with Mad River Theater Works. Carlton brings a creative eye and a different perspective to Mad River Theater Works. He relates the African experience within the diaspora to the African experience in the United States. “I think of the lineage of the diasporic culture and bridging the gaps between known history and lost history. Just like a tree, its story doesn’t start from the ground — it starts from the roots.”

Brendan Sheehan, *Lawman, security guard, Master White*, is from Yellow Springs, Ohio and earned his BFA in performance at Naropa University in Boulder, CO. Notable works while in Colorado include the role of Creon in *Antigone*, Kinesias in *Lysistrata* and the production of his own play, *Disbandment*. He was also a founding member of the Boulder Fringe Festival. Since returning to Ohio, he has worked with local theater organizations in both Yellow Springs and Dayton, including productions of Chekov’s *The Cherry Orchard*, Stravinski’s *The Soldier’s Tale* and Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* and *The Price*. This is Brendan’s first production with Mad River Theater Works.

meet the cast

Myles Wright, *Addison*, is delighted to be making his Mad River debut! Myles is an actor, poet and mentor from Atlanta, GA who obtained a degree in film and television performance/production from the New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts in 2018. Recent understudy credits include *Hands Up* (Alliance Theatre) and *Ghost* (Alliance Theatre). Other recent theater credits include *Black Bullet Dichotomy* (BlackLight Community), *Preacherman* (Trailblazers Collective), *Titus Andronicus* (Rogue Ensemble), *Macbeth* (Adirondack Arts), *The S*** Show* (No Peeking Theatre) and *We Have Standards* (No Peeking Theatre). Myles also self-published a poetry book in 2020 and is grateful for this beautiful opportunity to share meaningful work, and for the continued support from his family and friends! He dedicates this and all other appearances to his grandma, Bessie Lee.

meet the directors

Daniel Carlton is an actor, storyteller, playwright, poet, director and award-winning teacher/artist who has appeared on New York, national and international stages. His work has also been presented in schools, jails, homeless shelters.... everywhere but space. Recent credits include *Jabari Dreams of Freedom* (National Tour, New Victory Theater), *March On* (Apollo Theater, National Black Theater Festival, also playwright), *This Ability* (Chicago Children's Theater, also co-writer with Nambi E. Kelley), playwright/performer in *Check Your Invite* (commissioned for Harlem Stage),

So Journey to the Truth (commissioned for Syracuse Stage education, co-playwright with Nambi E. Kelley), *Night Train 57* (director, workshop for The Kennedy Center). Director/Playwright/Performer *Pigfoot Mary Says Goodbye to the Harlem Renaissance* (Negro Ensemble Company), *A Whistle in Mississippi* (co-writer Micheal Green) and *An Eagle in Harlem*.

Originally from Connecticut, **Chris Westhoff** has a liberal arts degree from Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. His focus there included literature, documentary arts, media production and music performance. He has worked in museums as an art handler, in schools as an educator, with construction and carpentry crews and in many theaters across the country both as a performer and manager. He has worked as the Managing Director of Mad River Theater Works since 2009 and, recently has taken a post as the Development Coordinator for the Antioch School, a celebrated democratic elementary school in Yellow Springs, OH.

acknowledgements

**Mad River Theater Works
Creative Team**

Daniel Carlton, *Director/Playwright*

John Booth, *Poet, activist, educator,
musician, father — descendant of
Addison White*

Kevin McGruder, *History professor at
Antioch College, Yellow Springs
365 Project*

Shadia Alvarez, *Antioch College Officer
of DEI, Director of The Coretta Scott
King Center*

Kathy Shulz, *Historian, author,
Addison White/UGRR Scholar*

Cathy Roma, *Prison rights activist,
Choral Director/Director of World
House Choir*

Omope Carter Daboiku
Storyteller/theater artist

Chris Westhoff, *MRTW Managing
Director/Musical Director*

Ontonio Osley, *Stage manager*

Jenny Haack, *Art design*

Philip Lynch, *Actor/musician,
former MRTW cast member*

**Mad River Theater Works is
supported by funding from The
Ohio Arts Council and The National
Endowment for the Arts.**

njpac on the mic

For post-show resources, please visit:
njpac.org/education-program/mad-river-theater-works-freedom-flight-resources

acknowledgements

Major support provided by:

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**Generous support for NJPAC's
SchoolTime Performance series
provided, in part, by:**



Generous support for NJPAC Arts Education provided by The Joan and Allen Bildner Family Fund, Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc., The Arts Education Endowment Fund in honor of Raymond C. Chambers, Jennifer A. Chalsty, Judy and Stewart Colton, Toby and Leon Cooperman, Mimi and Edwin Feliciano, The Izzo Family, Don Katz & Leslie Larson, McCrane Foundation, Inc., care of Margrit McCrane, The MCJ Amelior Foundation, Albert+ and Katharine Merck+, NJ Advance Media, David & Marian Rocker, The Sagner Companies/The Sagner Family Foundation and an anonymous donor.

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