WESTCOAST BLACK THEATRE TROUPE

NATE JACOBS FOUNDER & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PRESENTS

New Playwrights Series
World Premiere of Two One-Act Plays

BROADWAY

By Tarra Conner jones



Created by Nate Jacobs Written by Michael Jacobs

Costume Designer for From Birmingham to Broadway

Patricia Vandenberg

Costume Designer for Float Like a Butterfly

Adrienne Pitts

Properties Designer **Annette Breazeale**

Production Manager

James "Jay" Dodge II

Production Stage Manager

Juanita Munford*

Set Designer

Adam Spencer

Sound Designer
Patrick Russini

Lighting Designer Michael Pasquini

Projection Designer for Float Like a Butterfly Jay Poppe

Director

Nate Jacobs

May 4-May 29, 2022



Paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax Revenues. This project is sponsored in part by the Department of State, Division of Arts & Culture, the Florida Council of Arts and Culture, and the State of Florida.



CAST

From Birmingham to Broadway

Nell Carter......Tarra Conner jones*

Float Like a Butterfly

Muhammad Ali Darius Autry*

*Member of Actors' Equity Association (AEA), the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

MUSICIANS

From Birmingham to Broadway

Music recorded and mixed by Etienne "EJ" Porter at Drummerboy Entertainment and Recording Studios, Sarasota

Float Like a Butterfly

Music compositions by Derric Gobourne Jr. and Henry Washington

SPECIAL THANKS

Nate Jacobs is grateful to China Smith, boxing coach to Darius Autry and two-time National Boxing Association Heavyweight Champion (AKA "The People's Champ").

We thank Grant Boxleitner for his voiceovers as the ring announcer in Float Like a Butterfly.

WBTT TEAM

Founder and Artistic Director	Nate Jacobs
Executive Director	Julie Leach
Development Associate	Regina Belvin
Artist Relations Associate and Assistant Box C	Office Manager Ariel Blue
Resident Property Master	Annette Breazeale
Master Seamstress	Darci Collins
Production Manager/Resident Music Director.	James "Jay" Dodge II
Marketing and Communications Director	Scott Ferguson
Development Director	Debra Flynt-Garrett
Resident Choreographer	Donald Frison
Finance Manager	Robert Grant
Box Office AssociatesArnet	te German, Naquila Gregory, Margaret Lindsey
Resident Sound Engineer	Alexander Judd
Custodian	Gerald Law
Stage Hands	Amber Myers
House Manager	Myllanna McKinnon
House Associates Mydra McKinnon, Ste	efan Abner, Zion Thompson
Production Assistant/Assistant to the Artistic	Director Michael Mendez
Sound Technician, Stage Hand	
Box Office Manager	Eleanor Miller
Production Stage Manager	Juanita Munford
Resident Lighting Designer	Michael Pasquini
Wardrobe Manager, Lead Stage Hand	Adrienne Pitts
Associate Managing Director	Travis Ray
Resident Sound Designer	Patrick Russini
Technical Director	Shane Streight
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Videography James Berry	Films, Bill Wagy Productions

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I am thrilled to present this "double feature" of two world premiere one-act plays about two amazing African Americans who were determined to define their own destinies—TV and Broadway dynamo Nell Carter and boxing legend Muhammad Ali. In *From Birmingham to Broadway* and *Float Like a Butterfly*, we're fortunate to be able to showcase the talents of two actors who portray these larger-than-life personalities—WBTT favorite Tarra Conner jones and a young man who is appearing for the first time on our mainstage, Darius Autry.

Tarra came to me when we were shut down due to the pandemic and told me about an idea she had to develop a play about Nell Carter, who grew up in Alabama but set her sights on Broadway — even though she didn't fit the mold of a glamorous stage diva. She wowed audiences in *Ain't Misbehavin'* and went on to star in her own TV series, *Gimme a Break*. Tarra, whose singing voice has been compared to Nell Carter's, decided to pay tribute to Carter by writing and starring in a show about her. I encouraged Tarra to "go for it," we workshopped it together and I have the pleasure of directing it. The music you will hear in the piece was directed by a friend and colleague of Tarra's, John Bronston, and was recorded at Etienne "EJ" Porter's Drummerboy Studios here in Sarasota.

For the Muhammad Ali piece I had long wanted to develop, I turned to my brother, Michael Jacobs, who was the researcher and playwright. As Michael and I developed the play we agreed that it should reflect the many aspects of this man who is known throughout the world not just for his pugilistic prowess in the ring, but also for his pride and poetry beyond it. Ali continues to influence today's athletes to speak their mind about issues beyond whatever arena in which they compete. Derric Gobourne Jr. and Henry Washington, both of whom many of you know as actors, singers and dancers in many of our productions, helped us capture the cadence of Ali's signature musical speaking style in a whole new way.

We dedicate these plays to the influence of Nell Carter and Muhammad Ali—two very different individuals who both left their mark on history and culture by insisting on being themselves and who left wonderful legacies for those of us who follow in their footsteps. We hope you enjoy From Birmingham to Broadway and Float Like a Butterfly!

-Nate Jacobs

MUSICAL NUMBERS

FROM BIRMINGHAM TO BROADWAY

Wild Women Don't Get the Blues (I. Cox)

Keep Your Eyes On the Prize (Traditional)

His Eye Is on the Sparrow (C. Gabriel, D. Martin)

Black and Blue (F. Waller-H. Brooks-A. Razaf)

On Broadway (B. Mann-C. Weil-J. Leiber-M. Stoller)

Ain't Misbehavin' (F. Waller-H. Brooks-A. Razaf)

Honeysuckle Rose (F. Waller-A. Razaf)

Ain't Nobody's Business if I Do (P. Grainger-E. Robbins)

Keeping Out of Mischief Now (F. Waller-A. Razaf)

Ain't Misbehavin' (reprise)

Find Out What They Like (F. Waller-A. Razaf)

I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling (F. Waller-H. Link-B. Rose)

Mean to Me (F. Ahlert-R. Turk)

One Night Only (T. Eyen-H. Krieger)

Gimme a Break (B. Christianson-B. Garrett-M. Sims)

Amazing Grace (*Traditional*)

This Joint is Jumping (F. Waller-A. Razaf-J. Johnson)

Friend Like Me (A. Menken-H.Ashman)



TARRA CONNER JONES* (Playwright and Actor, From Birmingham to Broadway). It has been said that God sings through her voice! Tarra Conner jones is a gifted singer, actor, performer, and

playwright. Her destiny was sealed at an early age in the sacred spaces of the Black Church. It was there she noticed the power of her voice and saw firsthand how people experienced her. From then until now, Tarra has consistently performed on stages all over the world. Tarra has played many roles over the years, but she's most proud of her work as: Matron Morton in Chicago at The Fulton Theatre, Mama Ogre and Dragon in Shrek at The Alhambra (The show that made her a member of Actors' Equity Association), Ma Rainey in Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, Archangel Gabriel in Black Nativity at Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, Nell Carter in Ain't Misbehavin' at Theatre By The Sea in Rhode Island, and a six-month contract in Shanghai, China, performing in jazz and funk clubs. Most recently, Tarra portrayed Motormouth Maybelle in Hairspray and Tressa in Flight aboard Royal Caribbean's Symphony of the Seas. She sailed with the cruise line for nearly seven months. Tarra is immensely grateful to introduce her original work in her beloved Sarasota community. From Birmingham to Broadway chronicles the incredible life and work of Broadway legend Nell Carter. The same light that lit Tarra's eyes as a child in the church continues to light her path toward Broadway and beyond. Every time she takes the stage, she does so in memory of her mother, Ms. Chonita Conner. Tarra is charitable to the American Lung Association in its fight to eradicate cancer.

DARIUS AUTRY*

(Muhammad Ali) is a Tampa native. He feels honored to be playing the role of Muhammad Ali in Float Like a Butterfly, his first performance on our mainstage. In February he played Dez in WBTT's



rooftop staged reading of Dominique Morisseau's Skeleton Crew. He was last seen in a fully staged production as Romeo in Jobsite Theater's production of Romeo and Juliet at the Jaeb Theater in the Straz Center for the Performing Arts in Tampa. In between his commitments to the theatre, Darius acts on camera and occasionally writes film scripts. He can currently be seen in Harvey, an independent feature film, as Harvey. The movie can be found on multiple domestic and international streaming platforms. Darius has brought other roles to life in the theatre, such as Lincoln in Topdog/ Underdog, Martin in Seminar, and Woodson Bull III in Third. Darius is excited to join the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe family!

NATE JACOBS (Creator, Float Like a Butterfly; director of both plays) is Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe's Founder & Artistic Director. He is a driving force in Florida's theatre scene. A graduate of Florida A&M



University, Nate founded Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe in 1999. He has written, composed, directed and performed in many shows, as an actor, singer, dancer and comedian. He works extensively in the community, training and mentoring youth in the performing arts. As a result of his outstanding contributions to young people, the Sarasota County Branch NAACP Youth Council recognized Nate as one of its 2012 Men of Valor. In the spring of 2013, he was inducted into the Community Video Archives Hall of Fame for his significant contributions to the arts and education. In 2015, Nate was recognized as a Champion of Diversity for the arts during the Biz(941) and La Guia magazines' Unity Awards Luncheon, and was honored with the prestigious Larry Leon Hamlin Producer Award during the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, N.C., "for his contributions

^{*} Member of Actors' Equity Association (AEA), the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

to Black theatre specifically and American theatre in general." In 2017, Goodwill Manasota named him a Community Ambassador of the Year. In 2018, the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County honored Nate with the Arts Leadership Award for Artistic Achievement. In 2019 he brought Soul Man to the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, N.C. WBTT's fourth appearance there. In 2021 Nate received the Perfect Pitch Award from Key Chorale, which recognized him as a driving force in the arts and for his collaborations with other arts organizations, including American Roots: The Gospel Experience, a series of concert performances with WBTT performers and Key Chorale presented in three area churches in the fall of 2019.

MICHAEL JACOBS

(Playwright, Float Like a Butterfly) is excited to have the opportunity to collaborate with his brother Nate Jacobs on the development of Float Like a Butterfly. Michael and Nate are



also collaborating on Ruby, an original musical that was originally planned for this season but was postponed due to COVID; it will be presented in a future season. In addition, the brothers collaborated on WBTT's 2016 production of The Sam Cooke Story. Michael has a long-cultivated passion for theatre and the arts. He is an accomplished poet and playwright and was founder and director of two community theatre groups in the Washington, DC area. Michael also served on the board of directors of the Essential Theatre in Washington. Michael is an attorney specializing in employment, labor, entertainment, and sports law. He teaches in the graduate school programs at City University of New York and New York University. As part of his ongoing contribution to the arts, Michael provides pro bono legal services and support to many young and aspiring artists. He is a graduate of Howard University Law School and Florida A&M University, where he studied Pre-Law and Theatre.

(Production Manager/ Resident Music Director) has served as WBTT's Production Manager and Resident Music Director

JAMES "JAY" DODGE II

for over a decade. A producer, composer, arranger and songwriter,



Jay oversaw the production and music for three of WBTT's four appearances at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, N.C. He began playing the bass at age 13 and, through the years, has directed several band ensembles and accompanied many singers with his smooth melodic bass playing. He has traveled with the renowned Westcoast Gospel Chorus of Florida and The HLP Love Campaign, touring the U.S., Europe, Africa and the Caribbean, and performing a holiday show at the White House. His local and national TV appearances include Fox, NBC, BET and the CW Network. Jay has accompanied many artists, including recording sensation Terrell Carter, Kermit Quinn of the vocal group Blackstreet, Broadway stars Melba Moore and Chester Gregory, international recording artist Frank McComb, and gospel greats Hezekiah Walker, Kim Burrell, Shirley Caesar, Albertina Walker, Dorothy Norwood, Kurt Carr, Byron Cage, Richard Smallwood and Bishop Walter Hawkins. Jay holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Performance from Florida International University. He is a loving husband to his wife Renae and father to his two boys, Jay and Kai.

JUANITA MUNFORD* (Production Stage Manager) is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association. She has extensive experience as a stage manager. A native of Manchester, N.H., Juanita attended St. Michael's College in Winooski, Vt. After working in St. Michael's Playhouse, she moved to Sarasota in 1983 and became the stage manager for more than 90 shows at the Asolo Repertory Theatre. Juanita's first WBTT show as stage manager was Marvin Gaye: The Man and His Music in 2011 and she has served in that role ever since. She loves working with Nate Jacobs and all the amazing people at WBTT.

PATRICIA VANDENBERG, Ph.D. (Costume Designer, From Birmingham to Broadway) returns to WBTT after designing the costumes for Caroline, or Change in 2019-2020. Patricia has had a long career as a top-rated professor in the areas of theatre, communications, and business management. She earned her Ph.D. With Distinction in History and Criticism of the Theater from the University of Michigan, where she also received an M.A. in Communications and did the work for an M.F.A. in costume design. As a professor of theatre, Patricia chaired theatre departments, designed for theatre and dance companies, served on the Governing Council of the Association for Theater in Higher Education, and was an adjudicator for the American College Theater Festival. As a communications expert her professional positions included serving as the Chief Communications and Marketing Officer at the University of Massachusetts and at Mount Holyoke College, the oldest women's college in the world.

ADRIENNE PITTS (Costume Designer, Float Like a Butterfly) has worked with WBTT as an actress and stage hand for over 16 years. She started out on stage but soon realized she loved working backstage even more. Adrienne has been the Wardrobe Manager and Lead Stage Hand for WBTT since 2017. She was the Assistant Costume Designer for Raisin, Marvin Gave: Prince of Soul and Black Nativity. Adrienne has costumed Joyful! Joyful!, A Motown Christmas, The Mountaintop, Soul Man, Your Arms Too Short to Box with God, Light Up the Night, Technicolor Musical, and was the Assistant Costume Designer for Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill. Adrienne has also been writing for over 15 years and has been blessed to work with her mentor, Nate Jacobs. Her love of writing stems from an opportunity to write a play for her church youth group. Since the moment the play was performed, Adrienne knew she wanted to be a creative writer and eventually see her plays come to life on stage. She wrote the script for WBTT's 2019 Stage of Discovery summer show, A Journey to Motown and was the Costume Designer for that show as well. She is also interested in writing television series. In 2021 she served as the wardrobe assistant to actor Andia Winslow for Playing Through, a movie about the struggles

and triumphs of Ann Gregory, a woman of color who was a pioneer in the elite and competitive world of golf. *Playing Through* received the Audience Award for a Feature Film at the 2022 Sarasota Film Festival and also had a special screening at WBTT. Arienne is grateful for Nate Jacobs and the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe for allowing her to learn and grow in this amazing company.

ANNETTE BREAZEALE (Properties Designer) is WBTT's Resident Property Master. She has designed props for area stages including Banyan Theatre Company and the FSU Conservatory at the Asolo Theatre. In addition, she has worked as art director and production designer for national and international feature films and music videos. She would like to thank Nate Jacobs for the opportunity to work with such a talented and inspirational group of theatre artists.

PATRICK RUSSINI (Sound Designer) has worked as a professional sound designer, audio technician and sound engineer since 2012. His audio artistry has showcased the signature sound of Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe shows since he joined the staff in 2016 as Sound Engineer; he was recently named Resident Sound Designer for the company. Patrick has traveled twice with WBTT Founder and Artistic Director Nate Jacobs and other troupe performers and production staff to the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, N.C., run sound for WBTT's 70s Soul Party at Ed Smith Stadium in Sarasota, and worked with rock legend Alice Cooper, blues/gospel/rock singer/songwriter guitarist Jonny Lang, and many other artists. Patrick is happy to be part of the WBTT team.

ADAM SPENCER (Set Designer) designed the sets for WBTT's 2021 production of Pipeline and for this season's *EUBIE!* Adam received his BA in Theatre from Chadron State College and MFA in Theatrical Design from Illinois State University. He has served as Technical Director, Resident Designer and Scenic Design Professor at Louisiana Tech University and University of Houston-Downtown. Adam has worked at venues including Asolo Rep's Terrace Stage (scenic design) Playhouse on the Square (scenic design), Theatre Under the Stars (assistant lighting and assistant scenic design) and associated Humphreys

School of Musical Theatre (lighting and scenic design), Main Street Theatre (scenic design), Lexington Children's Theatre (lighting and scenic design), Birmingham Children's Theatre (resident designer and technical director) and Olney Theatre Center (props design).

MICHAEL PASQUINI (Lighting Designer) most recently served as Assistant Lighting Designer on Asolo Rep's world premiere of Knoxville. This winter was Michael's 16th season with the Sarasota Opera, where he is the head electrician and assistant lighting designer. First designing for WBTT in 2007, his most recent lighting designs were for Joyful! Joyful! and EUBIE! Other recent lighting designs include Manatee Players' Chaplin and The Players Centre's Falsettos, as well as shows at Florida Studio Theatre this past summer. He is a graduate of Booker High School's VPA Theatre program as well as Florida State University's School of Theatre. Michael is the Treasurer of IATSE Local 412, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

JAY POPPE (Projection Designer for Float Like a Butterfly) has designed projections for several WBTT productions, including Pipeline (a stage play recorded on video, for which he also designed video transitions), Soul Man and Queen of Soul: A Tribute to Aretha Franklin. He has also provided scenic projections for The Manatee Players productions of Newsies, Mary Poppins, Tarzan and more recently Titanic. Jay also performs, most recently in A Christmas Carol at The Manatee Players, where he played six different characters. "Thank you, Nate, for asking me to work on this amazing show!"

THANK YOU FOR KEEPING US SINGING!

We are grateful for the **668 donors** who contributed to WBTT during the 24 hours of the 2022 Giving Challenge, April 26–27! With donations and matching gifts from **The Patterson Foundation** and **Steve & Terry Clark** and **Sue Coyne & The Lewis Foundation**, **we raised \$168,344**, allowing us to keep singing, dancing, acting, teaching and bringing joy to the community! We couldn't do what we do without the help of generous donors.



Presented by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County

THANK YOU FOR BEING THE ONE FOR WBTT!

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Thanks to the donations we receive during each Giving Challenge and throughout the year, we are able to make a big impact in our community and to the artists and emerging young performers who benefit from our education programs.

Click here to flip through our most recent Impact Report—with info, photos and video of our shows, events and programs!

Thank you to our family of donors for supporting WBTT's 2021-2022 Season Includes Visionary Circle Donors, Production Sponsors, and Event Sponsors

Contributions received between Nov 15, 2021 and April 25, 2022 (Donors who contributed between Jan 1, 2021 and Nov 15, 2021 are listed in our season playbill.)

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Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe was founded in December 1999 as a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to produce professional theatre that promotes and celebrates African American history and experience, engages a broad base of patrons and audiences, supports the development of a dynamic group of aspiring artists and builds self-esteem in youth of color.

Tax-deductible gifts from generous individuals, businesses, and foundations underwrite WBTT's annual operating budget. Your support helps to keep tickets affordable and provides funds to mentor new local talent and to develop high-quality productions. In addition, your gifts allow us to offer theatre experiences to an underserved population.

Thank you!

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WBTT THEATRE

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