



The Harper Ensemble Theatre Company
Liberal Arts Division
and Cultural Arts Committee Present

TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET

by Jiréh Breon Holder

April 21-25, 2021

CAST

Sally-Mae Carter.....Jacquelyn Haas
Bowzie Brandon.....Jeremy Haynes
Tony Carter.....Joseph Haynes
Evelyn Brandon.....Jenece Upton

Too Heavy for Your Pocket is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

The New York City premiere was produced by Roundabout Theatre Company as part of Roundabout Underground at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre on October 5, 2017.

"Evelyn's Song" Music by Ian Scot, Lyrics by Jiréh Breon Holder

SETTING

Nashville, Tennessee. Summer of 1961

CREATIVE TEAM

Director.....Kevin Long*
Scenic/Properties Designer.....Lauren Nichols
Lighting Designer.....John Sanchez
Costume Designer.....Jane DeBondt
Sound Designer.....Jenna Moran
Dramaturg.....Mary T. Christel
Stage Manager.....Kate Stewart

PLEASE NOTE

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The Director is a member of the
**STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY**, a national theatrical labor union.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Theatre Technical Director Chelsea Lynn
Video Directors Brian Shelton, Jeremy Schultz
Run Crew Kayla Edgerton, Olivia Geraci
Light Board Operator Wil Geary
Sound Board Operator Alyssa Maslanka
Camera Crew Erik Bonilla Sanchez, Mary Renner, Jeremy Schultz, Brian Shelton
Set Construction Crew Tom French, Lisa Giebler, Chelsea Lynn
Charles Martin, Zak Zubka

FROM THE DIRECTOR

"Where, after all, do universal rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

—Eleanor Roosevelt, "The Great Question,"

Remarks delivered at the United Nations in New York on March 27, 1958

This year marks the 60th Anniversary of the Freedom Rides. We honor the Freedom Riders who went to the most dangerous places for them in our country and said, "It is my legal right to ride this bus."

Not only is the character, Bowzie, participating in a Freedom Ride, but each character in the play is on a freedom ride of their own:

Bowzie: "It'll all be worth it. Because my son will ride a bus and sit wherever he wants to. Not worrying if some men in sheets are gonna come put a bullet in his body. My daughter will be able to visit her grandparents with her girlfriends and not worry about if the police are going to harass her! And it'll be because their father—me—sacrificed everything he had for just one more liberty."

Evelyn: "I'm gonna be a mother. Hell, that's gonna be my Freedom Ride: Raising a family. Time for me to do what I want. I gonna sit my ass down and put some work into my dreams. The only audience I'ma be singing for will be my six Baby Bowzies as their daddy's bringing home the bacon for once."

Sally: "I wish there was a Freedom Ride for those boxes. They hoppin on air-conditioned buses complaining about where they get to sit when my daughter might have to watch her mama squat like a dog over a box 'cause ain't no Colored restrooms on Church Street. Like a dog. Without an ounce of dignity. You go out in the world all day. Everybody treat you like a dog out there. And you come to your own house and get treat like a dog there. Then you invite somebody in your home – your sister – and get treat like a dog. Everywhere. I want a *god damn* Freedom Ride for me, Evelyn."

Tony: "I've done my dirt, but—dammit—you gon' let me be a new man. Everybody gon' let me be a new man!"

The play poses the central question: where does our personal responsibility lie? As playwright Jiréh Breon Holder stated, "I'm really excited by the thought of what happens when something huge is occurring politically and we have to make the decision to participate in the macro or still continue our lives day to day on the micro level and are

those two things in conversation.” When injustice thrives all around us, do we invest stronger in our family and friends, or do we fight for change on a national scale? Regardless of which choice we make, it is about finding dignity and justice, and keeping that for the next generation.

The title of the play reveals that change may cost more than what we bargained for; however, we must keep hope alive. The stone that is “too heavy in our pocket” symbolizes the courage that we carry for our cause. Each of us chooses the burdens we bear. Having made those choices, we need to be strong enough to carry it. This play is for anyone who has ever thought about standing up for a cause. As the late John Lewis (a Freedom Rider himself) said, “Getting into good trouble.” “Finding a way to get in the way.”

Breath is a recurring motif throughout the play. These moments of breath signify promise, freedom, prayer, and reflection. It is impossible to ignore the correlation between our characters’ struggle for breath and the words, “I can’t breathe” spoken by Eric Garner and George Floyd, and subsequently adopted by those leading our current struggle for civil rights through the Black Lives Matter movement.

As Bowzie dreams and fights for a world in which his unborn children can live free of abuse and harassment because of his immense sacrifice, current events in our country are a painful reminder of how far we still have to go. I hope that though experiencing the play, we, together as a community, will exhale as one – moved, enlightened, changed, and grateful.

—Kevin Long, Director

INVICTUS

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

—William Ernest Henley, 1875

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Jiréh Breon Holder (Playwright) is currently the Playwriting Fellow of the Department of Theater and Creative Writing at Emory University. He is an Atlanta area playwright, director, and dramaturg. His sharp yet funny and often political plays frequently include wild visual metaphors and address the magic of everyday life in the South. In 2016, he received his MFA in Playwriting from the Yale School of Drama where he studied with Sarah Ruhl. He is a co-founder of Pyramid Theatre Company in Des Moines, Iowa. From 2012-13, he served as the Kenny Leon Fellow at the Tony Award-winning Alliance Theatre. He graduated cum laude from Morehouse College (B.A. Theatre) where he served as the artistic director of Spelman College Playwrights' Workshop and directed several productions. His play *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* was the recipient of the Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award, winner of the Alliance/Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition National Graduate Playwriting Competition and had an extended off-Broadway run at the Roundabout Theatre. He was a recipient of the 2016 Edgerton Foundation New Play Awards and honored as the Fellowship of Southern Writers' 2017 Bryan Foundation Award for Drama. His other plays have received productions at the Alliance Theatre, the Yale School of Drama and Yale Cabaret. He has also received readings at the Manhattan Theatre Club, the Roundabout Theatre, the Kennedy Center, and the Old Globe Theatre. As a theater artist with a strong political impulse, many of his plays and projects address the prison industrial complex, human rights, and agricultural/environmental sustainability. He is a firm believer that art changes lives and each project he is involved with seeks to touch people one audience at a time. Visit his website at www.jirehbreonholder.com

Kevin Long (Director), Nominated for The 2015 Tony Award® for Excellence in Theatre Education and Co-Author (along with our dramaturg Mary T. Christel) of the book *Bring on the Bard: Active Drama Approaches for Shakespeare's Diverse Student Readers*, is an Associate Professor of Theatre at Harper College, the recipient of the 2018 Motorola Solutions Foundation Endowed Award for Teaching Excellence, recipient of the 2012 Illinois Theatre Association Award for Excellence in College Theatre Teaching, and an Associate Member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. Kevin is a nationally recognized expert in teaching Folio Technique and frequently presents his workshop "Shakespeare Whispers Into Your Ear," which explores the language and theatre of Shakespeare through the use of the 1623 First Folio. Kevin teaches Folio Technique for Chicago Shakespeare Theater's Education Department, Actors Training Center, and at various institutions and theatres across the country. See also www.kevinlongdirector.com.

Lauren Nichols (Set/Props Designer), Lauren is a freelance designer and painter native to Chicago. Previous Harper designs include *Shakespeare In Love*, *American Idiot*, and *Follies*. Other design credits include productions with local companies: Firebrand, Northbrook Children's Theatre, DePaul University, Rivendell, Lifeline, Jackalope and Boho Theatre. Assistant (draftsman/model-maker) credits include projects with Goodman, Steppenwolf, Court, Julliard, New York Theatre Workshop, The Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Writer's Theatre, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, Milwaukee Rep, and Asolo Rep in Florida. During the summers she is an instructor as part of The National High School Institute's Theatre program - mentoring young theatre artists. Lauren holds an MFA from Northwestern. You may visit images of her work at laurenangeldesigns.com

John Sanchez (Lighting Designer) has worked professionally in theatre, dance, and television both locally and nationally. He is happy to be reunited director Kevin Long as part of his design team. His past shows at Harper include *Shakespeare in Love*, *Gypsy*, *Over the Tavern*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Heiress*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Italian American*

Reconciliation, Parade, Picasso at the Lapin Agile, American Buffalo, Rent, Enchanted April, Evita, Bury the Dead, The Diary Of Anne Frank, and A Little Night Music. Other productions include: *The Shadow, Sirens Of Titan, A Room With A View, and The Mark Of Zorro* for Lifeline Theatre. John has also designed for The Goodman and Steppenwolf theatres, and toured with Hubbard Dance Chicago and other companies. He was the master electrician/ lighting designer for *The Oprah Winfrey Show* at Harpo Studios, where he continues to work for OWN.

Jane DeBondt (Costume Designer) graduated from Millikin University in 1984 & was an equity actor for ten years. She has been a professional designer/stitcher since 1994. For the past four years Jane and her design partner Jesus Perez have been the lead costume designers for RAIL EVENTS Polar Express. Other recent productions include *Emma* (St. Ignatius High School), *Shakespeare in Love* (Harper College), and *Sister Act, Sweeney Todd, and Disaster!* (Rocky Mountain Repertory theater.) Jane is currently the resident costume designer at Harper College.

Jenna Moran (Sound Designer) is designing her tenth show with Kevin at Harper. Select Harper credits include *Shakespeare in Love, Follies, Fiddler on the Roof, Driving Miss Daisy* and *Parade*. Jenna has worked at several of Chicago's top theaters including Lookingglass Theatre Company, Court Theatre, The House Theatre of Chicago and Porchlight Music Theatre, where she is a proud Artistic Associate. She has also worked as a sound engineer for The Walt Disney Company. Jenna is a graduate of The Theatre School at DePaul University with her BFA in Sound Design and studied at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London, England. She was selected to represent the United States in the 2015 Prague Quadrennial where her work was on display in the Czech Republic throughout the duration that summer. For more information please visit jennamoransounddesign.com

Mary T. Christel (Dramaturg) currently is the curriculum developer for TimeLine Theatre's Living History program and developed engagement activities for TimeLine's classroom residencies for their production of *Too Heavy for Your Pocket*. She has served as dramaturg for Harper's productions of *Shakespeare in Love* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Mary co-authored *Bring on the Bard: Active Drama Approaches for Shakespeare's Diverse Student Readers* with Kevin Long. She is proud graduate of Northwestern University's theater department. Go 'Cats!

Kate Stewart (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be back working with The Harper College Ensemble Theatre Company! She served as stage manager for *As You Like It, Fiddler on the Roof, and Gypsy* at Harper College, just to name a few shows. Kate graduated from Columbia College of Chicago in 2014 and would like to thank her family and friends for their continued support.

ABOUT THE CAST



Jacquelyn Haas (Sally-Mae Carter) is honored to be making her first appearance with the Harper College Ensemble Theatre Company. Prior to receiving a B.F.A. in Performance from UIC Theatre Conservatory, she also performed with the Loop Players of Harold Washington City College in several productions including *A View From the Bridge* as Beatrice Carbone, *Electra* as Clytemnestra, and *No Place to Be Somebody* as Dee Jackson. Other credits include Queen Margaret in *Richard III* (Eclectic Theatre) and an audio podcast of *Breakz* as Imani (Eclectic Theatre). She would like to thank her loved ones for their ongoing support of her artistic endeavors.



Jeremy Haynes (Bowzie Brandon) is excited to be making his debut in *Too Heavy For Your Pocket*. A creative writing/spoken word artist, he is looking forward to taking his acting aspirations to a new frontier with the Harper College Ensemble Company. He would like to thank his family and friends for their support during this time.



Joseph Haynes (Tony Carter) is delighted to return to the Harper College Ensemble Company. A past theatre student of Kevin Long, Joseph has been in a few performances such as *Twelfth Night* and *The Seagull* and is looking forward to being part of this timely and powerful story. He currently resides in Los Angeles where he is pursuing a career in acting, music, and political activism. He is thankful to his family and friends for supporting him in this project.



Jenece Upton (Evelyn Brandon) previously appeared in Harper's production of *American Idiot*. Other theater credits include Fastrada in *Pippin* (Devonshire Playhouse) and Cora Groves in *The Rimers of Eldritch* (Devonshire Playhouse). Jenece has developed a passion for the stage since relocating to Chicago three years ago and is thrilled to be returning to Harper. She would like to thank her family and friends for their endless love and support, and the cast and crew for this brave, thoughtful production.

WITH SINCERE GRATITUDE

This company of this production owes our heartfelt thanks to two very special people: **Dr. Bernard LaFayette, Jr.**, and **Dorothy Walker** who worked with our cast and participated in our community event, "Subject Matters: *Too Heavy For Your Pocket* on March 28. Together, they brought our company and our community face to face with living history in preparation for our production. Their work created a transformational process for all. Thank you!



Dr. Bernard LaFayette, Jr. (Freedom Rider) It is an understatement to describe Bernard LaFayette, Jr. as passionate about the philosophy and methodology of Kingian Nonviolence! He is a Civil Rights Movement activist, minister, educator, lecturer and an authority on the strategy of Nonviolent Social Change. He has devoted his life, thus far, to his final marching orders from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, to "institutionalize and internationalize Nonviolence." Dr. LaFayette was a co-founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960. He was a leader of the Nashville Movement Lunch Counter Sit-Ins, 1960, and the Freedom Rides, 1961. [Click here](#) for more information.



Dorothy Walker serves as Site Director of the Freedom Rides Museum, a historic site of the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC), the State Historic Preservation Office. She also serves as Staff Manager for the Black Heritage Council, a statewide, all-volunteer advocacy division of the AHC that advocates for the preservation of African American historic places in Alabama. With a master's degree in Historic Preservation, she has more than twenty years of experience working in historic preservation and cultural resource advocacy, planning, outreach, research, budget and project management.



The **Freedom Rides Museum** is located at 210 South Court Street in Montgomery, Alabama, in the building which was until 1995 the Montgomery Greyhound Bus Station. It was the site of a violent attack on participants in the 1961 Freedom Ride during the Civil Rights Movement. The May 1961 assaults, carried out by a mob of white protesters who confronted the civil rights

activists, "shocked the nation and led the Kennedy Administration to side with civil rights protesters for the first time."

The property is no longer used as a bus station, but the building was saved from demolition and its façade has been restored. The site was leased by the Alabama Historical Commission and a historical marker was located in front of the building. In 2011, a museum was opened inside the building, and it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The museum won a national preservation award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2012. [Click here](#) for more information. (Wikipedia)

THANK YOU

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