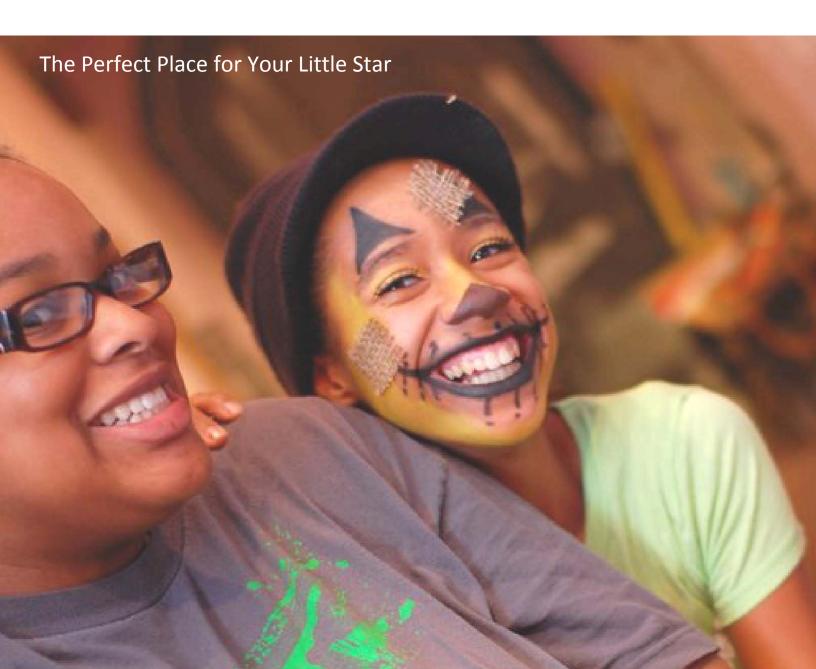
**Towne Street Theatre Presents** 

# tst kids

TST Kids Musical Theatre Camp
Summer 2009



# Mission

Founded in the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles riots with the belief that we could affect social change through our art, the Towne Street Theatre's mission is creating, developing and producing original work that is reflective of the African-American experience and perspective for theater and film.

In order to further illuminate the role African-American artists have played in the history of the American theater, we also produce a series entitled "Black Classics," dedicated to the work of playwrights seldom produced, such as Loften Mitchell, Alice Childress and Steve Carter.

Our mission of affecting social change is extended with our commitment to developing the next generation of theater artists through our children's programming.



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# TST Musical Theatre Camp Overview



# **Musical Theatre Camp**

The students of Towne Street's Musical Theatre Camp are an ensemble. From the beginning, the camp emphasizes teamwork. The children are taught how to work as a cohesive group and what it means to be a theatrical ensemble. They begin their musical theatre study by learning basic theatre vocabulary, generic to all productions. They learn theatrical stage directions, in addition to specific musical theatre terms. They receive instruction in all of the elements that are found in a musical theatre performance. (See box)

Throughout the rehearsal process, children are encouraged to use their imaginations. They create characters specific to their characters in the musical by exploring physical movement as well as vocal

# **Holistic Training**

# **DANCE**

emphasis on physiological and physical fitness, basic movement exercises, in addition to actual choreography.

# **VOICE**

emphasis on proper technique for singing, vocal warm-up, ear training, projection, learning the various vocal parts to songs

# **ACTING**

emphasis in reading the script for understanding, researching the time period of the musical and learning about historical events, fashion, dialogue, and mores of the era.

experimentation. Improvisational exercises and theatre games are employed to start the children on this exploration. In addition, the children are shown or are given homework to watch, relevant movies or television shows. Research materials are also made available to them in the classroom and they also have homework assignments that they research on their Also in the rehearsal computers at home. process, the children work on their characters, as they breakdown the script to ascertain what is happening in each scene. Musicals are unique in that they must do this process for each song also. They learn that in a musical, in addition to the dialogue, the songs in a musical further the story and have to be broken down also, as if they are a monologue or dialogue. This same process, along with character work and

acting techniques, are then applied to the dance numbers, in addition to the children learning the actual choreography.

Each year a musical production is chosen with the intent of teaching the children, not only the history of the musical itself, but teaching them about the society and the time period that is comes from. For example, The Wiz was presented in the 2008 Camp, so the focus of the camp was not only on the 1970's, when the musical was written and first presented, but also on the history of African American productions. Many of these musicals have been overlooked in theatre anthologies, so it's imperative that the children have a working knowledge of these shows and the performers, and the contributions they've made to the theatrical landscape.

Students gain knowledge of classic performers and productions by watching films like Stormy Weather, with performances by Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, The Nicholas Brothers and Lena Horne. They can see first-hand the discipline and the technique required to be "triple threat" performers, and to actually act, sing and dance at the same time. This teaching method was most helpful when we were studying and performing a musical that highlighted the great performers of the 1930's and 1940's.

When we were doing a specific musical (i.e. - The Wiz , Beauty and the Beast), it was helpful to use the films of those musicals for comparative purposes. The children were able to clearly see how the films were dramatically different than the musical productions, and how the musical's tools - dance and song, added to the clarity and the story structure of the production.

First, and foremost, our camp promotes good citizenship. Since the children are treated as an ensemble, they are extremely supportive of one another. They assist one another - if someone cannot do a dance step, or needs help with their lines, other students willingly step in to help them. They all feel successful together when they've performed in the final presentation.

There have been countless studies as to how the arts improve math scores and reading scores, but in addition to these scores, our camp gives the children a thirst for knowledge. Research is always necessary for the children to know whom and what they are portraying, and the children don't hesitate in doing the homework. Our program is a summer program, so many of the children continue the historical study, as well as, studying one or two of the artforms we've presented to them, during the regular school year.

For the past ten years, the children have written about their camp experiences at the end of the program. We have seen some of the children continue their studies in the arts throughout their high school years and onto the college level. Other students have decided to pursue related fields such as music or writing, and still others have decided to focus on sports or education. The common thread amongst all of these children are the thoughts they wrote about in their camp experience letter – they said they actually learned things that they previously had no knowledge of and they did things (sing, dance, etc.) that they didn't think they could do. There is phenomenal growth in each child, from day one to the last day of the camp, but what is most obvious, is the huge improvement in self-confidence and pride that each child receives from just participating in the camp.

# The Best of **TST Kids**

**A Musical Revue** 



The **Best of TST Kids** will be a musical revue where we re-visit shows and songs from the past ten years of our Towne Street Musical Theatre Camp. We will also incorporate a couple of new surprises that equal our best performances of the past.

The revue will be performed as a concert production, with the emphasis on the individual character, scene and song. Without the restrictions of a full musical (no set, minimal costumes), we can experience a vast number of different musicals. This format will enable students, who did not perform in a particular role, a chance to do so. Since we will not be doing a full production of each show, it will also enable more than one student to perform in the same role. The instructors will be able to give each student individual attention and most importantly - it allows every child a chance to shine!

In this (7) weekend intensive, the children will receive professional instruction. Our classes will include:

**Acting**: musical theatre performance / dialogue / character study

**Dance:** performance dance as well as dances pertaining to individual characters **Voice:** proper singing technique / projection / solo and group singing

From 1999 to 2008
we had 10 years of
memorable
performances...2009
seems like the perfect
time to showcase
"The Best of TST
Kids"



The children in our musical theatre program range from 7 - 17. They will be divided into small, age appropriate classes. They will receive the bulk of their instruction in their classes, but, we will bring all of the students together to learn the opening number and the grand finale.

# TST Musical Theatre Camp Productions

The Wiz
Disney's Beauty & the Beast
Bubbling Brown Sugar
New York Stories
Once on this Island

Our program will also give the children a chance to write.

The dialogue that connects our musical theatre numbers will be written by the students. They will write about the show and about their characters, based on the information they've learned in their classes.

The **Best of TST Kids 2009** may turn out to be our best kid's production ever!



Melonie Clark April 24, 2000

Romann Anderson is nine years old comes from a large a loving family. This 4th grader at New Roads Elementary is an accomplished pianist, actor and singer. Roman wants to achieve a double major in drama and music and become a successful entertainer ... no doubt!



Michael Ball is a 9th grade student at Loyola HS. His hobbies include acting, sports and hiking. When he grows up, he would like to work for the National Guard.



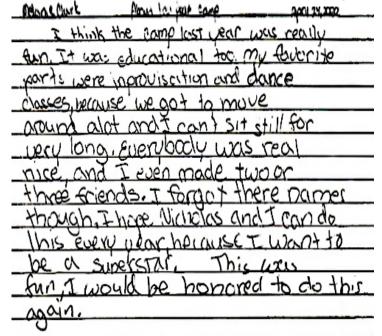
Nyamekye Bankole is a 10th grade student at Marcus Garvey School. Her hobbies include cheerleading, ballet, acting and singing. She wants to be a firefighter, or a veterinarian because she likes all kinds of animals. Even bugs!



Hobbies include piano and dancing. Kierah wants to be a teacher or a dance instructor. "I love being in this



Kierah Boone is a 6h grade student at St. Eugene. camp and I would like to continue this."





ONCE ON THIS ISLAND

The Wiz



Dear Towne Street,

Thank you for letting me perform in the play,
The Wiz. Ms. Veronica, thank you for teaching me
how to face the audience while pointing up to the
sky pretending that there was a big rainstorm coming.
Mr. Brian, thank you for teaching me how to dance for the
Wing Monkey scene. Ms Nancy, thank you for having me in
your performance.

What I liked about the play was that I learned how to act out Uncle Henry, by facing the audience pointing up at the sky pretending that there was a real thunderstorm. What else I liked about the play was being the Kalidah, scaring Dorothy and the Tinman away. I liked pretending to be the Royal Gatekeeper with Romann when we gave out the green glasses to the Lion, Tinman, Scarecrow and Dorothy. The Brand New Day dance with Lord High Underling was my favorite dance scene. The last thing that I liked about the play was taking Glinda The Good Witch off the stage with the heavy bed that she was singing on, with my Latin costume on, with Robert, Iby, Taylor, and Romann. I felt proud when my name was called for being chosen most improved amongst my peers. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to play so many characters.

Sincerely, Brad Bracy



Brad Bracy Westchester HS Hobbies: golf, basketball, track Goal: Cinematic Photographer

Nancy Davis-Bellamy & Staff...

Words cannot express my gratefulness to Towne Street Theater and their summer camp staff 2008. My son Brad has a condition that affects his speech and socialization skills. I was searching for a program that would help strengthen these skills. Last year was his first year at Towne Street Theater camp. He loved the experience and looks at the DVD often to recapture the moments of exhilaration of being on stage and singing the songs. I was on a mission to expose him to as many experiences that I could to develop these areas. Last year when I would drop him off I could feel the passion the staff had for theater and cultivating the raw talent of these young people.

This year during the school year he took choir and drama at his high school. When I asked him about attending Towne Street during the summer he answered a resounding yes, that he wanted to attend.

This year was the coup de grace, when we sat through the performance of "The Wiz," and I saw my son perform five characters throughout the play. I was astounded by his growth.

Thank you Nancy Renee for 'giving Brad a chance' for allowing him to participate in a big way and being included in this phenomenal experience. I thank you, thank you, thank you for giving my son a memorable experience. Thank you for creating the space for my husband and I to feel proud and encouraged at possibilities. Thank you for all the good work you do for all young people. It is programs and people like yourselves that restore faith in commitment, quality, fortitude, and vision. You are a great role model for dream keepers.

Eternally grateful, Florence Bracy, Mom

P.S. I was turned away by another theater camp a few years ago, and was told that they could not teach my son, and that they were sorry. Thank you again for proving them wrong and making our dreams come true.





Dear Towne Street Theater,

I just want to thank everyone that was involved in Towne Street this year because everyone was patient with me and allowed me to have sooo much fun in the process. It is so much fun being on stage...But doing it through the Towne Street process makes it all the much better.

I have participated in Towne Street for 4 years now...And Towne Street has given me the strength to carry other shows I have performed in. But when I perform in Towne Street it's like being home and everyone feels like family. Everyone just has a ball. And it's because the teachers really care about all of the children and no one is left out. Everyone has their time to shine.

And that is something you don't always find in children's camps.

But Towne Street is truly the best of the best.

Tony JJ &. Lorrich

My name is Elena Muslar and I am a student at Towne Street Theatre. Towne Street Theatre. Towne Street Theatre, otherwise known as TST is great. We combine singing, dancing, and acting. This makes musical theatre. It is also great because of the variety of things we do to prepare for our final performance. Performance day gives you a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment.

The instructors are nice and always teach us new and exciting things. They also teach us to be responsible, show respect toward others and to be prepared when memorizing lines and new dance steps. Ve are also taught how to project our voices when singing or talking. At IST you can express yourself in many ways. We are also fed varieties of good food. I am now 12 - years-old and the this is my third year at TST; I know it will be as fun as ever.

Elena Muslar



Dear Nancy,

I realized he can only handle one big event at a time and right now The Wiz is everything to him. He was beaming all the way home. I am so grateful to TST and Mr. Tony because he truly got a sense of belonging to something important and as well as an outside opinion of his lack of self discipline. I told Nancy Cheryl Davis that the TST summer camp process would be a wonderful show for PBS (or A&E or Disney). Not only because of the level of commitment you get from everyone but, also the good you are doing for the children in the village.

You are making history here and it needs to be documented. It is so obvious they're talented kids putting on a play, but it so clear they have been guided wonderfully and set up in a positive environment by the directions given to them to succeed tonight and in their lives.

Gavin Glynn



DISNEP'S
BEAUTH AND THE BEAST

Jourdan Simone Embry will soon be entering the 9th grade at St. Mary's Academy. Performing is her life. She's trained in dance with Lee Jones at DADA, and studied theater at Young Actor's Studio. Future aspirations include fashion design, producing and hosting her own talk show.



Maya Emelle is a young soul teenager with a heart for acting. She is an 8-year veteran of TST's Musical Theater Camp. She'll attend Hamilton HS for the Performing Arts, to hone her skills. "I'm an enthusiastic actress waiting for movie jobs, big or small."



Alan S. Goree is an 8th grader at John Burroughs Middle School. "TST is an amazing camp. It gives kids who haven't ever been exposed to the theatre a chance to shine. They don't judge you by what they see, but by what you can do and how you can become better. I'm so glad I got to work with them."



Imani-Gabriell Hollie is a 7th grade student at Culture and Language Academy of Success. Hobbies include being creative, singing and shopping. She might become a doctor, party planner, teacher, or the principal! Imani has sung lead parts in eight school musicals.



Misha Holtz is an 11 year-old actress. Her first role was *Tinker Bell* in *Peter Pan*. Misha's been cast in *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Grease*. She studies her craft at Gary Spatz's *The Playground*. Misha has a passion for acting and hopes to keep doing what she does best.





# **Arts Funding**

# The Realities of Funding

### The Future of Theatre

Our children are the future of theatre and your support and donations help to ensure that there is a future for them to inherit. However, it takes a village to bring a production to fruition. Consider all the players in each production: actors, writers, producers, directors, set designers, costumers, stage managers, make-up artists, technicians- all contributing to tell a story that might not otherwise be heard. However, California funding for the arts has proven scant in recent years. Indeed, your support is more vital than ever. Consider the excerpts below.

# The Hard-Hitting Realities of Funding

The article excerpts captured below paint a sobering picture of the veritable money drought as it relates to arts funding in California.

### California is Last in Arts Funding — As Usual

Mike Boehm // February 12, 2009

"When it comes to funding for state arts agencies, California remains not-so-proudly ensconced in its customary slot — dead last — according to a report from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

The service and advocacy group calculates that the California Arts Council's \$5.6-million budget comes to 15 cents per capita — 11% of the national average of \$1.35. We've been in the cellar since 2003, when the budget crisis before the current budget crisis led to the agency's gutting. The arts council's starvation diet has been a bipartisan affair: Former Democrat Gov. Gray Davis, who had built the arts budget to more than \$30 million in 2001, slashed it to barely more than \$3 million two years later. Under Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the tax-generated share of arts funding has been about \$1 million.

Taken together, the 50 states' 2008-09 budgets include a pinch less for the arts than they did a year ago, down from \$414.3 million to \$412.5 million. But if you subtract federal largess distributed through the National Endowment for the Arts and count only funds that states ante up from their own revenue sources, arts funding slipped 3.3%

— the first drop after four straight years of overall gains."

"The California arts budget includes \$1.1 million from the state's general fund — the minimum needed to qualify for matching money from the NEA. The bulk of our state arts council's money — \$3.2 million — is, in essence, a form of charity: voluntary extra payments that arts-loving motorists make so their vehicles can sport special arts-themed vanity license plates.

At least the arts council's new chairwoman, Malissa Feruzzi Shriver, should have a decent chance of getting the governor's ear: A painter and art dealer, she's the wife of Santa Monica City Council member Bobby Shriver — and thus the sister-in-law of the governor and his wife, Maria Shriver. She became chair by a vote of the arts council members last month, succeeding Michael Alexander, the executive director of Grand Performances, the free performance series in downtown L.A. Another Angeleno, Eunice David, wife of lyricist Hal David, is the new vice chairwoman."

# Corporate, Private Giving to the Arts Expect to Decrease, Studies Say

Published: March 5, 2009

"With arts organizations already reeling from the global economic malaise, a new set of surveys provides more bad news. According to a report in Bloomberg, corporate and private funding of the arts are likely to be hard hit. A poll of 158 companies compiled by the research group the Conference Board last month revealed that 45 percent had already reduced their 2009 philanthropy budget and 16 percent more were considering it. According to the survey, giving to arts and culture will see the biggest drop, with 41 percent of organizations reporting a decrease. Environmental causes are second, at 28 percent.

# **National Endowment for the Arts**

For FY2009, the budget is \$155 million or 0.005201342281879195% of the total budget. If that were distributed evenly across the country it amounts to roughly 39 cents per child for each under 15 years of age (based on US Census estimates of children up to 14 years of age Source CIA).

### California Art Council

California Budget is \$5,610,000 or \$2.56 per child under 18.

# May 18 2009 Baltimore Sun News:

Arts appear to play role in brain development

Classes can change brain and the way people think

For years, school systems across the nation dropped the arts to concentrate on getting struggling students to pass tests in reading and math. Yet now, a growing body of brain research suggests that teaching the arts may be good for students across all disciplines.

Donations from rich individuals — defined as having household incomes of more than \$200,000 or a net worth of at least \$1 million — will also drop, to an average of \$4,792, down 71 percent from the period between 2005 to 2007, according to a separate poll of 700 individuals compiled by the Center on Philanthropy.

"This is a tougher time for arts organizations," said Patrick Rooney, interim director of the center. "When you're providing human services or feeding the hungry, people understand that maybe this is a time to dig a little deeper. Helping an arts organization? That's a tougher sell."

According to another COP study, during the past four decades charitable giving decreased by an average of 1 percent in recessionary years and increased an average of 4.3 percent in non-recessionary years. "There's a chance that 2008 or 2009 will be worse than that," Rooney said. "We don't want to say the sky is falling, but we think there will be some pain and suffering."

So where does that leave us?



# Our Children: The Future of Theatre

Summer Schools closed. Arts programming cut from schools. Budgets slashed from cities and towns. The facts are dismal, but at TST, we refuse to give up and give in. Our programming is needed now, more than ever. Please give another child a chance to experience the magic of theater and the joy and learning skills it brings.

# Your help is needed.

# **Our History**



Nancy Cheryll Davis in "PassingSolo" Photo Credit: Nathaniel Bellamy

# **Providing Theatre as a Service to the Community Since 1993**

The Towne Street Theatre is the premiere African-American theater company in Los Angeles. Originally located in the Downtown Fashion District, our mission is producing and developing original works by that are reflective of the African-American experience. We also produce a "Black Classics" series, a salute to African-American playwrights who have contributed to the

American theater. Events are now held at various locations around the great City of Angels and The Towne Street Theater continues to be an oasis for creativity and imagination and a theater that helps to bridge the cultural divide by bringing artists and audiences of all colors together.

For the past sixteen years, the theatre has featured a diverse selection of intriguing productions from Walking With A Panther, Sheri Bailey's gritty drama

"We took part in the County's first Arts Open House Day at One Colorado in Pasadena."

about the stormy reunion of a Black Panther and his family, after a 23-year prison sentence, to Bernardo Solano's *Science & the Primitives*, a story of "altered states" in the jungles of South America and *Before 1950*, a collection of plays and poetry by African-American women writers, such as Margaret Walker and Alice Childress.

Our 1995-96 season featured world premieres by African-American Los Angeles based women playwrights, Barbara White Morgan & Sheri Bailey. *The Dance Begins When The Waltz Goes Backwards* opened in October 1995 and returned by popular demand in March, 1996. The story of a white, aging, savvy television writer and his re-encounter with a black intellectual homeless philosopher; this urban comedy was embraced by the public and received critical acclaim. It continued with Sheri Bailey's generational epic *Summers in Suffolk*.

Following an African-American family from the 1870's to the present, it revolved around the "Juneteenth" holiday. Comprised of 19 actors, 5 directors and an accompanying slide show, it was a multi-media history event and was sponsored in part by a grant from the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department. Audiences were quite taken with this production and its positive images of African-American history. It received three NAACP theatre nominations.

Our fourth season opened in February 1997 with *Passing*, our first commissioned piece. This adaptation of Nella Larsen's novella was sponsored in part by a grant from the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. Written by Nancy Cheryll Davis and Sheri Bailey, *Passing* is set against the roaring 1920's and the Harlem Renaissance. Dealing with the issue of a Black person passing for White, it centers on two beautiful women making explosive choices about race, sexuality, and class. Overwhelming response extended a six week run to ten! *Passing* also won Best Actress and Best Costume awards from the NAACP and was nominated for Best Play, Best Playwright, and Best Supporting Actor. The season concluded with a staged reading of *The House of Bernarda Alba* by Federico Lorca, and a holiday show with the Magic Mirror Players, a children's improv troupe.

The fifth season proved to be another year exciting year in theatre. *Passing* returned in February to sell out audiences, after winning awards in from the NAACP and DRAMA LOGUE. The TST conservatory began, with classes in acting, screenwriting, playwriting, classical theater and more. The first in our Black Classics series began with *Five on The Blackhand Side* by Charlie Russell.

As the 20th Century came to a close, *Passing* returned for the third year in a row and a new piece, *Millennium in Black* by Harriet Dickey, premiered. Set in the year 2099, it explored the danger of not knowing your past and how important it is to carry our history into the future. This was also the first year of the TST Musical Theater Camp for Children, held at St. Brigid Church in South Los Angeles.

In our seventh year we took part in the NoHo Arts Festival, produced the 2nd year of the TST Musical Theater Camp for Children, the TST Conservatory, and *Conversations With...*honoring the careers of legendary African-American performers with Barbara McNair.

Our eighth year began with the production of *Joleta* by Harriet Dickey, which won the NAACP award for Best Writer and was also nominated for Best Ensemble.

In 2002, our ninth year, we received three ADA Valley Theatre League nominations for *Start of Conversation* by Stan Sellers. Our Black Classic Series production of *The Phonograph* by Loften Mitchell, received NAACP nominations for Best Actress and Best Costumes. The year ended with a sold out revival of Barbara White Morgan's *An American Tract*.

Our 2003, 10-year anniversary year was a special season of TST favorites and two new programs, *TST on the Edge*, and the *TST Mind Maze* – a game show to help students study for the California Achievement Test.

In 2004 we presented the long awaited and requested return of *Passing*, which scored NAACP nominations for Best Lighting, Choreography and won again for Best Costumes. The first TST Treasures Awards honored the careers of Virginia Capers and Sy Richardson. We were also honored by the League of Allied Arts.

2005 included *Psychology of Chromosome X* by Shontina Vernon, and it received NAACP nominations for Best Actress and Best Supporting Actor. *Bad Bobbi Bolingo and The Dinosaur Cave,* by Tony Robinson, a children's show, premiered at the Edge of The World Theater Festival in LA.

2006 we focused on expanding our children's programming with a new screen writing program entitled *Girls Can!* and the 8th year of the Kids Camp.

2007 was a year of "firsts". It began with the first 10 Minute Play Festival, and another first, TST in Repertory with *Very Strange Fruit* by Mark V. Jones, and *The Meeting* by Jeff Stetson. For the first time, the Kids Camp production was held at a professional theater venue and the production of *Beauty & The Beast* sold out. We also took part in Suzy Lori Park's national production of *365 Days – 365 Plays*.

2008's dynamic season included the 10 Minute Play Festival 2, the premiere of PassingSOLO by Nancy Cheryll Davis - from our Black Classic Series, Nevis Mountain Dew by Steve Carter - and the first reading of Langston & Nicolas, our co-commission with The Robey Theatre Company, written by Bernardo Solano. This amazing year concluded with the Kids Camp 10th year anniversary incredible production of The Wiz.

2009 Programming includes TST on Tour, (Purlie Victorious; 1000 Variations; Langston & Nicolás; No Chance in Hell) the 3rd Annual TST 10 Minute Play Festival and Sunday Salons – Harlem to Havana, special events celebrating the poetry of Langston Hughes and Cuban poet, Nicolás Guillen, all year round. 2010 will bring the WORLD PREMIERE of Langston & Nicolas at the Stella Adler Theatre in Hollywood.

# **TST Board & Staff**

# **TST Board**

# **Executive Board of Directors**

Veronica Thompson, President Nancy Reneé, Vice President Nancy Cheryll Davis, Secretary Susan R. McClelland, Treasurer Harriet Dickey Sy Richardson Teressa Taylor

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# **Legal Consultant**

Edward H. Smith, Esq.

# TST Staff

Nancy Cheryll Davis: Artistic Producing Director / Co-Founder

Nancy Reneé: Co-Producing Director / Co-Founder

Nathaniel Bellamy: Producing Technical Director / Co-Founder Veronica Thompson: Company Manager / Associate Producer

Tony Robinson: Associate Technical Director / Producer

Leslie Miller: Associate Producer

Forrest Gardner: Sound Designer / Web Designer

Vanja Scholls: Graphic Designer Jonathan Winn: TST Logo Designer

Melissa Anderson: Administrative Assistant

Veronica McClelland: Intern Jerome Parker: Intern

# **Contact Information**

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The Towne Street Theatre is a 501 c 3 non-profit corporation. Donations are tax deductible to the extent the law allows. To request a project budget please call (213) 624-4796 or email us at info@townestreet.org