

JUNE 2021 | ISSUE NO. 3

# the check-in.

## CLASS NOTES

From Ebony Magazine to Disney+, our Black Alumni are making major moves across the world

## INTERLUDE

This month's playlist is a compilation of some of our alums' favorite songs from senior year

## MEET THE COLLECTIVE

Meet our 2021-22 Advisory Collective of distinguished alumni and supporters



## RETROSPECTIVE

We're celebrating the classes of '81, '91, '01, and '11 as they commemorate the anniversaries of their graduations from HSPVA

# inside.

## Chair

Denise Ward (Vocal '12)

## Vice Chair

Capra Fellows (Theatre '11)

## Secretary

Gabby Byrd (Vocal '11)

## Treasurer

Kierra Martin (Dance '12)

## Scholarship Co-Chairs

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Dabrina Sandifer (Theatre '06)

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Christian Warner (Dance '12)

Aldarian Mayes (Instrumental '10)

Malcolm Jackson (Instrumental '10)

Edward Bell (Vocal '10)

Taylor Scott (Theatre '19)

Dedreck "DJ" Carr (Vocal '18)

Henry Ellis Davis (Theatre '09)

## Contributing Editor

Gabby Byrd (Vocal '11)

## This Edition's Contributing Writers

Terrance Turner (Instrumental '10)

Denise Ward (Vocal '12)

Taylor Scott (Theatre '19)



## ON THE COVER

All photos on the cover provided by HSPVA Yearbook, Desireé Godsell (Dance '01), Moretta Irchirl (Vocal '11), Brittany Jones (Dance '11), Danielle McCorvey (Vocal '01), Bernard Kelly (Vocal '01), and Whitney Morrison (Theatre '11)

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**WRITE:** Share your thoughts on this issue and anything else PVA-related at [hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com](mailto:hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com)



# Friends,

First I'd like to thank you all for showing up and showing out! We raised over \$4,000 on our first Giving Day and quadrupled our initial goal. Your generosity is so appreciated! From our 2021 Scholarship recipients, inaugural Advisory Collective, the launch of our website, expansion of our mentorship program, and plans to have nationwide events and socials, we have so much to be excited about and even more to announce in the coming months. Our network is working, and it's all because of your support. As the Creative Team goes on "summer break" and prepares to gear up for the fall semester, we invite you to tap into all the Network has to offer. Do you like connecting with alumni and planning social and networking events? Join our Creative Team! Do you like mentoring students and advising young creatives and professionals? Consider becoming a mentor for the Black Alumni Network! Looking for ways to catch up with old friends and classmates? Attend one of our social and networking events! Like the content you see on our social media platforms? Share our posts with your friends and family! We thrive because of you and we hope you'll continue to "check-in" to the HSPVA Black Alumni Network.

WITH LOVE,

**Denise Ward**

CHAIR, HSPVA BLACK ALUMNI NETWORK



**a note  
from the  
chair**

# the commons.

Please join us in welcoming our inaugural **2021-2022 Advisory Collective!**  
This distinguished group of alumni and network supporters is committed to offering us community feedback, assisting with fundraising efforts, and supplementing the leadership team's skills and abilities to help guide us toward our stated mission.



**MIGNONNE ANDERSON**  
Alumni Parent



**ANITA BARKSDALE**  
Vocal '98



**CHELSEY CARTWRIGHT**  
Instrumental '08



**DR. PAM CORMIER**  
Vocal '83



**BRYAN MICHAEL-COX**  
Vocal '96



**ASHLEY TÁMAR DAVIS**  
Vocal '98



**DELIUS DOHERTY**  
Theatre '06



**JAMES FRANCIES**  
Jazz '13



**ANTHONY BOGUESS-GLOVER**  
Vocal '87



**ERIC HARLAND**  
Jazz '94



**ANISSA MARTELL HARLAND**  
Vocal '97



**ROBERT HODGE**  
Visual '98



**JONATHAN JACKSON**  
Alumni Parent



**ALEXIS JONES**  
Visual '03



**MONICA HATTER MAYES**  
Dance '00



**RHONDA PELTON**  
Alumni Parent



**DR. LUMUMBA SEEGARS**  
Vocal '05



**TAMARA SILER**  
Theatre '82



**DR. SETH PARKER WOODS**  
Instrumental '03



# SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNERS

**thank you.**

Thank you to all our alumni and champions who supported our first Giving Day! Because of you, we were able to quadruple our initial goal and get a head start on 2021-2022 scholarships, programs, and events.

(Oct 22, 1978 - June 13, 2021)



We regret to inform you of the passing of a very beautiful soul, Mekeva McNeil (Theatre '96) Theatre Artist, Educator, & Kinder HSPVA Theatre Instructor. Mekeva's artistry greatly impacted HSPVA and the Greater Houston arts community. From her groundbreaking direction of *FELA!* and *The Color Purple*, to her DJ sets around town, Mekeva was an indelible light who believed that art is a vehicle that inspires discourse, action and offers people a voice as agents of change. We send our love and prayers to her family and friends, and will continue to honor her incredible legacy.



**Morgan Manning**  
(Dance '21)

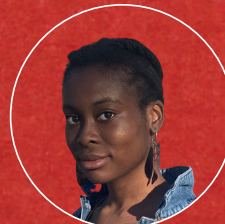
*Point Park University*

Bryan-Michael Cox Legacy Award

**Camara White**  
(Vocal '21)

*Lawrence University*

Bryan-Michael Cox Legacy Award



**Ire Asojo**  
(Visual '21)

*Brown University*

Take Care Initiative

**Ámbar Caldwell**  
(Theatre '21)

*Sarah Lawrence College*

Take Care Initiative



**Joshua Garvin**  
(Vocal '21)

*Syracuse University*

Take Care Initiative

**Tomi Akinwande**  
(Theatre '22)

*Berklee 5-Week Music  
Performance Summer Intensive*

Underclassmen Award





## By Taylor Scott

This dessert combines both brownies and ice cream and provides many opportunities for customization. You can also make the dessert as easy or as time intensive as you desire. First, we make the brownie layer. Then we make the ice cream layer and spread on top of the brownie.

### Brownie Layer

Ingredients:

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup light or dark brown sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 4 eggs
- 2 sticks of butter
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 8 oz. butterscotch chips

Recipe:

- Preheat oven to 350° F.
- Whisk eggs in a bowl.
- Add vanilla extract, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and salt to the same bowl and mix until fully incorporated.
- Melt the butter and butterscotch chips and mix (use chocolate chips instead if you prefer).
- Combine both mixtures. Fold in flour and cocoa powder.
- Pour mixture into greased baking pan.
- Bake for 30-35 minutes and let cool.

### Ice Cream Layer

Ingredients:

- 1 ¾ cup heavy cream
- 1 ¼ cup whole milk
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1/8 tsp. salt (or 2 pinches)
- Oreos (optional)

Recipe:

- Combine 1 cup heavy cream (you'll use the rest later), sugar, and salt in a pot over medium heat. Stir until sugar is dissolved.
- Remove the mixture from heat. Add the rest of the heavy cream, whole milk, and vanilla extract to the pot.
- Freeze the mixture (or use an ice cream maker machine).
- Once frozen, scoop ice cream into a blender with Oreos (optional) and dairy product of choice (i.e. half and half, heavy cream, milk, etc).
- When desired consistency is met, scoop ice cream on top of brownies and place in freezer.
- Enjoy!





# happenings.

## Donnie Scantz (Jazz '94)

Follow him on Twitch at [twitch.tv/dscantz](https://www.twitch.tv/dscantz) to catch his live Donnie After Dark (D.A.D.) dj sets.

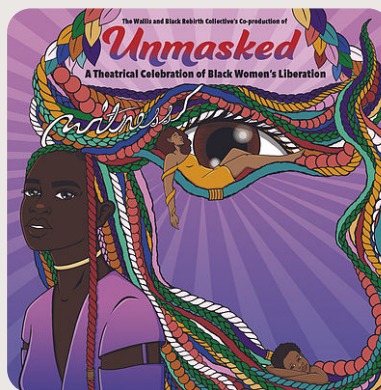


## Anthony Boggess-Glover (Vocal '87)

*E-Talk* is a podcast series where Anthony Boggess-Glover, interviews celebrities, artists, performers, politicians, and more to discover what about entertainment keeps us going and inspired to be better. If you are an entertainer or a fan of entertainment you will hear the struggles and triumphs of fellow thespians like yourself who engaged in their craft and came out on the other side, all the better for it. *E-Talk* can be found wherever you listen to podcasts.

## Kimberly Hébert Gregory (Theatre '90)

Released in honor of Juneteenth, *Unmasked*, co-directed by Gregory alongside Camille Jenkins, is a theatrical celebration of Black Women's liberation that features one-act plays by four of the country's preeminent voices in American theater. For more information and to purchase tickets for on-demand streaming, go to [blackrebirthcollective.org/unmasked](https://blackrebirthcollective.org/unmasked). Streaming packages on sale now through Sunday, July 4th.



## Jarvis B. Manning Jr. (Vocal '05)

Staged is a performing arts program created by Black Theatre Professionals to foster and uplift young talent. In each of their classes they combine practical performance technique with Theatre History through the lens of Black/ African Diaspora achievement. Their mission is to instill a sense of pride and import that is rarely represented in the dialogue of theatre, while teaching students real-world skills to help start a career in this field. Visit their website at [stagedmasterclasses.com](https://stagedmasterclasses.com) for more info.



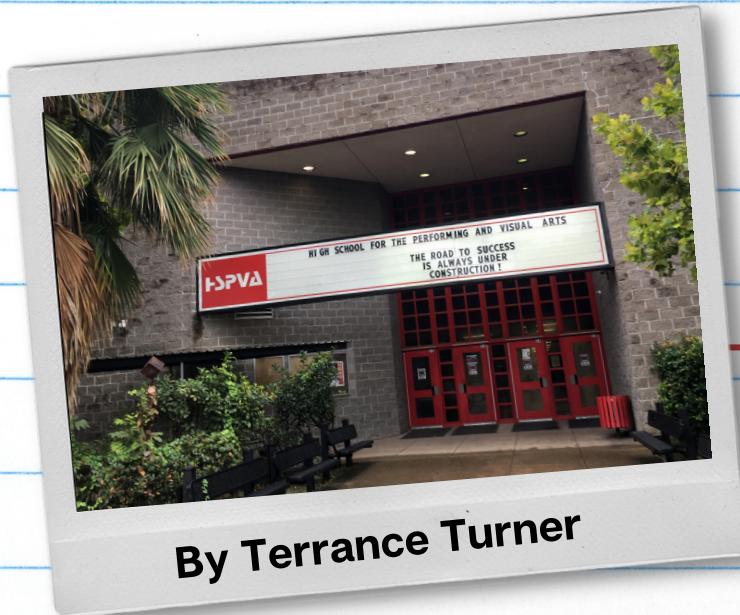




# conversation.



# a retrospective



This year marks 50 years since HSPVA was founded in 1971. Over the past five decades, the school, its students, and the nation have changed dramatically. Each new decade has brought new events in sports, politics, music, and film. In this feature, HSPVA alumni share their favorite memories and moments at PVA, and a historical retrospective describes highlights from each decade. Many students looked forward to the “Happenings” each year, and this feature reminds us that -- inside and outside the school -- so much was happening.



# 1981

If you were to visit PVA now, what would you like to see still in effect?

A new era began in this country when President Ronald Reagan was sworn into office at the beginning of the year. Although he's usually associated with conservative reform, Reagan fulfilled his campaign pledge and nominated the first female Supreme Court justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, which could be perceived as a small step towards gender equality.

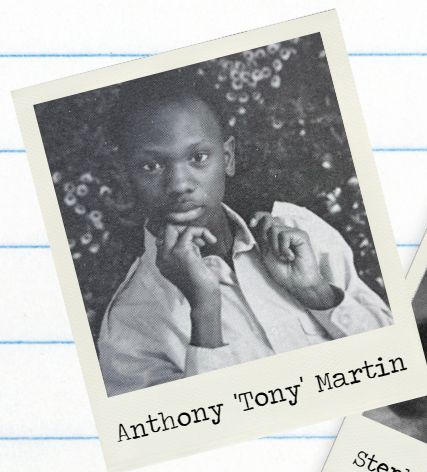
**"We had a semester called INTERIM where for one month we could choose from a host of classes that were only offered during that time. You could even select a subject out of your art area! We always looked forward to that time of year!!"**  
- Stephanie York Blue  
(Instrumental '81)

What's your most vivid PVA memory?

**"Encouraging words from Lady Marie Catley, English classes."**  
- Anthony 'Tony' Martin  
(Instrumental '81)

Due in part to MTV's summer debut on cable television and their endless stream of music videos, the music and television industries both grew substantially in 1981. MTV kept Black music out of rotation until Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" in 1983, which forever changed the art of the music video..

This year was a turning point for HSPVA as well. The school moved to the 4001 Stanford location during the 1981-1982 school year, making this class the last to graduate from the original campus. It's also one of the only classes without its own yearbook-- legend has it that the only original copy disappeared in the back of a van-- so, the yearbook for the following year combined both classes.



Anthony 'Tony' Martin



Stephanie York Blue



# 1991

If you could do it all over again, what would you change about your experience at PVA (if anything)?

**"I would have had more close Black friends! Shout out to Tiffany Brown and Tamilla Woodard. There was a lot of social stratification between art areas, so it was hard for Black students in different art areas to connect with each other. "**  
**-Toya Lilliard (Theatre '91)**

On Jan. 2nd, Sharon Pratt Kelly became the country's first Black female mayor. She campaigned as a reformer ready to sweep corruption out of D.C. and diversify the workforce by hiring women for top jobs, but her tenure was marked by bloated bureaucracy and conflicts with staffers and city workers.

Similarly, HSPVA's then-principal, Annette Watson, worked to diversify the student body and create reform, but she too dealt with turnover and pushback. During her tenure, the Media Department was eliminated and three top admin-- principal, assistant principal, and dean-- retired or were reassigned. Watson also clashed with what she saw as an undisciplined student body. She shortened the lunch period and required that students buy parking permits, but they balked at her restrictions.

Elaine Clift Gore claims in her book, *Talent Knows No Color*, that the power struggle didn't ease until internal tensions publicly aired and Watson was forced to work more closely with the HSPVA community (including parents).

In one word, how would you describe your PVA experience?

**"Foundational."**

Director John Singleton released *Boyz 'n the Hood*, an unflinching depiction of violence in South Central L.A. that stunned both critics and audiences alike. The film launched the careers of Ice Cube, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Morris Chestnut. The role of Brenda was played by HSPVA alumna, Tyra Ferrell (Theatre '74) who, that same year, played a supporting role as a grocery store customer in *Jungle Fever*, a Spike Lee Joint starring Wesley Snipes and Annabella Sciorra as an interracial couple.



Toya Lilliard



Toya & Friends



# 2001

The flights that crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and over Somerset County, Pennsylvania on September 11th killed nearly 3,000 people and marked the beginning of the 20-year war with Afghanistan and a global "War on Terror." The attacks effectively shattered our country's sense-- and illusion-- of safety in a year that seemed full of disaster. Earlier that year, Tropical Storm Allison poured 36 inches of rain into Houston, flooding hospitals and thousands of homes. In December, Houston energy company, Enron, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy causing thousands of employees to lose their pensions and 401k plans.

What's your most vivid PVA memory?

**"My most vivid PVA memory was being awarded the most improved musician award my freshman year. When I started at PVA, I was so far behind my peers with little experience in reading music. So for that to happen was highly motivating and it boosted my confidence."**

**- Bernard Kelly (Vocal '01)**

Naturally, the entertainment industry was there to help the country cope with the aftermath. R&B group **Destiny's Child**, led by former PVA student **Beyonce Knowles**, released its 3rd album, *Survivor*. Although it came before the 9/11 attacks and after the group had replaced three members (and fielded several lawsuits as a result), the lyrics of the chorus are powerful and likely resonated with new meaning for many. *Survivor* went multi-platinum and produced three No. 1 singles, including the title track.

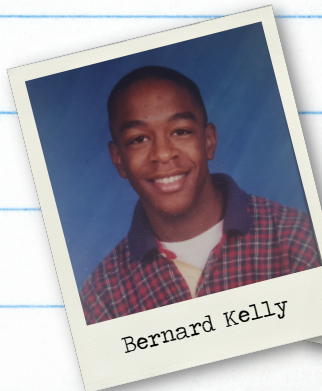
What lasting connections have you made from PVA?

In one word, how would you describe your PVA experience?

**"Liberating!"**

**- Jamila Glass (Vocal '01)**

**"The connections that HSPVA Alumni have is really unparalleled. Even when my own teachers didn't believe in me my peers did, and lifted me up. Today I can honestly say, some of my career highs have come from staying connected with my HSPVA family! H-town baby!!"**  
**- Desireé Godsell (Dance '01)**



Bernard Kelly



Desireé Godsell



Duke Gervais &  
Jamila Glass



# 2001

What's your favorite song that came out your senior year?

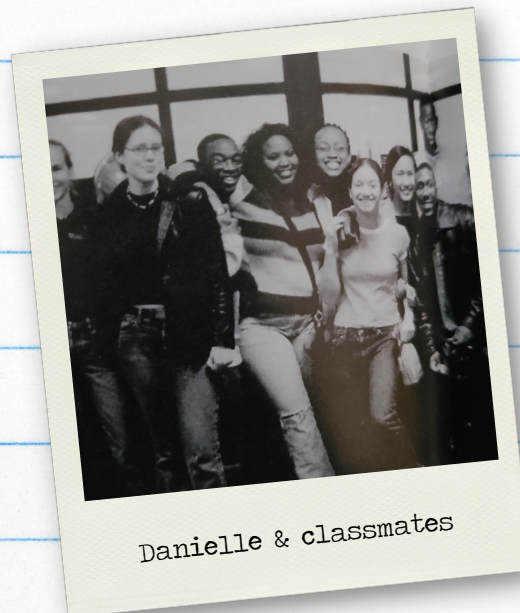
Mýa, Pink, Christina Aguilera, and Lil' Kim topped the charts with their remake of "Lady Marmalade" for the soundtrack of the movie *Moulin Rouge*.

**"I sang this song with some friends at one of the Happenings. "Lady Marmalade" by Lil Kim, Christina Aguilera, Pink, and Mýa."**  
- Danielle McCorvey (Vocal '01)

What lasting connections have you made from PVA?

**"I support PVAers when I know they have performances or showcases."**  
- Elizabeth Lockett (Vocal '01)

In film that year, Denzel Washington played a dirty cop in *Training Day* and Halle Berry played the wife of a death-row inmate in *Monster's Ball*. Both won Oscars for their performances, but Berry became the first Black woman to win the Academy Award for Best Actress.





# 2011

In May, the U.S. Census Bureau stated that for the first time, more than half of the children in America under a year old were minorities. It was a sign of shifting racial demographics; the nation had taken one more step towards its apparent destiny as a "majority-minority" country.

What's your most vivid PVA memory?

2011 was a banner year for HSPVA. The school celebrated its 40th anniversary that October with the "Encore 40" event at the George R. Brown Convention Center. The program included numbers from previous HSPVA musicals, video tributes from faculty, and a collaborative performance of "Song of Democracy" based on a poem written by Walt Whitman (which was recited by Principal R. Scott Allen). Chandra Wilson (Theatre '87), who plays Dr. Miranda Bailey on the long-running ABC drama *Grey's Anatomy*, was mistress of ceremonies.

**"I vividly remember standing backstage before my entrance in the show *Once on This Island* and realizing I was the happiest I'd ever been. I did not have a significant role in the show but in that moment I knew I was in love with the art of performance. Every aspect of the experience was incredibly fulfilling: the long rehearsals, the character study, the pre-show jitters, etc. This was one of many moments that led me to pursue performance beyond my high school years."**  
- Moretta Irchirl (Vocal '11)

If you could do it all over again, what would you change about your experience at PVA (if anything)?

**"I would put more trust in myself and my artistry and recognize my worth, and allow that to lead me."**  
- Brittany Jones (Dance '11)

If you were to visit PVA now, what would you like to see still in effect?

**"The freedom of expression and camaraderie among the students"**  
- Taylor Rawley (Vocal '11)

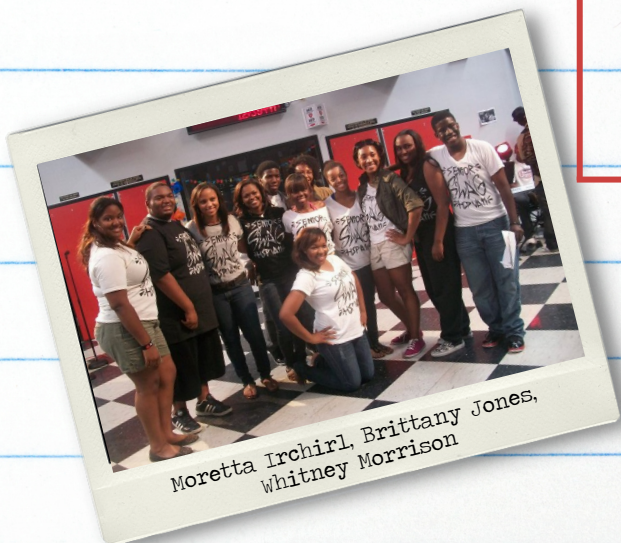
16 million viewers tuned in to watch the finale of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*-- her highest ratings since 1994.

In one word, how would you describe your PVA experience?

**"Unforgettable."**  
- Whitney Morrison (Theatre '11)

What lasting connections have you made from PVA?

**"So many! My high school group still talk and see each other regularly and have taken a few trips together."**  
- Capra Fellows (Theatre '11)





# interlude.

Since this Reunion Issue of *The Check-In* is all about Classes '81, '91, '01, and '11, this month's playlist is a compilation of some of our alums' favorite songs from senior year.

## Class of '81

"Before I Let Go" - Frankie Beverly and Maze  
"Never Too Much" - Luther Vandross

## Class of '91

"Vision of Love" - Mariah Carey  
"Lifetime" - Maxwell

## Class of '01

"Lady Marmalade" - Christina Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mya, and Pink  
"Independent Women, Pt. 1" - Destiny's Child  
"Love" - Musiq Soulchild

## Class of '11

"Someone Like You" - Adele  
"Raise Your Glass" - Pink  
"Party Rock Anthem" - LMFAO  
"6 Foot 7 Foot" Lil' Wayne and Cory Gunz  
"Run the World (Girls)" - Beyoncé

## SCAN PLAYLIST



# call board.

YOUR AD HERE

YOUR AD HERE

## ADVERTISE WITH US!

Promote your small business here in  
*The Check-In* for a small fee  
of just \$25 per quarter page!

Want to share information with us about job  
postings, casting notices, and scholarship  
opportunities?

Email us at  
[hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com](mailto:hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com)

YOUR AD HERE

YOUR AD HERE



# class notes.

straight A's

## WRITE TO US

We want to hear what you've been up to! Send us your stories and photos, and we'll share the highlights here. Email us at [hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com](mailto:hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com)

## a.cknowledgements

### Justin Prescott (Dance '06)

Artist-in-Residence and new faculty member at Loyola Department of Theatre Arts & Dance in New Orleans, Prescott performed in this year's Kennedy Center Honors to honor Dick Van Dyke and, Houston's very own, Debbie Allen (*top left*).

### Devyn Tyler (Theatre '09)

Recently spotlighted by Ebony Magazine for her performance as Ardelia in the new CBS series, *Clarice*, named after the detective who helped solve the famous serial killer case depicted in the classic film, *Silence of the Lambs* (*top right*).

### Paul Cornish (Jazz '14)

Wrote additional music for the new CNN film entitled *Dreamland: The Burning of Black Wall Street*, executive produced by LeBron James and Maverick Carter (*bottom right*).

### MAJOR. (Vocal '02)

Mayor Sylvester Turner has proclaimed that May 20th will now and forever be MAJOR. Day in the City of Houston.

### Lenora (Vocal '09)

Performed the national anthem at the May 1st Rockets vs. Warriors game.

### Peyton Booker (Vocal '15)

Accepted into Issa Rae's Insecure Writing Camp (*top middle*).



### Charles Jones (Vocal '00)

Performed the national anthem at the June 16th L.A. Dodgers vs. Phillies game. He also performed with Andra Day at this year's Cannes Film Festival and for Oprah Winfrey's Father's Day Special on OWN.

### Justin Simien (Theatre '01)

*Dear White People* creator now signed on to create Disney's new mini-series, *Star Wars: Lando* and direct Disney's reimagining of *Haunted Mansion*, based on the theme park ride (*bottom left*).

### Anthony C. Martin (Instrumental '81)

Named this year's UMass Boston's graduate commencement speaker, the highest university honor for a graduate student. Martin graduated with a master of science in Critical Ethnic and Community Studies (*bottom middle*).

### Seth Parker Woods (Instrumental '03)

Now represented by MKI Artists.



# a.ppearances

class  
notes.

## Nneka Okafor (Theatre '04)

Cast in Phoebe Robinson's Freeform comedy pilot for a new show entitled *Everything's Trash*.

## Alana Bright (Theatre '20)

Cast alongside Morris Chestnut, Lance Gross, Yaya DaCosta, and LeToya Luckett in *Our Kind of People*, a new Fox drama (*top*).

## Jada Walker (Dance '19)

Catch her dancing ballet in season 5, episode 14 of NBC's *This is Us*.

## Desireé Godsell (Dance '01) and Justin Prescott (Dance '06)

Both danced in Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights* movie. Prescott was dance double for Corey Hawkins (playing the role of Benny) while Godsell (*right*) can be spotted getting waxed in the salon scene.

## Alana Jones (Dance '13)

Catch her on YouTube in Mustapha B. Olokun's indie film entitled *Body and Spirit* (*far right*).



# a.lbums and other music

## Chris Walker (Instrumental '86)

*We're In This Love Together: Celebrating Al Jarreau* now available to purchase and stream on all platforms.

## Lisa E. Harris (Vocal '98)

In Harris' own words, her debut solo album, *On Life and That*, is "a recollection of original tunes being sung around a Texas campfire, a bluesy round of musical chairs and a drowsy line dance teetering on the border of dream land." The album features fellow alum, Burniss Earl Travis II (Jazz '05) and is available now on [lisae.bandcamp.com](https://lisae.bandcamp.com) (*top*).

## Corey King (Jazz '03)

Featured on Esperanza Spalding's latest singles, "Formwela 4", "Formwela 5", and "Formwela 6". Hear and see them (*middle*) all on YouTube or at [songwrightsapothecarylab.com](https://songwrightsapothecarylab.com).

## Ashley Tamar Davis (Vocal '98)

Visit [tamardavis.com](https://tamardavis.com) now to pre-order her 4th independent album, *My Name is Ashley*, before its August 12th release date. The album features alums Eric Harland (Jazz '94) and Jason Moran (Jazz '93), and more (*bottom*).



# who we are.

*The purpose of the HSPVA Black Alumni Network is to connect Black alumni of The High School for Performing and Visual Arts, in an effort to foster relationships, support current students and alumni endeavors, as well as champion the next generation of HSPVA artists and professionals of color.*

## Creative Team



**DENISE WARD**  
Chair  
Vocal '12



**CAPRA FELLOWS**  
Vice-Chair  
Theatre '11



**GABBY BYRD**  
Secretary  
Vocal '11



**KIERRA MARTIN**  
Treasurer  
Dance '13



**HENRY ELLIS DAVIS**  
Treasurer  
Theatre '09



**DABRINA SANDIFER**  
Scholarship Co-Chair  
Theatre '06



**TAYLAR LEWIS**  
Scholarship Co-Chair  
Theatre '11



**CHRISTIAN WARNER**  
Dance '12



**MALCOLM JACKSON**  
Instrumental '10



**ALDARIAN MAYES**  
Jazz '10



**TAYLOR SCOTT**  
Theatre '19



**EDWARD BELL**  
Vocal '10



**DJ CARR**  
Vocal '18

## How you can help

### Serve on the Creative Team

The Creative Team is a collective of HSPVA alumni who coordinate events, programming, and fundraising on behalf of the network.

### Perform or support one of our Alumni events

We host the Holiday Jam Social every December, an Alumni Happening in the summer, and we currently have additional performance opportunities and collaborations in the works.

### Contribute to our scholarship fund

Support our 2021-2022 vision as we seek to increase our monetary giving and award at least (10) students with scholarships or grants.