

Essential Theatre

2025 -2026 SUBSCRIBERS

ESSENTIAL BENEFACTOR \$1000 - \$2,500

Fitz and Camille Blake
Wendell L. Holden, Jr.
Rev. and Mrs. Theodore Houston
T'Keyah Crystal Keymah
John Pryor
Larry and Sharon Robinson
Dr. Gary and Katrina Rolle
Laurette Scott
Angela LaRuth Tidwell
Dr. Kenneth Williams

ESSENTIAL ANGEL \$550 - \$999

Sharon "Shabu" Anderson
Beverly Barber
Drs. A.J. and Mildred Brickler
Dr. Genae Crump
Delta Sigma Theta *Tallahassee Alumnae Chapter*
In Loving Memory of John R. and Ivradell W. Haugabrook
Shauna Y. Smith
McClain, Shawnta and Odell Stroud
Dr. Alonda Thomas
The Family of Mrs. M. Lucile Williams
Rodner and Clarise Wright

ESSENTIAL STAR \$300 - \$ 549

Cheryl Anderson
Dr. Na'im Akbar
Kimberley E. Brown, MSW
In Memory of Queen H. Bruton
Elaine Bryant
Ceseann Daugherty-Carroll
Carolyn Cummings, Esq.
Tara Y. Davis

Bev DeMello
Kenneth R. Dukes
Tony and Gretel LaRocca
William and Vernell McCray
Jennifer Wilder McKinney
Dr. Larry and Mrs. Betty H. Rivers
Jacquelyn Ross and Tonya Session
LemRoy (Nick) Saunders

Drs. Darryl and Latricia Scriven
Patricia Thompson
Jeff and Lynn (Bowens) Turner
Earl and Annette Washington
Mr. and Mrs. Keith Wesley, Sr.
Sylvia D. Williams
Dr. Vivian Wright Wilson

ESSENTIAL FRIEND \$150 - \$299

Joyce Allen
Alfreda Blackshear
Joanne Clark
Patricia A. Clem
Andrew Chin
Selvin and Sharon Cobb
E. Murrell Dawson
Dr. Emma Waters Dawson
Alberta Duffee
Bernard and Janis Edwards
Talethia O. Edwards
Gwendolyn Fillyau
Wileen Footman
Dr. Richard Schullerbrandt Gragg III
Dr. Phyllis Gray-Ray
Barbara D. Green
Vera Haugabrook

Fredia Houston
Dr. Malinda Jackson-James
Cassandra Jenkins
Brenda G. Johnson
Gloria Jones
Rhonda Jones
Alan R. Kagan, M.D.
Chinoah Kelley
In loving memory of Curtis and Trudi King
Phillip and Abigail Madison
Doris Maloy
Carolyn Anita McGriff
Hester O'Rourke, RN
A. Nevell Owens
Cedric T. and Sylvia G. Petties
Christine and Dennis Reilly
Eunice Rivers

Jermaine and Takisha Robertson
Stephanie Roeser
Kia Sanders
Martha L. Saunders
Darnell and Gwendolyn Singleton
Betty Smith
Mary Spencer
Caretha Thomas
Elton E. Thomas
Annie and Frank Trueblood
Harris and Mary Wells
Dr. Marilyn Weatherspoon
Gee Wilson
Lorene Wilson
Alice W. Williams
Kim Lyles Williams
Dhyana Ziegler, Ph.D.

ESSENTIAL SUBSCRIBER \$70 - \$149

Akiba Aliyy
Mattie Allen
Faye B. Brown
Clothelia Calhoun
Stephanie L. Clarke
Gwendolyn Dixon
Donna Erlich
Sharon Ford
Gail Garrett
Blondenia T. Gibson
Nancy Godette

Mary Lafitte Grayson
Brina Hamilton
Wendell E. Kimbrough II
Curlis Knowles
Mavis LaBounty
Gloria Marion-Smith
Brigitte Marshall
C. Okoro
Eva M. Parker
Beverly Randolph

Alveria Redding
Debra Ware Roberts
Juanita L. Robinson
Dee Rush in Memory Of Dr. F. R. Rush
Valeria Singleton
Kara Palmer Smith
Terri LaRuth Smith
Francesca Thomas
Takisha West
Margaret D. White
Alzora Ruth Williams



2025-2026 SEASON | February 5-8, 2026

Writing for Life Play Reading Series | Ronald O. Davis Acting Studio



Ode To Mariah

WRITTEN BY
BETH TURNER

DIRECTED BY
EVELYN D. HARRIS

Ode to Mariah

WRITTEN BY **BETH TURNER** DIRECTED BY **EVELYN D. HARRIS**

SET DESIGN Ruben Arana
COSTUME DESIGN Edith Carnley
LIGHTING DESIGN C. Bacote Robinson
SOUND DESIGN Kimberly Harding
DRAMATURG Keith Wesley
STAGE MANAGER Diana Belizaire

Cameras and recording devices of any kind are absolutely prohibited in the theatre. Please turn off or set to silent mode your cell phones, pagers and any alarm watches before the show begins. Please refrain from cell phone usage during the performance. The house manager reserves the right to ask disruptive audience members to leave without refund.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Beth Turner is a publisher, playwright, theatre director, and educator. She is the founding editor and publisher of Black Masks, a 41-year-old national publication on the Black performing arts. She has also written six plays, all of which have been originally produced in New York City. She received a Kennedy Center American Theatre College Festival (KCATCF) Award for playwriting for FAMU's production of her play *Sweet Mama Stringbean* in 2021. She has also directed plays including at FAMU, where she won the KCATCF Award for her direction of *Pearl Cleage's Blues for an Alabama Sky* in 2015 and Tarell Alvin McCraney's *In the Red and Brown Water* in 2018. She has been awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from The New Federal Theatre in 2021 and was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre in 2022 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. She is currently under contract to Routledge publishers for a book on Contemporary Black Theatre.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Playwright, Beth Turner, specifically pens *Ode to Mariah* as a special tribute to both her late grandmother and mother. The play bears the name of Turner's grandmother while plotting the story of her mother who had the desire to attend college. Turner's mother, while in high school, met the criteria to apply for a college scholarship, but was later denied due to an intentional rigging within the system to make her unqualified. Unfortunately, Turner's mother dream of going to college then was not realized; however, her leadership, love for education and poetry manifested in her role as a homemaker while rearing her children well.

What Turner successfully does in *Ode to Mariah* is capture the heart of a young girl who is not afraid to voice how she feels about traditions that are in conflict with her dreams. In the politest manner, we hear the heart of a seventeen-year-old with a clear vision of how she wants her future to be and despite the obstacles standing in her way, we know Mariah will one day become a teacher.

It is my hope you are inspired by this beautiful story and by the actors telling it to continue to not only believe in your dreams, but to actively go after and manifest them. As Turner's mother did by entering college at the age of 60 to pursue and earn her bachelor's degree as well as published a book of poetry and named poet laureate of Brooksville, FL.

- Evelyn D. Harris

SETTING: The play takes place in a small town, near Albany, in upstate New York in 1898

CAST

CHARACTERS	ACTORS
NARRATOR	Janiah Jefferson
NARRATOR	Jakyra Estiverne
MARIAH	Tommye Campbell
AKIM	Zac Showers
AURELIA	Kara Mullings
WILLIS	Desmond Lewis
BILL	Kendall Smith
JOHN	Clarence O'Neal Jr.
RUBEN	Donovan Parrish
MR. HEATHERTON	Zac Showers

This production is performed without an intermission.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Productions Manager: Luther D. Wells	Set & Paint: Julius Davis, Maesa Anderson, Shiane Sullivan, Shya Lee, Michael Royals
Technical Director: C. Bacote Robinson	Costume Supervisor: Edith Carnley
Stage Manager: Diana Belizaire	Costume Assistant: Kara Mullings
Company Manager: Azaria I. McCants	Director of Ticket Sales
Dramaturg: Keith Wesley	and Patron Services: Kimberly K. Harding
Light Board Operator: Sion Brown	Social Media Content Developers &
Sound Board Operator: Maesa Anderson	Marketing Assistants: Willis Fedd, Amir Burgess, .Layla Richardson, Oluwamodupe Oloyede, Skyla Stephens, Kyndal Jones
House Managers: Unica Mangus, Jordan Noland	Publicity Graphic Artists: Willis Fedd
House Staff: Brianna Bell, Anya Brown, Richard Brown II, Jaila Dunbar	Program Layout: Willis Fedd
Box Office Manager: Monica R. Woods	Photography & Videography: Willis Fedd, Layla Richardson, Amir Burgess, Brianna Bourjolly
Box Office Asst. Manager: Skyla Stephens	
Will Call Manager: Brianna Bourjolly	
Subscriber Relations: Jade Livingston, Jae Edwards	
Properties Supervisor: Evelyn D. Harris	

FACULTY & STAFF

Valencia E. Matthews: Director of Theatre | Dean, College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

Ruben Arana: Scene Design **Edith Carnley:** Costume Design **Willis Fedd:** Director of Marketing

Kimberly K. Harding: Management | Theatre History | Sound Design **Evelyn D. Harris:** Properties | Special Events | Recruitment

C. Bacote Robinson: Technical Director | Lighting Designer **Anedra Small:** Performance | Vocal Coach | Criticism | Recruitment

Luther D. Wells: Associate Director of Theatre | Performance | Recruitment