

FEB 16—FEB 27 | 2021

# FANNIE

THE MUSIC AND LIFE OF FANNIE LOU HAMER



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Asolo Repertory Theatre presents  
in association with Goodman Theatre and Seattle Rep  
A Rolling World Premiere Production of

# FANNIE: The Music and Life of Fannie Lou Hamer

By **CHERYL L. WEST**

Directed by **HENRY DOMINIC GODINEZ**

Music Direction and Arrangements by **FELTON OFFARD**

Costume Design **MICHAEL ALAN STEIN**  
Lighting Design **ETHAN VAIL**  
Sound Design **MATTHEW PARKER**  
Projection Design **AARON RHYNE**  
Wig Design for Fannie **MR. BERNARD**  
Dramaturg **CHRISTINE SUMPTION**

Scenic Consultant **ADAM C. SPENCER**  
Resident Hair & Make-up Design **MICHELLE HART**  
Production Stage Manager **NIA SCJARRETTA\***

Costume Coordinator **DAVID COVACH**  
Assistant Stage Manager **JACQUELINE SINGLETON\***  
Projection Programmer **KEVAN LONEY**  
Script Coordinator **JAMES MONAGHAN**

*Fannie* is produced by special arrangement with Bruce Ostler/Kate Bussert,  
BRET ADAMS, LTD., 448 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036. [www.bretadamsltd.net](http://www.bretadamsltd.net)

*Fannie* was commissioned by Goodman Theatre and Seattle Rep

Clips of the August 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom are used with special permission  
from the Jules Cahn Collection at the Historic New Orleans Collection/Historic Films Archive

Directors are members of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society;  
Designers are members of the United Scenic Artists Local USA-829;  
Backstage and Scene Shop Crew are members of IATSE Local 412.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

## CAST

**E. FAYE BUTLER\***.....Fannie Lou Hamer

\* Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors  
and Stage Managers in the United States.

## MUSICIANS

*in alphabetical order*

**FELTON OFFARD**.....Conductor/Guitar

**AARON WASHINGTON**.....Percussion

**VIVIAN WELCH**.....Keyboard

*Fannie* will be performed without an intermission.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

Song #1: **I'm On My Way To Freedom (Instrumental)**

Song #2: **Oh Freedom**

Song #3: **I Love Everybody**

Song #4: **This Little Light Of Mine**

Song #5: **I Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round**

Song #6: **We Shall Not Be Moved**

Song #7: **I Love Everybody (Reprise)**

Song #8: **Woke Up This Morning/Mind On Freedom**

Song #9: **Oh Lord You Know Just How I Feel**

Song #10: **I've Been Changed**

Song #11: **Eye On The Prize**

Song #12: **Certainly Lord**

Song #13: **Oh Lord You Know Just How I Feel (Reprise)**

Song #14: **I'm On My Way To Freedom (Reprise)**



# HENRY GODINEZ

## ON DIRECTING *FANNIE*

**You've worked with playwright Cheryl West before—what draws you to her writing and what makes your collaboration so successful?**

There's a certain rhythm and musicality to Cheryl's writing, to the language her characters speak. It's heightened and theatrical in the most grounded and earthy way. There's also a big-hearted compassion in her work that draws you in with a balance of humor and human truth. As a collaborator, Cheryl creates work, and a space to work, that welcomes the intersection of our cultures and backgrounds as folks of color. She welcomes the unity of our perspectives as a way to expand the scope of the story we're looking to tell. There's a sense of family and trust in our way of working that feels so fertile and creative. And we laugh a lot!

**What have you found to be most inspiring about Fannie Lou Hamer's life and legacy?**

I was raised by a strong single mother in the south who as an immigrant was fiercely devoted to the promise of the American Dream, much like Fannie

**“Fannie inspires me. I share her idealism and determination in the belief of what this country can be for all Americans.”**



Lou Hamer, and who to a certain extent, faced some of the same challenges and hardships that Fannie faced in the 1960's. As a naturalized American citizen, Fannie inspires me. I share her idealism and determination in the belief of what this country can be for all Americans.

**Are there any unique challenges with creating a “one person” show like Fannie?**

A solo piece like *Fannie* definitely carries some unique challenges that a multi-actor show does not. First, there is the stamina of the actor to always be aware of when crafting the ebb and flow of the show. There is great possibility in finding the right sustainable balance of energy. That need works in tandem with the arch of the story being told, and so I look to employ supporting design elements like music, sound, and projections to create a theatrical world that is compelling and supportive of the solo performer.

**How has the inclusion of song helped to shape the telling of Fannie's story?**

Fannie Lou Hamer used music as a source of inspiration and comfort. Singing was at the core of her faith, a deep source of her determination. It's fundamental to the telling of her story. The music in Fannie works like a kind of emotional barometer, buoying and carrying Fannie and the audience through the emotional journey of Cheryl's play. It both expresses and inspires.

**What do you hope an audience takes away from the performance?**

My hope is that folks leave our production of *Fannie* with an appreciation for how remarkable this woman was, and a realization that each and every one of us has a voice that deserves and needs to be heard. That, like Fannie, we too can make a difference, even against all odds. That we can mine the courage within and have faith in truth, love and compassion. That goodness is what truly makes us all fundamentally human.

# PLAYWRIGHT CHERYL L. WEST

## SPEAKS ON FANNIE LOU HAMER

**What are the origins of your creative process for Fannie?**

I was working on a musical that was set during Freedom Summer and as I was doing research for that I came across Fannie Lou Hamer. She was this woman who, every time she gave a speech, she would sing and there wouldn't be a dry eye in the house. I had heard of her in school, but I didn't really *know* her story like I do now. I'm always excited about unsung heroes or people who help me on my courage journey. My family is from Mississippi, they were part of the great migration north in the 1940s, so writing in the voice of Fannie Lou Hamer came naturally – sometimes I'll look back and think 'Now did I write that or did Fannie speak that?'

**What inspires you about Fannie Lou Hamer?**

The more I learned about her, her tenacity, her courage, I knew she had arrived on my shoulder to teach me, to move me along on my own courage journey. Every woman of color who has ever sought congressional office stands on her shoulders, including Kamala Harris who credited Ms. Hamer when she accepted the Democratic nomination for vice president.

Studying Ms. Hamer makes you realize, when we're the most helpless, there's still an action to do and how small actions lead to bigger ones. So if I can vote, if I can read a story to the kid down the street that doesn't have anyone to read to them, if I can bring Mrs. Brown a dinner plate, all these actions build empowerment and help to create community. There's so much divisiveness and helplessness in our country right now and Fannie Lou would've never accepted that. She would've said, you can pray, but you've also got to get up off your tail and do something. She's an example of how we can navigate our way through hard times.

**Music is central to the storytelling of the play - has that always been the case or did it emerge over time?**

I always knew it was going to be at the heart of the story. Music has the power to join people together and it was so integral to the civil rights movement. It's a tradition in the Black Church, the call and response congregational style, the inherent power in this music tradition is immense. When voices were raised in song, not even dogs or firehoses turned on you could deter the “righteous” mission.



**What do you hope audience members take away from this experience?**

Her campaign manager, Charles McLaurin, once told me “She made me brave,” and that's always stuck with me. One thing that Fannie Lou Hamer was, was a patriot. She believed that white freedom was tied to black freedom. Mr. McLaurin also told me that she wasn't afraid to tell someone the truth, give someone in the wrong a dressing down and then say “come on, let me fix you something to eat.” She was not the kind of person who felt that her struggle was separate from America's struggle. I hope the audience realizes that Ms. Hamer was one of the best grass roots leaders this country has ever produced. And that women still have a fight together: black and white and red and brown women. We have so much more in common than not and there's so much power there. I hope that the audience members who are still worried and still have some despair, that they can be uplifted and inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer. I certainly am.

**“These women inspired us to pick up the torch, and fight on. Women like Mary Church Terrell and Mary McCleod Bethune. Fannie Lou Hamer and Diane Nash. Constance Baker Motley and Shirley Chisholm. We're not often taught their stories. But as Americans, we all stand on their shoulders.”**

*—Vice President Kamala Harris in her acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, 2020*



## CREATING FANNIE LOU: AN INTERVIEW WITH E. FAYE BUTLER



### What did you know about Fannie Lou Hamer before getting involved in this project?

I knew she was one of the many women who were freedom riders and freedom workers and I knew that she was instrumental to the civil rights movement. But, they don't teach you much about her in most schools. She doesn't get a lot of credit for the work she did. She was such a powerful woman in such a calm way; she never fought for the spotlight or made it about her. Now, she wasn't afraid to be front and center if it was about fighting for rights; Black people's civil rights and women's rights too. She was a big feminist and she didn't even really know she was. There was this thing she'd say: 'I don't have a lot of education, but I have a lot of dedication.' She had an amazing ability to cut right to the bone with common sense. Probably the most famous of her quotes is: I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. We hear that a lot these days, but how many people know that comes from Fannie Lou Hamer? So to answer your question, I knew her, but I didn't *know* her. No one had ever brought her to the forefront.

### Do you think of *Fannie* as a one-woman show?

Yes and no. As the actor doing it, at times it feels that way because I have all the language to say. But it isn't a one-woman show in the sense that the band is a major, major part of what this show is about. And the

**“I don't have a lot of education, but I have a lot of dedication.”** —Fannie Lou Hamer

music lifts me, it carries me and it lifted Fannie too. Fannie had a campaign manager, a go-to person for years, Mr. Charles McLaurin, who always supported her through everything. For me, during this show, that person is Felton [Offard] our band leader; he's always ready to give me encouragement or leap up to protect me. So in that sense, I'm not by myself, Felton is my Mr. McLaurin who was always there for Fannie. AND, this is the first time we've done this version of the show, the full version, and the audience is going to be so much more a part of it now. This show will change every performance based on the needs of the people sitting in front of me, which is exactly what Fannie would do. She never spoke from notes, it was about the people in front of her in that moment and connecting with them. So, it is a one woman show technically, but in a lot of ways, it isn't.

### What's something you find inspiring—or perhaps most inspiring—about Fannie's life and legacy?

So many things, but one is her insistence that we've got to stick together as women. Because we're mothers, we know what that feels like. Knowing that, how can you not band together with another woman? We're always pushed down, we're always the least respected people in a room if we allow it to happen. And also, as Michael Edwards pointed out after hearing the show, she just told the truth. The unvarnished truth. We talk a lot about wanting the truth as Americans, but we really want someone to soften that for us. So it doesn't hurt. But she never did that: she was kind, but she told it exactly the way it was. Another one of her phrases that shows up in the play is 'The Truth is not your enemy unless you're worshipping a lie.' I think there's a lot of people who need to hear that.

### What do you hope audience members take away from this experience?

I hope it encourages them to go back and re-examine themselves, their country, and their neighbor. We are no longer neighbors! We no longer live in neighborhoods. Basic, simple, American things. You don't have to do anything dramatic, I always tell people that. Just be a good neighbor to people of all colors, creeds, religions, sexual orientations. I think it would make us a better country if we could just be neighbors again. But now we don't even speak to each other, we don't look at one another. Someone falls on the ground and we just step right over them. Where's our humanity? It doesn't hurt to say good morning. It costs you nothing. If we could do that, we'd have a better understanding of each other. We're all in this thing together.

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## ONLINE CLASSES

REGISTER NOW!

Join us this spring for Asolo Rep's unique online theatre classes, with offerings available for ages 8-adult. Connect with others and flex your creativity – the possibilities are endless (but class sizes are limited)!



## ILLUMINATIONseries *Digital 2021*

### Announcing the 2021 IllumiNation Digital Series

The IllumiNation Series explores the social, political, and cultural themes threaded throughout Asolo Rep's theatrical season. Discuss art and activism in these dynamic conversations that invite all to the table and challenge us to reflect upon our past and present in hopes for a more inclusive future.

**Purchase each event individually for \$15 or join us for all three for \$39!**

**Fannie Lou Hamer: Movement Maker**

February 25 at 7:30pm

**James Baldwin Now with Playwright Ty Greenwood**

March 25 at 7:30pm

**The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity: Wrestling with America**

April 22 at 7:30pm

*Learn more about IllumiNation: [asolorep.org/engage-learn/illumination-series](https://asolorep.org/engage-learn/illumination-series)*



# WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## AN INTERVIEW WITH EDUCATOR AND ADMINISTRATOR

# L'TANYA EVANS

### What was your graduate thesis topic and how does Fannie Lou Hamer fit into that?

The actual title is “Mid-Twentieth Century Southern Black Women and how they Impressed Democracy.” In terms of educational writing it’s more of a personal/reflective narrative – my degree is in English as well as History – so that allowed me some latitude in explaining my interest and rationale. The process involved bringing some students along with me and capturing their learning and reflections as well. Fannie Lou wasn’t immediately a part of that, I didn’t know much about her when I first started. But I had the opportunity to dig into the archives at Johnson Publishing, which published *Jet* and *Ebony* magazine, and was immediately enthralled with this person and her story. She became a central figure in my reflections on Black Women in the civil rights movements, particularly regarding voting rights initiatives.

### Why do you think we don’t learn more about Fannie Lou Hamer as part of our standard curriculum?

In my opinion, we have a tendency to teach history looking strictly at those who are deemed “heroes,” people who are larger than life, almost superhuman. It’s mythologized to a certain extent because it’s a good story. My students who participated in this thesis for example studied Rosa Parks and know her as the woman who refused to give her seat up on the bus. What they eventually learned on this trip was not only that Rosa Parks was one of several people and more than one woman who took this stand, but that Rosa Parks was the secretary of the local NAACP, she trained for this, and in many ways this was a planned strategy. She was considered an “acceptable” person to try the case. Meanwhile, before Rosa Parks, there was a 15-year-old named Claudette Colvin who was arrested nine months earlier for taking the same action, on the same bus system. History remembers Rosa and not Claudette because of decisions made at that time based on appearances and likelihood of winning their case. But you can imagine when my students learned about her it was at once exciting to hear about someone their own age taking action as well as disappointing that they had not been taught this before and probably wouldn’t have if not for this experience. I think History does something similar with Fannie Lou, which is why telling her story now is more important than ever. Unfortunately, we don’t know enough about our history to recognize when we are repeating it and how we can change things in the future.

### What do you hope learning about Fannie Lou Hamer will mean to your students now?

When we study the civil rights movement we tend to see a lot of men in suits, but that doesn’t tell the whole story. The story of the everyday people, women and young adults, who did the day to day groundwork – the door knocking, organizing meetings, boycotting – because the men risked losing their jobs if they participated. If we tell more stories about everyday people doing extraordinary things, I hope it empowers them to see their own strength and to use it. I want my students to see that the future is now; that they can meaningfully impact others with their actions right now. And I hope it inspires them to know their history.

Fannie Lou is just extraordinary to me. Who would take a beating like she did and still keep going? Who wouldn’t have asked ‘Is this worth it,’ but she pressed on. She had something to say and something to do. It needed to be done and she knew she could make a difference. She saw herself as a vessel and that’s all that mattered.

“...I had not heard of Claudette Colvin until yesterday. It’s funny how history is told selectively.”—student thesis participant



# THE CREATIVES

### MR. BERNARD

FIRST SEASON (Wig Design for Fannie) is excited to make his debut at Asolo Rep. He has designed wigs for theatre productions including most recently *Fannie: Speak On It!* at Arena Stage and Goodman Theatre. Other credits include *Ain’t Misbehavin* regional tour, *Crumbs From the Table of Joy* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *Sophisticated Ladies* (Drury Lane), *An Evening with Nat King Cole* (Minneapolis Arts Center). Mr. Bernard is a renowned hairstylist with over 40 years’ experience. He served as a leading platform artist for Johnson Products Company and was owner of Mr. Bernard’s Hair Salon. He is a licensed instructor of cosmetology and has participated in many television, film, and video shoots. When he isn’t fishing, he enjoys working on his new passion: Mr. Bernard’s Wig Tree!

### DAVID M. COVACH

TWENTY-SIXTH SEASON (Costume Coordinator) is thrilled to be joining the production team for *Fannie: The Music and Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*. Over the last 26 seasons, he has designed costumes for several Asolo Rep and FSU/Asolo Conservatory shows including *The Last Five Years*, *Broadway*, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* and *The Sisters Rosensweig*.

### HENRY GODINEZ

FIRST SEASON (Director) is the Resident Artistic Associate at Goodman Theatre, where he has directed more than a dozen plays including the world premieres of Karen Zacarias’ *Mariela In The Desert*, Luis Alfaro’s *Straight As A Line*, Regina Taylor’s *Millennium Mambo*, and *Feathers and Teeth* by Charise Castro Smith. Other Chicago directing includes the world premiere of Cheryl West’s *Last Stop on Market Street*, *Water by The Spoonful* by Quiara Alegria Hudes (Court Theatre), Paula Vogel’s *A Civil War Christmas* (Northlight Theatre), Nilo Cruz’s *Two Sisters and a Piano* (Teatro Vista), and *Anna in the Tropics* (Victory Gardens Theater/Teatro Vista). Godinez is the co-founder and former artistic director of Teatro Vista. Born in Havana, Cuba, Godinez is a professor at Northwestern University and serves on the board of directors of the Illinois Arts Council Agency. He is the proud recipient of the TCG Alan Schneider Directing Award, the Actors’ Equity Spirit Award, and the August Wilson Award.

### MICHELLE HART

EIGHTEENETH SEASON (Resident Hair & Make-up Designer) designs for Asolo Repertory Theatre and FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. Other credits: Sarasota Ballet, Palm Beach Dramaworks, freeFall Theatre, Urbanite Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, West Coast Black Theatre Troupe, Banyan Theatre, Ruth Eckerd Hall, Venice Theatre, Dorset Theatre, Barrington Stage and Open Stage Theatre. She has also done hair and/or make-up for Joan Rivers, Doris Roberts, Martin Short, Jane Russell, Arlene Dahl, Soledad Villamil, Jane Pauley, Richard Dreyfuss, Castille

Langdon, Christopher Higgins, Mary Mara, Heather Robb, Lauren Sweetser, Justin Long, Paul Downs, Douglas Sills and Nia Hills. Music videos include “Second Chance” by Shinedown, “Reverse Cowgirl” by T-Pain. Film and television: *Paradise, FL* and *The Real Stephen Blatt*.

### FELTON OFFARD

FIRST SEASON (Music Director/Conductor) Various credits include: Music Director/Composer/Arranger: *Fannie Lou Hamer, Speak on It!* Guitar: *Hamilton; The Color Purple; Addams Family; First Wives Club; Purlie; Motown: The Musical; Sister Act; Could It Be Magic? The Barry Manilow Songbook; Raisin; Blue Brothers; Comfortable Shoes; Jersey Boys; Three Mo’ Divas; Standing In The Shadows of Motown; Come Fly Away/Fly With Me*. CD: *Rise* and *Invincible*. Master of Music from Northern Illinois University. Mr. Offard teaches guitar and music production at Chicago State University. [www.feltonoffard.com](http://www.feltonoffard.com)

### MATTHEW PARKER

TWENTY-EIGHTH SEASON (Sound Designer) received his BFA in Theatre Production Design and Technology from Ohio University. He was the resident sound designer at Monomoy Theatre in 1990. He has worked sound and special effects at The Flat Rock Theatre in North Carolina on such shows as *I Hate Hamlet*, the world premiere of *Gilligan’s Island: The Musical* and others in the 1992 season. Since 1993, Mr. Parker has designed sound for most of Asolo Rep’s productions. In addition, he wrote and performed the musical scores for *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. Outside the theatre world he has designed and programed the show control system for Livingston’s Amusements Bazooka Ball arena, and produced Livestream expositions for the National Watercolor Society.

### AARON RHYNE

SIXTH SEASON (Projection Designer) Previous Asolo Rep productions include *We Need a Little Christmas, My Brilliant Divorce, Bonnie and Clyde, The Last Five Years, Working*, and *Hamlet*. Selected design credits include— Broadway: *The Sound Inside, Anastasia* (Outer Critics Circle Award, Drama Desk Award), *A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder* (Drama Desk Award), *Bonnie and Clyde*. Off-Broadway: *The Way She Spoke* (Audible); *This Ain’t No Disco* (Atlantic); *Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey* (Westside); *Bootycandy* (Playwrights Horizons); *Appropriate* (Signature); *Wild With Happy* (The Public, Drama Desk Nomination); *Graceland* (Lincoln Center). Opera: *The Thirteenth Child* (Santa Fe Opera); *The Ghosts of Versailles* (LA Opera); *La Traviata* (Wolftrap). Ballet: *The Wizard of Oz* (Kansas City Ballet, Colorado Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet); *The Sun Also Rises* (Washington Ballet). Disney: *Frozen* (Disneyland); *Beauty and the Beast, Tangled, Frozen* (Disney Cruise Lines). [www.aaronrhyn.com](http://www.aaronrhyn.com)



**NIA SCIARRETTA\***

NINTH SEASON (Production Stage Manager) Selected Asolo Rep credits include stage manager for *The Sound of Music*, *Into the Breeches*, *Knoxville*, *The Music Man*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Sweat*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Roe*, *Born Yesterday* and *Disgraced*; assistant stage manager for *Guys and Dolls*, *All the Way*, *South Pacific*, and *Hero: The Musical*. Previous Off-Broadway credits include work on *Jesus Hopped the A Train*, *In the Blood*, and *The Wayside Motor Inn at the Signature Theatre*. Nia has also worked with Creede Repertory Theatre, Hangar Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Flea Theatre, and Penguin Rep.

**JACQUELINE SINGLETON\***

SECOND SEASON (Assistant Stage Manager) is thrilled to be back at Asolo Rep! She was last a member of the Stage Management team during the 2018-19 season for *The Crucible*, *Noises Off*, and *A Doll's House, Part 2*. She has just concluded her nineteenth season at American Players Theatre (Spring Green, WI) most recently stage managing *This Wonderful Life* as well as a series of Zoom play readings in partnership with PBS Wisconsin. Other stage management work includes *Animal Farm* at Milwaukee Repertory and Baltimore Center Stage; *Outside Mullingar* at the Clarence Brown Theater (Knoxville, TN); three seasons at Forward Theater (Madison, WI); seven seasons at Madison Repertory Theatre; and work at numerous theaters in Chicago including the Goodman Theatre, Writers' Theatre, and Next Theatre.

**ADAM C. SPENCER**

FIRST SEASON (Scenic Consultant) is excited to join the Asolo Rep design team. He received his BA in Theatre from Chadron State College and MFA in Theatrical Design from Illinois State University. Adam has served as Technical Director, Resident Designer, and Scenic Design Professor at Louisiana Tech University and University of Houston—Downtown. He has worked at theatres such as Playhouse on the Square (scenic design), Theatre Under The Stars (asst. lighting and asst. scenic design), Lexington Children's Theatre (lighting and scenic design), Birmingham Children's Theatre (Resident designer and Technical Director), TUTS' Humphreys School of Musical Theatre (lighting and scenic design), Olney Theatre Center (props design), and Main Street Theatre (scenic design).

**MICHAEL ALAN STEIN**

(Costume Designer) is pleased to be making his Asolo Repertory Theatre debut. In a career spanning two decades, his designs have graced Feature Films, Television, Commercials, and many of this nation's premiere Off-Broadway and Regional Theatre stages: St.Lukes Theatre, SoHo Repertory Theatre, The Beckett Theatre (Theatre Row), The Guthrie Theatre, The Goodman Theatre, The Court Theatre, The Kennedy Center for The Performing Arts, Crossroads Theatre, Arena Stage, The Ford's Theater, The

Alliance Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, St. Louis Black Repertory Theatre, Congo Square Theatre, West Coast Black Theatre Troupe, Cincinnati Playhouse In The Park, American Blues Theater, and The Merrimack Repertory Theatre, amongst others. Special design projects have included: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., The Peabody Award-winning, *Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise*, for American Masters-PBS, and the upcoming, *Marian Anderson: The Whole World In Her Hands*, also for American Masters-PBS (premiering in February 2022). His original Costume sketch and design for world renowned Photo-Artist Renéé Cox's *RAJE (Rage!)* Superhero character are in the permanent collection of The Archives of American Art of The Smithsonian Institution. [www.michaelalansteincostume.com](http://www.michaelalansteincostume.com)

**CHRISTINE SUMPTION**

(Dramaturg) has served as a dramaturg for Sundance Theatre Lab, the New Harmony Project, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Icicle Creek Theatre Festival, and Hedgebrook Women Playwrights Festival, with which she has a 20-year affiliation. She has worked with playwright Cheryl L. West on numerous plays over the past 15 years, including *Birdie Blue*; *Pullman Porter Blues*; *Fannie Lou Hamer, Speak On It!* and more. She was Resident Director at DARTS/Company Subaru in Tokyo for three years and on the artistic staff of Seattle Repertory Theatre for nine seasons as Associate Artistic Director/Dramaturgy & Publications. *Hedgebrook Plays, Volume 1*, which she co-edited with Liz Engelman, was published by Whit Press in 2012.

**ETHAN VAIL**

FOURTH SEASON (Lighting Designer) Credits include—The Players Centre for the Performing Arts (Sarasota, FL): *Head Over Heels*, *All Shook Up*; Millbrook Playhouse (Mill Hall, PA): 65 Productions including the regional premiere of *Fun Home*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Rock of Ages*, *The Little Mermaid*; Compass Rose Theatre (Annapolis, MD): *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*; Manatee Players: *Anne of Green Gables*. He was the recipient of the 2013 USITT YD&T Award, sponsored by Barbizon Lighting Company, for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that he designed at Purdue University. He is also the Master Electrician at Asolo Repertory Theatre.

**CHERYL L. WEST**

(Playwright) Cheryl L. West's plays have been produced in England, off-Broadway, on Broadway and in numerous regional theaters around the country. She has written TV and film projects at Disney, Paramount, MTV Films, Showtime, HBO, CBS, and BET. She is working on commissions for Seattle Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, Minneapolis Children's Theatre, and the Goodman Theatre. A special acknowledgement to Mr. Charles McLaurin, Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer's campaign manager and right hand man. His words and insight regarding Ms. Hamer were immeasurable during the development of this work. [www.cheryllwest.com](http://www.cheryllwest.com)

THE **CAST**



**E. FAYE BUTLER\***

SECOND SEASON (Fannie Lou Hamer) is happy to return to Asolo Repertory Theatre having last performed as Queenie in *Showboat*. E.Faye's career spans 40 years performing in plays, musicals, concerts, clubs, cabaret across the country and internationally. National and Regional Tours: *Mamma Mia*, *Ain't Misbehavin*, *Dinah Was*, *Cope*, *Nonsense*. International & Regional: La Jolla Playhouse, The Goodman, Kennedy Center, Harmon Hall, Steppenwolf, Court, Victory Gardens, Peninsula Players, Chicago Shakespeare, Chicago Children, Milwaukee Rep, Yale Rep, Drury Lane, Marriott's Lincolnshire, Paramount, Porchlight, Congo Square, Arena Stage, Baltimore Centerstage, Olney, Signature, MSMT, Pasadena Playhouse, Paper Mill, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Seattle Rep, The MUNY, St. Louis Rep, Fulton, Performing Arts Center Hong Kong, Teatro La Habana, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, Northlight. Recipient of nine Jeffs, two Helen Hayes, Four BTTA, R.A.M.I., Ovation, Sarah Siddons, Excellence in the Arts, Kathy Lampkey, Rosetta LeNoire, Guy Adkins, After Dark, Barrymore, and Black Excellence Awards. Inducted into the Women in the Arts Museum, Lunt-Fontanne Fellow. Most recently named Chicagoan of 2020. [www.e-fayebutler.com](http://www.e-fayebutler.com)

THE **MUSICIANS**

**AARON WASHINGTON**

(Percussion)

FIRST SEASON (Percussion) is excited to be making his Asolo Repertory Theatre debut. He has played drums for a variety of different bands in the St. Petersburg/ Tampa/Sarasota area. He's played for the Robin Swenson trio, the Koko Ray band, Byrd Tribe, The Younglions of Florida, the Randy Stephens trio, and The Barker Project. Currently, he is a worship leader at Bayside Community Church and plays drums for their latest albums.

**VIVIAN (PORTER) WELCH**

(Keyboard)

FIRST SEASON (Keyboard) is a native of Chicago, Illinois and thrilled to be making her Asolo Rep debut. She has utilized her gift as a keyboard player for decades to support vocalists, choirs, bands, numerous churches, special programs, and events for Pinellas County Schools. Ms. Welch is also a lyricist, songwriter, retired educator, and resident of St. Petersburg, Florida.

\* Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



# FREEDOM FIGHTER

## FROM SHARECROPPER TO



1917 ◀

Fannie Lou was the twentieth child born into her Mississippi sharecropper family. She began picking cotton at age six and, by the sixth grade, dropped out of school to work the fields full time.

1945

While serving as a timekeeper on the same plantation from her childhood, Fannie Lou married Perry Hamer, a tractor driver who worked alongside her. The plantation owner valued her literacy skills, which she had picked up through Bible study. Throughout her career, she was disparaged for her simple southern roots, but her early appreciation for literacy and Christianity shaped her commitment to social justice.

1962 ◀

After becoming involved with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Fannie Lou and fellow activists attempted to register to vote, but were met with police pushback and a discriminatory literacy test. Fannie Lou was then kicked off the plantation and survived 16 drive-by shootings while in hiding.



1963

On her third attempt, Fannie Lou passed the voter registration test, but faced another barrier with the county poll tax, designed to discriminate against poor black citizens. These experiences spurred Fannie Lou to lead voter registration and education initiatives through SNCC and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She continued her community organizing work even after a brutal police beating left her with lasting injuries.



1964

The Democratic National Convention featured Fannie Lou giving a passionate address about racial equity on behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which she had founded to challenge her state's prejudiced, all-white delegation. She also ran a campaign for congress that, while unsuccessful, elevated her national platform. That same year, she worked with Freedom Summer organizers to train college students in civil rights activism strategies, including movement songs—something she became known for in this community.

## The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer

1971 ◀



1965 ◀

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law, but Fannie Lou's work was far from over. She assisted in numerous legal challenges to southern discrimination against black voters and organized a school desegregation lawsuit.



1969

After another failed bid for congress in 1967, Fannie Lou turned her attention to black poverty, housing and food insecurity back in Mississippi. She created Freedom Farms, an agriculture and economic development project to support impoverished black families.

Following a third and final unsuccessful run for office, Fannie Lou co-founded the National Women's Political Caucus and encouraged women to see the intersections of race and gender discrimination. Her voting rights activism later in her career focused on involving women in causes of racial justice, class disparity and political advocacy.

1977

At age 59, Fannie Lou died of complications from breast cancer and her funeral was attended by hundreds of Mississippi locals along with dignitaries and prominent civil rights leaders. She is remembered for her fearless approach to advocacy for black Americans' right to political participation and social equality.

Fannie Lou Hamer is remembered for her fearless approach to advocacy for black Americans' right to political participation and social equality.



# MUSIC AND THE MOVEMENT

MUSIC AND THE MOVEMENT, *continued*

## INEXTRICABLY LINKED IN THE MARCH TOWARDS JUSTICE

Bernice Johnson Reagon, a student leader from Albany, Georgia who joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960s and is now considered one of the leading civil rights music historians, said in a 2006 interview with WGBH in Boston that “One of the first things that’s important when you think about freedom songs and the civil rights movement is to not actually think of freedom songs as if they were created strategically by the Movement. Like the collective breath of the Movement, they were a natural outpouring, evidencing the life force of the fight for freedom.”

### THE SONG LEADER

Central to much of the music deployed as part of the civil rights movement is the call and response element. This gave a song the power to connect large gatherings of people who might not otherwise know each other. This style of Congregational singing is initiated by the song leader, which is separate from the idea of a soloist who typically sings an entire song or sections of it alone. While a song leader may begin alone or introduce new lyrics, it is always the intent of the song leader to include the group and lift everyone’s voices together. Fannie Lou Hamer is noted as one of the movement’s most gifted, frequent, and effective song leaders.



**1965**

From left: Guy Carawan, Fannie Lou Hamer, Bernice Johnson Reagon, and Len Chandler perform civil rights songs at the Newport Folk Festival. Photo Diana Davies



Bernice Johnson Reagon produced the limited-edition recording of *Songs My Mother Taught Me* for the Smithsonian Institution.



### THE ANTHEM

In many cases, songs shifted and grew organically out of the need of a situation, making the exact moment of their incorporation in the movement unclear. However, “We Shall Overcome” is often cited as the Anthem of the Movement and does have a traceable lineage. Zilphia Horton of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, an important training ground for non-violent resistance that often taught songs as one of its most useful tools, heard African American tobacco workers singing it on a picket line in 1946. Horton added some verses and taught this version to Pete Seeger in 1947. In April, 1960 folk singer Guy Carawan sang it to the founding convention of SNCC in Raleigh, North Carolina, and it quickly spread throughout the civil rights movement. Seeger, Carawan, and Frank Hamilton who made a crucial adjustment to the tempo, copyrighted the song to protect it from becoming a commercialized pop song.

**MAY 1965**

Martin Luther King, Jr. addressing a crowd on a street in Lakeview, NY

### POPULAR MUSIC

Many of the songs of the movement are folk songs or hymns, but popular music of the day was also repurposed for the cause. Harry Belafonte was recognized as one of the most visible leaders of the civil rights movement, often using his celebrity status to call attention to injustice. But his music was incorporated into the fight for freedom as well. His song, “Day-O (The Banana Boat Song)”, a Jamaican folk song sung from the perspective of dock workers waiting for their shift to end at day break, was released in 1956 and incorporated by the younger elements of the movement in part, as follows:

Original Folk Lyrics	Calypso Freedom Lyrics (as sung by Willie Peacock)
Day-O, me say Day-O Daylight come and me wan’ go home  Come mister tally man, tally me banana Daylight come and me wan’ go home Come mister tally man, tally me banana	Free-dom, give us free-dom Freedom come and it won’t be long  Well come Mister Kennedy, take me out my misery Freedom come and it won’t be long Well can’t you see what segregations done to me

**Like the collective breath of the Movement, they were a natural outpouring, evidencing the life force of the fight for freedom. —Bernice Johnson Reagon**



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*\*in memoriam*

With deep appreciation to the Sarasota County Commissioners  
who utilized CARES Act funding to support the Arts.

IN MEMORIAM

Asolo Rep would like to recognize those performing arts advocates who passed away  
during the last year. Their memories will live on in the stories we tell.

Ed Alley • Charlie Beye • Margot Coville • Ron Greenbaum • Judith Handelman • Stanley Kane • Stan Katz  
John Lucas • Judith Markstein • John Maxheim • Terrence McNally • Carol Phillips • Flori Roberts  
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*As of January 20, 2021*

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Your unrestricted gift will:

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- Sustain important and deeply integrated education and community engagement programs
- Support local artists, artisans and administration
- Allow us to plan for tomorrow

While we keep you engaged with little-to-no-cost virtual and socially distanced programming (such as Asolo Rep Engage and the Asolo Rep Outdoor Series) know that your gift will make a critical difference as we navigate the challenging months ahead.

With your support, and three heel taps, we look forward to roaring back soon, stronger than ever. Afterall, there's no place quite like Asolo Rep. There's No Place Like Home.