

# "Passing Strange"

Book, Music & Lyrics by Stew

Music by Heidi Rodewald

Created in Collaboration with Annie Dorsen

Musical Direction by Dionne McClain-Freeneey

Directed by Christopher Burris

Choreography by Krisha Marcano

Catawba Theatre

March 24-26, 2022 | 7:30 p.m.

March 27, 2022 | 2 p.m.

March 31-April 2, 2022 | 7:30 p.m.

Presented By

**UNC School of the Arts**

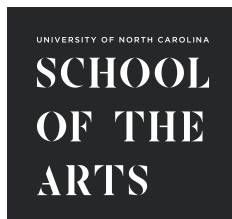
Brian Cole, Chancellor

**School of Drama**

Scott Zigler, Dean

**School of Design & Production**

Michael J. Kelley, Dean



[uncea.edu/performances](https://uncea.edu/performances)

"Passing Strange" is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

"Passing Strange"

Book and Lyrics by Stew

Music by Stew and Heidi Rodewald

Created in Collaboration with Annie Dorsen

"Passing Strange" was originally commissioned, developed and produced by The Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Tony Taccone, Artistic Director; Susan Medak, Managing Director; and The Public Theater, Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director; Mara Manus, Executive Director.

"Passing Strange" was originally produced on Broadway in February 2008 by The Shubert Organization, Elizabeth Ireland McCann, Bill Kenwright, Chase Mishkin, Barbara & Buddy Freitag, Broadway Across America, Emily Fisher Landau, Peter May, Boyett Ostar, Elie Hirschfeld/Jed Bernstein, Wendy Federman/Jackie Barlia Florin, Spring Sirkin/Ruth Hendel, Vasi Laurence/Pat Flicker Adiss, Joey Parnes in association with The Public Theater and The Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"If you're treated a certain way you become a certain kind of person. If certain things are described to you as being real they're real for you whether they're real or not."—James Baldwin

What I miss most about childhood is neither the lack of responsibility nor the innocence (that morphs into despair as you learn about the atrocities humans have inflicted on other humans throughout the history of man). I miss living with an open heart. Though I can't recall the moment I finally learned that my survival depended on my ability to keep my heart safe from harm, it was a lesson that I had to encounter time and time again before that wall was complete and strong enough to withstand the elements.

If you are a living being in the year 2022, you have been traumatized. There is the collective trauma of a worldwide epidemic that came with COVID-19, especially for those that lost family or friends. Yet this shared sense of loss has not brought us closer together. Add to that the advancement of technology that gives us the power to instantly connect to people all over the world, while simultaneously making it more and more difficult to connect to the people with whom we share space. As time presses on, we seem to get further and further away from our shared humanity. We are engulfed in global despair—a pandemic of isolation.

We are all in need of healing. Yet, there is a shared trauma that is unique to the experience of Black Americans in this country, particularly Black men like me. Our healing must address the fact that we are universally feared. When the Youth in "Passing Strange" lands in Amsterdam, he exclaims, "The kind of place I want to be is where no one's cold or scared of me." Even now, I am unable to describe what it is like to be feared everywhere I go, and how that fear keeps others from seeing me as I am. What I can say is that I understand that the fear isn't mine. I also understand how their fear of me led me to fear myself.

From seventh grade until the completion of graduate school, my education took place in predominantly white spaces. This has continued as I stepped into the role of educator. There are some truths that have become evident to me in places of higher education like UNCSA. In these spaces, my intelligence becomes a threat. My kindness is typically overlooked, while my confidence becomes arrogance. Despite my years learning and training so that I might earn my seat at the table, the message is repeatedly sent that I do not belong.

My first day on campus at UNCSA was the day before classes started in the fall semester. On this day, I was detained and interrogated by campus police, who stopped me because a student called saying I was suspicious. The accessories that would otherwise explain my presence were turned into evidence that I was a threat. My khaki colored shorts were suspicious. My backpack. My face mask. Even the white bag that contained a few shirts I picked up at Goodwill on my way to campus was reported as suspicious. Worst of all, I was wearing shades that often become necessary for me because of my eyes' sensitivity to light. After an excruciating ordeal I was allowed to exit campus, carrying a traumatic episode that resurfaces every time I see campus police or pass by their building.

How real is "Passing Strange"? Is it autobiographical? How real are the stories we create about each other? How real is your pain? What is real? What is real for me, and something I believe I share with the show's creator Stew, is my belief

that art has the capacity to heal. This is a requirement for anything I direct. If it does not facilitate the possibility of healing, particularly within the Black community, I can't do it. I write this while sitting across from the Lorraine Motel in Memphis where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. His sacrifice paved the way for me and it is my obligation to do the same, in my way, for those that might follow in my footsteps. I aim to never take an opportunity for granted, and this is no exception. It was a privilege to have led this incredible collaboration of artists, so that we might offer the students of UNCSA something real. —Christopher Burris

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## CAST

Narrator .....	Murphy Applin
Youth .....	Deandre Sevon
Rev. Jones, Terry, Christopher & Hugo .....	Seth McLaughlin
Marianna, Edwina & Sudabey .....	Kennedy Jackson
Mother .....	Bailey James
Franklin, Mr. Venus & Joop .....	Maleek Slade
Kelso, Desi, Sherry & Renata .....	Aisha Sougou
Heidi .....	Jasmine Hurt

"Passing Strange" is a Studio 3 & 4 production.

UNCSA gratefully acknowledges  
Patty and Malcolm Brown for their generous support.

# PRODUCTION STAFF

## Scenic Designer

Gisela Estrada

## Lighting Designer

Wheeler Moon

## Sound Designer

Samuel Hayes

## Costume Designer

Cassandra Sisson

## Wig & Makeup Designer

Nathaniel Jones

## Technical Director

Ryan Lasich

## Production Manager

Lauren Kean

## Production Stage Manager

Amanda Wingo

## School of Music Liaison

Ken Wilmot

## Intimacy Coach

Robin Christian-McNair

## Assistant Music Director

Nic Brown

## Dance Captain

Deandre Sevon

## Dialect Coach

Robin Christian-McNair

## Vocal Coach

Sonya Brown

## Assistant Director

Maya Mays

Director of Production ..... Joel Magill  
 Assistant Production Manager ..... Lauren Wieland  
 Deck Stage Manager ..... Stephanie Brown  
 Assistant Stage Manager ..... Eva Schramm-Hesse  
 Assistant Lighting Designer ..... Liz Shekhterman-Baklar  
 Assistant Sound Designer ..... Dylan Schoolfield  
 Assistant Scenic Designer ..... McKenna Farlow  
 Costume Design Assistant/  
 Wardrobe Supervisor ..... Damarius Kennedy  
 Assistant Wig & Makeup Designer ..... Cayla Mahome  
 Automation Engineer ..... Kaci Kidder  
 Automation Fabricators ..... Nomi Frank, Kaci Kidder, Van Wei  
 Automation Operator ..... Nomi Frank  
 Draftsperson/Lead Carpenter/Deck Chief ..... Emmy J. Babyak  
 Carpentry Crew ..... Kaillou Aguirre, Eric Clawson  
 ..... Colleen Goropeuschek, Ben Hirschfield  
 ..... Jamie Martinsen, Alexis Mundle, Emma Perch  
 Lead Welders ..... Colleen Goropeuschek, Jamie Martinsen  
 Deck Crew ..... Sam Albritton, Emmy J. Babykak, Alex Drake  
 ..... Miranda Sampaio De Faria, Cam Flurry, Yael Jeshion-Nelson

Scenery Crew ..... Eric Clawson, Ben Hirschfield  
..... Alexis Mundle, Emma Perch  
Scenic Charge Artist ..... Katie Pulling  
Lead Scenic Artist ..... Olivia Hill  
Painters ..... Tess Crabtree, Lauren Eckard, Tessa Hager  
..... Abrianna Harmon, Jasmine Hernandez, Renae Losee  
..... Clara Rimes, Paige Spizzo, Ross Stephens, Jordan Taylor  
Production Electrician ..... Kyle Munden  
Head Electrician ..... Dominick Riches  
Production Electrician Consultant/  
Head Set Electrician ..... Eric Hill  
Programmer ..... Camryn Banks  
Follow Spot Caller ..... Eric Hill  
Follow Spot Operators ..... Emma Fagin, Julian Rees  
..... Daniel Rosales, Cassandra Rubio  
Head Set Electrician ..... Eric Hill  
Electricians ..... Cat Alewine, Iris Barger, Lee Martinez Cruz  
..... Emma Fagin, Amanda Fisk, Izzy Flores, Malcolm Foster  
..... Abby Gragg, Jacob Grebber, Darian Horvath  
..... Trevor Kirschenheiter, Alyssa Landry, Mack Leach  
..... Jack Koch, Lauren Lee, Harrison Marcus, Tyler McKinnon  
..... Eric Nelson, Daniel Rosales, Cooper Reed, Julian Rees  
..... Cassandra Rubio, Ashley Spear, Joey Todd  
..... Bridgette Tran, Josh Wisham  
Costume Shop Manager ..... Marie Lupia  
Drapers ..... Hannah Andrews, Alex Brown, Quincy D'Alessio  
..... Molly Klemm, Lillian Murphy, Tsung-Ju Yang  
First Hands ..... Em Chesney, Jemima Firestone Greville, Zoe Gilreath  
..... Marquita Horton, Ella Moffly, Maki Niikura  
..... Megan Peck, Maggie Tennant, Will Wharton  
Stitchers. .... Catherine Alvord, Jenna Anderson, Iris Barger  
..... Tahtiana Bellins, Anna Casino, Five Dodge  
..... Isabel Egbert, Maggie Hammond, Adriaen Hobgood  
..... Mackenzie Hughes, Elliott Hunter, Olivia Keserich  
..... Isy Kessler, Annika Low, Sarah McElcheran  
..... Adeline Merson, Kira Miller, Mya Nunez, Isabella Rebollo  
..... Alastair Shoulders, Lyssa Troemel, Maureen Wynne

Costume Crafts Head ..... Lily Mateus  
Costume Crafts Assistant ..... Sara Petty  
Wardrobe ..... Ella Colbus, Mel Davis, Maggie Hammond  
Wig & Makeup Build Crew/Run Crew ..... Rose Eubanks, Courtney Kakac  
..... Cayla Mahome, Khepra Hetep, Hope Medwin  
Wig & Makeup Shop Manager ..... Hallie Moore  
Properties Director ..... Becky Hicks (she/her)  
Assistant Properties Director ..... Valerie Bashford (they/them/she/her)  
Lead Artisan ..... Alex Drake  
Artisans ..... Henry Beard (he/him), Natalie Carney (she/her)  
..... Nat Carreiro (they/them), Jenna Carroll, Renee Chasey (she/her)  
..... Ella Colbus, Megan DeVolder (she/they), Grace DiMaio (she/her)  
..... Praveer Gangwani (he/him), Gwen Landrum  
..... Josh Lawson (he/him), Olivia Keserich, Miles Maline  
..... Olivia Miller (she/her), Kendall Myers (they/them)  
..... Kay Raff (they/them), Nikolas Serrano  
Production Sound Engineer ..... Camille Everett  
Head Sound Engineer ..... Jaedon Harpe  
Com & Video Engineer ..... Jesse Wilen  
Deck Sound Engineer ..... Thania Melendez

### **Special Thanks**

Martin Lighting

Bandit Lites

KayRon V. Lantz

Molly Doan

## **THE BAND**

### **Keyboard**

Dionne McClain-Freeneay

### **Guitar**

Megan Maloney

### **Bass**

Sinclair Palmer

### **Percussion**

Chrishawn Darby (Mar. 24-26 & Apr. 1, 2)

Alston Harris (Mar. 27 & 31)



# BIOGRAPHY

**Stew** (composer, lyricist, librettist) "Passing Strange," which Stew starred in and co-wrote with Heidi Rodewald, premiered at Berkeley Rep and the Public Theater (2006/2007) before transferring to Broadway in 2008. The show has been honored with the Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Musical and the 2008 Obie Award for Best New American Theater Piece, as well as a Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical. Stew also received Tony nominations for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical, Best Original Score and Best Orchestrations.

Stew is the critically acclaimed singer, songwriter, founder and leader of The Negro Problem, a pop-rock combo from Los Angeles whose works include "Post Minstrel Syndrome" (1997), "Joys and Concerns" (1999) and "Welcome Black" (2002). Along with Heidi Rodewald, he co-founded the Afro-Baroque cabaret ensemble known as Stew. Their works include "Guest Host" (2000), "The Naked Dutch Painter" (2002) and "Something Deeper Than These Changes" (2003). He was an artist-in-residence at the California Institute of the Arts (2004-2005), Sundance Theater Lab (2004-2005), Sundance Screenwriter's Lab (2005) and Sundance Director's Lab (2005). Stew is also the composer of "Gary Come Home" for the "SpongeBob SquarePants" cartoon.

**Heidi Rodewald** (composer) has spent over a decade as a performer, arranger, producer, and composer for both The Negro Problem and the multi-disciplinary ensemble known as Stew. She co-wrote the musical "Passing Strange," which premiered at Berkeley Rep/The Public Theatre (2006-2007) and then transferred to Broadway in 2008, where it was nominated for seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical, Best Original Score and Best Orchestrations. The show has been honored with the Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Musical and the 2008 Obie Award for Best New American Theater Piece. She composed music for Karen Kandel's "Portraits: Night and Day" (2004) and co-wrote with Stew the screenplay "We Can See Today," Sundance Screenwriters Lab/Director's Lab (2005). She wrote and performed with seminal female punk band Wednesday Week.

**Annie Dorsen** (premiere director) is a theater director working at the intersection of algorithmic art and live performance. Her most recent project, Infinite Sun, is an algorithmic sound installation commissioned by the Sharjah Biennial 14 (2019). Previous performance projects include "The Great Outdoors" (2017), "Yesterday Tomorrow" (2015), "A Piece of Work" (2013), "Spokaoke (2012)" and "Hello Hi There" (2010). These pieces have been presented at numerous theatres and festivals worldwide, including at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (New York), Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin), the steirischer herbst festival (Graz), the Holland Festival (Amsterdam) and the Festival d'Automne (Paris).

In 2010, she collaborated with choreographer Anne Juren on "Magical," presented at ImPulsTanz Festival Vienna, Lyon Biennale de la Danse, Théâtre de la Cité International Paris, Kampnagel Hamburg and many others. In 2009, she created two music-theatre pieces, "Ask Your Mama," a setting of Langston Hughes' 1962 poem, composed by Laura Karpman and sung by Jessye Norman and The Roots (Carnegie Hall) and "ETHEL's Truckstop," seen at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival.

# BIOGRAPHY

She is the co-creator of the 2008 Broadway musical "Passing Strange," which she also directed. Spike Lee made a film of her production of the piece, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009 and was released theatrically by IFC in 2010. Her pop-political performance project "Democracy in America" was presented at PS122 in spring 2008. The short film "I Miss," originally the centerpiece of Democracy in America, screened at American Film Institute Festival (AFI Fest), SXSW Film Festival, The New York Film Festival's "Views From the Avant-Garde" and the Nantucket Film Festival.

She has taught at University of Chicago and Bard College, and she been a frequent guest lecturer at numerous universities and art schools in the U.S. and abroad. Dorsen is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the Spalding Gray Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grant to Artists Award and the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts.

**Christopher Burris** (director) is a visiting faculty member who has taught and directed at NYU, Pace University, Laguardia Community College and the University of California San Diego. Theater directing credits include: "Detroit '67" at UNCSEA, "Measure for Measure" for NYU's Graduate Acting, Scott Joplin's opera "Treemonisha" in Newark, the off-Broadway revival of A.R. Gurney's "The Fourth Wall" and "The Brothers Size," which received five 2016 Broadway World Award nominations including Best Play and Best Director. Burris has an extensive resume as a professional actor in theater (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse), film ("Shook," "Contamination"), commercials (NY Post, Dr. Scholl's), and voice-overs (Grand Theft Auto V, McDonalds, Burger King, AT&T). Both his writing and photography have been featured in American Theatre Magazine, and this fall he will direct American Shakespeare Center's production of "Pass Over." Drama League Director's Council Member & Nomination Committee. SDC Member. This production of "Passing Strange" is dedicated to his mother, Mary.

**Dionne McClain-Freney** (musical director) Composer: "The Movie Star & The Mammy" (Joe's Pub), "The Sugar Hill Sisters" (NYMF). Composer & Lyricist: "Rainbow Lullaby" (Broadway Records), "The Harriet Holland Social Club" (Movement Theatre Company), "Rice & Rocks" (Brooklyn Children's Theatre), "Going Home: Movement of Voices" (N.Y. Philharmonic's New World Initiative), "This One Girl's Story" (NC A&T, NYMF, Gayfest, GLAAD Media Award nominee). Music direction: "Brecht on Brecht" (Off-Broadway), "Spiritual Uprising" (People's Light & Theatre), "Black Queens Screen Test" (The Tank), "Turn The Volume Up!-Amplifying Black Keys" (Ring of Keys), "For Colored Girls" (Public Theatre), "We Got Beth, Billy Ragamatag and the Shadow Circus," "Shrek," "Beauty and The Beast" (Piper Theatre), "The Fourth Wall" (Off-Broadway). "Bring The Beat Back" (Polyphone Theatre Festival). BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop. TGBTG!

# BIOGRAPHY

**Krishna Marcano** (choreographer), who joined UNC School of the Arts (UNCSA) in 2016, is the assistant professor of theatre dance and the assistant dean for student affairs and entrepreneurial studies for UNCSA's School of Drama. After dancing with both The Martha Graham Dance Company and The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre for the first six years of her career, she spent the next 17 years on Broadway in hits like "Fosse" (1st national tour); Disney's "Aida"; "Sweet Charity"; "Motown The Musical"; and originated the role of Squeak in Oprah's "The Color Purple" (2005).

In 2008, Marcano received a Commendation from the City of New York for her lasting contributions to both the Caribbean American community and New York City. Volunteering at Career Transition for Dancers as the co-chair of the Business Group for seven years, then earning her MBA in Entrepreneurship, Marcano launched The Artistry Center in 2016 to help performing artists with artistic and entrepreneurial wellness.

## THE SCHOOL OF DRAMA

Ranked among the best drama schools in the world, the School of Drama is an immersive experience that prepares talented young artists for successful careers on stage, online, and in film and television. Conservatory training grounded in classical values adds technical skills practice to shape creatively inspired, versatile actors who are in-demand today. Students perform constantly in both small workshops and major productions across the theatrical repertory. An outstanding resident faculty gives personalized attention to their students' growth.

## THE SCHOOL OF DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Unlike other schools that incorporate design and production within theatre studies programs, the School of Design and Production is a highly regarded, independent conservatory. The school is ranked #3 in the nation. Employing a resident faculty of experienced professionals, the school offers a comprehensive curriculum in every aspect of modern stagecraft, from scene design to stage management. Students gain practical experience working on a variety of productions inside theaters of all styles and sizes, and within 100,000 square feet of production space. Graduates have careers in theater, film, television, dance, opera, live and themed entertainment, and more.

## DEAN'S COUNCILS FOR UNCSA

The Dean's Councils support each of UNCSA's five arts schools - Dance, Design & Production, Drama, Filmmaking, and Music. Dean's Council members support the school of their choosing with an annual gift of \$5,000 or more, work closely with the Dean to advance that school's mission and fundraising priorities, and enjoy a deeper relationship with the Dean and students of the school. If you are interested in joining one of these groups of committed individuals, please contact Vice Chancellor for Advancement Lissy Garrison at 336-770-3329 or [whittingtonr@uncsa.edu](mailto:whittingtonr@uncsa.edu).

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Mrs. Sharon D. Johe

Mr. Thomas S. Kenan III

# UNCSA MANIFESTO

## We Believe

**Artists** enrich our culture, enlighten our society, lift our spirits, and feed our souls.

Integrative **arts education** from an early age sparks a lifetime of creative thinking, powerful self-expression, and innovative problem solving.

Rigorous **artistic training** empowers our students and graduates to engage our communities, advance local and global creative industries, and inspire the world.

**Arts organizations** improve the quality of life and place in big cities and small communities, transforming them from merely livable to truly lovable.

**UNC School of the Arts** nurtures the talent, hones the craft, and develops the unique voices of emerging artists. We realize the full potential of exceptionally creative and passionate students to do their best work and become their best selves.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is important for many of us, as settle-descended persons, to consider how the land we occupy continues to interrupt the cultural, linguistic, historical and political connections that indigenous peoples have to this land. We must continue to recognize how we have, wittingly and unwittingly, remained as actors in the colonization of what we regard as our original context of teaching and learning. UNCSA is on the ancestral land of the Tuleto, Sappony, Catawba and Keyauwee tribes.

A land acknowledgment gives honor to and recognizes indigenous territories and indigenous people respective to the location(s) we currently work and live. A land acknowledgment serves as a reminder that the land you currently occupy has long been occupied by indigenous peoples who have a distinct linguistic, cultural and historical connection to the land.

# UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

## **UNCSA Symphony Orchestra with Michael Butterman: Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet"**

Saturday, March 26, 2022 | 7:30 p.m.

Stevens Center

Guest Conductor and Artist-in-Residence Michael Butterman (opens in new tab) conducts the season finale concert of the UNCSA Symphony Orchestra performing the orchestral suite from Prokofiev's most loved ballet "Romeo and Juliet" on a program that also features works from the latter half of the 20th century, both performed with accompanying video.

## **The Reynolda Quartet: In The Footsteps of a Giant**

Sunday, March 27, 2022 | 3 p.m.

Reynolda House Museum of American Art

Founded in 2019 to illustrate a progressive partnership between two of Winston-Salem's premier cultural organizations, Reynolda Quartet features renowned faculty-artists Ida Bieler and Janet Orenstein, violins; Ulrich Eichenauer, viola; and Brooks Whitehouse, cello.

## **"Mother Tongue" - A devised theater production**

March 31-April 2, 2022 | 7:30 p.m.

April 3, 2022 | 2 p.m.

April 7-9, 2022 | 7:30 p.m.

Freedman Theatre

"To know a person is to hear them speak and to look at their trash. And thus, 'Mother Tongue' is born." The first UNCSA devised theater production conceived and directed by a student, "Mother Tongue" was inspired by Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage and Her Children" and interviews with Brazilian waste pickers.

# UNCSA

[unca.edu/performances](https://unca.edu/performances)