

MEDIA RELEASE

Oscar-winning screenwriter Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Choir Boy* runs April 15-May 14



Previews Begin Apr. 15 | Opening Night is Apr. 21 | Closes May 14

[REQUEST PRESS TICKETS](#)

March 16, 2023 — PORTLAND, OR. The glorious harmonizing of spirituals and exuberant, soulful dancing will raise the roof at Portland Center Stage this spring when Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Choir Boy* soars onto the U.S. Bank Main Stage. *Choir Boy* begins preview performances on April 15, opens on April 21, and runs through May 14. Tickets are on sale now.

PCS's Associate Artistic Director Chip Miller directs this coming-of-age story of a young, black, gay student making his way at the Charles R Drew Prep School for Boys. Music Director DeReau

K. Farrar, the director of music at the First Unitarian Church of Portland, will bring the lush choral music to life. Isaiah Reynolds will make his PCS debut starring as Pharus Jonathan Young, joined by Luther Brooks IV, Delphon “DJ” Curtis Jr., Kevin Loomis, Don Kenneth Mason, Gerrin Delane Mitchell, and Wildlin Pierrevil.

Like the semi-autobiographical play that was the basis for the film *Moonlight*, McCraney drew from his own experiences for *Choir Boy*: “When I was that age, I was growing up black and queer in the South, and looking to be part of a community. I always felt like I had to negotiate who I was in order to do that. I still remember going to high school and how terrifying it was to try to be open and myself and excel in all the ways that I wanted to excel,” McCraney said in an interview with *Variety*.

McCraney also spoke about the play’s renewed relevance in an interview with *Theatre Mania*: “Cut to, you know, 2022 and there are states banning young folks from even identifying as gay or trans or bi or as queer. The words ‘queer theory’ are stricken from high-school learning and teaching. Here in Florida — where I’m from, where *Choir Boy* is set in my mind — that’s what’s happening.”

Choir Boy premiered in 2012 at the Royal Court Theatre in London and opened on Broadway in 2019, where it was nominated for four Tony Awards, including Best Play, and won a Special Tony Award. *Variety* called the play a “penetrating look at race, masculinity, and sexuality” and *NY Daily News* called it “stirring and stylishly told,” noting that “Tarell Alvin McCraney cannily explores race and sexuality and the graces and gravity of history.” *The Guardian* raved that “the songs bring the house down ... *Choir Boy* ascends and its choirboys achieve, as long as the notes hold, what feels like freedom.”

ABOUT THE PLAY

From the Academy Award-winning writer of *Moonlight*, comes this exhilarating story about Pharus, a young, gay student leading the gospel choir at his elite, all-boys prep school. Can a rigid institution that prides itself on producing “strong, ethical black men” contain Pharus, who is a quiet rebel at his core? Or can Pharus inspire the very nature of the school to shift forever?

Identity and community clash in this Tony-nominated hit. Filled with rousing music and soul-stirring dance, this play rejoices in all that it means to march to your own drum.

SPECIAL EVENTS

[The People's Party: BIPOC Affinity Performance for *Choir Boy*](#)

Sun., May 14, 2 p.m. • Sliding scale tickets w/ FREE pre- & post-show offerings

The People's Party: BIPOC Affinity Performances are a mindful curation of an environment meant to center the experience of people who identify as part of the BIPOC community (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). These events include exciting pre- or post-show offerings and complimentary Deschutes Brewery beer.

PLAYWRIGHT TARELL ALVIN MCCRANEY

Tarell Alvin McCraney's script *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue* is the basis for the Oscar-winning film *Moonlight* directed by Barry Jenkins, for which McCraney and Jenkins won an Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay. He wrote the film *High Flying Bird* which premiered on Netflix directed by Steven Soderbergh. McCraney's plays include *MS. BLAKK FOR PRESIDENT* (co-written with Tina Landau), *The Brother/Sister Plays* trilogy, *Head of Passes*, *Wig Out!*, and *Choir Boy*. McCraney is the recipient of a MacArthur "Genius" Grant, the Whiting Award, the Steinberg Playwright Award, the Evening Standard Award, the New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award, the Paula Vogel Playwriting Award, the Windham Campbell Award, and a USA Artist Award. He is the chair of playwriting at Yale School of Drama; an ensemble member at Steppenwolf Theatre Chicago; and a member of Teo Castellanos/D-Projects. McCraney is currently working on an original scripted TV series, *David Makes Man*, for Oprah Winfrey's OWN Network, produced by Michael B. Jordan and Page Fright Productions.

THE CAST

The powerful cast of seven consists of Isaiah Reynolds (*Choir Boy* at SpeakEasy Stage) playing Pharus Jonathan Young; his fellow students Luther Brooks IV (National Tour of *Annie*) playing Bobby Marrow, Delphon "DJ" Curtis Jr. (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and *Curious Incident* at PCS) playing David Heard, Gerrin Delane Mitchell (*Dreamgirls* at PCS) playing Junior Davis, and Wildlin Pierrevil (*Choir Boy* at Yale Repertory Theatre) playing Anthony Justin "AJ" James. Don Kenneth Mason returns (*the ripple, the wave that carried me home* and *Dreamgirls* at PCS) as

Headmaster Marrow and Kevin Loomis (*Inherit the Wind* and *Spider-Man* on Broadway) plays one of the school's professors, Mr. Pendelton.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Director Chip Miller (*It's a Wonderful Life* and *Rent* at PCS) is joined by Music Director DeReau K. Farrar in his PCS debut (Director of Music at First Unitarian Church of Portland) and PCS regulars Scenic Designer Brittany Vasta (*the ripple, the wave that carried me home*); Costume Designer Dominique Fawn Hill (*Rent*), Lighting Designer Marika Kent (*August Wilson's Gem of the Ocean*); Sound Designer Ash (*tick, tick ... BOOM!*); Fight Coordinator Kristen Mun-Van Noy; Stage Manager Haille Lantz, and Assistant Stage Manager Jasmyn Tilford.

TICKET AND PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

When: April 15 - May 14, 2023*

***Opening Night/Press Night:** Friday, April 21, at 7:30 p.m.

Preview Performances: April 15, 16, 19, and 20 at 7:30 p.m.

Pay What You Will Performances: April 16 and May 4 at 7:30 p.m.

The People's Party: BIPOC Affinity Performance: May 14 at 2 p.m.

Where: On the U.S. Bank Main Stage at The Armory, 128 NW Eleventh Ave, Portland, Oregon.

To Purchase Regular Tickets: Prices range from \$25 to \$98 and tickets may be purchased at pcs.org/choir-boy, 503.445.3700, or in person from the box office. *Prices vary by date and time and are subject to change.*

Ticket Specials: Visit pcs.org/deals to view ticket specials, including Rush Tickets, Pay What You Will, Arts for All, Active Duty, Military Veteran, Student, Under 30, The Armory Card, Groups of 10+, and more.

Please Note: This production is recommended for ages 14 and up. It contains adult situations and language, depictions of racism and homophobia, and sexual and discriminatory language. Learn more by calling 503-445-3700.

Accessibility: Learn about accessibility options at pcs.org/access.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE

[Portland Center Stage's](https://portlandcenterstage.org) mission is to create transcendent theatrical experiences and

community programs that break down the barriers separating people. We support our community in celebrating the full scope of humanity, appreciating difference, and fostering belonging. PCS was established in 1988 as a branch of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and became independent in 1994. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Marissa Wolf and Managing Director Liam Kaas-Lentz, the company produces a mix of classic, contemporary, and world-premiere productions, along with a variety of high-quality education and community programs. As part of its dedication to new play development, PCS has produced 29 world premieres, many of which were developed at its JAW New Play Festival. PCS's home is The Armory, a historic building originally constructed in 1891. After a major renovation, The Armory opened in 2006 as the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, the first performing arts venue in the country, and the first building in Portland to achieve a LEED Platinum rating.

Portland Center Stage is committed to identifying and interrupting instances of racism and all forms of oppression, through the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA). Learn more at pcs.org/idea.

[Portland Center Stage's 2022-2023 season](#) is funded in part by Season Superstars the Regional Arts and Culture Council and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation; Season Sponsors the Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency funded by the state of Oregon and the National Endowment for the Arts, and US Bank; and Producing Sponsors Ellyn Bye, Ray and Bobbi Davis, Ronni Lacroute, Mark Spencer, Argyle Winery, and Deschutes Brewery.

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