

ARTIST BIOS

Brandon Taylor Smith is excited to make his second appearance with Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre. He has been performing in Baton Rouge since 2016 and has been in many productions with Theatre Baton Rouge and Playmakers of Baton Rouge, including *The Glass Menagerie* (Jim), *Godspell* (All Good Gifts Soloist), *Clue* (Professor Plum), *A Few Good Men* (Jack Ross), *Hair* (Margaret Mead), *The Rocky Horror Show* (Riff Raff), *Cabaret* (Ernst Ludwig), and *James and the Giant Peach* (Ladahlord), among others. He would like to thank the production staff for including him among such a wonderful ensemble. He would also like to send his Love to Anna and Phoenix, and Veda Jayne for their love and support.



Brandy Johnson, a native of Baton Rouge, earned a Bachelor of Music Education from Loyola University New Orleans and a Master of Music from University of Kentucky. As an opera singer Brandy has sung with Washington National Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Chicago Opera Theatre, and La Scala in Milan. Brandy participated in the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program with Washington National Opera, where she made her debut as Mercedes in Bizet's *Carmen*. Other roles include Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), and Carmen (*Carmen*). Brandy performed in Oman with Placido

Domingo in a concert to open the Royal Opera House of Muscat. Brandy is currently a music educator with the East Baton Rouge Parish School System serving as a Talented Music Teacher at McKinley Middle Magnet, Baton Rouge Center for the Visual and Performing Arts, and Forest Heights Academy. She is an active performer with Theatre Baton Rouge, Playmakers, and the Manship Theatre. In December, Brandy performed *Simply Having a Wonderful Christmas Time* at the Manship Theatre and was a feature performer with Louisiana Arts and Science Museum's *Mighty Voices* cabaret performance. Brandy has directed for Playmakers (*Annie Jr.*), Independence Park Theatre (*Xanadu Jr.*, *The Grinch*) and Manship Theatre (*Aladdin Kids*, *Mathilda Jr.*) Brandy is currently directing *Alice in Wonderland* at Theatre Baton Rouge.



Celeste Veillon is honored to have been asked to appear once again in *Broadway at the Ballet*. She has performed professionally for years in theaters from New Orleans to Baton Rouge and arenas and venues across the country. Audiences and theater peers have acknowledged her work with numerous awards and nominations for her theatrical roles including a Broadway World Regional Award. She maintains a solo performance career with concerts, recitals and one woman shows and currently serves as Director of Music and Liturgy/cantor at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Brusly. She helps others share their own musical talents and fulfill their performance dreams through her private voice studio, The Studio of

Vocal Arts. Many of her students have performed on Broadway, Broadway tours, Disney World as well as having singing and music teaching careers of their own. Celeste attended LSU School of Music, graduating with top honors. She has released two solo albums, *A Time Will Come for Singing* and *Were You There- Meditations for a Spiritual Journey*. Celeste's music can be found on iTunes.



Dana Todd Lux, mezzo-soprano, received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from LSU and a Masters in Choral Music Education from the University of Louisiana at Monroe. A veteran performer, director, educator, and volunteer with numerous community theater programs and camps throughout Louisiana, Dana has a passion for performing musical theater and teaching it! In her spare time, she sings back-up for the King Creole Orchestra and Elvis tribute artists. She is also honored to play one of the grandmothers BRBT's *The Nutcracker*. This is her sixth-year teaching middle

and high school choir and musical theater at the LSU Laboratory School. She is married to jeweler Sandy Lux and has three boys, three cats, a dog, and three grandchildren.

David Ellis (Bass) is an experienced bassist and guitarist, collaborating with other Baton Rouge musicians for 30 years. He plays a wide range of styles, including jazz, rock, pop, country, folk, blues, and gospel. He has also played in the pit and onstage in local musical theater productions. He is currently expanding his horizons to include recording and production.



Elizabeth Mathews is honored and thrilled to be co-directing this Gala for BRBT. She is a former soloist with the Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre and continues to perform in BRBT's *The Nutcracker*, *A Tale from the Bayou*. Elizabeth teaches ballet at the Dancers's Workshop and Talented Theatre at Baton Rouge Magnet High School. She has performed locally with Theatre Baton Rouge, Swine Palace, LSU Theatre, LSU Opera, Playmakers, and Red Magnolia Theatre. Elizabeth has also worked in theaters across the country and on Broadway. She holds a B.A. in Theatre and an M.S. in Human Resource: Workforce Development and Leadership from LSU. GYBOTF. Thank you, Jill.



Jennifer Ellis is excited to co-direct her third *Broadway At The Ballet* gala. She has been performing and providing arts education in the community for over 30 years. Her experience ranges from founding/directing Greater Baton Rouge Children's Chorus, teaching vocal music in the classroom and as a private teacher, Chorus Master for Opera Louisiane, and music direction at Theatre Baton Rouge. Onstage she has played a number of principal roles in shows like *The King and I*, *My Fair Lady*, *Camelot*, and *Mamma Mia* to name a few. Three years ago she began performing jazz standards with her husband David in the Bishop Ellis Trio.



Jenny Heroman Koenig is thrilled to be returning to the stage! She studied voice with Ninfa Caruso and dance with Tari's School of Dance for most of her life and her theatrical credits include several local productions for the BRBT, Playmakers, ACT, TBR, the Cabaret Theatre, and Episcopal Theatre. Jenny has a B.A. in Mass Communication from LSU and worked in the TV industry for 12 years, but recently became a certified teacher through the Teach Ascension Academy. She's now teaching religion in the Lower School at Episcopal. She also sang with the Something Blue Band for 10 years, but moved on to her favorite role of all: being mom to her 4-year-old, Joey, and 2-year old, Jonathan.



Kristyn Van Cleve (Accompanist) A proud California Bay Area native now based in Baton Rouge, Kristyn received her Master of Music in Collaborative Piano from New York University, and is now pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Collaborative Piano and Pedagogy at LSU where she holds a graduate assistantship as a pianist and coach, accompanying voice lessons, masterclasses, lyric diction, acting, and conducting classes for both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as teaching keyboard skills classes for undergraduates. Recently she served as the rehearsal pianist and coach for LSU Opera's production of *A Little Night Music*. Outside of academia, she serves as the resident pianist and coach for Building Voices of the

Future - an online voice intensive created by NYU alumni for high school students, focused on developing well rounded and impactful artists. Her goal is to cultivate the next generation of impactful musicians by creating a warm and welcoming environment where students feel the freedom to express themselves through music. When not sitting at a piano or teaching, Kristyn can be found wandering the French Impressionist collection of an art museum or trying a new restaurant with friends!

Lee Hartman (Rehearsal Accompanist) is a keyboard player who has worked with churches and theaters for over 25 years. Lee is currently the music director for the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, plays in the orchestra pit at Theatre Baton Rouge, and has worked with LSU's Swine Palace and Musical Theatre Club.

As a church and theater pianist, Lee is a jack of all trades, and loves playing all genres of music. Some favorite theater credits include *Cabaret*, *Fun Home*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, and *Rock of Ages*. Playing for singers and dancers is Lee's favorite kind of work. With music degrees from the University of Tulsa and the University of Illinois, but in a quest for instruments that can't be tuned reliably, Lee has recently turned to banjo and accordion.



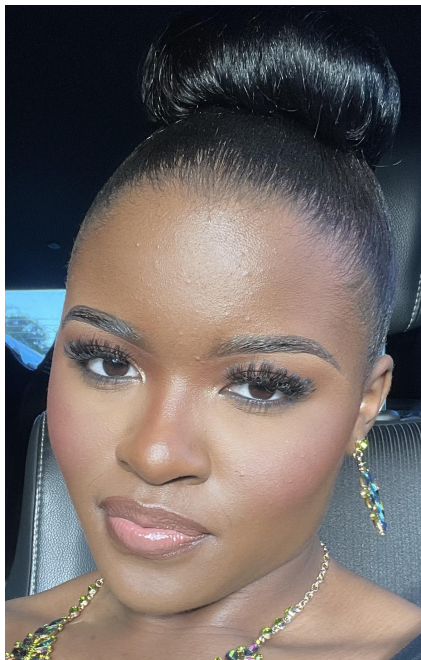
Leonard Augustus, Jr is a dancer, singer, actor, choreographer, and stage and multimedia performer. His dance trading began nearly 40 years ago at Dancers' Workshop. He was the original Nutcracker and Arabian Prince for BRBT's *Nutcracker- A Tale from the Bayou* and has danced many roles over his 40 years of dance. He's an award-winning stage performer with TBR, formerly Baton Rouge Little Theatre and serves the arts community and numerous charities through dance including dancing with the stars type events. Community service and building is his passion and whenever dance can be used to educate, he uses it, even in his retirement which began 3 years ago. "I never think about things I cannot do."



Ray Gaspard is delighted to be invited and returns to *Broadway at the Ballet* for a second year! It was 1978 when Ray first set foot on a Baton Rouge stage and in the last 45 years he has traversed virtually every one Red Stick has to offer. From musicals, to straight plays, to dramatic readings, to church productions and of course fundraisers, Ray has been a recognizable face for nearly half a century. Ray has also been involved with various film and television productions here in Hollywood south. Most recently Ray's been seen in "National Treasure" on Disney+, "True Lies" on CBS, and soon to be released indie "Lisa Frankenstein". Ray is pleased to be with you again this evening, and hopes you enjoy the show.



Richard Williams' favorite theatrical roles include the title role in *Willy Wonka* at ACT, Harold Hill in TBR's *The Music Man*, Frankie in both *Forever Plaid* and *Plaid Tidings* and The Tinman in *The Wizard of Oz*. Offstage, Richard is an attorney and serves as Deputy Director of the Louisiana Municipal Association. He received the Baton Rouge Bar Association President's Award for co-creating Arts Judicata with the Arts Council of Great Baton Rouge and serves on the Louisiana State Arts Council. He is a soloist at First Baptist Church in Baton Rouge and is past King of the New Orleans Krewe of Iris.



Sydni Wheeler, a junior at Baton Rouge Magnet High School, is extremely excited to be joining this year's stellar production of *Broadway at the Ballet*. While Sydni is fairly new to community theater, she has spent this past year participating in school performances. In fall of 2022, she acted as the lead understudy for Sophie in *Mamma Mia!* and she also has been featured in in-class Talented Theatre I ensemble productions such as *A Night of Scenes*. Sydni's recent intrinsic motivation to involve herself in theater is on par with her passion for vocal performance. She has been involved in both local and school choirs since 2nd grade under the direction of Emily Defoe and has been a member of the EBRPSS Talented Music program since 6th grade under the direction of Dr. John Madere and Dr. Kimberly Costanza. She aspires to double concentrate in Political

Science and Vocal Performance, eventually mastering the art of performing arts rehabilitation.



Timothy "Timmie" Callais holds an MFA in Acting from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, a B.S. in Theatre Performance and Directing from Northwestern State University, and he is formally trained in long-form improvisation with iO Chicago. Favorite musical roles include Billy Flynn (*Chicago*), Leo Bloom (*The Producers*), Julian Marsh (*42nd Street*), George (*Sunday in the Park with George*), Lumiere (*Beauty and the Beast*), and Franklin Hart, Jr. (*9 to 5 the Musical.*) In addition to performing annually in the party scene of BRBT's *The Nutcracker; a Tale from the Bayou* Timmie, aka Mister C, aka #TripletPoppa is a freelance acting coach, on the board of LA Thespians, the producer and director of The Radio Drama Club, and a full-time drama teacher at Baton Rouge Center for the Visual and Performing Arts.