

CHOIR BOY

BY

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DRAMATISTS
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CHOIR BOY
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For Saleem

CHOIR BOY was presented by Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer) in a co-production with Alliance Theater (Susan V. Booth, Artistic Director), at City Center Stage II in New York City, opening on July 2, 2013. It was directed by Trip Cullman; the set and costume designs were by David Zinn; the lighting design was by Peter Kaczorowski; the sound design was by Fitz Patton; the music direction and vocal arrangements were by Jason Michael Webb; and the production stage manager was Kyle Gates. The cast was as follows:

HEADMASTER MARROW.....Chuck Cooper
PHARUS JONATHAN YOUNG Jeremy Pope
MR. PENDLETONAustin Pendleton
BOBBY MARROW..... Wallace Smith
JUNIOR DAVIS..... Nicholas L. Ashe
ANTHONY JUSTIN “AJ” JAMES Grantham Coleman
DAVID HEARD Kyle Beltran

CHARACTERS

HEADMASTER MARROW — Late 30s/early 40s man of color, is the youngest and latest headmaster for the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys. He is paternal uncle to Bobby Marrow.

PHARUS JONATHAN YOUNG — Late teens, an effeminate young man of color. Begins the play a junior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys and the lead of the school's famous choir. He is roommates with AJ James.

MR. PENDLETON — Late 60s/70s, white male, professor at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys.

BOBBY MARROW — Mid- to late teens, a young man of color, Bobby is a junior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School and a member of the school's choir. He is also nephew to Headmaster Marrow.

JUNIOR DAVIS — A teenage young man of color, and a junior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys. He is a member of the school's choir.

ANTHONY JUSTIN "AJ" JAMES — Late teens, an athletic young man of color, a senior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys. He is a member of the school's choir and the school's baseball team. He is roommates with Pharus Young.

DAVID HEARD — Late teens, a young man of color, a senior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys. He is a member of the school's choir.

PLACE

Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys.

TIME

A school year, last year.

CHOIR BOY

PROLOGUE/GRADUATION

The stage is bare save for a few chairs. A spotlight warms on Headmaster Marrow.

HEADMASTER. Ladies and gentlemen, family and friends,
Welcome to the 49th Commencement for the
Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys.
And now to present the school song, next year's Choir Lead. Mr.
Pharus Jonathan Young.
*(Pharus steps forward and sings "Trust and Obey," the school's song.
With this the commencement begins.)*

PHARUS.

*When we walk with the Lord
in the light of His Word,
what a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
he abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and —*
*(Pharus has stopped. The headmaster notices. Pharus looks behind him
and is about to continue when we shift.)*

AN OFFICE

HEADMASTER. (*Taking off his robe.*) I said it, I reminded you at rehearsal in April, didn't I?

PHARUS. Yes, Headmaster Marrow.

HEADMASTER. I said, "Pharus, whatever you do, don't stop singing the school Song until every student is gathered and seated on that stage."

What'd you say then?

HEADMASTER and PHARUS. Why?

HEADMASTER. I knew right then

Right then, you would take that opportunity to

Be defiant, trouble ...

PHARUS. Trouble, sir?

HEADMASTER. Up to something!

I'm up there explaining to the board why ...

You think I want to be explaining anything to the board?

"Why *him*?" they asked. "Why *that* one?"

"Well he's the best, regardless of his ..."

PHARUS. You said that about me sir?

HEADMASTER. Yes —

PHARUS. I mean, it's true, but you said?

HEADMASTER. Pharus!

PHARUS. Sir?

HEADMASTER. Why, after I asked you not to, told you, "you couldn't,"

Made you understand the tradition, pointed out its

Potency, did you get up there at the Seniors' graduation,

A day that should afford them every rite and ritual

Of the ceremony, and mess up their moment

Why?

PHARUS. I ... Would you rather be feared or respected, Headmaster?

HEADMASTER. Pharus!

PHARUS. It keeps me up at night.

HEADMASTER. It does not.

PHARUS. (*Moving ahead.*) Now see,

If you're respected people give you space

CHOIR BOY

by Tarell Alvin McCraney

7M

The Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys is dedicated to the creation of strong, ethical black men. Pharus wants nothing more than to take his rightful place as leader of the school's legendary gospel choir. Can he find his way inside the hallowed halls of this institution if he sings in his own key?

"The sweet harmonies of classic spirituals unite the sometimes fractious voices of the young men in CHOIR BOY ... but when they raise their voices in unison, they offer a glimpse of a world in which the cruelty that can divide and destroy is dissolved in a graceful, embracing order. [An] affecting and honest portrait ... of a gay youth tentatively beginning to find the courage to let the truth about himself become known."

—The New York Times

"Believe the buzz. CHOIR BOY, the small but mighty coming-of-age play by Tarell Alvin McCraney deserves its kudos. [The play] captures the bristling tensions at a prestigious prep school for African American boys when a flamboyantly gay youth is named leader of their celebrated gospel choir."

—Variety

"In his stirring and stylishly told drama, Tarell Alvin McCraney cannily [explores] race and sexuality and the graces and gravity of history."

—New York Daily News

Also by Tarell Alvin McCraney

THE BROTHERS SIZE
IN THE RED AND BROWN WATER
MARCUS; OR THE SECRET
OF SWEET

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