

Will Nattalyee Randall be Our Next Big Broadway Star?



PHOTO BY PATRICK WEISHAMPEL

From left, Rodney Hicks, Tyrone Roberson, Mary Patton, Nattalyee Randall and Lexi Rhoades in "Dreamgirls" at Portland Center Stage.

By Helen Silvis
Of *The Skanner News*

Portland Center Stage will open its season Friday, Sept. 26, with *Dreamgirls*, directed by Chris Coleman. Judging by the dynamic performances on view at a recent rehearsal, *Dreamgirls* will be one of the most vibrant and enjoyable productions in recent memory. Loosely based on the story of The Supremes, *Dreamgirls* tells the story of the Dreamettes, featuring music with a Motown sound along with beautiful costumes and dancing that will transport theatergoers back in time to the 1960s.

Starring in the show as the original Dreamettes are: Nattalyee Randall as Effie Melody White, Mary Patton as Deena Jones, and Lexi Rhoades as Lorrell Robinson. Antoinette Comer plays Michelle Morris, the singer who joins the vocal group after they've reached stardom as The Dreams. Portland singer Shalanda Sims

up there.

HS: You studied music and English Education at University, so did you study music as a child?

NR: My parents are both pastors so I grew up in the church singing and I got involved with musical theater- community theater when I was in 6th grade. That was when I did my first show. It was *Annie*, and I was an orphan, and it's still actually one of my favorite musicals to this day, as clichéd as that is. I just remember being on stage, because we have a really big community theater in my hometown. It seats nearly 2000 people; it's really big. It's an opera theater and just being on that stage and performing for everybody was definitely life-changing to the point where I wanted to continue doing it as an adult.

HS: Did you see yourself becoming a performer from quite young?

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plays two roles in the production.

Helen Silvis talked to Nattalyee Randall about her career and the show. A classically trained singer Randall was named Broadway's Next Big Star by Ken Davenport on *BroadwaySpace.com*.

Helen Silvis: Where did you grow up?

Nattalyee Randall: I grew up in Springfield, Illinois, about three hours outside of Chicago. It's a town of about 200,000. It's the Land of Lincoln. I love Abraham Lincoln, so I let everybody know that he grew

NR: Yes, actually I was talking about this the other day. I was saying that when I was growing up I was thinking about being an entertainment lawyer. Then I played the flute all through growing up. And when I was younger you had to choose between choir and band so I always chose band. Finally they changed it to where you could do both. So I joined the choir in 8th Grade, and I was like, 'This is pretty fun'. So when it came to my senior year, I had to choose either vocal performance or flute performance, and I'm very grateful now that I chose

vocal performance. But yes, I almost became a band teacher.

HS: How did you make that transition from being at school to becoming a professional?

NR: I went to school on and off and during that time I would do regional work, every summer. So I also would occasionally work at community theaters in my hometown, but we would usually do regional

work in the surrounding areas. And I actually worked in Montana in a theater. So I said after I graduated college, no matter what, I would move to New York to continue on in the profession. I graduated two years ago and now I've moved to New York to see what happens.

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