

SEPTEMBER 22 – NOVEMBER 1, 2015 | QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE



BMO  Private Bank PRESENTS

# DREAMGIRLS

Music by **Henry Krieger** | Book and Lyrics by **Tom Eyn**  
Orchestrations by **Harold Wheeler** | Directed by **Mark Clements**

*Play*  
**Guide**

**The Rep**  
MILWAUKEE

Executive Producers:  
**Jackie Herd-Barber & Michael Barber**

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*Play*  
**Guide**



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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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# SYNOPSIS

## ACT I

Dreamgirls opens with Joann and Charlene, backup singers for Jimmy “James Thunder” Early, quitting right before a performance at the Apollo Theatre in the early 1960s. Before Jimmy’s performance, aspiring singers, including the Chicago girl group, The Dreamettes, are set to perform in a talent contest. The Dreamettes - Deena, Lorrell, and Effie - arrive late and have missed their spot, but slick Cadillac dealer and music industry hopeful, Curtis Taylor Jr., negotiates with the emcee to let them perform. In an additional dealing with Marty, Jimmy’s manager, Curtis arranges for The Dreamettes to fill the spot of the missing backup singers. At first, Effie refuses, but eventually agrees for the good of the group. They perform with Jimmy, and become his permanent backup singers, going on tour across the country with him.

In the meantime, Jimmy complains to Marty about the lack of audience response, and Curtis offers the services of C.C., The Dreamettes’ songwriter and Effie’s brother. Jimmy initially turns him down, but after hearing his work is convinced. After Jimmy and The Dreamettes record C.C.’s song, “Cadillac Car,” it climbs the charts, but is covered by a white singer whose version has much more success due to the corrupt system of radio payola. When C.C. fumes about the stealing of his song, Curtis suggests that they use payola to their own advantage, and Jimmy and the girls release “Steppin’ to the Bad Side,” which becomes a huge hit due to Curtis’s scheme.

Curtis and Marty discuss getting Jimmy and the girls a gig at hotel in Miami that has only catered to white audiences. After much finagling, Curtis gets them the job, and the group heads to Miami for a residency. During this time, Jimmy and Lorrell’s relationship has progressed, as has Curtis’s relationship with Effie. As the girls discuss their evolving relationships in the dressing room, Deena chides them for their behavior. Curtis arrives and tells the girls that they will be going out on their own, he has renamed them “The Dreams,” and that Deena will now sing lead, as her lighter voice will bring them more in line with pop audiences. Both Effie and Deena refuse the change, but eventually capitulate to Curtis’s desires. Marty confronts Curtis and then quits.

After a performance of their new signature song, “Dreamgirls,” reporters bombard Deena with questions and virtually ignore the other girls. As the scene transitions to a television studio, Effie is angry about the amount of attention Curtis pays to Deena, and then confronts Deena, accusing her of sleeping with Curtis. At their next performance in San Francisco, their song devolves into an argument between Deena and Effie, and Lorrell and Curtis join in on scolding Effie for her behavior.

The Dreams prepare for their Las Vegas debut, and Jimmy has arrived to see them perform. As he, Lorrell, and Deena wait in the dressing room, the girls talk about Curtis needing to tell Effie something. Once Effie arrives, Michelle, her replacement walks in, and the others realize that Curtis has not told Effie she is fired. Curtis offers to buy Effie out, but she refuses to take his money, and is ultimately destroyed by the betrayal of her friends, her lover, and her brother. She sings “(And I’m Telling You) I’m Not Going” to Curtis, but he walks away, leaving her alone. The act ends with the new Dreams performing in Vegas.

Nova Y. Payton as Effie.  
Photo by Michael Brosilow.



# SYNOPSIS *(CONTINUED)*

## ACT II

It is five years later, and The Dreams have just returned from a world tour. Jimmy and Curtis argue about the vitality of Jimmy's act, but Curtis will not budge. As the scene transitions to a Chicago nightclub, Marty is trying to get Effie an audition, as she has not worked in a long while. Effie arrives late, and reveals that she has a daughter, Magic. At first, Effie is resistant to a pianist she does not know, but relents and impresses the club owner with her voice.

The Dreams prepare for a Vogue photo shoot, but the photographers are only interested in the beautiful lead singer, Deena. On the set, Curtis and C.C. argue about the song "One Night Only," as Curtis has turned C.C.'s soulful composition into a disco track. Curtis has to be on the defensive once again when Deena, now his wife, tells him that she wants to act instead of sing. After Curtis sings of his love for her, Deena gives in.

At the Democratic National Fundraiser, Jimmy and Lorrell argue about the status of their seven-year relationship, and the fact that Jimmy is still married to someone else. As Jimmy begins his set, Lorrell and Deena lament their love lives, while C.C. and Michelle decide upon a future together, and C.C. chooses to go find Effie. Jimmy adds a little more funk to his soulless performance, and afterwards, both Lorrell and Curtis break up with Jimmy.

In a Chicago recording studio, Effie is beginning to work on her first solo album with Marty's help. C.C. returns and after some coaxing, he and Effie reconcile. He offers "One Night Only" to Effie, who records a soulful version of the song that soon rises up through the charts. Curtis hears about Effie's success and decides to release Deena's version immediately, while also paying for the suppression of Effie's record. As The Dreams sing "One Night Only," they muse about their own dreams outside of the group. Deena once again tries to convince Curtis that she should make a film and he tells her she cannot.

The Dreams return to their hometown of Chicago for a performance, and are met backstage by C.C., Effie, and a lawyer. Effie and her team confront Curtis about the payola scheme to suppress her song and threaten to reveal his illegal dealings to the authorities. Effie and Deena reunite and after Deena lets Effie know that she knew nothing of the plan to suppress her song, the two women reconnect. Effie tells Deena about her child, and that Curtis does not know that he has a seven-year-old daughter. Deena confronts Curtis and leaves him.

In the closing scene, Curtis holds a press conference to announce his divorce from Deena, the break up of The Dreams, Deena pursuing her first film role, and to congratulate Effie on her number one hit recording of "One Night Only." The Dreams perform for the last time as a group, and Effie appears as a special guest, reuniting all of the women who started their journey as an unknown girl group from Chicago.



Dan'yelle Williamson, Nova Y. Payton, Jared Joseph, and Trisha Jeffrey. Photo by Michael Brosilow.



Trisha Jeffrey, Dan'yelle Williamson and Nova Y. Payton. Photo by Michael Brosilow.



# PRODUCTION HISTORY

In the mid 1970s, Tom Eyn and Henry Krieger began to collaborate on a musical about the life of backup singers, originally titled *Project #9* in the planning stages. After a workshop for Joseph Papp at the Public Theatre starring Nell Carter, Loretta Devine, and Sheryl Lee Ralph, the creators decided to shelve the project until Nell Carter could return from working in Hollywood on a television series.

Eyn and Krieger showed the material they had to several Broadway producers, including Michael Bennett, who had also had success as a director with shows such as *A Chorus Line*. In the summer of 1980, they staged a workshop, now adding Jennifer Holliday to the cast of the newly titled *Big Dreams*. After a second workshop with a new Effie and much revision to the script, Bennett signed on to direct the show. During the third workshop in January of 1981, yet another actress played Effie and the title was changed to *Dreamgirls*. For the fourth workshop, Bennett rehired Holliday, as the show was written with her in mind, but she quit after she saw the shrinking focus on Effie in the most recent draft. After getting financing for the show from several backers, Bennett convinced Holliday to return after some changes to the show.

*Dreamgirls* opened its pre-Broadway run in Boston in November of 1981. Opening on Broadway on December 20th, 1981, *Dreamgirls* ran for four years and over 1,500 performances. Audience reception was strong. New York Times critic Frank Rich even said of Jennifer Holliday's show stopping performance of "(And I'm Telling You) I'm Not Going": "When Broadway history is being made, you can feel it."

In the subsequent years, *Dreamgirls* has enjoyed national and international tours, as well as several Broadway revivals and a film adaptation. Milwaukee Rep's production of *Dreamgirls* follows in this rich history by bringing this groundbreaking musical to the Quadracci Powerhouse stage.

Playbill for the Original Broadway production of *Dreamgirls*.



## Awards won by the Original Broadway production of *Dreamgirls*

### TONY AWARDS

- Best Book of a Musical
- Best Actor in a Musical
- Best Actress in a Musical
- Best Featured Actor in a Musical
- Best Lighting Design
- Best Choreography

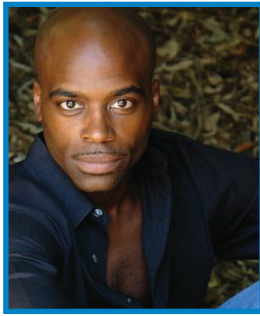
### DRAMA DESK AWARDS

- Outstanding Actress in a Musical
- Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical
- Outstanding Lighting Design
- Outstanding Set Design

### GRAMMY AWARDS

- Best Cast Show Album
- Best Female R&B Vocal Performance  
(Jennifer Holliday for "And I Am Telling You I Am Telling You I'm Not Going")

# WHO'S WHO IN *DREAMGIRLS*



**James "Thunder" Early**  
(Cedric Neal)



**Marty**  
(Nathaniel Stampley)

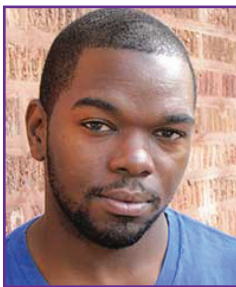
## THE DRE



**Lorrell Robinson**  
(Dan'yelle Williamson)



**Deena Jones**  
(Trisha Jeffrey)



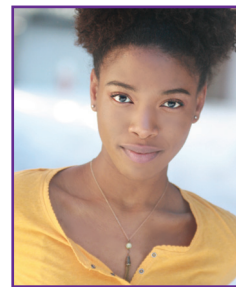
**Wayne/Tru-Tone/Tuxedo**  
(Jonathan Butler-Duplessis)



**Jerry/Tiny Joe**  
(Carl Clemons-Hopkins)



**Little Albert/Tuxedo**  
(Bradley Gibson)



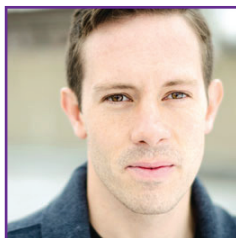
**Michelle Morris/Stepp Sister**  
(Alina John)



**Curtis Taylor, Jr.**  
(Jared Joseph)



**Sweetheart**  
(Bridgid Abrams)



**Frank**  
(Jared Davis)



**Les Style**  
(Raven Monique Dockery)



**Dwight/Security Guard**  
(Martin Hanna)



**Tru-Tone**  
(Di'Monte Henning)



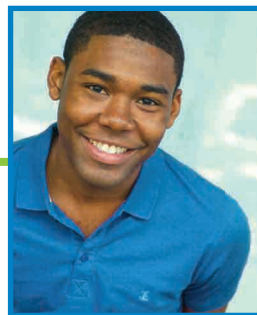
# AMS



**Effie White**  
(Nova Y. Payton)



**Michelle Morris**  
(Alina John)



**C.C. White**  
(Richard Crandle)

- ..... = ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP
- = FAMILY RELATIONSHIP
- ..... = BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP



**Jennifer Latimore**  
(Joanne/Les Style)



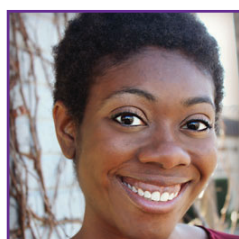
**MC/Mr. Morgan**  
(Eric A. Lewis)



**Charlene/Les Style**  
(Malkia Stampley)



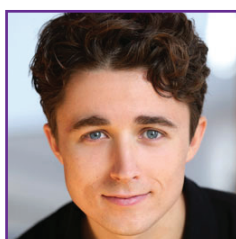
**Tru Tone/Tuxedo/Dance Captain**  
(Leonard E. Sullivan)



**Stepp Sister**  
(Arielle Leverett)



**Tuxedo**  
(Christian Magby)



**Dave/Stage Manager**  
(Riley O'Toole)



**Sweetheart**  
(Hallie Peterson)



**Stepp Sister/Les Style**  
(Kammeran Tyree)

# GIRL GROUPS OF THE 1960S

The 1960s was a time when music was rapidly changing, new styles were emerging, and artists that we now see as classic American musicians were just arriving on the national scene. The girl groups that The Dreams are modeled after were a staple on American radio and television. The girl group sound was buoyant and upbeat, full of harmony and lyrics that often centered on romantic relationships. Almost all of the girl groups were solely singers, performing music that was written for them, and played by studio musicians. As the era continued, a young producer named Phil Spector had a huge influence on the sound created by many pop musicians, including many of the girl groups; his signature was complex orchestration known as "the wall of sound" which became a cornerstone of the music of many of these groups. Some sources estimate that over 1,500 girl groups performed throughout the era, and the influence of this movement in pop music still resonates today.

## The Ronettes

### HIT SONGS:

"Be My Baby"  
"Baby, I Love You"  
"(The Best Part of) Breakin' Up"  
"Do I Love You?"  
"Walking in the Rain"



**The Ronettes, 1966**

(Photo by James Kriegsmann, accessed from Wikipedia.org)

## The Marvelettes

### HIT SONGS:

"Please Mr. Postman"  
"Twistin' Postman"  
"Playboy"  
"Don't Mess with Bill"



**The Marvelettes, 1963**

(Photo by James Kriegsmann, accessed from Wikipedia.org)

## Martha and the Vandellas

### HIT SONGS:

"Come and Get These Memories"  
"Heat Wave"  
"Quicksand"  
"Jimmy Mack"  
"Dancing in the Street"



**Martha and the Vandellas, 1965**

(Photo by Gordy Records, accessed from Wikipedia.org)



## The Shangri-Las

### HIT SONGS:

"Leader of the Pack"  
"Remember (Walking in the Sand)"



**The Shangri-Las, 1964**  
(Photo by Red Bird Records,  
accessed from Wikipedia.org)

## The Chiffons

### HIT SONGS:

"He's So Fine"  
"One Fine Day"  
"A Love So Fine"  
"I Have a Boyfriend"  
"Sweet Talkin' Guy"



**The Chiffons, 1966**  
(Photo by KRLA/Beat Publications,  
accessed from Wikipedia.org)

## The Shirelles

### HIT SONGS:

"Tonight's the Night"  
"Will You Love Me Tomorrow?"  
"Dedicated to the One I Love"  
"Mama Said"  
"Baby It's You"



**The Shirelles, 1962**  
(Photo by Scepter Records,  
accessed from Wikipedia.org)

## The Crystals

### HIT SONGS:

"Uptown"  
"He's a Rebel"  
"Da Doo Ron Ron"  
"Then He Kissed Me"

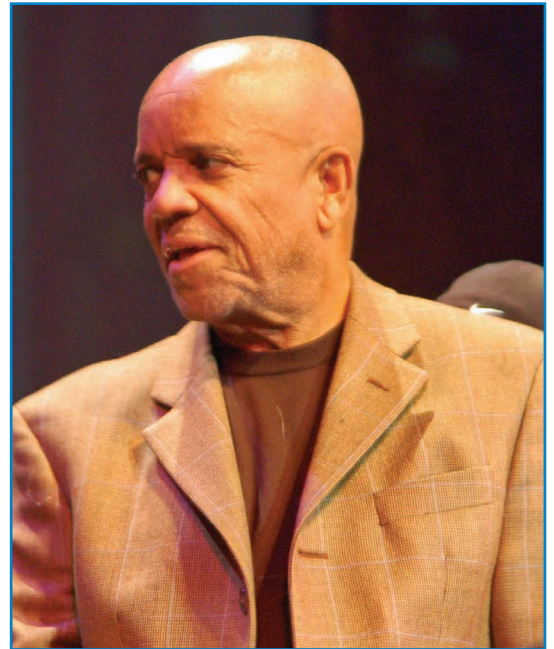


**The Crystals, 1965**  
(Photo by KRLA Beat, accessed from Wikipedia.org)

# THE INSPIRATION FOR *DREAMGIRLS*? THE SUPREMES AND MOTOWN RECORDS

Much speculation has occurred connecting the story of *Dreamgirls* to the story of The Supremes, Berry Gordy, and Motown Records. While the creators of *Dreamgirls* deny this claim and say that the story is inspired by an amalgamation of the girl groups popular in the late 1950s and 1960s, many say the parallels are clear. The producers of the musical have often emphasized that this not The Supremes' story in order to avoid a lawsuit, but audiences have seen the connections. Even founding member of The Supremes, Mary Wilson, named her autobiography after the musical (*Dreamgirl [My Life as a Supreme]*) because she saw their story being portrayed onstage.

The creators of the 2006 film adaptation of the musical more clearly drew from true history for inspiration, igniting controversy. The creators of the film directly reference Supremes album covers, specific looks Diana Ross sported, and events that represent Motown and Supremes history, but are not in the original musical. Legendary Motown artist Smokey Robinson lambasted the film and its representation of Berry Gordy in the character of Curtis: "Like a Black man can't do something with integrity and build an empire and build a dream with integrity." Gordy also shared his disapproval of the film, which resulted in the producers issuing a public apology to the music icon.



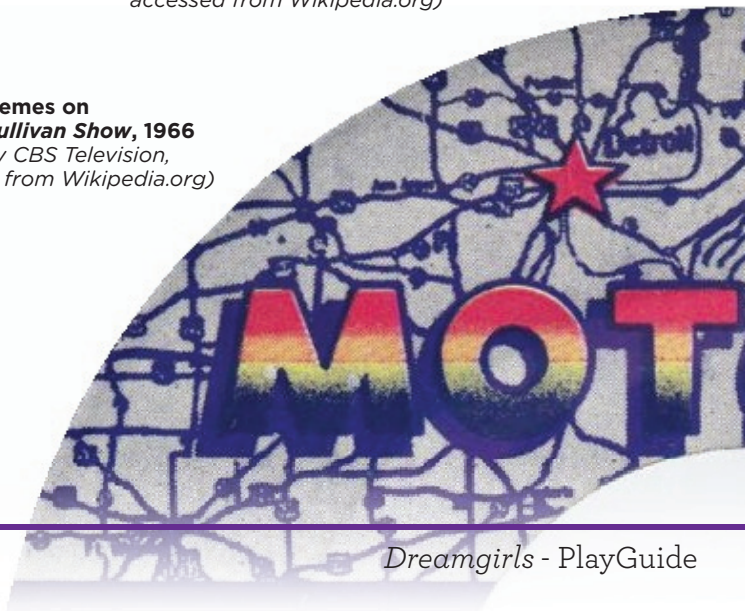
**Berry Gordy, 2010** (Photo by Angela George, accessed from Wikipedia.org)



**The Hitsville, U.S.A. Motown building, now the Motown Museum** (Photo by Chris Butcher, accessed from Wikipedia.org)



**The Supremes on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, 1966**  
(Photo by CBS Television, accessed from Wikipedia.org)







**Diana Ross, 1976** (Photo by Motown Records, accessed from Wikipedia.org)



**The Supremes, 1967**  
(Photo by General Artists Corporation, accessed from Wikipedia.org)

Some similarities audiences and critics have noted over the years between the stage musical and music history:

- Both the Dreams and the Supremes started as “ettes,” The Dreamettes and Primettes, respectively.
- Sources have stated that Florence Ballard sang lead for The Supremes at first, but was replaced by Diana Ross, just like Effie is replaced by Deena (This claim has been denied by some close to the group).
- The Dreams and The Supremes both served as backup singers before making it on their own.
- Berry Gordy and Diana Ross had an ongoing relationship that some say influenced his professional choices, much like the relationship between Curtis and Deena in the musical.
- Both Florence Ballard and Effie experience a downward spiral after being fired from their respective groups. While Effie stages a comeback, Ballard never did, dying at the age of 32 of a heart attack.
- Berry Gordy gave Diana Ross the opportunity to sing lead for The Supremes due to her more widely-appealing, softer voice, the same reason Deena is promoted in *Dreamgirls*.
- Much of the drama that occurs in the musical as Effie begins to have conflicts with the group and Curtis is supposedly similar to events that transpired before Florence Ballard was fired.
- Just as Michelle goes on with The Dreams the night Effie is fired, Cindy Birdsong also appeared onstage the night that Ballard was released from The Supremes.
- The Supremes became “Diana Ross & The Supremes” in 1967, just as The Dreams become “Deena Jones & The Dreams” in 1967.



# ABOUT OUR PRODUCTION

Six members of the *Dreamgirls* cast also appeared in last year's production of *The Color Purple*: Nathaniel Stampley, Malkia Stampley, Jonathan Butler-Duplessis, Leonard Sullivan, Carl Clemons-Hopkins, and Jennifer Latimore.

Soft Props Artisan Margaret Hasek-Guy painted 25 yards of silk for the Vogue photo shoot scene.

*Dreamgirls* has over 40 scene shifts throughout the performance.

The set for *Dreamgirls* features multiple automated set pieces which can move in as quickly as nine seconds during a transition if needed.



## Enhance Your *Dreamgirls* Experience

- **Rep in Depth** pre-show talks before every performance
- **Talkbacks** after every Friday evening performance
- **Free Workshops:**
  - October 3, 2-3pm:** "Dance with the Stars"
  - October 10, 2-3pm:** "Sing the Dreamgirls Songs"
- **Panel discussions** after Thursday night performances:
  - October 1:** "Making it in the Music Industry: Milwaukee's Music Scene"
  - October 8:** "Empowering Women"
  - October 15:** "Milwaukee Music in the 60s and 70s"
  - October 22:** "Women in the Arts"
- A very special **"Celebrating Female Singers" event** on October 29 featuring Rep patrons pre-selected to perform following the performance!



## FEATURED ARTIST: **APRIL MCKINNIS, DRAPER**

Many of the scene shifts in *Dreamgirls* center on a set of *periaktoi*, rotating scenic pieces, a style of scenery that originated in Ancient Greece.

*Dreamgirls* cast members wear more than 35 wigs during the course of the production.

There are approximately 200 separate costumes in *Dreamgirls*.

In the musical number "Heavy," The Dreams make a quick change in less than 15 seconds.

Costume artisans used 76 pounds of sequins on the costumes for *Dreamgirls*.

April McKinnis, Draper in the Milwaukee Rep Costume Shop, has used her considerable skills for almost twenty years in creating costumes for theaters in Wisconsin. McKinnis studied Theater at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania and during her time there, was hired during the summer by American Players Theatre in Spring Green to serve as a Stitcher in their costume shop. As McKinnis continued to work with APT in the summers, she worked her way up to First Hand and then Draper, and has now been a member of their team for 18 years.

APT and The Rep have strong connections, especially through their respective costume shops. Many Rep costume artisans spend summers at APT, and the organizations often loan costume pieces to each other. McKinnis first became a part of this connection in 2001, when she joined The Rep as a Stitcher for two seasons, and then spent a few seasons as a First Hand at First Stage before returning to Milwaukee Rep as a Draper ten years ago.

In speaking with McKinnis, she highlights the collaborative process by which costumes are made. As a Draper, she works with the designer to translate the renderings into patterns to work from. She does this by either draping fabric on a dress form padded to the actor's measurements or through drafting using grids, math, and measurements. After a final pattern is finished, and a muslin mock-up has been made, the First Hand cuts the actual fabric from which the costume will be made. The First Hand then passes the pieces along to the Stitcher to put together. As fittings with actors are completed, the Draper makes adjustments and alterations. At Milwaukee Rep, all of this happens in less than a month for each show!

When asked about the best parts of her job, McKinnis's answer was two-fold: the people and the challenge of the work. "We have such vastly different personalities in the shop, so it is a lot of fun. Everyone gets along really well together," McKinnis said. In reference to her work, "I love the actual draping – getting the design and actually making the pattern. Then seeing the finished product and making it look like the design, when you look at the actor in the costume and you look at the rendering and they look the same . . . I love when that happens."

In creating the costumes for *Dreamgirls*, McKinnis is excited about getting to make "pretty gowns and lots of them," especially the vast amount of sequined dresses worn by The Dreams. With the designer, Alex Tecoma, as a member of the Rep staff (Senior Draper), McKinnis has the opportunity to collaborate more directly on a daily basis than she might on other shows where the designer is not a Rep Company Member.

McKinnis hopes that audiences understand the deliberateness with which each costume is selected or created: "Every single item someone wears has been thought out and planned and has gone through many different hands to get to where it is onstage." McKinnis's hands have been integral in bringing the glitz and glam of *Dreamgirls* to life on the Quadracci Powerhouse stage.



Nova Y. Payton as Effie. Photo by Michael Brosilow

# VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Quadracci Powerhouse is located on the second level and can be accessed via the escalator or elevator.



## THE REP VALUES YOUR SUPPORT



### Financial support enables The Rep to:

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- ★ Educate over 20,000 students at 200+ schools in the greater Milwaukee area with Rep Immersion Day experiences, student matinees, workshops, tours and by making connections with their school curriculum through classroom teaching programs such as Reading Residencies and Scriptworks;
- ★ Maintain our commitment to audiences with special needs through our Access Services that include American Sign Language interpreted productions, captioned theater, infrared listening systems and script synopses to ensure that theater at The Rep is accessible to all;
- ★ Educate the next generation of theater professionals with our Artistic Intern Program which gives newly degreed artists a chance to hone their skills at The Rep as they begin to pursue their theatrical careers.

We value our supporters and partnerships and hope that you will help us to expand the ways Milwaukee Rep has a positive impact on theater and on our Milwaukee community.

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