

**LOCAL  
BROADWAY  
VETERAN  
TO DIRECT  
“THE COLOR  
PURPLE”  
AT LE PETIT  
IN JANUARY**

**Donald Jones Jr.  
is Back Home  
in New Orleans**

**By Dean M. Shapiro  
Senior Editor**

**A**fter enjoying a measure of success on Broadway and off-Broadway in New York City, Donald Jones Jr. has returned to his native New Orleans and will be making his Le Petit Theatre directorial debut in their January 2023 production of “The Color Purple.”

The musical adaptation of Alice Walker’s 1983 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel will take the stage on January 12 and run through three successive weekends before closing on January 29.

When Le Petit offered Donald the opportunity to direct the show, it was a fortuitous choice on their part. He had previously experienced performing in “The Color Purple” when it was staged at the Mahalia Jackson Theater during the 2010-2011 touring season.

“It was a really awesome moment for me and my family,” he fondly recalled about that local staging. “That tour was my first big professional gig. It was one of those shows I never got tired of doing because the message was so strong. So I am thrilled to be given the opportunity to direct it here in my hometown.”

A Renaissance Man in the world of musical theatre who sings, dances,

choreographs and directs, Donald’s roots stem from New Orleans’ culturally rich 7th Ward where he grew up in a “nice, solid, very family-oriented home.” His artistic talents were recognized early in life by his supportive mother, Sylvenie Carriere, and his younger sister Gabrielle. His late father, Donald Sr., inspired his strong work ethic.

“My mom saw me dancing around the house when I was a kid,” Donald said. “Gabby and I would make up dances in our living room together and she never told me no when I asked. Our church had started a dance ministry and my mom brought me to it. I started dancing there in church around 3rd or 4th grade and I also sang in their youth choir.”

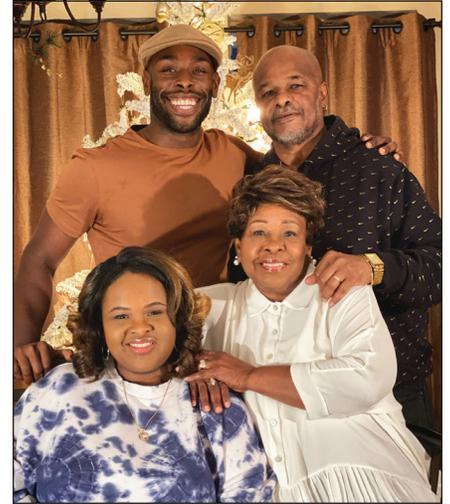
Later Donald would perform with a children’s theatre group that became Crescent City Lights under the auspices of NORD and both of the Jones children

were enrolled in the prestigious

Benjamin’s Center of Dance.

Donald performed for other dance and theatrical companies in New Orleans and he danced in several “Nutcracker” ballets. He also took part in drama club productions and sang in the choir at Brother Martin High School where he graduated in 2005.

From there it was on to Northwestern Louisiana State University where he earned his B.S. degree in theatre with a concentration in dance. Shortly after that he migrated to a dance company in Seattle where he honed his skills



Donald Jr. with his family, Donald Jones Sr., Sylvenie Carriere-Jones and Gabrielle Jones



Donald with two-time Tony Award winner Susan Stroman

in preparation for a stage career in New York City, the theatrical capital of North America, where he spent seven creatively productive years.

While in New York, Donald performed in Broadway productions of “Frozen,” “Chicago” and “Aladdin.” Off-Broadway he appeared in “Sweet Charity” and at Carnegie Hall he was a cast member in “West Side Story.” Choreography credits include the 2019 reboot of the popular Kids’ show, “Blue’s Clues” on Nickelodeon’s Nick Jr.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shutdown of live theatre compelled Donald to return to New Orleans. When Hurricane Ida hit the city he temporarily relocated to Houston with his family members but, as the situation returned to normal, work in his field started coming his way. He appeared in



Steve and Josh from Blue’s Clues, Donald and his assistant Samantha Farrow



the cast of the Jefferson Performing Arts Society's February 2022 production of "Fly." He also directed "Kinky Boots" for another local theatre and he joined the faculty at Loyola University where he will be directing their spring 2023 musical production of "UrineTown."

Although he plans to work in New York again, he is set on making a cultural impact while he is still here. "I've fully relocated to New Orleans and my focus this year is as a director and choreographer," he stated. "I trained here as a dancer and performer and was able to take that talent and technique outside of the state and be successful. Right now I'm trying to do the same with my directorial and choreographic credits.

"I have the opportunity to work those things here and eventually I would love to get a credit as a choreographer and director on a Broadway show," Donald continued. "I see myself being nominated for – if not winning – a Tony for direction and choreography. That is definitely a goal of mine. So I'm continuing to work those skill sets here."

"I left New Orleans right after high school and formed my adult experiences out of state. I never really got a chance to enjoy the city as an adult," Donald added. "So being back here now and seeing that the resources are more abundant than when I was a kid has gotten me a lot more excited to be a local artist. Directing at theaters I'd only heard of when I was younger is pretty awesome. So I am really excited to be home for all of that."

Nominated for both Tony and Grammy awards, "The Color Purple" is set in the early 20th century American South and spans the life of Celie, an African American woman with dreams of escaping her husband's control to reunite with her loved ones. Despite being oppressed, Celie embarks on a fulfilling journey toward empowerment and self-love.

During our interview, Donald confirmed that the storyline of the 2005 musical closely follows that of the book and the 1985 film starring Whoopi Goldberg in the lead role. "It's still the same exact story but it is told with songs and dances," he explained. "You get to see it played out in real time."

The Le Petit staging will feature close to 30 songs and about three or four dance numbers, all of which Donald will be choreographing, in addition to directing the production. An 8-piece band under the musical direction of Delfeayo Marsalis will accompany the performance.

"So, until the show opens I will be working diligently," Donald said. "I've been talking to designers and to my associates on how we can build it up to where it is the strongest show the city has ever seen. Especially since it is predominantly an African American show and story. I really want us to really utilize the talent we have in the city."

*Tickets for "The Color Purple" are now on sale at the Le Petit Theatre box office, 616 St. Peter Street in the French Quarter. Hours are Monday-Friday, 12-5 p.m. and 12 p.m.-curtain time on performance days. Tickets can also be ordered by phone at 504-522-2081 x 1 or by email at [BoxOffice@LePetitTheatre.com](mailto:BoxOffice@LePetitTheatre.com). Groups of 10 or more discounts available. Inquire for other discounts. Check the website, [www.lepetittheatre.com](http://www.lepetittheatre.com) for show dates and times.*

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