



Smile down on us, Sr. Thea



I WILL LIVE UNTIL I DIE

An Exciting New Musical

based on the life of Servant of God Thea Bowman



Image: Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration fspa.org/theabowman

at COCA in University City
MARCH 5TH-8TH, 2026

Thu, Fri, Sat @7pm
Sat @1pm Sun @3pm
www.gkce.org/theabowman

“I WILL LIVE UNTIL I DIE”
THE MUSICAL
based on the life of
Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman

is part of the Bicentennial Jubilee of
the Archdiocese of Saint Louis.
This is not just a celebration of 200 years,
it's an invitation to reconnect with a faith
that has the power to shape a city.
It honors a legacy of faith that has guided
generations while inspiring a future full of hope
for all who call this Archdiocese home.



Thank you

Joyce Jones and the Office of Racial Harmony and Black
Catholic Ministries from the Archdiocese of Saint Louis
The Offices of Education, the Office of Consecrated Life and
the Peace and Justice Commission of the Archdiocese

The Charles Lwanga Center

Saint Peter Claver Church

St. Josephine Bakhita Church

St. Alphonsus “Rock” Church

St. Francis Xavier “College” Church

St. Rita and Christ the King Churches

Center of Creative Arts-COCA, University City

Ushers and Box Office Assistants

All who held us in prayer

To view a full program with bios of the entire cast, scan the QR
Code below and click on “Sr. Thea Playbill”

Thank you for helping us share her witness with the world.
If you enjoyed the show, more donations are needed to cover
our costs. Donate using the QR Code below.



www.vallimar.com
<https://gkchestertonentertainment.org>

G.K. Chesterton Entertainment
presents

“I WILL LIVE UNTIL I DIE”

THE MUSICAL

*based on the life of
Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman*

Music, Lyrics and Book Created by
Vallimar Jansen

Musical Arrangements by
Frank and Vallimar Jansen

Director
Vallimar Jansen

Co-Director/Producer
Maria Vargo

Choreographer/Assistant Director
Carmen Guynn

Music Director
Frank Jansen

Choir Director
Suzanne Palmer

Stage Manager
Melanie Maxey

Rehearsal Pianist/Vocal Coach
Dawn Riske

Assistant Stage Manager
Ricco Martin Jr.

Costume Designer
Lauren Smith Bearden

Stage Crew
**AJ Bentley
Traniece Wiley
Seva Phillips**

Technical Director
Cameron Tesson

Props
Kevin McKenzie

Lights
Morgan Brennan

Sets
Kevin Ford

Sound
Justin Foster

Act One, Prologue Sister Thea Opens the Story
Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child

Act One, Scene 1 The Funeral
Born in Bethlehem
She Tried
Salve Regina
Rock My Soul

Act One, Scene 2A Her Parents Story
Oh, Freedom
Come by Here

Act One, Scene 2B Childhood

Act One, Scene 3 Music of the Spirit
I'm Gonna Sing

Act One, Scene 4A Water Fountain Encounter
Shine on Me

Act One, Scene 4B Realities

Act One, Scene 5 Mockingbird
This Little Light Of Mine

Act One, Scene 6 School Talent Show
We'll Take the Chalk and Skip the Chapel

Act One, Scene 7 Choices and Blessings

Act One, Scene 8A A Painful Goodbye
Steal Away

Act One, Scene 8B The Calling
Changed My Name

Act One, Scene 9 Farewell
Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round

Act One, Scene 10 Farewell
Remember Me

Sr. Thea Donors

Sr. Thea Bowman dedicated her life to faith, culture, education, and joyful witness. These donors are partnering with us in bringing her story to life through music, theater, and community formation.

In Memory of Dr. Larry D. Samuels
Betsey Beckman Abundant Blessings Fund
Mary Rose Desloge and Family
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul
Leadership Conference of Women Religious-Region 10
Ursuline Provincialate Central Province
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Adorers of the Blood the Christ
Kim Reid
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Bridget Brennan
Lisa Burks
Yvonne Clever
Sr. Sherri Coleman
Suzann Cross
Christine Dragonette
Elverne Eldridge
Mary and Joe Frigon-Milner
Armella Geier
Terry Gonda
Kathleen Hesse
John Hasser
Peter and Holly Hasser
Christina Holmes
Mike and Marlene Jones
Phillip Mannhard

Joan McGinnis
Anne Moll
Barbara Morrow
Mary O'Neill
Cynthia Rosario
Christina Ryan
Jennifer Schenk
Susan Spaeth
Bridget Stegall
Cynthia Stevens
Margaret Denise Toney
Unknown
Janet Watley-St. Josephine Bak.
Aimee Whitman, Scott Jarboe &
Family
Brenda Winebright

Thank you to all who donated, whether a large amount or small, with sincere apologies to those whose names were not included here

More About Sister Thea

From the website of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Born Dec. 29, 1937, in Yazoo City, Mississippi, Thea was reared as a Protestant until at age nine when she asked her parents if she could become a Catholic. Gifted with a brilliant mind, beautiful voice and a dynamic personality, Sister Thea shared the message of God's love through a teaching career. After 16 years of teaching, at the elementary, secondary and university level, the bishop of Jackson, Mississippi, invited her to become the consultant for intercultural awareness. In her role as consultant Sister Thea, an African American, gave presentations across the country; lively gatherings that combined singing, gospel preaching, prayer and storytelling. Her programs were directed to break down racial and cultural barriers. She encouraged people to communicate with one another so that they could understand other cultures and races.

In 1984, Sister Thea was diagnosed with breast cancer. She prayed "to live until I die." Her prayer was answered, and Thea continued her gatherings seated in a wheelchair. In 1989, the U.S. bishops invited her to be a key speaker at their conference on Black Catholics. At the end of the meeting, at Thea's invitation, the bishops stood and sang "We Shall Overcome" with gusto. Thea lived a full life. She fought evil, especially prejudice, suspicion, hatred and things that drive people apart. She fought for God and God's people until her death in 1990.

The U.S. bishops endorsed the sainthood cause of Sister Thea Bowman on Nov. 14, 2018, during their fall assembly in Baltimore. The Diocese of Mobile reports that as of February 12, 2026, the diocesan phase of Sister Thea Bowman's cause is complete. Materials have been sent to the Vatican's Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. The granddaughter of slaves, she was the only African American member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, and she transcended racism to leave a lasting mark on U.S. Catholic life in the late 20th century.

<https://www.fspa.org/content/about/sister-thea-bowman>

----- Intermission -----

Act Two, Scene 1 Wisconsin

*When the Saints Go Marching In
Make Them Like Me*

Act Two, Scene 2A Celebrating Racial Harmony

Jesus Is A Friend

Act Two, Scene 2B Fears about Integration

That's the Way It Is For Now

Act Two, Scene 3A Return to Canton

Act Two, Scene 3B Threats

Steal Away

Act Two, Scene 3C Tragic History and Continuing Hope

March Against Fear

Act Two, Scene 4A Viterbo Faculty Meeting

Act Two, Scene 4B Small No Longer

This Little Light Of Mine

Act Two, Scene 5 Journey of Service

Go Tell It On the Mountain

Act Two, Scene 6 Cancer, Friendship, and Sharing the Story

There Is A Balm In Gilead

Deep River

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

Come and Go With Me

Act Two, Scene 7 Address to the Catholic Bishops

We Shall Overcome

PRINCIPAL CAST

Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA ValLimar Jansen
Little Birdie Shondria Wilson
Young Bertha / Young Sr. Thea Tiffany Tenille
Dr. Theon Bowman, MD Toni Twitty
Mrs. Mary Esther Bowman Victoria Pines
Little Flonzie Rian A. Page
Young Flonzie Giani Hall

SUPPORTING CAST

Mrs. Washington / Adult Flonzie Sharon Reed-Ussery
Fr. Robinson / Bishop Richardson Fr. Arthur Cavitt
Miz Lula Mae Johnson Gloria Vann
Mrs. Quinn Atiera Muhammad
Walt Palmer / Fr. Murphy / Interviewer Kevin McKenzie
Sr. Lina Putz / Mrs. Keller Maria Vargo
Sr. Dorothy Kunding Betsey Beckman
Sr. Agnes / Dr. Margaret Walsh Angela Nicholson
Sr. Eleanor Lisa Osselmeier
Young Sr. Dorothy Maria Fe Wilhelm Sanchez
Dr. Thomas Henderson Luke A. Steffen
Dr. Donald Garrett Joseph Link

CHILDREN'S ENSEMBLE

Ruby Delaney / Dancer Kiarse Fields
Samuel Fletcher / Dancer Curtis McCall
Robert Greene / Dancer KyShawn Jennings, Jr.
James Rivera / Dancer Jaron Bentley
Martha Rivera / Dancer Sarah Bentley
Pearl Washington / Dancer Raylee Jones

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS

Mrs. Rivera Carmen R. Guynn
Mrs. Fletcher Krystal McCall
Mrs. Delaney Rebecca Bryson
Mrs. Greene Bria Guerrini

Director's Note

As an inspirational speaker and performing artist, year after year at the end of my presentations people would say to me, “You remind me of Sr. Thea.” So I went on a quest to discover her.

For decades, Sr. Thea’s voice has lived in my bones — her scholarship, her laughter, her prophetic insistence that wholeness is both a human birthright and a moral demand. Thea Bowman was a Franciscan Sister, a doctor of English literature, a theologian, a teacher, a preacher, an evangelizer, and one of the most electrifying public intellectuals of the twentieth century. She also happened to be dying when she did some of her greatest work. That convergence — of mortality and mission, of suffering and song — is where this play lives.

“**I Will Live Until I Die**” (actual words of Sr. Thea) is drawn from the arc of her life. Where the historical record falls silent, poetic license has been applied — not to embellish, but to illumine. Theater has always been the space where truth speaks in ways that documentation cannot.

What Thea understood, and what this production reaches toward, is the radical possibility of a beloved community — one that does not ask you to surrender who you are in order to belong. Her vision was not tolerance. It was transformation. She sang it across race, across tradition, across every room that told her she was too much.

You are welcome here. All of you. Sr. Thea embraced everyone. She lived fully. She died singing. We carry her forward — together.

— *Dr. ValLimar Jansen*



James East is a well-rounded bass player from a family that is both Catholic and very musical. Msgr. Ray East is his brother.

Terry Gonda, a Detroit music minister and spiritual Director, is excited to play guitar for this production honoring Sister Thea. Terry loves adding to the emotional landscape that helps bring stories of faith and courage to life. She thanks you for supporting live theatre and live music and encourages you to spread Sr Thea’s story.

Teri Littlejohn is a North City drummer who shares her talents not just with her Church but also with our musical.

Kirsti Reeve first picked up a recorder at the age of 7 and is honored to be bringing her repertoire of wind instruments to this production. Originally from England, she moved to Detroit in 2003 but has tried very hard to keep her accent. When not making music, she works as a mental health counselor, and is still figuring out how to read and knit at the same time.

Dawn Riske serves as Director of Music Ministries at Christ the King Church in University City. She thrives when involved with activities and communities where bridges are built and relationships are strengthened.

David Callon teaches English at St. Louis University High School and sings at St. Margaret of Scotland Church.

Jennifer Kelly is a noted Gospel singer with extensive experience in a variety of musical productions.

Ruth (Daughter) / DancerTrinity Daniels
Deborah Jean (Daughter) / Dancer Waverly Walker
Betty Marie (Daughter) / Dancer..... Raina Bentley

CHOIR

Kim Bentley, Elizabeth Clay, Clyde Cross, Curtis Cross, Dominic L. Garland, Barbara E. Jackson, Kinsley McCall, Maria Sanchez Peña, Bridget Stegall, Marrisra Strayhorn, Joyce Williams, and members of the cast

CHOREOGRAPHERS/DANCERS

Carmen Guynn Lead Dancer / Principal Choreographer
Betsey Beckman Sr. Dorothy Choreographer
Rev. Tracy Holliway-Wiggins Choreographer-Sr. Thea Bowman Catholic School Liturgical Dance Ministry
STBCS Dancers: Raegan Rogers, Rosalind Rogers, Cameron Chike, Emerson Taylor, Anyelle Wright, Leena Rogers, Meadow Coates, Ja’Miyla Willis, Arianna Morris, Cidney Shells, Jameila Tally, Seva Phillips, Traniece Wiley, Yvette Miller
Ronda Smith Branch Soloist / Choreographer Go Tell It on the Mountain
AJ Bentley Featured Dancer

MUSICIANS

Frank Jansen Music Director / Composer / Arranger / Keyboards
Suzanne Palmer.....Choir Director
James EastBass
Terry Gonda Guitar
Teri LittlejohnDrums
Kirsti Reeve Flute & EWI (Electronic Wind Instrument)
Dawn Riske Rehearsal Pianist / Vocal Coach / Program Booklet / Ensemble
Jennifer Kelly Ensemble Singer
David Callon Ensemble Singer

SUPPORT TEAM

Anita Barni, Betsey Beckman, Sharie Bowman, Alice Dames, Lisa DeLorenzo, Paul Hasser, Becky McKenna, Beth Pilarski, Soyinka Rahim, and Lucia Samuels
Dan Looten Website/Ticket Sales

PRINCIPAL CAST BIOS

ValLimar Jansen as Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA



ValLimar Jansen has performed and toured professionally throughout the United States, Canada, the UK, Poland, Italy, Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium, St. Maarten, St. Kitts, Bonaire, Ghana, Israel, Japan, Singapore and China. She played the role of Beneatha with the Broadway touring cast, in the European premier of Raisin. She went on to co-author a one-woman musical about the life of Ethel Waters that received a special commendation from the Kennedy Center, in Washington, D.C.

Over the years, ValLimar remained active with the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival-Region XIII, serving on the board, managing the Excellence in Education Awards, responding to productions, assisting with new play development, and consulting on matters of diversity. When her schedule permitted, she continued to serve on the team for respondent training. Responding to productions is still her favorite way to serve American College Theatre Festival-Region XIII.

With over 120 unique performances annually, ValLimar has developed her signature blend of dramatic art, music, movement, prayer and inspirational exhortation. Her biggest international audiences were at World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland and then in Panama City, Panama. At the Loreto/Angora International Papal Event (In Italy) ValLimar and her husband, Frank Jansen, performed for over 300,000 people and the event was broadcast on Italian television, EWTN and across the world!

She has produced and/or co-produced fourteen CDs and has nine published works. ValLimar's passion is to combine her faith and spirituality with her love of theatre and music. She draws on her BA degree (CSUSB) her masters degree (UCSB) and her doctorate (SOGCBC). She writes all her compositions with her husband, Frank Jansen. They and their supportive family live in southern California.

CHOREOGRAPHERS/DANCERS

AJ (Aaron Jeremiah) Bentley is a homeschooled senior and proud member of the "Bentley 5." He began performing at Stages St. Louis in Beauty and the Beast Jr., Seussical Jr., and 101 Dalmatians. AJ currently trains at COCA as a first company member of Ballet Eclectica and COCA dance. He has performed for five seasons with The Muny Teen Youth Ensemble and is grateful for the love and support of his family, friends, and mentors.



MUSICIANS

Frank Jansen's professional music career spans over a course of 35 years. He is a well-respected composer, arranger, performer, and teacher. He is president of AFW Music. He tours extensively with his wife ValLimar, performing throughout the United States, Europe, and Jamaica. Frank writes and performs in a wide variety of styles including: Sacred, Gospel, Rock, Country, Jazz and Classical.



Suzanne Palmer Suzanne Palmer is the artistic director and conductor of Community Gospel Choir (CGC). Suzanne is a long-time educator with choral and band director certifications. Suzanne is the 2023 recipient of the Arts and Education Council Art Educator of the Year: Legacy Award. She has also been honored for her contributions to gospel music by the Gospel Music Workshop of American in 2023. Her commitment to Christ and her musical background bring a well-rounded perspective to teaching choral music, with an emphasis on African-American gospel and



spiritual music. "I am devoted to God's purpose for me and that means by serving others I serve the Lord." This statement is rooted in the word from Matthew, 25:40 – "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Refresh Community Church.



CHOIR

Marissa Strayhorn is thrilled to make her stage debut in this production. When she's not rehearsing, she enjoys reading, going on long walks with her dog, and spending quality time with her daughter, Raylee. She is deeply grateful to her family and the Creator for their love, encouragement and support.



Joyce Williams is very excited and honored to participate in this wonderful musical. She loves to sing and has been singing in choirs all her life. She was a soloist for Pope John Paul II in 1999, and sang with the famous Legends singers. Joyce presently sings with the choir at St. Josephine Bakhita. She is a retired educator who loves to make music and travel.

CHOREOGRAPHERS/DANCERS



Rev. Tracy Holliday-Wiggins is a native of East St. Louis, IL and is thankful for the opportunities afforded her through dance. She is thankful of the vision and how it comes into fruition with creative team players from the administrative, production staffs, and the cast. She has been with The Black Rep since 1988. Tracy thanks God and looks forward to sharing her students' artistic gifts in this musical.



Ronda Smith Branch knows that her soul's work involves helping others to the freedom of self-love, and becoming a Well Being Life Coach is one of the ways she is doing so. Her mission is to get others to love themselves for the greater good of us all, knowing what is hindering that process is a major component to provide an accurate base for where we start.



PRINCIPAL CAST BIOS

Shondria Wilson as Little Birdie

Shondria is a Seventh Grader at Sr. Thea Bowman Catholic School. This is the first play in which she has ever performed. She has studied violin since Kindergarten, and is also learning piano. Shondria hopes to be in many more plays, and would like to bring you all with her on her journey.



Tiffany Tenille as Young Bertha / Young Sr. Thea

Tiffany is deeply honored to join this production in the company of such passionate and gifted artists. Originally from Chicago, she earned her BFA in Acting from The Theatre School at DePaul University. Her recent stage credits include *The Dance on Widow's Row* (The Black Rep), *Jazz* (Marin Theatre Company), and *Between Riverside and Crazy* (San Jose Stage Company). On screen, Tenille delivered a breakout performance in Numa Perrier's *Jezebel*. The film's theatrical release and subsequent streaming debut on Netflix cemented Tenille as a rising star in the industry. As a director, her debut short *Albion Rose* premiered at MoMA and received many awards and recognitions and was hailed the film as "utterly mesmerizing." She is currently premiering her sophomore short, *A Woman's Body*, while developing her art-house brands, *The Petticoat Suite* and *Petticoat Portraits*. Tenille extends her love and gratitude to Vallimar and Maria for the opportunity to share in this meaningful work. www.tiffanytenille.com



Toni Twitty as Dr. Theon Bowman, MD

Toni Twitty is an aspiring writer and actor who has been in several shows; "I Will Live Until I Die" being his first professional production.



PRINCIPAL CAST BIOS

Victoria Pines as Mrs. Mary Ester Bowman

Victoria is ecstatic and honored to be a part of this original work. This is her first production with GKCE. Some of her most memorable productions include “The Color Purple”; Shug Avery (Hawthorne Players), “Into the Woods”; Jack’s Mother; “Godspell”; “Member of the Wedding”; Berenice Sadie Brown (Clayton Community Theatre), “Night Watch”; Dr. Tracey Lake (Theatre Guild of Webster Groves) and “Sweet Potato Queens”; Flower Tammy (New Line Theatre). Victoria was most recently seen at The Sheldon Concert Hall in the musical “Broadway Noir Deux” an original production conceived by Director, Chris Moore (New Line Theatre).



Rian Amirikal Page as Little Flonzie

Rian writes: "what a joy" it is to be amongst this dynamic cast in this amazing production. Rian has studied musical theater and dance at COCA and GCPA and some of her local performances include: Tiny Tim Cratchit in 'A Christmas Carol', Shanell in 'School of Rock', Young Nala in the 'Lion King' Young Celie in 'the Color Purple' and Puff in 'Romeo and Zooliet'. Rian aspires to grace the stages on Broadway one day and would like to extend a huge thanks to Mrs. Valimar, Maria, her castmates and family members for believing in her and pushing her closer to that dream!



Giani Hall as Young Flonzie

Giani, Class of 2029 at Cardinal Ritter College Prep and pageant titleholder Miss Saint Louis 2025-2026 is excited to be part of this production. She enjoys creativity and inspiring others through her brands Gather & Grow and PolygByGigi. In the future, she hopes to study architecture and minor in early childhood education. She hopes to keep growing in her talents and inspiring others through both the arts and her platforms.



Barbara E Jackson I'm excited for you to witness my efforts in my debut performance in the Sr Thea Bowman story, I WILL LIVE UNTIL I DIE. A retired educator who felt as though I was on stage when teaching, but this is very different and exhilarating. Dedicating the performance to my loved ones; my 1st heartbeat my son Ja-maal David and my parents Jerry & Christine who brought the arts into our home to my seven siblings.



Kinsley McCall loves to be happy, to sing, dance, play, and give lots of hugs!



Maria Sanchez Peña is a native of Lima, Peru. She moved to USA more than 20 years ago to study. She works in the agricultural field. She started singing again a few years ago, and since then she cantors, participates in her parish choir and was involved in the *Song of Mark*.



Bridget Ford Stegall is excited to be performing in this groundbreaking musical. “Singing is my passion!” She is a member of her church choir, SLSO InUnison Chorus and several community mass choirs.



CHOIR

Kimberly Bentley is the proud mother of the Bentley 5 and a dedicated member of Center of Creative Arts (COCA). Her theatre work includes Tapestry of Shadows, directing children’s ministry holiday musicals, teaching musical theatre camps, and providing private music instruction. With over 25 years in music education, Kimberly advocates for youth in the arts and thanks her family and mentors for their support.



Elizabeth Clay is a St. Louis native and choir member at St. Josephine Bakhita Church. This is her first time on a professional stage, and she is glad to share this experience with her granddaughter, Trinity (Betty Marie).



Clyde Cross has been singing in North City choirs for 40+ years. He graduated from Sumner High School with Tina Turner, Class of 1958. He met Sr. Thea at the National Office of Black Catholics in Houston. There she taught his sister Janet liturgical dance. He sang for the Pope in 1999, and is enjoying being part of the program with his son, Curtis.



Curtis Cross is very happy to be a part of this play. He enjoyed working with the cast; he sang in the at St. Peter Claver Church in Detroit, MI. He is a cosmetologist, a chef, and is retired from Chrysler. Since 2019, Curtis has been a student at the Studios @ Michigan for modeling, acting, and commercials. He and his father, Clyde, are members of St. Peter Claver Church.



Dominic L. Garland has been a Licensed Euneal Director for 36 years. He serves at Serenity Memorial Funeral Home St. Louis where he is the Senior Director and primary makeup artist. He served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Velda Village, and is a 60-year church member of St. Josephine Bakhita (formerly St. Bridget of Erin Ch.) and is grateful for his family.

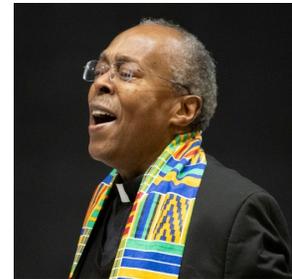


SUPPORTING CAST BIOS

Sharon Reed-Ussery

as Mrs. Washington / Adult Flonzie

Native St. Louisan Sharon takes on dual roles in this inspiring tale of a granddaughter of slaves and an African-American Catholic Sister who left an indelible mark. Sharon’s background in music and the arts began at age 3 when she learned to play the piano by ear and the trombone in high school. Her first performance was in the stage production of Noye’s Fludde Opera (Noah’s Flood), with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra/St. Alphonsus Rock Church at age 16, followed by the production of “#Me Too: Her Voice Will Be Heard.” She has sung with local bands since 2016 and serves as and Minister of Music at St. Josephine Bakhita. She works at the Daughters of Charity Provincial Office in the West End, and thoroughly enjoys being near her family of three children and four grandchildren who never lack for attention or love.



Fr. Arthur Cavitt

as Fr. Robinson / Bishop Richardson
Fr. Art is a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis who is still spreading the message of God’s love and hope through liturgies, pastoral care encounters, days of recollection, and special projects such as this evangelizing musical production.



Gloria Jean Vann

as Miz Lula Mae Johnson
Gloria, a native of St. Louis, is married to David Vann, and together they have five children. She studied at Harris-Stowe State College and Southeast Missouri State Univ. Gloria has earned numerous accolades, including the Gospel Trailblazer Award in 2023 and 2024, induction into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2025, and a sold-out European tour. Additionally, she currently holds the prestigious title of Ms. Missouri Senior America 2025. In retirement, Gloria remains dedicated to sharing music and collaborating with seniors, individuals experiencing homelessness, and children.

SUPPORTING CAST BIOS



Aтира "Tarrah" Muhammad as Mrs. Quinn
Aтира is a local theater professional and enthusiast who has recently acted with Kirkwood Theatre Guild, served as Artistic Director for Encore Theater Group for August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* and she appeared as Ruth Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun*. Aтира has also worked with A Call to Conscience Inc. as set designer and appeared in productions of *Time's A Gettin' Harder: Stories of the Great Migration* and *A Celebration of Dreams: The Annie Malone Story*. Originally from Oklahoma, she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications Studies and is a proud tribal citizen of the Chickasaw Nation. Aтира would like to thank her four sons, for their continued support and encouragement.



Kevin McKenzie
as Walt Palmer / Father Murphy / Interviewer
Kevin McKenzie writes Catholic saints books for children and loves to fix broken things. He is excited to get to play a bad guy, and several good ones in this musical. He's so proud of his wife Maria for giving her all to make this musical so professional. Hoping Sister Thea is Saint Thea soon!



Maria Vargo as Sr. Lina Putz / Mrs. Keller
Maria is a multi-talented actress, singer, songwriter, producer, Director and Christian speaker. Currently she is the President and Artistic Director of G.K. Chesterton Entertainment, a Non-Profit Entertainment Company. As an actress Maria portrayed St. Faustina in a one woman show with over 300 performances. Maria's talent is not only inspiring and uplifting but many have called her work life changing.



Bria Guerrini as Mrs. Greene
Bria Joi is a native of St. Louis, Missouri where she spent her childhood in the studio, dancing for 10 years as well singing in numerous choirs. While attending the University of Missouri-Columbia, Bria studied an interdisciplinary program where the focus was on emerging media, video production and digital storytelling. She was recently married and enjoys traveling, listening to music and being with family friends.



Trinity Daniels as Ruth (Daughter)
Trinity is a St. Louis native and an altar server at St. Josephine Bakhita Parish. She is an eighth grader at Brittany Woods Middle School and enjoys dancing for this production.



Waverly Walker as Deborah Jean (Daughter)
Waverly Walker is thrilled to be performing in "I Will Live Until I Die" with G.K. Chesterton Entertainment's company at COCA as a daughter, main dancer, and in the choir. Through this community, she has grown as a person and in her faith. As she's transitioning into college, she realized that this is her last performance as a high schooler, but she wouldn't change it for the world. Theatre has been a cherished part of her life since middle school, and she hopes to continue to pursue theatre through college and the rest of her life.



Raina Bentley as Betty Marie (Daughter)
Raina Bentley is a homeschooled sophomore and the third of the Bentley 5. She trains at COCA in Allegro and Improv Troupe and has appeared in COCA Summer Musicals including Mean Girls, The Lion King, The Color Purple, Cinderella, and HADESTOWN. Her credits also include Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (La Bohème, Tosca) and The Muny (Joseph). She thanks her family and mentors for their continued support.



MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

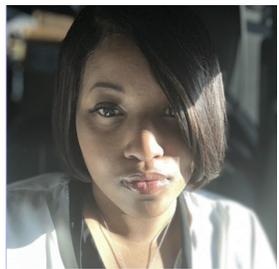
Carmen R. Guynn as Mrs. Rivera

Carmen R. Guynn is an award-winning performing artist and the visionary founder and owner of Almas Del Ritmo Dance Company and the St. Louis International Salsa Bachata Festival. Her distinguished theater career includes earning a St. Louis Theater Circle Award for In the Heights at STAGES St. Louis and an Arts for Life honor for The Color Purple. Carmen's recent regional credits feature standout performances in Pippin, Cuéntame, Rock of Ages, and We Are the Whole Cast. Beyond the stage, she has appeared on OWN's *Welcome to Sweetie Pie's* and MTV's *MADE*, bridging the worlds of musical theater and television. A dedicated "Artist," she uses her craft to champion social equity and mental health awareness, performing always to the glory of God. Through every production, festival, and stage she touches, Carmen creates spaces where culture, faith, and community converge.

Follow her journey:

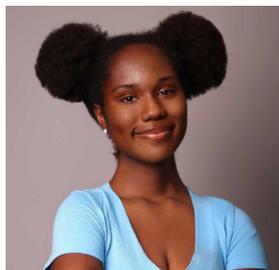
www.adrdancestl.com

@adrdancestl | @stlsalsafest_



Krystal McCall as Mrs. Fletcher

Krystal is a loving Mother of two children and a wife of an amazing husband. I love God and I'm a truth seeker. I love to sing, dance, and bring joy to others!



Rebecca Bryson as Mrs. Delaney

My name is Rebecca Bryson. I love the joy and art of acting. With acting you can be yourself and live through another character at the same time.



SUPPORTING CAST BIOS

Betsey Beckman as Sr. Dorothy Kundiger

Betsey Desloge Beckman, choreographer and dancer, has been collaborating with ValLimar Jansen for over 20 years in venues including conferences, churches, and Carnegie Hall. Betsey had the honor of both producing and performing in the previous version of "I Will Live Until I Die" in her current hometown - Seattle, WA, and her ministry of dance and embodied prayer reaches around the globe through the online community Abbey of the Arts. Betsey's mother hails from St. Louis, and as she is excited to be returning to her family roots to bring the story of Thea Bowman to life.



Angela Nicholson as Sr. Agnes / Dr. Margaret Walsh

Angela is a longtime member of the St. Francis Xavier (College) Church choir. A multi instrumentalist and solo cabaret artist with past shows in St. Louis, Chicago and New York, she's happily retired from corporate life and proud to be a part of this production. Thanks to her ever supportive husband, David Ampleman.



Lisa Osselmeier as Sr. Eleanor

Lisa is a graduate of St. Louis University, BA Theater '78. She has enjoyed singing in different choirs and productions over the years!



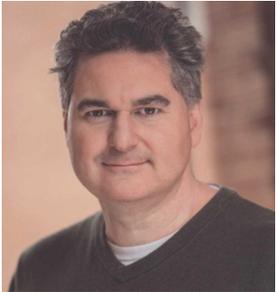
Maria Fe Wilhelm Sanchez as Young Sr. Dorothy

Maria Fe is 14 years old, attends Cor Jesu Academy, and belongs to the Chamber Choir. This is not her first show; she participated in many small school plays before, including the *Song of Mark*. She also cantors at her parish Christ the King, and loves anything related to music and singing.

SUPPORTING CAST BIOS



Luke A. Steffen as Dr. Thomas Henderson
Luke is a geographer and actor in the St Louis area. He has participated in a wide variety of paid and volunteer shows throughout the St Louis area, including a production of *Sister Act* with Alpha Players of Florrisant. He would like to thank his parents, friends, and his girlfriend for all their love and support and hopes you enjoy the show!"



Joseph Link as Dr. Donald Garrett
Joseph is an actor, screenwriter and author. He has written seven feature length screenplays some of which have won awards in international competitions along with one of his screenplays being featured on *Coverfly's Redlist* (Top 20). He has studied acting at COCA as well as with the local acting studio, Creative Actors. Joseph acted in a nationally touring musical as well as in some independent films. He has also written a 91,000 word science fiction novel called *The Zero Particle Cooperative*.



CHILDREN'S ENSEMBLE / DANCERS BIOS

Kiarse Fields as Ruby Delaney
Kiarise is nine years old. She loves dancing and has danced for three years. She goes to Sr. Thea Bowman School and loves to draw. This is her third play.



Curtis McCall III as Samuel Fletcher
Curtis is a proud student at Sister Thea Bowman School in East St. Louis, IL. He loves to dance, sing, and play instruments like violin, drum, and guitar.



CHILDREN'S ENSEMBLE / DANCERS BIOS

KyShawn Jennings, Jr. as Robert Greene
KyShawn is in the Sixth Grade at Sr. Thea Bowman Catholic School. He likes to play sports, especially basketball and track, and both he and his sister Shondria play for the school. His pet dog is named Bella. He is happy that he and his sister can participate in this play together.



Jaron Bentley as James Rivera
Jaron Bentley is a homeschooled sixth grader and the fourth of the Bentley 5. He trains at COCA in dance, Allegro, and Improv Troupe and is a second company member of Ballet Eclectica and COCADance. Credits include *Ragtime* with Union Avenue Opera, *A Raisin in the Sun: The Musical* with The Black Rep, and youth ensemble with The Muny (*Frozen Jr.*, *Evita*). He thanks his family and mentors for their continued support.



Sarah Bentley as Martha Rivera
Sarah Jessica Bentley is a homeschooled fourth grader and the youngest of the Bentley 5. She trains at COCA as a PPD student in Allegro Junior Choir and Improv Troupe. Her credits include *A Christmas Carol* with The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and *The Color Purple*, *Finding Nemo*, and *Seussical Jr.* at COCA. Sarah also sings with St. Louis Children's Choirs. She likes to sew and crochet, and thanks her family and mentors for their continued support.



Raylee Jones as Pearl Washington
Raylee is 8 years old and loves singing, dancing, and performing for family and friends. This is her first show and she has had so much fun learning with her castmates. When she's not on stage, she enjoys math, soccer, and cheerleading.