

Redefining Disney's Cinderella

Written by Abeni Hill



Traci Allen was born and raised in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Her mother was a music teacher and her father was a basketball coach. She left her hometown to pursue her dream of attending a historically Black university. Allen is a graduate from Howard University who earned a degree in theater arts with a concentration in musical theater.

Allen will take the stage as Cinderella in the Children Theatre Company's (CTC) fan-favorite and holiday production of Rodger's and Hammerstein's "Cinderella."

With her dark hair in artistically woven braids that have been brought back into a bun, mahogany skin, and dark brown eyes, Allen represents the idea that Disney's blonde and blue-eyed Cinderella has become more culturally aware.

"What little girl doesn't dream of one day being Cinderella," questioned Allen.

The new company member began her work with CTC as an apprentice, which brought her to Minneapolis. During her apprenticeship, Allen participated in the company's productions, readings, and workshops and her most memorable experience, working on the play "Bud, Not Buddy" with Marion McClinton.

"I really loved working with Marion because he's an incredible director who has such great vision and such confidence in his actors," said Allen. "Additionally, the cast was absolutely amazing."

Allen enjoys her relationship with the theatre company.

"The Children's Theatre has done amazing work," said Allen. "They do work that is challenging for the actor as well as the audience member. They produce work with such great depth."

Allen has always had a musical and artistic side. The triple threat actress has been dancing since she was four and was a part of her school's production of "Pippin" in the 8th grade. Allen loves music, especially the music from "Cinderella."

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"There is a lot of great music in our show, sung and instrumental, classical and modern, original compositions and old favorites," said Allen.

The whimsical actress favors songs with meaning. "My favorite song from the show is a song Cinderella sings called, 'I've Got A Feeling.' It's a really beautiful song about watching the world around you come alive and witnessing the magic that happens when you choose to believe that your dreams can come true."

Allen focuses on character development for each role that she accepts. She said her most challenging character was Taylor from "Stick Fly," which played at Parks Square Theatre.

Allen said she might have known someone with the same personality as her character.

"I could have gone to school with her, but we are very different people," said Allen.

The insightful actress said that the character pushed her to find out why her character's way of thinking and why she does certain things without the commentary of her own personality.

"It forces you to get to the bottom of it instead of simply judging her," said Allen. "You have to silence your brain and your natural reactions. It makes you a better human being because you gain compassion and understanding."

Allen offered advice for her fellow actors.

"Your reputation precedes you, so be kind," said Allen. "Be in the habit now. Talent is great, but work ethic makes all of the difference in the world."

Cinderella opens Tuesday, Nov. 12 on the United Health Group Stage at the Children Theatre Company and will close Jan. 5.