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FOUR LITTLE GIRLS: Birmingham 1963

Powerful musical play explores the Civil Rights Movement through the eyes of children

MONTGOMERY, Ala., (Jan. 3, 2019) — Alabama Shakespeare Festival presents [Four Little Girls: Birmingham 1963](#), a play with music by Christina Ham, in partnership with Montgomery Public Schools. The production runs January 25 through February 13.

Tickets are available anytime online at [asf.net](#), by visiting the ASF Box Office, or calling 334.271.5353 during Box Office business hours (Monday through Saturday from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.).

It was Sunday, September 15, 1963, when a stack of dynamite hidden by Ku Klux Klansmen detonated in the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama during Sunday morning services, injuring dozens of people and killing four little girls: Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, Cynthia D. Morris Wesley, and Addie Mae Collins. *Four Little Girls: Birmingham 1963* examines the realities of a segregated and politically-charged climate through the eyes of these children.

In the play, which takes place before the bombing, the four young girls express their hopes and dreams about “what they want to be when they grow up,” against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement. A full children’s chorus sets the tone with Civil Rights anthems such as “Amazing Grace,” “Oh, Freedom,” and “Woke Up This Morning.”

“This play isn’t simply a docudrama; it innately reflects who we still are as a nation,” said Tangela Large, the production’s director. “It is our hope that this production will inspire all of us to diligently fight for a world in which children are able to fully be themselves and enjoy the innocence and pleasures that childhood should guarantee for all.”

The play features students solely from [Montgomery Public Schools](#) (MPS). Jhordyn Long (Baldwin Magnet School), Trinity Ross (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School), Jalyn Crosby (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School), and Antonisia Collins (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School) portray Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, and Cynthia Morris Wesley, respectively.

Twenty more students appear in the chorus/ensemble, including Pia Jung (Baldwin Magnet School), Somer Deason (Loveless Academic Magnet Program High School), Josephine Severance (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School), Ella Figiera (Floyd Middle Magnet School), Faith Gatson (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School), Gaia Moore (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School), Mariban Escalante (Sidney Lanier High School), Antonavia Collins (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School), Jace White (Baldwin Magnet School), Mason Jeffers (Loveless Academic Magnet Program High School), Elias Afangideh (Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School), Zechariah Pickett (Jefferson Davis High School), Terrence Baldwin, Jr. (Park Crossing High School), Masury Cobb (George Washington Carver High School), Serenity Griffin (Baldwin Magnet School), Lexi Menefee (Loveless Academic Magnet Program High School), Taylor Hudson (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School), Andarious Porter (Booker T. Washington Magnet High School), Ashlee Ford (Baldwin Magnet School), and Charles Hunter (Robert E. Lee High School).

Over one hundred students auditioned for roles in the play. Those who were selected took acting classes beginning in October at Alabama Shakespeare Festival to prepare for the production that opens January 25. Other MPS students have prepared art and research projects that explore the Civil Rights Movement and will be on exhibit in the lobby of the theatre during the run of the production.

“Theatre has always been inherently local. It reflects the people, the times, and history of its region. It serves as a powerful tool for passing along stories and posing new questions,” said ASF Artistic Director Rick Dildine. “Our partnership with Montgomery Public Schools is one of the most exciting collaborations this season.”

Director Tangela Large is a regional actress (Playmakers Rep, Shakespeare and Company, Trinity Rep) and director currently on faculty at the University of West Georgia. Musical direction is by Dr. Joel Jones (professor emeritus at Alabama State University), who previously musically directed Disney’s *Mary Poppins* and Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* at Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Other members of the artistic team include stage manager Lexi Tippet, scenic designer Charles Eddie Moncrief III, lighting designer Tom Rodman, choreographer Crystalina Coats, costume designer Val Winkelman, sound designer Chris Lane, production assistant Jonathan Meinsler, and teaching artists Marcus Clement and Darrian Stovall.

Playwright Christina Ham was recently recognized by *American Theatre* magazine for being one of the most produced playwrights in the United States for the 2018-2019 theatrical season. She is currently Mellon Foundation Playwright in Residence at Pillsbury House Theatre, as well as a writer for the hit Netflix horror series *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*.

Four Little Girls: Birmingham 1963 will run concurrently with another of Christina Ham’s plays, [Nina Simone: Four Women](#), a musical play on the Octagon Stage which examines the aftermath of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing through Nina Simone’s stirring and definitive songbook. The presentation of these plays marks the first time that Alabama Shakespeare Festival has produced two plays by a living playwright at the same time.

This production is sponsored by the [Alabama Tourism Department](#).

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Alabama Shakespeare Festival is a not-for-profit organization under the direction of Artistic Director Rick Dildine and Executive Director Todd Schmidt. Designated as The State Theatre of Alabama, ASF is a leader in education and outreach, serving more than 40,000 students annually with artistic programming. ASF is supported by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.