

Rhapsody in Black Artist Bios

Written and performed by LeLand Gantt and developed at NYC's Actors Studio by Estelle Parsons, ***Rhapsody in Black*** is a one man show that explores LeLand's personal journey to understand and eventually transcend racism in America. We follow his spellbinding life story -- from an underprivileged childhood in the ghettos of McKeesport, Pennsylvania to teenage experiments with crime and drugs to scholastic achievement and an acting career that land adult LeLand in situations where he is virtually the only African-American in the room. How he manages to cope with the various psychological effects of consistently being marked The Other is recounted in remarkable and exquisitely moving detail, guaranteed to leave lasting impressions. Multiple elements combine to give *Rhapsody* its super-powered emotional punch, many of them concentrated in the incredible persona of its star. Charming, self-deprecatingly funny, linguistically awesome, LeLand Gantt imbues every word that falls from his mouth with all the passion and poignancy of a preacher speaking the Gospel. This is partly because he's confronting heavy subjects, but mostly because he believes so firmly in his message that it's impossible for it to emerge any other way. In his own words; "Objective truth strikes a chord."

ESTELLE PARSONS won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in 1967 for her role as Blanche Barrow in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Among her most noted television roles, she played Roseanne's mother on the award-winning sitcom *Roseanne*. She played the title role in *Miss Margarita's Way* on Broadway and the National tour, and Violet Weston in *August: Osage County* on Broadway and the national tour.

Ms. Parsons' directing credits include: a multi-cultural *Anthony and Cleopatra* described as "the most exciting and innovative presentation in English since Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Belasco Theater; Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* adapted by Adrienne Kennedy at the Signature Theater, NYC; *Oedipus the King* (Yeats adaptation) and *Salome: The Reading* (Oscar Wilde) with Al Pacino on Broadway and the National tour. Nominated four times for the Tony Award, Ms. Parsons was inducted into the American Theater Hall Of Fame in 2004.

LELAND GANTT first unveiled *Rhapsody in Black* at the WorkShop Theater Company's Sundays@Six reading series in March 2013. Further development at The Actors Studio yielded a slot in their Playwrights/Directors Unit's spring festival in May 2013 and, subsequently, a three-week workshop run last fall.

Regional credits include: *Two Trains Running* and *Radio Golf* (Syracuse Stage); Walter Mosley's *The Fall of Heaven*, world premier (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); *Gem of the Ocean* (Arena Stage), *Jitney* (Pittsburgh Public Theater), and *In Walks Ed* (Longwharf Theater).

Off-Broadway/Broadway: *Slippery When Wet* (La Mama), *Another Man's Poison* (Peter Jay Sharpe Theater), Oyamo's *Killa Dilla* and *Let Me Live* (Drama Desk and Audelco Award nominee for Featured Actor), and the revival of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (u/s Rock Dutton).

Film and television credits include: *Miracle at St. Anna*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Malcolm X*, *Presumed Innocent*, *Law and Order*, *Law and Order SVU*, *J.A.G.*, and HBO's *The Affair*.