

Director's Vision

By Devanand Janki

It is my great privilege and thrill to welcome you to our production of *Little Girl Blue: The Nina Simone Musical* here at the historic and gorgeous Goodspeed Opera House. We are especially blessed to have the stunning Goodspeed by the River space which allows us to once again, gather, to share, and to experience the power, joy, heartbreak and thrill of what an evening in the theatre can bring.

I am proud to say that this new musical began in Connecticut. We originally developed it with my theatre company Live and In Color, based in Salem, Connecticut, as well as Manhattan. Our first public performance was in an outdoor space much like this one in East Haddam, Connecticut. It was that performance that showed us that Nina's voice was especially needed right now. That was four summers ago. Little did we know what the next few years would have in store for all us.

Who knew that the fight for freedom would become that much harder? Again? Freedom from disease. Freedom to feel safe and protected in this country. No matter the color of our skin. Freedom from lies. Freedom from tyranny because we tell the truth. Freedom in our election system. Freedom to trust that process will be fair and just. Freedom to trust in our leaders. And more importantly, freedom to trust in our neighbors. All of these freedoms are



being tested throughout our land everyday.

Nobody cared more about freedom than Nina Simone. She was denied so many freedoms. The freedom to pursue her dream of studying and becoming a great classical pianist. The freedom of a quiet mind to comfort her. Freedom to share her artistry with the world. But she kept fighting. Whether the demons were at the door or inside her own mind, she kept up the fight. Her entire life was a quest to be liberated. Thank goodness, no force could hold her back.

Little Girl Blue: The Nina Simone Musical is written, sung and lived by the incomparable Laiona Michelle and backed by a trio of brilliant musicians. Get ready! These astounding artists will take you on an emotional rollercoaster—the journey of a classical piano child prodigy to the High Priestess of Soul, told through the glorious words and music of an American icon.

Nina's voice and her fight could not be more needed and more essential than right now. Her music teaches us what beauty can sound like. It is my hope that with this piece we can all listen and feel together again, with a deeper understanding of who we are, and why freedom is essential for all of us, in every way.

Little Girl Blue
The Nina Simone Musical