

HartBeat's new Artistic Director

Godfrey Simmons Jr. is the new Artistic Director for HartBeat Ensemble, and that is really good news for HartBeat, Asylum Hill and Hartford. The results of a nation-wide search brought him and his family, wife Sarah Chalmers and son Samuel, to our neighborhood from Ithaca NY.

Originally from Virginia, and William & Mary College, he began acting there, but the path to here was not a straight theatrical line. Fresh out of college he wrote for an industry publication in Washington DC for a year and during that time auditioned for and got his first professional acting job. This led to becoming a teaching artist in schools, a thing that was much in demand at the time. He continued to work in DC, Philadelphia and New York, both acting and taking teaching artist jobs until a resident professional teaching associate program was established at Cornell



University. Actors were hired to both act and teach acting. That brought him to Ithaca, and that brought him to Sarah. They worked together on the program and later to co-found the Civic Ensemble in Ithaca, a theater production company much like HartBeat. In many ways, it was his son Samuel who caused him to look for a more diverse community in which to raise him. Cornell is very diverse, but Ithaca, not as much. So when the opportunity at Hartbeat came up, Godfrey and Sarah were ready to move. It's not like they were jumping blindly into something, years before Godfrey spent 8 weeks acting in a play at TheaterWorks. He could appreciate both the current economy of Hartford and its deep cultural richness.

In looking to the future Godfrey said "My vision for HartBeat is to at once go deeper and broader... because HartBeat deserves it and Hartford deserves it."

For the upcoming season, it is likely to be 18 month long, all of 2020 and the first half of 2021. *Pagao* by Cin Martinez will likely be brought back, and the plan is to do *My Children! My Africa!* By Athol Fugard. The Youth Play Institute will be expanded this season to three productions and WTF will be back as well. Lots to look forward to.

Keep an eye on AHNA's Facebook page, and Event's & Things to Do page on the website for updates on their schedule.