

30 Year Anniversary Celebration



Youth Ensemble of Atlanta
Empowering youth through the arts



ABOUT YEA

Founded in 1990 as the *Freddie Hendricks Youth Ensemble of Atlanta*, it is recognized by the community now as **YEA**. **YEA** is the south's premiere African-American youth theatre company providing a cultural and creative outlet for the young people of Atlanta. **YEA** has developed over twelve company-inspired productions to include **RHYMES AND REASONS** (dealing with child abuse); **SOWETO! SOWETO! SOWETO!** . . . A Township is Calling (created in 1992 commemorating the struggles against apartheid); **SCHOOL HOUSE ROCKS** (tackling the subject of youth violence); **TIMES** (dealing with AIDS and sexuality); **PSALM 13** (battling teen pregnancy); **B.L.A.C.K. Better Left a Colored Kid** (speaking to the loss of community and the search for material wealth); **JEKONNI'S SONG** (a story of love); **ENDANGERED SPECIES** (discussing the issues young girls face on their journey to womanhood); **YEAH, I SAID IT!** (shining light on truths), **GUMBO** (history of where we've being and where we're going); **RISE** (addresses human and civil rights issues); **PREY** (deals with the struggles of Black men in America); **COLLAGE** (traces African-American literature for kids ages 5-12); **COLORS OF LOVE** (annual Holiday show); and **ALWAYS** (a delightful rendition of Urban Holiday Soup). These productions have been critically acclaimed and performed for more than a million people on four continents throughout the world.

More importantly, **YEA** fosters the personal growth of hundreds of young people from childhood to adulthood. Along the way, these talented and dedicated performers develop crucial communication and life skills that result in heightened cultural awareness, a commitment to excellence and community service, an appreciation for diversity, and self confidence and self-esteem. Many of our ensemble members come from at-risk communities and face many temptations that could lead them to a life of great hardship.

These young people see **YEA** as a safe-haven where their voices can be heard, where they are free to creatively express themselves without fear of reproach, and where their individual strengths and talents can be nurtured and appreciated. The professional arena in which the members of **YEA** work truly provides an atmosphere for tremendous personal growth and development. **YEA** members not only gain valuable performance training and experience, but also attain a strong sense of confidence, self-discipline, and heightened self-esteem. These accomplishments can be treasured and utilized to obtain rewards that might otherwise seem unobtainable. **YEA** has produced original works on a variety of stages in the city including the Alliance Theatre, the Carter Center, 7 Stages, Ferst Center for the Arts, Rialto Center for the Performing Arts and 14th Street Playhouse.

YEA has received numerous awards and honors including the *1997 Mayor's Recognition of Youth Arts Development Program* and *Atlanta Magazine's "Best of Atlanta" Teen Theatre* for 1997 and 2002. **YEA** has also been featured in *Parade* and *Southern Living* Magazines and won the *VITA Award for Best Overall Production of the 2000 Windybrow Arts Festival* in Johannesburg, South Africa. **YEA** has been recognized for its work by the *President's Committee on the Arts* (2008 Coming Up Taller Awards Winner), *Georgia Black Business Awards* (2010 Nonprofit of the Year), *City of Atlanta Mayor's Office*, *C. T. Vivian Leadership Institute* (2009 Torch Award) and winner of the *VITA Award for Best Overall Production at the 2000 Windybrow Arts Festival* in Johannesburg, South Africa. Most recently, **YEA** is the recipient of the prestigious *2019 Medallion Award* from the Children's Theatre Foundation of America (CFTA). The award, selected by CFTA's Board of Trustees, is presented annually at various cities throughout the United States and Canada. **YEA** was recognized for its 29 years of excellence in the performing arts and its service to young people. **YEA** has performed for the *Trumpet Awards* and the *Atlanta Hawks' Tribute to Maynard Jackson* while sharing the stage with *Bobby McFerrin*, *Shirley Caesar* and *Smokie Norful*. Our performers have received Emmys and Grammys and perform on Broadway, television, in major films and on numerous professional stages in the U.S. and Europe. Musical credits include singing background vocals for Platinum recording artist *Chaka Khan* for the debut of the "One Life" anthem for climate change produced by Interface and directed by Broadway celebrated choreographer *Otis Sallid*.

30 Year Anniversary

Celebration



Celebrating 30 Years of Excellence!

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and the young artists that are part of the work of the ensemble, we invite you to JOIN US as we celebrate our 30th Anniversary!

At the core of YEA is our Workshop Training Program. The company was started to provide training and produce original work. For nearly three decades, we have provided the youth of metro-Atlanta (and as far away as Columbus, Georgia and Birmingham, Alabama) with free training in the performing arts. Students audition to join the ensemble each year. All ensemble members are provided free training in the workshop program through a company scholarship. To maintain this scholarship, members must meet certain attendance and participation requirements. The scholarship covers all expenses associated with the training and performance programs. Workshops are held for three hours each Saturday and include formal and informal instruction on basic and advanced techniques and concepts in all disciplines of the performing arts.

Through the services of our long-time volunteer tutor, YEA also offers free academic tutoring to ensemble members before workshop during the academic year. YEA is best known for the quality and impact of our original issue-oriented musical productions. We became cultural ambassadors for the City of Atlanta on four different occasions and birthed the next generation of artists, with credits on Broadway, in film and television and numerous recordings. YEA students have become educators, lawyers, producers, stage and fashion designers, technicians, arts administrators and more. 30 years ago, it would have been hard to imagine that YEA would one day receive the *President's Coming Up Taller Awards* at the White House – but, we did – and produced more than 11 original plays written by youth. This is truly a testament to what can happen when you believe in, nurture, empower and love our youth. We built an institution that has been sustained for nearly three decades while providing training and development to the youth of Metropolitan Atlanta.

This was all done with the support of our community, and for that we thank you!

Please, join us on Saturday, August 8, 2020
at the Rialto Center for the Arts to celebrate our achievements.

<https://youthensemble.org/>

