

**THEATRICAL
OUTFIT**

PRESENTS:

YOUNG JOHN LEWIS

Written by Psalmayene 24, Music by Eugene H. Russell IV

Directed by Thomas W. Jones II

June 4-29, 2025

A WORLD PREMIERE HIP-HOP MUSICAL ABOUT HOW A CIVIL RIGHTS ICON FOUND HIS POLITICAL VOICE

"If not you, then who? If not now, then when?" Congressman John Lewis

YOUNG JOHN LEWIS, commissioned by Theatrical Outfit, is a brand new musical about one of our most inspiring and principled politicians. Congressman Lewis was a key member of the Civil Rights Movement, and was known as the "Conscience of Congress" where he represented Atlanta for 17 terms. But how did he begin his political career? How did he find his principles and his political voice? And what was it like to be part of one of the most important political movements in American history?

Young John Lewis tells this story, and examines 10 crucial years in which The Congressman answered these questions. This is the John that was inspired to become an activist after the murder of Emmett Till and after his thwarted attempt to attend the then segregated Troy University. This is the John that learned the tactics of nonviolent resistance as a member of the youth-lead *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)*. This is the John that learned to connect with people who had different ideologies to his own, and to build coalitions with them. This is the John that literally placed his body on the line as an activist to demand for the civil and human rights of all American citizens.

A LIVING LEGACY

As we enter a new age of political turmoil in which the rights and values that Congressman Lewis fought for throughout his life are under threat, we hope that this powerful new musical will help a new generation of political leaders to find their voice. We want *Young John Lewis* to serve as a roadmap to excite and inspire us all to live The Congressman's legacy in the present and the future.

This piece explores three pillars of The Congressman's political and personal legacy:

VOTING RIGHTS: He championed the enfranchisement of voters across the South, and saw the democratic process as crucial to improving the lives of his community and all Americans.

CIVIL RIGHTS: He believed in the founding principle of our nation that all people are "created equal," and challenged oppressive forces that sought to dehumanize Americans and set them against one another.

PERSONAL MORAL COURAGE: He showed up for his community, over and over again. He put his body on the line for what he believed in, and his commitment to non violent direct action was unshakable.

Young John Lewis raises some of the key questions of the Civil Rights movement for us to answer again: *Who are we to each other? What are responsibilities to our fellow citizens? What future can we imagine for our country?*

ABOUT THEATRICAL OUTFIT

Our theater stands on Luckie Street in a building that used to be Herren's Restaurant, the first white-owned restaurant to voluntarily de-segregate in 1963. It is a site of conscience in Atlanta and inspires us in how we approach our work. Founded in 1977, TO has evolved into one of the city's leading professional theatre companies with a mission to "produce world class theatre that starts conversations that matter."

THE CREATIVE TEAM

WRITER: PSALMAYENE 24 is an award-winning playwright, director, and actor. "Psalm" is currently The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Playwright in Residence at Mosaic Theater. *The Frederick Douglass Project*, which he co-wrote with Deirdre Kinahan, received six Helen Hayes Award nominations. Psalm has received commissions from the African Continuum Theater Company, Imagination Stage, The Kennedy Center, and more. His one-man play, *Free Jujube Brown!*, is recognized as a seminal work in Hip-Hop Theatre and is published in "Plays from the Boom-Box Galaxy: Theater from the Hip-Hop Generation" (TCG).

COMPOSER: EUGENE H. RUSSELL IV is an Atlanta native, Tennessee State University alumnus, and proud Girl Dad. An accomplished musician/composer whose single "Brand New Day" can be found on all streaming platforms, Eugene IV recently co-wrote the music for *The Boy Who Kissed the Sky*, a musical based on the childhood of Jimi Hendrix and co-produced by the Alliance Theatre and Seattle Children's Theatre.

DEVELOPMENT DRAMATURG: ADDAE MOON is an Atlanta based playwright, dramaturg, director and cultural worker. He is the Associate Artistic Director at Theatrical Outfit, and a co-founder of the new play development and performance collective Hush Harbor Lab. He has also collaborated with Out of Hand/Equitable Dinners, Actor's Express, Theatre du Reve, and the High Museum of Art.

DIRECTOR: THOMAS W. JONES II has directed, written, and performed in more than 200 plays worldwide. In 1978, Tom founded Jomandi Productions, where he led Jomandi to become the 3rd largest African-American theatre company in the U.S. His work as writer, director, and actor has been acclaimed nationally and internationally. His most recent work was as playwright and lyricist on the new musical, *For Peace I Rise*, on the life of Civil Rights icon C.T. Vivian.



PARTNER WITH US

Theatrical Outfit (TO) is actively looking for partners who can help deepen the impact of *Young John Lewis* across Atlanta, and to help us champion causes that defined The Congressman's political work and life. We have opportunities to communicate engagement messaging with our audience: in pre and post show speeches; in the lobby before and after the show; digitally through social media and eblasts; and through workshops and post-show conversations. As well as bringing the community together to celebrate and explore this story together, we are focusing on developing practical ways to reach young people, and encourage them to find their own political voices.

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- We want to bring youth groups to the theatre to see the piece and meet the artists. We will have study guides available with details of the piece, the history, and key questions to explore with students.
- We have a special curriculum called RHYTHM AND REVISION, a 6-week bootcamp for young people aged 14-21. Led by professional teaching artists, participants explore playwriting, spoken word, hip hop, and performance. We are developing a special version of this program connecting young people to the story of *Young John Lewis*.

FUNDRAISING PARTNERSHIPS

- Financial support will help us reach more people with the piece, expand our educational programming, and offer the full support a new musical needs.
- We are seeking support from foundations, corporations, and individuals.
- A full overview of levels of support and associated benefits can be found on our website.

MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS

- Do you run an organization that champions voting rights, civil rights, personal moral courage, or political leadership in Atlanta? Get in touch with us!
- This show can serve as a platform for organizations actively engaged in actions that preserve elements of The Congressman's legacy, and we want to amplify your voice.
- We can create a social media partnership, promote your work on our website, or through our email and mailing lists.

POLITICAL ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

- We will have space in our lobby for folks that want to set up a table to sign audience members up to vote or volunteer.
- We can partner in the creation of a "Political Action Next Steps" guide that can be sent to all attendees.

If you have any other ideas, our doors are wide open. Contact matt.torney@theatricaloutfit.org

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