

**BRT**  
BRISTOL RIVERSIDE THEATRE  
120 Radcliffe Street  
Bristol, PA 19007  
Box Office: (215) 785-0100  
www.brtstage.org

*Seriously*  
**ENTERTAINING**  
t h e a t r e

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High-resolution images available upon request  
and online at: [www.canarypromo.com/bristol](http://www.canarypromo.com/bristol)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**January 2008**

**BRISTOL RIVERSIDE THEATRE presents**  
***Welcome Home, Marian Anderson***  
Inspired by the life and legacy of the Philadelphia singer  
January 22 – February 10, 2008

PHILADELPHIA – **Bristol Riverside Theatre** is honored to present the Philadelphia area premiere of ***Welcome Home, Marian Anderson***, a musical drama about the triumphant story of the celebrated Philadelphia contralto singer. Written by and starring **Vanessa Shaw**, and directed by **Jeffrey V. Thompson**, the production explores the life and legacy of the famed African American singer who overcame racial bias to capture a nation, becoming one of the most successful singers of her time and an important figure in American history. Hailed as “An artful mixture of history, social commentary and music” with “A riveting performance with a vocal power that is electrifying” (*Trenton Times*), *Welcome Home, Marian Anderson* runs at Bristol Riverside Theatre from **January 22 through February 10, 2008** (Opening Night is January 24). Tickets are \$39 – \$42 and are available by calling the BRT Box Office at **(215) 785-0100** or online at **[www.BRTstage.org](http://www.BRTstage.org)**.

*Welcome Home, Marian Anderson* follows a critical period in the life of the singer (the mid to late 1930s), including the historic and now legendary 1939 Easter Sunday concert at Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Music performed in the play includes classical arias, spirituals, American patriotic songs, and German lieder.

Throughout her career, Anderson prevailed over seemingly insurmountable challenges with dignified resolve and quiet determination. Having already achieved international acclaim, Anderson was denied permission to perform at the Daughters of the American Revolution’s (D.A.R.) Constitution Hall on the grounds of segregation. Politicians, community and church leaders, and the general public – both black and white – denounced this decision which led to the public resignation from the D.A.R. of Eleanor Roosevelt, then First Lady of the United States. Later, a public concert was organized at the Lincoln Memorial with the great mall as an outdoor auditorium. Broadcast over national radio, Anderson’s concert was attended by a huge and enthusiastic audience of 75,000 people – the largest gathering at the mall in its history up to that time.

Playwright and performer, Vanessa Shaw, has garnered praise for her portrayal of this enigmatic and powerful historical figure. She was moved to begin work on the script after reading of Anderson’s death in

1993. Seeing a photo of the Lincoln Memorial concert and the thousands of people in attendance, “was so overwhelming and inspiring that I began writing the play that day,” she says. “Bringing this legend to the stage has been both rewarding and daunting, and worth every minute.” The show has been performed at the National Black Theater Festival, the Paul Robeson Theater in Brooklyn, Seven Stages in Atlanta, and the Lorraine Hansberry Theater in San Francisco, among others. Bristol Riverside Theatre will present its Philadelphia area premiere.

The cast of three perform several roles throughout the show, including Vanessa Shaw as Anderson, Mary Saunders Patterson, and Maude, **Ivan Thomas** as Paul Robeson, Accompanist, Billy King, Nazi Soldier, and Gerry, and **Mark Edward Lang** as Kosti, Orpheus, and Hurok.

Vanessa Shaw’s previous performances include *Timbuktu* opposite Ertha Kitt, *Camelot* with Robert Goulet, and *Raisin* opposite Debbie Allen and Joe Morton. Her classical and theatre concerts have taken her all over the world and include the works of composers as diverse as Copeland, Bizet, Rogers and Hart/Hammerstein, Howard Roberts, Schubert, Cole Porter, and Stevie Wonder. With over fifteen years of professional experience performing, teaching and directing, Mark Edward Lang is an Artistic Associate with New York City’s Harbor Theatre Company, an honors graduate of Vassar College, and recipient of the Kazan Prize for Excellence in the Dramatic Arts. Ivan Thomas, a singer, actor and classical pianist, has performed around the world and is currently a baritone singer with the Mitch Miller Orchestra.

Born in Philadelphia on February 27, 1887, Marian Anderson grew up in the ethnically and racially-mixed South Philadelphia neighborhood at Fitzwater and Martin Streets. She began her musical career at the age of six, singing in the choir at Union Baptist Church, and later attended South Philadelphia High School. A master of repertoire across operatic, recital, and American traditional genres, Anderson played a vital role in the acceptance of African-American musicians in the classical musical world. Her grace and effortless virtuosity under unknowable pressures remains a model for all. Marian Anderson died in 1993 at the age of 96. She is interred in the Eden Cemetery in Philadelphia. The famed conductor Arturo Toscanini once declared, “A voice like Marian Anderson is heard only once in a hundred years.”

### **About Bristol Riverside Theatre**

Since 1986, BRT has brought consistently acclaimed professional theatre to Bucks County and maintained a long-term commitment to finding and developing new plays. The theatre is the recipient of over 50 Barrymore Award nominations for Excellence in Theatre, given annually by the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia. In addition to its mainstage productions, the theatre serves as a cultural hub for the community, with such programs as children's theatre, community concerts and exhibitions of local visual arts.

*Bristol Riverside Theatre’s 2007-2008 season is sponsored by Verizon, Grand Sponsor of the 21<sup>st</sup> Season.*

## **Welcome Home, Marian Anderson**

### **FACTS**

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**Performances:**

Tue, 1/22	8:00pm
Wed, 1/23	8:00pm
<b>Thu, 1/24*</b>	<b>8:00pm</b>
Fri, 1/25	8:00pm
Sat, 1/26	2:00pm
Sat, 1/26	8:00pm
Sun, 1/27	3:00pm
Wed, 1/30	2:00pm
Wed, 1/30	8:00pm
Thu, 1/31	8:00pm
Fri, 2/1	8:00pm
Sat, 2/2	2:00pm
Sat, 2/2	8:00pm
Sun, 2/3	3:00pm
Wed, 2/6	2:00pm
Wed, 2/6	8:00pm
Thu, 2/7	8:00pm
Fri, 2/8	8:00pm
Sat, 2/9	2:00pm
Sat, 2/9	8:00pm
Sun, 2/10	3:00pm

**Dates:** January 22 – February 10, 2008

Previews run Jan. 22 – 23

**Opening night is Thu, Jan. 24***Press: please R.S.V.P. to Megan Wendell,  
megan@canarypromo.com***Theatre:** Bristol Riverside Theatre  
120 Radcliffe Street  
Bristol, PA 19007**Prices:** \$39 – \$42  
\$15 for students age 22 and younger**Tickets:** **Phone:** (215) 785-0100  
**Online:** www.brtstage.org

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**Welcome Home, Marian Anderson**by **Vanessa Shaw**Directed by **Jeffrey V. Thompson****Cast** *(in alphabetical order)***Mark Edward Lang:** Kostì, Orpheus, Hurok, et. al.**Vanessa Shaw:** Marian, Mary Saunders Patterson,  
Maude**Ivan Thomas:** Paul Robeson, Accompanist, Billy King,  
Nazi Soldier, Gerry, et. al.

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**\*Opening Night**

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**To request more information, photos, and interviews, please contact:**Megan Wendell, Canary Promotion, (215) 242-6393, [megan@canarypromo.com](mailto:megan@canarypromo.com)