

INSIDE THE MUSICAL GUIDE:

CHOIR BOY



SEPTEMBER 11 - OCTOBER 23, 2022

A PLAY WITH MUSIC

Written by Tarell Alvin McCraney

Directed by Jamil Jude

This "Inside the Musical" Guide offers supplementary curriculum containing educational content, interactive activities, opportunities for reflection, and resources based on the themes of the show *Choir Boy*. This guide can be utilized before or after experiencing the show. Questions? Reach out to educationprograms@5thavenue.org

Content contributor: Brodrick Ryans

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SYNOPSIS

Choir Boy follows a group of students at a prestigious prep school for Black boys as they struggle with issues of identity, sexuality, and manhood. When the leader of the school's legendary gospel choir, Pharus Young, has his pride sullied by one of his fellow students, we are sent on a voyage through the growing pains of adolescence.

For fifty years, Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys has been a highly respected institution dedicated to helping its students grow into "strong, ethical Black men." But what happens when Pharus does not fit the mold for a typical "Drew Man?" Pharus is different from his peers, and his effeminate nature constantly sets him apart. Though he may be the leader and most talented member of Drew's renowned gospel choir, he struggles to gain their acceptance and respect.

A riveting coming-of-age tale from Tarell Alvin McCraney, the Academy Award®-winning writer of *Moonlight*, *Choir Boy* is a masterful story about honor, legacy, and dignity filled with electrifying gospel, spiritual, and R&B performances.

“Reaffirms Tarell Alvin McCraney’s position as one of the most profoundly moving and insightful writers of our time.”
—DC Metro Theatre Arts

CONTENT ADVISORY:

This production contains nudity, language, and adult content.



Check out the *Choir Boy* “Show Talks” with guest artists Brodrick Ryans and Nicholas Japaul Bernard!



CLICK HERE
or scan the
QR code
to access.



CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

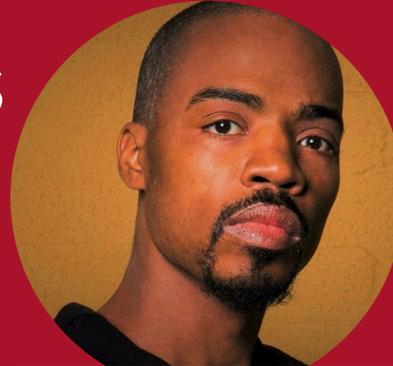
ADULT LEADERS

at Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys

Late 60s, 70s, white male, professor at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys.



MR. PENDLETON



HEADMASTER MARROW

Late 30s, early 40s Black man, the youngest and latest Headmaster for the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys.

Headmaster Marrow is Bobby Marrow's uncle

STUDENTS

at Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys

Late teens, an effeminate Black student. Begins the play as a junior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys and the lead of the school's famous choir.



PHARUS JONATHAN YOUNG

Mid to late teens, a Black student, Bobby is a junior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School, and member of the school's choir.



BOBBY MARROW

A teenage Black boy, and a junior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys. He is a member of the school's choir.



JUNIOR DAVIS

Late teens, a Black boy, a senior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys. He is a member of the school's choir.



DAVID HEARD

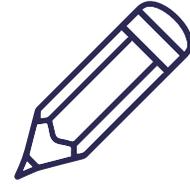
Late teens, athletic Black student, a senior at the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys. He is a member of the school's choir and the school's baseball team.



ANTHONY JUSTIN 'AJ' JAMES

Roommates

ACTIVITIES



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Materials Needed: paper & pen/pencil

David and Pharus talk about what it was like when they became friends and roommates at school, observing the different family dynamics they've experienced.

In this exercise you will write a reflection about someone you've met (friend, family member, colleague, or acquaintance) who has a different background/family dynamic than you do, keeping the following things in mind:

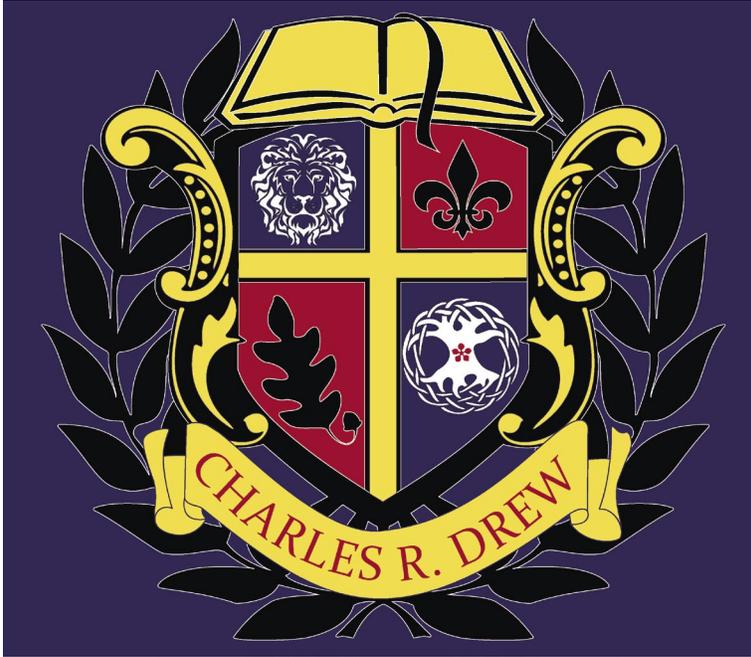
1. How did you feel when you met this person for the first time?
2. What are the things that make the two of you different?
Try to expand beyond just physical or tangible things.
3. What are some things that you have in common with this person?
4. How often do you see this person now?
5. Why do you feel it's important to know people who are different from you, and how do you come together to celebrate those differences?

Discussion:

Use this as a group discussion exercise with a group or people you experienced *Choir Boy* with. Reflect on ways that you can meaningfully connect with people who have different identities or lived experiences than yourself.

1. How can you hold space for your different experiences and identities and honor each person's needs and boundaries?
2. What are some important things to keep in mind to engage with new people in a supportive, positive way?
3. What are some ways you can embrace and celebrate everyone's unique qualities?

ACTIVITIES



School crest design by Tony Cisek, Scenic Designer for The 5th Avenue Theatre and ACT's co-production of *Choir Boy*, 2022.

DESIGN A SCHOOL EMBLEM:

Materials Needed: paper, pen/pencil, color pencils, crayons or markers

During the play *Choir Boy*, you will see a lot of the cast members wearing the same uniform, school colors, and symbols. Using the student guide template and the tools that you have access to, create your own school emblem. This could be inspired by a school you have attended or could be created from a new school you imagine!

Keeping these things in mind:

1. What is the name of your school?
2. What are the school's colors?
3. What type of uniform will the students wear?
4. What will the emblem represent?
5. Where would you display the emblem?

Share your school emblem with others and discuss the different symbols and meanings of each part of your emblem!

Share your school emblem design on social media and tag @the5thavenuetheatre and @acttheatre!

ACTIVITIES

Trust and Obey



1. When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a
2. Not a bur - den we bear, not a sor - row we share, but our
3. But we nev - er can prove the de - lights of His love, un - til
4. Then in fel - low - ship sweet we will sit at His feet, or we'll

CREATE A SCHOOL ANTHEM

Materials Needed: paper & pen/pencil, access to device for music/sound

Step 1: Listen to the hymn “Trust and Obey,” which is the school anthem for Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys in *Choir Boy*. You can find several different versions online, and here’s one [a cappella example](#).

Step 2: Reflect on the importance of a school anthem - what are some important factors that go into choosing a school anthem? How can an anthem convey a school or group’s values?

Step 3: Create your own anthem! You can use the melody of “Trust and Obey” and write your own lyrics to replace the words in the song. This anthem could be in alignment with the school emblem you designed in the previous activity, or it could be an anthem just for you.

[CLICK HERE](#) to access an instrumental recording of “Trust and Obey” to get a sense of how your new lyrics might fit into the melody.

BONUS OPTION: If you play an instrument, explore creating a new melody or sound for your own school anthem.

Reflection & Discussion:

Share your anthem with others and reflect on the following:

- What do your anthem’s lyrics and words mean to you?
- How did *Choir Boy* inspire or impact the creation of your anthem?
- If someone were to perform your anthem, what would you tell them about it to give them inspiration? What direction would you give them for their performance of it?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out some other education guides for *Choir Boy* created by theater organizations across the country!

Choir Boy Study Guide by [Alliance Theatre Institute](#)

Choir Boy Study Guide by [Gablestage at the Biltmore](#)

Choir Boy Study Guide written by Jennifer Zakkai at [Geffen Playhouse](#)

Choir Boy “Inside Out” Study Guide by [Denver Center for the Performing Arts](#)

About Brodrick Ryans:

Brodrick Ryans (he/him) is a Seattle-based musical theater artist, director, teaching artist, the founder/host of the podcast [TIMEOUT w/ Brodrick](#), as well as the current Assistant Company Manager at The 5th Avenue Theatre. Most recently, Brodrick just finished his 2020-21 Emerging Leaders in Theatre for Young Audiences Fellowship with TYA/USA. He also worked on the education materials for *A Kids Play About Racism*, *Voices of Change*, and *Creative Drama for Mental Wellness for Middle and High Schools*, while serving as a teaching artist and the



Education Coordinator for Seattle Children’s Theatre. “I am really excited about being in space and working with students on audition techniques and acting work. I feel that it is my job as an educator to help students unlock the gifts and abilities that are already there, and teach them to move in space completely as themselves.”

Follow Brodrick on Instagram [@brodrickryans](#) and [@timeoutbrodrick](#).