



Theatreworks USA | 151 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001 | 212.647.1100 ph | 212.924.5377 fax | www.twusa.org

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## FREEDOM TRAIN

*Freedom Train*, the highly acclaimed Theatreworks USA musical – and its longest running show – based on the life of Harriet Tubman, will be playing at \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock, under the auspices of \_\_\_\_\_.

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Harriet Tubman was born a slave, but when she was 25 she made her perilous escape from a Maryland plantation, leaving her family behind. Pursued by dogs and relentless slave catchers, she followed an escape route laid out by Quakers B secret hiding places in churches, barns, cellars and homes.

The escape route that Harriet followed soon became known as the Underground Railroad, and she quickly became one of its most celebrated “conductors.” Up creek beds, through swamps, over hills in the dark of night, on 19 secret trips Harriet Tubman guided more than 300 slaves, including her aged parents, to freedom. “I never run my train off the track,” she said, “and I never lost a passenger.”

*Freedom Train* tells the thrilling story of Harriet Tubman, the Moses of her people, in a fascinating series of highly theatrical scenes that use dance, dialogue, and music of the period. *Freedom Train* is the story of self-sacrifice, dedication and survival, laced with warmth and a sense of humor that celebrates the human spirit – a universal story for all. Target is the national tour sponsor of this production. **TARGET**

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*Freedom Train* is a musical with a book by the late **Marvin Gordon** that incorporates traditional African-American spirituals, including “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” “Steal Away,” “Wade in the Water,” and “Good News, the Chariot’s A-Comin’,” all arranged by **Garret Morris** and **Ron Burton**. The production was originally staged by **Gloria Jones Schultz**, and is currently directed by **Joy Kelly**. The scenery was designed by **Hal Tiné**. This 60-minute musical is recommended for audiences age 8 and up.

(MORE...)

*Freedom Train* is Theatreworks USA's longest-running production, having been on national tour since Fall 1974. There are currently two companies of this show criss-crossing the country. *Freedom Train* is able, as are all Theatreworks USA productions, to play a wide range of venues, from large Broadway-sized performing arts centers in major metropolitan areas, to elementary school cafeterias in small towns.

The six actors and stage manager in *Freedom Train* rehearsed for two weeks in New York City with the director. Once the tour begins, the actors and stage manager typically arrive at the performance venue early in the morning to set up the scenery and to prepare for the performance. Following the show, they pack the set, costumes, and sound equipment into two large vans, and drive to the next city, sleep in a hotel, and begin the whole ritual again the following day.

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**Theatreworks USA** has a distinguished history of not only providing young audiences with their first taste of the performing arts, but also giving young actors, writers, directors, and designers an early opportunity to work in this field. A list of Theatreworks USA alumni reads like a veritable "who's who" of theatre: four-time Tony-winning director Jerry Zaks, Robert Jess Roth (*Beauty and the Beast*), Michael Mayer (*Thoroughly Modern Millie*); writers Marta Kauffman and David Crane (TV's "Friends"), Lynn Ahrens and Steven Flaherty (*Ragtime*, *Once on This Island*), Jason Robert Brown (*Parade*), Laurence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin (*Legally Blonde*), Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx (*Avenue Q*); and Tony-winning actors John Lloyd Young, Roger Bart, Chuck Cooper, and John Glover. Esteemed performers F. Murray Abraham, Henry Winkler, and Judy Kuhn also got their start with Theatreworks, and other actors have gone on to originate lead roles in such Broadway shows as *Avenue Q*, *Hairspray*, *Young Frankenstein*, *Rent*, *Wicked*, *Jersey Boys*, and many others. The actors of *Freedom Train* may also go on to similar success in musical theatre.

Theatreworks USA is America's largest and most prolific professional not-for-profit theatre for young and family audiences. Since 1961, Theatreworks USA has enlightened, entertained, and instructed over 68 million people in 49 states and Canada, now performing for about four million people annually. Every year, the company tours approximately 16 shows from its ever-growing repertoire of 110 plays and musicals. In addition, Theatreworks USA also has an extensive multi-cultural guest artist roster, including storytellers, puppeteers, poets, and magicians. Under the direction of Barbara Pasternack (Artistic Director) and Ken Arthur (Managing Director), Theatreworks USA is also one of the most honored theatres of its kind. It is the only children's theatre to receive both a Drama Desk and a Lucille Lortel Award. In addition, Theatreworks USA was the recipient of a 2001 Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation Award, and in May 2000, The Actors Fund of America bestowed its Medal of Honor upon its founders, Jay Harnick and Charles Hull