

OFFICIAL PRESS KIT • 2026

DARYL D. BROOKS

Director • Writer • Producer

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, BLACK ENSEMBLE THEATER — CHICAGO



DARYLDBROOKS.COM

BLACK ENSEMBLE THEATER • 4450 N. CLARK ST., CHICAGO

THE STORY OF A LIFE BUILT IN THE THEATER.

Daryl D. Brooks is an award-winning director, writer, and producer, and the Artistic Director of the Black Ensemble Theater in Chicago — a role he stepped into in April 2026, during the theater's 50th anniversary year.

His path to that title is rare in American theater. More than twenty years ago, Brooks walked into the Black Ensemble Theater, the company founded by the legendary Jackie Taylor, and started at the box office. From there he worked every job in the building: box office associate, house manager, associate director, and producing managing director. That journey means Brooks knows the theater from every seat in the house — the patron's, the usher's, the stage manager's, and the performer's.

Along the way he has directed more than fifty productions at Black Ensemble and across Chicago — at Porchlight Music Theatre, Theatre at the Center, Theo Ubique, Columbia College Chicago, and beyond. His work spans beloved book musicals like *Memphis!*, *The Color Purple*, and *Dreamgirls*, and the signature musical revues he both writes and directs — including *You Can't Fake the Funk*, *Men of Soul*, *Women of Soul*, *Reasons: A Tribute to Earth, Wind & Fire*, and *Blue Heaven*.

Critics reach for the same words to describe a Brooks production: joy, energy, celebration. Underneath that celebration is a discipline — honoring the artists who came before, developing the ones coming up, and treating Black music history as American history, worthy of the finest stagecraft Chicago can offer.

Brooks won the 2019 Joseph Jefferson Award for Production — Revue for *You Can't Fake the Funk* and has earned nine Jeff nominations for Director of a Revue. As Artistic Director, he is honored to serve alongside founder and CEO Jackie Taylor as the theater she built enters its next fifty years. Away from the stage, he is a proud father to his daughter, Maya.

QUICK FACTS

TITLE

Artistic Director, Black Ensemble Theater

APPOINTED

April 2026 — the theater's 50th year

PRODUCTIONS DIRECTED

50+

YEARS AT BLACK ENSEMBLE

20+

JEFF AWARDS

2019 Winner • 9-time Director nominee

BASE

Chicago, Illinois

SHORT BIO — READY TO USE

Daryl D. Brooks is an award-winning director, writer, and producer and Artistic Director of Chicago's Black Ensemble Theater. In twenty-plus years with the company founded by Jackie Taylor, he rose from the box office to the artistic director's chair, directing over fifty productions along the way. He won the 2019 Jeff Award for *You Can't Fake the Funk*.

EVERY JOB IN THE BUILDING.

2026 — PRESENT

Artistic Director — Black Ensemble Theater

Appointed in the theater's 50th anniversary year, serving alongside founder and CEO Jackie Taylor.

UNTIL 2026

Producing Managing Director — Black Ensemble Theater

Led production operations across seasons of revues, musicals, and new work.

EARLIER ROLES

Associate Director • House Manager • Box Office Associate

Twenty-plus years of rising through every department of the company.

SELECTED PRODUCTIONS — WRITER & DIRECTOR

Men of Soul — 2015 & 2026 revival • **JEFF NOMINEE x2** •
NATL. BLACK THEATER FESTIVAL

You Can't Fake the Funk — 2019 • **JEFF AWARD WINNER**

Hitt Records — 2024–25 • **WORLD PREMIERE**

Women of Soul — 2018–19 & 2022 • **JEFF NOMINEE x2**

Reasons: A Tribute to Earth, Wind & Fire — 2023

Blue Heaven — 2023

Black Pearl • *Sammy: A Tribute to Sammy Davis Jr.*

SELECTED PRODUCTIONS — DIRECTOR

That's What Friends Are For — 2025 • **2 JEFF NOMINATIONS**

The Time Machine: A Tribute to the 80's — 2024 • **3 JEFF NOMINATIONS**

Damn Yankees — Theo Ubique • 2026

Assassins — Theo Ubique • 2023 • **JEFF NOMINEE**

Memphis! — Porchlight • 2018 • **JEFF NOMINEE**

Dreamgirls — Phoenix Theatre Co. • 2023 • *The Color Purple* — 2022

Million Dollar Quartet — Theatre at the Center • 2019

ALSO AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO: *Grease* (2025) • *Rent* (2025) • *Pippin* (2024) • *Sunday in the Park with George* (2023)

"The creative force behind so many of the theater's wonderful, effervescent productions over the past twenty years."

— CHICAGO THEATRE REVIEW, 2026

"A sensational dance-a-thon set to the beat of funk."

— WTTW ON YOU CAN'T FAKE THE FUNK, 2019

AWARDS & HONORS

Joseph Jefferson Award

2019 WINNER • NINE-TIME NOMINEE

Won Production – Revue for *You Can't Fake the Funk*; nine nominations for Director of a Revue, spanning a decade of signature work.

Black Theatre Alliance Awards

TWO-TIME WINNER • BEST DIRECTOR

Twice honored as Best Director, celebrating excellence in Black theater across Chicago.

Black Arts & Culture Awards

FOUR-TIME WINNER

Four awards for Best Director and Best Production.

African American Arts Award

2019

Honoring his contribution to the arts.

Newcity Stage — Players 50

2022 • 2024 • 2026

Three times named one of "The Fifty People Who Really Perform for Chicago."

Chicago Defender — Men of Excellence

2019

Honoring Black men whose leadership strengthens the city.

National Black Theater Festival

SELECTION

Men of Soul (as *One Hundred Ways*) selected, carrying Black Ensemble's work beyond Chicago.

Service to the Field

ONGOING

Member, Sarah Siddons Artistic Council; board member, Season of Concern.

APPROVED PHOTOS



HEADSHOT — NAVY SUIT, COPPER TIE



HEADSHOT — BLUE SUIT



HEADSHOT — BLACK VEST



PORTRAIT — IN THE THEATER



PERFORMANCE — AS SOLOMON BURKE



MEDIA — WGN NEWS INTERVIEW



WITH FOUNDER & CEO JACKIE TAYLOR



OPENING NIGHT — PUMP BOYS & DINETTES



BLACK EXCELLENCE AWARD — OUTSTANDING DIRECTOR

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MEDIA CONTACT

INTERVIEWS & PRESS

Media requests, features, and podcast appearances.

GUEST DIRECTING

Available for select directing engagements at theaters and universities.

SPEAKING

Keynotes and panels on theater, leadership, Black music history, and arts institutions.

WORKSHOPS & MASTERCLASSES

Directing, musical revue creation, and career development for young artists.

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