

Wallis Annenberg
Center for the
Performing Arts

Paul Crewes
Artistic Director

Rachel Fine
Managing Director

THE WALLIS AND CRE OUTREACH PRESENT

THE HERO WITHIN

AN ORIGINAL PLAY BASED ON THE LIVES OF LOS ANGELES VETERANS

PLAYWRIGHT

Melvin Ishmael Johnson

DIRECTOR

Greg Shane

MUSIC

Ruben Thomas Jr.

STAGE MANAGER

Earlean Anthony

LIGHTING/SOUND DESIGN

Princella Baker Jr.

COSTUME DESIGN

Connie Maria Avila

CAST

(VETERANS APPEARING AS THEMSELVES)

Harold Boons

Chris Thouart Curtis

Patricia Jackson-Kelley

Monty Montgomery

Ruben Thomas, Jr.

Judy Welch

Jonaton Wyne

APRIL 22-23, 2017

Lovelace Studio Theater

Running Time: 90 minutes with no intermission.

GRoW @ The Wallis education and outreach programs, including Young Artists Project, School Partners, and Community Partners, are made possible by the generous support of GRoW Annenberg Foundation, Actors' Equity Foundation, Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, Johnny Carson Foundation, Friars Charitable Foundation, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, Lori and Robert Goodman/ Resmark, GRoW Annenberg Foundation / Regina and Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, In Memory of Morris Hazan, Viceroy L'Ermitage Beverly Hills, Leon Lowenstein Foundation, Meeghan and Michael Nemeroff, In Memory of Benjamin Norton, Arline and Buddy Pepp, The Wasserman Foundation & Wells Fargo.

Acknowledgements

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Albert Parvin Foundation, California Arts Council, California Community Foundation, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Hollywood Charity Horse Show, John and Lynn Shane, Karl Kirchgessner Foundation, S. Mark Taper Foundation, Starbucks, US Bank, Walmart, Weingart Foundation, Wells Fargo, and the William K. Keck Jr. Foundation.*

IN HIS OWN WORDS

"CRE Outreach is truly honored to have the opportunity to collaborate with the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. The quality of work produced and presented here is of the highest artistic level. We want to thank The Wallis for providing a platform for veterans to share their experiences and to educate audiences about the real struggles that veterans face when reintegrating into society. I am so thankful to partner with The Wallis to change perceptions and eliminate stereotypes about the reality of the effects of the military."

— Greg Shane
CRE OUTREACH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

THE HERO WITHIN

After completion of a successful operation, the Joint Task Force of the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines has gathered veterans to be recognized as heroes. However, the effects of trauma trigger one veteran in attendance to do the unthinkable. From there, we follow the trials and tribulations of seven brave men and women along their path from civilian life to joining the military to their return home, as they search for the hero within. Filled with both lighthearted comedy and dramatic moments that will leave you on the edge of your seat, *The Hero Within* brings veterans' personal stories to life through an artistic journey that gives voice to the difficulty of transitioning back into society.

Based on the true stories of the actors, *The Hero Within* is brought to The Wallis by one of CRE Outreach's signature programs, Veterans Empowerment Theatre (VET), a form of art therapy encouraging military veterans to use artistic expression to find a path to overcome addiction, effectively deal with PTSD, and reintegrate into society.

VET presents a firsthand view of the soldiers' experiences in their most raw form, unfiltered by press, political, or military censorship. Productions give audiences greater insight into the difficulty facing veterans returning from deployment. Performances depict real encounters from the front lines of battle and expose the inner turmoil of the lasting scars, both external and internal endured from combat.

Research from the National Initiative for Arts and Health in the Military shows that "the arts offer veterans paths to healing and reintegration into family and community life." VET draws on the transformative nature of creating original theatre to aid in this process. Compared to the destruction, both physical and emotional, which is inherent to war and combat, the act of creating art becomes essential to the healing process.



HAROLD BOONS is a Vietnam Era Veteran, United States Air Force, Master Sergeant Retired with tours of duty in Japan, Thailand, Panama, Honduras, Korea, and Germany. He studied Cinema and Television at Los Angeles City College and Performance Arts Theater at California State University Channel Islands. His background SAG acting works include the television shows "State of Affairs" and "Scream Queens" and in the movies *The Circle* and *Bright*. His acting includes short films *The Optimist* and *Until The Day End*. He is a stand-in and photo double on *White Famous*, a pilot sitcom ordered by Showtime. He wrote, directed, and produced a PSA on the hazards of smoking, which aired on community access programming. He currently has a recurring background role as a Joint Chief of Staff on ABC's hit television show "Scandal."



CHRIS THOUART CURTIS USAF Veteran, Chris Curtis is a diverse creative. Born and raised in New York, since leaving the state he has held residences throughout the country, including 5 years stationed in South Dakota near Mount Rushmore. First meeting Southern California in 2016 through his journey to Joshua Tree, a strong intuition moved the trip further west making Los Angeles home. As a model of expanding self expression, the message of healing persists to evolve through his work. Vast Experience has shaped a wealth of value, shining light on true diligence and overcoming. Find out more on Facebook and Instagram - @ThouartChris



PATRICIA JACKSON-KELLEY in her first performance is happy to be a part of *The Hero Within*. She has an Associate Degree of Applied Science in Nursing from New York City Community College, A Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Hunter College, New York City and a Masters in Public Administration in Health Service Management from Golden Gate University, San Francisco, California. She retired as a Lt. Colonel and completed 26 years of combined active duty and reserve military service. She served in the Air Force, Navy and Army Reserves. Her affiliation with numerous committees and organizations within the community and throughout the United States assist her in serving veterans. She would like to thank her family and friends, cast and director and everyone else who extended a hand in sharing experiences of creating this journey formulating *The Hero Within*.



MONTY MONTGOMERY is a retired Senior NCO and Iraqi Veteran from Chicago. He is an Actor/Singer who has recently become a member of Screen Actors Guild (SAG). While on Active Duty his motto was "One team- One fight!" Since retirement, his motto has changed to "One man-One mic!" He would like to thank Greg Shane & Melvin Johnson for the opportunity to be a part of *The Hero Within*.



RUBEN "RU" THOMAS JR is an American Recording Artist & Actor. Ru is a veteran of the United States military, serving 6 years in the United States Air Force. Ru enjoys acting, but has a passion for music. Inspired by the Hip Hop culture, Ru has recorded numerous Hip Hop albums, and has composed music for both musicians and films. Ru's music career started back at age 7, when he first began writing poetry and playing the trombone. Ru recently graduated from the Los Angeles Film School with an Associates Degree in Music Production and a Bachelors in Business Entertainment. Ru has since started his own Independent Entertainment Company, Juice Entertainment, which is also an acronym for "Join Us In Creating Entrepreneurs Entertainment." Ru can be found on all social media platforms @ Rolemodelru or by visiting Rolemodelru.com.



JUDITH WELCH started acting in High School and continued her education majoring in Theatre Arts at S.U.N.Y. Oneonta. Judy received her first acting award for "Best Supporting Actress" in the 7th Corp. Tournament of Plays for *The Man Who Came to Dinner* while serving in the U.S. Army in Stuttgart, Germany. Judy and her family later moved to Chicago where she continued on in film, voiceover, television, and theater with many leading roles. Some of her credits include: "Stranger Than Fiction," "Of Boys and Men," as well as several commercials such as University of Phoenix and a PSA for the Department of Veteran Affairs. Judy is grateful for the opportunity to work with CRE Outreach and give a voice to so many Veterans that are too afraid to speak out. "Believe in yourself, so others may believe in you too" - Judy



JONATON WYNE is from New York. He was a theatre arts major in college, where he also played football. His dream was to play professional football but he found himself drifting into the performing arts. After coming back to LA he got into film and television work: "Black Diamond," "The Cross," "General Hospital," "The Paramedics," "A Doll House," "A Few Good Men," and "For Black Boys Who Have Considered Homicide." Jonaton was in the Army for two years, his last year of duty was in Vietnam. His last two theater performances this past year were *Sabado Mornings* and *Catch The Tiger*. His last film this past year was *Kiss Me at Midnight*.



MELVIN ISHMAEL JOHNSON (Playwright), is the founder of Dramastage-Qumran and Veterans Community Theater Workshop. He was born December 1, 1947 in Greenville, Mississippi. He graduated from Coleman High School and served in the US Marine Corps (1969-1971). After being honorably discharged from the services, Melvin attended the African Renaissance Theater Company of Detroit, Michigan (1973-1980). Melvin is the author of many plays including: *Surviving the Nickel*, *Catch the Tiger*, *Number One Recruit*, *Nail Heads* and *The Emperor's Last Performance*, and he is the co-author of *The 101 Club* with Judith Bowman and *If the SHU Fits: Voices From Solitary Confinement with Andy Griggs*. Melvin also developed the Anti-Violence Situation Coping Group as a conflict resolution group for military veterans. He is a member of the Robey Theatre Advanced Playwright Program and host of the weekly internet radio show: The Qumran Report (skidrow.la).



GREG SHANE (Director) is the Artistic Director and co-founder of CRE Outreach, and directs *The Hero Within*. He received his B.A. in theatre from Tulane University and his M.A. in Educational Theatre from the Steinhardt School at NYU. Since he began teaching theatre in 2003, Greg has travelled all over the world bringing performing arts and arts therapy programs to various populations in cities including London, Dublin, Puerto Rico, and Brazil. Greg's work helps at-risk youth, military veterans, prisoners, mentally challenged individuals, the homeless, and the visually impaired. Blind in his right eye, Greg's personal connection and sensitivity towards the challenges of the visually impaired lend a unique perspective to his work.