



## The 2016 Gyneka Award Honorees Salute the Teaching Artists



### Relentless Educator: Dr. Tommie Tonea Stewart

Dr. Tommie Tonea Stewart, a native of Greenwood, Mississippi, has lived in Montgomery Alabama since 1990. She is a professional actress; play director, national museum exhibit director, tenured Professor and the Dean of the College of Visual & Performing Arts at Alabama State University. As Dean of the College of Visual & Performing Arts, Tonea serves as administrator over the Departments of Art, Music, and Theatre. She also serves as professor, role model, motivator, and mentor to the students. Since her arrival, the number of Theatre majors, minors, and the number of graduates from the Department of Theatre Arts have soared. Over seventy-five percent of the ASU theatre graduates have received full scholarships to major graduate universities such as Brown, Yale, University of California, Los Angeles, University Of Louisville, Washington State, New York U and Louisiana State University to name a few. Youth and adults from the Montgomery area and across the nation have been touched by Tonea's artistry through T.A.P.S. (Theater Artists Performance School), Camp 3T (Teaching Through Theatre), TTI (Technical Theatre Initiative), ARPAC (Adult Repertory Performing Arts Camp) and Camp Gifted for persons with disabilities; all are summer performance and enrichment programs.

After receiving a B.S. degree in Speech and Theater from Jackson State University and an M.A. in Theater Arts from the University of California at Santa Barbara, Tonea completed her Ph.D. in Theatre Arts at Florida State University (FSU), in 1989. She was the first African American female to receive a doctorate from the FSU school of Theatre and the first McKnight Doctoral Fellow in Theatre Arts. During her study at FSU, Tonea also received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Her screen and television credits include: A Time To Kill, The Rosa Parks Story, Mississippi Burning, Invasion of the Body Snatchers III, Living Large, My Stepson/ My Lover, "Walker, Texas Ranger," "Memphis Beat" "Matlock," "Leave of Absence," "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," "ER," "Touched by an Angel", "Mississippi Damned" and several Lifetime Movies, the latest being "The Wronged Man.

1997 Image Award Nominee  
1999 Gabriel Award Winner  
2008 Disney Theo Award Winner  
2011 NBTF Living Legend Award Recipient

1999 New York World Fest Gold Medal Winner  
2000 Emmy Award Honoree  
2009 Operation Push Honoree  
2015 Mississippi Legendary Achievement Award

#### The 2015 White House Champion of Change Honoree

*The prestigious award recognizes faculty and staff members at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). According to the White House news release, "These leaders have worked with students, families, and policymakers to build pathways to graduation at their respective institutions."*



## **Master Teacher: Irene Crist**

It has been written in the Memphis Flyer and spoken among her peers, students and fellow cast mates about the numerous plays that she has appeared in on the Memphis stages. Some have also written that Irene is one of the best actresses and directors of our time.

Irene has over 30 years of experience in Acting, Teaching and Directing for the theater. In addition to these skills she works with several individuals and groups on business presentation skills, including StartCo and Zero to 510, both programs which foster entrepreneurs.

Irene was born in Rockville, Maryland, and studied at Towson College. She has been with Playhouse on the Square since 2004, and has earned numerous theatre nominations and awards. Irene is a noted director, having worked at other Memphis theatres to the delight of many actors who sing her praises. Her theatre credits range from comedy to drama, and she has received numerous theatre awards.

Irene is currently a resident company member at Playhouse on the Square where she directs and act in both of their venues. She is a master teacher who privately coaches acting to both children and adults.



## **Musicologist: Performer & Educator: Joyce Cobb**

Cobb's musical style is derived from but does not mimic blues and jazz singers such as Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughan (among others). She is a fluent and adept scat singer and improviser who has a wide range of timbre and emotion in her presentation of songs. Her musical background has been diverse having sung country, disco, R&B, soul and jazz. This diversity has created a unique sound that does not really directly mimic any other singer; she has her own signature style. "Joyce Cobb's big, vivacious voice can interpret everything from pop to country to classical to her truest love, jazz."

Ms. Cobb's credits in theatre began in the 90s, and for the last 16 years Cobb has been the lead actress and singer for numerous award-winning live productions to include *Ain't Misbehavin*, *Lady Day at the Emerson Bar and Grill* and *The Devil's Music: The Life and Times of Bessie Smith*.

Joyce is a very pro-active advocate of music education and the history of singing style in American pop and jazz music. Cobb has served for close to 20 years as adjunct vocal professor at the University of Memphis' School of Music. She has worked with younger jazz vocalists and musicians at the STAX Music Academy helping aspiring younger artists.