

BART'S BLOG – MAY 2025

🕒 21 hours ago 👤 Bart Lovins 🔗 <http://bartlovins.com>

Part 3: Expanding Access — Diversity in Casting



Ragtime original cast photo 1998

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Welcome to the third installment in a four-part series exploring the journey of bringing the musical *Ragtime* to the stage as the PAC's 2025-2026 season opener.

Ragtime is more than just a musical — it is a powerful reflection of America's promises, struggles, and dreams at the turn of the 20th century, a mirror still relevant to the America we live in today. To honor this story truthfully, it is essential that our cast reflect the racial and cultural diversity at the heart of the narrative and our community.

We have expanded our audition efforts beyond the PAC, attending open calls and hosting auditions at venues like Actors Theatre of Louisville. Yet, so far, we have not seen the number of performers of color we need to cast this production with the integrity it deserves. That reality weighs heavily on me as a director because *Ragtime* speaks directly to the moment we are living through — its story of hope, hardship, and justice feels more urgent than ever.

Our next open call is this June, but we are at a critical turning point right now, so we are inviting performers of color to submit video auditions by May 31. If you are interested or know someone who might be, I encourage you to contact me directly at lovins@thepac.net for details and audition materials.

In addition to offering pay for professional artists, we are also providing travel funding assistance to performers of color who reside outside Hardin County, making participation more accessible.

This show needs your voice.

If we are unable to build the diverse cast this story demands, we will, with deep regret, pivot to a different production before our June auditions. It would be a tremendous loss to miss the chance to tell *Ragtime's* powerful story at this important moment.

Make them hear you!

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THE MONTHLY MARQUEE

Audience Survey Winners

Congratulations to Maghan Duvall, Sandy Ringle, Andrea Seery, and Amelia Tarrence, each the lucky winner of a \$20 PAC gift certificate for completing an audience survey in April, and thank you for helping us learn how to serve our audiences better!

Audience Survey

Share your thoughts on your recent PAC visit and get entered into the next drawing.

AUDIENCE SURVEY

PAC Spotlight

The MAY PAC Spotlight shines on John Hardin High School's Emmalyn Lies, Samantha McNichol, and Akili Lowe.

All three students have been involved in the JHHS Choir for several years, participated in Youth Theatre of Hardin County and served as PAC Aides this school year.

What do you want to do when you grow up?

Emmalyn: A Behavior Analyst for the FBI

Samantha: A mathematician and have a baking business

Akili: A Neonatal Nursing

What have you seen at the PAC?

Emmalyn: I've seen many shows at the pac, for example, I've seen *The Little Mermaid*, *Matilda*, *The Play that Goes Wrong*, *Nutcracker*, *Shrek*, *Cinderella*, and *Clue*.

Samantha: A lot of things! Most of the surrounding schools' productions, the PAC shows, plenty of dance recitals, and concerts alike.

Akili: *The Addams Family*, *Suessical the Musical*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Secret Garden*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Nutcracker*, and more.

What have you participated in at the PAC?

Emmalyn: I've participated in *Oklahoma*, *Legally Blonde*, and *Mamma Mia*.

Samantha: I've been in a few musicals and plays with John Hardin, notably *Mamma Mia* and *Legally Blonde*, Youth Theatre's *Oklahoma*, and many choir performances.

Akili: *The Wedding Singer*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Oklahoma*, *Legally Blonde*, *Matilda*, *Nutcracker*, *Mary Poppins*, *Tracks*, *Second Samuel*, *Mamma Mia*, and *Alice in Wonderland Jr*.

Samantha: Many of my most rewarding PAC experiences have been from being a PAC Aide during my senior year. I've spent the year working with some of my closest friends and making some new friends, exploring everything behind the scenes at the PAC, learning new things, and having fun together.

Akili: My most rewarding PAC experiences are gaining new theater families every single show. The PAC provides a wonderful space for everyone to be themselves, love their art, and appreciate each other.

What did you learn from your PAC Aide experiences?

Emmalyn: Serving as a PAC aide has benefited me by providing me with numerous new skills that I can apply in the future. For example, I now know how to operate many different tools and construct different pieces.

Samantha: I've learned to enjoy the process. Every small part of every journey makes it valuable, and it's not just the final product we put on a stage, but the things we learn doing it that are important.

Akili: I've learned a lot about what goes on backstage from being a PAC Aide during school hours. I've been able to help build sets, clean, work lights, and sound. There are so many parts of the amazingly oiled machine that is the PAC.

How else have you benefited from the PAC?

Emmalyn: My experiences in the PAC have helped me learn to be myself and have fun. Performing in front of others has helped me overcome many of my worries about what people think of me. It's really helped me to learn who I am as a person.

Samantha: I have formed so many amazing connections from PAC experiences. Many of my best friends have been made through theatre, and the PAC provides us with a place to show up for each other and support one another.

Akili: I've been able to become a better actress by pushing myself to be on stage as much as my schedule would allow. I've learned to appreciate all the hands that help on and off stage.

Why is the PAC important to you?

Emmalyn: The PAC is very important to me since it's allowed me to come out of my shell and meet a lot of people that I can consider family.

Samantha: I've spent many hours in the PAC this year doing so many different things, and it really has become like a second home. It is a community of the most supportive people who will love and encourage you in everything you do.

Akili: The PAC is important to me because it gives kids and adults opportunities to use a beautiful space to perform, despite Hardin County being smaller than others. It proves to our community that theater is important. Hardin County is packed with so much talent.

Why should the PAC be important to others?

Emmalyn: It should be important to others since it's a place where people can express themselves in front of others. Everyone should appreciate and even try this.

Samantha: The arts are such a valuable, joyous part of life that getting involved with them in any way should be at the top of everyone's list. The PAC does an amazing job of providing that opportunity to everyone!

Akili: The PAC should be important to others because we are lucky enough to have such a big, well-thought-out theater, which should be appreciated. It's an amazing opportunity for young people to perform on a stage this big – to get that experience.

Do you have any other comments you'd like to share?

Akili: I love the PAC and am so grateful for the opportunities I have on stage and for being a PAC aide!



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