



## **AUDITIONS FOR “PRELUDE TO FREEDOM”**

A stirring musical drama about the beginning of the end of slavery!

In the spring of 1861, at the very beginning of the Civil War, Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, witnessed one of the pivotal moments in American history. For the first time, enslaved people were taken from their enslavers by the United States government, the so-called “contrabands.” It was the first giant step toward the ending of slavery, the prelude to freedom. The late Gerri Hollins, a renowned singer and musician and founder of the Contraband Historical Society, was a descendant of those contrabands. She told their story in “Prelude to Freedom,” a musical drama about her freedom-seeking ancestors, set against the backdrop of those historic events. Its stirring melodies and gripping drama make this inspiring history – which was so often absent from the history books – come alive.

The Contraband Historical Society, in partnership with Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center of Newport News, is presenting this important work for three performances at Downing-Gross on June 13 and 14. We are seeking actor/singers and other helpers to bring this community production to life!

**Auditions are at the Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center, Wickham Avenue and 24<sup>th</sup> Street, Newport News, Studio D, on Saturday, March 22, from 1 to 4 p.m., and Monday, March 24, from 6 to 8 p.m.**

Auditioners should come prepared to sing 16 bars of a song, preferably a folk or gospel/spiritual song. Sheet music is welcomed. There will be cold readings from the script. Bring a resume and head shot if you have them.

If you need further information, contact producer Tony Gabriele, 757-898-4723 or [contrabandhs@gmail.com](mailto:contrabandhs@gmail.com)

## DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

(Note: Because of the historical subject matter, casting must be racially specific)

Black characters:

JOHN TAYLOR – Late teens-early 20s. Enslaved on the Mallory farm. Hates his enslaved status, yearns for something better and not afraid to say so. Closest thing to a central character in the play.

LULA – Teenage. Enslaved on the Mallory farm. John's sister, devoted to him.

HATTIE – 30s-50s. John and Lula's mother. Enslaved on the Mallory farm. Very protective of them, will defy authority if need.

EMMA ANN – 50s-60s. Enslaved on the Mallory farm. Weary and despondent from the breaking up of her family.

SHEPARD MALLORY, FRANK BAKER, JAMES TOWNSEND – 20s-40s. Enslaved on the Mallory farm. They will find the courage to make a daring move that changes history.

BIG LUKE - 20s-50s. Enslaved on the Mallory farm. Forceful personality, a natural leader.

PEARL – Any adult age. Enslaved on the Mallory farm. Close friend of Hattie and Emma Ann.

AUGUST – 30s-60s. Enslaved on the Mallory farm. A house servant, he is glad of that status, but there is a limit beyond he will not be subservient.

WILLIAM ROSCOE DAVIS – 40s-60s. Better educated than most enslaved people, he is destined to become a minister and community leader.

MARY PEAKE – 30s-40s. She is free and a teacher, warm-hearted and dedicated to helping the young.

COLLIE – 20s-30s. Emma Ann's daughter. Devout but sickly. (Note: For plot reasons, role requires an actor with relatively light skin color.)

White characters:

CHARLES MALLORY – 40s-50s. Owner of the Mallory farm and a civic leader. Considers himself a benevolent slave owner, but will not tolerate any defiance.

JOHN CARY – 40s-50s. Leader of local military academy. Self-important and a bit pompous.

JOSEPH BROOKS – 30s-40s. Stranger in town. Intelligent and sensitive, he carries a deep secret.

CAIN – 20s-50s. Mallory's overseer. Ready to use violence to do his job.

GENERAL BUTLER – 40s-50s. Commander at Fort Monroe. Shrewd and self-confident. (Non-singing role)

MISS TWINE – Adult, any age. Civic leader. A Southern belle.

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