

Production Staff

Producing Artistic Director	Mark Clayton Southers
Playwright	Renn Woods
Directors	Mark Clayton Southers Monteze Freeland
Production Stage Manager	Ashley Southers
Set Design	Diane Melchitzky
Light Design	Madeleine Steineck
Sound Design	Mark Whitehead
Costume/Makeup Design	Cheryl El-Walker
Prop Master	MJ Henderson
Sound Technician	Mark Clayton Southers
Light Technician	W. Roger Randolph
Carpenters	Diane Melchitzky Lonzo Green
Posters/Graphic Design	Eric Donaldson

Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company Staff

Founder/Artistic Director	Mark Clayton Southers
Artistic Associate	Wali Jamal
Managing Director	Eric A. Smith
Business Manager	Lorill Readie
Resident Costumer	Cheryl El-Walker
Resident Sound Designer	Mark Whitehead
House Manager	Lonzo Green
Concessions	Lexie Dorsette
PR/Media/Marketing	C. Denise Johnson Pam Collier
Web Master	Steven Doerfler

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The Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company presents:

SOLO

**RENN
WOODS
IN CONCERT**
(A Play in Rhythm And Blues)

written by
and starring
Renn Woods

directed by
Mark Clayton Southers
and **Monteze Freeland**



October 5-20

Words from the Artistic Director and Co-Director

Mark Clayton Southers



Wow! What a whirlwind of a play. What I really love about Renn Woods play SOLD is that it affords the opportunity for our audiences to take a journey. It's a journey full of hope and joy but also despair. It's a roller coaster ride for our emotional senses. For Pittsburgher's to have this opportunity excites me. I'm so glad she lived right here in Pittsburgh for several years to become eligible and be considered a Pittsburgh Playwright. We've assembled a very talented and versatile cast & band for this journey and of course our remarkable designers to assist in realizing the vision for this piece.

Renn Woods' story is very personal, moving and mesmerizing. We thank her for sharing and trusting us with it.

Please enjoy the show.

Words from Co-Director Monteze Freeland



She slowly walked onstage draped in a white gown holding a glowing ball and sweetly ushered in the night sky with "That voice!" as a friend beckoned to me. That was the first time I saw Renn Woods playing the Moon in Baltimore's Center Stage's production of "Caroline or Change"... I saw the show thrice. Fast-forward five years and this budding director is given the opportunity to co-direct her in a storytelling of her life. It's as if the moon still shines bright. An artist's career does not simply comprise of a resume but it includes their personal journey and imagination. The two are as relevant as they are equal to one another and often intertwine. Renn Wood's "SOLD" is the result of that powerful mix. This illustration of struggle and perseverance rings true to any person who has placed their gift on the alter for others to admire, critique and praise. It's not the life that Hollywood paints, it's raw and it hurts and will become the one companion that will never leave. For better or for worse. This "story from a sacred place" pays homage to all who have lived in the heat of the footlights.

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Pittsburgh Playwrights

Sold Production Bios

Ashley Southers (*Production Stage Manager*) is a 2012 graduate from Pittsburgh Obama and plans to attend CCAC in Spring 2014 to start her career as a screenwriter. She has worked on previous production *Gem of the Ocean*, *Straightening Combs*, *Radio Golf* and *Jiney* to name a few. She has stage-managed for the Theater Festival in Black and White for two-year prior to stage-managing Sold. She has enjoyed her experience working closely with her father Mark, this awesome cast and crew and Mrs. Renn Woods.

Madeleine Steineck (*Light Design*) Madeleine Steineck is a Lighting Designer and Master Electrician. Recent Master Electrician credits: Nearly Wild (Texture Ballet Company), Lady Windermere's Fan and Don Juan Comes Back From the War (PICT). Recent Design credits: Aladdin Jr. (JCC Performing Arts Camp), Hello, Dolly! (Winchester Thurston High School), Romeo and Juliet³ (Morgantown Dance and Morgantown Ballet Company). Upcoming Design Work: Urinetown: The Musical (Mercyhurst University).

Mark Whitehead (*Sound Designer*) is the founder of Saints & Poets Theater, for which he produced and directed Christiane D's Saffronia, Sam Shepard's The Late Henry Moss and Donald Freed's Secret Honor: The Last Testament of Richard M. Nixon. He was a member of timespace, for which he produced hamletmachine and directed 4-H Club and Insignificance. Additional directing credits include The Revenants, Cry Havoc, Taking Sides, and Fool for Love. Mark has designed sound for numerous local theaters, and is Resident Sound Designer for The Unseam'd Shakespeare Company and Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater Company. Mark has won Onyx awards for best sound design three years in a row for his work on PPTCO's annual August Wilson productions. He was named best sound designer and listed among the best directors in City Paper's 2001 theater round-up, and was named best sound designer of 2000 by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Mark was a founding producer of the Dark Night Cabaret performance series. He has also produced and directed music videos for several local bands.

About Renn Woods (*Playwright, Composer, Biographer, Star*)

Renn Woods is a stage, film and television actress, playwright, music producer, spokesperson, singer and songwriter. She is a passionate life long supporter of soldiers in the Armed Forces and military families.

Renn was a child prodigy with such a sophisticated vocal ability, she toured the world with Bob Hope's USO Tours and opened for the legendary comedian Bill Cosby. Renn is dedicated to causes involving youth in the arts, and female empowerment. She has lent her narrative voice and point of view to numerous programs on NPR in her commitment to education and public access to cultural information.

As an actress, Renn has appeared in several of the most popular and well loved films ever made, including *The Jerk*, *Hair*, *Xanadu*, *9 to 5*, *The Brother From Another Planet* and the original version of *Sparkle*. Renn has portrayed characters on television ranging from roles in the epic miniseries *Roots*, to talk shows, game shows and recurring roles, to cast and special guest appearances in series, to films made for television. Renn received a special People's Choice Award for her performance as Fanta in *Roots*. A favorite of the King of the Late Night Talk Show, Johnny Carson, Renn appeared three times on his show in 15 months. Her television film roles include: *Detention: The Siege At Johnson High* (Mrs. McGill), *Marshal Law* (Centaur Operator) and many more.

Renn was Dorothy in the 1st National Tour of *The Wiz*, where "her performance was hailed by the critics as a new musical theatre standard for the young performers." (broadwayworld.com). Renn was in *Caroline, Or Change* (The Moon) at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles and reprised her role on the East Coast Tour. She performed in *The Joni Mitchell Project* at the Los Angeles Theatre Center and appeared in *Big River* on Broadway as Alice's Daughter. She was chosen by Bob Iger, CEO of Disney, as the vocalist for the prestigious Legends Awards ceremony, inducting Sir Elton John. *An Empress Like Renn* (written by Renn Woods) was produced by Danny Glover. *A Diva Like Me*, written by Renn Woods as a one-woman autobiographical show with music, was subsequently produced with success at the LA Music Center under Gordon Davidson's tenure and then produced by Todd Salovey at The Lyceum in San Diego. *Neither Will Be Bought, Nor Sold* (musical written by Renn Woods) was selected to be developed at The Kennedy Center (KCACTF) in Washington DC. *Sold: Renn Woods In Concert* (A Play in Rhythm and Blues) adapted from her successful autobiographical one-woman show, *A Diva Like Me*, had its industry premiere on Broadway in the fall of 2012.

Renn began her professional singing career at the age of 6. As a musical child prodigy, she made her first television appearance at 10 on NBC's Soul Special. She was a member of the pre-teen group Sundays Child which released their single and self-titled debut album on Reprise Records and became a pop music phenomenon, performing at Carnegie Hall in NYC and opening for many major stars and acts during that time. It was rated 4 of 5 stars on AllMusic.com by its editor. Renn's classic rendition of "Aquarius" in the original film version of *Hair* has become the benchmark vocal for this iconic recording. Renn's first solo album entitled *Out of the Woods* was produced by five-time Grammy Award winner Al McKay of Earth, Wind & Fire. Her second solo album *Azz- Izz* was well received and very popular on radio. Renn's soundtrack credits include her performances in *Sparkle* ("Jim Dandy"), *Hair* ("Aquarius"), and *Prefontaine* ("What You Need Tonight"). Renn is currently in the studio putting the finishing touches on her eagerly anticipated new CD. Special thanks to Lonzo Green for all that he has done during my stay here in Pittsburgh.

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Sold Musician Bios

Mike Borowski (*Music Director/Guitar*) As an active performer, Mike Borowski is a founding member of Pittsburgh's premier tango ensemble, *Cuidado*, as well as *Choro no Vinho*, Pittsburgh's only Brazilian choro group. Borowski also plays with *Dazzletine*, a high-energy glam rock band, and *Kinetic*, a soul-full afro-pop group specializing in Afro-Cuban music. He has also had the opportunity to record and collaborate with singer and Hollywood actress Renn Woods. They are currently working together to develop a soundtrack for a Hollywood film as well as a brand new album under Mrs. Woods. Borowski served as musical director for the Uptown Music Collective in Williamsport PA, where he was responsible for organizing and conducting a theatrical performance of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. He has toured throughout the U.S. and has played solo concerts in Japan including "Café Parloir", and the famous jazz venue "Left Alone." Borowski also enjoys work as a freelancer, playing in various jazz settings as well as participating in many new projects such as *Classical Revolution* in the Pittsburgh area. As an arranger and composer, Borowski has written original music and arranged numerous pieces for *Cuidado*, which can be heard on their self-titled debut, released in January last year. He has also composed and arranged for Duquesne University jazz guitar ensemble as well as the contemporary music ensemble. He is currently writing for his guitar and trombone duo group, *StringBone!*, which frequently plays concerts and weddings throughout the Pittsburgh area. Mike Borowski attended the Mary Pappert School of Music at Duquesne University where he received his Bachelor's and Master's degree in guitar performance. He has studied with many incredible musicians including Joe Negri, Tom Kikta, Sean Jones, Mike Tomaro, Ken Karsh, and Mark Koch. For more information please visit www.borowskiguitar.com.

Special Thanks

Voice Over Actors

Nathan Hollabaugh, Jamie Slavenski, Bill Creane, Les Howard, Mark Southers, and Cheryl Walker

Organizational/Funding Support



The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust

Kevin McMahan
Janis Burley-Wilson
Rebecca White

Nick DeCesare (*Keys*) This is Nick's first show. He has been playing Jazz for the past three years around Pittsburgh. He hails from New Castle, PA and attends Duquesne University as a Piano Performance Major. He also teaches piano to student in Mars, PA. He studies Jazz Piano under Ron Bickel at Duquesne. He is happy for this opportunity to play at the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company.

George Heid III (*Drums*) has been playing the drums and composing music since he was three. He has trained under Roger Humphreys Sr. and Kenny Washington. He attended CAPA High school. George is part of a group called Elevations, which played in the Monterey Jazz Festival in 2012. This year he Herb Alpert ASCAP Award and the Down B young Jazz Composers Award for his song Emma Rain which is on the Elevations CD. It is a true honor to work with Renn Woods and this awesome cast.

Tony Campbell (*Woodwinds*) is a woodwind player from the Pittsburgh Area. He has played with the likes of Roy Ayers, Diane Carol, Jack Jones, Ben Vereen and many others. He has been in the industry since he was 13 (we are not going to give his age away) Tony teaches music to the next generation at Urban Pathways located in the Downtown area of Pittsburgh. He thanks Mark Southers his childhood friend for the opportunity. He is pleased to play with Renn Woods.

And to you, our loyal patrons for being with us as we start the next 10 years of creating
GREAT THEATER IN PITTSBURGH!

Sold Performance Bios Continued

Leslie 'Ezra' Smith (*Lester, Ray Golden Days, Gergory*) Ezra is a spoken word artist, actor, director, playwright, and event host and coordinator, born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He's currently a co-host of Eargasm Open Mic Series, an open mic event featuring spoken word and musical performances from local and national acts. He was awarded Poet of the Year from the 2010 Pittsburgh Hip Hop Awards. In 2007 and 2008, he was awarded by the AACTA Onyx Awards the Best Supporting Actor in a Musical for his performance in Kuntu Repertory Theater's production of *Sarafina!* and Best Lead Actor in a Play for his performance in New Horizon Theater's production of *Freeman*. In Fall of 2014, his one man show *The Book of Ezra* will be produced by the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater Company.

LaMar Darnell Fields (*Peirce, Kurt, Orderly*) LaMar was born and raised in Pittsburgh PA. He began acting in his mid teens, with the Wings For Success Company. Since then, he has worked with the Kuntu Repertory Theatre, New Horizon Theatre, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre, HLN Productions, Shona Sharif Drum and Dance Ensemble, Stop and Watch Films, Orchard Place Productions, Zeno Films, Confluence Productions, Words with Wings, performing in several plays, and filming multiple films, one of which is due out this year, "Blood First," and notable commercials including the "Debt Monkey" commercial. LaMar is continuing to work very hard on furthering his acting career, with multiple projects in the works. He has most recently been awarded Best Actor by the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre for his performance in the 2012 Black and White Festival.

Aliya Sims (*StartChild*) Aliya has been acting since she was 7 years old. You could of caught her as Evillene in the Frick production of the *Wiz* under the direction of Mark Southers. She also has done *The Death of a Salesman, Pippen, Annie, The Miracle Worker*, just to name a few of her theater credits. Aliya currently attends CCAC as a Psychology and Dance major. She is happy to be united with Mark for this production of *Sold*, and it is a joy to work with Mrs. Woods.

MJ Henderson (*Choreographer/ Marcus Hollaway, Blue Star Host, Sir Lady Java, Icky Shaw*) Pittsburgh, P.A., native by way of Washington D.C. is a product of the Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts and Point Park University. This singer, actor, and dancer has been on stages around the world, and is honored to be working with PPTCO again. Some of his credits include *A Ramp to Paradise* with Walter Rutledge (Thelma Hill Performing Arts Center), *Legend of The Venus Hottentot* (Emoves/Harlem Stage), *Going The Distance* (Smithsonian Discovery theater), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (PPTCO), *Into the Woods* (Howard Theatre), *Being Beautiful* (Karamu House), *The Wiz* directed by Broadway and recording artist Billy Porter, and national tour of *Lord I'm Coming Home* with Sherman Hemsley. M.J. would like to give special thanks to Mark for believing, Montese for fighting, and Renn Woods for the journey. a talented cast who are truly all-stars. And I dedicate this show to Russia and Amber Joell, and most importantly my mom and dad, I love you more than you'll ever know and never last or least God. "Thank you Lord, for I am only here because of you!"



Delana Flowers



Jamilah Chanie



Sandy Dowe



Leslie 'Ezra' Smith



Renn Woods



Aliya Sims



Les Howard



MJ Henderson



LaMar Darnell Fields



Marcus Southers



Cheryl Walker

The Players of Sold

About the Directors of Sold



Mark Clayton Southers is an award winning playwright, photographer, scenic designer, theatrical producer and stage director. He and his family reside in Pittsburgh's historic Hill District. He is the founder and producing artistic director of the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company currently celebrating its eleventh season. He has produced well over 125 full length and one act plays, including August Wilson's complete 10 play Pittsburgh Century Cycle. He is a published poet and playwright as well. His play *Ma Noah* was the recipient of the 2004 Theodore Ward prize at Columbia College, Chicago. His poem play *Angry Black Man Poetry* had a successful run at Teatr Śląski in Katowice, Poland in 2009.

Some of his favorite directing credits include Paul Robeson for the Griot Ensemble Theatre Company; Pill Hill and Freeman for New Horizon Theatre; *Almost Maine* for South Park Theatre; the August in February Series for the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust; *Dutchman* for Bricolage Theater Company; *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *The Piano Lesson* for American Stage Theatre, St. Petersburg, Florida; *Gem of the Ocean* for Human Race Theatre, Dayton, Ohio; *Passing Strange* for Short North Theatre, PA, *Doc* for Trilogy Opera Company and *Dorothy Six*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars*, *VALU-MART* and *Jitney* for The Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company. He's received 4 Best Director AACTA Onyx awards.

His directed production of *Two Trains Running* was voted one of the top ten plays of the decade by The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. His directed production of *Jitney* broke all house attendance records at The Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater and was voted in the top ten of best plays for the 2010 season by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. The Dayton Metro News recently named him best director for his work on Dayton's Human Race Theatre's production of *Gem of the Ocean*.



Monteze Freeland is thrilled to be back at PPTCO after performing in *Congo Square*. Usually seen as an actor, Monteze has directed for The Pittsburgh New Works Festival, Kuntu Rep, Black and White Productions, The Arena Players, and The Pride Theater Festival. Many thanks to Mark Southers and our unstoppable cast and crew.

Sold Performance Bios

Sandy Dowe (*Mother, Ambassador*) Sandra Dowe has been a teacher and professional vocalist in the Pittsburgh area for several years. Her father, trombonist Al Dowe, is responsible for getting her started in the music business and she is now a part of our city's rich, musical heritage. Sandra also enjoys acting and is so very excited to be in the theater once again. "Thank you, Mark Southers and Renn Woods for creating this wonderful experience. It has been a pleasure working with you both, the cast, and crew. Thank you, God for creative gifts and your Presence through it all".

Les Howard (*Leroy Willow, George Jefferson, Cabby, Milos Forman*) Les is a veteran actor of the stage and has had many fine performances from Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles, to Pittsburgh. Les is also a local jazz singer of note, and once produced his own local television show here on public access television. Les might be best remembered as "Turnbo" in Mark Southers' hugely successful and critically acclaimed production of August Wilson's *Jitney*. Les has appeared in numerous performances locally for Pittsburgh Playwrights, the former Kuntu Repertory, the August Wilson Center, Pittsburgh Musical, and New Horizon Theaters. Les most recently appeared in New Horizon's *Nothing But The Blues*.

Delana Flowers (*Sheila Holloway, Wimper Wolf, Oncologist*) Delana is eternally grateful to God for blessing her with artistic ability and with opportunities to share her gifts. She has appeared in several local productions including *Black Nativity*, *Nothin' But the Blues*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *The Chelsea Arms*, *Mahalia Jackson: Standing on Holy Ground* and *I Gotcha*. She is thankful for the love and support of family and friends.

Jamilah Chanie (*Shonda Holloway, Medical Assistant, Twyla Tharp*) Jamilah Chanie was last seen in her award-winning role in of Clare in the Theatre Festival in Black and White play *Redneck Revenge*. Her most memorable role was the role of Grandma in a color blind casting of the musical *Billy Elliot* in London, England. She would like to thank her best friend and mother for her support. I love you Mrs. Georgia Brown!

Cheryl M. El Walker (*Ollareen Willow, Louise Jefferson, Hair Dresser, Neanna*) is an award-winning costume designer and make-up artist who is also a veteran stage actor from Pittsburgh. Her creative work has been seen in Kim El's "Straightening Combs" and she has earned several Onyx Awards for Best Costume Design, Best Make-up and Leading Actress, all from The African American Council for the Arts (AACTA). She also received the 2012 Legacy Award from The Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company. Cheryl's stage performances include *The Wilksburg Arts Theatre*, *New Horizon Theatre*, *Kuntu Repertory Theatre*, *PPTCO* and most recently with the B.U.S 8 Tour with *Bricolage*. Cheryl is an alumna of Point Park University.

Marcus Southers (*son*)