



New York Public
Library for the
Performing Arts



Black Theatre United Designer Initiative

is the brainchild of founding members Lisa Dawn Cave (Broadway Stage Manager), Carin Ford (Broadway Audio Engineer), and Michael McElroy (Broadway Performer and Arranger). Centering BTU's mission of developing programming and providing pathways for up and coming and early career professionals, this new initiative focuses on all the various fields of design. Lisa Dawn, Carin and Michael assembled over thirty Broadway designers in scene design, lighting design, costume design, wig/hair design, makeup design, sound design, projection/video design, and special effects design, to create a BTU Design Think Tank. Our think tank of Design professionals provided input, ideas and support vital to the development of this initiative. Based on multiple meetings with our Designer Think Tank, the BTU Designer Initiative was divided into three phases:

Phase 1: "Before the Curtain Rises" The Designer Series



Phase 2: The Black Theatre United Design HUB

Phase 3: BTU Design Expo

On June 20th, Black Theatre United will unveil The BTU Design Expo 2025. This event is being co-produced by the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. The expo will offer up and coming and early career professionals an in person experience and access to today's Broadway designers. The one day event will feature panels with designers, "Tedtalks", demonstrations by designers of the latest innovations within their fields, panels that feature designers and the ancillary specialists that make up their teams, and lastly portfolio reviews and one on one conversations with designers for up and coming artists. The day will also include information sessions with the Library curators on research and tours of the research facilities. The event is structured to provide access and expose up and coming and early career professionals to the world of the designer, the specialists who work with them, and an opportunity for Broadway designers to connect with the next generation of art makers.

BTU Designer Think Tank Members:

Natasha Katz, Benjamin Stanton, Peggy Eisenhower, Jules Fisher, Brett J. Banakis, Christine Jones, David Korins, Dede Ayite, David Zinn, Paloma Young, Catherine Zuber, Sarafina Bush, Jonathan Deans, Scott Lehrer, Jeremy Chernick, Mia Neal, Nikiya Mathis, Daniel Brodie, Kirk Cambridge-Del Pesche, Justin Ellington, David Brian Brown, Jon Weston, Kai Harada, Marilyn "Cookie" Jordan, Sarah Cimino, Aaron Rhyne, Wendall Harrington, Lucy MacKinnon, Jeff Sugg, Aaron Beck and Joe Dulude II

Donor Support

Black Theatre United seeks support to ensure that designers in training and up and coming designers from around the country can attend this one day event. Donor support would provide lodging for two nights at a partnering hotel, MTA transportation, and per diem during their stay. Working together we have the ability to continue expanding the talents and perspectives that make up our world by providing access to new and hereto omitted voices. BTU believes that facilitating access and pathways to new voices holds the key to expansion, innovation and the evolution of our industry. We hope that you will join us in continuing the work of opening doors and creating opportunities for all.

In Solidarity,
BTU Founders and Board



www.blacktheatreunited.com



BTU Design Expo Scholarship

Black Theatre United, in collaboration with **The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts** located at Lincoln Center, is excited to present the BTU Design Expo on June 20, 2025! This inaugural event will provide access to up and coming and early career professionals in transforming theater design today.

BTU recognizes that access to opportunities like this can be a challenge, for some, and we are committed to ensuring that talented, passionate individuals who may face financial barriers have the chance to attend. Through our BTU Design Expo Housing Scholarship, we will provide housing and a stipend for up to 10 recipients to support their participation in this career-changing event.

Scholarship recipients will be responsible for their own transportation to New York.

Who Should Apply?

- This opportunity is intended for up and coming and early career professionals who:
 - are 18 years of age or older
 - Demonstrate artistic excellence and a commitment to their craft
 - Would significantly benefit from attending the expo but face financial limitations

We encourage applications from individuals across diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and lived experiences. Our goal is to support those for whom this opportunity could make a meaningful impact on their career journey.

How to Apply

Applicants must submit by: **May 23rd, 2025. Scholarship recipients will be informed by June 1st.**

- A brief personal statement (300-500 words) explaining:
 - Their artistic journey and career goals.
 - Why attending the BTU Design Expo would be a game-changer for them.
 - A simple letter of financial hardship listing your need for housing
 - That you reside outside of New York City
- A portfolio (or work samples), showcasing their talent in ONE of the following formats:
 - Website/online portfolio link
 - PDF with images of past work
 - Video reel or project samples
- A letter of recommendation (optional but encouraged) from a mentor, professor, or industry professional who can speak to their artistic potential and financial need.

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