

VERA J. KATZ

Master Teacher/ Dramaturg/ Director/ Artist Activist/ Author

For over 50 years Vera J. Katz, Professor Emerita from Howard University has been a prominent voice in the realm of theatre and the arts. As a legendary acting and directing professor her teaching techniques have worked to shape the careers of many of today's brightest stars and industry professionals from Broadway to Hollywood. She has taught such notables as Debbie Allen, Anthony Anderson, Chadwick Boseman, Clinton Turner Davis, Lynda Gravatt, Corey Hawkins, Taraji P. Henson, Phylicia Rashad, Wendy Raquel Robinson, Fredericka Whitfield, Lynn Whitfield, and Isaiah Washington, to name a few.

Originally working under the famed playwright-director-author Moss Hart on Broadway, she went on to earn her BFA in Theatre Arts from Brooklyn College, an MFA in Directing and Acting from Boston University and has studied film at both the University of Southern California and the University of California/Extension. She has been a university liaison with Arizona State, a guest teacher and director at Rutgers University, a visiting professor for the Mentor Series in Directing Graduates at the University of Michigan and a panelist/workshop leader at the East Central Theatre Conference. She won an award for the Directing the Best Production in Dundalk, Ireland's International Festival. Katz is a member of the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), a prejudice reduction organization dedicated to enlighten Black and Jews about each other's culture. Katz has been profiled in *The Washington Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Village Voice*, *The Amsterdam News*, *US News and World Report* and *CBS Sunday Morning News*.

Katz was adopted as an only child into a Jewish Family and introduced to the horrendous treatment of Jews during World War II. This knowledge birthed a sensitivity and intense dedication for all people who were likewise oppressed and hated. Equipped with passion and educational training in 1969, at the tense time in the Civil Rights Movement, Katz adopts the black experience as her own by joining the faculty of Howard University. She immersed herself in a battle that was not her own, with a people who were not her own, yet supporting a cause for equality, which for her was succinctly personal, understandable and identifiable.

Notwithstanding her many notable academic achievements, she developed a focused passion for theater and began with an emphasis on directing for the stage, because it became obvious that the only way African Americans could effectively tell their stories, history and tales would be if they owned it and created it. In 1969 Howard University became the conduit where the provisional teacher and student would become a perpetual family through the common bonds of Condition, Culture, and the Arts.

Katz embraced the "never give up attitude", which reflected the culture of the Civil Rights Movement during those early years at Howard University. She showed her resolve to purpose by reminding family and friends alike that her name is Veritas, Latin meaning "Truth", which carried an obligation to live up to its billing. Katz and her colleagues forged ahead with productions that reflected the truth, especially in how it perfectly blended the artistry of poetry, music, and dance. Katz taught freshman technique and the classics. In 1970 she fought for and subsequently implemented Howard University's first Directing Program for undergraduates, which to this point was reserved for graduate-level students and at that time the only program of its kind in the nation.

After 32 years, Katz voluntarily retired from Howard University. Presently, she is a Master Teacher and a faculty member at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington D.C. for the past 18 years. Katz also continues to work as a Dramaturg and Director, while conducting national and international workshops, master classes and teaching acting privately.

The release of Vera J. Katz's highly anticipated book: *A Katz Walk "Toolbox of Techniques for Actors and Directors"* is set to be the crown jewel of all her artistic endeavors. This addition to Katz's oeuvre will indelibly serve as yet another significant contribution to the artistic disciplines of acting and directing, especially as it relates to the "Black Experience". Although small in stature Katz's perseverance, passion and demand for excellence are the reasons why she is recognized among the giants in the industry.