

'Broadway Rocks' singer traces musical roots to Flint

BRIDGETTE REDMAN
FOR THE LANSING STATE JOURNAL

When Lakisha Jones, an American Idol finalist, comes to Wharton Center today to perform with the Lansing Symphony Orchestra, she'll be singing on a foundation that was built in Flint and continues to inspire her today.

The pops concert, "Broadway Rocks," features three guest artists, including Jones, who will be singing with the Lansing Symphony Orchestra

as they perform such songs as a Jersey Boys medley, Good Morning Baltimore from "Hairspray," Circle of Life from "The Lion King," Seasons of Love from "Rent," Defying Gravity from "Wicked," and Phantom of the Opera and Music of the Night from "Phantom of the Opera."

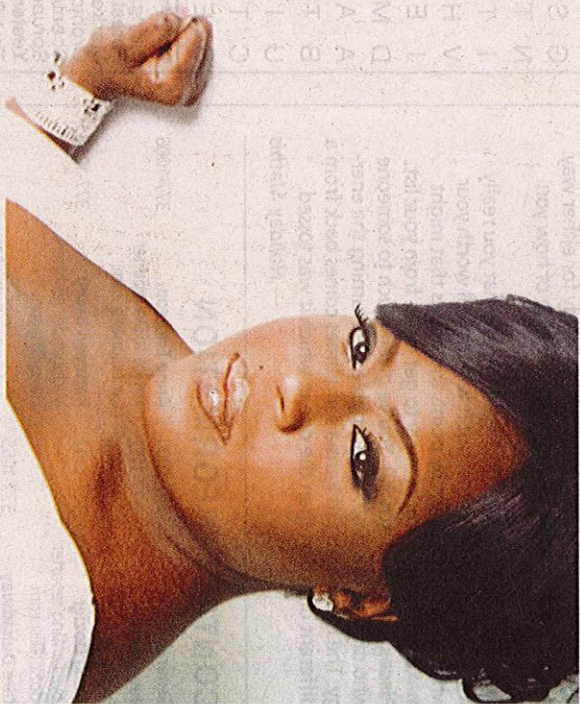
Joining Jones will be Christie Noll and Rob Ewan. Jones grew up in Flint, where she said she sang at Mt. Zion Missionary Church starting at the age 5.

"My grandmother was the one who motivated me to sing, she passed away last year," said Jones. "I would get up, but I would be terrified, but then I would start singing."

She also credits a teacher at Flint Central High School with being instrumental in pushing her to be the best she could be. One of her earliest performances was in a play coincidentally called "Lead Poisoning."

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Lakisha Jones credits a Flint teacher with pushing her to be the best.



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Jones

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"The more people who told me I could sing, the more people saying, 'Oh, you sound really good,' (motivated me). I started believing in it and perfecting my craft. I auditioned in New York City for American Idol and I kind of made it and kept making it, and the rest is history."

Ten years ago, Jones was a single parent of a 3-year old, and the American Idol experi-

ence changed her life.

"It opened so many doors and allowed me to do what I want to do."

She's since gone on tour in "Color Purple," performed on Broadway and released her own record.

One of her favorite moments in the Broadway Rocks concert hearkens back to her American Idol experience. She sings "And I Am Telling You," from "Dreamgirls."

"On Idol, I sang that song, and Simon told 23 other contestants that they could go home," Jones said, adding, "Fourth place isn't so bad out of 103

people who auditioned."

Jones said the "Broadway Rocks" concert is popular because they bring elements of Broadway shows from New York to communities around the world, and that it is great for all those who are not able to get to New York and see a Broadway show.

"Broadway Rocks is for everyone in the family. We take the audiences on a journey," said Jones. "The three of us in the show have all been in a Broadway show, and we try to give a little acting and emotion and vary that with live instrumentation. It's wonder-

ful. We've done this show all over, the National Symphony orchestra, Europe and all over. It's really a great show and brings some classics back as well."

Now living in Houston, Jones still travels back to Flint to visit family and has been following the Flint water crisis closely.

"My mom is there and cousins, uncles and aunts. It's really just a sad situation. You can't use the water. You have to use bottled water for everything—for something as simple as brushing your teeth. No one should have to live like that."

She does a vocal image program in Houston at a school and the school held a water drive last month to send water to Flint for part of the relief effort.

"The fourth graders came up to me and said 'Miss Jones, we want to send water to your country.' We had people supporting me and my hometown. It was such a blessing for them to do that. We're working internally to see what else we can do to help my city. The water crisis is really devastating."

LSJ 2-20-16