

# Up Close & Personal with Mark Burrell

February 28, 2015 / in STAGE / by Joey Amato

*Pippin* star Mark Burrell is definitely no stranger to the stage. Serving as swing, assistant choreographer, and dance captain of *Pippin*, the Michigan native made his Broadway debut in the first national tour of *Fosse*. He has held the title of Assistant Choreographer for Radio City Music Hall's Christmas Spectacular starring The World Famous Rockettes for the past 10 years and is quickly becoming recognized as one of the premier teachers and coaches in New York.

His motivating, yet demanding style is shaping the next generation of dancers by setting high standards for students and pushing them to test their fullest limits. Recently, his choreography was chosen to be produced in an evening of "Downtown Dancing @ The Joyce" a benefit supporting Dancer's Responding To AIDS.

Burrell's experience is extensive, having performed throughout the United States and internationally, including engagements in Japan, Zambia, Peru, and South Africa. He was featured in the motion picture, *The Producers: A Movie Musical* as well as other theatrical productions including: *CATS*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *Broadway for Hilary*, and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*.

“One of my greatest experiences was when I travelled to South Africa to work an industrial for IBM,” Burrell recalls. “The performance was a Best of Broadway/cabaret-style show that we performed twice during their conference. It was truly an experience of a lifetime.”

The feisty 36-year-old is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where he remains on the faculty as a summer instructor, master teacher, and choreographer. He has also engaged in the classical and contemporary works of such esteemed choreographers as Lar Lubovich, Paul Taylor, Jiri Kylian, Lila York, and David Parker and The Bang Group where he is an honorary guest artist. In addition, he continues to perform as a principle dancer with Chet Walker’s company *WalkerDance*.

Burrell didn’t start singing until later in his career when he went to a Broadway performance of *Cats*. “That’s when I got bit by the bug. I said to myself, ‘this is a dancers dream.’ Seeing that show was a pivotal moment in my life.”

Since then, Burrell has been the resident choreographer for The Barbara Ingram School of the Arts where he has created productions of *Disney’s Beauty and the Beast*, *Legally Blonde* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Burrell’s former students can be seen on numerous Broadway stages as well as in many collegiate dance lines, national commercials, as well as being featured on *So You Think You Can Dance* both here and in Israel. He has also coached and served as a mentor for celebrities on *Dancing with The Stars*.

He is quite eager to bring this production of *Pippin* to Nashville for its debut. “People are going to experience quite a spectacle. You’ll be surrounded with not just great song and dance but also incredible acrobatics,” he says. “The show is about taking risks and following someone’s journey, which makes it more enticing than a book musical. The audience will be submersed in an interactive circus world.”

Without giving too much away, Burrell wants people to know that *Pippin* is unlike anything they’ve ever seen before. “There are hot-bodied men and women to die for. Plus it’s a show that really makes you think. As visually stimulating as it is, it asks what is extraordinary to you. That can be answered in different ways and that’s the message people walk away with...have I taken the risks I’d like to take?”

Burrell and the cast of Pippin will bring their extraordinary talents to Nashville for a limited, one-week engagement March 10-15. Tickets are still available at TPAC.org, by phone at (615) 782-4040.

Photos by Terry Shapiro.

### Share this entry

