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Adam Allen aims to elevate local talent

Amanda Sieradzki

Council on Culture & Arts

Much like the show “In Living Color” provided a platform for the co-medic Wayans family, Adam Allen founded his company Phi Entertainment to create a space for area talent in Tallahassee to get in front of the right producers and people to launch their careers.

His vision for the upcoming 2022 Performing Arts Conference at Florida A&M University’s Lee Hall Auditorium aims to do just that. Allen put together two days of panels, presentations, and networking along with an emerging artists showcase for April 15-16.

“I wanted to give up-and-coming Tallahassee talent a place to put their stuff out there,” says Allen. “I think there’s a need for that here. We have a lot of talented people that come through Tallahassee, but everyone thinks they have to move to Atlanta, Miami or somewhere else. I wanted to create that hub and the right type of company here to broadcast their talents on a professional level.”

Allen earned his degree in Criminology from FAMU and has made a career working in the attorney general’s office as well as in juvenile detention centers.

His advocacy for the arts runs deep however, and stems from his mother who is an English and drama teacher. Allen played in his high school band while he was still a middle schooler. He’d attend plays with his mom and could read and write percussion music from a young age.

The art of stepping

When it was time to go to college, Allen experienced stepping and dancing for the first time as an extracurricular at FAMU. Being from a small town that didn’t offer these electives, he was

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immediately inspired and took over the step team as a sophomore. As a choreographer, he began creating routines for FAMU, FSU, and TCC, working with 14 groups total. Allen would practice for four to five hours each night.

"Stepping is making rhythmic sound with your hands and feet, and you have to be coordinated and in sync with other people when you're making beats and patterns," says Allen. "Once I see something I like, I'll study it. Once I study it, I'll make it mine. If I see something, I can do it."

This self-starting attitude earned him 157 first place wins out of the 164 competitions that he participated and led teams. It was his involvement with two organizations in particular — dance group B Phi P and step team G-Phi — that the name for his company, Phi Entertainment was born.

Allen's background in percussion helped him in crafting winning routines while he set work throughout Florida. It

If you go

What: 2022 Performing Arts Conference

When: April 15-16

Where: Lee Hall Auditorium, 1601 S Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd

Cost: General Admission, one-day \$40 and two-day \$80; VIP \$60 and two-day \$80

Contact: For more information, call 850-597-8497 or visit phientertainment.net/performing-arts-conference.

was through connecting with so many groups that he identified the need for a larger platform that could help young artists to showcase their work.

Entertainment ambition

Allen began assembling his ideas for Phi Entertainment in 2012 and got the company off the ground in 2019. His goals and visions were to make an entertainment company that could host

variety shows in the style of Dean Martin and Flip Wilson. Each performance would include everything from comedy and dance to inspirational acts and singing.

He was in the midst of recruiting artists for a 25-city tour planned across Florida and Georgia when the 2020 pandemic derailed Phi Entertainment's plans.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Allen was inspired to shift his variety show concept to a streaming platform and is now planning a launch of both a live and online version of the production.

A platform for young people

Beyond providing a platform for emerging artists, Allen is hopeful that Phi Entertainment and the performing arts conference will reach the young people most at risk within Leon and Gadsden counties.

"The past couple of months we've had a lot of violence between young people," says Allen. "We can talk to young people all day and they might not listen, but I feel like if we can put them in front of celebrities to say, hear this mes-

sage that will have better impact on them. I want to educate through entertainment."

Guests at the conference will include celebrities like multiplatinum recording artist Mr. Servon, Sirius XM and Rock the Bells Radio's DJ Epps, actor J.D. Williams and actress Lakensha Clark-Duvall.

Allen wanted to provide an opportunity for artists to network with professionals in the field while also speaking with producers and talent agents. Whether attendees choose to go for one day or two, Allen is hopeful that the conference will bring the community together to celebrate all of the talent Tallahassee has in the performing arts.

"The conference is not one-dimensional," says Allen. "We want to put our talented people in front of the right eyes. The performing arts brings us all together, and that's what we need most right now in the world today."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).