

SHANICE RETURNS AS MICHELLE OBAMA IN '44: THE MUSICAL'

"I Love Your Smile" Singer Reprises Acclaimed Role as Washington, D.C. Run Extends Through May 24 by Popular Demand

WASHINGTON, DC, DC, UNITED STATES, May 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Grammy-nominated singer Shanice, best known for the 1992 hit "I Love Your Smile," returns to the role of Michelle Obama in 44: The Musical, reprising a performance that has become a defining highlight of the production. Her return coincides with a newly announced extension of the show's Washington engagement at Shakespeare Theatre Company's Klein Theatre, which will now run through May 24, 2026. The show's first 18 performances saw 14 sell out, prompting the production to add 16 performances to the run.



T.J. Wilkins as Obama in 44: The Musical

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Eli Bauman, writer, composer, and director of 44

Shanice originated the role of Michelle Obama and has been widely praised for bringing power, nuance, and emotional depth to one of the show's most beloved characters. Her portrayal continues to resonate with audiences, anchoring a production that has become the most successful run in the show's history, surpassing previous engagements in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York.

Following acclaimed runs across the country, 44: The Musical has arrived in the nation's capital with renewed purpose. Equal parts concert, comedy, and cultural time

capsule, the production reimagines the rise and first term of President Barack Obama through music, humor, and a cast of unforgettable political figures.

Washington audiences have responded with enthusiasm, filling the theater nightly with a sense

of shared history that feels uniquely tied to the city. Early local reviews underscore that connection: DC Theater Arts called the show “a love note to the Obamas and an irreverent, satirical trip down memory lane,” noting it leaves audiences “feeling lighter and happier.” Washington City Paper similarly described it as a lively, celebratory return to the Obama era—a time defined by optimism and cultural momentum.

The production blends R&B, gospel, and pop with sharp satire and dynamic choreography, featuring 24 original musical numbers performed by a powerhouse cast and live band.

“This has been unlike anything we’ve experienced in any other city,” said Eli Bauman, writer, composer, and director of 44. “Washington has embraced this show in a way that is immediate and deeply personal. The response here hasn’t just exceeded our expectations—it has redefined them. There’s an energy in this city, a connection to the story, that you simply can’t replicate anywhere else.”

Lead producer Monica Saunders-Weinberg echoed that sentiment: “We always knew bringing 44 to Washington would be meaningful, but the reality has been extraordinary. With 14 of our first 18 performances selling out, extending by popular demand felt like the only option. Audiences here understand every moment, every reference, every note — and we’re thrilled to give more of them the chance to experience it.”

As the production continues its celebrated run, 44: The Musical stands as both a theatrical event and a transformation of recent history into a night of joy, nostalgia, and shared experience in the very city where that history was made.

TICKETS & INFORMATION

Now Through May 24, 2026



T.J. Wilkins and Shanice play Barack and Michelle Obama in 44: The Musical



44: The Musical is an uplifting musical that relives the Obama years.

Shakespeare Theatre Company: Klein Theatre
450 7th St NW, Washington, D.C.
Tickets: 44theobamamusical.com

ABOUT SHANICE (Producer & Castmember): Singer, actress, and producer, Shanice was the first African American to star as Éponine in *Les Misérables* on Broadway. Known for her international Grammy-nominated song "I Love Your Smile" and her five-octave range, she has worked with Narada Walden, Babyface, David Foster, Josh Groban, Kenny Loggins, Jon Secada, and more. She serves as a producer of *44: The Obama Musical* alongside Eli Bauman.

ABOUT ELI BAUMAN (Writer, Composer, Director, Lead Producer): Eli Bauman is a Los Angeles-based writer, composer, and director whose career has spanned political organizing, scripted television, and variety. A Columbia University graduate, Eli organized for Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign in Nevada and later coordinated Veterans' Affairs for the 2009 Inaugural Committee. He went on to write for FX's *Lights Out* and NBC's *Prime Suspect* before earning a Writers Guild Award nomination for *Maya & Marty* with Maya Rudolph and Martin Short.

ABOUT MONICA SAUNDERS-WEINBERG (Lead Producer): Driven by purpose, connection and joy, Monica's portfolio spans business, residential development, commercial real estate, investment, philanthropy, and the arts. Monica is currently Co-Owner and Joint Deputy Vice-Chair of Terrace Tower Group (TTG)—a global real estate and investment conglomerate operating out of Sydney, New York and Portland. Through her production company Hana Black Productions, she has developed projects for film and television, recently becoming a shareholder in fellow Australian Bruna Papandrea's renowned production company, *Made Up Stories*. In addition to her business and artistic endeavors, Monica has furthered the philanthropic legacy of her late father, John Saunders, supporting numerous charities both as an individual and through The Saunders Family Foundation, for which she has served as Chair and Executive Director for the last 26 years. She is a founding partner of The Growth Project, which connects business leaders with charities to help maximize their impact on the world, as well as a Founding Angel and dedicated board member of *Feel The Magic*, a charity that supports grieving kids and families.

ABOUT ANTHONY "BREW" BREWSTER (Music Director): He is a Grammy-nominated producer, music director, and keyboardist whose work spans soul, R&B, and rock. Raised in Venice, California, his credits include Telly Award-winning commercial work through Beacon Street Studios, music direction for the ESPY Awards, and collaborations with artists including Ant Clemons, De La Soul, and Citizen Cope.

ABOUT MISS JAMES ALSOP (Choreographer): She is one of the most sought-after choreographers working in film, television, and live performance today. Her credits include Beyoncé's Renaissance World Tour, the Whitney Houston biopic *I Wanna Dance With Somebody*, the Peacock series *Girls5eva*, the No. 1 Netflix series *Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, and the upcoming season of *Emily in Paris*. She began her career as co-choreographer on Beyoncé's *Who Run the World (Girls)* campaign and has since worked across NBC, Netflix, Showtime, and major

live stages worldwide.

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