

## JENNIFER HOLLIDAY

### *BROADWAY STAR*

Jennifer Holliday is a star “reborn!” After 22 years as an entertainer, she has finally come full circle with a second pair of wings for her career and a second chance of hope in her personal life. Whether punctuating a presidential ecumenical service at the White House with a rousing “down-home” gospel hymn, or shaking the rafters of a concert hall with a hand-clapping show tune, this lady is at home wherever she performs.

Holliday is a “singer’s-singer,” a diva with a voice that is undeniably a true gift from God. The passion and conviction that she emotes in every song that she sings can leave an audience absolutely breathless. Holliday has the innate ability to get inside a lyric and gives new meaning to songs that she has performed more than a thousand times for nearly two decades.

With her superlative skills, soulful artistry, and hyper-emotional church influenced technique, Holliday’s “spine-tingling” hits, “And I’m Telling You I’m Not Going” and “I Am Changing,” from the Broadway Smash Hit “Dreamgirls,” catapulted her to stardom, national recognition, and still bring audiences to their feet.

Holliday was discovered at the age of 17 in her hometown of Houston, Texas by Jamie Patterson, a dancer from New York, who was touring in the national company A Chorus Line. Patterson bought Holliday a plane ticket to New York and arranged for her an audition for Vinnette Carroll’s “Your Arms’ Too Short To Box With God.” She sang one of her mother’s favorite hymns, “God Will Take Care Of You.” Holliday was hired that very same day and won the lead role in the Broadway Revival of “Arms’ Too Short” at the Ambassador Theater. The rest is Broadway History! At the age of 21, her portrayal of the heroine, Effie “Melody” White in “Dreamgirls,” garnered her the 1982 Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical, and her first Grammy Award for Best R&B Female Vocal Performance for her signature “Torch Song” and Top 40 Hit, “And I’m Telling You I’m Not Going.” Her second Grammy came three years later for her rendition of Duke Ellington’s “Come Sunday,” a moving tribute to the late Mahalia Jackson, who was the greatest gospel singer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Currently, Holliday gives concerts throughout the world and performs with many symphonies across the country. She still dreams of one day returning to the Broadway stage in another big musical, and hopes to continue to grow and develop herself as a singer and actress. Holliday has broadened her talents to the worlds of television and film. She guest starred on the hit Fox TV show, *Ally McBeal*, in her recurring role as Lisa Knowles, the choir director at Ally’s church. Holliday’s yearly appearances on the show gave her national acclaim from her faithful fans and introduced her to a new generation of loving, devoted fans. She has also appeared on *Ellen*, *Hang Time*, and *Touched by an Angel*, and made her motion picture debut in *The Rising Place*, an independent film for Flatland Pictures.

But things haven’t always gone smoothly. Holliday was in despair for more than ten years before she could admit to herself that she had more than a case of the blues. Now she shares her story of overcoming depression--day by day—

[HOLLIDAY, PAGE 2]

and stresses that seeking medical treatment for this common disease is the key to successful recovery: 'It's as if my whole life has started over, and God has shown me how to laugh again, to have fun.'

She can still remember the day she ran into singer Phyllis Hyman at New York City's Lincoln Center in the summer of 1995. At that time Hyman weighed nearly 300 pounds. Two-time Grammy Award-winner Holliday, who at five feet five inches once tipped the scale at 340 pounds, had recently dropped 200 pounds over 18 months. Jennifer recalls Phyllis gazing wistfully at her newly svelte form. "Wow! You've transformed your whole life!" she remembers her saying while giving her a look that also seemed to say, I just can't do it. "It's not about the weight," Jennifer now wishes she could have said to Phyllis. "It's about finding yourself on the inside." She regrets that they didn't have the opportunity for a more candid conversation, because only three weeks later, alone and despondent, Hyman committed suicide in her New York City apartment. "It's not that I believe I could have saved Phyllis," Jennifer explains. "But perhaps if we had talked longer, if I had shared my story with her, she wouldn't have felt so alone. Maybe she would have understood that help was available, that depression is a treatable disease." That message--that there is a healing path out of depression's darkness--is what Jennifer Holliday, now a volunteer advocate for the National Mental Health Association, wants everyone to get.

Holliday has performed at the White House on numerous occasions for Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. Bush, and Bill Clinton. Recently she performed for *The Singer and the Song: Live From the White House*, a primetime special for PBS Television. She made her Carnegie Hall debut also for PBS Television in the primetime special *My Favorite Broadway: The Leading Ladies – Live From Carnegie Hall*.

Holliday is arguably one of the greatest voices of the new millennium. "My deepest desire has always been to sing from my heart and to be honest with my truest heartfelt emotions. My song not only speaks from my soul but it also speaks through me to the hearts of those who hear me sing. I am truly grateful unto God for this beautiful gift of song that He has blessed me with and for the opportunities that He has given me to share my song with the world." For more information please visit [www.apbspeakers.com](http://www.apbspeakers.com).

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Sharing My Song with the World
- Singing from the Heart