KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Nikiya Mathis

Actress · Broadway Hair & Wig Designer · Special Tony Award Honoree



Make space for the next person.

Nikiya is a working actress and a Broadway wig designer, and the first wig designer in history to receive a Special Tony Award. She tells a story like an actor and backs it up with the work. Honest, funny and impossible to tune out, she leaves rooms ready to make space for more people.

1st wig designer to receive a Special Tony Award

12 Broadway productions designed

2 Drama Desk Awards

3 Henry Hewes Design Awards

MFA in Acting, NYU, with recurring TV roles

KEYNOTES · 30 TO 60 MINUTES PLUS Q&A, SHAPED TO YOUR AUDIENCE

01 "The One They Didn't Plan For"

INCLUSION & CULTURE

Theaters used to call Nikiya for "the one-black-girl's-hair-that-they-did-not-plan-for," often the day before tech. What it really costs to include people late, and the HAIRversations approach she built to plan for everyone from day one.

Best for: DEI and culture teams, ERGs, HR leaders, beauty and haircare brands, entertainment companies

02 "Pressure Busts Pipes or Makes Diamonds"

WOMEN & LEADERSHIP

They tell you to chase your dreams. They don't tell you the dream can demand everything you have. The honest version of leading as a Black woman, the applause and the heartbreak, and what Nikiya knows for sure on the other side of it.

Best for: women's leadership conferences, Black women's ERGs, leadership summits, arts organizations

03 "All You Have Is All You Need"

LEADERSHIP & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

"Auditions taught me how to hear 'no' without breaking. Entrepreneurship is teaching me how to say no without apologizing." Six lessons from the audition room that built a leader, a designer and a business.

Best for: corporate leadership events, entrepreneurship programs, business schools, team kickoffs

04 "Don't Become Distracted"

PURPOSE & THE NEXT GENERATION

The message at the heart of her Special Tony Award speech. For anyone who has been made to feel like too much or not enough: how to keep doing the work, do it well, and hold the door open for whoever comes next.

Best for: commencements, convocations, students and young professionals, mentorship programs

05 "God Doesn't Waste Anything"

FAITH & CALLING

No cosmetology license. No apprenticeship. Just a gift she kept saying yes to until it felt like ministry. Built on the Parable of the Talents, a talk about building a career in entertainment without leaving your faith at the stage door.

Best for: churches and ministry conferences, Christian colleges, women's ministry events, faith-based ERGs

> *"The truth of the matter is you were enough all along. They just didn't want you to know it."*
>
> SPECIAL TONY AWARD ACCEPTANCE, 2024

ALSO SPEAKS ON

- **The Business of Beauty** — For drama schools: hair riders, the hair conversation, speaking up on set
- **Building the Pipeline** — For high school and beauty school students: design jobs in theater, TV and film, and how to get in
- Textured Hair & the CROWN Act
- The Multi-Hyphenate Life
- Art as Activism

FORMATS

- Keynote, fireside chat or panel
- **HAIRversations** — Roundtable and hands-on hair tutorials for actors, design students, directors, producers and general managers
- **Wigs & Wine** — Hands-on wig styling and application in a relaxed, social setting, with wigs to buy. First hosted at the Goodman Theatre
- Design Talkbacks
- **One-on-one consultations** — For theaters and individual actors
- Virtual, any of the above

HAS TAUGHT AT

NYU Tisch (annual guest artist, Graduate Design and Graduate Acting) · Yale · Princeton · Temple · UConn · Sam Houston State · NAATC · Black Theatre United · The Billie Holiday Theatre · Denver Center for the Performing Arts

BOOK NIKIYA

Let's hold your date.

AS FEATURED IN

The New York Times · Allure · Playbill · Broadway.com · HelloBeautiful

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