

# VISUAL STORY FOR *HEY VIOLA!*

A Visual Story helps people prepare for coming to a show or decide if this show is right for them.

Here are the show times for *Hey Viola!*:

**Thurs, April 13 – 7:30 PM (Pay-What-You-Will Preview)**

**Fri, April 14 – 7:30 PM (Opening Night)**

**Saturday, April 15 – 1:00 PM**

**Saturday, April 15 – 7:30 PM**

**Sunday, April 16 – 7:30 PM**

**Weds, April 19 – 1:00 PM**

**Thurs, April 20 – 7:30 PM (DJ Night)**

**Friday, April 21 (Live Description)**

**Saturday, April 22 – 7:30 PM (Closing Night)**



# What information is in this Visual Story?

*You can click on the things you want to know about:*

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## **Schedule / Important Times**

*These times may be slightly different for every show.*

The performance is about 80 minutes long. You are welcome to leave the theatre and then return to your seat during the show.

### **Evening Shows**

**6:30 PM** – Lobby doors open and you can pick up your tickets  
your tickets

**7:00 PM** – Theatre doors open and you can find your seat  
seat

**7:30 PM** – The performance starts

**8:50 PM** – The performance ends

### **Afternoon Shows**

**12:00 PM** – Lobby doors open and you can pick up

**12:30 PM** – Theatre doors open and you can find your

**1:00 PM** – The performance starts

**2:20 PM** – The performance ends

## Arriving at the theatre

When you arrive at the theatre, you will enter the main lobby through one of two doors. Volunteers will be at both doors and in the lobby. They will be happy to help you if you have any questions or do not feel sure about where you should go.

If you need to pick up your physical ticket from the Box Office, you will enter through the doorway marked “Theatre Entrance.” The Box Office is through these doors. Box Office staff will be able to help you

If you already have your ticket, then you will enter through the doorway near the concession.



This is the Box Office where you can pick up your physical ticket.

## **Before the show**

You can enter the theatre to find your seat 30 minutes before the show begins. You are also welcome to hang out in the lobbies. There are comfortable seats in the lobby where you can sit. When it is time to go into the theatre, the lights in the lobby will flash on and off and someone will make an announcement.

You can also leave your coat, sweater or bags at the Coat Check, if you would like. Volunteers at the Coat Check will safely store your items for the duration of the show. When you drop something off, they will give you a token with a number on it. When you want to get your item back, you bring your token back to the volunteers at the Coat Check.

Our concession will be open. You can purchase snacks or drinks there if you would like to eat or drink something. You are welcome to bring your food and/or drink from the concession into the theatre.

## The Set

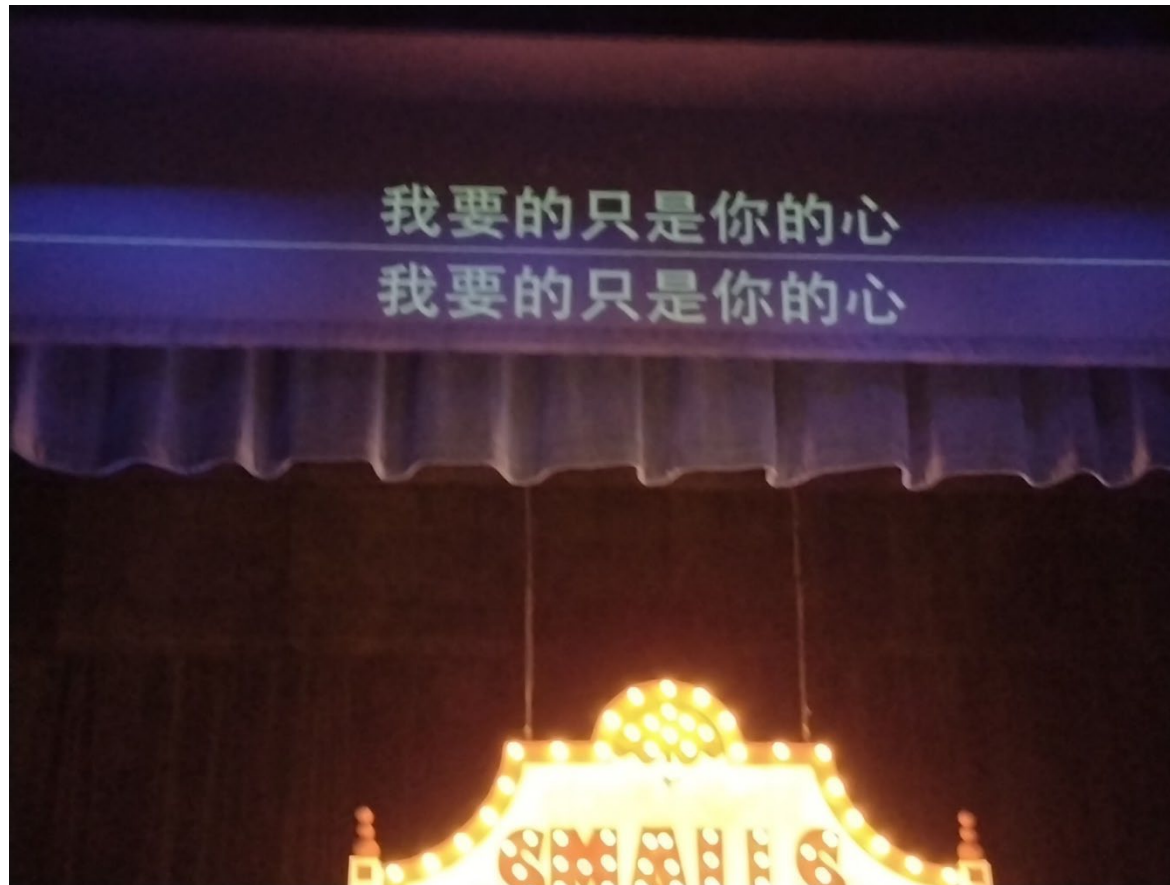
This is Krystle, who plays Viola Desmond, on the stage at Gateway Theatre with her band. The setting for most of the show is the stage of a club in Harlem, New York, called Smalls Paradise. A big sign hangs over the back of the stage: "Smalls Paradise" is written in red letters on the sign and there are light bulbs around the edge of the sign that are lit up during the show. The set never changes, but Krystle will often use her words to let us know that she is pretending to be in other locations. A pianist sits at a piano on one side of the stage. Two other musicians sit on the other side of the stage, where there is a drum kit, a stand-up bass, a guitar and a trumpet.



Here is a photo of what the play will look like. Krystle Dos Santos who plays Viola Desmond is centre stage, with the band on either side.

Krystle mostly stays in the centre of the stage speaking into a microphone on a stand. Sometimes she takes the microphone off the stand and moves around the stage.

Above the stage there are screens on which surtitles are projected. These surtitles show a translation in Simplified and Traditional Chinese of the words that are spoken or sung in the play. These surtitles are there to support audience members who may not understand everything spoken in English, but can read Chinese writing.



Here is a photo of the surtitles projected above the stage.

## Who you will see on stage

Krystle Dos Santos is the performer who plays Viola Desmond.



This is what Krystle looks like as Viola Desmond.



This is what Krystle looks like normally.



Mary, Steve and Chris are the musicians. They are on stage from before the beginning of the show.

They are dressed in formal clothes to look like musicians playing in a nightclub



This is Mary playing the piano.



This is Chris and Steve.

This is what Mary, Chris and Steve look like regularly.



## **The curtain speech**

Before the performance begins, an audio recording of a woman's voice will be played in the theatre. This recording will provide some information to the audience, including:

- An acknowledgement and welcome to the ancestral territories of local Indigenous nations
- A recognition of sponsors and funders who support this show
- Some reminders about rules of conduct for theatregoers, such as reminders that you should turn your phone off or put it on airplane mode during the performance, or that taking photos during the performance is not allowed

## **About the story**

This is a show about Viola Desmond. Viola Desmond was a real person who was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and lived from July 6, 1914 to February 7, 1965. She is considered an important figure in the history of civil rights in Canada. A picture of Viola Desmond can be found on many Canadian \$10 bills.

During the show, the main performer, Krystle Dos Santos, pretends to be Viola Desmond telling stories about her life. Viola speaks directly to the audience as though she is familiar with the people in the room. She pretends the theatre is a bar in Harlem, New York, called Smalls Paradise. This was a real nightclub where Viola Desmond worked when she lived in New York. Sometimes Viola pretends she is in other places for a short period of time. Sometimes she adopts the voices of other people when she is remembering them.

The stories Viola tells are told as though Viola is remembering her life. The stories aren't always told in the order in which the events happened. Some songs are also mixed in with the stories. These songs are used to give an emotional context to the stories that are being told.

At the end of the show, Krystle stops pretending to be Viola and re-introduces herself as Krystle. Her voice changes slightly, but you may notice it. She shares a bit more with the audience about why she wanted to tell Viola's stories. She sings one more song, then introduces the band, then leaves the stage.

# Things in the show that might be intense

These are some things in the show that might be intense.  
On the following pages, we will explain more, or you can click on items on the list.

- [Dying](#)
- [Racism](#)
- [Physical abuse](#)
- [Jail](#)
- [Talking directly to the audience](#)
- [Live music and singing](#)

Many of the following explanations refer to things that the performer, Krystle, describes while pretending to be Viola. In these explanations, she is referred to simply as Viola.

If something feels too intense, you are allowed to leave the theatre during the performance. A volunteer will help you return to your seat if or when you feel ready to return to the theatre to watch the show.

## Dying

At two points, Viola talks about the last moments of her life as she though she is experiencing them. She describes what it feels like to be dying. At the end of the show, Krystle stops pretending to be Viola and tells us about how Viola Desmond died.

Viola tells a story about an explosion in Halifax that killed many people.

Viola talks about an American businesswoman, Madame CJ Walker. She mentions the death of Madame CJ Walker's husband.

# Racism

The show includes many stories about experiencing racism as a Black person. She talks about some of the racism she experienced and some of the racism Black people in Nova Scotia faced in general, including violence and denial of access to education or services. She also makes reference to racism against Black people in the United States. She refers to slavery and segregation. She refers to racist laws in many American states called "Jim Crow Laws." She describes how Jim Crow is a fake character based on racist stereotypes about Black people.

An important part of the show focuses on a specific incident of racism which Viola experienced. She talks about workers at a movie theatre who refuse to sell her a ticket for the seat she wants, because she is Black. She describes how she was forcefully removed from the theatre, put in prison for a night, and then charged with a crime she didn't commit. She talks about how members of her community respond to the event and how the experience impacted her life. She talks about how the experience and its aftermath affected her life and mental health.

Sometimes when Viola talks about racism, she shows intense emotions. She may be sad or angry, because of what she experienced. Sometimes she pretends to speak as other people who say things to her that are racist or hurtful.

Many songs in the show refer to racism against Black people.

## Physical Abuse

Viola tells the story of how she was dragged out of a movie theatre in detail.

Details include:

- Her shoe falls off
- A man grabs her by the legs and twists her body, causing pain in her knee and hip
- She digs her fingernails into a wooden door frame
- She talks about bruises forming on her body
- She talks about feeling small pieces of wood under her fingernails

She acts out some parts of this experience, including grabbing the doorframe.



Here is a photo of Krystle as Viola miming grabbing the doorframe.

## Jail

Viola talks about her experience being held in jail.

During this part of the show, Viola asks if there are any criminals in the audience. She refers to herself as a criminal. She uses the word “criminals” ironically to refer to people like herself who haven’t actually done something wrong, but who have been put in jail for reasons that are unfair.

## Talking Directly to the Audience

Viola sometimes asks questions directly of the audience. For example, she asks if anyone in the audience has ever been to Halifax. No one has to answer, but you can if you would like.

## Live Music and Singing

There are 17 full or partial songs that Viola sings in this show. There is a band onstage that plays music live. Their instruments include a guitar, a bass guitar, a piano, a drum kit and a trumpet. Because they are playing live instruments, they can sometimes be louder than we expect. Sometimes the guitarist, Steve, adds vocals to songs.

Song lyrics may express intense emotions, refer to racism, talk about things like kissing or being intimate with someone, or use metaphorical language that is not meant to be understood literally. During some songs, Viola sings with a lot of intensity. She ends one song by screaming the last word to express her anger and pain.



Here is a photo of Krystle as Viola singing intensely.

Sometimes Viola tells stories between song verses. Sometimes music begins or ends while she is telling stories.

During some songs, Viola may try to get audience members to clap in rhythm with her singing. You do not need to clap with her if it makes you uncomfortable, but you can if you would like to. Other people around you may clap along with her, if they feel comfortable doing so.

## **Sound**

Sometimes the sound can be very loud during songs.

Sometimes the band plays atmospheric music that may create a feeling of anxiety that matches intense moments in Viola's stories.

## **Lighting**

Most of the time the lighting stays the same throughout the show. Most of the time the light on stage appears dark blue or yellow. At one point the light shifts to green, and at another it shifts to red.

There are always lightbulbs lit up on the Smalls Paradise sign. Sometimes only, a few lightbulbs on the Smalls Paradise are lit up at a time. During these moments, each lightbulb is lit up and then darkened in a rotation that makes it look like light is moving around the sign.

Sometimes a spotlight is used when Viola stands at the microphone stand or when she sits at the piano. These spotlights are rectangular in shape.



Here is a photo of Krystle as Viola singing in the spotlight.

There will be no strobes. At the end of the show, the stage lights are not turned off. The house lights are turned on when the show is over.



## Examples of Lighting



Here is a photo of Krystle as Viola in blue lighting.



Here is a photo of Krystle as Viola in red lighting.



Here is a photo of Krystle as Viola in green lighting.

## **How people react**

People might want to sing along or clap when they hear some songs in the play. When songs end, people might clap their hands or cheer to show their appreciation for the singing and the music. You are welcome to do so, but you don't have to.

Sometimes people might respond to questions that Viola asks on stage.

When the show ends, people will clap and cheer to show their appreciation for the performance. If they really like the performance, they might stand while they do this. Sometimes this can go on for a few minutes, while each performer steps forward to acknowledge the audience and be appreciated. Krystle might also call out the names of each band member. You don't have to clap or cheer at any point, if you don't want to, but are also welcome to do so.

## **The end of the show**

When the show is over, the performer stops pretending to be Viola, and speaks to the audience as herself, Krystle. She talks about why sharing Viola's story with people is so important to her. Then she sings a final song, which is dedicated to Viola. When the song is over, the lights will be turned off for 5-to-10 seconds. People will begin clapping and cheering for the performers. You are welcome to stay and show appreciation for the performers, but you are also welcome to leave whenever you feel ready to do so.

## Everything that happens in the show

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This section includes a detailed description of every thing that happens in the show. Mostly this involves describing what Viola talks about. If you do not want to know every thing that happens in the show, then do not read this section.

When the show begins, the band is playing music. When they finish their song, one of the musicians introduces Viola as though she is a performer taking the stage at Smalls Paradise, a club in Harlem, New York. She sings a song about making an impact in the world. The song is called “I Don’t Wanna Set the World on Fire.” For most of the show, the audience is meant to understand that Viola is performing on the stage at Smalls Paradise. She speaks to the audience as though they are watching her at Smalls Paradise. There are a few moments when we are to understand that she might actually be living the last moments of her life on the floor of her apartment in New York City and dreaming she is on stage at Smalls Paradise.

Viola starts telling stories about her life while the band keeps playing. The first story is about her childhood. She talks about her siblings who are named Olive, Helen, Jackie and Harry. She talks about her and her siblings singing and dancing while doing household chores and how much her family loved music.

As the music ends, Viola talks about how music is played everywhere in New York and she can hear it in her apartment. She talks about lying on the hardwood floor of her apartment. This becomes a memory of her having fallen after returning home from work. It is a memory of the last moments of her life. Then she remembers she is onstage at Smalls Paradise talking to the audience. She then sings a song about dreaming called "Dream A Little Dream."

Viola addresses the audience and asks if there is anyone from Halifax present. Some people in the audience might cheer or call out in response if they have ever lived in Halifax and Viola will react if they do. She says Halifax is the first place she had a near-death experience. She then tells a story about being a child in Halifax when two big ships hit each other and there was an explosion. She mentions that thousands of people died as a result of the explosion.

Viola talks about her parents' love of singing and shares snippets of songs that her parents loved. She then sings a song that shows the kind of love and belief Viola's mom had for her children. The song is called "This Train." When the song ends, Viola talks about how she was taught she could do anything. She then talks about how she became a teacher. This is the first time we hear her speak about racism. She talks about not being allowed to attend teachers college and about how she would only be hired to work at schools where only Black students went, because they weren't allowed to go to school with white students.

Viola then talks about realizing that there were not beauty salons or hair or beauty products available for Black women in Halifax. She talks about Madame C J Walker, a Black woman who was the first millionaire in the United States of America and who made her money from creating beauty salons and beauty products for Black American women. She discusses the racism and sexism that both she and Madame CJ Walker experienced as Black women in North America in the 1900s.

Viola then talks about going to beauty and hairstyling schools in Montreal, as well as in Atlantic City and New York City in the United States. She talks about opening her own salon, Vi's Studio of Beauty Culture, in Halifax. The band begins playing music. Viola talks about meeting her husband, Jack, who owned a barbershop next door to her beauty salon. She then sings a song called "On the Sunny Side of the Street." In the middle of the song, she talks about how good it makes her feel operating her beauty salon and how she learned to start making wigs for women experiencing hair loss. Then she sings the last part of the song.

Viola then talks about Portia White, a Black opera singer from Halifax. She shares how Portia White encouraged her to think about what else she might do other than running her own salon. Viola sings a song called "Tomorrow Is My Turn."

When she's finished, she thanks the audience and thanks the venue, Smalls Paradise, for hosting her. She acts as though everyone in the audience are old customers of Smalls Paradise and that she recognizes some people in the audience. She talks about how she worked at Smalls Paradise when she attended beauty school in New York City. Then she talks about her dream to teach other women to do what she does for work and opening a franchise of beauty parlours across the country that employ Black women.



Viola sings a song called "A Kiss to Build A Dream On." In between singing, she talks about the life of Madame CJ Walker and how Madame CJ Walker created her business and wealth despite racism, poverty and the death of her parents. Viola mentions that Madame CJ Walker wouldn't have been allowed to stay at any hotels in Halifax, despite being a millionaire, because she was a Black woman. Viola then tells how she opened her own beauty school in Halifax. She sings a song called "A Change is Gonna Come."

When Viola finishes the song, she asks if anyone has seen a movie called "The Dark Mirror" starring an actor named Oliva de Havilland. She says she has only seen the first 10 minutes of the movie. She then tells a story about trying to go see the movie in a movie theatre called The Roseland in a town called New Glasgow. She talks about how the ticket seller wouldn't sell her a ticket for the seat she wanted, because she is Black. She talks about leaving enough money for the ticket at the counter and taking the seat she wants anyway. Then she talks about the theatre manager and a police officer violently removing her from the theatre. Then she sings a song called "Sinnerman."

When the song is over, Viola talks about being in a jail cell. She talks about the racist Jim Crow laws in the southern United States. She describes how the laws were named after a racist cartoon character. She then talks about how laws similar to the Jim Crow laws weren't enforced in Canada, but how white people could choose to prevent Black people from using or working in businesses and institutions. She then talks about how she passed the time in jail by organizing her appointment book. Viola sings a song called "Trouble in Mind." In the middle of the song, she reads from a section of her appointment book before she finishes singing.

After the song, Viola asks if there are any criminals in the audience and refers to herself as a criminal. She uses the word "criminals" ironically to refer to people like herself who haven't broken any laws, but who get treated like criminals. Then she talks about being in court. She describes how the white theatre workers and the police officer lie about which ticket she purchased. She tells how she is charged with "tax fraud" as a result of their lies and has to pay a \$26 fine. She talks about the impact this experience had on her. She talks about how her parents were angry and afraid for her. She talks about how her husband urges her to move on without doing anything about it. She sings a song called "Don't Let Me Be Understood."

The music keeps playing while Viola talks some more about the impact this had on her and how she wishes her husband was more supportive of her fight against the injustice done to her at the Roseland Theatre. She talks about how the story of what happened to her was published in a Black newspaper run by a woman named Carrie Best. Then she begins singing a song called "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around." Between verses of the song, she tells the story of her legal fight to get the charges against her overturned. She talks about how she lost her court case on a technicality, because of a mistake made by her lawyer, Mr. Bisset. She shares how Mr. Bisset wouldn't talk about racism being a part of why she was treated the way she was. Then she sings a song called "Smile."

When the song ends, Viola talks about being on the floor of her apartment in New York and her apartment being cold. This is meant to recall the moment from earlier in the show when she talks about falling down in her apartment. Then Viola returns to speaking to the audience. She talks about how her husband separated from her after the court case. She reflects on the cruelty of racist discrimination in Canada. She talks about losing her passion for her work. Then she sings a song called "Feeling Good."

When the song ends, Viola talks about people forgetting who she was and what she did. She talks about moving to New York and making a new life for herself. She talks about working as a representative for Black artists who talk about difficult things, including racism, in their music. Then she talks about reading in the newspaper about Rosa Parks, a Black American woman famous for protesting racist discrimination in a similar way to Viola Desmond. After talking about Rosa Parks' protest, Viola has a brief flashback to her experience at the Roseland Theatre and the aftermath. She briefly describes the experience as though she is living through it again. She finishes by quoting Rosa Parks' explanation for why she decided to do what she did and shares her agreement with the explanation.

After this, Viola sings a song called "Mississippi Goddamn." This song talks about racism against Black people in the United States of America. The lyrics in the chorus refer specifically to the states of Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi, but the song isn't only about racism in these places. The lyrics at the end of the song are changed to include the Canadian province of Nova Scotia among the states named in the song. When the song is over the audience will applaud. It will seem as though it's the end of the show.

When the audience has stopped applauding, Krystle re-introduces herself as Krystle Dos Santos. She talks about when and how Viola Desmond died in her apartment in New York. She refers to the fact that a picture of Viola Desmond is on the Canadian 10-dollar bill. Then she talks about the ways in which artists like herself use imagination to try to understand and relate to experiences other people have had. Then she talks about why she wanted to share Viola Desmond's story and some of the music from Viola's lifetime with the audience. Krystle calls out "Hey Viola!" and dedicates a song to her. Then she sings a song called "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free."

Krystle will finish singing, while the band continues to play music. The audience will applaud for Krystle and the musicians. Krystle will introduce each musician by name, then she will bow, wave at the audience and walk off stage. The band will finish playing the last song. When the music is over, that is the end of the show.