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EDITORIAL: UA theater graduates making a mark

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Tuscaloosa's own Stephen Tyrone Williams is doing his city and alma mater — the University of Alabama — proud, playing on Broadway opposite superstar Tom Hanks in the hit "Lucky Guy," written by Nora Ephron. Though as the abused Haitian Abner Louima he's in just one scene, it's pivotal, as pointed out in early reviews.

The Village Voice, Variety and The Associated Press all wrote about his moving performance. The Hollywood Reporter used the adjective "superb." Playbill noted that harrowing moment, a two-person scene between Hanks and Williams, is the emotional highlight of the show, and that "... Stephen Tyrone Williams plays it beautifully to a hushed house."

He didn't arrive overnight, building from the lead in his first play, "Once On This Island" at Central High School, through UA shows such as "Ragtime," where he was a towering Coalhouse Walker, to when he landed a starring role in a national tour, his first week in New York City. He's grown from work in off-Broadway theater, independent films and television, including the lead in Showtime movie "Children of God," as lovingly reviewed in The New York Times, among others.

Many here predicted a decade ago that someday he'd be on Broadway.

But Williams is just one of numerous UA theater grads carving out impressive careers in acting.

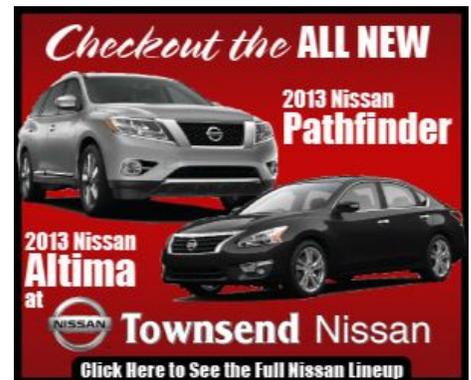
Russelville native Sonequa Martin-Green has been all over TV since her graduation in 2007, with roles on "Army Wives" and "The Good Wife" leading up to this year's double threat, featured on a pair of hits, ABC's "Once Upon a Time," as the mysterious Tamara, and AMC's "The Walking Dead," as Sasha.

Jake Boyd, a 2010 graduate, has gone out on national tours of "Carrie" and "Oklahoma," the latter in one of the leads as Will. He's also getting a lot of TV work, in a recurring role on "Are We There Yet?," as a co-star of "Blue Bloods." He's currently shooting a featured role on "All My Children."

And that's not all: Erica Hansen recently completed a two-year run in "Cats." Lauren Hauser-Wiley is playing adult Cosette in the national tour of "Les Miserables." Michael T. Walker has played leads on national tours of "Seus-

sical" and "Hairspray," shot a small role in HBO's "Boardwalk Empire" and will be seen this summer in the Liam Neeson thriller "Non-Stop."

Although UA theater grads have gained success in the past, the wealth of working actors today can be credited to a renewed focus on professional training, overseen in



the past

decade by new faculty members including Seth Panitch and Raphael Crystal, who take students on showcases to New York, to meet agents, managers and casting directors.

“We can teach them all the theory in the world, but in the end, (that alone) doesn’t get them employed,” Panitch said.

Last week’s showcase landed auditions to the hit “The Book of Mormon” for undergrads

Michael Luwoye and Thaddeus Fitzpatrick.

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