



JENNIFER HOLLIDAY

Born and raised in Houston, Texas, Holliday went straight from the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church Choir to the Broadway stage in the Big Apple. One Sunday, while singing in the church choir, she was discovered by dancer Jamie Patterson who was touring in the national company of *A Chorus Line*. Jamie not only set up an audition for Jennifer in New York for the show *Your Arms Are Too Short To Box With God*, but he also bought her an airline ticket and made arrangements for her to stay with his aunt. During the audition with the show's creator and director, Vinnette Carroll, Jennifer sang her favorite hymn, "God Will Take Care Of You." And that He did. She was hired for the show that same day.

Jennifer toured with *Your Arms Are Too Short To Box With God* for five months and then made her Broadway debut with the show as Jennifer-Yvette Holliday.

While on Broadway, Jennifer's talent was noticed by the renowned Broadway director and choreographer Michael Bennett, the creator of *A Chorus Line*. He invited her to participate in an untitled project that he was producing. Even though Jennifer was still performing in *Your Arms Are Too Short To Box With God*, Bennett's project sounded too good to pass up. The project turned out to be *Dreamgirls*. At this early stage of the workshop process however the role of Effie was not fully developed and even the signature song "And I'm Telling You..." had not been written yet. During workshops for the show, Jennifer began shaping and changing the storyline of Effie's character to be what she felt would be a more truth portrayal. And around this time Bennett suggested that it would be better if Jennifer dropped the hyphen and go by Jennifer Holliday, which she did.

Dreamgirls had previews in Boston opened on Broadway on December 21, 1981 at the Imperial Theatre...and the rest is history. The show ran for five years and won universal acclaim. Holliday's other theater credits include *Sing Mahalia Sing: The Mahalia Jackson Story*, *Downhearted Blues: The Bessie Smith Story*, *Harlem Suite* (with Aretha Franklin), *Chicago* (starring as "Mama Morton"), *Grease* (starring as "Teen Angel") and *Black Nativity* (starring as the "Angel of God"). Jennifer also reprised her role as Effie to sold-out crowds in 2007.

Holliday's recording career has been moderately successful with the release of five albums beginning in 1983. Her second album, "Say You Love Me," won her a second Grammy for her rendition of Duke Ellington's classic, "Come Sunday."

Jennifer has carried on a parallel career as a recording artist. “And I’m Telling You, I’m Not Going” remains her biggest chart-topping success to date. The song was #1 on the R&B Charts for four consecutive weeks and a Top 40 hit on the Pop Charts. From 1985 to 1992 she enjoyed five Top 10 singles on the R&B and Dance Charts such as “I’m On Your Side” and “No Frills Love.” Over the years Jennifer has worked with and recorded with many other major artists including Barbra Streisand, Luther Vandross, David Foster, Paul Simon, Michael Jackson, and Foreigner on a special version of “I Want To Know What Love Is.”

Jennifer - the actress – paved a new path in her career when TV producer David E. Kelley saw her on the Rosie O’Donnell show and gave her a call about making a guest appearance on “Ally McBeal,” the Fox TV series that starred Calista Flockhart. The response to her version of Randy Newman’s “Short People” was so overwhelming that Kelley wrote her character, Lisa Knowles, into the series as a regular. As the outspoken, quirky choir director and lead soloist at McBeal’s church, Jennifer’s character appeared on the series for five seasons. Over the years, she has also appeared on other TV series such as “Touched By An Angel,” “Hang Time,” “Happily Ever After,” “The Love Boat” and “Ellen.”

Holliday continues to perform all over the world with leading symphonies such as the Boston Pops with Keith Lockhart, The National Symphony Orchestra and the Cincinnati Pops with Eric Kuntzel. She’s performed for both Democratic and Republican U.S. Presidents. In 2000 she received an Honorary Doctorate of Music from the Berklee College of Music for her work on behalf of mental health awareness, depression and suicide prevention. Jennifer continues to believe that music has a healing power and she also strongly believes that her music and her story are her gift to her audiences.