

Leslie Uggams Press Biography

Leslie Uggams is a Tony (*Hallelujah, Baby!*) and Emmy Award-winning actress and singer whose career has brought her from Harlem (Uptown) to Broadway (Downtown), the big screen (*Skyjacked*, *Deadpool*) to television (*The Leslie Uggams Show*, *Nurse Jackie*). Perhaps best known for her stirring portrayal of Kizzy in the landmark TV mini-series Alex Haley's *Roots* (Critics Choice Award, Emmy and Golden Globe nominations), Ms. Uggams has performed to critical and popular acclaim ever since her first professional appearances at the age of nine at the famed Apollo Theater. There she opened for such musical legends as Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald and Dinah Washington. Now, after six decades on stage and screen, Ms. Uggams is a legend in her own right. She is now on the Board of Directors of the Apollo Theater, and she was recently awarded an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from the University of Connecticut. She is also the recipient of an American Artist Award from Arena Stage in Washington, DC.

Ms. Uggams has been touring nationally, performing to sold-out audiences, with her autobiographical one-woman musical *Uptown/Downtown* (LA Drama Critics Circle Award, NAACP Theatre Award, IRNE Award, Broadway World People's Choice Award) which chronicles her extraordinary career in stories and song. From New York to Boston and Los Angeles, critics have raved, calling Ms. Uggams "dazzling," "indefatigable," and "delectable!" Recently Ms. Uggams also starred as *Mame* at the Wick Theatre in Florida; as Mama Rose in *Gypsy* at Connecticut Repertory Theatre; in the Encores! presentation of *Pipe Dream* at New York City Center; and in the Broadway-bound world premiere of *Stormy Weather: The Lena Horne Story* (Ovation nomination) at the Pasadena Playhouse in California, breaking that theater's all-time house attendance record. She will soon be seen as Blind Al in the 20th Century Fox movie *Deadpool* in 2016.

On Broadway Ms. Uggams made her stunning musical theater debut starring in *Hallelujah, Baby!* earning both Tony and Theater World awards. Since then she has starred on Broadway in *Blues in the Night*, *Her First Roman* with Richard Kiley, *Jerry's Girls*, *Anything Goes* at the Lincoln Center Theatre (also the first national tour), *King Headley II* with Brian Stokes Mitchell (Tony Award nomination), *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and most recently *On Golden Pond* opposite James Earl Jones. Off-Broadway Ms. Uggams has won Audelco Awards for several highly praised star turns including *The Old Settler*, Keb Mo's blues musical *Thunder Knocking on the Door*, and *First Breeze of Summer* at the acclaimed Signature Theater. Regional roles include *A Little Night Music* at Michigan Opera Theatre, *The Rink* at the Cape Playhouse, *Hello, Dolly!* and *Into the Woods* at Houston's Theater Under the Stars, *Master Class* at TheaterFest in New Jersey, and *Call Me Madam* and *Blue* at Paper Mill Playhouse, NJ.

Ms. Uggams' still vibrant television career, which began at the age of six portraying Ethel Waters' niece on the TV series *Beulah*, spans decades. As a teenager she famously won a \$12,500 college scholarship on *Name That Tune*, and as a regular on *Sing Along with Mitch* she was the first African American performer to be featured on a weekly national primetime television series. Other early guest appearances included *Your Show of Shows*, *The Milton Berle Show*, *The Arthur Godfrey Show*, and *The Ed Sullivan Show*. In 1970 she hosted her own primetime variety series, *The Leslie Uggams Show*. Later starring roles included her award-winning portrayal in Alex Haley's *Roots*, the miniseries *Backstairs at the White House*, the ABC-TV movie *Sizzle*, the HBO special *Christmas at Radio City Music Hall*, and her Emmy-winning duties as co-host of the NBC-TV series *Fantasy*. She continues to guest star on dramatic series with recent appearances on *The Good Wife*, *Memphis Beat* and *NYC 22*. She is featured on a three-episode arc in the final season of *Nurse Jackie*.

While a student at the Julliard School in New York, Ms. Uggams released the first of 10 solo albums she was to record for Columbia Records. Later she signed with Atlantic Records. Her newest CDs are *On My Way to You: The Songs of Marilyn and Alan Bergman*; *Leslie Uggams: Uptown/Downtown*; and *Wishing You a Happy New Year* with the Curtis McKonly Orchestra. She can also be heard on the new cast album of *Pipe Dream*.

In concert Ms. Uggams has toured with Peter Nero and Mel Torme; performed at the Hollywood Bowl in *Jerry Herman's Broadway*, an all-star tribute to the legendary composer; and appeared as a guest soloist with numerous symphony orchestras across the country, including The National Symphony Orchestra, The Cincinnati Pops, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, and The Rhode Island Symphony. In addition, Ms. Uggams performed before 300,000 people during the Memorial Day Concert on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol which was also broadcast live by PBS to millions of viewers nationwide.

For more information, please visit her online at www.leslieuggams.com, www.facebook.com/LeslieUggams, www.YouTube.com/SmagguProductions or on Twitter @LeslieUggams.