

curtis henderson

bio



When Curtis Henderson was a kid he and his two pals used to win most of the talent shows held at St. Mark's Congregational Church in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. They were just ten years old and known as The Cousins, covering Curtis Mayfield's material, Ray Charles songs and lots of tunes by the Temptations. "I listened to these artists' albums over and over again but also learned a lot from singing in church as well," says Curtis. That was the beginning.

The Cousins were singing and dancing all over town and performed with the Lawrence Bagwell dance troupe at Boston's famous Paul's Mall and at The Jazz Workshop. Later, they combined forces with the popular Boston gospel group known as The Prophets. Although the New Hope Baptist Church

was their base, their enthusiastic style took them to many different congregations in the area, where their tight harmony and high energy kept the churches rocking!

Henderson is now the General Manager of Boston Neighborhood Network (BNN) and has been with the cable TV outfit for over twenty years. But his other love has always been music.

After graduating from English High School, Curtis attended Boston Business School. When his draft number came up in 1966, he joined the Army for a three-year stint so that he could choose a particular job and stay off the front lines in the then-raging Vietnam War. He ended up in 'Nam offloading huge fuel tankers and delivering them to the interior—not the desk job he had envisioned. In Vietnam he got to sing at various Army functions with some of his comrades and took a couple of courses in film projection—that was his intro to the world of film. In 1969 he was discharged from Fort Leonard Wood near St. Louis, Missouri. There he spent eight years singing and performing with local show bands and studying music theory and composition.

His next stop was Puerto Rico, where he worked in the big tourist hotels as a singer with a show band called Phlavor—eight musicians, mostly locals, with a three-piece horn section and two lead singers. They performed the hottest American R&B tunes from groups like Earth, Wind & Fire, The Temptations and The Ojays. While in San Juan, he had his first foray into musical theatre, playing the role of the Lion in *Disco Wiz*, a contemporary version of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Curtis returned to Boston in 1981 and continued his musical pursuits with a soul group called The Sirius Connection, known for its funky original compositions. This group was featured on a WGBH TV special edition of *Say Brother*.

In 1984, Curtis connected with the groundbreaking work of cable television. He produced a show called *City Beat* and began producing additional programming for musicians and local activists. He was soon hired as the BNN Studio Manager and two years later was promoted to Public Access Director for the city. In 1998, he became General Manager of BNN and continues to serve in this role.

Curtis has worked tirelessly to bring the residents of the City of Boston the programming they need to become an informed and educated citizenry. Under his supervision, BNN's news and

information programming line-up has blossomed from a daily local news program to collaborations with nonprofit organizations and successful co-productions about health, education, the arts and more.

In 1995, the Alliance for Community Media honored Curtis with the Jewel Ryan White Award for developing cultural diversity in access television. Under Curtis's leadership, BNN has received national recognition including honors from The National Alliance for Community Media for "Overall Excellence".

To ensure a solid future for community television in Boston, Curtis worked to secure a permanent home for BNN. In December 2007, after several years of searching, negotiations and securing funds, BNN opened the doors to its new home in the geographic center of the city. BNN purchased and renovated the former MBTA Power Station in Egleston Square, an imposing structure built in 1909 to convert power for the elevated transit line and sitting vacant for 20 years. It is now a vibrant community media center. BNN was recognized by the Boston Preservation Alliance for restoring this historic building to its original beauty and they have received the LEED Silver certification for its 'green' efforts, including the use of a geothermal heating and cooling system.

In the mid-nineties, Curtis received an enthusiastic welcome into Boston's jazz world. He performed in Boston clubs and concerts at hot spots like Scullers Jazz Club, Prenzare's, The 1280 Club, MIT's Kresge Auditorium, The Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, The African Meeting House, *Black Nativity*, and at Boston's prestigious benefit for The Dimock Center, *Steppin' Out*. Curtis has also worked with top local musicians Rollins Ross and Frank Wilkins both in the studio and around town.

In 2006, Curtis began collaborating with producers Larry Woo and Gordon Worthy to begin work on his first CD, *Magic of the Night*. Juggling a full-time job as General Manager of Boston Neighborhood Network by day and working into the wee hours of the morning in the studio, Curtis and his team completed eleven original tunes and three covers. The CD combines some of Curtis's favorite funk influences of the '70s and '80s, mixed with some sweet soul and jazz overtones to create a sound for today. Saxophonist Walter Beasley, guitarist Jeff Lockhart, saxophonist Andre Ward, keyboardist Frank Wilkins and vocalist, Athene Wilson are featured guests on the CD.

Through his music, Curtis hopes to be part of the energy that will continue to uplift our hearts, minds and souls with hope and healing.

Contact: Curtis Henderson, Jr.
curtismusic@comcast.net