

## Leading Lady Discovers “B-Side” At Dixwell Gym

by **MARKESHIA RICKS** | Mar 20, 2015 12:22 pm

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MARKESHIA RICKS PHOTO

“You’re gonna hit one, two and then I’m going to swing,” Devonne “Da Bomb” Canady told Catrina Ganey. “Got it?” Ganey had it.

“When I swing, you betta get down,” Canady said, noticing Ganey’s wide eyes. “Are you nervous?”

“We have an understanding don’t we?,” Ganey said half jokingly. “We’re going to do one, two ... duck?”

That’s right, Canady said.

“You looking all evil all of a sudden,” Ganey said a little more seriously.

“This is how it is—intimidation without even doing anything,” Canady said.

Two can play at that game.

“I can look serious too,” Ganey said.



Ganey proved she had nerves of steel Tuesday at Elephant In The Room Boxing Gym. They're the kind of nerves you might need if you raised your grandson to near adulthood only to have him cut down by a senseless act of violence.



In [\*brownsville song \(b-side for tray\)\*](#), which opens next Wednesday at Long Wharf Theatre, [Ganey plays just such a grandmother](#), named Lena. Lena loses her grandson, Tray, to gun violence. In the play, boxing is Tray's outlet. He hones his skills at a neighborhood gym in Brooklyn. Ganey and other members of the Long Wharf cast traveled to the Dixwell neighborhood gym Wednesday for an up-close look at one aspect of their characters' world.

When Ganey put on a pair of bright pink boxing gloves at Elephant in the Room, she showed her fellow cast members that she can float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.



The cast members spent a few hours watching the students in the gym's after school program as they showed off their skills. They also learned about Elephant In The Room and its mission as a safe haven for children in Dixwell and beyond. (Read more about that [here](#).)



*brownsville song (b-side for tray)* Director Eric Ting (pictured) said boxing is essential to the life story of the show's title character, Tray, [played by actor Curtiss Cook Jr.](#) (pictured above). Tray not only has his sights set on a college education when he is killed; he is a Golden Glove champ, something that the boxers at the Elephant In The Room know a little something about. The gym has produced at least one Western New England Golden Glove champion every year since it opened. This year it was recognized as the best novice team by the same branch of the Golden

Gloves.

“Tray uses boxing to focus his energy,” Ting said of the reason for the field trip to the gym. Boxing also is essential to the life story of the production’s playwright, Kimber Lee, who is a competitive boxer—which was news to Canady. Given the play’s connection to boxing, Canady had a question: Did anyone know what the “B-side” in the title means?

Most people guessed that it was the side of an album that never makes it to the radio. But Canady said the “B-side” has a connection to boxing.

“The B-side is the side that is expected to lose in a bout,” she said. “In boxing matches, people put their money on the A-side.” Her revelation drew exclamations of “Ooooh,” and “Wow!” “Kimber probably would have known that,” Ting said.



Both Ganey and Cook went a few rounds with Canady and the punching mitts. Ganey was so pumped that she kept training with a 7-year-old boxer named Kimara, who adopted a few of the cast members.



Kimara asked Cook to help her lace up her gloves and in turn allowed him to use her gloves when it was his time to try the punching sequence. She corrected fighting stances and demonstrated the proper way to perform the punching combinations.



She took Ganey over to one of the gym's punching bags, held it and called out the punch combinations. "One, two. One, two, three," she said. "Wait, this bag is too hard for you. Let's go to the other one."

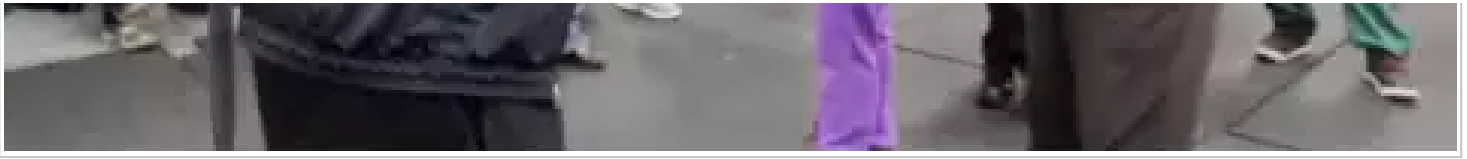


Canady said Kimara is a bit of a phenom at the gym. For one, she's allowed to come to the gym's after-school program though participants are technically supposed to be 8 and up; Canady said she was so impressed with Kimara's maturity that she let her stay. After seeing Kimara, who turns 8 in August, take charge with the cast members, Canady said she might have to make the little boxer her assistant coach.

Ganey said it was a good workout; she'd like to come back and learn more. Her newfound zeal for boxing is called getting "bit by the bug" at the gym, Canady said. "She'll probably be a little sore tomorrow."

*brownsville song (b-side for tray) begins March 25 and runs through April 19. For ticket information, [click here](#). To find out more about events connected with the play, including an April 9 forum on violence in New Haven, visit Long Wharf Theater's [website](#).*





*Previous coverage related to “brownsville song (b-side for tray):*

[At Stetson, The Gloves Come Off](#)

[Justus’s Mom Brings Leading Lady To Tears](#)

[Eyeing Breakthrough, He Explores City’s “B Side”](#)

[Can “Second-Chance Society” Compete With Big \(Prison\) Business?](#)

[The Organic Truth, From Trayvon To “Tray”](#)

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## Comment

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**posted by: HewNaven on March 20, 2015 4:19pm**

Such an awesome story that I really hesitate to say the following:

Do these youth boxing programs allow hitting in the head, because I'd have to say that would be a horrible idea for children. I'll hold off on further commentary until we have a definitive answer from Ms. Canady or Mr. Rosa (see

[http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/fair\\_haven\\_boxers\\_hit\\_spotlight/](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/fair_haven_boxers_hit_spotlight/))

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