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Jennifer Shelton Performs  
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FEATURING JENNIFER SHELTON,  
LONG BEACH SYMPHONY  
& MUSICAL THEATRE WEST

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Jennifer Shelton wears a red double-breasted coat, \$504, and black slacks, \$270. Both are available at Kimberly Collection in Belmont Shore. **PAGE 34:** purse from MTW holiday bazaar (see table of contents for details). **PAGE 35, UPPER LEFT:** Jennifer wears a zebra wrap dress, \$59, from Jenny G in Belmont Shore. **UPPER RIGHT:** She wears a black beaded sweater, \$210, and red taffeta skirt, \$385, both by Nanette Lepore, available at Kimberly Collection. **ON PAGE 36, UPPER RIGHT-HAND CORNER:** Jennifer wears a black dress with a velvet bodice and crinoline skirt, \$455, by Nanette Lepore, also available at Kimberly Collection. Makeup by Alisha Pierce, hair by Mark Anthony, and fashion editorial assistance by Cassandra Campa. Sitting editor, Melissa Balmer. Photography of Jennifer Shelton by Matt Fukushima. Holiday gift bazaar courtesy of Musical Theater West; 2007 Lexus SC 430 in Malibu. Red Mica courtesy of Lexus. Long Beach Symphony photos courtesy of the LBSO. Musical Theater West photos courtesy of the MTW (except for photo of Jennifer Shelton).



# jennifer SHELTON

SETTING THE STAGE FOR ASPIRING YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN PERFORMERS

By Leona June Christensen      Photography: Matt Fukushima

More than any part that has earned her boisterous applause or glowing accolades from critics, Long Beach actress and vocalist Jennifer Shelton's most cherished role is encouraging aspiring African American performers by taking parts that are traditionally designated for Caucasian actors.

"I am proud that I am one of the few African American women in Southern California who can make a living as a stage actress playing leading roles," Shelton said. "I am conscious of the roles that I play and how they reflect my ethnic community. I hope that my work will make it easier for others who can better see themselves on stage because of my performances."

While growing up, the San Francisco Bay-area native dreamed of following in her father's footsteps and becoming a judge. Instead, Shelton studied voice and piano at the California State University, Long Beach's music department. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in philosophy where she met her husband, Michael, a lifelong resident.

"I have lived and toured extensively throughout the United States and across the globe," said Shelton, a fourteen-year International City resident. "I always come home to Long Beach for the sense of community that I have not found in Los Angeles or other cities. I enjoy our city's ethnic diversity."

This year, Shelton's career came full circle. Twelve years ago, she debuted in *The Man of La Mancha* with John

McCook at the now-defunct Civic Light Opera in Long Beach. She recently completed one of her most challenging roles in the same musical at the Rubicon Theatre Company based in Ventura.

Best known for her Playbill Award-winning portrayal of Sarah in *Ragtime* at the Moonlight Amphitheatre, Shelton has toured the country with the First National Company. She has also headlined many concerts, including "A Tribute to Disney's Bob Igar," costarring Dylan McDermott. She has also appeared in the Disney movie of the week, *Gepetto*, with Drew Carey and Julia Louis-Dreyfus.

Locally, Shelton's talents are showcased as a star of Long Beach's Musical Theatre West, including *Hot Mikado* (Yum-Yum) and *The World Goes 'Round* (opposite Adrian Zmed). Additionally, the NAACP nominated her for an award for her performance in Long Beach's International City Theatre production of *Swinging on a Star*, as well as appearing as Maureen/Queenie in their production of *Honk!*

"Jennifer is a terrific artist with a gorgeous voice—a star with true audience connection and immediate rapport with each member of the cast," said Janet Nyquist, general manager of the Long Beach Symphony Orchestra. "We had to invite her to return for a second 'Holiday Celebration.'" **LB**

Shelton stars in the Long Beach Symphony Orchestra's "Holiday Celebration" concert. See page 36 for details.